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AN EDITORIAL OCCUPANT

Jessica Duffin Wolfe

Readers rewrite the books they remember. We occupy the books we've read, just as books occupy places, and places occupy books, ideas, and readers. Recently opening a book I took to the west coast in 2005, I flipped to the back page and found the old inscription left there for me by a traveller on a Vancouver beach: go to Ahousaht, he'd written. First Tofino, then Ahousaht, on Flores Island off the coast. Since that summer, whenever that book comes to mind, I think of that inscription, and about how big the waves were on Long Beach in Tofino that grey day I tried to read, and the people and surprising landscape I met in Ahousat, and about coming to the edge of the world and quoting Thomas King to ask, "Where did all the water come from?" The other day when I opened it again I was surprised to realize that King had autographed the book, *Green Grass, Running Water*, a book about the occupations of stories and landscape, and about how we live inside questions. He'd even written "for Jessica." I remembered only the other inscription, the other occupant.

The essays in this issue take a variety of sidelong glances at occupation in all its masks and guises. Peter Smiley considers a filmmaker whose work re-inhabits the BBC's video archive, and Mark Milner calls out Stephen Leacock's occupation of Orillia. Dylan Reid finds a history of contemporary mask panic in early modern France, and Alex Willis outlines Ezra Levant's denial of Canadian citizen Omar Khadr's right to occupy Canada. Brett Story reviews two new documentaries and looks at what it means to occupy a solitary jail cell. Lucas Van Meer-Mass discusses the Toronto habitations made

visible by photographer Patrick Cummins. Brendan de Caires returns to Trinidad and Tobago to ask how literature occupies Port of Spain. In one of her first English publications, celebrated Chinese poet Wu Ang glances at transnational marriage and Tchaikovsky. Jonathan Ball's haiku gives the National Gallery a new occupant, while Godfre Leung considers 1970s precursors to today's New York museum occupations.

This issue doesn't pretend to suggest the full spectrum of occupation: no one has written here about the Middle East, or about Canada's occupation of aboriginal land, nor do we for the most part look directly at the Occupy Wall Street protests, whose novel uses of the word "occupy" inspired this issue. As Quebec's Law 78 continues to undermine the right of folks to occupy public space in protest, this week marks the two-year anniversary of the G20 meetings in Toronto and the resulting wounds to everyday life in the city. We feel it's important to keep finding new ways to talk about the occupations of that week: this collection of fine work is our word in that conversation.

This issue, our fourth, also completes our first year of publishing quarterly issues of wide-ranging review essays and poetry, impassioned blog posts on Chirograph, and the recorded voices of international scholars on our podcast. To mark this exciting milestone, we decided to grow our site: we've redesigned our main page for easier navigation, implemented a mobile site, and are thrilled to be offering our first issue in PDF and EPUB formats for tablets.

We are always working to create better experiences for our readers, whether online, or in person at our events. More than ever, *The Toronto Review of Books* is committed to protecting accessible and public spaces for ideas—places where divergent perspectives can dwell together; room for insisting, as Canadian legislators gleefully restrict our protest rights, on speaking in public. To celebrate this resolve, and in honour of the Occupy issue, this evening *The Toronto Review of Books* is hosting an emphatic and resplendent masquerade. In his essay in this issue, Dylan Reid points out that we're witnessing widespread panic about adults wearing masks in public. We've decided to party instead of panicking. Join us—tonight, and for the parade of the coming year.

MASK PANIC: PAST AND PRESENT

Dylan Reid

On January 7, 1514, the *Parlement* of Normandy, the royal court of appeal for that prosperous French province on the Channel coast, issued a decree banning the wearing and owning of masks. “It is prohibited for all persons [...] to wear or purchase any false visage, mask, fake nose or beard, or anything else that disguises the face,” proclaimed the magistrates. They prohibited merchants from selling masks and ordered that all masks be handed in to the authorities, as if they were dangerous weapons. The timing of this decree suggests the court issued it in anticipation of Carnival, the traditional mid-winter festival that preceded the forty-day fast of Lent in the Christian calendar. As they still do in many parts of the world, in Normandy at the time people, especially young men, celebrated by parading the streets wearing costumes and masks. The *Parlement*, whose duties included regulating public order, evidently felt that by hiding people's identity, masks created the potential for disorder.

Five centuries later, we are going through our own moral panic about adults wearing masks in public. During the June 2010 meeting of the G20 in Toronto, police deployed a rarely-used law against wearing a disguise with criminal intent—one usually applied to armed robbers—to arrest people wearing bandanas in the protest area. Recently, a Conservative Member of Parliament introduced a private member's bill to create a law against wearing a mask during an "unlawful assembly," and the government has said it will support the bill. Since rioting, vandalism, and wearing a mask with intent to engage in a criminal act are all already

illegal, this law won't discourage any further violence. It could potentially, however, be used against a protest that was peaceful but not approved by the authorities. A new bylaw passed by the City of Montreal, meanwhile, does not even make that distinction, banning the wearing of masks at all protests in response to the continuing student demonstrations against Quebec's proposed tuition hikes

Canada isn't alone in its mask panic. In response to widespread riots in 2011, Britain moved to give police the power to remove masks from people wearing them in public. In New York, police revived a little-used law from 1845 that bans mask-wearing at gatherings to arrest several Occupy Wall Street protestors wearing Guy Fawkes masks. Tellingly, the law was first introduced after poor protesters in nineteenth-century New York donned "Indian" costumes of "calico gowns and leather masks" to inflict political violence against the agents of a wealthy landowner who was trying to evict his tenant farmers.

Meanwhile, in the midst of an ongoing European financial crisis, the French authorities took the time to once again ban public mask-wearing. A French law directed against the *niqab*, the full-face veil worn by less than 2,000 Muslim women in France, came into effect on April 11, 2011. Women wearing it face a fine or compulsory citizenship lessons. To allay the anti-Muslim overtones of the law, however, France adjusted it to include any instance of "covering one's face in public space," meaning it also bans balaclavas, hoodies or masks, although it includes exemptions for parades and practical needs, like motorcycle helmets. Legislators identified gender equality as the reason for the ban, suggesting that the *niqab* oppresses women and that even wearing it voluntarily might result from family and community pressure, but they also cited the need for authorities to be able to identify people.

The way the *niqab* debate played out in Canada suggests that a deep-seated fear of hidden identity plays a part in the frenzy devoted to this small piece of clothing. In 2007 Quebec's provincial chief elections officer required women in *niqabs* to unveil in order to vote, claiming that a hidden identity could be a mask for fraud. When Elections Canada found a simple procedure for women with covered faces to identify themselves without unveiling, the Conservative government kicked

up a fuss, revealing that their concern was more symbolic than practical. Last year, Immigration Minister Jason Kenney further decreed that women could not take the citizenship oath while wearing the *niqab*. He argued it is a "public declaration that you are joining the Canadian family and it must be taken freely and openly." The ban was instituted despite the fact that veiled women already confirmed their identities by showing their faces to officers of the court before taking the oath, again revealing that the legislation was less about the need for formal identification than a desire for symbolic openness. But if the source of the *niqab* panic lies partly in the hiding of individual identity, it also grows out of a perception that wearing the veil denotes an identification with an alternate group identity, one that is perceived to be in conflict with "Western values." In August 2010, in what was quickly dubbed an instance of "*niqab* rage," a woman was arrested for tearing off another woman's *niqab* while swearing about the victim's religion and presence in Canada. Ironically, the victim was attacked while engaging in that prototypically Western consumer activity, shopping at a suburban mall with her kids.

No members of the sixteenth-century *Parlement* of Normandy would have ever encountered a *niqab*, although nuns or widows shrouding their faces would have been familiar to them. The members would instantly have recognized the other controversy driving anti-masking laws, however: young people wearing masks for political demonstrations and violence. One mask in particular has come to encapsulate this activity for both protestors and authorities. Popularized as an image by the illustrator David Lloyd for Alan Moore's 1980s comic-book series and later graphic novel *V for Vendetta*, the Guy Fawkes mask became widely available as a piece of merchandizing after the 2006 movie adaptation, quickly spreading around the world in the form of cheap plastic copies. In the graphic novel, the mask symbolizes resistance to corrupt authority, and it soon began appearing in protests—those associated with the G8 and G20 meetings, then the Arab Spring, and more prominently in the Occupy movements in North America. The mask also became the symbol of the online hacker movement Anonymous, and in turn, authorities began to use it as a marker of potential subversion. In an internal report, Canada's Integrated Terrorism Assessment Centre highlighted the Guy Fawkes mask as

a way to identify people who might be sympathizers with Anonymous's threats of cyber attacks related to Toronto's 2011 Occupy movement.

Other masks, whether the black balaclavas used by the "Black Bloc" anarchists at Toronto's G20 protests or a simple bandana covering the face, may be less striking but have a similar effect. Even the hoodie, which doesn't cover the face but shadows it, has the power to disturb. In Eminem's 2004 "Mosh" video young men angry about the injustices of George W. Bush's America don hoodies and gather in a seemingly threatening group—whose surprise purpose turns out to be to go vote. The video plays on the multiple implications of protest and threat, and of anonymity and group identity, created by shrouding the face with a hood. The movie *Hot Fuzz* mocks the similar panic in England about hoodie-wearing youth. The February 2012 shooting of Trayvon Martin, a young black man wearing a hoodie in Florida, however, shows the very real tragedies that can result from these fears.

Both the appeal of masks and the fear of them may have some genuine basis in human psychology. Modern psychological experiments suggest that people who feel disguised are more likely to break rules of all kinds, both altruistically and selfishly. Two researchers at the Rotman School of Business at the University of Toronto, Chen-Bo Zhong and Vanessa K. Bohns, along with colleague Francesca Gino from UNC-Chapel Hill, conducted an experiment in which U of T students wore glasses—some clear, some sunglasses—while performing a "sharing" test through a computer with someone they didn't know. Those who were wearing sunglasses shared far less money than those wearing clear glasses. A separate experiment confirmed that simply wearing sunglasses created a strong feeling of anonymity in students. The researchers concluded that even a sense of "illusory anonymity" resulted in less-inhibited behaviour. In another article, Chen-Bo Zhong and others looked at a whole series of studies on anonymous behaviour, whether in darkness, in masks, behind an internet pseudonym, or simply in a crowd. It turns out that more aggressive people, especially young men, are indeed more likely to engage in violence when they feel anonymous, but those of milder temperament become more likely to try to stop it. The character of the mask itself can also shape behaviour. In one experiment,

participants wearing Ku Klux Klan uniforms increased the electric shock levels of subjects who couldn't see them, but those wearing nurse's uniforms decreased the levels of pain they inflicted. Other experiments showed that masked people were also more willing to break social taboos to speak truth to others, even about something simple, like telling a person her fly is down.

Similarly, during Carnival in sixteenth-century Normandy, maskers felt free to make public satirical comments about the foibles of their fellow-citizens and authorities—whether of the church, nobility or the law—that they would not make so boldly at other times of the year. But this satire could also degenerate into vicious personal attacks, and there was always the threat of riot. Given the genuine potential for rule-breaking that comes with wearing masks, it becomes easier to understand why authorities might have concerns about people wearing them in public. Regulators need to guard against over-reacting, however. Over time, the *Parlement* of Normandy learned to distinguish between harmless and dangerous masking. Their initial ban was completely ineffectual—not only did masking continue, but masked Carnival celebrations in the city of Rouen, where the court was based, became ever more elaborate. Eventually, the *Parlement* abandoned its blanket prohibition and instead came to an understanding with the maskers. The magistrates let the Carnival organizers themselves decide who got to wear a mask, making them self-policing. They then focused their regulation on keeping the festivities from going bad, by punishing vicious satirical attacks against individuals, making sure people wearing masks didn't carry weapons, and keeping the festivities from going on too late into the dark winter nights.

Modern authorities should take a page from this sixteenth-century experience and learn to distinguish between harmless and dangerous uses of masks. The New York anti-mask law did introduce an exception for parties in the 1970s. And the French law against covering the face also had to include a series of exceptions, including wearing them for Carnival. But these laws still don't distinguish between wearing a mask for peaceful protest and wearing one for rioting. The resurgence of this long-forgotten issue reminds us that covering the face in public carries power—to set oneself apart from society or to identify oneself as part of a group, to break

free of social rules or protest against authority. After all, even children carry an implicit threat when they walk the streets in disguise at the end of October, tricks if there are no treats—but we have yet to abolish Hallowe'en.

OCCUPYING PRISONS: CANADA AND THE FUTURE OF INCARCERATION

Brett Story

Films reviewed in this essay:
Herman's House (Canada, 2012, 81 min.), directed by Angad Singh Bhalla
Hunting Bobby Oatway (Canada, 2004, 45 min.), directed by John Kastner

As the Canadian government prepares to close Kingston Penitentiary, the oldest pen in the country, Whiggish history-telling has already begun to frame its wake. Virtually all the major news media have offered their own declarations of the nineteenth-century prison's archaic irrelevance. The coverage tells a story about the perceived barbarism and inefficiency of an architecture that postmodern thinking on incarceration no longer

deems appropriate. "By 1849," writes Jim Coyle of *The Toronto Star*, "the penitentiary was the subject of a report that found it to be a place of particular brutality. Meals of bread and water. Long stints in "The Box," a coffin-shaped wooden container into which the prisoner was jammed. Flogging, even for juvenile offenders." Coyle's core conclusion is clear: "Given the antediluvian design, the degradation of physical plant and human inmate, and the long, long record of brutality and corruption, it is a piece of Canadian history long overdue for consignment to the past."

At first glance, Coyle's perspective and the many like it make sense: the history of Kingston Pen is brutal, and might as well be closed. In light of imminent plans to dramatically *expand* Canada's existing prison system, however, the story begins to look rather strange. The Harper government's Bill C-10 legislates the most accelerated and expensive bundle of prison building bills in Canadian history. Even some US Republican legislators are looking north with raised eyebrows, and suggesting we take heed. The Omnibus Crime Bill models the new prisons on the American system, which has lost virtually all rehabilitative functions and ideals. In fact, the early nineteenth-century experiments in prison architecture, including the Kingston Penitentiary, were actually developed as an enlightened, humanist corrective to existing punishment practices. At least that was the story their champions told themselves.

Central to the eighteenth-century reformist project and its earliest architecture that brought the prison into being, was the solitary cell. Solitary confinement was originally conceived by Quakers and Anglicans in the late 1790s in Pennsylvania to offer a humane alternative to pre-existing punishments, such as public floggings, labour chain gangs, stockades and other corporeal brutalities. In the one-man cells and total silence where felons spent their days and nights, it was believed they would find the peace and quiet necessary to examine themselves, and to find inside of themselves the requisite remorse and self-realization to become better and more divinely oriented citizens. We call jails "penitentiaries" because solitude was thought to occasion penitence.

The first major institution in the United States to experiment with isolation was the Eastern State Penitentiary in Philadelphia. It was built just six years before the Kingston Penitentiary, in 1829, and was

inspired by the reformers of the Quaker Church. Its purpose was not just to punish criminals, but also to rehabilitate them. The notion was revolutionary. That criminals could be rehabilitated and reformed was an untested idea in the history of penology, and spoke to a particular notion of humanism popularized during this period. But something strange quickly became evident: solitary confinement, rather than offering criminals the requisite conditions of self-reflection to rehabilitate them into law-abiding citizens, instead drove prisoners mad. Evidence abounded, even at the time. Charles Dickens, indulging Europe's interest in this radical experiment in criminal justice by visiting captives held at Eastern State Penitentiary, wrote of his shock at meeting sense-deprived and wild-eyed inmates. They were "dead to everything but torturing anxieties and horrible despair," he wrote, concluding, "I hold this slow and daily tampering with the mysteries of the brain, to be immeasurably worse than any torture of the body."

By the late 1800s the perceived benefits of total isolation had been thoroughly discredited. In an 1890 US Supreme Court opinion concerning the effects of solitary confinement on inmates in Philadelphia, Justice Samuel Freeman declared that "a considerable number of prisoners fell […] into a semi-fatuous condition […] and others became violently insane." German doctors documented a spike in psychosis among inmates in their isolationist replicas of the Pennsylvania model, and clinical research reports across Europe were unequivocal in identifying the dire psychological effects of solitary confinement. The effect of isolation was not only cruel, but it made inmates *more,* rather than less, dangerous to society. The experiment had clearly been a disaster, and for almost a century isolation and sensory deprivation retreated from common use as penal practices.

Considering this history, the vigorous comeback of solitary confinement over the last generation is deeply puzzling. Indeed, the rebirth of solitary confinement in American prisons recently reached a landmark of sorts: one of its longest held captives marked his 40th year in isolation, an African-American member of the Black Panther party from Louisiana named Herman Wallace.

His story is garnering increased public attention thanks to *Herman's House* (2012), a documentary that premiered at this year's Hot Docs festival in Toronto. Directed by US-based Canadian Angad Bhalla, *Herman's*

House offers an indirect window into the un-viewable world of Herman Wallace, who, along with fellow Black Panther Albert Woodfox, has spent the majority of the past four decades (longer than any other US prisoner) in an isolation unit at the notorious Angola Penitentiary in Louisiana. Alongside fellow inmate Robert King, who was finally exonerated and released in 2001, this triad of political prisoners, known collectively as the "Angola 3," share a fate with tens of thousands of others living out their lives in these solitary "management control units," solitary "departmental disciplinary units," and solitary "closed custody units." Solitary confinement is typically characterized as holding prisoners alone at least 23 hours per day in cells about the size of a household bathroom, usually without windows or sound or any opportunity for human contact.

This level of isolation is almost impossible for most people to imagine. And when we do, it evokes, almost intuitively, our worst fears about being alone and feeling the mind grinding down.

Herman Wallace has so far eluded the particular mental psychosis associated with long-term solitary confinement. Yet it is indeed the life of Herman's mind that the other main subject of this film, the artist Jackie Sumell, seeks to affect, and even liberate. Jackie's political interventions on behalf of her friend Herman don't begin as an artist's project, but it is indeed her artistic intervention that the film follows most intently. That project is the scaled down construction of Herman's "dream house," as imagined and described to her by Herman over many conversations, and that ultimately tours as an installation called "The House that Herman Built." "I knew that the only way I could get him out of prison was to get him to dream," she says at one point. Through her actualization of this idea the relationship between the freedom of the mind and the freedom of the body are brought into complex question.

To that end, one frustration of the film is the sense that Jackie upstages Herman somehow, not only because she occupies more "screen time," but because it's not always clear to what degree their collaboration of imagination has anything to with, in an immediate and utilitarian sense, the politics of getting him out. But that frustration could perhaps be registered with any film that tries to say something about a prison, without being able to enter one. We want to meet Herman but we can't

because he's in a cage; that he's in a cage is the point of making these works of art.

In this case, the frustration of not having cinematic access to Herman's body or the cell it occupies serves up its own opportunities. For one, we get to think much more about his life, not as arrested by the architecture of his confinement, but as existing through a slew of relationships. Herman's relationship with Jackie, unlikely and unequal as it might at times appear, contains more mutual support than one might assume it could. Herman has a relationship with the State, which seems so invested in keeping him from other prisoners, while he credits the politics of the Black Panther Party with keeping him sane. And of course he also has a relationship with us, the audience, a cast of strangers for whom his life and the prison space it occupies provoke endless questions. Because Herman's voice has no body in this film, these questions become as much about us and our worlds, as they do about his.

How does the solitary cell relate to life outside? How does it travel? These questions find their counterpart in a very different prison film that also screened at Hot Docs this year. Canadian director John Kastner's 2004 made-for-television documentary *Hunting Bobby Oatway*, tells the story of sex-offender Bobby Oatway and the community outrage surrounding his release on parole to a halfway house in Toronto in the late 1990s. Like *Herman's House,* this film also invites reflection about the function and character of prisons, without actually filming in one.

The film begins with Oatway's release to an urban halfway house after he spent a decade in prison for sexually abusing children. His release ignites an emotional public campaign by former victims, municipal politicians, and neighborhood residents, to first disclose his identity to the community and then harass him out of it. While sympathy for such a person might seem uncomfortable, there is at least some cause for such feeling when Oatway decides that the public attention and torment is too much, and elects to return to prison to serve out the rest of his full term. As it turns out, it's not easy to put someone back in jail. Indeed, the most striking characters of the film are Oatway's parole agents, who not only advocated for him to remain on the "outside," but did so out of a seemingly counterintuitive concern for public safety. The greatest threat to

community safety, they argued, was not Oatway full stop, but Oatway in isolation—released at the end of his term to resettle all alone, without the support of the men in the halfway house, without the daily check-in and accompaniment of a parole officer. Social ostracism creates further isolation within an already individualized society: the solitary cell, therefore, is a cell that travels.

There might be important similarities between the solitary cell and the organization of broader social structures: the dangers ascribed to solitary confinement might warn us against its imitation in everyday life. Prisons tell us stories about ourselves, and our societies. Both *Herman's House* and *Hunting Bobby Oatway* suggest a way of thinking about the prison not as exceptional, existing outside of politics, but rather as integral to modern North American social life.

Using optics only available to cinema, these two films reframe the prison system here and now. They help erode the hard and fast distinction between what we call the inside and what we call the outside, a distinction that might apply just as well to the "inside" of a self, and the outside world. The idea that closing the Kingston penitentiary tells us that our nation is becoming more humane is contradicted by clear evidence that the American style of mass incarceration towards which we are advancing destroys lives and creates further violence. On the eve of a likely massive growth of our prison population, as the Canadian justice system is remade in the image of the largest carceral state in human history, we might think about where actually to cast our gaze in order to better understand what the prison discloses, or doesn't, about the political present.

OCCUPY THE BBC: THE WORK OF ADAM CURTIS

By Peter Smiley

A million acts of reportage, programming and documentation have left the BBC with the planet's most complete video archive of the twentieth century. BBC writer and documentarian Adam Curtis's technique is to obsessively sift through these uncountable hours of footage looking for connections. He shuffles through the BBC's memories like its regretful conscience, imbuing each with a paranoid significance. Minor snippets of old news broadcasts take on symbolic force when placed in Curtis's counter-historical narratives. Thus in *The Power of Nightmares*, Curtis's series on the concurrent rise of neo-conservatism and radical Islam, we see President Reagan dedicating the space shuttle *Columbia* to the Afghan *mujahedeen*. A young Ayman Al-Zawahiri chants hoarsely at journalists through the bars of his cage. American children play *Bible Adventures* for Nintendo ("Look out! He's the Antichrist!"). Each snippet would have been unremarkable when broadcast. Individually, they are fascinating historical documents. They flesh out Curtis's Pynchon-esque vision of the twentieth century, full of improbable characters and laced with a creeping paranoia.

Curtis's films explore the power of ideas, and their tendency to mutate in unanticipated ways. Every Curtis documentary has a soothingly predictable rhythm. It begins with old news footage over which Curtis's authoritative British voice describes two phenomena. Their differences are emphasized. They appear to have nothing whatsoever in common.

But, curiously, they do.

A tortured metaphor illustrates the profound interrelation of these phenomena. The creators of one of the phenomena never anticipated the effects that their phenomenon would have on the other phenomenon. The first phenomenon acted on the other phenomenon, and in the process, both phenomena became an entirely new phenomenon.

"And we are still suffering from the effects of that phenomenon today," says Curtis. Cue quickly intercut

shots of flowers blooming in stop-motion, a snake charmer in a Bollywood movie, the smiling face of Tony Blair, factories spewing pollution, and newsreel footage of people buying shoes in Weimar Germany, followed by the name of the documentary in all-caps Helvetica over grainy footage of a swan.

Many find Curtis's style insufferable, and understandably so; it can seem better-suited to a music video than to purportedly serious explorations of twentieth-century political ideology. This grating superficiality extends, at times, to the substance of the films, as Curtis massages historical narratives to fit his neatly paradoxical framing devices. This Curtis parody sums up all that is infuriating about his work; Curtis's work is described as "the televisual equivalent of a late-night drunken Wikipedia binge with pretensions to narrative coherence." Yet such criticisms fail to capture both what is valuable about Curtis, and what his work says about the eroding authority of the BBC.

The BBC was once the subject of a broad liberal consensus. Founded as the world's first public service broadcaster, its motto, "nation shall speak peace unto nation," implicitly posited the broadcaster as the national voice, addressed not just to its citizens but to the world. While governments challenged its editorial independence, the BBC as institution remained uncontroversial, its civilizing, educative mission accepted uncritically by both ends of the political spectrum.

Its reception was to change under Margaret Thatcher, who saw the BBC as wasteful, politically suspect, and a ripe target for privatization. Her unprecedented attacks on the legitimacy of the broadcaster were amplified by a right-wing press that Rupert Murdoch was rendering increasingly virulent. In 1989, Murdoch delivered the MacTaggart Lecture at the Edinburgh International Television Festival, where he dismissed the BBC's public service mission and argued for its privatization. Twenty years later, his now-disgraced son James delivered his own MacTaggart Lecture, in which he likened the existence of a government-owned BBC to the world of *1984*, a comparison that might have startled George Orwell, who was a prolific contributor to the broadcaster. Today, the BBC remains an institution under siege. Once the authoritative voice of England itself, it must now fend off constant accusations of bias, irrelevance, and anti-

competitive behaviour. Powerful forces agitate for its destruction. These challenges to its survival and legitimacy have forced the broadcaster into a defensive and self-critical poise. The broadcaster now interrogates itself and its role in the world in a way that would have been unthinkable 40 years ago, and Curtis's work is a manifestation of this trend.

Perhaps the best place to appreciate Curtis's work is on his BBC blog, *The Medium and the Message*, where one can enjoy his research and curation without having to endure his style. This fascinating post begins with a typically glib comparison (the cultural stagnation of late communism versus the cultural stagnation of late capitalism) before moving into a profound, extensively researched exploration of Soviet popular culture during the 1970s and 1980s. Of particular interest is the tragic story of Dean Reed, the American pop idol who defected to the USSR, where he became a state-endorsed "Comrade Rockstar," before dying under mysterious circumstances. The blog features similarly fascinating, extensively researched posts on the history of yoga, the cruise ship industry, and the steady-state theory of the universe. In a way, Curtis is like the archaeologist who reconstructs the garish paintwork on classical statuary. You might find the aesthetics offensive and the handiwork sloppy, but you will never see the original in the same light again.

This power of Curtis's work is particularly evident when he turns his gaze on the BBC itself. This short film for the BBC's *Newswipe* program argues that following the Cold War, television journalists could no longer appeal to political authority or present their work as a truth-seeking crusade; instead, they looked to the perceived authority of the viewing public, which accounts for the rise of "citizen journalism," and the attendant and constant undignified pleas of broadcasters to "send us your videos." Curtis's own career in fact has much in common with the rise of the citizen journalist. Both owe their existence, at least in part, to the fact that the BBC and other major broadcasters can no longer take their own authority for granted. They must find something more to offer, whether in the cellphone footage of their viewers, or in Curtis's slanted visions, the eccentric institutional memory of the BBC.

100 YEARS OF OCCUPATION: LEACOCK IN ORILLIA

Mark Milner

Robertson Davies's Salterton was inspired by Kingston, and Mordecai Richler immortalized St. Urbain Street. It's hard to imagine these books set elsewhere: Duddy Kravitz could never come from Vancouver. But no place takes as much pride in being a setting as Orillia does in its starring role in Stephen Leacock's *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town*.

Leacock was only a part-time resident, but the Orillia phone book is crammed with names from *Sketches*: Mariposa Market, Brewery Bay Food Company, the Leacock retirement home and the Ossawippi Express, to name only a few. The author's presence is hard to escape. For years, you could see his face on a wall mural on Front Street. Leacock occupies Orillia, even more than other local icons like Gordon Lightfoot, ex-NHLer Rick Ley or Franklin Carmichael. This town prides itself on a book poking fun at it.

Born in England in 1869, Leacock moved to Orillia in 1908. Then a professor of politics at McGill, he only lived here between semesters, but he arrived in time to see episodes that inspired *Sunshine Sketches*: the federal election of 1911, the passing of a 1908 temperance bylaw, a fire at St. James Anglican Church in 1905.

Indeed, the town's population inspired many of his characters: barber Jeff Shortt became Jefferson Thorpe, undertaker Horace Bingham became Golgotha Gingham and hotelier Jim Smith became Josh Smith. "Leacock always maintained that his town was completely fictional," wrote Margaret MacMillan in her biography of Leacock, "but he took much from Orillia."

Or as Shortt once said, “I never thought he was going to put in a book, what I told him.”

How did Orillia react to his send-up of the town? Pretty well, actually. A review in the Orillia Packet said, “[T]here is no room for resentment, in fact Orillians are rather proud to think that Orillia is the “Little Town,” which has been immortalized as a type of Canadian life.” Others replied with humour: one local sent Leacock a tongue-in-cheek letter threatening a lawsuit.

After Leacock’s death *Sunshine Sketches* began to occupy Orillia. In 1952, when Elizabeth II ascended to the throne, communities across Canada sent gifts to the new queen. The Orillia city council heard a motion to spend $100 on a leather-bound edition of *Sunshine Sketches* to give to the new queen. “There was a real debate in the papers,” said Fred Addis, curator at the Leacock Museum. “And one of the aldermen said ‘Why would the Queen want a book by that old drunk?’”

Orillia city council voted the gift idea down, a rejection that kick-started the movement to preserve Leacock’s legacy.

A group of locals, with help from literary heavyweights like W.O. Mitchell and Pierre Berton, set about buying Leacock’s old house. They turned it into the Leacock Museum in 1958, not long after Leacock’s son said he’d never let the city own it.

“That whole cut and thrust in the 1950s was instrumental in establishing Leacock as a Canadian icon,” said Addis. “Leacock’s impact really was cemented in the hearts and minds of Orillia.”

Since then Leacockmania has only grown. In 1960 the Mariposa Folk Festival launched with a name chosen for its association to Orillia. The manuscript of *Sketches* was acquired by the museum in 1966. By 1972, twenty years after calling Leacock an old drunk, Orillia advertised itself as “The Leacock City.” In 1995, 5,000 people came out to help raise a replica of the boathouse on the museum’s grounds, while the Leacock Sidewalk Sale will run again this year from July 24th to 25th.

This little book has meant so much to Orillia because of how Leacock portrayed the town. While *Sketches* satirizes small-town life, it never crosses into maliciousness: Leacock’s Mariposa is rural, but not a place to be mocked by urban elites in the big city. It’s not hard for a community to take some ribbing to heart when it’s this good-natured and gentle.

Growing up in Orillia, I found Leacock's name everywhere. I had copies of *Sketches* in grade school, when I graduated from college and now, sitting next to me on my desk, is a critical edition. It's impossible to be a reader here and not own this book. I've seen used copies turn up everywhere: used bookstores, thrift markets, a table in the break room at the Zehrs on Coldwater road. In a way, *Sketches* has even influenced how Orillia looks: the city strives to give visitors the feeling of a small town, going as far as having a heritage-themed bylaw for signage on the main street. Leacock's legacy won't fade anytime soon. 2012 is the centenary of the publication of *Sketches* and Orillia is ready: *Sketching Sunshine*, a one-man play with Joe Matheson playing Leacock, comes to the local theatre in July, and the Leacock museum is throwing a celebration in a city park this August. Downtown, Manticore Books has stacks of *Sketches* for sale, complete with a cheat sheet showing what represents what. As Addis said, "Orillia will always be in the Leacock business."

OF NATURE

Jonathan Ball

a murder in The National Gallery
the corpse evidence or art
a bloodied face attracting files

524 Dupont, 2010, from Full Frontal T.O.

THE IMPERMANENCE OF THE ORDINARY: *FULL FRONTAL T.O.*

Lucas Van Meer-Mass

Reviewed in this essay:
Full Frontal T.O. (Coach House, 2012), photographs by Patrick Cummins, text by Shawn Micallef

Cities have been photographed since the birth of the medium, but camera lenses have tended to focus on urban life: its characters, opulence, industry, and grime. Where architecture was concerned, photographers were more often than not content to portray modern buildings with the same aesthetic principles as the building's designers, emphasizing clean lines, bold shapes and empty spaces. Patrick Cummins's new book on the colloquial architecture of Toronto's downtown core draws our gaze instead to the intersection of these subjects: the human element in the built form. With words by Toronto's resident *flâneur*, Shawn Micallef, Cummins's collection of photographs consists of studies

of the city's homely small-scale commercial and residential architecture. The book includes longitudinal studies that trace the transformation of buildings over a roughly 30-year period and typographical studies that highlight variations of a single architectural form.

Cummins's longitudinal studies each suggest a narrative at once intimate and broadly social. From the poignancy of a second-floor half-shuttered window that does not change for a generation to the abrupt transformation of a storefront from local furrier to Money Mart, the series chart stories of decline and renewal, of transformation and re-contextualization. Photographs of a family business in slow decline elicit an emotional reaction while the hardening of residential facades on a major thoroughfare suggests a lesson in urban development. In one typographical study we see various examples of the Gothic Cottage form after decades of use. The refractions of this basic form and their rich diversity emerge from the background to themselves become the subject of the series.

Cummins's photographs suggest that the virtue of their subjects lies in how the buildings change, in the stories implied by how they adapt, expand, shrink, or vanish. By photographing building facades and street elevations head-on and excluding wherever possible people and cars, Cummins's work brings to the fore the oft-thought but rarely expressed idea that these humble buildings and how they change constitute the muscle and bone of Toronto's architectural identity. Toronto's humdrum architecture is full of implied anecdotes, good and bad design decisions, and the traces of histories ranging in scale from graffiti battles to great stylistic movements. The photographs can be mined for different stories endlessly, and Micallef's commentary, sometimes humorous and sometimes informed by educated historical and architectural insights, offers departure points for our own exploration of the complex and changing city.

Once the narcissistic thrill of seeing one's own city captured in photographs wears off, however, one may be left with the uneasy sense that the fine-grained urban change that this book presents as a virtue is of diminishing significance in Toronto. Current development, driven by a now-dominant concern for the investments of downtown home ownership, may not allow homes and storefronts to reflect anything other

than their most expensive uses. In *Full Frontal* we see the passing of one modest business into another, one middle- or working-class resident selling to another. The book pays little if no regard to what has undoubtedly had the greatest affect on the qualities and forms of urban development during the 30 years it covers. In a word, rising property values have occupied the space that allowed for the incremental neighbourhood change we see in this book. The Annex, Harbord Village, and Cabbagetown, to name a few, have been recast as idealized and unchanging images of their original forms. Meanwhile, new developments no longer bother with the meagre profits of small-scale residential or commercial projects. Instead, the character and dynamics of a neighbourhood are changed in one gesture. Outsized condominium and commercial developments trade on the diversity of the neighbourhoods to whose homogeneity they are in fact contributing.

In the interests of protecting these spaces for human-scale neighbourhood change, it is worth noting that the buildings and neighbourhoods that draw Cummins's attention and Micallef's commentary are similar to Jane Jacob's Greenwich Village and Annex neighbourhoods. Both have since become exclusive and aesthetically rigid neighbourhoods as their property values have increased. Their value as workshops for understanding human-scale urbanism, as places that allow for the cultivation of community and creativity, has been undermined as decisions on urban development have become increasingly concerned with the exchange value of their properties.

Micallef's comparison of Cummins's work to Vancouver artist Stan Douglas's *Every Building on 100 West Hastings* is in this sense apt. The work is a 16' by 3' composite photograph that shows an empty and derelict block in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. The shuttered windows and aging signs tell the story of a human presence now either absent or alienated from the city's built form. The buildings serve as squats and venues for art galleries and events periodically, but their grip on the space is tenuous. The photograph is a portrait of a once-active area whose users have been steadily excluded from local agency because of rising rents and the logic of property speculation that prefers empty buildings to the upkeep of inhabited ones. In the ten years since that image was first published, nearly every single building

on that block has been occupied by residents and businesses from outside the neighbourhood. The change appears to be permanent. Micallef suggests in his introduction that the work captures some aspect of Vancouver identity, but it also depicts the end state of an area from which original residents have been steadily estranged.

Full Frontal T.O. shows us a city that grows on top of itself through renewal and decline, exhibiting both its mortality and persistence. The book shows us parts of the city where the built form evolves but is always shaped to some degree by the occupations of those who have come before. Cummins's photographs do not display human subjects, but, more poignantly, objects and buildings in which people have invested themselves, and that are erased or transformed by subsequent layers of human activity. In *Full Frontal T.O.* the city's quotidian architecture is a dynamic and human subject central to the city's identity, even as the forces that now threaten this delicate character escape understanding.

MADE IN OCCUPIED JAPAN

Edward Brown

Recently an acquaintance I'll call Eric gave me a chrome-plated naphtha lighter similar to a Zippo. The lighter was manufactured by Atomic. Engraved on the bottom were the words, "MADE IN OCCUPIED JAPAN." Shiny as a trophy, at 60-plus years, the relic still functioned like new.

Inquiring as to how he came to possess the lighter, Eric explained he had stolen it from an old man.

"Won't he notice it's missing?"

"Probably not."

Eric reasoned that because I smoke cigarillos, I would want the stolen lighter. He was correct.

"How much do you want for it?"

"Nothing."

Did I mention Eric can be generous?

I asked Eric if he was aware of the lighter's history. He said he was, explaining how, once, military brass routinely presented Allied soldiers with lighters just like this one in order to commemorate their heroics in the Pacific campaign.

A war medal in the guise of a lighter? Ridiculous. Fearing Eric would demand its return, I wisely kept this opinion to myself. At times Eric can be fickle.

He asked me to estimate its value. Shrugging, I told him I was unsure.

Allied powers occupied Japan between 1945 and 1952. For Japanese citizens, occupation had advantages, as well as disadvantages. Occupation brought democracy to the island nation. Land reform was implemented. Trade unions formed. However, organized crime gained a toehold, the black market thrived and occupying soldiers were implicit in a pandemic of rape.

Under the terms of surrender, Japanese industry was required to demilitarize. Factories once manufacturing weaponry now produced a plethora of chintzy goods like ceramic figurines, pinking shears, porcelain pigs, tacky bisque dolls and lighters like the one Eric had stolen from the old man. The global marketplace was flooded with cheap, disposable wares. Trade agreements required a "MADE IN OCCUPIED JAPAN" label on all Japanese exports. In Canada, Eaton's and Simpson's carried these goods. By the early 1980s, some considered the items collectibles. Their value was artificially inflated. Today on eBay, the opening bid for a pistol-shaped lighter made in occupied Japan is $4.99.

I'll keep all this to myself. Knowing Eric, he'll be disappointed.

LEUNG ON CHRISTOPHER D'ARCANGELO'S OCCUPATIONS

CHRISTOPHER D'ARCANGELO'S OCCUPATIONS

Godfre Leung

In recent months, the Occupy Wall Street splinter group Occupy Museums staged an alternative, barter-based art fair outside New York's annual Armory Show, and released a fake press release under the guise of the Whitney Biennial disavowing the exhibition's corporate sponsors and apologizing to the exhibiting artists "for allowing them to be exploited by the former sponsors." In these demonstrations, as well as in the group's "occupations" of the major New York museums last autumn, Occupy Museums identifies its target as the high art world, and not the forces behind what it has called "the intense commercialization and co-optation of art." In suggesting that art has been "corrupted" by its close association with capitalism, the movement unwittingly invokes the fantasy that art should transcend economics, a fantasy that art institutions have themselves used as a smokescreen to mask such connections.

Three earlier New York City interventions also used the protest strategy of occupation to question the relationship between the art world and corporate capitalism. In 1971, a group of prominent artists called the Art Workers Coalition protested the Guggenheim Museum's cancellation of a Hans Haacke exhibition by brandishing posters with the slogan "FREE ART," forming a conga line in the lobby, and following the dancer Yvonne Rainer up the museum's spiral structure. Haacke's exhibit would have exposed the dealings of two New York real estate partnerships that had been charged as being slumlords. Three years later, Haacke mounted an exhibition at the John Weber Gallery in New York detailing the corporate affiliations of the Guggenheim

Museum's board members. One work noted that three board members also served on the board of the Kennecott Copper Corporation, which played a major role in the 1973 Chilean *coup d'etat* that toppled Salvador Allende's democratically elected government. While the AWC was calling for museums to allow artists a free platform for their political commentary, Haacke's work reflected on the political complicity that underlies this freedom. "Free" platforms entail participation in a larger system that sometimes supports dictators as well as artists.

In 1987, another group brought art out into the streets rather than taking occupation activism into museums. Seventeen demonstrators were arrested when ACT UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power) occupied and blocked traffic on Wall Street for several hours to protest the high price of AZT, the first anti-retroviral HIV medication to hit the market. The Food and Drug Administration had delayed testing for all HIV medications except for AZT, granting a monopoly to the Burroughs Wellcome corporation. The result was an overwhelming price tag of $10,000 per patient per year. Rallying behind their slogan "Free AZT," ACT UP used handbills and placards designed by members of the art collective Gran Fury to help disrupt this exploitative system. ACT UP resented the weighing of tens of thousands of human lives against untold millions of dollars, and used their art to achieve a social benefit, rather than posing art as a social benefit in itself. In fact, many members of Gran Fury had reservations about their graphics being viewed as art, and later about exhibiting them in artistic contexts, for fear that falling under the genre of "political art" would render the message merely aesthetic and therefore neutralize its political force and activist intent. In contrast to Occupy Museum's suggestion of an art that transcends capitalist exploitation, the art critic and ACT UP member Douglas Crimp wrote in 1988: "We don't need to transcend the epidemic; we need to end it." ACT UP later demonstrated on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange, temporarily shutting down trading. The FDA soon began testing more—and better—HIV treatments.

An earlier artist, Christopher D'Arcangelo, also took on both the art world and political economy by casting his gaze on real estate. Like the AWC, D'Arcangelo literally occupied museums, staging

unauthorized disruptive "performances" at the Whitney, Guggenheim, Met, and MoMA in 1975. At three of these performances, D'Arcangelo chained himself up and then removed his shirt to reveal on his back the slogan "When I state that I am an Anarchist, I must state that I am also not an Anarchist, to be in keeping with the (----) idea of Anarchism." Museum security had to release him from his chains before they could cuff him up again, mirroring his wish that the museums also free the art on display from their institutional fetters. After his MoMA "performance," D'Arcangelo wouldn't allow his father, the well-known Pop artist Allan D'Arcangelo, to pull any strings with the museum to have the charges dropped because he didn't want the prestige of high art, the very thing he was protesting, to save the day. In a 1997 interview, the older D'Arcangelo recalled saying to his son: "Why are you going after the museums? Chain yourself to the Chase Manhattan Bank doors, close the banks. The museums are sort of innocent bystanders in a way." But for Christopher, art and economics could not be so casually separated.

Shortly before his early death at age 24 in 1979, D'Arcangelo participated in a group exhibition at Artists Space, alongside Cindy Sherman, Adrian Piper, and Louise Lawler. D'Arcangelo's most visible contribution to the exhibition was to erase his name from the exhibition's title and its promotional material. The invitation card read: "_________, Louise Lawler, Adrian Piper and Cindy Sherman are participating in an exhibition organized by Janelle Reiring at Artists Space, September 23 to October 28, 1978." Each artist had four pages of the catalogue; for his section, D'Arcangelo composed a text entitled "Four Texts, for Artists Space," formatted and typeset in the same style and according to the dimensions of the other three artists' pages. Instead of printing this text in the catalogue, however, D'Arcangelo left his four pages blank and instead pasted print-outs of the texts on the walls of Artists Space, interspersed with the contributions of the other three artists. These texts, not credited to D'Arcangelo, resembled conventional museum wall texts, and thus seemed to "explain" the works by Lawler, Piper, and Sherman on exhibit.

D'Arcangelo's texts each discussed the economic and ideological function of art exhibition spaces, and even went so far as to call into question Artists Space

itself, a revered non-profit founded as an alternative to the commercial gallery and museum system. One of those texts read:

> It is implied in the brochure that Artists Space shows work that is not shown in galleries and museums. Perhaps this is so. But the support for Artists Space is, in an indirect way, the same as the support for galleries and museums. Artists Space receives its main support from tax dollars; galleries and museums from private money. The government invests our money to maintain itself and, at the same time, to maintain the full social, cultural, and economic system (capitalism) [...] Once it is understood that the support of Artists Space and the support of galleries and museums are one and the same, that the systems are one system, a discourse for change may be opened that will lead to tangible results, i.e., unqualified space and/or revolution.

D'Arcangelo's erasure of his name from the exhibition was an intentionally self-defeating attempt to absolve himself of his complicity as an artist in the production of social capital.

During that same group exhibition at Artists Space, Louise Lawler installed a spotlight that shone out the gallery's second-storey windows onto the bank across the street. These lights were kept on until midnight and after dark a silhouette of the gallery's windows could be seen on the bank's façade. The existence of that venerable non-profit alternative art space on Hudson Street in TriBeCa acted as an aesthetic cover for the economic activity that was the neighbourhood's real, but hidden face. D'Arcangelo made this complicity the content of his work. Due to his skill with constructing temporary walls from sheet rock, he had entered the art world as an assistant at the John Weber Gallery in SoHo at 19. He was keenly aware that through this work he participated in the capitalism his art opposed. In 1977, D'Arcangelo and the artist and gallerist Peter Nadin started a business renovating loft spaces for commercial and domestic use. After a job was finished, D'Arcangelo would send out invitation cards announcing an art opening, as if the

renovated space were a work of art. The cards came with a disclaimer at the bottom: "We have joined together to execute functional constructions and to alter or refurbish existing structures as a means of surviving in a capitalist economy."

Most of D'Arcangelo and Nadin's projects took place in lofts in the then newly christened TriBeCa. The acronymic branding of TriBeCa, short for "Triangle Below Canal Street," came alongside New York City's 1976 ordinance to zone the area's formerly industrial spaces for use as living quarters or as hybrid "mixed use" spaces. As detailed in the urban sociologist Sharon Zukin's indispensable 1982 *Loft Living*, the re-zoning of TriBeCa for lofts represented a new stage in the city of New York's project to revitalize Lower Manhattan. During New York's fiscal crisis in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the city, whose industrial manufacturing base had diminished, leveraged one of its few remaining assets: its physical terrain—first SoHo, then TriBeCa. The city zoned SoHo lofts for residential use in 1971, but with the caveat that the tenant must be an artist who also used the space as a studio. This repurposing could thus also be labelled a "cultural good deed" that would help young artists to find affordable living and work spaces. The TriBeCa ordinance didn't have this "mixed use" requirement and was plainly a real estate gambit from the start. Many artists of this period did put their TriBeCa lofts to "mixed use," however, including Nadin himself, whose West Broadway space was not only an art gallery, but also the domestic residence of his artist friend Nick Lawson.

The city subsidized the conversion of these formerly industrial spaces into residential ones, but in 1975 the tax law was adapted to benefit large-scale developments, in effect turning over many of the area's underused, abandoned, and foreclosed buildings to speculators and holding corporations. The aftermath was first a mass migration of artists to the area under artificially low rents, then the arrival of most of the city's major art galleries, as SoHo became the capital of the New York art world. Many artists were forced to relocate, and eventually the galleries themselves moved to the old warehouses in Chelsea, leaving SoHo to become the luxury district we know today. The cultural currency of high art and the cachet of loft-dwelling artists helped to reshape SoHo and revitalize lower Manhattan's

then-stagnant housing market. The cachet of loft living having already been established by 1976, neither the artists nor the galleries were needed to break the ground, so to speak, when it came time to "flip" TriBeCa.

D'Arcangelo did not live to see the Wall Street era of the 1980s—or MoMA's active entry into the real estate market with the erection of its "Museum Tower" luxury high-rise apartment on West 53rd Street in 1983—but his work, as a SoHo gallery assistant, as a renovator of TriBeCa lofts, and as an exhibiting artist, contributed to the capital of high art, both social and financial. D'Arcangelo not only helped build the neighbourhood that would house Wall Street's young tycoons, but through high art's assistance in revitalizing New York's real estate market, he also prepared the traders' accelerated marketplace.

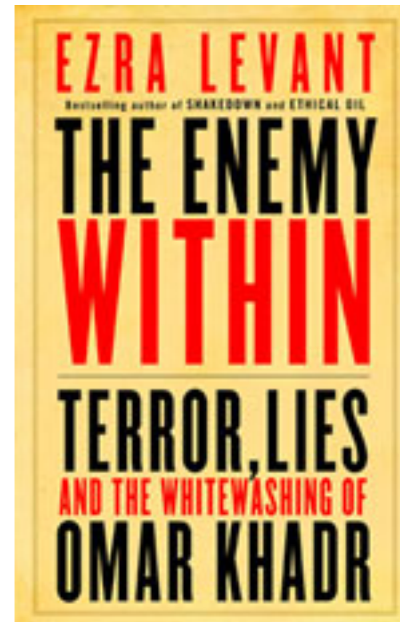
On September 10th, 2011, exactly one week before the Occupy Wall Street movement began its occupation of Zuccotti Park, Artists Space exhibited a long-due retrospective of D'Arcangelo's art called "Anarchism Without Adjectives." This tribute to the previously obscure artist on the eve of the Occupy Movement is telling. For D'Arcangelo, no artist or alternative art space—not even an anti-capitalist art fair like the one organized by Occupy Museums—can ever be separated from "the full social, cultural, and economic system," and as such, his target could not be high art or political economy, but had to be both. D'Arcangelo's legacy now seems inseparable from the movement he anticipated, but more still needs to be learned from the example of his work.

OCCUPY THE RIGHT: EZRA LEVANT AND THE REDEFINITION OF CANADIAN CHARACTER

Alex Willis

Reviewed in this essay:
The Enemy Within: Terror, Lies, and the Whitewashing of Omar Khadr (McClelland & Stewart, 2011), by Ezra Levant.

Ezra Levant's jeremiad, *The Enemy Within: Terror, Lies, and the Whitewashing of Omar Khadr*, is not actually about the eponymous Pakistani-Canadian, but rather about Toronto and the "professional protestors of the anti-war left." In committing the burden of responsibility in the Khadr saga to the left, Levant continues his campaign of redefining responsible citizenship in a multicultural society—specifically, deconstructing the supposed failures of progressive culture and media. While energetic in his attacks on Canada's left for its sympathies with Khadr, Levant never succeeds in identifying a coherent conservative stance on the young Canadian's predicament.



After Levant's republication of the infamous Danish Muhammad cartoons in his magazine *The Western Standard*, and his subsequent self-indulgent martyrdom at the hands of the Alberta Human Rights Commission (HRC), Rex Murphy called him "the No. 1 advocate for, and defender of, freedom of speech, freedom of the press and freedom of thought in modern Canada." Levant's 2009 book *Shakedown* emerged from his subsequent "interrogations" with the Alberta HRC. This book was a largely anecdotal and charismatic attempt to dismantle the restraints against central tenets of Canadian democracy and free thought. Claiming that, "once unleashed, censorship can bury social progressives

as easily as it can bury Prairie pastors," Levant's earlier work could at least make some claim to being a non-partisan and collective endeavour.

While calling *The Enemy Within* a sequel to *Shakedown* would be technically inaccurate, it does share with its earlier cousin a loathing for systems and media that privilege institutional diversity and complexity over individual liberties. And yet, ironically, this latest work is more invested in homogenizing "Canadian values" than challenging a restrictive status quo. Omar Khadr is an incidental player in this drama: the book is not fundamentally concerned with making a case for what he did or what he might do. On both counts, the record is either legally settled or speculative, and so what remains is Levant's scathing rebuke of a culture that at worst passively encourages domestic terrorism. Levant's Canada, and specifically Toronto, is a festering breeding ground for malign "tolerance." Unlike *Shakedown*, which detailed how even progressive voices could be silenced by good intentions, *The Enemy Within* takes aim at a liberalism that is the *sine qua non* of a left-wing urban existence. Levant hopes to dislodge this culture of acceptance by occupying the new space with a more determined and unequivocal Canadian-ness.

As a character study, the book is largely a failure, since Omar Khadr remains a cipher. The young man is used to codify the moral and ethical failures of an over-tolerant culture of accommodation, and we are never enlightened about the "Canadian values" that will prevent "elite terrorists" such as Khadr from sprouting again in Canada. Throughout the book, Levant's model for behavioural rectitude is the American Khadr killed during combat in Afghanistan. In the chapter "Whom Did Khadr Murder?" the author develops a portrait of Khadr by negative association with the lionized Christopher Speer, who is as much a paragon of virtue as Khadr is an unrepentant devil. Levant sums up this antagonistic symmetry by quoting an essay Speer's son's Tanner wrote to Khadr himself: "ARMY ROCK'S!! BAD GUYS STINK!!" It is hard to mistake the onerous allegory at work here: self-sacrificing hero soldier from an average Midwestern American background dies at the hand of an urbanized, "worldly" Canadian child of Islamic immigrants with a suspicious and criminal past.

Levant is not so crude as to suggest that immigration policy alone could be responsible for

Canada's failure to match American standards of citizenship. He proposes that progressive media and educational institutions have fostered bad outcomes from immigration, manifested in the malignity of such figures as Omar Khadr. In his study of Khadr's character, Dr. Michael Welner—the psychiatrist whose testimony condemning Khadr was ultimately disallowed from submission at trial—maintains a suspicion that the young man "had been indoctrinated by his anti-Gitmo amen corner," i.e. Canada's left-leaning media and the social justice community. Levant takes up this critique with gusto, never missing an opportunity to draw in some element of the "elite" intelligentsia who characterize Toronto's media scene. In particular, the "always credulous" *Toronto Star* and its readers are all but accused of colluding with Omar's father Ahmed Khadr in "buying guns, and ammunition, and bombs, and anti-aircraft weapons, and landmines for jihadist guerillas." *Star* reporter Michelle Shepard and rabble.ca founder Judy Rebick are identified as key players in this sympathetic drama—the latter blind in Levant's view to the (admittedly possible) irony that Khadr, left to his own devices, would like nothing better than to kill her. "After all," writes Levant, "the woman is an ardent advocate for gay rights, she's Jewish, and is one of Canada's leading feminists."

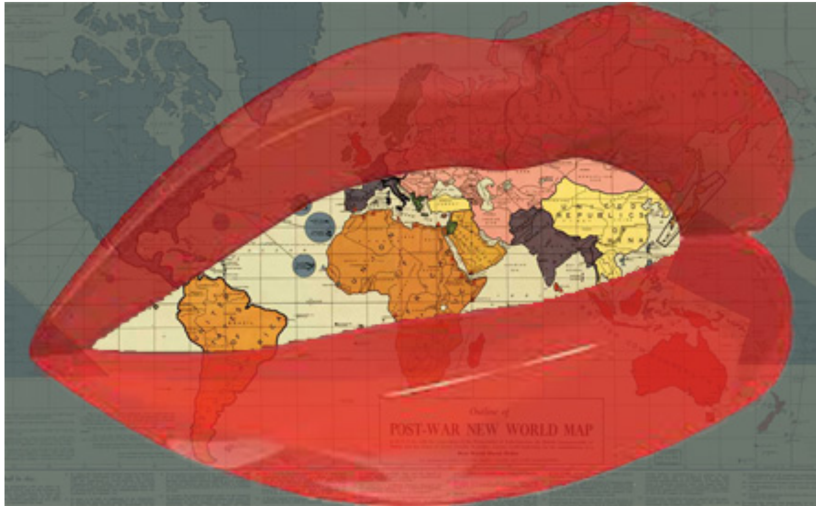
That Khadr's grandparents owned a bakery on Toronto's Eglinton Avenue West, "one of the most ethnically diverse strips of commerce in North America," seems to have had little effect on his aspirations. Levant argues that Canada's lack of moral direction—its unwillingness to declare certain cultural codes taboo or illegal—has allowed the fundamentalism exhibited by Ahmed Kadr and his sons to grow deep. Levant's attempts to redefine or perhaps "roll back" the character of an "average" Canadian childhood smack of a deliberate misunderstanding of pluralism. Instead of a nuanced, mature discussion of cultural density and his resistance to the notion that its narrative of accommodation is inevitable, Levant only offers facile contrasts of a zealous obsession with the Quran with an "average" Canadian youth's interest in Harry Potter.

If, as Levant believes, the ground has been laid for "elite" and "worldly" terrorists to occupy Canadian cities, we ought to be concerned. Yet in confronting this possibility, Levant viciously and rather aimlessly

harangues the reader with the outrage that villains such as the Khadrs were ever allowed here in the first place. He seems personally offended that a Canadian citizen could and would so easily dispose of traditional Canadian values, and yet walk unimpeded among "us." This missed opportunity for both Levant as a writer, and for the conservative culture whose attention he has captured, replaces genuine conservative social critique with a witch-hunt.

Despite every instance of abuse the Khadr family has heaped upon the Canadian health care, immigration, and justice systems, the fact remains that they are still Canadian citizens. That Omar Khadr could once again occupy Canada, his place of birth and rightful home, is blamed on the left: "Thanks to years of hard cheerleading on our campuses, in our political movements, and in our newsrooms for the family's most favoured son, Canada will soon become Omar Khadr's country." Part of this is tongue-in-cheek, but his quip— "will soon become"—is nonetheless deeply troubling: to claim, even in jest, that a native citizenship is conditional upon the convictions (justified or not) of a foreign court borders on a dangerously extreme nationalism.

Unlike *Shakedown*'s more libertarian concerns, *The Enemy Within* evinces a reactionary conservatism that stakes a claim for codes of conduct and upbringing. Unable to provide a constitutional model of morality that accepts the diversity of Canadian demographics, Levant becomes obsessed with Omar Khadr's non-Canadian-ness, but in Canada's cities especially, Khadr's difference from Levant's "average" is utterly banal. A majority of Canadians can by now identify with Khadr's divergence from the historical ethnic norms Levant tries to uphold. Levant's anger is misplaced, and his efforts to prevent Khadr's re-entry have all the hallmarks of a superstitious exorcism. Rather than attacking Khadr for his lack of patriotism and failures as a Canadian, Levant should be asking what could be done to help keep other youth from becoming radicalized on Toronto's streets. Success in that vein simply cannot happen by shunning the transgressor, and pretending as if he did not exist.



TWO POEMS

By Wu Ang

"Transnational marriage"

A tongue from a developed country
Fallen into a developing mouth
It discovers, the sanitation there's a bit problematic
The dentists are very irresponsible
A cotton-ball from many years ago
Still exuding residual warmth in some cranny
It sheepishly wishes to make an exit
But is clamped onto by the tips of incomplete teeth

In the name of love
In the name of profound and all-knowing love
Please stay here until the rumours pass
Then, we'll be more as equals
Despite messier
Appearances

"I'm not acquainted with Tchaikovsky"

—for mother

He's not my neighbour
Nor is he the nurse on duty at the operating room
One day
I was out buying fish
Someone pointed at him and told me
That's him who died a hundred and fifty years ago
Tchaikovsky

Saltwater fish and bamboo weave
Making me drip with sweat
Not even a slip of handkerchief
I suppose
My daughter won't be coming home too early

Tchaikovsky
Never worried about the cherry harvest
But I'm worried about her
She's almost all grown up
Amongst the men she's infatuated with
There happens to be one called Tchaikovsky
A man who never plans to marry
She writes in her letter
"Therefore I've decided
to stay up north for the summer
…"

Translated by Alice Xiang

THE LAND OF TRINITY AD INFINITUM: DIASPORA CULTURE IN PORT OF SPAIN

By Brendan de Caires

I

Twenty years ago, quixotically pursuing a doomed romance, I moved to Port of Spain, the capital of Trinidad and Tobago. Part of what decided me to go was the time I'd spent among the malcontents of the city's Woodford Square. On any given day there was a Dickensian cast of cranks, madmen and impassioned citizens, fulminating against the "parasitic oligarchy" of Trinidad and Tobago. Nestled downtown between the Hall of Justice, a cathedral, the National Library and the Red House parliament building, Woodford square is tailor-made for civic wrangling, almost like the *Field of Dreams* thought experiment ("If you build it, t(he)y will come"). Guidebooks call it "The People's Parliament" and, predictably, compare it to Speakers' Corner in Hyde Park, but for me it has always been more of a Zuccotti Park *avant la lettre*.

In my day, a staple Woodford theme was the government's contempt for working people, its indifference to price increases for cooking gas, flour and the like. The decline of West Indies cricket was another crowd-pleaser, especially the theological question of whom to blame: white men on the Cricket Board? Interloping small islanders like the swaggering Antiguan captain Viv Richards? Bystanders constantly intervened—this was before we'd come to terms with being a third-rate Test team—and heckled speakers into silent departure if they didn't pass muster.

Trinidadian culture is unusually well-supplied with the rhetoric of badinage and repartee. (If, for example, you ask a question to which there is a self-evident reply, they dismiss you with the phrase "You asking answers!"). Its wonderfully eclectic creole was recently honoured with a monumental dictionary that a

Canadian lexicographer compiled after more than twenty years of painstaking research.

A culture like this should be a-tumble with books, but it wasn't—at least when I lived there. Although Dr. Eric Williams, an academic historian, had served as prime minister for 25 years the island's main cultural interests lay elsewhere. Williams produced tomes with titles like *Capitalism and Slavery*, and *From Columbus to Castro*: *The History of the Caribbean 1492-1969*, but the culture he left behind showed few signs of the intellectual self-sufficiency that was meant to accompany independence. In the last twenty years "Trini" culture has become practically synonymous with "pan" (steelbands), soca, and the most enjoyable carnival outside of Rio.

The NGC Bocas Lit Fest, now in its second year, is a remarkable attempt to supply some of this missing literature. In four days at the end of April, 2012, the festival crammed nearly 100 high- and mid-brow events into a nonstop schedule. Expertly coordinated by a small, dedicated team, the organizers forced audiences to pick and choose throughout: Jamaican poets, or a talk on Caribbean historiography? A workshop with Barbadian fantasy novelist Karen Lord and Canadian-based Trinidadian novelist Rabindranath Maharaj, or a short talk on "the evolution of carnival" by local novelist Michael Anthony? Gaps in the formal programme were filled with open-mic sessions outside the library, and evenings given over to photography exhibitions, music and dance recitals, and readings celebrating 50 years of Caribbean independence.

In a memorable essay on the work of the artist Christopher Cozier, Nicholas Laughlin, one of the main Lit Fest organizers describes:

> the special predicament of "here": twenty-first-century Trinidad, a small, confusing post-colonial, post-everything space, "a world with two coups, murders, kidnappings, wrought iron, queen shows". Those of us who inhabit this "here" navigating blindly, by instinct, on ground still incompletely charted. (We were the

> land's before the land was ours.) And those looking from outside distracted by five hundred years of expectations about what the Caribbean is or ought to be.

The confusion has produced a lively culture but one that often shied away from highbrow stuff, especially when it smells of books—one of V.S. Naipaul's characters is famously flummoxed by "litritcher and poultry." So, paradoxically, although Trinidad has produced or nurtured both of the Caribbean's literary Nobels (Derek Walcott and V.S. Naipaul), it never managed to develop a serious reading public, nor a publishing industry worth the name. Nearly all of its artists and writers had to make their names abroad before they could get any serious local attention.

West Indian literature has always cast a longer shadow than expected, but it hasn't yet fulfilled Louise Bennett's charming vision of "colonisation in reverse." What it has produced is a fascinating hybrid of the old and new worlds, what might be called a "diaspora culture." The 50 writers who converged on Port of Spain came from North America, England, Europe, and all parts of the Caribbean. The guest list even included, intriguingly, the Indian writer Rahul Bhattacharya and the Irish-Turkish novelist Joseph O'Neill, author of widely-acclaimed *Netherland*.

Bhattacharya and O'Neill both have an intuitive grasp of the spontaneity of West Indian speech, especially our fondness for a grandiloquence that first world writers could not use unselfconsciously. O'Neill recalled coming to Trinidad to work on a death penalty case under appeal to British Privy Council. His curiosity was piqued by a local activist brandishing a placard with an Arthur Koestler quote. He befriended the man, who quickly became his guide to the island. Reading from a piece published by Granta in Winter 2000, O'Neill recounted their drive to a village where one of his now-executed clients had allegedly committed a murder:

> "Trinidad was named after the divine Trinity," said Ishmael Samaad. "What else does Trinidad mean? It means the meeting place of three continents, of three great faiths. This is where they converge." He leaned to one side and shot a glance over

his right shoulder. He was driving a battered Mazda with broken lights, shaking parts and—hence the craning of the neck—no wing mirrors.

I was conscious of the car's intense rattling because we were passing the shanty town that had sprung up by the Beetham Highway on the edge of Port of Spain. Motorists were terrified of breaking down here, I'd heard, and would abandon their vehicles rather than stick around for the repair truck.

"But this land of the Trinity," Samaad continued, "is where they hang men in threes. Three a day on three consecutive days, except Sunday. They hang on a Friday, the Muslim day, and Saturday, the Jewish day, and they hang against the wishes of the Catholic church. The government run roughshod over three religions. With these hangings the Trinity has taken on a very macabre meaning."

Bhattacharya's grasp of Guyanese speech-making is even more impressive, as are his insights into the postcolonial confusion of societies in which the descendants of slaves and indentured labourers jostle for political control.

With the outsiders setting the bar so high, I was intrigued to see how well the West Indians would fare, how their take on the same topics would differ. Generally, they held their own on both counts, possibly conveying the complexity of the Caribbean even more forcefully, and its tendency to produce widely divergent variations on a theme. Consider three of the Jamaican poets who attended the festival—Shara McCallum Kei Miller and one of the elder statesmen of West Indian letters, Mervyn Morris—were a useful study in the sort of contrasts that kept occurring within what look like narrow categories. All three teach creative writing: McCallum in the US, Miller in Glasgow, and Morris in Jamaica (where he taught Miller at the University of the West Indies). McCallum—whose transcontinental ancestry is remarkable, even by Canadian standards—comfortably draws on a striking range of literary influences. Asked by an interviewer, a few years back,

what she was reading, her answer included Michael Ondaatje, Adrienne Rich, Yehuda Amichai, and Wislawa Szymborska. Her poetry works much of the same vowel magic Walcott used so well over the years, but it also, to my ears, has an attractive, almost indiscernible, American lilt. "At the Hanover Museum," published in 2000, begins:

> Once many believed in a common dream
> of this island, variegated skins of fruit
>
> arrayed at market. *Every mickel mek a muckle*.
> But the land keeps opening to loss—
>
> flame tree seeds shaken loose from limbs,
> sifted flour that will not rise into bread.
>
> Stalks of cane grow, unaware of their irony,
> scattered across this museum's grounds.
>
> Inside, shackles affixed to cement blocks
> have rusted to vermillion, almost beautiful.
>
> Here, the sea breaking against cliffs
> is a voice I might mistake for the past.

Miller and Morris are more attuned to British culture but otherwise have little in common. When they read together towards the end of the festival, they were a study in contrasts: tall, elegant, and tidily-dreadlocked Miller practically sang his Paterian verse; Morris, compact, white-bearded, and professorial, surprised the audience with expert switching between different registers of Jamaican speech and formal English.

Miller spoke movingly about the death of his mother and asked "How do you sing your way out of grief?" He finds one answer in the "singer man" who, in the 1930s, beguiled the labourers building Jamaica's roads by singing songs to them. Miller's verse is effortlessly musical, tumbling out like his own, enchanting ideas of "song" in the poem "Some Definitions for Song," which begins

> — the speech of birds, as in birdsong, but with exceptions. Pigeons do not sing. Vultures do not sing. A bargain, or a very small sum, as in "he bought it for a song." Think what we could purchase with songs, thrown across the counter and landing more softly than coins. Perhaps then, the

origin of the expression, to sing for your supper. The troubled sound that escapes from a woman's mouth while she dreams of fire, also any sound that escapes, also anything that escapes; a passage out, the fling up of hands.

Morris barely comments on his work, which sounds much more tightly measured than Miller's. Apart from switching between middle-class Jamaican English, and more demotic creole,[1] Morris can also deftly record the shifting hopes of independence, five decades earlier, in his poem, "To an Expatriate Friend":

> And then the revolution. Black
> and loud the horns of anger blew
> against the long oppression; sufferers
> cast off the precious values of the few.
>
> New powers re-enslaved us all:
> each person manacled in skin, in race.
> You could not wear your paid up dues;
> the keen discrimination typed your face.
>
> The future darkening, you thought it time
> to say goodbye. It may be that you were
> right.
> It hurt to see you go; but, more,
> It hurt to see you slowly going white.

It is clear, reading, talking with and listening to these poets that Jamaica alone is diverse enough to sustain a literary festival for a week—as the newly revived Calabash festival will do at the end of May. Placed alongside other Anglophone West Indian writers, and with the added company of Cuban and Haitian authors, it is both inspiring and slightly saddening how wide a cultural range this small region contains, and how differently even near-neighbours articulate their lives.

Of the many other readings I attended, two stand

[1] The decision to alternate registers has a fascinating political context which Miller discusses in a post at his blog *Contradictory Instructions*: "You must understand, Jamaica is not like Trinidad. In Trinidad, both rich and poor people can meet on equal footing in the space of the Trini language. As well, they can meet physically (and again, equally) in the space of the Savannah. Jamaica is much more segregated. Our very language is policed and is not a space in which everyone is equally welcome. If you come from uptown and you try to speak 'patwa' you are accused of being condescending; if you are from downtown and you try to speak 'proper' they make patronizing music videos of you and laugh you to scorn on television (Just see the case of Clifton 'Canna Cross It' Brown!). And neither has there been an actual spot where all classes can feel welcome and safe. Well, not until the dance days were created."

out as exemplars of the emotional stakes at the Lit Fest. Trinidadian writer Sharon Millar, recently shortlisted for the Commonwealth Short Story Prize, read a spellbinding account of a kidnapping. For years the local newspapers have been filled with tabloid accounts of kidnap-for-ransom scams, but it felt like the first time most of the audience had suffered imaginatively through an actual abduction: the particulars of being manhandled, blindfolded, and penned in a small, dark room with a bucket for a toilet. Millar didn't get to finish the story but the extract did its work. The audience left chastened by the unexpected plunge into an experience most had learned to ignore in the island's sensationalized media.

At the other event, the Haitian-Canadian novelist, poet and academic Myriam Chancy broke down halfway through a mellifluous passage about children playing in Port-Au-Prince. In the middle of a sentence she simply stopped, blinking back tears for perhaps a quarter of a minute. The silence was so sudden, so at odds with her cantering lyricism, that it felt like forever. Everyone in the room sat up a little with the suspense. Then, having mustered the courage to speak again, Chancy gamely continued to the end. It was the most eloquent expression of what the earthquake had taken away, a moment few in the room will ever forget.

After three days of relentless culture—much of which draws full houses—I ask the main Bocas Lit Fest organizer, Marina Salandy Brown, how she pulled it off. We are outside the Library, sampling first-timers at the open mic. Salandy-Brown, a recent re-migrant to Trinidad after a successful career at the BBC, smiles like I'm asking answers. She tells me the Lit Fest grew out of an earlier success with a film festival and answered a felt need. “Talent will out in all kinds of ways. All you have to do is […] recognise it and provide a kind of conduit for it [...] Carnival and calypso and all that—which we need—they’re so big and powerful and successful, they’ve been such a large part of the making of our national artistic form that they’ve assumed proportions far greater than the other things we can do, which is write, perform, this kind of thing." Later on, she adds,

"What we're trying to do is get people out of here [gesturing towards the mic] and into there [pointing at the library]."

IV

Earlier this month, PEN's World Voices Festival of International Literature in New York held an event called "A People's Assembly in the Spirit of *The Path to Hope*" (the political tract, written by French nonagenarians Stephane Hessel and Edgar Morin, that is said to best articulate the worldview of the Occupy movement). Chaired by two Occupy Wall Street organizers, the event began with the audience reading statements about what had motivated the protests. It wasn't long before this unusual act of inclusivity made a telling point. The confusion of accents, pitches, timbres—the globe-spanning polyphony you'd expect in New York—quickly brought home the movement's global intellectual ambitions. It insisted that the words being read belonged to the *world's* voices, rather than a few ultra-smart people in the developed world. It suggested that the movement wasn't trying to win power in itself but rather to lever existing power into launching a new conversation.

In one of their opening paragraphs, Hessel and Morin note:

> We must understand that globalization constitutes both the best and the worst thing that could ever happen to mankind. The best because all the scattered fragments of humanity have become interdependent for the first time, creating a shared fate that makes one single Homeland Earth possible. Such an outcome, far from eliminating individual home-lands, would simply incorporate them. The worst because it has triggered a frantic race toward a succession of catastrophes.

The passage perfectly captures both the sadness and the hope of the West Indian diaspora, and the triumphs of a place like Woodford Square and an event like the NGC Bocas Lit Fest. Modern history has acted like a cultural centrifuge on the Caribbean—Walcott's 1992 Nobel lecture was, fittingly, called "Antilles: Fragments of Epic

Memory"—scattering our identities to a hundred thousand elsewheres. But occasionally enough of the fragments gather in one place long enough for us to piece together, to see or, at least, intimate, what our whole selves might have been like if the dreams of West Indian federation had come to pass. For me it was a moment of cultural transcendence, equal parts lament, catharsis and inspiration. I left Port of Spain with the strong hope that the festival would fulfil its early promise and that it might even, in time, help the scattered fragments of West Indian humanity to recognize our own cultural and political interdependence.

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