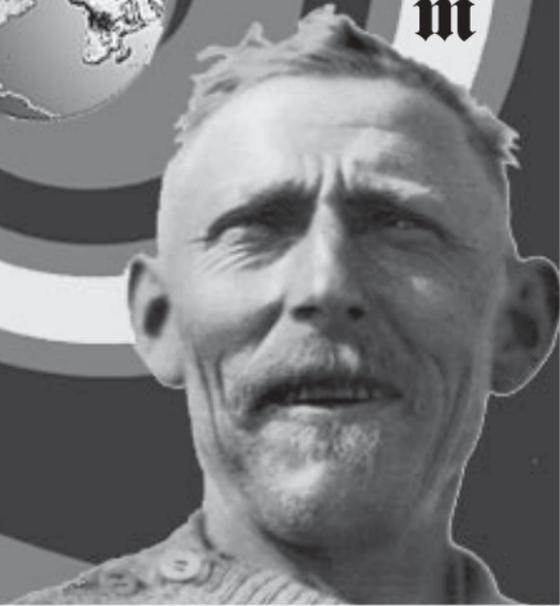


**P**LAGIA **R.**  
*L* **A** *G* **ia** **R.**  
*T* **e** **W** **o** **r** **L** **D** *is* **N** **e** **w** **S** **m**



«Une vérité banale renferme plus de génie que les ouvrages de Dickens, de Gustave Aymard, de Victor Hugo, de Landelle. Avec les derniers, un enfant, survivant à l'univers, ne pourrait pas reconstruire l'âme humaine. Avec la première, il le pourrait. Je suppose qu'il ne découvrirait pas tôt ou tard la définition du sophisme.

»Les mots qui expriment le mal sont destinés à prendre une signification d'utilité. Les idées s'améliorent. Le sens des mots y participe.

»Le plagiat est nécessaire. Le progrès l'implique. Il serre de près la phrase d'un auteur, se sert de ses expressions, efface une idée fausse, la remplace par l'idée juste.

»Une maxime, pour être bien faite, ne demande pas à être corrigée. Elle demande à être développée.»

"A banal truth contains more genius than the works of Dickens, Gustave Aymard, Victor Hugo, or Landelle. With these latter, a child who outlived the universe would not be able to reconstruct the human soul. With the former, he could. I am assuming he would not eventually discover the meaning of sophism.

"Words that express evil are destined to take a useful meaning. Ideas get better. The meaning of words participates in that.

"Plagiarism is necessary. Progress implies it. It squeezes the phrase of an author, makes use of his expressions, erases a false idea, replaces it with a right idea.

"In order for a maxim to be well put, it does not ask to be corrected. It asks to be developed."

—Lautréamont, *Poésies II*

THE WORLD IS NEW

# Plagiarism

## THE CRIME OF THE MILLENNIUM!

A special publication of The Expatriot in association with the Iowa Chapter of the Aggressive School of Cultural Workers. To the unwitting authors of this booklet, we extend our gratitude.

Bordeaux, March, 1995

### THE LINDBERGH BABY



IN LATIN, a *plagiarius* is a kidnapper, literally one who snares another's child or slave in a *plaga* (net). Until the late 17th century, the English term was *plagiary*: only then did it acquire an *-ism*, suggesting a syndrome or habit rather than an individual perpetrator. And only then did plagiarism come to mean the theft, not of any beloved person or thing, but specifically and exclusively of writing.

### REMOVABLE TYPE

**a** BEFORE the invention of movable type in the mid-15th century, when all books were manuscripts, plagiarism, in effect, was necessary. Books multiplied only if they were copied; authors could not afford to be jealous of their words, since unless they got stolen they languished unread. The 20th century, of course, has seen the influx of a large variety of machines that make movable type *removable*, in the sense that texts and pictures can easily be stolen and reassembled into new constructions. These include, of course, the xerox machine, the tape recorder, home video, and the personal computer, to name but a few.

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## THE IRONIC GESTURE, REPEATED AD NAUSEAM

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*“For decades psychiatrists, psychologists, scientists of all sorts have attempted to explain the psychogenic underpinnings of plagiarism. What are the roots of this manic-depressive drive to steal, corrupt and twist the work of real artists? Deeply lost in psychotic denial and persecutory projection, plagiarists appear invulnerable to almost all forms of therapy with the exception of extreme punishment. Most disturbing is the recent rise to fame of certain cultural workers and their glorification of plagiarism as a high art form. One immediately wonders what sickness lies in our society that such wickedness should be spawned. To do so is only to blame the victim. Their compulsion to grossly reshape external reality to suit their inner perverse needs threatens the moral sensibility of man, woman, and child alike. We are again confronted with the fact that not all psychological abnormalities are solvable by science at this time. I only wish that their mothers would have drowned them. In lieu of this I recommend Congressional action. Let’s throw their asses in jail.”*



Excerpt from a speech by psychiatrist Dr. Marvin W. Welp, M.D. at a convention of the American Psychiatric Association in March, 1988.

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### CACHET DOGMA

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WELL INTO the 17th century, originality carried no cachet. Shakespeare exemplifies the premodern attitude: he took plots and characters from wher-

ever he pleased, rarely acknowledging sources, and he saw so little sanctity in his own words that anyone could print them who cared to incur the expense—which did not include royalties to Shakespeare. In fact, one might guess that the pre-eminence of the individual

“genius” and the myth of his “mysterious” abilities to “create” stem directly from attitudes developed, employed and passed on by the 20th-century Modernists.

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## ENCLOSURES

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THE CONCEPT of “plagiarism” has no natural or universal basis.

It arose at a specific point (18th century England) in the development of capitalist society. It was the “intellectual” counterpart to the movement of land enclosures. Both phenomena represent the extension of “individual ownership” into areas that had, previously, been considered inalienably collective and communal. Thus, plagiarism cannot be dealt with in isolation, but must be viewed as one of the many areas of discourse and discipline which interweave to form the ideological base—and concrete expression—of what we now understand as modern consumer society.

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## DETOURNEMENT

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THE SITUATION-ists in particular were fond of plagiarism. To them the technique was best exemplified by *détournement*, a word which contains all at once the ideas of a “detour”, “deflection” and of the act of “hijacking.” They took works of popular culture — particularly comic strips — and injected them with their own “situationist” content. These works looked on the surface to be “normal” and unthreatening to the average person, but upon closer inspection and engagement with the content, revealed themselves to be virulently radical.

All these strange artifacts, collages and montages, have had a profoundly shocking effect on both the public and public opinion. The people especially put out were the modern artists, because nothing of theirs was taken seriously or respected any longer. Even the avant-garde was mercilessly mocked, and in the end, even the

ideological basis for its project was questioned.

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## HIJACKING MILIEUX

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**DETOURNEMENT** is "...short for: *detournement of pre-existing esthetic elements. The integration of present or past artistic production into a superior construction of a milieu.*" Detournement is practical because it is so easy to use and because of its inexhaustible potential for reuse. Concerning the negligible effort required for detournement, "*The cheapness of its products is the heavy artillery that breaks through all the Chinese walls of understanding.*"



Detournement, which Lautréamont called "plagiarism," confirms the thesis, long demonstrated by modern art, of the insubordination of words, of the impossibility for power to totally recuperate created meanings, to fix an existing meaning once and for all; in a word, the objective impossibility of a "newspeak" of the kind that Orwell writes about in his *1984*. To Lautréamont is ascribed the *de facto* plagiarist motto, "*Plagiarism is necessary. Progress implies it.*"

Any use of the legitimate modes of communication must thus both be and not be the refusal of this communication: a communication containing its own refusal; a refusal containing communication, which is to say the transformation of this refusal into a positive project. All this must lead somewhere. Communication now contains its own critique.

While the media continues to plagiarize itself, certain cultural workers are forced to plagiarize the media in an attempt to be heard. For the time being they will content themselves with

plans of “kidnapping” media discourse. If this energy fails, these cultural workers may find silence (or armed assault on communication centers) more to their taste. Time will tell.

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## PSEUDEPIGRAPHY

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**Ψ** PSEUDEPIGRAPHY is the false attribution of a piece of writing to an author. It was popular in the pre-Christian era but declined in the middle ages. During the Greek era different authors writing on, for instance, Pythagorean theory, would routinely ascribe it to Pythagoras himself (despite the fairly constant tradition that he wrote nothing).

Pseudepigraphy is truly the historian’s curse, for who knows who wrote what? It is of interest to the plagiarists mostly because in it, attribution is impossible. One is thrown back on to

the qualities the work itself possesses, and not hypnotized by the personality that created it.

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## REMOVABLE FEASTS

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THE FESTIVAL of Plagiarism (San Francisco) ran continuously for fifty hours from February 5 to February 7, 1988. (Festivals of Plagiarism have taken place in: London, England (January 7 to February 28, 1988); Madison, Wisconsin (January 29 to January 30, 1988); and Glasgow, Scotland (August 4 to August 11, 1989). Other Festivals of Plagiarism have allegedly taken place in Iowa City, Montréal, New York, Berlin, Budapest, São Paulo, and Tokyo, although there is no documentation to authenticate this.)

Propaganda for the San Francisco Festival made wide use of pseudepigraphical slogans by

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*“ What doesn’t grow out of tradition is plagiarism.”* —EUGENIO D’ORS



famous artists; examples include: “*Plagiarism is never having to say you’re sorry*” [Andy Warhol]; “*Plagiarism? I just don’t like the way it tastes*” [Sherri Levine]; “*Plagiarism, almost as much fun as chess*” [Marcel Duchamp]; “*Plagiarism is taking back what was stolen from us in the first place*” [V. Mayakovsky]; and “*Plagiarism: It’s as good as it feels*” [Janet Janet].

Texts played a crucial role in Festival propaganda. Here festival organizer Stewart Home discusses his intentions in edit-

ing *Plagiarism: Art as Commodity and Strategies for its Negation* (1987):

Many of the texts included in the Plagiarism booklet were intended to overstate the case for a particular polemical position. My intention in doing this was to stimulate debate and help create the conditions for a radical shift in the reader’s orientation to the mental sets creativity, identity, originality, individuality, value and truth. Unfortunately this tactic tended to mask both differences and similarities

in how certain cultural workers approached various theoretical issues. It also led to broader misunderstandings; a number of individuals (such as the journalist John A. Walker) took ideas connected to the Festival over-literally.

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## MY MIND IS A CAMERA

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**COPYRIGHT** laws are a problem where certain cultural workers are

concerned, because they are dogmatic and narrowing. Certain cultural workers will not hesitate to use what is out there, or to steal away what does not belong in the first place. The notion that ideas could be the property of someone, treated like real estate, contradicts the drive towards intellectual and creative liberation, which certain cultural workers hold as one of their primary reasons for existence.

When the U.S. signed the Berne Convention (an international copyright treaty) in 1989, many commented upon the

changes this brought. Before March 1, 1989, if your work did not carry the © symbol it had no copyright protection. But, since the treaty has come into effect, the copyright of a work is automatic regardless of whether a © symbol is displayed. If you want your work to be “anticopyright,” you now have to state that in writing.

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## THESE WORDS, MY PICTURE

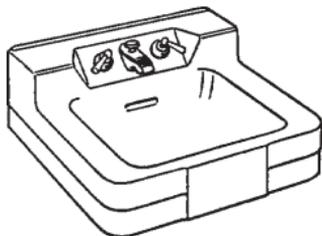
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“TRANSFORM the world,” says a certain cultural worker. “Change life,” says another. These cultural workers’ firmest beliefs are in the positive. Instead of removing the wings of a dragonfly to call it a red pepper, in a subtractive or reductive mode, we should affix wings to a red pepper, in an additive or augmentative mode, to have it become a dragonfly. Certain cultural workers want only to add to the infinite variety of objective and subjective manifestations of the world, not

subtract. That in mind, the following poem can be seen as a torch-bearer:

*With this pair of scissors  
and our will to fight, it's plain  
we'll have a revolution  
and capture all of Spain.*



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## THE EVENING LAMP

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LET'S CEASE making a scapegoat out of plagiarism.

Ever since Adam, mankind has been seeking scapegoats as a convenient way to pass the buck, thereby avoiding precise scientific analysis. Thus the use of the term "plagiarism" is somewhat hazardous due to the fact that it is the common ground of the deceived gaze and of false consciousness. Certain cultural workers, however, share sets of concerns that give their work greater unity. (I am growing old

and, more than that reality to which I believe I subject myself, it is perhaps the dream, the difference with which I treat the dream, which makes me grow old.)

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## ON THE FAMILY TABLE

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ONE FOCUS shared by certain cultural workers is the general hypothesis that stressful life events play a role in the etiology of madness. What kind of diseases shall we predict with the described strategy? Ulcers? Coronary Deaths? None at all? If we find prospectively that man's awakening is harder, if it breaks the spell too abruptly, there remains madness. The agonizing question of possibility is no longer pertinent. (My guess is that this crippled old man of my imagination was still not fully human.)

Kill, fly faster, love to your heart's content. And if you should die, are you not certain of reawakening among the dead? Our hypothetical intelligent civilization that is transmitting messages will presumably

be at least as smart as we are about these matters and will have devised a code that is efficient. Let us see how the hypothesis emerged.

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## IS ALSO THE CENTER OF A WORLD

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THERE IS NO disputing the fact that many people who experience or anticipate personal catastrophe—for example, bereavement, imprisonment, the bugaboo of death, the simplistic theatrical portrayal of the beyond, the shipwreck of the most beautiful reason in sleep, the overwhelming curtain of the future, the tower of Babel, the mirrors of inconsistency, the impassable silver wall bespattered with brains (these all too gripping images of human catastrophe are, perhaps, no more than images)—also experience that

there is nothing more sterile, in the final analysis, than the perpetual interrogation of the dead. There is very little contention among certain cultural workers on these matters. And so, if these arguments are valid, we are truly alone in the universe.

But this commentary is becoming too precise. Concerning the different characteristics of madness, it is inclined to be hospitable to fragmentary dialectics, and were it to be pursued, this text should destroy the unity of madness. It is better to leave the ambivalence of the archetypes wrapped in their dominant quality.

Let yourself be carried along, for events will not tolerate your interference. You are nameless. The ease of everything is priceless.

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## STREET ART

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XEROGRAPHY has become quick, cheap and widely available, and the local copy shop has become a nexus for marginal activity (a detouring center in almost every neighborhood). In

his article, "Xerox and Street Art," Stephen Perkins explores this do-it-yourself esthetic:

More a camera than a printer, the xerox machine is the ideal, if not unwitting accomplice to this underground culture. With a couple of dollars in your pocket you're in the publishing business, push a button and you could have ten copies as easily as a thousand. For the band in a rush to publicize their gig, the activist responding to some world event, the artist publicizing her latest exhibition, the only thing between the pasted-up image and every telephone pole in the neighborhood is the walk to the xerox store. It's the ultimate user-friendly machine (there's even something comforting about carrying that stack of warm copies in your hands as you walk out into the street).

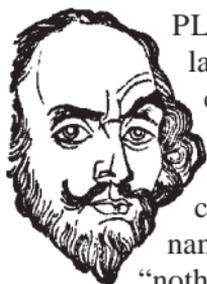
By the late 1970s, with the help of cheap and ubiquitous xerography, punks and other marginals were transforming the fanzine (borrowed from the sci-fi underworld) into the preferred medium of the do-it-yourself

marginals milieu. There are said to be 5,000 to 10,000 samizdat fanzines currently published in the U.S. alone. Many of them look like S.I. (Situationist International) publications except in their punk sloppiness, and some of them were dealing with "situationist" ideas long before the Institute for Contemporary Art or Greil Marcus got hip.

Too, there is the issue of Mail Art. Photocopy provided these cultural workers in particular with the means to cheaply make their work, thus making the free exchange of works among other Mail Artists possible. Mail Art meets the needs of Mail Artists to assemble in an uncritical, hermetic clique which is homologous with the art establishment but rhetorically opposed to it. It has its own star system, not unlike the Special Olympics. It's a ghetto, a closet, self-satisfied and stultified, defensive like a neurosis, not incoherently revolutionary, but coherently involuntary. One near-celebrity said: "We got sick to death of mail art people, and just wanted to do insensitive ugly things to piss them off, and just get left alone."



## PLAGIARISM MADE EASY



PLAGIARISM in late capitalist society articulates a semi-conscious cultural condition: namely, that there is “nothing left to say,” a feeling made more potent by the theoretical possibility of access to all knowledge brought about by new technologies. The

practitioners of much of “post-modern” theory have tended to proclaim this feeling rather smugly; but if there is nothing to say, they yet demonstrate that there will “always” be something to sell. On the other hand, there are practitioners active in many disciplines who, recognizing the necessity for collective action demanded by new media such as video and magnetic tape, engage in plagiarism in an attempt to expose and explode once and for all the individual

istic attitudes which tend to make all human activity seem redundant and increasingly alienated.

Plagiarism is the soft underbelly of linguistic originary presence. Hovering over all the jabbering and pewling of the legal profession and the professoriate, the self-muted mouth of the divine shrouds itself in the cloud of unknowing. For if mute it is because the word kills as well as creates, that is, embodies complete power which obliterates the puny human ants. We are to believe, says this tale, that



speech is being withheld, is thereby being, withheld. This of course provokes volumes; if you refuse to speak, then I seize the microphones of history and swell out in capitalist expansiveness. In this vein, monopoly becomes necessary, from which plagiarism. Your uses of force, my Lord, I emulate. The discourse model of the law equals that of the divine and of knowledge production and transmission itself. Its differential destruction of the social formation is ignored since this affects only the others. The invention of God created real estate.

It would be better to say that no one owns anything, not even a physical body much less a mind or a soul. The monadic personality fragments dissolve under the negative impact of totalized ownership of the world. Thus courts of law, writs, record books and ledgers, the unfolding and endlessly self-generating quantization that spins through the brains of the population burst into flames. After the inevitable violence in the streets, this is the only form of class upheaval with any possibility of



success. Afterwards, there is nothing left “knowable” or ownable; and any so-called implications would then merely be those of the enemy’s Newtonian/Victorian machine mind which continues to crank and grind regardless of the fact that the people have stood up, collected their coats and walked away, at last.

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## A ROSE IS A

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ONE CAN BE an artist, a professor, a punk, a skinhead, a cook, a lawyer, a publisher, etc. One can even be

a criminal, a drug addict, or a bum, just as long as one is something. Anyone without an identity is considered somehow less than human, incomplete. It is ideas like this that exist in the minds of almost all Western peoples.

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## ROSE IS A

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IT IS EASY to criticize movies and television, but to what degree do your behavior, ideas and relationships emulate those offered by these very media? It is time to take back as our own what has been

marketed to us. We must plagiarize, freely using what is available to us as our own. We must bring down the barriers of false communication by re-inventing our own images, symbols, and means of communication. Ideas do not belong to any one individual or group. Freely plagiarize other works, starting with this one, altering it to fit your idea of how it should be. Take popular media images and transplant them into a new context, change them to mean what you think they really do mean, or what you want them to mean. Offer your ideas to others to similarly transform and personalize. The emphasis is not on individuality and uniqueness, but on the collective adventure of self-empowerment and autonomy.

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## DEMYSTIFICATION

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 WHAT IS IT about plagiarism? Maybe it's its idiosyncratic wrapper, a little present, just for you, filled with metaphysical subtleties. You tear it open with

a practiced jerk. The familiar subdued crinkle. The soft, insinuating scent of fuser oil. The gleaming, ripply surface that looks as though the lovely toner had only minutes ago hardened in midswirl. Gradually, you let your mind close in on it, pressing through the platen cover, into the objective, the transfer optics, past a photoreceptor. Static electricity's sharp sweetness marries gentle selenium. And the corotrons—whatever it is that controlled high voltage static discharge does to the brain it's doing it now. Your eyes go out of focus as you swallow. Rays of light shoot out through the top of your head. It's time for the next bite.

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## PUB LOGIC

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THAT THE SOCIAL element of the Festivals played an important part in advancing discussion of plagiarism has been noted by two reviewers. A certain cultural worker in his account of the Glasgow Festival recounts: "Many of the best discussions



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took place, not at the Transmission Gallery, but at a nearby pub. Nearly every night, we'd meet there after the gallery closed to talk things over. More often than not, the discussion was over cultural issues. I had several interesting discussions with members of the viewing public in this way." Stewart Home in Festival documentation comments briefly on a similar phenomenon from the same Festival: "A lot of really good discussion took place on an informal basis during the Festival. Glasgow life is very much centered around pub culture and the drinking seemed to facilitate debate."

The social milieu and the culture it created was an important part in the "success" of the Festival of Plagiarism (San Francisco), although paradoxically the least understood by Festival commentators. In the introduction to the Festival documentation, a certain cultural worker writes,

As it proceeded it became clear that a temporary and autonomous cultural milieu was being created and sustained by the par-



ticipants. Coupled with a free flow of people within the gallery space, and simultaneous activities occurring in all these areas, there was an almost palpable festival atmosphere which continued throughout the 50 hours. Much of the upbeat energy appeared to be generated by the sense that the Festival belonged to everyone who was there, that it was an inclusive and continually changing process with no ostensible bosses or curators, and that what did or did not happen was very much dependent upon people's participation or non-participation.

The following quote is from a text fly-posted onto the win

dows of the gallery during the Festival of Plagiarism (San Francisco):

In other settings, plagiarism/detournement/montage was only one tactic within a larger strategy and a larger project that informed it. But a "Festival of Plagiarism," in elevating the lack of ideas into a virtue and a theme, can only act as another index of the hollowness of the scene that gives rise to it. The moment the derailment of signs is appropriated as a "positive artistic technique" is the same moment at which its potentially critical, negating effects are dulled and domesticated. It becomes diversion rather than detournement. (And of course, as such it is already a basic term in the lexicon of advertising and mass media.)

The organization of the Festival of Plagiarism (and similar events) is a natural outcome of the realization that art simply is (and always has been) a question of administration (rather than some inherent quality in the objects elevated to the status of art). The extent to which the

Festival was able to "demystify" contemporary cultural practices was limited by the unwillingness of many "plagiarists" to take on administrative responsibilities. Many of those who responded to the initial invitation to participate in the organization of the Festival replied by asking for money and requesting that they should be found gallery space (400 copies of this invitation were mailed out and a further 300 distributed by other means).

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## PLAGIARISM, BRIEFLY

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"THE MERE WORD theft is the only one that still excites me," said Chris in a paroxysm of delight. "I deem it capable of sustaining the old human fanaticism."

Five years ago, if you had told a sophisticated writer that two of America's most glittering stars earned their way to stardom by stealing the works of other writers, he would have laughed and thanked you for the joke of the day. If you were to add that the stars were no flash-

in-the-pan, but grew to be America's year-after-year favorite, he'd stop laughing and walk away, impatient with your over-active imagination.

To the sophisticated professional, plagiarism is great for home-grown, do-it-yourself writing. But for serious prose endeavors for urbane readerships—never! Theft. Plagiarism. These have been, for the West, merely exotica. Today, your hard-working and ambitious certain cultural workers have proven them all wrong

through the seven major assertions which plagiarism makes:

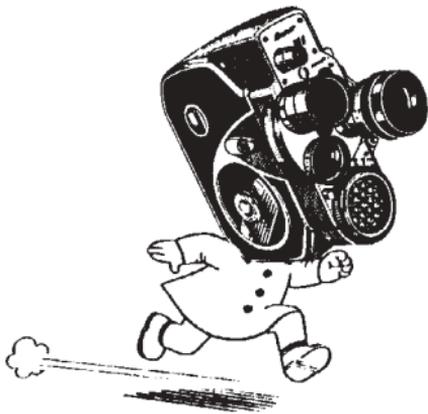
- i. Theft is all that is the case.
- ii. What is the case—a fact—is the existence of property.
- iii. A logical picture of the facts is plagiarism.
- iv. Plagiarism is art with a sense.
- v. Art is a truth function of plagiarism.
- vi. The general form of a truth function is  $[P, \neg N()]$ . This is the general form of a proposition.
- vii. What we cannot plagiarize, we must be silent about.

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## THE WORLD IS NEW: ACT XVII, SCENE 3

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*Enter Nancy & Sluggo as SPIRITUS and THINKER, respectively*



SLUGGO: Call us thieves if it must be so! But listen: it *is* new. These genes, exhibiting recombination, were stolen from tired parents to reveal a progeny that did not occur in them before.

NANCY: Perhaps unwittingly for our purpose, Jim Tate has hinted at the real robbers: Read the great poets, listen to the great composers. It's

the same everywhere. The *Masters*. The *Thieves*.

SLUGGO: What has bothered us for so long are those which we cling to, traditions which wince at the thought of freeing one's self from any dictatorial and *absolute romanticism*.

NANCY: Yes, you say absolute because it is the absolute romantic who refuses to acknowledge what he is really doing, and who thus fails to go beyond myriad influences into a realm of literature that may come from newspapers but never reads like one.



SLUGGO: Uh-huh, so W.C. Williams was never out of concordance and we can revel in the contradiction: Now at last that process of miraculous verisimilitude, that great copying which evolution has followed, repeating move for move every move that it made in the past—is approaching the end.

Suddenly it is at an end. *The world is new*. What I mean is, the imagination here, too, must be allowed the driver's seat.

NANCY: Even so, there are certain questions that should be raised. Generally they pertain to—

## C O N T E X T

Guy Debord *mainly rejects simple reversal of context (i.e. the Black Mass as a reaction against the Christian) in favor of the neutral phrase or image which explodes with meaning in a new context. However, splicing two or more texts together which are working parallel patterns (most especially from different time periods) can be effective and might well be worth the experiments. At least the concept of originality in traditionally inspired texts will be brought under the microscope.*

**“Own nothing! Possess nothing! Buddha and Christ taught us this, and the Stoics and the Cynics. Greedy though we are, why can't we seem to grasp this simple teaching? Can't we understand that with property we destroy our soul?”** —ALEKSANDR SOLZHENITSYN

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## COLONIALISM

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OUR LIVES have become resources for our culture and economy. We reproduce our lives with this raw material, only to turn around and buy it back. Thus *we* are the raw material, the producer and the consumer. Our product is the commodification of our lives. We possess it, gaze at it, think about it, but we cannot live it. Our lives are now external; they are *possessed* by us. Moreover, the more that we are what we have, the more we become alienated, dead. As what we are reproducing, our lives, becomes external to us, it feeds in as source to once again recreate our lives, securing our gaze outward. Hence this process refers increasingly only to itself and no longer to the world

or our bodies. It becomes, in a sense, autonomous. This is, of course, how capital expands once geography has been filled. It is no less than the colonization of our lives.

Our goal is to be brilliantly successful. Our strategy: to deny the possibility of theft. Plagiarism is the revolution of this denial. Do not be mistaken. Plagiarism is not an affirmation of the value of our reproduced selves. We use product as source, plagiarism, in order to critically expose that we have become what we have.

So we must finish with rebellion, because rebellion is too easily accounted for, even depended upon. Our lives must no longer be organized by this Culture of Property, even as rebellion must be organized by what it rebels against. No, the only

possibility is to simply live your life. This is the real revolution.

Chuang Tzu tells of a Useless Tree: "Axes will never shorten its life, nothing can ever harm it. If there's no use for it, how can it ever come to grief or pain?" Rest, friend. Do not let your life become timber for a house no one can live in.

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## SPECTACLISM

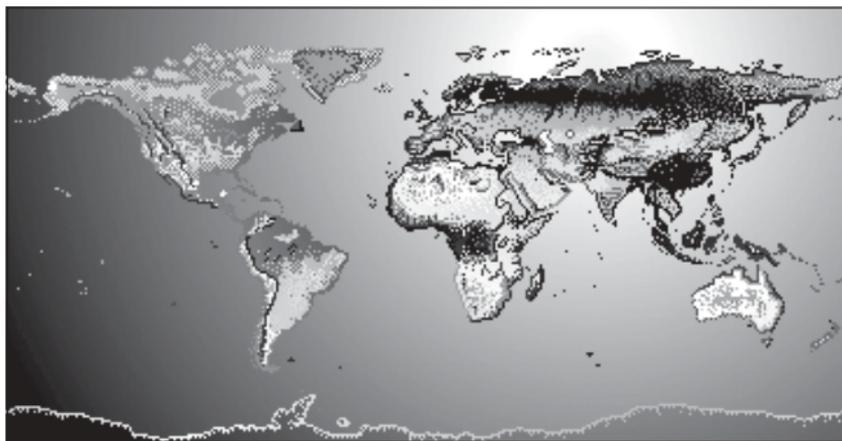
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TOO MANY artists of our day are paralyzed by the possibility of being recuperated by the *spectacle*. No strategy has proved sufficient to avoid being taken back in, reowned, and dispossessed by the apparently

ubiquitous image of our own life that hovers before us daily, reminding us that we produce our lives for some mysterious "other." No theory has proved sufficient to account for this "other," whether it is Marxism, Capitalism, or Situationism. At best they draw the dim outline of a *phantom*, and demand we shed our distant lives to take aim against some immediate and imaginative foe.

No more. The "other" will always evade us, and the spectacle shall forever *recuperate* our lives. For all we know, this is how it always has been, and always shall be.

The time has come to recuperate the spectacle itself. The



*image* preserves its recuperative powers by *theories of ownership*. It sucks in what the human imagination might produce, leaving a barren soul begging for sustenance from the very system which has desiccated its life.

Copyright is one of the constructs of such a cultural *black hole*. No “other” will be found beyond the feeding itself. There is no Spectacle, no Capitalist, no Marxist, to lay blame on, only the feeding.

As such it is time to reject these constructs, and reclaim our life that perhaps once fed us. Communication must no longer consist of the one way current into some bottomless cultural pit. Rather communication must be returned to the realm of *community*.

This is Spectaclism. It is its own negation. It is a return to

our own lives. Long live the Spectacle!

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## CATACLYSM

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AS PLAGIARISTS, some of us “look forward” to a time when we can be our “creative” selves without having to look over our shoulders for the copyright police. This is wrong. If we want a world where culture is nobody’s property, then we have only to make it. This is where the cataclysm comes in. Nothing is quite as radical as reality itself. The buttresses will begin to tremble and show their age. Tearing down and building are the same thing; it is only a matter of perspective that makes them seem so different.

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