

This is being written with the television on in the background. What is being written is informed by what is showing. It tells me, Me? Us? I write we. We write. What we have written. I am not wearing Reeboks. This is a quote from somewhere. But this is a simulacrum. It's a question of consumption and pleasure. The cover image of this issue might be a temple. We were thinking about using a still from *Blade Runner* (the director's cut) but the question of rights came up. Maybe there's something less "consumerist" about using a painting, in this case one by Karl Wiebke. Wiebke's unique qualities as a painter, in addition to the unique qualities of his work, might challenge the presence of the television.

We say "painter" and "work" because Wiebke is an artist for whom the process of work, and the conditions under which he works, are constantly under investigation. His project is not about cultural language but about the artwork itself. He is not about creating elites. His work can be appreciated by "everyone" should they choose to engage with its codes. It becomes a process of reading, seeing. We provide the vocabulary as viewers. We have to get investigative here, maybe in the company of Jean-François Lyotard, Jean Baudrillard or Paul Virilio.

One moment we are being specific—scientifically exact; the next figurative. Metonymic. Mnemonic. Ron Silliman says in his autobiographical piece in this issue: "The 'average' sentence in Albany is 6.94 words long." Charles Bernstein on Zukofsky: "These are compositions and not explanations"—theory becomes active, creative. Friends say the Wiebke picture looks like a temple. And maybe it is. You can listen to it and smell it as well as see it.

The catchword for this issue of *Stand* is "postmodernism"—a linchpin in the consumerist binge that is the Western Tradition's millennial endgame. Adorno's observation that there can be no poetry after Auschwitz marked the end of one kind of modernism—with the Holocaust, the question of the 'self' was placed in new contexts by the destruction of the minority by the mass on a universal scale. The Grand Narratives of isms and systems have fractured. Irony and parody have become the accepted means of communication in this culturally tainted environment. The television advert refers to its own production, the writer gives way to the reader. The magisterial self is pulled down like Ozymandias into the circles of consumer society, the mass. In the distance is the pleasure dome, surely the desire of every individual within the audience. The irony being that too much consumerism consumes itself.

If modernist artists at the beginning of the century turned to "primitive" art for inspiration, the postmodernist artist appropriates freely from any source.

The regional becomes globalised. The internet has pushed the project into hyper-spatiality. Our interview with John Tranter considers issues around the implications of the Web and the literary journal. In his review of J. H. Prynne's *Poems*, Nigel Wheale refers to the "hiddenness" of J. H. Prynne. Prynne utilises "post-modern" processes though he works against consumerism and fetishisation. With a history of small press publication, Prynne has eschewed mass-marketing. His current *Poems* was only agreed to because it was an amalgamation of small and medium-sized press concerns. Its publication history is complex, hermetic, and non-commercial—and far outside consumerist politics. It is important to consider that many writers labelled as post-modern are in fact questioning the tenets and processes of this.

Richard Aczel expands our reading of "pure" connection between capitalism and the postmodern: "The globalization of McDonalds culture and the 'virtual' worldwide hegemony of Lara Croft may well signify a 'loss of the real', but so too did the show trials and personality cults of the Stalinist 1950s, the abnormally overfulfilled norms of superhuman stakhonovite workers, and the impenetrable political jargon of newspapers with well-meaning titles like 'The People's Freedom'".

This issue looks at points of cross-over and genre contamination. Music and poetry and television become inextricably linked. Drew Milne makes the following point: "Try comparing the prosodic qualities of a line from a poem by J. H. Prynne such as: 'Now washing the front place quickly, speak to her: on tap, here, here, here.' with Gina G's Eurovision anthem: 'Ooh aah, just a little bit, ooh aah, a little bit more, you know what I'm looking for.'" If America is thought to epitomise the "postmodern condition", John Ashbery is the poet who has dived in and considered the role of the poet in such a milieu. Marjorie Perloff talks of Ashbery's latest book *Girls on the Run: A Poem* as a transcription of ways of communicating; and this number of *Stand* is all about issues of communication, voice and understanding.

Also included in this issue are three of the prize-winning stories from the *Stand* Short Story Competition. We'd like to congratulate the winners, and thank our judges Chris Burns and Michèle Roberts. Rosalind Brackenbury's superb story "Instead of the Revolution" collected first prize, and though destined to be part of this "postmodern issue" regardless of themes, brings into play many of the questions asked elsewhere in the issue: "Was I, she wanted to know, the person who had written that poem? She had seen my name on the posters and wondered, because it said American Poet, and she knew I wasn't American."

Our next issue will focus on America—to be published in conjunction with the Cambridge American Literary Festival which will celebrate the memory of Tony Tanner, in March 2000.