hassle, expense and embarrassment of filing civil suits against the blockaders. Protesters who committed the same 'crime' were given vastly different sentences – it seems punishments depended on the mood of the judge. Defense lawyers revealed that the RCMP provided Macmillan Bloedel with "mug shots" and detailed personal information on all 'arrestees'. And the list goes on... Anyone who still believes that justice system in British Columbia is a fair arbitrator should carefully read this essay.

Hatch provides us with a launch pad from which we may start to fully understand how this 'battle for the trees' is only a small part of a much bigger struggle. His extensive bibliography lists sources which may otherwise have remained hidden in a quagmire of government whitewash and oppressive judicial bureaucracy.

Dr. Maurice Gibbons' essay, "The Clayoquot Papers," fills a space that, despite their diversity, all the other essays miss – personal experience. Dr. Gibbons eloquently tells us the story of his arrest and trial. In doing so, he translates for his readers the powerful emotional energy of the blockades at the Kennedy River Bridge.

The momentum of the Clayoquot protest and social conflict peaked in the summer of 1993 and has now faded. These essays are, in essence, a reflection and an important after-the-fact analysis of the biggest illegal protest in Canadian history. It seems on the surface that change did not evolve out of this conflict – the trees are still falling at an ever increasing rate. However, sometimes change is subtle.

Christopher Hatch opens his concluding essay, "The Clayoquot Protests: One Year Later" with a question – "Did the Clayoquot protests fail"(199)? Hatch admits that on the ground the status quo is strongly in place but highlights that in a broader sense change has happened. He sites various initiatives of the provincial government of British Columbia to improve forestry practices and industry initiatives to 'green' their images as evidence of this change. Well, it's not the most encouraging news but its an important start.

However, perhaps change took place in some almost imperceptible ways. Tzeporah Berman, in her essay "Takin' it Back," explores this idea. Berman highlights the accomplishments of the Peace Camp, the most important of which was the power of this special community to act as a vehicle for social change. Berman writes, "Ultimately, the struggle is not only a struggle for "wilderness" or sound forest practices but fundamentally a struggle with how we interact with the natural world..."(6). Reading *Clayoquot & Dissent* should be a priority for anyone engaged in this struggle.

• • • **Jill Thomas** is currently pursuing her Master's in Environmental Studies at York University. She worked at the Clayoquot Resource Center during the Clayoquot trials in Victoria, BC. . . . . .

## The Chicago Gangster Theory of Life: Nature's Debt to Society, by Andrew Ross, New York: Verso, 1994.

Reviewed by Mark Lutes

That Andrew Ross has his finger on the pulse of North American cultural politics became evident to me when, shortly after reading his *The Chicago Gangster Theory of Life*, I began clipping a large stack of newspapers that had piled up over Christmas. There I found *Globe and Mail* arts columnist Robert Fulford, lamenting the popular wisdom that virtue and capitalism are at odds, and embracing the "reasonable idea" that "we will be more intelligent when we embrace the natural desires that give rise to capitalism." I then found a lengthy and circumspect *G&M* editorial which noted that we are being 'geneticized' by the saturation coverage of research claiming genetic origins for more and more areas of human behaviour and health. Next was a story of a Manhattan subway car explosion "sparking fears of a new terrorist assault in the heart of the financial district." Ross has a lot to say about these and many other current fascinations of popular discourse; little of it original but all of it interesting, and written with humour and a keen insight into the political pitfalls of current environmental discourse.

*The Chicago Gangster* is a lively and very readable critique of cultural locations where ideas and discourses of culture and ecology intersect. Ross seems to suffer from the typically postmodernist fear of being insufficiently complex – thus he tells very complex and ironic stories that combine, pull apart, juxtapose and critique the stories, images and ideas circulating through popular culture. Ross' genre of 'postmodern cultural criticism,' could be read as the mutant offspring of post-structuralist literary criticism and nature writing. Think of a Barry Lopez, informed by all the preoccupations of postmodern and poststructuralist theory (e.g. suspicious of essentialism, origin stories, binary dualisms and totalizing theory), writing about various sites in modern culture where ideas of nature intersect with struggles for liberation and social change in the context of relations of power, race, class and gender. Yet Ross' stream-of-cultural-consciousness writing style propels the reader almost effortlessly through this sometimes bizarre array of subject matter.

*The Chicago Gangster* follows the format of Ross' 1991 book, *Strange Weather: Culture, Science and Technology in the Age of Limits*. It examines disparate areas of cultural responses to issues, events and movements – debates about cultural preservation in Polynesia, the bombing of the World Trade Center, media images of ecology and the Gulf War, the men's movement and ecofeminism, and sociobiology – in a series of chapters connected by a loosely structured set of common themes. These sites are important to Ross because the discourses and ideas that inform and emerge from them play a crucial role in defining and delimiting the potential for political and social change. Ross offers a trenchant critique of what he sees as politically regressive elements of alternative movements and cultural trends.

Ross takes the title for his book from a passage in sociobiologist Richard Dawkins' *The Selfish Gene:*

> **Like successful Chicago gangsters, our genes have survived, in some cases, for millions of years, in a highly competitive world. This entitles us to expect certain qualities in our genes. I argue that a predominant quality to be expected in a successful gene is ruthless selfishness. This gene selfishness will usually give rise to selfishness in individual behaviour (254).**

The kind of circular reasoning employed here by Dawkins, involving the use of often suspect metaphors from human life to conceptualize nature, then reading them back on social life as deterministic laws, is for Ross a pervasive feature of all the areas of cultural politics covered in this volume. This tendency underlies the main themes running through Ross' essays: first, the hazards of appealing to the authority of 'nature' to explain and legitimate problems that are rooted in social relations of domination and inequality, is a critique of a trend he sees in ecological discourse that preaches denial, scarcity and limits, which for Ross are incompatible with a progressive political project. This discourse of limits, he argues, is closely linked to coercive forms of social control and the logic of corporate capitalism, and is closely linked to the misguided attempt to find guidance for human affairs in laws of nature.

The first chapter, the longest and most fully developed, examines the complex ways that discourses of cultural preservation have played out in political, cultural and academic debates over ethnic identity in the Polynesian South Pacific Islands. The stories that Ross tells about these islands are always informed by an ironic appreciation of their role as the "birthplace of modern ecological romanticism" (28), and the role of their inhabitants as a backdrop for European stories of noble savages, scarcity and abundance, cultural destruction, and encounters of Westerners with 'primitive Others'. Ross wants to subvert the standard stories told by or for Westerners about Polynesian culture, while aware of the fact that his may be yet another contribution to this tradition. But, he says, "I will press on anyway, in the hope that since my stories are neither romantic nor apocalyptic, they may help to dissipate the power of the genres that have fueled this long obsession" (28). Ross cautions against an attitude of uncritical respect for traditional values, which has been mobilized to legitimate corrupt and authoritarian governments in places such as Fiji, where the island's traditional elite sponsored a military coup against a newly elected and moderately left-leaning government. The contradictions of Polynesian cultural politics emerge most fully in an extended examination of a Mormon-run 'ethnic theme park' in Hawaii.

In his examinations of various sites of 'cultural politics', Ross usually manages to

weave together a fairly coherent narrative out of quite disparate elements. At times, however, his stories are so loosely woven together as to be in danger of completely unraveling. The second essay, "Bombing the Big Apple", is ostensibly about the World Trade Center (WTC) bombing, meanders through pastoral anti-urbanism, environmental racism, the history of urban green space, urban planning and the history and politics of land use at the WTC site, architectural theory, Marxist and Darwinist variants of evolutionism, the Chicago School of urban theory, global cities, New York's fiscal crisis, austerity economics, the Rio environmental conference, cost-benefit logic, Murray Bookchin's social ecology, a dozen or so movies, including *Batman, Ghostbusters,* and *Blade Runner,* artists communities in SoHo (where Ross lives), opposition to an AIDS treatment centre in Ross' neighbourhood, and finally the racial, economic, ecological and geopolitical context of the bombing and subsequent trials.

Ross' point here is that we should be suspicious of the popular hysteria around the threat of 'Islamic terrorists', and the racist and Orientalist assumptions that fuel these fears. Ross offers an alternative explanation that grounds the bombing in the history of urban transformations and displacements resulting from the construction of the WTC. Ross presents us here with a choice between urban ecological theories which 'naturalize' these transformations in the name of an evolutionary logic of decay and redevelopment, and a more politicized version of particular class interests and the strategies of multinational capitalists and political opportunists. As a substitute for the 'fanatical extremists' story, however, Ross offers little more than a narrative of retribution, where the bombing is the wages of sins of class and ethnic warfare.

**The real resident alien in the trials, however, was the World Trade Center itself. Its construction had been central to attempts to transform the infrastructure of the global economy, but the story of that construction involved a good deal of violence within the city that would not ordinarily be termed 'urban terrorism.' ...As for the answer to the question, 'Who bombed the Big Apple?,' it lay, as I have tried to suggest, as much with the history of the WTC's planners as it did with the trial of the building's alleged bombers. (158)**

While it is hardly fair, given the conventions of his analytical genre, to expect Ross to produce a coherent causal explanation for the bombing, the bombing serves as a convenient and rather weak hook on which to hang the rest of the piece. His glib and unconvincing explanation for the bombing doesn't do justice to the range of issues and analyses build into the piece.

In "Wet, Dark and Low: Eco-Man evolves from Eco-Woman" Ross turns his attention to two factions in the 'gender wars' – the 'men's movement' and ecofeminism. Where Ross was somewhat respectful and muted in his critique of cultural politics in Polynesia, his treatment of the 'men's movement' is less ambivalent. Some of his best one-liners are deployed in savaging the attempts of Robert Bly and others to resolve the current 'crisis of masculinity' by reclaiming the pagan Wild Man myth or 'playing in full redface' by appropriating native American ceremonies. Here, Ross' usually ironic analytical style gives way to gratuitous parody and sarcasm. While linking Sam Keen's *Fire in the Belly* to the right-wing 'family values' discourse "in their reinstatement of the eroded authority of patriarchal familialism," Ross opines of Sam Keen that "[a]nyone... who enthusiastically cites Norman O. Brown's opinion that 'the loins are the place of judgment' needs to be hit upside his head" (214). Later he argues that attempts within the men's movement to refashion masculinity in response to its 'crisis' relies on a "narrative of evolutionary adaptation" in which "Bly's Wild Man... begins to merge with the weekend grunt in jungle camouflage, nursing an M-16." This sets Ross up to ask: "What rough beast, in the guise of Iron John, slouches toward the Pentagon? And how will he react to the boys showering together in boot camp?"(218).

If this militaristic vision of men's wilderness retreats breeding an army of only slightly kinder and gentler Rambos isn't enough to generate in his readers a healthy suspicion of the men's movement, Ross also offers a complementary story which links the movement with capitalist ideology. The narratives of the men's movement, he argues, work to naturalize culturally specific masculine traits, reinforcing current ideologies and economic relations. The attempt to find essential masculine traits and needs on which to ground a men's movement, argues Ross, shares common ground with stories of 'Man the Hunter' (here he invokes Donna Haraway, almost the only figure in the book about whom he finds nothing critical to say), at one time common in sociobiology and primatology.

**You do not have to subscribe to alternative narratives, often quite romantic, about the cooperative ethic of pre-industrial or pre-capitalist times to see how the story of Man the Hunter agrees with the life of competition and the gendered division of labour in a market economy, and how it therefore elevates local capitalist principles to the level of general, transhistorical laws about masculine nature. Nature's laws are thereby understood to embody principles that are primarily social and economic in origin (219).**

*The Chicago Gangster* is replete with such examples of oppressive social ideologies being smuggled into scientific and environmentalist discourses under the guise of natural laws 'discovered' in nature.

The concluding chapter, "Superbiology", develops most clearly the critical themes of the book. Sociobiology, and especially genetics research, is giving new life to biological determinism and social Darwinism, and renewed support for the idea of reading societies in terms of the laws of nature. The new politics of nature resulting from this gene-centered resurgent scientism is threatening to recast the nature/nurture debate, reinforce capitalist ideologies based on competitive individualism, justify social inequalities and undermine oppositional discourses. The appearance of *The Bell Curve* and the massive publicity it received would appear to vindicate Ross on some of these points. But Ross' main point is that such arguments from nature, including human nature, are reinforcing an environmentalist 'discourse of limits' based on the idea of natural scarcity, which in turn generate and legitimate increasingly repressive social formations.

**But environmental consciousness has not only helped to reinforce the current recessionary messages about self-sacrifice and deprivation in our daily lives. It has also provided some backing for the call to limit freedoms, because it offers an argument about 'natural limits,' based upon empirical projections, which (as in the case of sociobiology) can be used to support discourses of social limits (266).**

Environmentalist exhortations of reduced consumption levels, population restrictions, and generally 'saying no' are, for Ross, not the stuff of successful social movements. He asks rhetorically: "So what are we left with? A dog's breakfast of self-denial, self-restraint, guilt, and disavowal – hardly promising instruments of liberation" (269). Not only will these not appeal to the masses, but they are dangerously compatible with conservative economic and social policies, such as government austerity measures and restrictions on individual freedoms. Much better, says Ross, to abandon the notion of scarcity altogether in favour of hedonism:

**Getting rid of the concept of scarcity is part of the cultural work that is necessary in order to make a world in which hunger and poverty no longer prevail. In that very different world, scarcity no longer exists conceptually as a default condition, and an ecological society has developed a more democratic way of ordering its priorities (270-1).**

And this is how the book ends, with a call to cast off shackles imposed on us in the name of nature and imagine an eco-utopian future that lies beyond scarcity, to be achieved through transforming our political consciousness and social institutions. This brief nod towards a positive program, as opposed to critique, certainly does not distinguish the book.

There is much to admire and ponder in *The Chicago Gangster,* most notably the insightful and critical reading of various sites of popular culture as ecological narratives. Ross' refusal to take environmentalist and scientific arguments and discourses at face value is a useful and perhaps indispensable contribution to current debates around environmental issues. However, I have three main criticisms.

First, there is little sustained analysis to support the arguments he puts forward. Someone weaned on a meat and potatoes diet of classical sociological theory might find Ross'

brand of 'postmodern cultural studies' a rather thin broth. The small chunks of Marxism, feminism and social ecology that surface in Ross' narrative are thoroughly disintegrated, and there is no pretension to developing a coherent analysis. The rhetorical technique is rather repeated assertions from different contexts. For instance, one of the arguments that emerge continuously in the book is that the themes of scarcity and limits in environmental discourse intersect with 'austerity economics' which asks people to make sacrifices for the sake of government deficits and economic growth. The link to environmental issues helps to naturalize the need for these sacrifices, and presents them as a universal condition of scarcity, rather than the self-interested strategy of the capitalist class. However, the connection between environmental and economic discourse is usually assumed, rather than demonstrated. He seems to rely on a cultural version of the ecological maxim that 'everything is connected to everything else' so that any conceivable parallel between different discourses can be read as a determining influence. The problem is that one can only read of so many instances of the application of a 'cost-benefit budgetary logic' or 'evolutionary logic' before these terms start to sound rather vacuous and in need of some elaboration. But Ross seems to appropriate only discrete terms and categories from various theoretical discourses, and inserts them into his own narrative with little attention to the context of their origins.

Second is Ross' rather condescending attitude towards the environmental movement that serves as a foil for his critique. He doesn't appear interested in debates within these movements around the issues he is raising. At times he positions himself as a sympathetic critic, but more often he appears to find very little to his liking among the basic tenets of environmental and ecological discourse, especially when expressed in language too compatible with the dominant economic interests. There is actually very little direct analysis of the environmental movement in the book, instead the focus is on how ecological ideas are appropriated by other areas of popular culture. Without this grounding, his invocation of environmentalists appear as little more than attacks against straw people.

**Environmentalists are often oblivious to such social milieux in presuming that the biological ethics governing their ideas and prescriptions are governed by (higher) natural, and not social, laws. To the contrary, ideas that draw upon the authority of nature nearly always have their origin in ideas about society. If this book's arguments had to be summed up in one sentence, that would be it. But there is still a great deal of cultural work and persuasion to be done before such an aphorism becomes common sense. Environmentalists need to be convinced that their arguments do not exist outside of the sphere of ideologies that governs our social reality; the way that we think about the natural world has more to do with our social world than anything else. The ecologically impaired need to be persuaded that ecology can be sexy, and not self-denying (15).**

The level of generality involved here is symptomatic of Ross' frequent refusal to attend to social context. This is not to say that many of his comments are not valid, quite the contrary, but his positioning of himself as the white knight of enlightened social thought in a world of misguided dupes is hardly edifying. At a conference a few years ago, a participant commented that Ross didn't "sound like a fan" of the New Age movement which was the subject of the paper he had just presented. He replied: "I'm wary of giving up certain privileges that we have struggled to enjoy as polemical critics – the capacity to use our hard-earned public voices to intervene and to contest the shape of public thinking about countercultural communities and practices" (Ross, 1992:553). Ross certainly does not present himself as 'fan' of the environmental movement, at least as he now sees it. While this is, of course, part of his 'privilege' (as a prominent academic at an elite institution?), his readers would be better served if the objects of his rather off-hand critical remarks were presented as somewhat more than caricatures.

Finally, Ross' arguments about the nature of scarcity and limits seems to me ultimately unconvincing. While it is useful and valid to point to the constructed and ideological nature of 'natural' limits, his proposed solution doesn't seem much of an alternative. As an oppositional strategy, trying to get rid of the notion of scarcity in a capitalist society doesn't seem much different than the strategy of invoking scarcity and limits. Narratives of post-scarcity abundance are just as much a part of capitalist ideology and culture as limits, and it's hard to see his strategy as anything but substituting one pole of a binary for another. It might make affluent urbanites like Ross feel more comfortable about their standard of living, but in a country and a world of gross inequalities, and multinational corporations opposing any restrictions on their ability to convert more and more of the cultural/natural world into commodities, an outright rejection of limits is not the answer. There is little to distinguish this from Bush's proclamation just prior to the Rio environmental summit that the American standard of living was not up for negotiation. Contesting for the definition of limits, and the meanings and implications attached to them, yes, but the last thing the world needs is another masculinist narrative of unlimited freedom and unbounded consumption.

Ross, Andrew, 1992. "New Age Technoculture." *Cultural Studies*, (Grossberg et al, eds.), New York: Routledge.

. . . **Mark Lutes** is in the doctoral program at the Faculty of Environmental Studies, York University. His dissertation will examine the representation of human activities and climate in global warming policy discourses. His previous contributions to *Undercurrents* include "A Fable for the New Age" (Vol. 5). . . .

## Rogue Primate: An Exploration of Human Domestication by John A. Livingston, Toronto: Key Porter Books, 1994.

Reviewed by Joanne Nonnekes

*Rogue Primate: An Exploration of Human Domestication*, written by one of Canada's most respected naturalists, John Livingston, has just been awarded the Governor General's Award for non-fiction. Livingston is well known for his previous books, *One Cosmic Instant* and *The Fallacy of Wildlife Conservation*, and for his work with the CBC television in bringing natural history programs to the earlier years of *The Nature of Things* and the series *Planet for the Taking*. As with his previous writing, Livingston has grounded this book firmly in his life long experience as a naturalist and has here provided us with a well-documented explication of the main arguments he has been putting forward in his teaching and writing throughout his career. Those familiar with his work will be treated to an enticing reminder and captivating exploration of human interaction with Nature as Livingston seeks to define the crisis of Nature. As Livingston frequently asserts in his lectures, "How can we pose solutions, when we haven't defined the problem?" Those new to Livingston's work will find this a provocative read as Livingston turns "the problem" around and around, looking at it from many different angles, challenging our assumptions about Nature, ourselves, and the relationship between them.

*Rogue Primate* is a passionate plea for the human species to awaken the long domesticated and repressed "wildness" that exists in each of us. For Livingston, this "wildness" is an untamed, undomesticated memory of an "at-one-ness" with Nature; a memory, perhaps from childhood, or, deeper still, a memory from pre-civilized human existence. The book is written with a sensitivity to the non-human that is rare and is the result of a committed naturalist having spent much time observing Nature, contemplating Nature, being in Nature, and struggling to become Nature.

Livingston begins with the suggestion that humans are no longer evolving biologically, but have been, and continue to be, evolving culturally. For Livingston, humans have "forgotten" the part of themselves that was Nature, and replaced it with what he terms a cultural prosthesis; "a substitute mode of approaching and apprehending the world" (10). What is this cultural prosthesis? According to Livingston, it is a form of domestication, an utter dependence on technology, defined as "how to do it," "storable, retrievable, transmissible technique;" and it is ideology defined as the system of abstract thinking which replaces an interdependence with Nature. "In human society ways of doing have supplanted ways of being" (12).

Following this line of thought Livingston suggests a comparison between animals domesticated by humans and humans themselves: like the domesticate who is entirely dependent on humans for its welfare, humans