In his analysis of 389 autobiographies and stories in news media and 316 interviews with students, Flaherty finds that three categories— (1) suffering and intense emotion, (2) violence and danger, and (3) uneventfulness—describe more than 75 percent of slow-time situations. These situations are distinguished by high levels of "stimulus complexity" which, for Flaherty, refers to "conscious information-processing," or in other words, time-consciousness, not the objective volume or complexity of work. John Donne was thinking about conscious information processing when he wrote in *Song:* "But come bad chance, / And we join to it our strength, / And we teach it art and length, / Itself o'er us to advance." In a factory, some workers teach neither "art" nor "strength" to their "bad chance" but become so engrossed in their jobs as to ignore the passage of time. Their workday seems short. Other workers, inclined to reflect on their job and "joining their own strength" to the time remaining to do it, experience a long workday. Slow-time is time burdened with subjectivity, fast-time is time ignored—which is why remembering difficult events is so often easier than experiencing them: A month served in solitary confinement seems like a century, but it seems shorter afterward because the act of remembering burdens the event with less subjectivity than the act of living through it.

The argument of *A Watched Pot,* in brief, is that the amount of conscious information processing per objective time unit determines variation in perceived time passage. Unfortunately, the sources of time-consciousness, while central to Flaherty's argument, are never independently measured. Assembly line work can pass slowly because it gives workers a chance to think too much; yet, the assembly line is normed, which, all else being equal, accelerates the passage of time. Furthermore, work can be reframed. One imaginative man, by Flaherty's own account, transformed his dull assembly line job into an exciting Olympic event, thus making the clock move faster. No one can tell whether a worker's time passes slowly because of too much conscious information processing, because it is inadequately normed, or because he or she lacks an active imagination.

Flaherty's theory is elegantly conceived, but his key terms, stimulus complexity and conscious information processing, are too loosely defined to allow us to assess his claims. If Flaherty fails to solve fully the problem of perceived time duration, however, he articulates it successfully, and that is a considerable achievement. In an increasingly affluent society, where time cost rather than money cost increasingly affects our decisions and our lives, the passage of time becomes a central concern. Michael Flaherty's *A Watched Pot* is a pioneering book because it is the first effort to deal with this difficult problem.

How long did it take you, gentle reader, to get through this review? Did you feel you read 500 words? 700 words? 900 words? More?

IDEOLOGY AND CULTURAL PRODUCTION

Image Politics: The New Rhetoric of Environmental Activism, by **Kevin Michael DeLuca.** New York: Guilford Press, 1999. 203 pp. $30.00 cloth. ISBN: 1-57230-461-8.

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Activists make meanings, albeit not in the circumstances they choose. For Kevin DeLuca, the most important, and most interesting, thing that social movements do is create images, or "mind bombs" (DeLuca, quoting Greenpeace director, Robert Hunter), that undermine hegemonic values and meanings, creating alternatives, or at least spaces for alternatives. Although some sociologists have looked at these images, DeLuca charges they have been overly concerned with the strategic implications of rhetorical choices, and they invest too much intentionality in the creators of the images. He contends, instead, that the perspectives of communication studies, particularly postmodern perspectives, offer a deeper understanding of social movements in contemporary life.

By implication, the modern, or at least sociological, understanding of movements as purposive actors making collective claims on authorities is fundamentally mistaken. Such an approach leads analysts to look at questions

of causes and effects, and to examine factors such as organizational strength and size, alliances, political context, public policy, tactical choice, and strategic interactions. DeLuca contends that such approaches miss the important work that movements can do in contesting meanings, and that they focus on factors that are largely irrelevant. It is critical, instead, to see movements as makers of meaning rather than as simple strategic actors, organizations, political formations of any kind, or events. In the postmodern era, he contends, "mass media render organizational size and resources largely irrelevant" (p. 25).

The radical environmental movement offers a particularly opportune site in which to see the politics of images at work, as its efforts challenge the long-established discourse of progress that has captured both the left and the right. In this text, radical environmental images, mostly created by Earth First! and Greenpeace, challenge the hegemonic discourses of progress, industrialism, and indeed, modernity, through a distinct and effective rhetorical style—the only way to undermine a social control that is "fundamentally rhetorical" (p. 50).

DeLuca acknowledges the tension inherent in making a claim he characterizes as postmodern in the modern context of an academic book. "The form," he explains, "is designed to question, interrupt, and disrupt a certain drive to clarity, transparency, and a transmission of authorial intentions in a translucent text" (p. xiii). He offers three "meditations," in which he engages theoretical academic literature from communication studies, feminist theory, literature, and social movements, while offering close readings of a few selected images. (Given the contingencies of meaning, discussion of sampling or selection bias would be misplaced.) Unsurprisingly, DeLuca's theoretical engagement with literature from communication studies is far more extensive than his treatments of literature on social movements, which is cursory and dated.

The first meditation promises a theoretical overhaul of thinking about social movements; the second questions the prospects for any kind of "nature" in a postmodern age. The third meditation looks at the economic and political context of mass media, and how that affects the uphill struggle activists face in creating new meanings. He is enthusiastic about

images that depict small groups standing up against large machines. He finds, for example, "the image of Greenpeacers in rubber dinghies steering between whaling ships and whales is an encapsulated rhetorical and philosophical statement challenging the anthropocentric position granting humans dominion over all living creatures and implicitly offering biocentrism as an alternative" (p. 54). He is less sympathetic to groups and actors who engage in more instrumental, modern politics in pursuit of organizational survival or political efficacy.

DeLuca is candid about his sympathies, which are with the activists and against the machine, and pointed about his prescriptions: "[T]he task for environmental activists is to promote the detachment of the ideograph nature from any foundational meaning and, instead, to understand nature as a culturally constructed ideograph in the open social field of discursive politics" (p. 69). He means to "valorize" contemporary Luddites, and to establish a postmodern politics that, by "deconstructing transcendental foundations, inhabiting places, and living with incoherence can offer a meaningful hope for radical democracy" (p. 64). He also means to create another site for analysis, that of audiences making sense and giving meaning to images, rather than simply acquiescing to particular interpretations imposed by authorities or challengers.

As a member of Kevin DeLuca's audience, I must acknowledge that it is, perhaps, unfair that he has drawn a reviewer who can applaud the attention to rhetoric, but still finds exclusion of the material context in which images are made and received inadequate, at best, and more likely, fundamentally misguided. I find it hard not to wonder if the postmodern turn in the analysis of social movements dooms scholars of movements, if not the movements they examine, to self-indulgence and irrelevance.