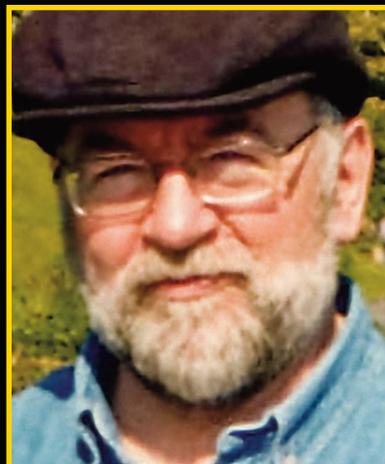
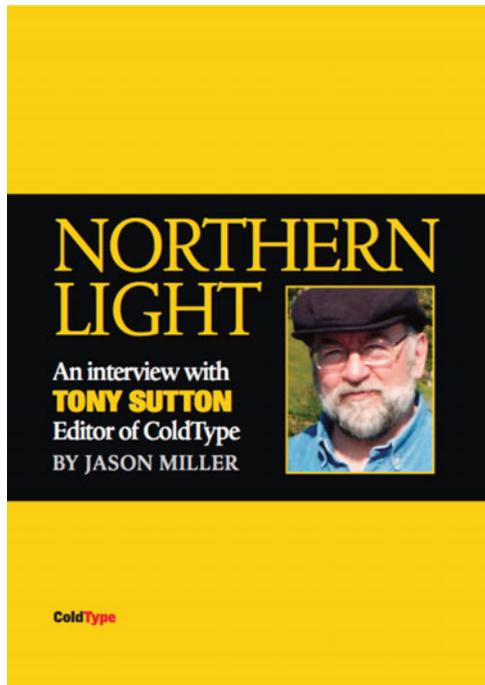


NORTHERN LIGHT

An interview with
TONY SUTTON
Editor of ColdType
BY JASON MILLER



ColdType



Tony Sutton, editor of Coldtype – www.coldtype.net – is a publishing consultant and president of News Design Associates, Inc. – www.newsdesign.net – an international publishing consultancy based in Georgetown, 20 km from Toronto in Canada. He may be contacted at editor@coldtype.net

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ColdType

WRITING WORTH READING FROM AROUND THE WORLD
www.coldtype.net

NORTHERN LIGHT

AN INTERVIEW WITH TONY SUTTON
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early asphyxiated by the stench wafting from the mendacious corporate media pundits I've been profiling, I decided to ascend from the intellectual sewer into which I had crawled in order to observe them in their natural habitat.

At last some detoxified air! It was an incredible boost to my faltering faith in humanity when I recently had the privilege to conduct a cyber-interview with Tony Sutton, the editor and publisher of *ColdType*, an online journal which presents "Writing Worth Reading from around the World."

As you will discover, Tony and his marvelous publication are two of the best kept secrets we political educators and agitators for social justice have in our arsenal. Domiciled in the Great White North, Tony publishes one of the finest radical journals in existence.

In terms of content, contributing writers, and presentation, *ColdType's* quality is unparalleled. Judge for yourself: www.coldtype.net

To learn more about *ColdType*, Tony Sutton, and Tony's highly refined insight on the dynamics of oppression (which was forged in the crucible of his involvement in the struggle against South African Apartheid), let's move on to the interview:

Jason Miller: Your publication has been characterized as the "Counterpunch of Canada," yet many US Americans are unfamiliar with it. How would you describe ColdType?

Tony Sutton: I'm flattered by the comparison; I've been a fan of Counterpunch for years. But it's a bit like comparing a newspaper with a magazine. As a monthly, *ColdType* can never provide the quantity of information put out by the daily Counterpunch, nor do we want to. The acid test for *ColdType* content is: Will it still be relevant in six months' or two years' time? We're interested in journalism that has legs as well as style. On a philosophical level, however, there is a similarity: both CP and CT are as interested in the quality of the writing as the subject being discussed, and both want to help foster a fairer, more equitable, society.

JM: What is ColdType's mission?

TS: In its original tabloid format *ColdType* promised to provide readers with *Writing Worth Reading From Around The World*. That's still our basic mission – I'm constantly seeking writing that has something to say – and says it in an intelligent, well-reasoned way.

ColdType is dedicated to excellence in progressive thought: the site is full of powerful book excerpts, wonderful essays and some of the finest columnists in the online world. Great thinking. Great writing. Great design. That's what we try to achieve in each monthly package.

JM: What is the approximate readership of your publication?

*Great thinking.
Great writing.
Great design.
That's what we try to achieve in each monthly package*

The *ColdType* web site gets between 150,000-250,000 hits a month, depending on the amount of cross-postings we get. Most of the hits come in the first two weeks of publication, which is why I'd like to publish more often. But, right now, there's no time for that . . .

The *ColdType Reader*, just one part of coldtype.net, has been lifted by other web sites around the world, so we know it gets lots more downloads than our web counter tells us but, as the other sites don't supply figures, it's hard to find out the precise circulation. One of the interesting things about being an Internet-based magazine is that there's a completely different circulation model than that of mainstream publishing; the numbers don't grind to a halt when a new issue is published – we're still getting hundreds of downloads each month of issues published 18 months ago.

JM: How long have you been publishing ColdType?

TS: *ColdType* began as a tabloid magazine 13 years ago in 1994. I launched it while corporate design consultant for Thomson Newspapers' North American operation. My ambition was to publish a weekly tabloid highlighting great newspaper journalism from around the world, but I didn't have enough cash (or, if truth be told, the courage) to do my own prototype. So I used corporate cash to do it, as a publication for the group's journalists. In hindsight, I realise I should have gathered the cash and published it myself – that first issue was a runner up in the Canadian National Magazine Awards contest for an 8-page photo



IN PRINT: The first tabloid issues of ColdType – www.coldtype.net/old.html

essay by Toronto photographer Russell Monk on the genocide in Uganda; and the response to those first 2,000 copies was amazing. Five issues of the printed *ColdType* were produced, all are on our web site, www.coldtype.net/old.html. Ironically, I lost the page files for Monk’s award-winning photoessay 10 years ago, but we’ve found them and have recently republished them at www.coldtype.net/photo.html.

When I left Thomsons in 1996, *ColdType* ceased publication. Thomsons gave me the title when they got out of the newspaper business in 2000 after which it sat gathering dust for a couple of years until I had a brainwave and registered *ColdType.net* to publish the magazine – still as a tabloid – in pdf format. After one issue, I realized that the newspaper format was not ideal for an online publication, so turned it into the format you see it today, with

I think there’s something respectful in presenting great journalism in a manner that avoids the generic blandness of html, making it instead enticing, unique and readable

long, essay-length articles produced as downloadable pdfs.

The *ColdType Reader* followed a couple of years ago. Its genesis was in a collection of essays titled *OtherVoices* www.coldtype.net/voices.04.html that I had introduced to coldtype.net in 2004, and later abandoned as too time-consuming. (Look out for a separate e-book of the *Best of OtherVoices* later this year). I realized there was a place for shorter magazine-length articles a couple of years ago and *ColdType/2* was born; I renamed it the *ColdType Reader* an issue later as the first title was confusing readers — and me.

JM: You publish some iconic figures from the Left. How do you draw such intellectual talent?

TS: I hope they’re attracted by the philosophy and quality of the publication. Right from its first printed issue, *Cold-*

Type has carried the work of great writers and photographers, and I believe that quality attracts quality – our contributors certainly aren't lured into *ColdType* by money, because there isn't any. I'm proud to have fine contributors such as George Monbiot, John Pilger, Greg Palast, Edward S. Herman, Uri Avnery, Michael Parenti, Noam Chomsky, Loretta Napoleoni, Robert Fisk (who has been with us since the first printed issue) and many others, and I hope they feel the same way about *ColdType*.

JM: Your PDF format is unique; I am not aware of another socio-political or news site that employs it. What led you to employ PDF?

TS: Although I appreciate the reach of the Internet, I'm not too keen on its limited formatting. And, like many other internet readers, I still like to print out stuff, read it and file it – holding a publication in your hands and turning pages is so much more fun than reading on a computer monitor.

The great thing about the pdf format is that it allows me to publish without having the hassles of advertising or subscriptions or print runs or returns or paying printing bills and postage – or making a profit! And I think there's something respectful in presenting great journalism in a manner that avoids the generic blandness of html, making it instead enticing, unique readable. Just look at our collection of 50 of Joe Bageant's essays – www.coldtype.net/joe.html – as an example of what I mean.

JM: ColdType provides peerless quality in its visual presentation

I think of ColdType as therapy – working for commercial publishers imposes intellectual demands that I'm not always happy with; editing ColdType allows me to publish what I believe is relevant

of its fine content. How are you able to maintain such a high standard when you charge no subscription fees?

TS: It's as easy to produce quality, as it is to produce crap – and I've had enough experience working in publishing over the last 30 years to tell the difference. I don't have to charge because *ColdType* is not my day job – I travel around the world consulting on editorial and design for newspapers and magazines. I think of *ColdType* as therapy – working for commercial publishers imposes intellectual demands that I'm not always happy with; editing *ColdType* allows me to publish what I believe is relevant. I hope we'll be able to survive without accepting paid-for ads, begging for money or charging subscribers.

JM: Please give us a quick biographical sketch of Mr. Tony Sutton

TS: I'm English, spent the early part of my career on weekly, evening, Sunday and national newspapers in Britain. Then I became assistant London editor of the East and West African editions of *Drum* magazine, transferring to South Africa where I became executive editor of the magazine – which was aimed at Black readers – a couple of months before the June 1976 Soweto schoolkid riots (see more on my six year spell with *Drum* magazine at www.coldtype.net/photo.html). After that I became a consultant, working for the black alternative media as well as mainstream newspapers and magazines. I moved to Canada in 1990 to re-design the *Globe and Mail* newspaper in Toronto, transferred to the corporate



ON THE NET: Front pages from the pdf version of ColdType – www.coldtype.net/reader.html

office as head of design for North America and then became an independent consultant 12 years ago. I also spent five years as part time editor of *Design*, the magazine of the US-based Society for News Design.

JM: Also, please tell us about your wife and her contributions to your endeavors

TS: Jools has kept me sane and out of prison for the past 40 years.

JM: After the years you spent editing Drum and opposing Apartheid in South Africa, what are your thoughts on the conditions that black South Africans face today?

TS: I still consult for newspaper clients in South Africa and am amazed how, despite the obvious signs of wealth in the cities; things haven't really im-

Apartheid ended and everyone got the vote but, after taking power, the ANC quickly abandoned its socialist ideals and its leaders saw no problem in adapting to the 'benefits' of free market capitalism

proved for the majority of the people. There have been positive changes, of course: Apartheid ended and everyone got the vote but, after taking power, the ANC quickly abandoned its socialist ideals and its leaders saw no problem in adapting to the 'benefits' of free market capitalism. The result is a small class of elite citizens – both black and white – who have to barricade themselves into homes surrounded by electrified fencing and patrolled by armed security guards while the masses still live in squalor.

JM: What do you think of the continued oppression of blacks in the United States via a deeply entrenched system of institutionalized racism, including the prison industrial complex, de facto segregation, structural barriers virtually guaranteeing

widespread impoverishment, and a grossly inequitable educational system?

TS: I remember my trips to the United States in the 1980s when black leaders were demonstrating for the introduction of sanctions against South Africa. It seemed strange that so much energy was spent in decrying the lot of their oppressed brothers in South Africa while ignoring the inequality that was so obvious in their own country. Apartheid doesn't have to be institutionalized to be effective – much of South Africa has learned that lesson since the ANC came to power. The fight for economic and social freedom for blacks in both countries still has to be won.

JM: Living in a nation which provides guaranteed health care to its citizens, what do you think of the fact that the US plutocracy has worked furiously for years to block "socialized medicine" in the wealthiest nation on the planet, despite numerous polls indicating that 70-80% of US Americans favor a system of national health care?

TS: Healthcare in the US is a disgrace. Until something is done about a system that allows drug companies and other corporations to throw so much cash into the electoral system the majority of working class people will continue to be shafted. Change will only come when people open their eyes, see what's happening, rise from the comfort of their sofas, take to the streets and do something about it.

The suffering of the Palestinians under the oppression of Israel and, by extension, the United States is as bad, if not worse, than that of black South Africans under the evils of apartheid

JM: Many have drawn parallels between the plight of the Palestinians and the black South Africans who suffered under Apartheid. What is your view?

TS: The suffering of the Palestinians under the oppression of Israel and – by extension, the United States – is as bad, if not worse, than that of black South Africans under the evils of apartheid. Why is it so too easy to forget the lessons of recent history. Israel, the US and the world should be ashamed of what is happening in the West Bank and, more recently, in Gaza. Israel, perhaps more than any other nation, should know better . . .

JM: How did you wind up in Canada?

TS: The main reason we left South Africa was because my son Oliver was about to be drafted into the South African Defence Force, and there no way Jools and I would allow him to fight for apartheid. But I was also ready for change – we went to South Africa on a year-long contract in 1975 and stayed for 14 – I was a newspaper and magazine consultant and had done everything I needed to do there; even my unpaid work with the alternative media was becoming stale, especially as the end of apartheid was on the horizon. At this time – late in 1989 – I was invited to Toronto to lead the *Globe and Mail* newspaper through a major redesign, so off we went. It was strange to find myself in a hotel room in Toronto watching Nelson Mandela's release from jail – at that moment I thought I'd made a serious mistake, a feeling not helped by the fact that we'd

moved from an African summer to winter in Canada . . .

JM: In what ways do you see the Stephen Harper administration moving Canada into the realms of imperialism, militarism, neocolonialism and fascism?

TS: I hope Harper won't be in power long enough to take us too far down those paths. But I'm not sure the people of Canada will make the right choice at the next election, whenever it happens. It's amazing how the promise of tax cuts and a bit of extra spending money so easily persuades voters to elect a government that does not represent their interests. And there's no doubt that the propaganda machine will be focused on the previous Liberal government's insanely corrupt handling of advertising contracts. There's no excuse for corruption, but it probably won't be pointed out that at least Jean Chrétien's lot didn't waste billions of dollars and hundreds of lives by signing on to Bush's war in Iraq, which Harper likely would have done. Harper's keenness to resupply the military and to commit Canada to the futile war in Afghanistan is sign enough of his belligerence – if he can be so dangerous running a minority government, I dread to imagine the havoc and misery he might wreak with a clear majority.

JM: What are your thoughts on Canada's participation in the imperial war crimes in Iraq and Afghanistan?

Simple. We shouldn't be there. It's time to return to our traditional peacekeeping

We have to spread the message to more and more people that global capitalism and corporate greed are not in the best interest of them, the nation or the world

role. Canada shouldn't be fighting Bush's wars. Nor should America."

JM: How do you feel about Canada aligning itself more and more closely with the United States?

TS: Canada will always be linked with the United States due to the proximity of its main centres to the border, but that doesn't mean the country has to become servile to whatever US interest is dominant at any particular time. Right now Canada is about to implement its own no-fly list on air travelers and seems likely to sign up for America's idiotic and paranoid missile defense system. I dread to think where Bush and Harper will take us next."

JM: As a final question, what strategies do you think radical writers, publishers, and political educators need to employ to better penetrate the false consciousness constructed and maintained by the ruling class?

TS: We have to keep telling the truth, we have to continue the fight for social justice, and we have to spread the message to more and more people that global capitalism and corporate greed are not in the best interest of them, the nation or the world. ●

For once I have little to add except my assertion that if we had a legion of Tony Sutton's, our world would be a much better place. He truly is a "Northern Light." Many thanks to Tony for his substantial contributions to the cause of social justice.

– Jason Miller

**WRITING WORTH
READING FROM
AROUND THE WORLD**

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