



Streetwatch volunteer talks with homeless man

## Students Join Streetwatch

### CUNY Students Monitor Police and Grand Central Partnership

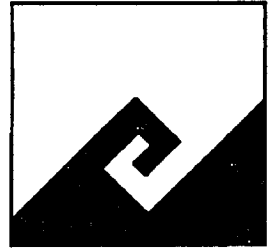
BY ALEX S. VITALE

Several Graduate Center Students are involved with a new organization called Streetwatch which was begun in January by the New York Coalition for the Homeless. One of those students, Tracy Morgan (History), was drawn to Streetwatch because the program "highlights the city's failure to address the problem of homelessness. The city is using the

police to extinguish lives and in an effort to hide a problem it has created." The program is based on a group in San Francisco whose volunteers monitor police misconduct towards the homeless. Here in New York, the decision to create Streetwatch was motivated by both the change in mayoral administrations and an increase of brutality-complaints being made by the homeless to the Coalition for the Homeless.

Streetwatch relies on volunteers to monitor the activities of law enforcement agencies like the NYPD, Transit Police and Amtrak Police. These volunteers are trained in observation techniques, the legal rights of homeless people and the best ways to work with people on the streets in order to collect information

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Excerpts and photo from a discussion between Cornel West and Manning Marable. See page 3.



Maria Hong reviews *Parallel Time: Growing Up in Black and White*, a new book by Brent Staples. See page 6.

## Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick Speaks on Campus

### Queer Theorist Discusses Silvan Tomkins

BY PAM RENNER

On April 8th, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick addressed a capacity crowd in the Graduate Center's third floor studio. The well-known Duke University based pioneer in Queer Theory, author of such works as *Tendencies* (1993), *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (1985), and *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990), was introduced by Michele Wallace, who represents all of the departments which joined forces to sponsor Sedgwick's visit: the English Departments of the Graduate Center and City University, as well as the Women's Studies Certificate Program.

Sedgwick's topic was as interdisciplinary as the crowd she drew: shame, an emotion that's familiar to most of us, regardless of sexual orientation or political persuasion. "Shame at the Threshold: Reading Silvan Tomkins (1911-1991)," examined the work of an American psychiatrist, who wrote in the political context of a 1950s-style liberal agenda, yet whose views, remarkably, are without the prevailing homophobia of the period. The reason for Tomkins' prescience in this matter remains a mystery, even to Sedgwick herself: "I'd love to know how come there's no heterosexism in this book," she mused, in response to an audience question about Tompkins' own sexuality.

Though Tompkins was not gay himself, Sedgwick points out that his work allows a great freedom for theorists today to navigate between biologically-based notions of affect, and the digital (on/off) model of the human psyche that has tended to remain in theoretical vogue ever since the writings of structuralists like Levi Strauss.

Sedgwick's involvement with Tomkins'



Photo by Wayne Geist

### Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick

works, however, is more than academic; she described the process of reading him as an affective affair: "What does it mean to fall in love with a writer?" Sedgwick asked. She and her graduate student Adam Frank, a partner in this venture, admire Tomkins for writing "a text full of unpathological notions about us." She lauds his work for its multi-valent possibilities, comparing it to a "colorwheel."

Calling Tomkins a "polymath," Sedgwick went on to explore the implications of his unconventional psychological writings for the practice of theory today. In his works, a four-volume study entitled

*Affect Imagery Consciousness*, Sedgwick seeks, and finds, "grounds for a more respectful conversation between science and the humanities." "The transmissibility of theory," she complained, "is getting strongly laminated with certain notions." Because of a strong, even a "reflexive anti-biologism," Sedgwick automatically... into subversive vs. hegemonic." She expressed reservations about the implications of this for the theoretical practice. "If we banish biologism entirely, are we going to have access to more than two values?"

In this light, Sedgwick spoke about the ambiguity of shame, "It's not the most toxic emotion," she suggested, "shame is a punctuational moment. It's about thresholds. It's painful."

When asked what the most toxic emotion might be, Sedgwick responded: "Tomkins says the most toxic is the mixture of anger and contempt which makes hatred." The works of Silvan Tomkins, and those of Sedgwick herself, go a long way towards combatting the prejudice and ignorance upon which hatred thrives.

## Confessions of a Caffiend

### An Addict's Guide to East Village Cafes

BY GREGORY IGORIORG

Six steps below sidewalk level in my damp lair, where there are no pools of sunlight in the morning and no views of moon at night, one primitive, dark spirit prevails. Coffee. In shifting masks and avatars—from the vicious espresso that thrashes me out of the sheets at morning through the benign creamy shades of afternoon and evening to the solid

black that gives strength to the weary at night—coffee orders the hours and quickens the brain. It is coffee that makes humans out of slate-eyed zombies, separates us from the sluggish crepuscular beasts—eels, say, or tree-sloths—that do not care what time it is and do not bother to finish their work.

Wondering if maybe I've been down in my lair too long, I emerged the other day to have my cup o' joe in public, at a cafe. I decided to take a walk and check out the new cafes in the neighborhood. My neighborhood is the East Village and the new cafes are so numerous that the morning cup multiplied into two, four, a half dozen. Prodigious doses of caffeine, even for me. Quaking like a jackhammer, I have returned to tell the tale. With these new spots, the East Village is more than ever a haven for students looking for a place to get their dose, to read a book, eat cheap, or just observe the other wildlife in the Manhattan zoo.

No Bar Cafe (432 E. 9 Street, between 1st and Avenue A) opened its doors last summer and kept them open whenever the Con Ed bill was paid up.

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Professor Norman Kelvin Edits the Letters of William Morris, the first of a three part series on Scholars and their Subjects by Pam Renner. See page 8



This month, Valkyrie gets a pedicure and takes home the goodies. See page 12.

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**Editor's Note**

Welcome to the *Advocate's* last stand for this semester, our first (and probably final) **Paradise Regained** issue. Though spring in New York may be a step or two down from Eden, it sure feels good to have the sun in our faces again after such a long, bruising winter. To fete the finish of the cruelest month, our art column, by Jeannette Redensek, examines plans for several public gardens-to-be. And, if you're starting to make your own plan for springtime in the city—that magical season when the last term paper vanishes into the U.S. mails and the rowers appear in force at the Central Park Boat Basin, our May marginalia offer something in the way of ideas for summer pleasures, ranging from research grants to study urban immigration to bike routes to escape the city smog. Before making the break from academe final, we introduce a new multi-part series: *Scholar and Subject*. In forthcoming issues, we will see how scholarly research works across a variety of disciplines.

Finally, our lead Letter to the Editor invites the Graduate Center community to attend a crucial conference at Brooklyn College on May 6, about the future of teachers at CUNY. For our sake and for that of our students, it is more vital than ever that we begin to organize and air our concerns about fair conditions. What's at stake now is the future of public education in New York.

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**Letters to the Editor****To The Editor:**

There is no more important issue facing higher education in general, and CUNY in particular, than the use and abuse of part-time faculty. This issue affects all strata of academe. The growth in employment of part-timers has arisen from a multitude of factors: the decline of the professoriate, lack of support for students, worsening benefits and working conditions, and the debasement of liberal arts and science education, especially in the public sector. In this deteriorating atmosphere, academic unionists must rise to this challenge if CUNY's mandate of providing a quality higher education to the citizens of New York City is to survive and thrive.

In an attempt to explore the national and local situation, and to come up with concrete possibilities, proposals, and an agenda for action, a free conference for full-time and part-time faculty is taking place at Brooklyn College on Friday, May 6, 1994. We hope to explore the concerns of part-timers and full-timers, and discuss the kinds of solutions suitable to CUNY.

"Academic Unionism & Part-Time Faculty Strategies for Change" is a true CUNY-wide conference, co-sponsored (so far) by various local chapters of the union—Borough of Manhattan Community College, Brooklyn College, Hostos, Kingsborough and LaGuardia, and various professional organizations—Doctoral Students Council, CUNY Association of Writing Supervisors, CUNY Language Forum, and Part Timers United, among others. One of the keynote speakers is Karen Thompson, the Chair of the AAUP National Committee on Part-Time and Non-Tenured Track Appointments. Other representatives of academic unions and the fight for part-time faculty will be there.

Everyone is invited. Please come and express your worries, opinions, and hopes. Help us articulate our concerns for a more equitable and healthy CUNY for all involved. For further information call the Brooklyn College chapter of Professional Staff Congress, the union that negotiates for all instructional staff and management, at (718) 951-4413.

Sharona A. Levin  
Co-Chair of Organizing Committee

**To the Editor:**

Kudos ain't the word, [the March issue] looks great. Just grabbing a copy here in the computer lab and seeing people stuffing it under their arms around the building, made me think it was another *Advocate*—all slicked out with splashy graphics. I haven't had time to sit down and check out the words, but on my train ride back to the island I'll be doing just that. GOOD STUFF!

David Kirschenbaum  
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**Fix the Toilets**

Every time I use the bathrooms on the basement level or on the 18th floor at the Graduate Center, I wonder what architectural school flunkie designed the stalls. And what flunkie toilet technician helped out. First of all, the stall doors have huge gaps in them. Not only can you see out, others can see in. You just know some peeping tom thought that gimmick up. Worse, if you're sitting on the throne, contemplating, say, your next seminar presentation, and someone else enters a stall and closes her door, next thing you know, your door swings open and you are cruelly exposed to the sight of the less fortunate waiting for their shot at the pot. Finally, when all is said and done and you try to flush away your rich or watery substance, the toilet makes abysmal little sucking sounds, but doesn't do—excuse the expression—shit. I guess it's too much to ask for new stall doors that stay closed properly, but those johns could use a tune-up.

—Valerie Walker

**Course Evaluations: Why not Here?**

Frank feedback from one's students is one of the most valuable tools a teacher—on any level—has to work with. After all, how can a professor know what evil lurks in the hearts of his students during a two-hour monologue on, say, the syntactical anomalies in the Virgilian epic, unless he asks? The easiest and most elegant mechanism for students to evaluate their professors is the course evaluation form, familiar to many from their undergraduate days, or perhaps from their own adjunct-teaching experiences. On these nifty little forms, for those who have never used them, one can usually find a variety of questions, some to be answered numerically (for example, "How successfully do you feel this class was organized, on a scale of 1-5?"), others allowing for individual comments ("If this class were to be taught again, what features could be improved?").

The results from these end-of-the-term surveys are often published in a school-wide guide for undergrads. For graduate students, whose burrowings into foreign departmental offerings are far more rare, it makes sense to publish a guide within each department, so that next spring's students may be the inheritors of this spring's hard-earned wisdom.

Though these student course guides are un-

doubtedly valuable, there's an even more important reason to make these evaluations compulsory for all the departments. Professors should know how they're being perceived by their classes. They may be surprised, pleased, outraged, or just plain floored by the results—but in the end, ignorance is not bliss. Knowing one's strengths and shortcomings as a teacher can be the first step towards improvement.

At the CUNY Graduate Center, the policy on this score seems to be laissez-faire, at best. Some departments do publish valuable student guides about professors and their courses, while others seem to have never even considered adopting such a policy. A practice this valuable should not be left to the fates; it could easily be institutionalized. To wit: all professors, during the final class session, must hand out a prepared survey form about the course. These forms are to be answered anonymously. Every student must complete one, during a twenty-minute interval set aside for this purpose.

The benefits of institutionalizing feedback are incalculable, for professors and graduate students. Doctoral students, many of whom are college teachers themselves, tend to have strong opinions on the subject of pedagogical techniques. Why not put these strong opinions to work for the improvement of our intellectual lives?

**Who's to Be Executive Officer?**

I remember being baffled the first time I attended an Executive Committee meeting in my program and discovered that the program was actually run by the professors. Why, one might think, would anyone with a Ph.D. in German (or Math or Biology and so on) be competent enough to run an organization, which is in some ways what a department is? Running a department is, after all, not what drew them to the scholarly world in the first place. Yet it is a job that must be done, and some people do it well. The position of chair is, indeed, of the utmost importance. The Executive Officer determines to a large extent the direction the program will take. Some people fear that three years, the current term of EOs, is long enough to "radicalize" a program. Others welcome such a possibility. The fact that EOs are appointed by the president and not selected by the programs themselves is also a subject of some debate at the Graduate Center.

President Horowitz stressed to me in an interview that the input she received concerning David Nasaw's appointment as the new History EO was among the most thoughtful that has come her way. The letters she received, the interviews she held, all showed "a real love of the program." She was emphatic that Prof. Nasaw was of the opinion that "1000 flowers should bloom," that the History Program will continue to be one in which there will be room for traditional as well as contemporary methodologies.

Her job, as the one who makes the appointment, is to "get as much input as possible, specifi-

cally information that will allow me to develop as large a perspective as possible on the needs of the program in the next years." As part of this goal, she recently instituted a formal procedure whereby she meets with the Executive Committee of each program when appointing EOs. She stressed that the process stops with her and that 80th Street, as some have maintained, plays no role.

Concerning the matter of whether an EO should be appointed by the president or selected by the program, she said that those in favor of the latter method think this a more democratic way of doing things. She emphasized, however, the singular nature of the Graduate Center. Because of the consortial aspect, the faculty of the various programs are not together like a "family" (as in the case of departments at other universities), and thus there is great variability, not to mention inconsistency, of faculty involvement in a program. Thus, if the selection were made within the program itself there is the danger of the process becoming politicized.

The needs of a program are, of course, viewed differently by different people. "Rumor evolution" was how President Horowitz characterized what fuels the fears and passions aroused over the matter of EO appointments. The process by which President Horowitz was selected to head the Graduate Center was a lengthy one. In retrospect it strikes me that the deliberation involved itself reflected the recognition that a powerful hand and an objective point of view were needed for just such matters as the appointment of Executive Officers.

—Elizabeth Powers