SPECIAL SPRING BOOKS PULLOUT

CUNY GRADUATE CENTER
Advocate

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Best and Worst of 2006 (p. 4)

CCNY Students Sue over Shakur Sign

The Associated Press has recently reported that City College students and alumni, including architecture student Rodolfo Leyton, have filed a lawsuit against the City University of New York in the US District Court of New York. The lawsuit, according to the AP, claims that the students' first amendment rights were violated by the University when the CUNY Chancellor Mathew Goldstein ordered that the sign over a student center bearing the name of Guillermo Morales and Asatta Shakur be immediately removed. The attorneys in the case, Ronald B. McGuire and Kamau Franklin are asking that a temporary injunction be ordered against the university prohibiting it from prosecuting or punishing students for any attempts to replace the sign and allowing the students to continue operating the community center.

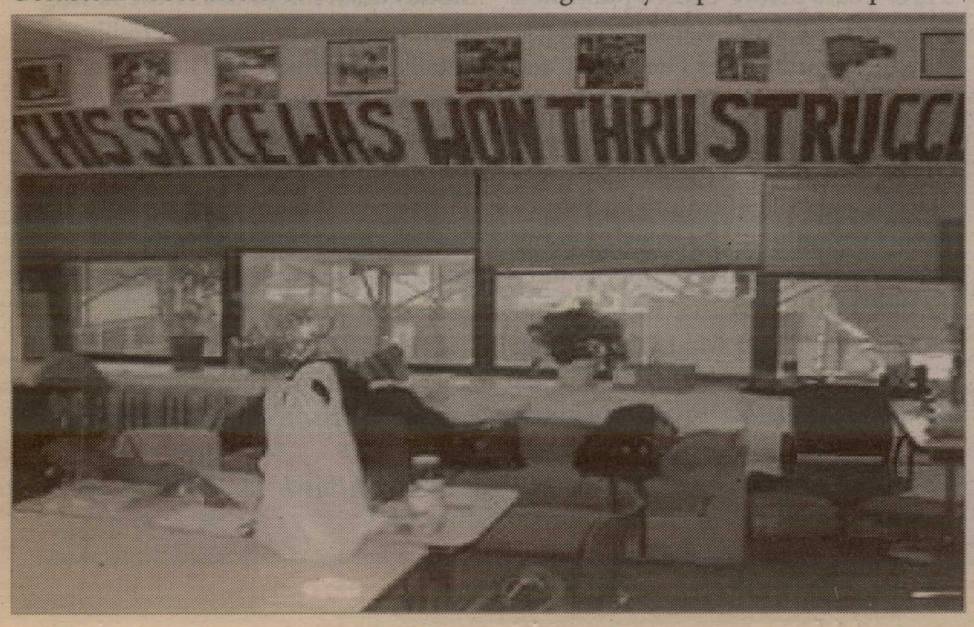
The conflict between students and the administration over the sign began in early December when the newspaper the *New York Post* ran a front page article with the headline "Disgrace!" in which the paper claimed that the Guillermo Morales/ Assata Shakur Student Center in the North Academic Center was named after a "convicted cop killer who left behind a lifetime of pain for the family of New Jersey State Trooper Werner Foerster," and that the student center's name was "a punch to the gut that has furious police groups demanding the publicly funded institution strip away the Black Liberation Army militant's name." Shortly after the publication of the article, the Chancellor of the City University of New York, Matthew Goldstein wrote a letter to the President of City College, Gregory H. Williams, demanding that the sign be removed. According to Chancellor Goldstein the University by-laws state that only the Board of Trustees has the right to name university centers and institutes and that the sign over the student center was a violation of those by-laws.

Although the student center had been named after Morales and Shakur for over seventeen years, the sign over the student center was removed on December 14th. The sign was later released to the student center's director Rodolfo Leyton by the Office of Public Safety.

The Morales/ Assata Shakur Student Center at City College was founded by City College students in 1990, during a series of organized protests against tuition increases at the University. It was during those protests that students took over the room. After the protests, students decided to use the room to form a community center to create greater ties between the college and the surrounding community. Since then the center has served as a home base for various student groups and organizations including SLAM: the Student Liberation Action Movement, which was founded in 1996 to combat further tuition increases.

Both Assata Shakur and Guillermo Morales are former City College students and for many students at the college they represent the spirit of revolutionary struggle that defines the organizations that use the center. In a press release issued December 12th, Harlem SLAM stated that: "We consider Assata Shakur to be one of the people who were wrongfully and purposefully framed for her activities. And we consider her a hero and role model for standing up for our people and putting her life on the line."

Although Assata Shakur, then a member of the Black Panther Party, was found guilty for the murder of New Jersey State Trooper Werner Foerster in 1973, her supporters insist that she is innocent. Assata Shakur escaped from the Clinton Correctional Facility for Women in New Jersey in 1979 and fled to Cuba where she has resided ever since. ■



Pataki Appoints Two Trustees in Last-Minute Senate Meeting

In a last minute Senate meeting on December 13th, 2006, purportedly called to finish a bill on civil confinement for sexual predators, the former Governor George Pataki and the New York State Senate confirmed two appointments to the CUNY Board of Trustees: Jeffrey Wiesenfeld and Solomon A. "Sam" Sutton.

Solomon A. Sutton, the newest member of the CUNY Board of Trustees is a graduate of Yeshiva University and is the Executive officer of Accessory Exchange Incorporated, a company that produces and distributes fine leather goods. He is also President of the Sephardic Community Federation, and the Vice-President of the Education Association for Children in New York State. In addition to Sutton's many business and civic activities he is a certified foster parent and has fostered at least a dozen children from New York State over the years.

The other appointment, Jeffrey Wiesenfeld, is a former member of the counterintelligence department of the FBI, a current sitting member of the CUNY Board of Trustees and is a principal with Bernstein Global Wealth Management. Wiesenfeld was originally appointed by Pataki in 1999. His tenure is set to expire in 2013.

Of the sixteen members of the CUNY Board of Trustees, seven are appointed by The New York state Governor at the approval of the State Senate and five are appointed by the Mayor of the City of New York. The remaining two members include the chairs of the CUNY Faculty and Student Senates. ■

Welcome to CUNY Inc.

FROM THE *editor's desk*

With the new appointment of Solomon "Sam" Sutton, and the unexpected re-appointment of Jeffrey Wesienfeld to the CUNY Board of Trustees, former governor George Pataki has implicitly approved and helped to reinforce the continued corporatization of the City University of New York. Like other university boards, the board of the City University of New York is composed almost exclusively of current or former corporate and/or business elites, often with little, if any, actual experience in the classroom or in educational administration. In other words, the members of the CUNY Board of Trustees have practically no understanding of what it is like to teach, work, or attend classes at the university. Instead, what they know, and what they are best at, is what all corporations are best at: selling products, cutting wages, fighting unions and unionization, defending shareholders' interests, and creating efficiency at all costs. This model, depending on how you look at it, may or may not work well for an auto manufacturer facing stiff global competition, but it is certainly not an appropriate way to run a university, where the product isn't merely knowledge, but experience.

The newest stooge to take to the dias of the BOT, Solomon Sutton is a fine example of the continued corporatization of the university. As the Chief Executive Officer of Accessory Exchange, Mr. Sutton has made a prestigious career, not publishing or teaching undergraduates, but, like his father, manufacturing and selling leather handbags. In a capitalist society like ours this is a lovely way to provide for one's family, and The Advocate admires Mr. Sutton's many community activities and his participation in the civic life of his city. However, Mr. Sutton, like nearly all of the members of the BOT, is woefully under qualified to deal with the real, complex, ethical, and political problems that face the university, and like so many members before him is bound to become another living, breathing, rubber stamp for the continuance of the Schmidt/Goldstein/Pataki agenda of corporate governance over the nation's largest urban university. In addition to his many civic activities, Mr. Sutton, who apparently has a lot of time on his hands, is also Vice-President of the Education Association for Children in New York State, a group whose name sounds suspiciously like The National Education Associtaion, but whose politics could not be more different. The Education Association for Children in New York State, or TEACH NYS is, according to its critics, a largely pro voucher group with a slick veneer of concerned citizenship, whose slogan "working for parents...and their children" uncannily reveals their real priorities to the parents of students who attend private (see religious) education institutions. Mr. Sutton's obvious pro-privatization stance will fit right in on a board of trustees whose ring leader is the former Chairman of the Board for Edison Schools: a company dedicated to the model of for-profit private education.

But Solomon's appointment is still less controversial than former Governor Pataki's last minute decision to push through the re-appointment of Jeffrey Weisenfeld, the loose cannon of the BOT, and a man who has virulently spoken out against the PSC CUNY union and called anti-war teach-ins at CCNY "seditious." Largely despised, Wiesenfeld's re-appointment was originally proposed by Pataki too late to be approved by the State Senate, a move that many pundits saw as a snuff against Wiesenfeld. However, Pataki, in his rush toward the presidency, scheduled an emergency session of the senate on Dec. 13, 2006 to, according to the *New York Sun*, "hammer out an agreement on a civil confinement bill for sexual predators." Under the guise of sexual predation, however, Pataki put forth a whole slew of bills that included, among other things, the two new appointments to the CUNY Board of Trustees.

Now that Governor Spitzer is in office we can only hope that he will prioritize an investigation of the structure and membership of the Board of Trustees. A good place to begin would be to refer to the Rand Corporation's report "The Governance of the City University of New York: A System at Odds with Itself" and to consult directly with the PSC, the Student Senate, and the University Faculty Senate before appointing any new members to the board. It is time that university governance reflects the concerns of the students, faculty, and staff of the university, and not the interests of politicians and corporations. ■

letters

Re: Grover Furr's "Lies, Damn Lies, and David Horowitz":

Grover Furr's recent article in *The GC Advocate*, "Lies, Damn Lies, and David Horowitz," treats many serious issues that deserve our complete attention as scholars and graduate students.

First, let me confess that I know Grover Furr from my years as an undergraduate at Montclair State University, where I took a course with him on the contemporary novel. Dr. Furr is a committed progressive activist on campus and has championed many causes, including the anti-war movement and numerous anti-racist struggles. For these reasons, he is generally respected by faculty and students. I personally respect what he and many other contemporary scholars in the field of Sovietology are doing to challenge the orthodox metanarrative of twentieth-century communist history. Several scholars in the field now contend that Soviet historiography has generally been more interested in serving the ideological needs of the Cold War rather than the disinterested pursuit of truth.

The ideological demands placed on the academy in the current period are not unlike those of the Cold War. Private and state funding has shifted from Sovietology to Middle East Studies to fund research that justifies U.S. military intervention in the region. We are living in an age where the theory and practice of imperialism is being rehabilitated by a combination of politicians, media pundits, and academics. Opposition to this hegemony is dealt with swiftly and ruthlessly as demonstrated by the cases of Ward Churchill, Grover Furr, and countless other academics and public intellectuals who decry imperialist wars of terror, torture camps, secret wire taps, and whatever other political expedients our rulers might deem necessary.

Now, more than ever, academics must organize to defend dissonant voices that dare to challenge the orthodoxy of the corporate state. We should be especially sensitive to the precarious position of untenured faculty — junior faculty, contingent faculty, and graduate students — whose academic freedom in the classroom can be easily chilled by attacks on them or their colleagues. Academic workers of the world, unite!

Frank Crocco, English Department

Re: Bush's Private Armies, Seen from Within:

"A minor point – one that you couldn't know – about Pelton. It's absolutely false that he was the only westerner to have spent time with Francis Ona on Bougainville. I can name three people immediately -- Wayne Coles-Janess, Mandy Cavatini, and her husband Fabio. These are all film makers. I'm an anthropologist who worked on Bougainville. I never met with Ona. Anyway, this is of course a small thing. But I thought you might like to know."

Don Mitchell

Idema's Warriors

"I read your review of Pelton's book with great interest, including your brief comments about Jack Idema. In the interest of an academic search for the truth, I think you will find a lot of very interesting facts about what Pelton wrote about Idema, as well as a theory of why Pelton devoted such space to him in his book, by contacting Idema's defense attorney, John Tiffany."

Ted Kavanau, CCNY 1955

Mr. Kavanau is far too diplomatic when he refers the "search for the truth". Apart from spelling Mr. Idema's name correctly, Mr. Pelton's work – more specifically the chapter devoted to Idema - can best be described as fiction – and not good fiction at that. I am not discussing a few defamatory comments, but a complete fictionalized account of events. What is even more disturbing is that Crown Publishers parent company – Random House – had more than adequate information and documents discounting a vast portion of the vicious and false diatribe presented by Mr. Pelton. Three years before Crown published Licensed to Kill, Random House – which published The Hunt for Bin Laden - possessed documents, recordings, photographs, and video which prove the falsity of Pelton's diatribe, and the questionable nature of his fraudulent sources. I only wish that we had an opportunity to discuss this matter further, and perhaps show you what I am talking about so that your review could be modified to reflect this great injustice perpetrated by Mr. Pelton.

John Edwards Tiffany, Esq.
Attorney for Jack Idema

Michael Busch responds:

I was pleasantly surprised by the response to my review of Robert Young Pelton's *Licensed to Kill*. It reminded me that the CUNY system benefits from a rich diversity of people and opinions.

Don Mitchell correctly points out that Pelton was not Francis Ona's only Western visitor to Bougainville. The error was my own. Many thanks for setting me straight.

As to the other letters, I admit to being skeptical of their intent. John Tiffany is right: Ted Kavanuagh's diplomacy is certainly misplaced. The Jack Idema case has summoned all manner of nuts from the conspiracy-theory woodwork.

While I respect Mr. Tiffany's commitment to seeking justice for his client, I am less impressed by the macho-mouthed Special Ops wannabes and other "super patriots" with which he's chosen to surround himself. Their wild (and wildly bad) writing can be savored online at www.superpatriots.us. Mr. Tiffany's willingness to associate with this motley assortment does little to help Idema's cause, or his own credibility. Finally, in no way am I qualified to evaluate charges of Pelton's supposedly libelous intent. The *Columbia Journalism Review*, however, is. Their assessment of the Idema case, and the evidence Mr. Tiffany purports to possess, can be easily accessed online at www.cjr.org.

That said, should Tiffany see fit to arrange a meeting with Idema in his Kabul prison cell, I'll gladly make the trip.

Michael Busch

Tech Notes: Dude, Where's My Computer Lab?

GC technology

THE GRADUATE CENTER'S INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY: MUSICAL CHAIRS

At the start of the Spring 2007 semester there will be several changes around the Graduate Center involving the Information Technology department and services. In an effort to make IT technicians more accessible within the library, several IT staff will be moving within the library, from the C-level concourse room C408 to the library's second floor, located behind the reference librarian's desk. The Assistive Technology office, headed by Sharon Lerner, will move to the library's first floor, to the space where the old copy machines were just beyond the circulation desk.

Room C-415A, which was a computer classroom, is now a "smart" classroom for regular non-computer classes. According to Bob Campbell, Assistant Vice President of Information Technology, this conversion was an effort to return classroom space to the students. The 20-25 computers that used to be in room C-415A were moved to room 6418 and now constitute a computer classroom.

Continuing the musical chairs-type moves, classes that used to meet in the room adjacent to the breakout space in the conference hall on the C-level concourse, room C-416, have been moved to the new C-415A in an effort to remove them from potential noise distractions from conferences and events in that area.

Room C-417 is now a seminar room, another space that was converted over to student use; (it was formerly used as storage).

There were numerous reasons for the room changes and switches, among them the need to make as many rooms available for scheduled classes as possible and an attempt to locate personnel in places where they would be most accessible. The continued trend of an overall increase in student enrollment was cited by Elaine Montilla, Acting Director of User Services, as another reason behind the recent moves.

Correction

It was erroneously reported in the November 2006 issue that the "All the world's a stage" speech is from *Macbeth*. Those who responded to say it was in fact from *As You Like It* passed the test. Good job!

Bob Nelson, Deputy Director of Student Services, said that the number of students enrolled at the Graduate Center has increased steadily, from 3,567 for Fall 2000 to 4,313 for Fall 2005 – or an increase of nearly 21%.

TO COMPUTE OR NOT TO COMPUTE?

With the new computer classroom installed on the Sixth Floor (Room 6418), the question raised is whether this room could be used as a computer lab during the times when there are no class meetings scheduled. The GC IT department is starting to explore this option, and is requesting some student feedback as to the following items:

- Would students want/use a computer lab on the Sixth Floor?
- What software applications should be considered for installation?
- What nature of resources would be used/needed?
- What time frame would be best for use as a computer lab? (mornings vs. afternoons vs. evenings; weekends, etc)

Please send an email with your feedback at: it@gc.cuny.edu

UPGRADING SOFTWARE

Other new developments that students will notice this month are updates of several software programs in use by local and public access computers throughout the Graduate Center. SPSS version 15.0 was recently acquired by the GC and should be up and running by the start of February, according to Montilla. As of late January, SPSS is available for student use from home via Citrix. The main improvements on version 15.0 are enhancements to the program's data management, visualization, reporting, and statistical applications.

Another updated program available through Citrix is End Note X.

Rounding out the recent software updates are ESRI ArcView 9.2, and ArcGIS 9.2. "Copies of ESRI ArcView 9.2 are now available to CUNY students taking ESRI related courses for a one-year period," said Montilla. In order to obtain this software, students should be advised that their professors will need to request ESRI ArcView 9.2 on their behalf. This may be done online at www.esri.com/slpromo. As far as obtaining ArcGIS 9.2, students should contact the IT department directly for installation information.

Lastly, Maple, a math and engineering software, will soon be available for student and faculty home use, according to James Haggard, Deputy CIO for Strategic Initiatives. By mid-February, students and faculty will be able to download Maple through the CUNY portal's E-Mall software center (www.cuny.edu), where students already have free access to download Symantec AntiVirus 10.0.

TELECONFERENCING AND TOLL FREE ACCESS NUMBERS

Over the semester break the Graduate Center has implemented a Teleconferencing Bridge, which now allows callers to participate in a scheduled teleconference call, free of charge, anywhere in the United States. Up to eight participants, both internal and external, will be eligible to participate in each individual conference call. The catch? Although this service is open to students, reservations are required and are subject to availability. In order to make a reservation, please call Jack Tralongo in the IT department at least 48 hours in advance of when you would like to schedule a conference call at (212) 817-7340. Instructions on how to use the Teleconference Bridge will be given at the time of reservation.

Another new service made available since December is toll free phone numbers to call into the Graduate Center. There are two main toll free numbers now running:

- 1 (877) 4-CUNY-GC (1-877-428-6942), which dials directly into the Graduate Center's main phone line. Callers may dial "0" to speak with the GC operator during the hours of 9am-5pm on weekdays.
- 1 (877) 846-9777, which allows callers to access the Graduate Center voicemail system to check voicemail from anywhere in the U.S.

One last toll free number that was activated in December is the one for accessing the Teleconference Bridge, (888) 228-4950.

TECHNOLOGY THAT WORKS: PUTTING TRACK-IT! TO WORK

The days of placing a call to the Information Technology Help Desk (ext-7300) to have someone fix a technology-related problem that you have encountered are numbered.

The recent acquisition of the updated version of Track-It! 7.0 will make life easier for all within the Graduate Center. Track-It! is the program used by the Help Desk to track all work order tickets opened (and closed) within the building. Some of the main features in version 7.0 include an automated notification application, which will notify users via their GC email when their work tickets are opened and closed, a self-service feature, which will allow users to open, edit, and close work tickets online, and a solutions database, so that users may trouble-shoot online first, should they desire, before opening a work order through the Help Desk.

The new version of Track-It! should be in place during February and, aside from allowing for greater ease in user-maintenance of work orders, has an additional advantage: it will free up the Help Desk technicians. On average during the semester, Montilla estimates that the Help Desk receives 25-30 calls per day, and sometimes up to 30 walk-ins per day, all seeking support for software, hardware, printers, copiers, etc.

With Track-It! 7.0's increased automated streamlining process, it is hoped that the time spent by the Help Desk opening, editing, and closing work tickets will be reduced, thus enabling the technicians to spend more time addressing the actual technological problem rather than filling out paperwork.

UPDATE FROM FALL 2006: GC PAPER CONSUMPTION

During the Fall, the *GC Advocate* reported on the alarming increase in printer paper consumption at the Graduate Center, an ongoing trend over the past several semesters. As of February, there is a print management project underway, headed by Jack Tralongo, to explore the different questions raised by and possible solutions to the GC's paper consumption problem.

This group is presently trying to define what are the parameters involved with managing the GC's paper consumption, and what technologies are available to solve this issue. ■

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THE ADVOCATE is published 3 times a semester, in September, October and November; and February, March and April. Submissions should be in by the beginning of the month, and print copies will be on the stacks around the 15th.

The Best and Worst of 2006

WORST EXAMPLES OF CUNY DISSING ITS OWN STUDENTS: CAROL LANG AND MIGUEL MALO

The City University of New York does not take the most open view possible toward freedom of speech on campus, as demonstrated by the university's unflagging hounding of two activists whose cases wound through the courts and the newspapers through 2005 and into 2006. Lang, the Theatre department secretary at City College, was involved in a March 2005 demonstration against military recruiters at CCNY. Two days after the incident she was arrested; but while the public case was resolved without conviction, the university nonetheless suspended her without pay for allegedly assaulting a peace officer. The arbitrator eventually ruled against Lang in August after months of hearings. But on one point where the arbitrator decided in her favor, involving a salary payment the arbitrator says was due her, the college administration still ignored the ruling and reportedly refused to shell out the eight hundred bucks. Meanwhile former Hostos Community College student Miguel Malo, convicted in October 2005 of the ridiculous charges of third-degree reckless assault and disorderly conduct for a one-man protest all the way back in 2001, was sentenced to probation and community service, but no jail time. Malo, Vice President of the Hostos Student Senate at the time of his arrest, was convicted of charges that stemmed from a protest against cuts in English as a Second Language funding at Hostos. The result of this lone voice calling attention to a vital question was one of the most overblown persecutions of speech in recent memory.

WORST EXAMPLE OF CUNY DISSING OTHER SCHOOLS' STUDENTS: THE RICHMAN SCHOOL LAND GRAB

Hunter College's rabid hunger for science facilities has led President Jennifer Raab into a disgraceful deal that gains a few square feet of lab space at the cost of shortchanging thousands of children and giving CUNY another self-inflicted black eye. It was revealed last summer that Hunter College had been quietly developing a land swap for two years with the Julia Richman Educational Complex on East 67th Street. The JREC is a New York City schools success story, praised for its innovation and standards in *New York City's Best Public High Schools: A Parents' Guide*; it's currently home to four flourishing high schools, a grade school, and an extraordinary special needs school for autistic students. Under the deal, the JREC would trade its prime Upper East Side location to Hunter in exchange for buildings owned by the college all the way down at 25th Street and First Avenue. Parents and friends of the school were outraged to hear about the secret deal that would force 1,900 students from six schools to abandon the recently renovated facilities and instead trek to the unsubwayed netherworld of Outer Gramercy, far from the museums, parks, and libraries of the UES. As Juan Gonzales sneered in the *Daily News*, "In other words, the need for Hunter's adult college students to be within walking distance of all their facilities is a greater public good than any inconvenience that could result to autistic children and second-graders." But who cares what happens to the children, as long as Hunter College can keep its test tubes all in one place? Way to go, Ebenezer Raab!

WORST EXAMPLE OF CUNY DISSING ITS OWN FACULTY: THE "CLIMATE OF FEAR" AT HUNTER

More bad news for Hunter. The college's select Committee on Academic Freedom, even limited as it was in its investigative powers, reported evidence last winter of "disturbing" and pervasive problems at Hunter contravening the "self-evident truth," in the words of CUNY Chancellor Matthew Goldstein, that higher education cannot function without academic freedom. "Even the perception of limitations on academic freedom has a profound effect on an institution," the committee reported, "and it was clear that many individuals perceived such problems." Reported problems included administrative pressure to offer or not offer certain courses based not on student need or academic criteria but administrative preference; senior administrators modifying the academic direction of a department without full consultation with the faculty; pressure from above to make or reverse decisions on hiring, promotion, and tenure; bypassing of official procedures for routine matters like search committees and student grading; and worst of all, a widespread perception that "dissent could lead to retaliation." This is serious stuff, striking at the core of Hunter's integrity as an academic institution. On top of all of this, so far the university has shown no enthusiasm for rooting out these malignancies reported in the Hunter College infrastructure. Perhaps outside groups like the AAUP investigating CUNY will be able to light a fire under the higher-ups and wake them up to the danger to the collegiate reputations they seem to value so highly. Hey President Raab, what's your damage, anyway? It's your job to prevent this. And it's certainly your job to fix it.

WORST EXAMPLE OF THE CUNY BUREAUCRACY FEEDING ITSELF: BARUCH'S PRESIDENT GETS A FREE HOUSE!

Kathleen Waldron, President of Baruch College, has reportedly raked in the dough for CUNY, and it seems the Board of Trustees knows how to give a little love back to its rainmakers. Waldron is the recipient of an especially nice perquisite: a new house to be purchased by the university. And not just any house. According to the April 2006 minutes from the CUNY Board of Trustees, the new residence will be a "condominium apartment on 27th St., between 5th and Madison Avenues, in Manhattan, at a cost of no more than $2,500,000." Good thing they're keeping it reasonable. It's not like $2.5 million could buy anything useful to the students anyways. The purchase, say the minutes, is to be covered by "the proceeds of the sale of cooperative apartment 4A at 145 Central Park West," a former residence for the president of the GC. If the GC president's ex-address doesn't ring a bell, you might know it as the San Remo – "the city's most beautiful apartment building and one of its most prestigious addresses," according to *The Upper West Side Book*. Nice to know that CUNY's college presidents are ensconced in the most unaffordable apartments in Manhattan, with our tuition footing the bill.

BEST EXAMPLE OF CUNY RESPECTING ITS STUDENTS: THE GC IT TURNAROUND

Remember last March when the Graduate Center's IT people were actually telling students, "Don't trust your U drive"? Some signs seemed to indicate a slow reversal of fortune for IT in 2006. Most intriguing is the promise of near-term wi-fi capacity in limited areas of the building – an amenity that's already par for the course at other CUNY campuses like Brooklyn College. Demonstrating a commitment to the Apple platform, the GC also purchased ten new iMacs out of student tech fee funds and brought in an actual Mac specialist, Michael Oman-Reagan. The IT folks have also targeted software updates, which have long been lagging, and improved access to Mina Rees databases. Longer-range plans include gearing up to transition to the new Windows OS and the latest version of Office and over a hundred new PCs for faculty and staff. Robert D. Campbell, the new GC IT VP, admitted last fall that "a lot of needs were uncovered" and that they had "a significant amount of work to do to get the resources in line" with GC community needs. Given how heavily students depend on GC's technology resources, more proactivity from IT can only be a good thing.

MOST PROMISING INITIATIVE BY THE DSC: WHAT TO DO ABOUT STUDENT HEALTH INSURANCE

Last fall the DSC started soliciting information from GC students about their health insurance needs. Considering how expensive the available GHI plan is, it's a good bet a large swath of GC students is underinsured or uninsured. Let's hope enough students back up the DSC's Health Issues Committee that new alternatives materialize soon. To offer your suggestions, go to the forums at the DSC web site, cunydsc.org.

THE 2006 "WIN SOME, LOSE SOME" AWARD: THE NEW PSC CONTRACT

After *several years* without a contract, the Professional Staff Congress (PSC)/CUNY reached a tentative agreement with CUNY in April. The PSC characterized the final contract as a pragmatic victory. Included were modest salary increases, increased pay for sabbaticals, and increased benefits (including dental) for full-time faculty and staff. There were also several provisions affecting part-time/adjunct faculty, including mild pay increases; a fund for professional development grants for adjuncts; 100 new full-time lecturer positions earmarked for experienced CUNY adjuncts; and paid sick days for non-teaching adjuncts and adjunct CLTs. That a contract with some basics but few goodies was such a Herculean achievement indicates both a willingness to work together on the part of the PSC and CUNY, and a vast need for CUNY labor relations to improve before the expiration of the new contract opens up the possibility of a new period without one.

THE "BLINK AND YOU MISSED IT" AWARD: THE BAR

For 22 days last spring, the GC had its own bar (recalling the more freewheeling days when the GC was back over by Bryant Park). Our beer-loving reviewer labeled the libations delicious and reasonably priced – evidently *too* reasonably for the profit-gouging bean counters at Restaurant Associates, which ran the saloon as an extension of the disturbingly overpriced 365 Café and which has an exclusive lock on GC catering. On March 17, Vice President of Student Affairs Matthew Schoengood sounded the death knell via an email: "Although we had hoped to provide this service on a trial basis through the end of Spring 2006 semester, it became apparent that this was not an economically feasible venture." No further details were provided. So we're all back to sneaking flasks into the classrooms like before.

MOST ENVELOPE-PUSHING *ADVOCATE* ARTICLE: THE PLEA TO STOP HOVERING

A March *Advocate* article about the GC's commendable response to various toilet facility shortcomings was followed up with an excoriation in the May issue of women who hover over the seats in GC bathrooms. "The GC staff does an impeccable job of keeping this place far cleaner than many of our own homes," explained writer Ellen Zitani; "there is certainly no need for you to go and pee all over it." That's the *Advocate* for you, always standing up for the needs of GC students – or rather, sitting down. All the way down. ■

Coming to Voice: What My Students Taught Me

MARTA BLADEK

dispatches
FROM THE FRONT

During the first difficult semester in graduate school when the task of aspiring to belong to the community of scholars seemed overwhelming, I came across an essay by Jennifer Lynn Fellman called "Damsels in Distress: Performing Femininities" from her book *Never a Dull Moment: Teaching and the Art of Performance*. In it, Fellman writes about the unsettling silence she encounters in the classes she teaches. Her students, mostly women, some of them immigrants, either speak in low and shaky voices or don't speak at all.

This insightful and engaging essay struck a chord with me. Reading about women who can't bring themselves to take part in class discussions because they are too timid to speak up, I felt a pang of recognition. Her female students' voices, as Fellman writes, remain dormant, silent, or barely audible at best. Fearful to make a claim to an idea, believing that the thought doesn't deserve to be shared with others precisely because it is theirs, the women feel uncomfortable having to respond to Fellman's probing questions. Their shyness and insecurity prevent them from speaking up, from hearing their own voices, and from making sure others can hear them too. Perplexed with women "who refuse to speak loud enough to be heard" (88), Fellman still insists that they contribute to discussion. She purposefully calls on them even when they don't raise their hands. After all, as she argues, making sure a student develops his or her own unique voice should be at the heart of feminist pedagogy (95). As a teacher committed to feminism and as a woman aware of gendered expectations that shape her students' attitudes about who they are and what they are capable of, Fellman sees the college classroom as a place where women's silence should and has to *be broken*.

It is not only women's self-imposed and well practiced unobtrusiveness, however, that troubles Fellman. What she finds even more disturbing is the fact that it isn't challenged enough by teachers who allow the women in their classes to remain silent by accepting their passivity. Instead of encouraging empowerment through self-expression, as Fellman sees it, the academy is complicit in tolerating and even encouraging a status quo that takes women's unassuming and silent presence for granted.

To illustrate the empowering effect public speaking can have on a woman's self-esteem and her sense of academic competence, Fellman recalls a shy Russian student who rarely participated in discussions yet wrote ones of the most insightful papers in her class. The young woman, confronted by Fellman, explained that her Slavic accent was to blame for her silence: it was embarrassing to her and as far as she could tell it was embarrassing to others too. As Katrina argued, not only had she nothing to say, but she could not even say it properly. Fellman, of course, was not convinced. She arranged a teaching assistantship for her. Katrina took it up. When she returned to Fellman at the end of the semester, she summed it up by saying that finding out that she was capable of speaking in front of a group of her peers had been the most empowering experience in her life.

Three years later, as I was preparing to teach my first class, I returned to Fellman's essay. As much as I would like to say that the excitement about the opportunity to team-teach a class inspired me to recognize myself not in one of Fellman's quiet students but rather in her confident teacher persona, I still identified myself with Katrina – before her transformation into an articulate teaching assistant no longer held back by her accent. And, as I was slowly realizing, in my new role as a teacher, I could no longer count on a professor to call on me. It would be my task to make sure that everyone in my class had a say. But to do that, I had to find my own voice first.

Unlike most of the students in my program, I was beginning to teach only at the end of my third year in graduate school. I doubted I had been ready before, and I still had my doubts then. Entering a classroom for the first time, I was weighed down by feelings of scholarly ineptitude and felt very uncomfortable with the thought of being asked to find myself not in the usual role of a student but that of a professor. I was also painfully aware of the virtual non-existence of anything I might refer to as my pedagogical approach.

Moreover, I was shy and I knew it would show when I taught. I remembered that as a college student, I felt uneasy when faced with timid female professors. I expected them to display all the traits a great teacher should have: intelligence, passion, and confidence. I felt disappointed when they didn't. In addition, having spent years in the Eastern European educational system, I perceived the air of authority an instructor projected as proof of his or her credentials.

Only belatedly, as the new semester was approaching and it was my turn to step into their shoes, I began to empathize with the soft-spoken women who taught me in the past.

During the first few weeks of classes, when it was my turn to lead the discussion, my voice was trembling; I was speaking too low. I had the impression that my students couldn't hear me. To make matters worse, I was afraid they couldn't understand me either. As I saw it, standing in front of the group, controlling the flow of conversation, assigning homework, and grading papers, I was taking a position I had no right to and every one of my students knew it. After all, I pretended to know how to teach when I was only learning it.

And yet, the students in my evening class, most of them women, were kind and supportive. Of course, nothing happened the way I had expected it. Still, my students were a wonderful group to work with. What I found striking, however, was that just as I didn't emanate Fellman's natural confidence and lacked her outspokenness, my female students differed from the "damsels in distress" she was encountering in her classes. From the beginning, they didn't hesitate to speak up. To my astonishment, they raised their hands when I posed a question. Even more thrilling was the fact that they were asking me for answers and trusted I would provide them! In my classroom, then, the characteristics Fellman attributes to herself and her students were reversed. It was not the students who had to be encouraged to speak up; it was I, their professor, who had to learn to raise her voice loud enough to be heard.

A few of the women in my class stood out in particular.

Jennifer, in her early twenties, was extremely bright and articulate. Every time she raised her

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What Do We Do When the Lights Go out at CUNY?

KARL LINDSKOOG

On January 10 the New York State Higher Education Committee heard testimony from members of the Professional Staff Congress (PSC) on the devastating impact that underfunding and de-funding has had on the City University of New York. As part of the PSC delegation, I tried to convey the experience of graduate students. I spoke about the low wages and heavy workload of adjuncts, the lack of health insurance for graduate students, and the general inability of CUNY to support its graduate students. Combined with the testimony from the other faculty and staff, the committee members faced a pretty bleak picture of the current state of the university.

In response, Assemblyman Joel Miller offered an anecdote. One night while he was sitting at home with his wife the electricity failed and the lights went out. He and his wife assumed Con Edison was aware of the problem and that their electricity would be restored shortly. After two hours of sitting in the dark, they called Con Ed only to find out that the electric company did not even know of the power outage. Our testimony before the committee, Miller told us, had finally alerted them that the lights were out at CUNY.

I am not sure that I believe this was the first time Mr. Miller and the other committee members had heard of the desperate need for funding at CUNY, but the implication that this new knowledge would transform their behavior was encouraging nonetheless. Indeed, students at the Graduate Center know that the lights have been out for quite some time. A few responses to a survey of GC student-workers conducted last year by the Adjunct Project capture their frustration. One student writes,

"It is shameful that Graduate Assistants do not receive health insurance. I get paid sub-par working wages as a teacher for CUNY which forces me to take on a second job in order to pay the Graduate Center for my GHI health insurance. The amount of paid labor a CUNY grad student must undertake in order to survive makes finishing a Ph.D. within a reasonable amount of time very difficult. CUNY grad students are thus in school for longer periods, paying more and more money to CUNY."

Another respondent concurred: "I walk around holding my breath that nothing happens where I have to see a doctor because of the complete lack of benefits offered to teaching fellows. How are we supposed to pay for outside health care when our wages barely allow us to pay rent? . . . Something needs to be done to raise wages of the teaching fellows and adjuncts so that there is not such a HUGE disparity between the cost of living in NYC and our wages."

These statements are old news to the many graduate students working at CUNY. We have been working and studying in the dark for years. But if graduate students are aware that something is terribly wrong, is there any sense of what needs to be done to remedy the situation? Will obtaining increased funding fix the problem? Is the hardship of graduate students and adjuncts in general simply the product of CUNY's lack of resources, or is it also the product of how the resources are being distributed?

If graduate students are inclined to think the problem derives from both the amount and the distribution of resources, then any solution must not focus exclusively on the state and city budgets. An effective solution must somehow force the administration to allocate more money to funding graduate students, providing essential benefits like health insurance, and raising wages for adjuncts.

The organization in the best position to achieve this solution for graduate students is the PSC, the union that represents graduate student workers along with other part-time and full-time faculty and staff at CUNY. Yet, many students at the Graduate Center do not seem convinced that the PSC can bring about the change they so desperately need. If they were, they would join the union and maybe even participate in campaigns aimed to improve benefits and wages for graduate students and other part-timers. But as of 12/01/06, only about a quarter of Graduate Assistants (a title that includes teaching, writing, and technology fellows but not regular adjuncts) had joined the union. That means that only 1.5 percent of the 10,894 part-timers at CUNY are unionized graduate assistants. That is not a very sizable bloc to push for something like health insurance for graduate students.

I have heard many understandable reasons why graduate students might not join the PSC or become active in union campaigns. While wandering the hallways of the Graduate Center you may have heard one or all of the following comments: After coursework, research, and teaching who has time for such activity? If I am going to be at CUNY for only the next few years at most, why should I devote my precious time and energy to the union? And does the union even do anything for graduate student workers anyway? After all, we didn't see any great benefit in the last contract. Why should the next one be any different?

Although I have held all of these perspectives at various times, I would like to offer a counter-argument. Graduate students should join the union because an enlarged and activated student body could bring about some real improvements in our experience as students and as workers. The PSC and CUNY management will soon return to the bargaining table to negotiate the new contract. With this in mind, the Part-timers' Committee of the PSC has crafted a coherent set of contract demands, which include health insurance for graduate assistants and increased pay for adjuncts to lessen the wage gap between part-time and full-time faculty.

If a growing number of graduate students join the union and begin to actively advance these demands, the union may realize that they cannot let CUNY management deny us any longer. Yes, graduate students know the lights are out at CUNY. We must now refuse to continue working and studying in the dark. ■

DISPATCHES *from 5*

hand, I could count on her great insights that would take the discussion in an unexpected and exciting direction. I admired her unwavering confidence and her willingness to test her ideas on her fellow students. Jennifer was open enough to engage in dialogue with someone else, but she never doubted the worth of her own thoughts on a subject.

Luz, on the other hand, was a mature woman, an activist committed to equal rights, well aware of her own powerful presence. She was unapologetic about her ambition to finally get a diploma after decades of being held back from college by the necessity to raise and then support a family. I watched with awe the interaction between Luz and the younger women in the class: even if I was not doing a great job as a mentor, Luz certainly did.

To me, an insecure and overwhelmed adjunct instructor, these women were a revelation: they were outspoken, confident, and intellectually curious. Instead of obsessing over their gaps in knowledge, which, I admit, became my personal preoccupation in graduate school, they took in new things and simply added them to what they already knew.

They were not embarrassed at having to ask a question about the meaning of a word or a passage that sounded particularly confusing. They knew they were learning and that learning had the strange propensity to simultaneously make you smarter and more aware of your own ignorance. But for them, these new discoveries and the changes in their perception of some issues, were the thrill of the learning process. Their attitude reminded me of the unabashedly sincere intellectual excitement that led me to pursue a graduate degree in the first place, but which was somehow lost when I became busy making sure I could keep up with the demands of the graduate-level coursework. Watching my students and listening to their conversations, I remembered my undergraduate enthusiasm and I wanted it back.

Slowly, as the weeks passed by, I spoke less and less hesitantly. No longer frantically focused on what I would have to say next, I was able to follow my students' arguments more carefully. Consequently, my comments were more in tune with their train of thought. Gradually, my emerging sense of ease made everyone more comfortable too. I noticed that those few students whose faces were betraying the combination of fear and excitement I knew so well myself – the desire to say something and the simultaneous conviction that whatever you want to say does not matter – were becoming more actively engaged in discussions. They were speaking up more often, joining me in my own efforts to overcome shyness and inhibiting self-doubts.

But how exactly was my nurturing and non-threatening way of being a teacher fit in the paradigm of feminist pedagogy set up by Fellman?

No matter how hard I worked on it, I doubt I managed to project the confidence that would inspire the women in my class to take up challenges in their own lives. They would not learn just by observing **me** that a loud voice makes a person's presence known and impossible to ignore.

Yet, the point was, they did not need to learn it from me: they already knew it.

So, just as Fellman came to define the goals of feminist pedagogy based on her classroom interactions with students, after my first semester as a teacher, I have also arrived at my tentative teaching philosophy.

Comparing Fellman's students with mine and noting the different problems and obstacles these two groups of women faced, I came to the conclusion that feminist pedagogy should, first of all, be responsive to our students' needs that may not be identical depending on the contexts in which we teach. What was a challenge for Fellman didn't present a problem in my classroom. Instead of having to draw out my students' voices, my task as a teacher was to make sure their engaged curiosity and commitment to learning would translate into their academic success.

What I have come to refer to as "situated feminist pedagogy," then, questions the viability of universal and generalized principles of what constitutes good teaching practices. I argue instead that we should teach our students what they need to be taught, constantly reassessing our preconceptions about our roles and tasks as teachers.

One of the important insights my first semester of teaching led to was the recognition that teaching and learning are reciprocal processes. The teacher and student roles are not static. The flow of knowledge is not unidirectional. We learn as we teach, and we teach as we learn. The other important lesson I took away from my students was that the multiplicity of voices, the conversations they form, and the exchange of ideas that takes place through them is all that teaching, learning and intellectual pursuit should be about. ■

SPRING Books PULLOUT

The Horror, the Horror: 2006 in Horror

TONY MONCHINSKI

book REVIEW

- *Cell* by Stephen King (Scribner, 384 pages)
- *The Ruins* by Scott Smith (Knopf, 336 pages)
- *The Road* by Cormac McCarthy (256 pages)

What is it about good horror fiction that hooks a reader? On the one hand, the author presents the audience with a work that calls for a suspension of disbelief. The horror fan understands this, expects it, and willingly submits to the writer's fancy. Setting aside any credence, the reader gives himself the chance to embrace an author's fabrication. This is the implicit agreement to which one consents when picking up a horror novel: we invite the dread, the awfulness. We *expect* and hope the writer will enmesh us within his fantasy. There is, at the same time, the unspoken assumption that the author will deliver the goods; that she will take us on a roller coaster ride of emotion culminating, ultimately, if not in satisfaction, then at least in entertainment.

2006 was a good year for horror novels. Among others, Stephen King's *Cell*, Scott Smith's *The Ruins*, and Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* all secured spots on the New York Times bestseller list. *Cell* led the way, released early in January. *The Ruins*, Scott Smith's follow up to his 1993 first novel *A Simple Plan*, issued over the summer, with Stephen King pronouncing it the best horror novel of the early twenty-first century. McCarthy's *The Road* dropped at the end of September with positive reviews still reverberating throughout the press.

Devendra Varma notes that "The difference between Terror and Horror is the difference between awful apprehension and sickening realization: between the smell of death and stumbling against a corpse." It is this difference that separates the first two novels from the third. *Cell* and *The Ruins* start out with the promise of terror but devolve into the horrific realization that both are grossly overrated. *The Road* promises nothing, a terrifying pledge in and of itself, and delivers resoundingly.

Here's the thing about Stephen King: he hasn't published a great book since 1978. That was the year *The Stand* released, following on the heels of such classics as *Carrie* (1974) and *Salem's Lot* (1975). Arguably *The Long Walk* (1979) and *The Running Man* (1982) extend his run of quality fiction, but both were published under his Richard Bachman nom-de-plume. The problem for King fans — which I admit to — being weaned on his early great stuff *isn't* that the man keeps publishing. It's that the quality of his proliferation varies. The occasional enjoyable book is sandwiched between the interminable, and lately it seems that King is even recycling old material.

Consider *Cell*. With a dedication to George Romero and Richard Matheson that ostensibly gets him off the hook for plagiarism, King presents us with a promising first hundred pages. Protagonist Clayton Riddell, away from home on business, is standing on a metropolitan street in broad day light, thinking about returning home to his wife and child. Through Clayton's eyes we witness the fallout from "The Pulse," a terrorist attack to which 9-11 pales in comparison. An electronic message is sent through people's cell phones, transforming anyone who happens to be using one at that moment into a jabbering homicidal maniac. Clayton watches in horror as people, who, seconds ago, were perfectly normal, go postal and, as if infected with *28 Days Later*'s rage virus, bludgeon, stab and masticate others to death.

As much as these first hundred pages tantalize, they also hint of the disappointment to come. Part of a writer's task is to keep the action *going*. King strands Clayton on the thoroughfare for way too long, using the situation as an expository device to illustrate the growing carnage around the character. Clayton grabs the only other sane man on the street next to him — they weren't *on* their cell phones when the Pulse sounded — and the two set out on a quest to survive and, hopefully, get back to Clayton's wife and child. Along the way the circle around Clayton enlarges as he surrounds himself with a menagerie of survivors, some better equipped — mentally and physically — than others.

As Romero explored the issue of zombie "evolution" in *Land of the Dead*, King presents a horde of blood thirsty maniacs that slowly but surely organize, as if, as per a union activists' dream, realizing strength comes in numbers. Their organization is centered around radios and palaver. At night the maniacs lay around in football fields and parking lots while boom boxes blast muzak, recharging their neural batteries, as if all tied into one gigantic brain. Their jabber itself reminds one of similar vocifferations emerging from characters in other King novels, notably the Tak in *Desperation*. The "one-sane-man in an insane world" theme resonates through many a King novel, as it does in Romero's undead films and Matheson's *I Am Legend*. It is a challenging theme, but is it one King is still up to wrestling with?

His writing has been commodified like the works of few other authors. King has a column in *Entertainment Weekly* where he expounds on his top-ten favorite TV shows (he thinks highly of *The Wire*) and movies (*Borat* doesn't make the cut). One reader-reviewer on *Amazon.com* opines that "King writes novels pretty much the way McDonald's sells hamburgers", noting that much of his oeuvre is "not nourishing or particularly tasteful, but every once in a while they're just something for which one has an occasional hankering."

The fast food metaphor is apt. How often do we get a hankering for a McDonald's French fry? We know — if we've seen Morgan Spurlock's *Supersize Me* or read his *Don't Eat This Book* — that those fries aren't good for us. Seal one in a glass jar and come back two months later and the thing will not have decomposed one bit. But that knowledge ultimately doesn't dampen our hankering. And, like French fries, it's near impossible to stop with just one.

It's the same, one suspects, for Stephen King the man and his fans. Many of us were relieved a few years back when King announced his retirement from writing novels. Everyone wants to see the champ go out on top, but that time had — despite what register receipts might say — come and gone for the Maine native. His departure proved short-lived, less so than Jay-Z's or Michael Jordan's. And it appears there is no stopping King: in addition to *Cell*, 2006 also saw the release of his *Lisey's Story*. As this issue of *The Advocate* goes to press, King's *The Secretary of Dreams* should be just coming out.

What can one say when Stephen King heaps accolades on Scott Smith's *The Ruins*? Perhaps take it as a warning and — unlike that novel's American *touristas* vacationing in Cancun — steer clear? Jeff, Amy, Stacy, and Eric, all recently having graduated college, enjoy the sun and tequila in Mexico. They accompany Mathias, a German they meet, to look for his brother who has recently disappeared with a female anthropologist working at a reclusive site. One of three Greeks they affectionately call Pablo tags along. When they stumble closer to the dig a concerned taxi driver and some Mayan villagers try to warn them off, but impatient, impetuous, go-anywhere ugly American tourists and those they drag with them are not easily dissuaded.

The six soon find themselves trapped on a vine-covered hill, the site of the excavation. The seemingly benign Mayan villagers, now armed with bows and rifles, circle the bottom of the hill, refusing to let them leave. Pablo takes a tumble down an excavation tunnel and breaks his back. *Making matters worse, it turns out* the vines covering the hill are sentient and eat people alive. Intelligent vines, they're capable of mimicking people, animals, and electronics equipment (the chirp of a cell phone in the cave below draws Pablo to his doom).

For the next two days all manner of nastiness visits itself upon the six. They have to plan to drink their own urine — none of them being very well stocked for this venture to begin with. The vines attempt to turn them against one another, echoing some off-color comments Eric made about Nazis when Mathias is around to hear. The vines get inside people's bodies, leading to one character's flaying himself. Their hope — that "The Greeks", Pablo's companions, will come looking for them — fades. The Mayans wait patiently at the bottom of the hill for the vines to placate themselves on this latest sacrifice.

Again, here is a novel that starts out terrifying. As it unfolds the suspense builds. Oftentimes we look back upon a work and declare it anti-climatic. *The Ruins* proves anti-climatic a third of the way through, dragging on from there. One of the biggest problems with the novel is the choice of "ancient terrors." Vines? Come on Scott Smith. Although John Wyndham did something similar in 1951 with *Day of the Triffids*, *The Ruins* lacks that novel's social commentary.

Which brings us to Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*. Not a horror

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Of Free Trade and High-Tech Magellans

book REVIEW

- *The World Is Flat* by Thomas Friedman (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005. 496 pages.)

MAURICE LEACH

There is good news and bad news about millionaire *New York Times* columnist Tom Friedman's latest work *The World is Flat.* The good news: this is a great intro to the current and ongoing hi-tech revolution. The bad news: this book has a lot of fat and it gets repetitive, especially after 300 pages with tons of anecdotes you can review at your own leisure. But worse *The World is Flat* at times reads like a free trade propaganda piece, highlighting all the benefits but few of the disadvantages of unfettered, unregulated markets. It is sadly lacking in serious political context and analysis that would help Friedman better explicate why not everyone is on board with the largely business-driven changes in technology sweeping the post-industrial world. Let us help him, shall we?

The title, *The World is Flat,* is a somewhat overdone reference to the broad horizontalization that high technology is creating in labor and communications. It is supposedly a paradox – in which Friedman juxtaposes his "discovery" that the world is flat with the story of Columbus discovering that the world is round (or was that Magellan?) – which occurs *after Friedman visits India and learns* that it is possible to outsource various and sundry tasks (such as tax preparation) there or anywhere, revolutionizing our notions of how work can be performed. The only obstacles to this phenomenon of globalization are politics and terrorism. Since only dull or simple tasks will be outsourced, American workers will be freed to work on more complex tasks creating new technologies, jobs, and marketing opportunities not now conceivable.

To better explicate this concept of flattening Friedman provides an anecdote about how technology was flattening the military's command structure by providing better information to soldiers in the field and thus facilitating their capacity to make adjustments in real time without waiting first for input from officers in higher echelons of the service. Although it's not clear just how desirable this is for the commanding officers, some of Friedman's most provocative comments come in his discussion of the flattening of hierarchies. Maybe there is some potential there.

The phenomena contributing to this flattening effect include "home sourcing" where it is now possible to enter a McDonald's restaurant but have orders taken by a call center worker in another city or state entirely; "E-tutoring," where you can get an education without ever leaving home; "uploading," where a web-user can upload content and broadcast it without waiting for traditional media organizations and institutions to publish it; "file-sharing," another related practice facilitated by a type of free software or freeware where web users swap files at no extra dollar cost; and "insourcing" in which global supply chains are synchronized for large and small companies. Also relevant are open-source communities where community-developed software is written and deployed as either freeware or shareware, and the trend toward interactivity on the web as manifested by blogging and the popularity of such websites as Youtube.com, the online interactive encyclopedia Wikipedia, and Myspace.com, which has created online communities open to participation by any web user.

The book's most outstanding sections are the ones which discuss such captains of post-industry as Marc Andreesen and Jim Clark who founded Netscape (formerly Mosaic) and started the dotcom bubble; Tim Berners-Lee – a British scientist consulted for the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN), who developed the concept of the World Wide Web; and John Doerr and Scott Hyten of Wild Brain, who developed interoperability between machines, streamlining communications and facilitating the sharing of complex tasks to flexible rather than fixed locations

Friedman isn't completely oblivious to the problems and challenges presented by globalization. He raises a critical point by Sandel but doesn't incorporate it into his own conclusions.

> Sandel startled me slightly by remarking that the sort of flattening process that I was describing was actually first identified by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engles in the Communist Manifesto, published in 1848. While the shrinking and flattening of the world that we are seeing today constitute a difference of degree from what Marx saw happening in his day, said Sandel, it is nevertheless part of the same historical trend Marx highlighted in his writings on capitalism – the inexorable march of technology and capital to remove all barriers, boundaries, and restraints to global commerce.

Sandel tells Friedman,

> In the Communist Manifesto, he described capitalism as a force that would dissolve all feudal, national, and religious identities, giving rise to a universal civilization governed by market imperatives. Marx considered it inevitable that capital would have its way – inevitable and desirable. Because once capitalism destroyed all national and religious allegiances...it would lay bear the stark struggle between capital and labor. Forced to compete in a global race to the bottom, the workers of the world would unite in a global revolution to end oppression. Deprived of consoling distractions such as patriotism and religion, they would see their exploitation clearly and rise up to end it.

All this flattening business is just a means for companies to find the cheapest way to produce goods and services and increase profit, Sandel concludes. Yet Friedman's discussion of Wal-Mart presents the strongest argument in his work that maximizing profit should not be the overriding consideration in business when its leads to such problems as the lack of affordable healthcare for its employees, canceling of employee pension programs or lowered job security and morale. This is especially proven when Wal-Mart's competitors are able to run successful companies without making so many of the same compromises.

Also omitted are externalities especially that sine quo non of externalities, global warming. How will the problem of global warming affect globalization? China and India may be joining the industrialized world but how will the industrialization of these countries create even deeper environmental strains and stresses before the world's ecosystem collapses entirely? The Earth has a finite amount of resources and is already showing a declining capacity to absorb the deleterious chemical effects of industrialization from the countries that have already succeeded to this point.

Now onto the bad news, which is the staggering lack of any wider political context for the flattening effect. Friedman presents a chronology of globalization starting with 1492 and ostensibly the "discovery" of America by Columbus as his baseline, and continuing through various phases until we reach what he calls Globalization 3.0 which the world economy has reached today. He breaks down the process of globalization into three different phases: Phase I from 1492-1800, Phase II from 1800-2000, and Phase III, or Globalization 3.0, which commenced in 2000 and continues today . However, these phases are defined entirely in terms of technology. The words imperialism, colonialism, and slavery never appear anywhere in this discussion. Yet globalization has often resulted in the ruthless exploitation of black, brown, and white peoples in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and even Europe itself. It may be an inconvenient fact for pro-globalization boosters but this exploitation not only happened, it practically defined the era from the 16th to the mid-20th centuries as a group of small capitalist European states came to dominate the entire world and rule it entirely for their own benefit.

Friedman makes the debatable point that capitalist economies are governed from the ground up with the interests of the people in mind. Does modern China resemble a bottom up capitalist structure? Aren't Japan, Korea, and Singapore examples of state sponsored capitalist states with central economic planning of a type of state-corporate partnership once derided as Fascism in the 1930s? What about China's poor human rights record as attested to by Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International? Too inconvenient to mention I suppose, to quote again former Vice President Al Gore.

Most free-trade policies that help drive the flattening effect are supported by a small number of corporate elites and their political supporters in Washington because there is no widespread agreement that globalization is something all citizens of all countries want. As Schaeffer argues in his work *Understanding Globalization: Social Consequences of Political, Economic, and Environmental Change*, it is often presented as inevitable, like a force of nature, rather than the outcome of deliberate and conscious corporate and government policies. Globalization has often been opposed by a huge cross-section of groups that includes labor, environmentalists, minority groups, feminists, and small to medium business owners. These groups oppose globalization because it involves relocating jobs to cheap unregulated, non-unionized, labor markets where environmental regulations are minor or non-existent and where the monopolization of the free market by large conglomerates often results in the elimination of competition. Globalization usually creates downward pressure on wages which disproportionately affects those groups already at or near the bottom of the wage scale. Those who support it are the economic and political elites, who promote it because it serves their financial self-interest, and who have propagandized its limited advantages to all classes of the society. To Friedman the American public is just misinformed and needs to be educated about the advantages to them of globalization.

Nor is it evident that the wondrous technological advantages of globalization are really all that global. To paraphrase Schaeffer: despite the plaudits from business economists, some academic theorists question whether globalization is just corporate hyperbole

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LEACH *from page 8*
because it really doesn't impact the lives of most people around the world in any substantive manner. Even pro-globalization scholars acknowledge that most people around the globe do not have enough money to save or invest in global financial markets – including most citizens of the world's wealthiest nations. Most of the global production in goods and services is consumed_within the originating country. Most of the world's labor is not employed by transnational corporations because it is engaged in either growing their own food, or working for small businesses, non-profit organizations, and the public sector. Most of the world's population does not own telephones, computers, fax machines, televisions, refrigerators, automobiles, radios, or game consoles, so the technologies said to be revolutionizing the world have had little impact on their daily lives. Globalization is selective not universal and therefore not truthfully "global" in scope at all. Some parts of the globe, like the Asia-Pacific region, are being integrated into a multinational capital and consumer network while people in other regions, like sub-Saharan Africa, are being excluded, ignored and marginalized. Most investment circulates between wealthy, industrialized capitalist nations – to the tune of 83% of all direct investment. Most of what's left goes to China and a small percentage went to India where it has been concentrated in small enclaves that do not employ large numbers of people. Friedman addresses this issue but it is buried deep in the second half of his book and it is handled in an almost perfunctory manner.

Friedman also neglects to provide much economic context for flattening such as how China's entry to the World Trade Organization (WTO) gave a big boost to offshoring (to the relocation of production of goods or services from one country to another). Or how, since 2000, the strong U.S. dollar has made offshoring all kinds of manufacturing and services much more economical than domestic production?

He gets rather petulant when describing anti-globalization forces and seems to see the lack of an anti-globalization movement in China, Russia, or Eastern Europe as a good thing. However, even if this is correct that there is no such movement, it is just as likely attributed to the disturbing suppression of dissent in many of those countries rather than tacit support for globalization.

The discussion on how wonderful it is to outsource American tax returns to India overlooks the privacy issues, quality control problems, and the fact that offshoring inevitably leads to a loss of jobs here in the United States thereby contributing to the nation's unemployment rate.

But there is no unemployment problem in the U.S. because the unemployment rate is at historically low levels, right? That depends on which measure of unemployment one chooses to reference. If you chose the oft-cited Bureau of Labor Statistics' U3 figure unemployment in the U.S. looks fine right now. But if you look at the broader U6 figure it doesn't look so rosy. Expand one's view of unemployment to the large number of discouraged workers (not commonly commented on by free trade advocates), the lag of private sector hiring since the last recession (remember the jobless recovery?), and the large of number of undocumented workers and there is a high degree of displacement of the American labor force that is not showing up in that one U3 data point. The flat world has also created a free flow of labor back and forth across U.S. borders bringing cheap many times, undocumented workers into the U.S. the implications of which for the further displacement of American workers, *The World is Flat* does not begin to address.

A common complaint by American companies the past several years is that they outsource to India because they can't find qualified people at home. But has anyone noted the large number of highly educated engineers and IT professionals who can no longer find work? Or the decline in enrollment in engineering programs throughout the United States because the jobs are just not there for graduates? Methinks the real reason is the point raised and left hanging by Sandel earlier on. Let's review that again,

All this flattening business is just a means for companies to find the cheapest way to produce goods and services and increase profit. ■

The Disease that Changed History

LINDSAY SARAH KRASNOFF

book REVIEW

- *The Ghost Map: The Story of London's Most Terrifying Epidemic – and How it Changed Science, Cities, and the Modern World* by Steven Johnson (Riverhead Books, 2006. 320 pages)

That there is a renewed interest in diseases and epidemics is not surprising given the post-9/11 climate of anthrax scares and biological warfare. The strange smells lurking in the New York City air, whether a pleasant maple syrupy sweet whiff or a puff of decaying air, as happened this past January, illuminate a growing concern by the general public to better understand the nature of urban epidemics – whether air- or water born, man-made or naturally occurring. Diseases have historically had a knack for striking urban areas; in more 'recent' times, there was the Bubonic plague which struck Europe in the 1340s and England in the 1660s, the waves of cholera of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and of course, the influenza of 1918 which killed millions world-wide. Yet, many of these historic "greatest hits" of epidemics stemmed from problems created by man in urban environments.

In *The Ghost Map*, Steven Johnson tells the story of a cholera outbreak in London's Golden Square, a neighborhood of SoHo, during late August and September 1854. The underlying point throughout Johnson's story is that the sanitary conditions – or rather, lack thereof – of Golden Square, and the city in general at this point in time, aided and abetted the spread of cholera. Johnson maintains that it was London's nineteenth century cholera outbreaks, specifically this one in particular, which led to the construction of a modern sewage system and better drainage throughout the city.

Cholera is a waterborne intestinal infection, caused by the bacteria *vibrio cholerae,* and is normally contracted through drinking contaminated water. Cholera first began to spread outside of the Indian subcontinent around 1817 and by 1832 reached the major cities of Western Europe. Although Great Britain enjoyed certain advantages by being separated from the rest of Europe by the English Channel, cholera was carried to its shores by 1832 thanks to increased trade and travel to and from the Continent. Outbreaks of cholera were thus not unheard of in 1854, where Johnson starts his narrative. However, one of the problems that he attributes to the disease's lethality was the lack of any scientific knowledge about cholera and how it spread. Johnson sets out to tell us exactly how this lack of information began to change thanks to two of the books' protagonists, Dr. John Snow and Reverend Henry Whitehead.

Snow, renown for his work in anesthesiology and as one of Queen Victoria's physicians, is one of the central figures in *The Ghost Map*. By patching together personal memoirs and newspaper accounts, Johnson recreates much of Snow's movements during the 10-day cholera outbreak. Snow is preoccupied by the cholera outbreak, which is stunning in that it spread more quickly and claimed more fatalities than had any other previous outbreak of the disease in London. He spends much of the book trying to determine the method through which cholera spread. Snow conducts various inquiries and research and deduces that the disease is being spread throughout Golden Square by water. However, trying to convince others – specifically, the public health officials – of this water-born theory is the main problem that Snow encounters. In an era where the miasma theory – the belief that diseases were spread through foul odors – was still quite prevalent, Snow had great difficulty trying to obtain credibility for his theory.

To this extent, one of the other central figures of *The Ghost Map*, Rev. Whitehead, plays a crucial role. Although Whitehead initially opposes Snow's idea of water contamination as the main source for the spread of infection, he does switch sides and becomes an advocate of the water-born theory. One of Whitehead's main plot turns is that he identifies the original source of this cholera outbreak – a public water well, the Broad Street pump, around which this particular outbreak was centered.

Two other main characters in the book, London and the cholera bacteria, play prominent roles in telling Johnson's story. Both city and disease are showcased, giving a detailed account of what London was like at the time, and, in particular, what the sanitary conditions were of a city that by the 1850s had roughly 2.4 million inhabitants squeezed into a 90 square-mile land tract, and how the city's infrastructure played an agreeable host to the *vibrio cholerae* bacteria.

Johnson's story telling abilities are well honed, having written for a variety of publications, such as *Discover*, *The New York Times Magazine*, and *Wired*, and this is perhaps the best quality that he brings to *The Ghost Map*, in that the book reads very much like a novel rather than a historic or scientific work. Although he is not a historian, Johnson does make ample use of historic records and a variety of primary sources, ranging from personal diaries, newspaper accounts, and city and company figures and statistics. While his research is thorough, it does not approach one of the seminal works on cholera's history and social role, Richard Evans' 676 page *Death in Hamburg*. However, what Johnson lacks in page numbers he makes up for in terms of clarity of explanation – he weaves together seamlessly the science behind the disease, the history of medicine at that time, and the actual moving plotlines of Snow and Whitehead into a book that the general public can easily understand and follow. ■

The Song Writer, Essentially

GEORGE FRAGOPOULOS

book REVIEW

- *Bob Dylan: The Essential Interviews,* Edited by Jonathan Cott (Wenner Books, 494 pages.)

It's 1991 and Bob Dylan is being compared to Shakespeare. It's not an unfair comparison to make if one simply takes into account the 30 plus years of songwriting up until that point. The context of the discussion? Might people in the future have a hard time accepting that Dylan, much like Shakespeare, produced 'so much incredible work'? Interviewer Paul Zollo mentions that many people "have a hard time believing that Shakespeare really wrote all of his work because there is so much of it. Do you have a hard time accepting that?" Dylan's response, that "people have a hard time accepting anything that overwhelms them," is an answer that sums up the world's relationship to Dylan himself: that even today, after 40 plus years of song writing, countless moments in the nation's gaze, following the release of Dylan's own memoir in 2004, *Chronicles: Volume 1*, and now more recently, *Bob Dylan: The Essential Interviews*, that we — listeners, fans, critics — are not only still attempting to come to terms with Dylan but that we are still miles behind, lost in the dust, of an artist that continues to run far beyond our expectations. As such, one would look at something as revealing as the interview, the confrontation between one person — supposedly — asking honest questions and the other person — again, supposedly — answering honestly, to help clarify the enigmatic moments of a career filled with them. As these collected interviews show, however, Dylan is far from being the typical interview subject and should we really expect anything else?

Bob Dylan: The Essential Interviews begins with what reads like a necessary explication of the 31 *'interviews' — some are not in the typical* Q&A format — that are to follow by editor Jonathan Cott. Cott has done a (mostly) great job of making the selections for this anthology and also conducted two of the better interviews for *Rolling Stone Magazine* both in 1978. (Small complaint: the four interviews collected and all conducted in 1978 cover much of the same territory, including Dylan repeatedly discussing his four hour epic film *Renaldo & Clara*, which would be released in 1978 to, predictably enough, scathing reviews; a shorter, two-hour cut, was released later that same year.) As Cott perceptively puts it in his introduction, Dylan throughout the span of his entire musical life has come across as a Proteus-like figure, constantly changing shape and form to elude the grasp of anyone and everyone — fans, critics, and interviewers especially. Dylan was never afraid to challenge those who sought to question, and worse, label him, especially when such figures came from the media. An encounter with a *Time* magazine reporter which appears in the documentary *Don't Look Back* is one such infamous instance. But what obviously lies at the center of an ever changing, always shape shifting personality is the attempt to retain something of a true self, and to hide that self as best as one can from the public eye. But what then becomes of the interview itself when one is faced with a subject that does not seek to provide anything that would seem like a true answer?

Dylan as an interviewee may be maddening, enigmatic, inconsistent even contradictory but the one thing he is not is boring; we truly get a glimpse of the artist himself, despite the fact that he still remains at some distance. When Dylan states in a 1966 interview he gave to *Playboy* that he believes in "distance" and "in people keeping everything they've got" he might as well be speaking of himself in relation to everyone out *there* — the interviewer in particular — who is eager for a piece of him. The need to run, to constantly evade that which seeks to confine, restrict, is what Dylan has been doing his entire life. An early interview with Nat Hentoff for the *New Yorker* in 1964 has Dylan commenting on the liner notes for his album *The Times They Are a-Changin'* in which he spoke of how he had always been running when he was a boy — running away from Hibbing [Minnesota, where Dylan was raised] and from his parents." Dylan responds that he's always been "running" because he has never truly been free:

> So I started running when I was ten. But always I'd get picked up and sent home. When I was thirteen I was traveling with a carnival through upper Minnesota and North and South Dakota, and I got picked up again. I tried again and again, and when I was eighteen, I cut out for good. I was still running when I came to New York. Just because you're free to move doesn't mean you're free.

Of course the line between what is truly autobiographical and what are lies is something that Dylan is constantly playing with, and always making his astute listener aware of. What Dylan is most consciously undermining throughout this collection of interviews are the expectations that we, his audience, bring with us to any encounter with him. The difference with a figure like Dylan is that such an encounter resonates on so many different levels. We have not only the expectations of being fans but of being followers of someone who is meant to have all the answers; and the role of he with all the answers is something that Dylan has always avoided and he does as such by throwing our expectations back at us, saying time and time again: if I don't even have the answers for some rock and roll journalist, what makes you think I have the answers when it comes to solving the world's problems? So we get something along the lines of the following exchange from 1969:

> *Let me put it another way...what I'm getting at is that you're an extremely important figure in music and an extremely important figure in the experience of growing up today. Whether you put yourself in that position or not, you're in that position. And you must have thought about it...and I'm curious to know what you think about that...*
>
> What would I think about it? What can I do?
>
> *You wonder if you're really that person.*
>
> What person?
>
> *A great "youth leader..."*
>
> If I thought I was that person, wouldn't I be out there doing it? Wouldn't I be, if I thought I was meant to do that, wouldn't I be doing it? I don't have to hold back...I can see that position being filled by someone else. I play music, man. I write songs...And I'm just one person, doing what I do. Trying to get along...staying out of people's hair, that's all.

Of course what is being avoided here by Dylan is the need to be put in any real "position." The terms of the interviewer are simply not the same terms Dylan wishes to place himself in; the resulting answers may sound like calculated responses meant to confuse and disturb but are simply the results of two people operating on different wavelengths.

Dylan as interview subject is best at revealing the expectations of those who seek him out. A great example is the piece by self-proclaimed Dylanologist A.J. Weberman in 1971 for the *East Village Other*. Weberman's surreal and, at times, hilarious piece follows the author as he goes through Dylan's garbage, tells him that "NASHVILLE SKYLINE sucked while SELF PORTRAIT was a stone rip-off since many people bought it, played it once, and stuck in on their shelf," and that Dylan was failing to live up to his "responsibility as a culture hero." One's not sure if Weberman is intentionally playing with the persona of the crazed fan who seeks to tell the artist that they are the only one with a true understanding of the person and of the work created by that person or whether he actually believes what he's saying; I, for one, hope it's the former. The piece is really more about Weberman than about Dylan. But the essay does a great job, willfully or not, of exposing how fans have come to perceive Dylan; as a prophet or savior, one with all the answers and as someone who should, must, have all the right answers.

The fundamental problem with the interview as process of self revelation is that Dylan is too much of any single thing to get *at* within one interview and perhaps that is what becomes so maddening when reading any single interview in the anthology; one should not sit down and think that all will be revealed within one moment, all at one time; this *Essential Interviews* really needs to be read chunks at a time, and with as critical and astute a frame of mind as reading anything even slightly demanding. The interview as process, by its very nature, fails to achieve the goals it sets out for itself. The entire process itself betrays the very conditions which Dylan has set for himself as an artist and person. In volume one of *Chronicles*, for example, Dylan recounts how much Rimbaud's *"I is Another"* came to mean to him when he first discovered it and how it became a moment of revelation. In simple terms, Dylan is not satisfied with being a singular and unified self or, at the very least, of presenting that self to us and *The Essential Interviews* does a great job of making us aware of this. What is most important is the "mask" that someone wears that just so happens to look like, sound like, and is recognized as Bob Dylan; as he once told a concert audience on Halloween night in 1964, "I have my Bob Dylan mask on". Considering the unreasonable expectations that his interviewers hold towards him, it is no surprise then that no single interview in this collection comes close to getting at who Dylan is, and we are all better off for that. There is something of the artist that cannot be domesticated.

The most illuminating aspect of this series of interviews is that it allows us a glimpse at an always evolving artist over the span of 40 plus years. We get Dylan the folk singer; Dylan the "sellout" who dropped his acoustic guitar and plugged in; Dylan the film director; Dylan the born again Christian; and the current incarnation to bear that name: an older, but perhaps not that much wiser, musician still doing what he does best: simply writing songs. And this is him in 2004, so many years after the beginning:

> What happens is, I'll take a song I know and simply start playing it in my head. That's the way I meditate. A lot of people will look at a crack on the wall and meditate, or count sheep or angles or money or something, and it's a proven fact that it'll help them relax. I don't meditate on any of that stuff. I meditate on a song. I'll be playing Bob Nolan's "Tumbling Tumbleweeds," for instance, in my head constantly—while I'm driving a car or talking to a person or sitting around or whatever. People will think they are talking to me and I'm talking back, but I'm not...At a certain point, some of the words will change and I'll start writing a song.

And it's really not that much more complicated than that. ■

I've Never Met a Man Who Knew So Much About Nothing

MATT LAU

book REVIEW

• *The Parallax View* and *Planet of Slums* by Slavov Zizek (528 pages)

One of today's leftist theoretical commonplaces is that "we don't know where we are," thus the call to "Theory" (etymologically, a viewing, a seeing). This proposition, a favorite with Slavoj Zizek himself, was undercut recently, however, by two articles that appeared in consecutive issues of *New Left Review* in early 2004. The first issue of that year featured a review essay, by Zizek, of Kojin Karatani's *Transcritique: On Kant and Marx*; the second added Mike Davis's take on the world's first reasonably accurate global census report, the UN's *Challenge of Slums & Global Report on Human Settlements 2003*. In 2006, the arguments of these essays served as starting points for two remarkable books: *The Parallax View* and *Planet of Slums*, respectively.

In the venerable tradition of critiquing modern life it is often said that Marx and Freud, along with Nietzsche, provide the fundamental lines of thought. On the one hand, Marxism gives us the socio-historical coordinates, the real objective conditions of possibility for life in the chaotic turbulence of capitalism. On the other hand, psychoanalysis glimpses the predicament of the individual, in the throes of their subjective ambivalence, within this self-revolutionizing world order. The irony of recent years, however, and one that is not lost on either Zizek or Davis, is that Marx's thinking has been rehabilitated for its psychological nuance, while Freud's general pessimism about human nature has found ample general proofs on the political-historical front. Nonetheless, Davis' article and book have broken new ground in the objective understanding of contemporary life, while *Parallax View* is a wide ranging affair that does much to locate individual experience within the late-capitalist deluge of pseudo-concrete images and the corresponding "plague of fantasies" they beget.

Davis begins his new work with a bang: we are at a tipping point. For the first time in human history more people live in urban areas than in rural ones. Meanwhile, the human population is exploding. Yet, while both Marxist and classical economic models predicted this increasing urbanization at a general level, they failed to account for the paradoxical way it has come about. That is to say, at the very moment when "developing" countries were drinking from the "poisoned chalice" (Davis's locution) of Structural Adjustment Programs – i.e., privatization of infrastructure and civil service, cost-recovery in schools and healthcare, the removal of protectionist measures in agriculture, and so on – their cities were simultaneously growing in population and density. And what do you get when a country's economy is in freefall while populations are nonetheless being forced to migrate into urban centers? Slums, lots of them – nearly 1 billion people worldwide today live and work informally. By 2030 we can expect the ranks of the informal proletariat to have doubled, and who knows what their numbers will be in 2050 when the world's population is expected to peak at a staggering 10 billion inhabitants. In any case, this is the "Event" of our times, as Alain Badiou might say: the rise of "a surplus humanity" who if they cannot pull themselves up by their bootstraps might just have to eat them instead.

It is this kind of frightening paradox that Slavoj Zizek, like Marx and Lenin or Freud and Lacan, in a different register, before him, has made of a productive career of elaborating. So it is not surprising that Zizek was so taken by Karatani's book and its devotion to the most sublime forms of contradiction: not only paradox, but also identities of opposites ("speculative judgments" in Hegel's terms) and especially the Kantian notion of antinomy. While the UN census is original in that it tells us something for the first time, *Transcritique* is original in Nietzsche's precise sense of the term: it sees old, discarded things in a new way. In this case the old object is nothing but the much maligned, recently "spectralized" doctrine of Marxism; the "new" position of sight, on the other hand, is the rehabilitated notion of Kant's antinomies.

What is an antinomy? In brief, Kant conceives of an antinomy of pure reason as a logical impasse where equally valid arguments can be made for the necessity of two mutually exclusive conclusions upon the same matter. There are four such antinomies at the level of cosmology, according to Kant: (1) the universe is finite; the universe is infinite – (2) matter (in an empirical sense) is infinitely divisible; it consists of fundamental "building blocks" – (3) we are caught in an autonomous causal chain of events; human beings possess free will – (4) as Hegel puts it, "the dilemma whether the world as a whole has a cause or not." Like the Sublime, antinomies are either mathematical, that is they entangle us in the paradoxes of measurement when it is carried out on infinitesimally abstract levels (both large and small), or they are dynamical, that is they pertain more precisely to the impasses of subjectivity, as in the case of free-will versus determinism.

In any event, the important thing to remember about them is their scandalous nature; they are not new names for traditional metaphysical dualisms – yin/yang, masculine/feminine, light/dark, etc – but thoughts that shake the very edifice of philosophical modernity. As Zizek put it in his early book on Kant and Hegel, *Tarrying with the Negative*: "There is nothing subversive about a notion of the universe as an organism whose life force hinges on the tension of two polar principles; what Kant had in mind, however, was something quite different and incomparably more unsettling: there is no way for us to imagine in a consistent way the universe as a whole; that is, as soon as we do it, we obtain two antinomical, mutually exclusive versions of the universe as a whole." The idea, in short, is that the two versions of things are not compatible with one another, that a tension, an antagonism, an imbalance defines their relationship and therefore the universe itself. The location of this tension is "a certain crack which prevents us from even consistently imagining the universe as a whole." Lacan's famous name for this crack is the Real.

A suggestive way to conceive of Zizek's critical procedure is to locate it in this radical ontological crack, not in the space where we conceive of the difference between given objects, but, rather, in the space where, as Zizek puts it in the exposition of *Parallax View*, "*pure difference is itself an object*." In Kantian terms, it is not the space between different accounts of the universe, but the way in which these accounts render the universe inconsistent with itself that bears witness to the fact of pure difference. It is this wholly negative dimension or void – this radically ambiguous gap between the thing and itself, which bears witness to the non-coincidence of a thing with itself – that defines Zizek's notion of a "parallax viewpoint" and it is this viewpoint that he consistently exploits to startling ends throughout this new book.

What, then, is a parallax? Given the ambiguities explicated in the previous paragraphs, it should come as no surprise that for Zizek it is both an epistemological, subjective part of our existences and an ontological property of the objects that circulate around us. The subject is ticklish, as the title of one of his most important books suggests; however, it is the object that tickles the subject. This conception involves a fundamental reversal, the standard trope of so many of Zizek's arguments, of our notions of subject and object. For Zizek, the subject is not the active agent in this pair but the passive, "ticklish" receptacle, while the object is not an inert indifferent presence, but the tickler, the moving force. The object that can do these sorts of wondrous things is, for Zizek, a "parallax object." Here is his introduction of the notion of parallax:

The standard definition of a parallax is: the apparent displacement of an object (the shift of its position against a background), caused by a change in observational position that provides a new line of site. The philosophical twist to be added, of course, is that the observed difference is not simply "subjective," due to the fact that the same object which exists "out there" is seen from two different stances, or points of view. It is rather that, as Hegel would have put it, subject and object are inherently "mediated," so that an epistemological shift in the subject's point of view always reflects an "ontological" shift in the object itself. Or – to put it in Lacanese – the subject's gaze is always-already inscribed into the perceived object itself, in the guise of its "blind spot," that which is "in the object more than the object itself," the point from which the object itself returns the gaze. "Sure, the picture is in my eye, but I, I am also in the picture."

It is plain to see here, that the inconsistency, the crack that Kant discovered at a global yet precise level is being deployed in a much more general way: not only is the universe as a *whole inconsistent or "not-all,"* but subjects and objects are inconsistent with themselves insofar as they contain the "ex-timate" traumatic kernels of one another. This gesture by means of which the antagonism of the antinomy is generalized is not original to Zizek. It is, instead, the starting point of Zizek's main influence: Hegel. What Kant conceived as a disquieting impasse, as an irresolvable deadlock, is for Hegel the fundamental feature of reality and the starting point for his philosophical system. Hegel's name for this paradoxical antagonism is "dialectic."

Notwithstanding Zizek's own assertions that a dialectician should learn to count to four, Hegel's dialectic is a three step logical process. As Hegel himself puts it in the first book of his *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences*: "with regard to its form, the logical has three sides: (α) *the side of abstraction* or *of the understanding*, (β) *the dialectical* or *negatively rational* side, [and] (γ) *the speculative* or *positively rational one*." The popular but basically erroneous version of this structure is (1) Thesis, (2), Antithesis, (3) Synthesis. One of the amazing things about Hegel's system is that it is, not unlike Benoit Mandelbrot's fractal geometry, formally "self-similar": it resembles itself on both large and small scales. Consider the *Encyclopedia* itself. It is divided into three books: the *Logic*, the *Philosophy of Nature*, and the *Philosophy of Spirit*.

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Dissecting an American Disaster

MICHAEL BUSCH

book REVIEW

- *Fiasco* by Thomas E. Ricks. (New York: Penguin, 2006. 482 pp.)
- *The Occupation* by Patrick Cockburn. (London: Verso. 229 pp.)

Having witnessed firsthand the devastation wrought on the French Empire by Napoleon's prosecution of the Peninsular War, Arthur Wellesley, 1st Duke of Wellington, purportedly commented that "great nations do not have small wars." Wellesley's words, had they passed in front of George W. Bush's eyes, would likely not have effected the President's decision to overthrow Saddam Hussein. Yet as the fourth anniversary commemorating the American occupation of Iraq draws depressingly near, both Americans and Iraqis continue to suffer the truth of Duke Wellington's warning.

Wellesley's observation haunts the pages of two recent books detailing the American catastrophe in Iraq. Focusing primarily on military matters, Thomas Ricks' *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq* soberly assesses the self-denial and incompetence of the Pentagon's civilian leadership, and catalogues the avoidable mistakes foolishly committed in the name of freedom and democracy. In counterpoint to *Fiasco*'s focus on the American experience in Iraq, Patrick Cockburn's *The Occupation* chronicles the war largely from the perspective of life on the ground for ordinary Iraqis, contextualizing the country's current state within the broader strokes of a tortured history. Both books deserve reading, and will undoubtedly remain important long after others on American troubles in the Middle East descend into obscurity.

The violence currently destroying Iraq can properly be understood as the most recent chapter in a war spanning fifteen years. The opening volley was triggered by Saddam Hussein's illegal "annexing" of Kuwait in August 1990. World leaders, eager to test rekindled hopes for a proper collective security system following the Soviet Union's collapse, rallied behind George H.W. Bush's call for Hussein's removal from Kuwaiti soil.

Within weeks of commencing hostilities, the United States, backed by the United Nations and most of its member states, had humiliated Hussein's million man army, and liberated Kuwait. What followed was twelve years of low-grade warfare given the more palatable label "containment." While U.N. sanctions and intermittent aerial bombing failed to dislodge Hussein from power, they had the effect of ruining the Iraqi economy and a once prosperous society.

By the time George W. Bush had taken his place in the Oval Office, patience with the policy of Iraqi containment was nearly exhausted. It was costly, uninteresting work with little palpable result. Troops stationed in the Gulf region were demoralized, and politicians began seriously questioning the moral implications of punishing millions of innocent Iraqis for the crimes of their leader. But if containment were to be discontinued, what would take its place? Everyone acknowledged the dangers of an unchecked Saddam Hussein, but disagreement arose over how best to deal with him. This debate simmered until September 11th, after which time the gloves came off. The rest is all-too-familiar history.

The debate over containment sets the stage for the first scene in *Fiasco*. There's little question that Ricks, Pentagon correspondent for the *Washington Post*, sees in Iraq a tragedy of epic proportions. The story is replete with heroes and fools, intrigue and valor, hubris and death. Yet by the close of the book, one realizes that Ricks is less a playwright than a lawyer. *Fiasco* constitutes nothing less than a finely nuanced, deeply researched, and impassioned indictment of the incompetence gripping the entire federal government.

The greatest contribution Fiasco makes to the literature on Iraq is its in-depth look at the time between September 11th and March 2003. In a refreshing break from his colleague Bob Woodward–who goes out of his way to criticize *The New York Times* at every opportunity–Ricks takes to task all the major media outlets for their shameful malpractice during the run-up to war, including his own. *Fiasco* devotes considerable space to reminding its readers that the hawkish, and wildly inaccurate, views on display in the *Post* played a major role in the march to war. Ricks quotes at length perhaps the most memorable piece of hogwash to grace the pages of the *Post*, an editorial by former Rumsfeld assistant Ken Adelman:

"I believe demolishing Hussein's military power and liberating Iraq would be a cakewalk . . . Let me give simple, reasonable reasons: 1. it was a cakewalk last time; 2. they've become much weaker; 3. we've become much stronger; and 4. now we're playing for keeps . . . Hussein constitutes the number one threat against American security and civilization. Unlike Osama bin Laden, he has billions in government funds, scores of government labs working feverishly on weapons of mass destruction –and just as deep a hatred of America and civilized free societies."

It wasn't just public opinion that the major papers helped shape. Their influence extended deep into the highest levels of government where critical decisions concerning Iraq were made. To underscore the point, Ricks highlights the congressional testimony of a deputy chief of the CIA. When pressed to explain his assessment of questionable intelligence concerning Iraqi WMD programs, the CIA officer responded "My source was the *Washington Post*."

And then there's the Congress. "In previous wars," writes Ricks, "Congress had been populated by hawks and doves. But as war in Iraq loomed it seemed to consist mainly of lambs who hardly made a peep." Still cowed by the lingering memories of September 11th, and unable to act effectively from a minority position in both House and Senate, the Democrats largely stood aside as neoconservatives bullied and lied their way to war. "There were many failures in the American system that led to the war, but the failures in Congress were at once perhaps the most important and the least noticed."

It only gets worse from there. No matter how bad U.S. intelligence may have been before the war, it's not nearly as shocking as the strategic blunders committed by American military leadership once the fighting began. Ricks lays the blame for these errors squarely at the feet of General Tommy Franks, the architect of invasion planning. To begin to understand American failures in Iraq "it is necessary to step back and examine Gen. Tommy Franks," Ricks asserts, "and his misunderstanding of strategy . . . In war, strategy is the searchlight that illuminates the way ahead." General Franks, according to *Fiasco*, conceived battle as a series of tactical decisions. His war plans "confused removing Iraq's regime with the far more difficult task of changing the entire country." In other words, there was no grand strategy. "In its absence, the U.S. military would fight hard and well but blindly, and the noble sacrifices of soldiers would be undercut by the lack of thoughtful leadership at the top."

Ricks clearly has sympathy and enormous respect for the men and women in the American armed forces. Time and again, *Fiasco* highlights the bravery, intelligence, and professionalism of individual soldiers conducting operations under tremendous stress in chaotic environments. Nevertheless, he is not shy to criticize in explicit terms the major failings of particular commanders and loose-cannon soldiers. Garnering special attention is Major General Raymond Odierno, recently appointed as assistant to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Ricks repeatedly returns to claims that under Odierno's leadership in Iraq, soldiers were recklessly undisciplined in the field, and encouraged to torture captured insurgents. *Fiasco*'s willingness to name names and describe in stomach-turning detail crimes of the guilty, as well as valorous deeds of the heroic, will assure its place as a document of reminder, once the fog of war in Iraq has dissipated.

Whereas *Fiasco* is an expansive book running nearly five hundred pages, *The Occupation* captures Cockburn's meditations on Iraq more economically. Less a work of traditional reportage than a diary of life in a country ravaged by violence, this slim volume paints a gloomy portrait of Iraq since March 2003. The beautiful writing and considered reflections found throughout *The Occupation* gracefully conveys not just the savagery of war, but the scars of sadness left on those who suffer it.

Cockburn is no stranger to Iraq. Having covered the country for nearly thirty years, he developed a rich portfolio of Iraqi contacts and friends, from which *The Occupation* benefits enormously. He raised the hackles of Saddam Hussein, however, during the mid-1990s with another book, *Out of the Ashes*. Co-authored with his brother Alexander (biweekly columnist for *The Nation*), *Out of the Ashes* reported on the murderous tyranny of the Hussein regime. The book proved wildly popular on the Iraqi black market, insuring that the brothers were no longer welcome in the country.

Cockburn, currently Middle East correspondent for the British *Independent*, snuck into Iraq shortly before the American invasion early in 2003. His trip was not easy. Warned that Saddam's security forces might seek to exact payback for the success of *Out of the Ashes*, Cockburn was forced to cross into Iraqi Kurdistan from Syria. While conditions made the journey arduous, Cockburn's timing proved auspicious.

"I started for the border across the rain-swept plains of north-eastern Syria. Middle Eastern borders have a nasty habit of closing at unexpected and deeply inconvenient moments. But there, on the west bank of the Tigris, swollen by winter rains, was a tin boat with a rickety outboard motor and single oar. A few minutes later I was back in Iraq. I was just in time. Soon afterwards, the Syrians, responding to complaints from Baghdad, took away the tin boat and sent soldiers to patrol the riverbanks with orders to stop anybody crossing."

Timing plays a critical role throughout *The Occupation*. As the body count of friends and acquaintances piles up, Cockburn himself is spared kidnapping and death numerous times simply by the force of sheer luck. Time and again, Cockburn checks out of hotels just before they're ripped

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BUSCH *from page 12*

apart by suicide bombers, journeys on dangerous highways that are closed immediately afterwards, and escapes the notice of impromptu checkpoint "officers" likely working for the insurgency. This makes for exciting reading, but clearly takes its toll on Cockburn.

It becomes apparent shortly into the book that Cockburn's choice of title conveys a double meaning. *The Occupation*'s tale is as much about a country under foreign rule as it is about the hazards of being a journalist in the midst of chaos and uncertainty. Far from the frenzied writing of some journalists–thrilled by the prospect of danger–Cockburn's writing communicates fatigue and melancholy. By the final chapters, *The Occupation* is a shell of what it promised at the start. The colorful writing characterizing the book's opening turns stale, as Cockburn increasingly reports facts in place of personal impressions. It's a reflection of the war itself: what began with a flamboyant campaign of "shock and awe," promises of "sweets and candy," and the fall of "evil" has transformed into an occupation of mind-numbing violence defining the *status quo*.

Cockburn's writing is at its weakest when he recounts the now familiar story of the run-up to war, L. Paul Bremer's tenure as imperial proconsul, and the descent into madness currently ruining life throughout most of Iraq. The dry facts of occupation detract from Cockburn's sharp eye, deep learning, and ability to extract the larger truths of war from the minor details of its waging. Take this, for example:

"There used to be a mosaic of President George Bush on the floor at the entrance to Baghdad's al-Rashid Hotel . . . The idea was that nobody would be able to get into the hotel . . . without stepping on Bush's face." After the invasion, "one American officer, patriotically determined not to place his foot on Bush's features, tried to step over the mosaic. The distance was too great. He strained his groin and had to be hospitalized." Cockburn notes that the story serves as a "parable about the failings of the U.S. occupation. There was the officer seeking, like his army, to carry out a tasks beyond his strength. When he failed and suffered injury this was blamed on the legacy of the old regime."

The Occupation closes with an assessment of all that's gone wrong with the war, and its implications for the future of not only Iraq, but the United States as well. Cockburn notes that the sorts of admissions of failure now leaking from the mouth of George Bush and other administration officials will do little to stem the tide of further problems yet to come. Cockburn sees America's two wars in Iraq as the bookends of American hegemony in world affairs. Just as Operation Desert Storm marked the beginning of the U.S. "reign as sole superpower" sixteen years ago, "the occupation of Iraq in 2003 may have marked the beginning of its decline. Saddam Hussein . . . had far exceeded his country's strength by conquering Kuwait. Propelled by similar arrogance twelve years later, George Bush showed the limits of U.S. power by the invasion and occupation in Iraq." ■

LAU *from page 11*

Each of these books in turn is divided into three sections: as in the Logic, where we get first the "Doctrine of Being," followed by the "Logic of Essence," and finally the "Doctrine of the Concept." Without going into it at all, this three-part movement is also part and parcel of the minute particulars of Hegel's argumentative thread.

It should come as no surprise then that, as both a Hegelian and a lover of forms and orders at many levels, Zizek's books so often are themselves divided into three sections. *Parallax View* is no exception in this regard. Like all of Zizek's important books, what he calls his "serious stuff," its overall structure amounts to a book length essay in "concerto form." Each book moves through three general topics: beginning with Philosophy, followed by Psychoanalysis, and concluding with Politics. The philosophical opening of his books usually begins with a bang: in the form of a parallax or anamorphic shift in perspective towards a traditional philosophical topic. The tool to accomplish this shift is more often than not one of Lacan's mystical dictums, as in *Sublime Object of Ideology*, where the opening argument is that Marx and not Freud invented the modern notion of a symptom. In *Parallax View*, the old idea that gets a new twist to begin with is the Hegelian notion of "Concrete Universality."

This is usually followed by an arduous process of bringing psychoanalysis to bear on formations in contemporary thought. In his early books the formations were usually drawn from analytic philosophy, especially the work of Saul Kripke and others in philosophy of language debates. In more recent books he has engaged with psychoanalysis's more explicit opponents in cognitive studies and brain science and other "Third Culture" arenas. This is nowhere truer than in *Parallax View*, and the middle section is arguably the most original part of the book. It contains perhaps the largest percentage of new material and perhaps cultural studies' most sustained and illuminating engagement with advances in the sciences. And of course, what Zizek book would be complete without a smattering of mind-bending political observations? The main difference between this book and the important early books, in this regard, is that the focus of his political writings has undergone a shift in its center of gravity from the fallout from the collapse of Communism, something Zizek himself had a not insignificant hand in, to what appears to be the newest superpower collapse, that of the US. This shift has been in high gear since the attacks of 9/11, and many of the short subsections in the final third of the book will be familiar to those who have followed Zizek's journalism in the Iraq War period. There is not anything emphatically new going on here, then; there is, however, a broadened and more sustained critique of some interesting and some unlikely topics. No one should be surprised that Zizek champions John Brown as the ultimate parallax figure of American history – to this day white people think he's crazy, while blacks think the opposite – as a figure for whom there is no middle ground.

For myself, I found the most interesting part of the end of the book to be not this analysis nor the equally illuminating discussion of failed Supreme Court nominee Robert Bork's political philosophy, but the enigmatic reflections on *Bartleby*. This is because, as anyone who has done as little as sit in one of his lectures knows, Zizek's love of negativity has for the most part inhibited him from anything like a prescriptive politics. As Iranian secret agent President Bush might say, "Does the opposition have a plan?" Finally, those "Beltway Insiders," the Hegelian-Lacanian-Marxists, can say, "Yes Mr. President, yes we do." And what is this plan? It's slogan is Bartleby's "I'd prefer not to." Or to put it in Seinfeldian, "Everyone's doing something, we'll do nothing!" Zizek's point is not that this is in-itself the answer, but the only way out of the deadlock between hegemony and its allotted "resistances."

This is how we pass from a politics of "resistance or "protestation," which parasitizes upon what it negates, to a politics which opens up a new space outside the hegemonic position and its negation. We can imagine the varieties of such a gesture in today's public space: not only the obvious, "There are great chances of a new career here! Join us! – "I'd prefer not to"; but also "Discover the depths of you true self, find inner peace!" – "I'd prefer not to"; or "Are you aware how our environment is endangered? Do something for ecology!" – "I would prefer not to."

Zizek's point however is not that we must "clear the table" and then begin the (logically) positive work of building a new order. Bartleby's motto "is not so much the refusal of a determinate content as, rather, the formal gesture of refusal as such," not the starting point, "but a kind of arche, the underlying principle that sustains the entire movement: far from "overcoming" it, the subsequent work of construction, rather, gives body to it." Above all the targets of this arche-refusal are not the obvious villains of global capitalism, but the half measures meant to counteract it – charitable giving being foremost among them.

So what would such a movement look like in actual cases? Take voting in America for instance; as Zizek pointed out long ago, the choice for us is between Coke and Diet Coke. Sure Diet Coke won't start a war in Iraq; it's healthier than that. It will wage an economic one instead, via NAFTA, FTAA, and so forth. As Kerry was always implying in his election bid: I can ruthlessly pursue America's national interest even more efficiently than President Bush and his administration. So what is the way out of this forced, false choice?

For Zizek, it is the negative one: DON'T VOTE. Take America's already existing, statistical apathy (around 50% voter turn out or near 60% when it all seems terribly important) and turn it into a statistical boycott (somewhere near the mid-30s in percentile). This would make our elections invalid according to international election authorities insofar as the result cannot be construed as the will of the majority of the people. Does that bear legally on our government? Of course not, but it would be a hell of a lot more interesting than voting either Democrat or Republican for another 150 years.

The point would not be, however, to have a third party follow on this, but to continue the difficult work of negation, of restructuring the legal foundation of the country. Not just no more gerrymandering and lobbyists, but how about no more Senate or Presidency? "I'd prefer not to have a Monarch and a political aristocracy." Not just allowing unions and other measures for workers, but how about actually nationalizing industries? "I'd prefer not to be exploited for my labor time by self-interested companies. I'd prefer not to think that 'Greed is Good.'" Not just rent control, but how about a cessation of rents and mortgages? "I'd prefer to not to pay rent." Not just only making purchases from ecologically friendly companies, but how about not buying anything at all in the way of luxuries? "I'd prefer not to shop." From not voting, to not shopping, to not working, in all these cases we are not participating in the frenetic activities of contemporary life; but, at the same time, this negativity is in no way a return to a balanced, ordered, basically pre-modern, world. Rather, it beats capitalism at its own game of destabilization.

The difficulty, of course, as Zizek himself acknowledges, is knowing what the effects of all this will be, what the "new" will actually look like. The other shortcoming of this prescription, I'm afraid, is that one could become terribly bored with all this refusing. But, then again, that could be a refreshingly new strategy for revolutionaries: boring their enemies to death. ■

The Attack on Higher Education and the Necessity of Critical Pedagogy

HENRY GIROUX

Thinking is not the intellectual reproduction of what already exists anyway. As long as it doesn't break off, thinking as a secure hold on possibility. Its insatiable aspect, its aversion to being quickly and easily satisfied, refuses the foolish wisdom of resignation. The utopian moment in thinking is stronger the less it... objectifies itself into a utopia and hence sabotages its realization. Open thinking points beyond itself.[1]

The attack against Middle Eastern studies as well as other engaged areas of the social sciences and humanities has opened the door to a whole new level of assault on academic freedom, teacher authority, and critical pedagogy.[2] These attacks are much more widespread and, in my estimation, much more dangerous than the McCarthyite campaign several decades ago. Trading upon the ongoing corporatization of the university, its increasing reliance on non-government financial resources, and its vulnerability to outside criticism, a number of right-wing advocacy groups are now targeting higher education, alleging it is not only a breeding ground for cultivating anti-Israel and anti-capital sentiments but also a hot-bed of politicized pedagogical encounters considered both discriminatory against conservative students and un-American in their critical orientation. Invoking academic freedom is crucial for maintaining the university as democratic public sphere, but it is equally essential to defend critical pedagogy as a condition of civic responsibility and teaching as a deliberate act of intervening in the world as part of the goal of encouraging students to think about justice and to question "the ostensibly unquestionable premises of our way of life."[3]

academic repression
IN THE FIRST PERSON

While most defenders of the university as a democratic public sphere rightly argue that the right-wing assault on the academy levels a serious threat to academic freedom, they have largely ignored the crucial issue that the very nature of pedagogy as a political, moral, and critical practice is at stake, particularly the role it plays in presupposing a view of the world that is more just, democratic, and free from human suffering.[4] Robert Ivie has argued rightly that academic freedom in its basic form "means unfettered scholarly inquiry, a scholar's fundamental right of research, publication, and instruction free of institutional constraint."[5] But it is pedagogy that begs both a more spirited defense and analysis so that it can be protected against the challenges that David Horowitz, ACTA, SAF, Campus Watch, and others are initiating against what actually takes place in classrooms devoted to critical engagement, dialogue, research, and debate. Pedagogy at its best is about neither training nor political indoctrination; instead, it is about a political and moral practice that provides the knowledge, skills, and social relations that enable students to expand the possibilities of what it means to be critical citizens while using their knowledge and skills to deepen and extend their participation in a substantive and inclusive democracy. Rather than assume the mantle of a false impartiality, pedagogy recognizes that education and teaching involve the crucial act of intervening in the world and the recognition that human life is conditioned, not determined. The responsibility of pedagogy amounts to more than becoming the instrument of official power or an apologist for the existing order. Critical pedagogy attempts to understand how power works through the production, distribution, and consumption of knowledge within particular institutional contexts and seeks to constitute students as particular subjects and social agents. It is also invested in both the practice of self-criticism about the values that inform our teaching and a critical self-consciousness regarding what it means to equip students with analytical skills to be self-reflective about the knowledge and values they confront in classrooms.

What makes critical pedagogy so dangerous to Christian evangelicals, neoconservatives, and right-wing nationalists in the United States is that central to its very definition is the task of educating students to become critical agents who actively question and negotiate the relationships between theory and practice, critical analysis and common sense, and learning and social change. Critical pedagogy opens up a space where students should be able to come to terms with their own power as critical agents; it provides a sphere where the unconditional freedom to question and assert is central to the purpose of the university, if not democracy itself.[6] And as a political and moral practice, pedagogy should "make evident the multiplicity and complexity of history," as a narrative to enter into critical dialogue with rather than accept unquestioningly. Similarly, such a pedagogy should cultivate in students a healthy scepticism about power, a "willingness to temper any reverence for authority with a sense of critical awareness."[7] As a performative practice, pedagogy should provide the conditions for students to be able to reflectively frame their own relationship to the ongoing project of an unfinished democracy. It is precisely this relationship between democracy and pedagogy that is so threatening to conservatives such as Horowitz. Pedagogy always represents a commitment to the future, and it remains the task of educators to make sure that the future points the way to a more socially just world, a world in which the discourses of critique and possibility in conjunction with the values of reason, freedom, and equality function to alter, as part of a broader democratic project, the grounds upon which life is lived. This is hardly a prescription for political indoctrination, but it is a project that gives education its most valued purpose and meaning, which in part is "to encourage human agency, not mold it in the manner of Pygmalion."[8] It is also a position that threatens right-wing private advocacy groups, neoconservative politicians, and conservative extremists because they recognize that such a pedagogical commitment goes to the very heart of what it means to address real inequalities of power at the social level and to conceive of education as a project for democracy and critical citizenship while at the same time foregrounding a series of important and often ignored questions such as: "Why do we [as educators] do what we do the way we do it"? Whose interests does higher education serve? How might it be possible to understand and engage the diverse contexts in which education takes place? In spite of the right-wing view that equates indoctrination with any suggestion of politics, critical pedagogy is not simply concerned with offering students new ways to think critically and act with authority as agents in the classroom; it is also concerned with providing students with the skills and knowledge necessary for them to expand their capacities both to question deep-seated assumptions and myths that legitimate the most archaic and disempowering social practices that structure every aspect of society and to take responsibility for intervening in the world they inhabit. Education is not neutral, but that does not mean it is merely a form of indoctrination. On the contrary, as a practice that attempts to expand the capacities necessary for human agency and hence the possibilities for democracy itself, the university must nourish those pedagogical practices that promote "a concern with keeping the forever unexhausted and unfulfilled human potential open, fighting back all attempts to foreclose and pre-empt the further unravelling of human possibilities, prodding human society to go on questioning itself and preventing that questioning from ever stalling or being declared finished."[9] In other words, critical pedagogy forges both critique and agency through a language of scepticism and possibility and a culture of openness, debate, and engagement, all elements that are now at risk in the latest and most dangerous attack on higher education.

The attack on pedagogy is, in part, an attempt to deskill teachers and dismantle teacher authority. Teachers can make a claim to being fair, but not to being either neutral or impartial. Teacher author-

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MONCHINSKI *from page 7*

novel per say, it is nonetheless both terrifying and horrifying. With a "long shear of light and ... a series of low percussions," the world as we know it ends. Years later a man and a boy make their way through the ash-covered overcast wasteland that was the United States. Their goal, as they push their shopping cart and look for food, is to make it to the coast, along the way, if possible, "keeping the faith." They are, as the man tells his son, "the good guys." And there is no shortage of bad guys out there. Roving bands of armed cannibals enslave and eat anyone they find. The boy and his father have a revolver with three bullets, meant less for protection and more for insurance: if they are to be captured the father is determined to shoot his son--lest the boy be tortured, raped and eaten, and not necessarily in that order — then himself.

In an existential sense, *The Road* is terrifying. The man, racked by coughs, hacking up bloody sputum, is dying. Radiation poisoning? McCarthy never specifies, but it appears they are trudging through a nuclear wasteland. What will become of the boy upon the man's demise? Viscerally the novel is horrifying. In the locked cellar of a farm house the father and son stumble upon a group of naked, shivering, pleading people, including a bearded man on a stained mattress with charred stumps where his legs were amputated. The image--someone's food supply--is horrendous. Haunting, it sticks with the boy, his father, and the reader.

Unlike the utilitarian prose wielded by King and Smith, McCarthy's is beautiful. In the hands of a lesser author, this attribute could conceivably divert attention from the tale. Wielded by this modern master, the words contribute to the simple elegance of the story. What makes *The Road* especially disquieting is the suspicion that, with tens of thousands of nuclear weapons extant, its plot isn't inconceivable. What makes it inspiriting is the fact that good survives in a world gone bad. Works such as *The Road* instill hope that a well crafted horror tale, even if it doesn't call itself such, is still possible. ■

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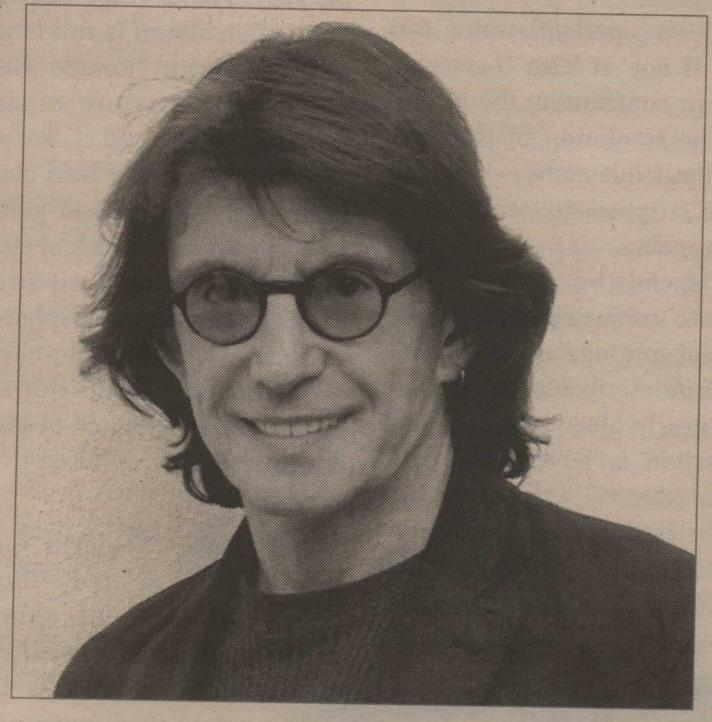
ity can never be neutral, nor can it be assessed in terms that are narrowly ideological. It is always broadly political and interventionist in terms of the knowledge-effects it produces, the classroom experiences it organizes, and the future it presupposes in the countless ways in which it addresses the world. Teacher authority at its best means taking a stand without standing still. It suggests that as educators we make a sincere effort to be self-reflective about the value-laden nature of our authority while taking on the fundamental task of educating students to take responsibility for the direction of society. Rather than shrink from our political responsibility as educators, we should embrace one of pedagogy's most fundamental goals: to teach students to believe that democracy is desirable and possible. Connecting education to the possibility of a better world is not a prescription for indoctrination; rather it marks the distinction between the academic as a technician and the teacher as a self-reflective educator who is more than the instrument of a safely approved and officially sanctioned worldview.



Critical pedagogy forges both critique and agency through a language of scepticism and possibility and a culture of openness, debate, and engagement – all elements that are now at risk in the latest and most dangerous attack on higher education

The authority that enables academics to teach emerges out of the education, knowledge, research, professional rituals, and scholarly experiences that they bring to their field of expertise and classroom teaching. Such authority provides the space and experience in which pedagogy goes beyond providing the conditions for the simple acts of knowing and understanding and includes the cultivation of the very power of self-definition and critical agency. But teacher authority cannot be grounded exclusively in the rituals of professional academic standards. Learning occurs in a space in which commitment and passion provide students with a sense of what it means to link knowledge to a sense of direction. Teaching is a practice rooted in an ethico-political vision that attempts to take students beyond the world they already know, in a way that does not insist on a particular fixed set of altered meanings. In this context, teacher authority rests on pedagogical practices that reject the role of students as passive recipients of familiar knowledge and view them instead as producers of knowledge, who not only critically engage diverse ideas but also transform and act on them.[10] Pedagogy is the space that provides a moral and political referent for understanding how what we do in the classroom is linked to wider social, political, and economic forces.

It is impossible to separate what we do in the classroom from the economic and political conditions that shape our work, and that means that pedagogy has to be understood as a form of academic labor in which questions of time, autonomy, freedom, and power become as central to the classroom as what is taught. As a referent for engaging fundamental questions about democracy, pedagogy gestures to important questions about the political, institutional, and structural conditions that allow teachers to produce curricula, collaborate with colleagues, engage in research, and connect their work to broader public issues. Pedagogy is not about balance, a merely methodological consideration; on the contrary, as Cornelius Castoriadis reminds us, if education is not to become "the political equivalent of a religious ritual,"[11] it must do everything possible to provide students with the knowledge and skills they need to learn how to deliberate, make judgments, and exercise choice, particularly as the latter is brought to bear on critical activities that offer the possibility of democratic change. Democracy cannot work if citizens are not autonomous, self-judging, and independent — qualities that are indispensable for students if they are going to make vital judgments and choices about participating in and shaping decisions that affect everyday life, institutional reform, and governmental policy. Hence, pedagogy becomes the cornerstone of democracy in that it provides the very foundation for students to learn not merely how to be governed, but also how to be capable of governing.

One gets the sense that conservative educators from Lynne Cheney to Ann D. Neal to David Horowitz believe that there is no place in the classroom for politics, worldly concerns, social issues, and questions about how to lessen human suffering. In this discourse, the classroom becomes an unworldly counterpart to the gated community, a space for conformity in which the meaning of education is largely reduced to respecting students' "comfort zones" and to perpetuating current governmental and social practices, however corrupt and antidemocratic. This is a form of education, as Howard Zinn notes, where scholars "publish while others perish."[12] This is not education; it is a flight from self and society. Its outcome is not a student who feels a responsibility to others and who feels that her presence in the world matters, but one who feels the presence of difference as an unbearable burden to be contained or expelled. The importance of academics as engaged intellectuals, the necessity of making education worldly and pedagogy a moral and political practice, has been captured in a different context by Edward Said in his discussion of the role of the public intellectual. He wrote:

So in the end it is the intellectual as a representative figure that matters—someone who visibly represents a standpoint of some kind, and someone who makes articulate representations to his or her public despite all sorts of barriers. My argument is that intellectuals are individuals with a vocation for the art of representing ... And that vocation is important to the extent that it is publicly recognizable and involves both commitment and risk, boldness and vulnerability. ...The intellectual ... is neither a pacifier nor a consensus-builder, but someone whose whole being is staked on a critical sense, a sense of being unwilling to accept easy formulas, or ready-made clichés, or the smooth, ever-so-accommodating confirmations of what the powerful or conventional have to say, and what they do. Not just passively unwilling, but actively willing to say so in public.[13]

Given the seriousness of the current attack on higher education by an alliance of diverse right-wing forces, it is difficult to understand why liberals, progressives, and left-oriented educators have been relatively silent in the face of this assault. There is much more at stake in this attack on the university than the issue of academic freedom. First and foremost is the concerted attempt by right-wing extremists and corporate interests to strip the professoriate of any authority, render critical pedagogy as merely an instrumental task, eliminate tenure as a protection for teacher authority, and remove critical reason from any vestige of civic courage, engaged citizenship, and social responsibility. The three academic unions have a combined membership of almost 200,000, including graduate students and adjuncts, and yet they have barely stirred. In part, they are quiet because they are under the illusion that tenure will protect them, or they believe the attack on academic freedom has little to do with how they perform their academic labor. They are wrong on both counts, and unless the unions and progressives mobilize to protect the institutionalized relationships between democracy and pedagogy, teacher authority and classroom autonomy, they will be at the mercy of a right-wing revolution that views democracy as an excess and the university as a threat.

The current assault on the academy is first and foremost an attack not only on the conditions that make critical pedagogy possible, but also on what it might mean to raise questions about the real problems facing higher education today, which include the increasing role of adjunct faculty, the instrumentalization of knowledge, the rise of an expanding national security state, the hijacking of the university by corporate interests, and the increasing attempts by right-wing extremists to turn education into job training or into an extended exercise in patriotic xenophobia. Pedagogy must be understood as central to any discourse about academic freedom, but, more importantly, it must be understood as the most crucial referent we have for understanding politics and defending the university as one of the very few remaining democratic public spheres in the United States today. ■

NOTES

1 Theodor W. Adorno, *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture*, ed. J. M. Bernstein (New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 292.

2 See Joel Beinin, "The New McCarthyism: Policing Thought about the Middle East," in *Academic Freedom after September 11*, ed. Beshara Doumani (New York: Zone Books, 2006).

3 Zygmunt Bauman, *Globalization* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), p. 5.

4 I have taken up the issues of critical pedagogy, democracy, and schooling in a number of books. See most recently, Henry A. Giroux, *Border Crossings* (New York: Routledge, 2005); *Democracy on the Edge* (New York: Palgrave, 2006); *The Giroux Reader*, ed. Christopher Robbins (Boulder: Paradigm, 2006); and Henry A. Giroux and Susan Searls Giroux, *Take Back Higher Education* (New York: Palgrave, 2006).

5 Robert Ivie, "Academic Freedom and Political Heresy," *IU Progressive Faculty Coalition Forum* (October 3, 2005), http://www.indiana.edu/~ivieweb/academicfreedom.htm

6 Jacques Derrida, "The Future of the Profession or the Unconditional University," p. 233.

7 Edward Said, *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), p. 501.

8 Stanley Aronowitz, "Introduction," in Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of Freedom* (Boulder: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998), pp. 10–11.

9 Zygmunt Bauman and Keith Tester, *Conversations with Zygmunt Bauman* (Malden: Polity Press, 2001), p. 4.

10 Chandra Mohanty, "On Race and Voice: Challenges for Liberal Education in the 1990s," *Cultural Critique* (Winter 1989-1990), p. 192.

11 Cornelius Castoriadis, "Democracy as Procedure and Democracy as Regime," *Constellations* 4:1 (1997), p. 5.

12 Howard Zinn, *On History* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2001), p. 178.

13 Edward Said, *Representations of the Intellectual* (New York: Pantheon, 1994), pp. 12–13, 22–23.

Henry Giroux is Global Televbision Network Chair in Communications at McMaster University.

The Art of Noise: But ... Is It Music?

ANTON BORST

music REVIEW

- *I Dated the Devil* by Antonius Block (Trost Records 2006)
- *Plays Polmo Polpo* by Sandro Perri (Constellation Records 2006)

When guitarist and drummer Jorge Docouto handed me the debut album of his Brooklyn-based art-noise rock band Antonius Block, he told me he hated anecdotes and adjectives, especially in self-indulgent music reviews. *I Dated the Devil* — precise, direct — reflects this aesthetic: it cuts to the bone, the initial title track shrieking open with a riff as simple and urgent as a siren over the hammered throb of Andrya Ambro's drumming. Austrian-born singer Tina Schula, whose detached, sometimes spoken, vocalizing invites comparison with Nico, complements the austerity of the instrumentation with a disturbingly blunt matter-of-factness on this and other tracks. Elsewhere emotionally inscrutable, here her voice projects at once disconnection, resilience, damage, and power as she sings alternately of dating the devil and breaking off his horns. Through restraint, simplicity, and minimalism, the band members leave a kind of space open between them that echoes the hollowing disillusion expressed in many of the lyrics — the disillusion, for instance, of beating off a devilish lover only to be left self-mockingly "Crying like a baby / For Jesus to save me / Waiting to be reborn."

In the context of such severity, even subtle changes are dramatic, and songs that begin as skeletons of voice and drums can bloom quickly into moments of voluminous guitar rock, as does "Thanks." After Schula sardonically thanks a deadbeat lover for all his lying, drinking, and manipulating over a frantic four-note riff and a one-two drumbeat for over a minute, the guitar abruptly swells open into full, grand, arena-sized chords. The lyrics seem to undercut

the triumph of the guitar, however, as Schula sings, "I need you / I need you / But I don't want you. / I don't want you." Disgusted by her lover's lying and empty promises more than anything else ("Thanks for telling me" is the frequent refrain), the singer ends here without any kind of false or merely wishful verbal answer to the emotional quagmire of dependency.

The guitar continues alone, leveling out and extending the track into a drone-dirge that conveys a sense of a new direction, though a flat and solemn one. Where words fail, the repetition of this simple, dissonant riff moves forward, demanding a second look at the concluding lines: perhaps wants can in fact trump needs, or, if not, at least there may be some kind of dignity in confronting the intractability of one's fate. The resolution of the song — a hardened answer to bleak questions — depends entirely on the persuasive, stripped stoicism emoted by the guitar's metallic atonality.

Much of the album depends on electric guitar tone and texture, Docouto conjuring bleeps, steel drum sounds, mechanical grating, clicks, growls, alarm bells, and a lot of indescribable strangeness from his amp. While nearly always present and wildly innovative, distortion is nevertheless disciplined, as on "13 New Moons," where furiously plucked notes spin into brief roars made edgier and more visceral by Docouto's rigorous control. For all its unconventionality and experimentation, the band "rocks" like

very few others, eschewing the alienating pretension possible with some avant-garde noise rock, but remaining firmly on the bracing, breaking border of what mainstream American sensibilities would define as music. It possesses the best qualities of the best of New York's rock avant-garde old and new: the Velvet Underground, early Sonic Youth, Liars, Yeah Yeah Yeahs. But while the band-equation game may provide an accurate enough sketch of Antonius Block's sound, it would be a disservice to suggest these bands as influences.

Rather, Antonius Block taps into a New York tradition, its primal dissonance evoking the uncompromising concrete and steel walling the bohemian edges of city life. Better to describe the band as original and organic than experimental or unconventional considering the willful artificial novelty those latter terms sometimes imply. Even — or especially — at its most abrasive moments, Antonius Block achieves a directness, honesty, and emotiveness seldom if ever heard on the radio or television.

Like *I Dated the Devil*, Toronto-based Sandro Perri's recent *Plays Polmo Polpo* (largely a reinterpretation of several tracks previously released under the name Polmo Polpo) incorporates sounds that many would define as noise if heard in isolation into richly layered musical soundscapes. Though an EP, *Plays Polmo Polpo* develops with the logic and unity of an album (a full-length is due this spring), beginning with "Romeo Heart (slight return)," a free-floating overture of descending harmonica, rumbling drums and clicks, electronic beeps, whirs, and drones, somber bass clarinet, and sporadically strummed and plucked guitar. Perri's training in jazz and previous work in electronica combine here to create a warm, loosely structured, but cohesively moving, aquatic atmosphere, the unpredictability and variety of its sonic elements like a profusion of life drifting along with a slow deep current (a motif present in much of his work as Polmo Polpo, which roughly translated from Italian means octopus lung).

Track two, "Requiem for a Fox," incorporates much of the layered diffusion of "Romeo," but quickens into a regular tempo that carries the voice of Perri, who sings on the rest of the album. The final three tracks tighten and clarify the established musical themes by dropping the electronics and foregrounding Perri's singing and acoustic guitar with minimal drum and horn accompaniment. As dreamy, entrancing, and relaxed as the first tracks are, Perri's transition to the intimacy of singer/songwriter provides an unexpected and powerful comfort after their continually shifting, layered expansiveness. This movement from the liberating otherworldly atmosphere of "Romeo" and "Requiem" to the familiar homeliness of acoustic, verse-chorus-verse pieces defines the EP, which ends with "Circles," on which Perri sings, "I run around in circles and I / Find the circles that transfer me to calm, / The circle's getting smaller cause I / Made the point of tracing circles back home." The lines, like the music, combine the thematic openness of formalism with a human tone and warmth. Similarly, the structured and seemingly less structured halves of *Plays Polomo Polpo* mutually complement one another: even as Perri frees his music from the constraints of typical pop forms to explore otherworldly soundscapes, he also reinvigorates those forms by reminding the listener why they ever developed in the first place: to provide us with a welcome, or at least inevitable, home.

Even the EP's openers — at times less songs than sonic textures — establish a powerful sense of familiarity. Perri finds the warm tones and percussiveness of everyday sounds like closing doors, creaking, clacking, and clocks ticking, inserting them seamlessly — or mimicking them — alongside more conventionally played guitar and drums. Both *I Dated the Devil* and *Plays Polmo Polpo* succeed through expert musicianship. But it is a musicianship that relies on sensibility and the ability to find and select new tones beyond the conventional pallet as much as it does on skill or creativity, suggesting the uncanny conclusion that music is potentially everywhere if you stop to listen — in the roar of trucks and machines, in the accidents of amplifiers, the possibilities of electricity, in the noises a house makes as it settles. ■

Timely 'Dutchman' Revival Falls Short

FRANK EPISALE

theater REVIEW

- *Dutchman* by Amiri Baraka, directed by Bill Duke. Cherry Lane Theatre
- *The Fever* by Wallace Shawn, directed by Scott Elliott. Theatre Row, the Acorn Theatre

I wish I could report that Amiri Baraka's incendiary 1964 play *Dutchman* had become dated and irrelevant, a relic to be preserved in the museum of theatre history as a reminder of a time when America's turbulent "melting pot" was coming to a boil. Unfortunately, the slow and often cosmetic progress in America's divisions of race and class has done little to dampen the hostility, distrust, and paranoia that fuel this problematic masterpiece.

I also wish I could report that the current revival of *Dutchman*, directed by film and television stalwart Bill Duke and starring Dulé Hill (best known as Charlie on TV's "The West Wing") were as provocative and powerful as the play itself. Unfortunately, schematic directing and some strained acting have rendered the production little more than competent, though it is not without its charms.

Baraka's play is allegorical and rife with elusive metaphors, but the setting is as concrete and identifiable as they come: a New York City subway car. Clay, an upwardly mobile young black man, is riding the train on his way to a friend's party. When Lula, an alternately seductive and insulting white woman, enters the train, Clay's carefully constructed and maintained world begins to fall apart. Ultimately it becomes clear that Lula's designs on Clay are far more sinister than sexual.

Dutchman only works in performance if the actor playing Clay can successfully portray a sympathetic everyman figure who explodes with repressed rage and resentment when pushed too far. Hill is a charismatic and conscientious actor but he didn't quite succeed in making sense of that difficult transition, or of Clay's conflicted reaction to Lula throughout the play. At some moments, the text demands that he be openly attracted to her, at others that he be skeptical, dismissive, or violently angry. None of these dimensions of Clay's character is unusual in and of itself, but condensed into 60 minutes between two strangers in a public setting, the quick emotional transitions demand significant craft from actor and director.

Hill seems aware of the craft required and has clearly worked hard to make sense of the play. His work is sometimes a little too apparent, in fact. In Clay's crucial, brilliant, final monologue, Hill sometimes pauses for too long between thoughts, visibly working himself up to the next level of anger rather than achieving the impression of an organic crescendo. His visible struggle with the role, and the sweat glistening all over his face by the end of the monologue, evoke a great deal of sympathy for the actor rather than a sustained engagement with the issues raised by the text.

Hill's job is made more difficult by Jennnifer Mudge's sometimes perplexing portrayal of Lula. It's difficult to imagine how Clay could find this obviously unstable woman seductive, no matter how attractive her frequently referenced legs and hips might be. By revealing her character's malignancies so early and so often, Mudge not only hinders her costars performance but robs the play itself of its fundamental narrative arc. If the audience are never seduced by Lula, there can be no identification with Clay when the play lurches into darker territory.

Ultimately, the responsibility for flawed performances by strong performers must lie with the director. Duke seems so determined to broadcast his understanding of the play that he keeps its subtext visible at all times. The structure of Baraka's text require that the themes and metaphors reveal themselves a little at a time, but this production keeps everything on the surface from the beginning. It may be that Duke, as a film director, is aware that any twist ending demands that certain clues be placed throughout the production. As I certainly enjoy films that reveal their secrets upon repeated viewings, I can sympathize with this impulse. That approach requires a great deal more subtlety than is in evidence here, though.

While *Dutchman* is ultimately a condemnation of both Clay's desire to assimilate and of the systemically carnivorous culture that seduces him, Duke is too eager to render the world onstage sinister and unsettling from its opening moments. Because this play's intentionally misleading surface is rooted in a tangible naturalism, it is a mistake to create a situation so uncomfortable that the audience can't help but wonder why Clay doesn't just get up and move to the next car. Baraka's primary medium has always been poetry, and Duke's attempt to make the play's "points" too literal, too obvious, backfires.

Duke works more successfully with his design team, creating a slick and effective, if slightly gimmicky, production. Set designer Troy Hourie's onstage subway car works effectively with Aaron Rhyne's video projections to give the impression of a moving train. Jeff Croiter's lights extend the atmosphere into the audience, with an occasional flickering that is evocative of subway stations and train cars.

Dule Hill and Jennifer Mudge in a revival of "Dutchman"

Given that Baraka's notoriety stems far more from his politics than his poetics, it's not surprising that his brief talkback session after the performance was at least as memorable as the production itself. Since his best-known work has a decidedly separatist bent, would there be tension between Baraka and a racially diverse, middle-class audience? Would the controversy surrounding his recent poem "Somebody Blew Up America" and the subsequent stripping of his title as New Jersey Poet Laureate dominate the forum and overshadow any discussion of *Dutchman*?

Despite my queasy sense of apprehension, Baraka displayed none of the intellectual laziness and irresponsible rhetoric that sometimes compromise his genuinely valuable and provocative insights. He talked about writing the play while participating in a workshop that also included soon-to-be luminaries Adrienne Kennedy and Edward Albee. He talked about drawing inspiration for Dutchman's central metaphor from the way images of white women seemed to be used to advertise and sell the very idea of America. He pointed out that the play's violent ending was written in a time bookended by the high-profile assassinations of John and Robert Kennedy, and of Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcom X.

When asked why he chose to revive the play now, he responded that the Cherry Lane Theatre, site of *Dutchman*'s Obie-winning 1964 NewYork premiere, had initiated the new production. He also responded, though, that it seems a timely revival, given the various ways in which American politics have regressed in recent years, and the troubling superficiality of progress that sometimes belies the backsliding. Referencing Dr. King's famous warning about "integrating into a burning house," he quipped that public figures like Condoleeza Rice seem to believe they are wearing "asbestos suits."

Asked who he saw as a contemporary equivalent of Clay in *Dutchman*, Baraka pointed out that the metaphor can be read in more than one way. "On one hand," he said "it could be Sean Bell. On the other hand, it could be Damon Wayans." His cultural critique extended to contemporary theatre in America as well, as he bemoaned how conservative, and how overwhelmingly white, Off-Broadway has become.

I have heard from friends that he has been less compelling and more divisive at some subsequent talkbacks, but while it may sometimes be difficult to separate the wheat from the chaff of his rhetoric Baraka the playwright, poet, and activist remains an important voice, and a reminder that this nation remains far more divided and scarred than we sometimes like to pretend.

• • •

Another revival of an explicitly political, Obie-winning play is the current production of Wallace Shawn's monodrama *The Fever*, playing at the Acorn Theatre in the sprawling new Theatre Row complex on 42nd Street. A beautifully written, if self-indulgent, mediation on liberal guilt, Shawn's play was first performed in 1990 in a series of private apartments. The play was written over a period of several years, during which Shawn says he became increasingly aware of the systemic injustices from which he benefited. While many critics were derisive towards the play's initial public performances (at The Public Theatre), *The Fever* has been performed fairly widely, both because it is an easily produced (if not so easily acted) piece and because its themes seem to resonate with a great many theatre artists.

Audiences are invited to arrive early to *The Fever* and sip champagne onstage while mingling with each other and with the playwright/performer. While Shawn and director Scott Elliott have reconceived the play as a character piece rather than a monologue delivered by Shawn himself, the onstage gathering serves to blur the divide between actor and audience and reinforce the highly personal nature of the work itself. Shawn delivers the monologue with the fluency and mastery of a man who has been working with this material for over a decade. And while the phrase "liberal guilt" is often used dismissively and even scornfully, an awareness of the price of privilege, and of our own complicity with a system that ensconces some in penthouses and others in homeless shelters, has rarely been more urgently needed.

Dutchman by Amiri Baraka, directed by Bill Duke. Cherry Lane Theatre, 38 Commerce Street. Monday and Tuesday at 7pm. 70 minutes. Wednesday – Friday at 8pm. Saturday at 2pm and 8pm. Tickets: $36.00 - $41.00 at www.telecharge.com. Student tickets are $10 and can be purchased at the box office one hour before the performance. Volunteer usher positions may also be available. Show website: www.cherrylanetheatre.org.

The Fever by Wallace Shawn, directed by Scott Elliott. Theatre Row, the Acorn Theatre, 410 W. 42nd Street. Monday – Friday at 8pm, Saturday at 2pm. 90 minutes. Tickets $51.25 at www.ticketcentral.com. Student tickets for select performances: $15, available by signing up Ticket Central's "Student No Rush" program at www.ticketcentral.com/student. Show website: www.thenewgroup.org. ■

In Nightmares: David Lynch's 'Inland Empire'

TIM KRAUSE

film REVIEW

• *Inland Empire*, directed by David Lynch

Whatever your affective responses to David Lynch's new film *Inland Empire* — wonder, delight, curiosity, rage, boredom, despair, or disgust — it's safe to say you won't feel any of them unalloyed by any of the others at any single time: that is, the film, itself a curious amalgam of brilliance and dreck, breathtaking cinematic poetry and bathetic film-school overweening, will affect you in a number of clashing ways, and all at once, much as its heroine, played by Laura Dern, suffers, Alice-like, a tumble down a rabbit-hole that is at one and the same time mysterious and frightening, beautiful and terrifying, splendid and horrid. Like other of Lynch's recent films, such as the godawful *Lost Highway* (1997) or the slightly more interesting *Mulholland Drive* (2001) — the latter largely redeemed by the radiant breakout performance (those eyes! that kiss!) of then-newcomer Naomi Watts — *Inland Empire* is relatively untethered to any semblance of a coherent, interpretable plot-line: Lynch's habitual trope of a quasi-mythic journey through darkness and evil into clarity and compassion is still present, but is here divorced from the heightened, febrile realism that made films like *Blue Velvet* (1986) and *The Straight Story* (1999) such overwhelming successes, both aesthetically and, dare I say it, morally. *Inland Empire*'s nightmare world lacks the solid, daytime counterpart that made those earlier films' explorations of cruelty and fear so compelling: nowhere present, for example, are the complex investigations of small-town America, post-adolescent sexuality, and crime and the law that figure so prominently in *Blue Velvet*; similarly absent are the simple, touching character studies of *The Straight Story*. Here instead everything is through-the-looking-glass, a land of dreams and monsters, a Moebius strip of darkened staircases, leering prostitutes, and fatal abdominal wounds that plays out as a grainy feedback loop, a static-shrouded broadcast from some brooding collective unconscious.

Throughout *Inland Empire* I was reminded irresistibly of a line from Philip K. Dick's 1977 dystopian fantasia *A Scanner Darkly* — whose cinematic version by Richard Linklater was one of last year's best (and senselessly underappreciated) films — in which the protagonist, Robert Arctor, tries to make sense of his solitary, drug-addled existence: "[I]n this dark world where he now dwelt, ugly things and surprising things and once in a long while a tiny wondrous thing spilled out at him constantly; he could count on nothing." This line, used to such great effect — and somehow surviving Keanau Reeves's soporific "There's-a-bomb-on-the-bus?" delivery — in Linklater's film, would be a perfect epigraph to Lynch's, the operative words, however, being *once in a long while*: for Lynch's film, unlike Linklater's, is interminable, both literally and figuratively. Literally in that it is largely without a recognizable beginning or end — despite a seeming beginning in the visit of an insane elderly Polish woman (played by the incandescently odd Grace Zabriskie, whose riddling folk-tale ostensibly sparks the film's descent into insanity) to Laura Dern, and despite the film's cathartic ending, aided by the soundtrack's throbbing Nina Simone spiritual — and figuratively in that it seems (or seemed to this reviewer, at least) to last forever: hours and hours of maddeningly meandering episodic scenes that reveal little, plot lines that trail off and fall back upon one another, and situations, dialogue, and characters that come straight from the relentlessly-overdetermined (read: *trite*) Lynchian playbook of weirdness-for-weirdness'-sake. (Cf. Dennis Hopper's woefully affected, and now-anthemic, ejaculation of "Pabst Blue Ribbon!" in *Blue Velvet*, the rallying cry of besotted hipsters, cloyingly self-aware undergraduates, and third-rate, *soi-disant* pop-culture connoisseurs everywhere.)

Whether or not this lumpy, half-cooked goulash of a film will appeal to you is quite beside the point: as with last night's fever-dream, there are some absolutely stunning moments — streetlights viewed from a car window, stretching forever in an endless chain like lamps lighting some gothic underworld or house of the dead; Harry Dean Stanton's understated, quietly magnetic presence in his role as a film producer, another performance that manages to break through the hard-baked crust of the scene-chewing eccentricities Lynch forces on his actors; or even the (sigh) frequent dance scenes, which, well . . . are short, at least, and a welcome kinaesthetic break from the rest of Lynch's shopworn *bizarreries* — that, if not actually worth your investment of money, time, breath, and brain cells (*ars longa, vita brevis*, as Hippocrates said, a maxim whose truth I never felt so pointedly as during this film), are at least something to take with you from the wreckage of this harrowing experience, the cinematic-memorial equivalent of Coleridge's famous question: "If a man could pass through Paradise in a dream, and have a flower presented to him as a pledge that his soul had really been there, and if he found that flower in his hand when he awake — Aye, what then?" Here the passage is through Hell, illumined fitfully by some wonderfully stercoraceous (that is, too-dark, washed-out, and altogether ugly) digital cinematography — which, by a process of Brechtian defamiliarization, is the perfect visual counterpart to the film's nonnarrative — and by ghastly attempts at humor and packaged attempts at fright — Hell, as Dante and Milton (and, later, C. S. Lewis) remind us, is preeminently *boring* for those who suffer therein, and only mildly less so for its visitors — but nevertheless reeking, for better *and* for worse, of that same old sulfur, that wonted fire and brimstone.

You might even like or love it, though I suggest these responses would be the result of the cinematic equivalent of Stockholm Syndrome: at almost three hours, this is a long (albeit self-enforced) captivity, and toward the end I wanted to do anything to please my abductor and make him stop showing me such horrible things. (Indeed, one scene near the end — in which Dern lies bleeding to death, whimpering softly between a group of homeless people who talk, pointlessly and at length, about the feasibility of taking a bus from Hollywood and Vine in LA to Pomona — perfectly encapsulates this viewer's experience of the film: painful and near-death, with my suffering unnoticed by those around me, who remained, bovine acolytes of the Church of Lynch, fixated on the fascinating inanities happening onscreen. *Look into the light*, indeed.)

I do bemoan, however, Lynch's complete jumping-off-the-tracks from his more grounded explorations of America's seamier underside, the one wedded inextricably to its smiling, bland (like those blindingly white picket fences that open *Blue Velvet*, their scrubbed-clean brightness masking the decadence within) exterior: in a year that seemed quite literally the tipping point for American power, global security, and even environmental stability, Lynch's excursus into his phantasmal, fantastical *Inland Empire* seems an unfortunate detour from the real-life American one . . . but, as Laura Dern's character finally wakes up to realize (or does she?), it's only a movie, after all. ■

David Lynch at a Berlin press conference in 2006. Evidently he was announcing plans to star as Brad in a new remake of *Rocky Horror*.

News You Can Use from the DSC

WELCOME BACK STUDENTS!

We're starting the semester with a new team: a new Co-chair for Communications, Ericka Calton, (Biomedical Engineering) and three new Steering Committee members, Rob Faunce (English), Denise Torres (Social Welfare), and Patrina Huff (Urban Education). We also thank our continuing Steering Committee members for their dedication and hard work. We would like to welcome our new webmaster, Amanjeev Singh, a graduate student at City College's Compute Science program. Last semester, we welcomed two new Chartered Organizations. The Future is Green club, whose goals are to increase environmental and sustainability awareness around the GC, and the Luso-Brazilian Group, whose mission is to promote awareness and knowledge of the Lusophone world in the United States. The DSC has chartered a record number of clubs this year, and we were able to give most of them office space. In addition, there is webspace available on our DSC website for chartered organizations.

The DSC has created a Scholarship Development Committee. The committee's goal is to award students for academic excellence as well as service to their departments and to the University by means of a cash award. What is unique about this award *is* that there is no research project required. If you are interested in joining the committee, our next meeting is on March 23rd at 5pm. Lastly, spring semester means election time for the DSC. Nominations begin on February 1st, and once the nominations process is complete, we will be sending out ballots in April. Start thinking about who you would like to nominate from your department or at-large. If you are interested in running for a Steering Committee or Co-Chair position, please contact us for information about the positions.

ISSUES AND ADVOCACY

This semester, our goals are to continue to reach out to all GC doctoral and professional programs to ensure that every program has the representation they are entitled to on the DSC. No representation means missing out on important information as well as the departmental allocation each represented department is entitled to. Health care remains a crucial issue for students, as the current health insurance options are expensive for many students—and going without insurance is not recommended. We will continue to discuss health insurance options with the administration. Our Health Issues Committee, chaired by new SC member Denise Torres, considers the securing of a low-cost health insurance program as a top priority. International student advocacy is also one of our priorities. The DSC will continue to do outreach to off-campus programs; this semester, we will visit Queens College and Hunter College School of Social Work. We will continue to contribute money to the Travel and Research Fund as well as to the Wellness Center.

DSC FUNDS

Department representatives are encouraged to spend their allocations. For ideas on how to spend your money (other than an end-of-the-semester party), please visit the forums on our website. Remember- any unspent allocations from fall roll over to spring. Funds are still available for Cultural Affairs and Professional Development Grants. If you are thinking of holding a conference, roundtable, or publishing a journal, please contact our office and complete a grant application.

DATES TO REMEMBER FOR THE SEMESTER:

The DSC meets once a month in room 5414 at 6pm. Refreshments are served at 5:45pm. This semester's plenary will meet: February 23 March 23 April 27 May 11, at 5:00

In addition, the DSC sponsors a party and a coffee hour each semester. The DSC Coffee Hour will take place on the Wednesday, February 14th from 3-6pm in room 5414. We will be serving homemade (by your talented Steering Committee!) and fresh coffee and tea. Please stop by to meet your Steering Committee and to discuss any student issues that you have.

Our bi-annual party will take place on March 16th in room 5414 from 7pm-11pm (with a St. Patrick's theme!). Please join us for free beverages and food while we dance the night away.

Lastly, the DSC will be visiting Queens College on February 21st for a lunchtime pizza party. If your program is hosted at Queens College, or if you adjunct there, please join us for free pizza and drinks.

Once again, welcome back and come stop by our office in 5495! ■

Can you draw?

Do you make people laugh?

We are looking for an experienced and/or ambitious comic artist to illustrate a regular original comic strip for the Advocate.

Comics should be related to graduate student life, should ideally be serial in structure, and will run six times a year.

Interested illustrators should send samples, digital or conventional to James Hoff Editor-in Chief The GC Advocate Room 5396 The Graduate Center 365 5th Avenue, New York, NY 10016 or electronically to advocate@gc.cuny.edu.

President Kelly Consents to Swimsuit Calendars

MATT LAU

In yet another effort to raise desperately needed funds for the Graduate Center, sources close to the President's office are confirming that a green light has been given to an innovative new marketing and fundraising strategy: swimsuit calendars featuring select groups of students, staff, and Graduate Center faculty and administration.

But more surprising than the general idea of such a plan is that market research experts at *Direct Opinions*, an industry leader hired by the Graduate Center, have indicated that the surest bet for financial success would be to inaugurate the series with a calendar devoted exclusively to President Kelly himself.

"No one would believe it at first," said a mid-level manager at the super secret firm, *Marketing Underground*, a silent partner in *Direct Opinions*, "but the data doesn't lie. Since coming into office President Kelly has developed a surprisingly loyal following."

Yes, it seems it is not just Susan O'Malley, chairwoman of CUNY's faculty senate, who finds the President "dazzling," but also a growing number of self-described "Bears" in the gay community.

"From the data we've culled from chat room interviews and other reliable but informal means," said another *Marketing Underground* employee, "it all seems to have started when the President's appointment was announced in *The New York Times*. The picture that accompanied the article caused quite a sensation in certain circles, if you know what I mean."

According to their findings, *Marketing Underground* estimates that within a week of the article being published the President's picture had appeared on over 1,000 websites devoted to the aforementioned, anything-but-miniscule sub-culture.

"The President has dazzled his fans not just with his charisma, his charm, his fund raising skills, and his ability to quote at length from James Fenimore Cooper's neglected masterpieces, *The Leatherstocking Tales* and *The Deerslayer*," commented a representative at *A Bear's Life* magazine, "they are also enamored of his gorgeous smile, his rugged beard, and his impeccably tailored, Kevlar-lined suits."

Andrew Sullivan, the noted *Salon* columnist, pundit and bear, once wrote, "Part of being a bear is not taking being a bear too seriously." When asked about President Kelly's predicament of having all the characteristics of a bear without actually being one, Mr. Sullivan replied, "I'm not sure what I would do in his position, but I'll tell you this. If what I understand is correct, then I think Dr. Kelly is taking it all wonderfully in stride. In the interest of full disclosure, however, I should tell you that I've already pre-ordered my calendar on Amazon!"

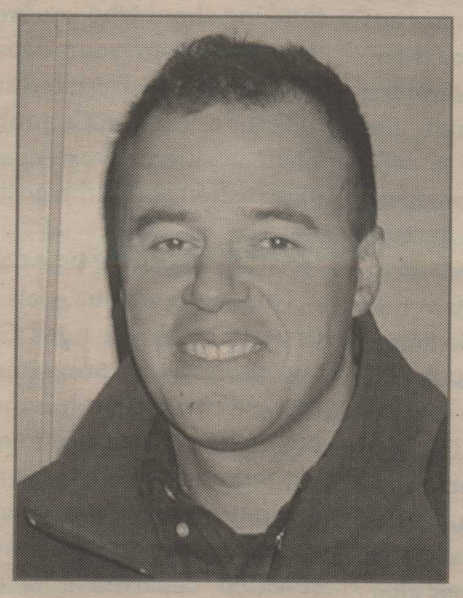
With this kind of enthusiasm about the project, it is easy to see why even Graduate Center officials with misgivings were ultimately persuaded. "The data clearly bears witness," said one GC official speaking on condition of anonymity, "to the fact that our President has an appeal that can carry the entire University to prominence. When you look at things like his receiving several hundred votes in the Mr. NYC Bear 2006 pageant and the interest he's received from cartoonist Bob Cunningham [author of "Grizzly Tales"], you just can't argue with the proverb 'be it better, be it worse, be ruled by he who bears the purse.'"

The latest rumors circulating on the Internet have it that President Kelly's calendar might go so far as to feature Duncan Faherty, the young Assistant Professor from Queens College that many bears consider a stunning young "cub."

"I can neither confirm nor disconfirm those rumors," said another high-ranking school official. "But in any case, with multiple calendars slated for next year, including Babes and Hunks of the GC, and calendars featuring transgendered students and students with disabilities, you can be sure that the GC will be exploiting every conceivable predilection in pursuit of its worthy and honorable goal of meeting its fund-raising targets for 2010." ■

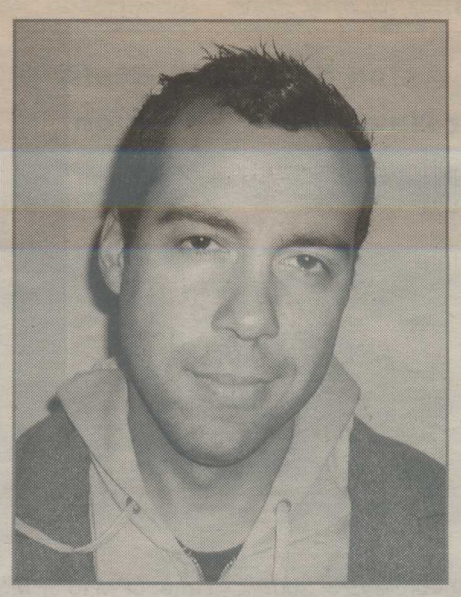
Student Forum:

What was the last Great Book that you read and why?

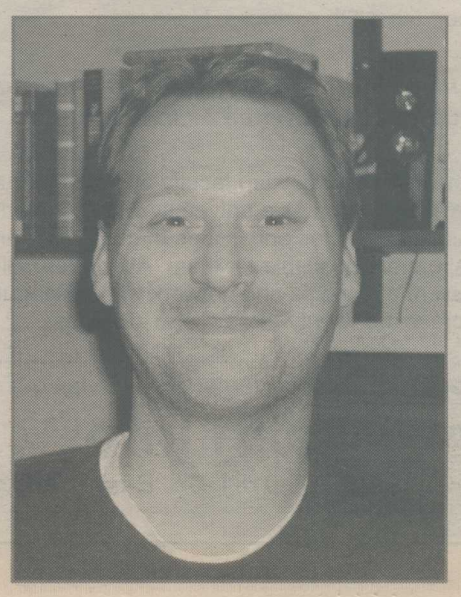


The last Great Book I read was Steven Remy's *The Heidelberg Myth*. The story was compelling, and the book was a masterpiece of research and writing on a topic that, incredibly, had received almost no scholarly attention.
Ke Johnson
History

Stephen Mitchell's translation of *Gilgamesh*. Only now can I figure out why evberyone was so upset about the looting of the Baghdad Museum.
Nikhil Bilwakesh
English



Edouard Glissant's *Le Quatrième Siècle* is not only the last Great Book I've read, but also one of the best novels I've encountered.
Michael Latour
French



Alan Carr's *Easy Way to Quit Smoking*. That book literally saved my life.
James Hoff
English