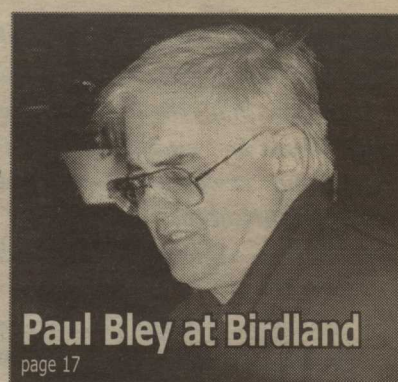


## CUNY GRADUATE CENTER **Advocate**

September 2007

<http://gcadvocate.org>

[advocate@gc.cuny.edu](mailto:advocate@gc.cuny.edu)



Paul Bley at Birdland

page 17



Mary P. Clancy, RN, was the Graduate Center's only licensed medical provider.

## *With Clancy Gone, Health Services Down But Not Out* VP: Contract woes hinder finding a successor

With the recent departure of the beloved Mary Clancy, Director of the Health Services Center, the Office of Student Affairs has been scrambling to find an adequate successor. Meanwhile many new and returning students are arriving at the Graduate Center only to find they are without access to professional health care on campus.

Clancy, a nurse practitioner, and the only licensed medical provider working in the Health Services Center resigned on July 30<sup>th</sup> and the administration, although actively involved in negotiations with unspecified service providers, has yet to find a replacement.

Consequently the center is currently operating without any licensed medical practitioners.

The Health Services Center, funded by a significant portion of the student activity fee, is one of the most popularly supported programs on campus, and is vital to the health and well being of the Graduate Center Community. The center, which provides free medical consultations, prescriptions, physicals, blood tests, and examinations, is an especially important resource for the many uninsured or seriously underinsured students who rely upon the free care provided there. Indeed, in a 2005

referendum described by Director of Student Affairs Sharon Lerner as "the largest turnout by far of any election or referendum" in 15 years, GC students overwhelmingly agreed to a whopping \$96,000 increase in student activity fees specifically earmarked for the continued support of the Health Services Center. That the center is now inadequately staffed for an indefinite period of time raises concerns that it might have all been for naught.

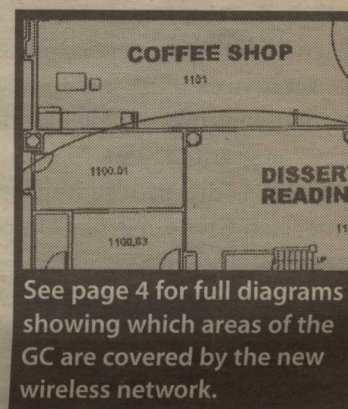
Matthew Schoengood, the Vice President of Student Affairs, has said that his office is doing everything it can to find a new direc-

*Continued page 5*

## **Wireless at Last** Service in place in Library, Commons, and other sites

After months of waiting, the promise of wireless internet service in the Graduate Center is now a reality. Launched in July, the GC's wireless network now provides coverage in several main student areas throughout the building, and deployment of additional wireless transmitters will be ongoing throughout the fall semester.

The first phase of wireless service is now operational throughout all three floors of the Mina Rees Library, the Dining Commons on the eighth floor, the Skylight Room on the ninth floor, the C-level conference room, the 365 Café lounge, the art gallery, the Beasley Powell Elebash Recital Hall, the Martin E. Segal Theater, and the first floor entryway. The GC's wireless network is an open network, meaning that there is no password required. Anyone who enters the GC building may log onto the wireless network. Matt Liston, Director of Enterprise,



See page 4 for full diagrams showing which areas of the GC are covered by the new wireless network.

Networks, and Systems for Information Technology, said that this was to facilitate use not only by students and members of the GC community, but also for guests who may frequent events held at the GC. "Our philosophy," said Liston, "was that we didn't want to deal with passwords because of problems that could crop up, depending upon which devices people use. This [the unsecured system] gives us freedom and flexibility." Users should note that with this system, if they are using the GC wi-fi connection, they will have access

*Continued page 4*

## **CUNY Tightens Admissions Standards for Senior Colleges**

Chancellor Matthew Goldstein and the City University of New York have recently announced plans to raise undergraduate admissions standards for all of the university's eleven senior colleges. The new plan, which would raise the minimum required SAT math scores for incoming freshmen from 480 to 500 at six of the 11 senior colleges, and from 480 to 510 at Baruch, Hunter, Queens, City, and Brooklyn Colleges, will go into effect in the fall of 2008.

Chancellor Goldstein has argued that the new test scores are necessary to make the university competitive with other local public and private colleges, saying that CUNY students in the past have been "woefully unprepared" for college level math courses. Goldstein also stated that the university was planning on raising the English requirements for new incoming freshmen but no specific numbers have yet been given.

*Continued page 5*



# It Can't Happen Here: Or Has It?

"Yes. Why are you afraid of the word 'Fascism,' Doremus? Just a word — just a word! And might not be so bad, with all the lazy bums we got panhandling relief nowadays, and living on my income tax and yours — not so worse to have a real Strong Man, like Hitler or Mussolini..."

— Sinclair Lewis, *It Can't Happen Here*

The media and media watch groups have been abuzz this week with talk about the recently revealed "Presidential Advance Manual," which lays out the tactics the Executive branch uses to control, limit, and silence protest and political speech at all public presidential events. Most coverage of the document's release, including a Slate column published Aug. 20<sup>th</sup>, 2007 have responded with humorous chuckles and characteristic liberal cynicism seeing the manual as just another example of Republican malfeasance, stupidity, or hubris. Although the manual's tactics are indeed sometimes laughable, the existence of the publication, and the consequences of its use should be a wake up call to anyone who takes their own freedoms and democracy for granted. The manual, which was acquired through court proceedings related to a case the American Civil Liberties Union brought against the President's office, is now available online for anyone with the inclination to read it.

Although all but about four pages of the 103 page document have been redacted (one shudders to imagine the "unknown unknowns" contained therein) those several passages reveal, with startling directness, the degree to which this executive branch in particular, but the US government more broadly has sought to promote certain kinds of public speech, while actively seeking to suppress others. The document, which includes bold sections on "Crowd Raising" "Preventing Demonstrators," and "Handling Demonstrators," include some of the

## FROM THE editor's desk

following recommendations for dealing with any abnormally vocal citizenry. If demonstrators are discovered at an event, the manual recommends, in disturbingly militant language that: "Rally squads... be dispatched to surround and drown out demonstrators immediately." The task of these "Rally squads," as the document describes earlier, is

to use their signs and banners as shields between the demonstrators and the main press platform. If the demonstrators are yelling, rally squads can begin and lead supportive chants to drown out the protestors (USA! USA! USA!) As a last resort security should remove the demonstrators from the event site. The rally squads can include, but are not limited to, college/young republican organizations, local athletic teams, and fraternities/sororities.

Obviously, the idea of sorority sisters as ideological shock troops seems laughable on the surface, but like all good fascists, it appears that Bush's handlers understand the political and militaristic value of enthusiastic and patriotic youth, and the image of cheerleading college students shouting "USA! USA! USA!" — a scene almost straight out of Lewis's nightmare vision of American fascism — is unnervingly reminiscent of similar youthful popular rallies in Germany and Italy in the 30s and 40s. Like these previous regimes, which managed to recruit millions of ordinary freedom loving citizens to genocide and murder, despite their own best interests, our government is in the process of influencing and managing public opinion for the interests of a small elite, shielding the press from images of dissent, and manipulating impressionable young recruits for the cause of the "homeland."

Meanwhile in New York City, the New York Police

Department continues to search the belongings of innocent subway riders, violating their civil liberties almost daily, and to crack down on and declare illegal any public gatherings of more than 50 people, while the MTA is running television ads asserting that "1,944 New Yorkers saw something and said something," thanking them for keeping their eyes and ears open. Of course, the MTA fails to mention how many suicide bombings have been thwarted by these vigilant citizens, or how many riders' rights were violated and their belongings illegally searched when they became the subject of these investigations.

The NYPD, for its part, has also been remarkably silent about just how many attacks have been stopped thanks to their "random" bag searches. As I've said before in this space, it seems more than absurd to think any terrorist with enough sense to put together a bomb would be dumb enough to be deterred by uniformed guards at a subway entrance. All of this manipulation and abuse is made possible, of course, by the climate of fear and cynicism that predominates our culture today. No longer does the government steal our civil liberties away from us; it doesn't have to since so many among us seem so eager to give them away. Indeed, we have been convinced that it is in our best interests to remain meek observers and let the professionals take care of our comfort and security.

Every time the government shields dissent and public outrage from the media, every time the average citizen stops vigilantly asserting their rights in the face of police force, and every time the people are taught to fear and suspect their own neighbors, we take one goosetep closer toward totalitarianism. Lewis's vision of a perfect storm of political events leading to an American fascist state, although more than seventy years old now, seems more relevant than ever. ■

Dear Editor:

I just read Nikhil Bilwakesh's Book Review: *To Set This World Right: The Antislavery Movement in Thoreau's Concord* by Sandra Harbert Petrulionis.

I have just finished reading "To Set This World Right: The Antislavery Movement in Thoreau's Concord." I was very impressed by Dr. Petrulionis' work, which included vast research into primary sources such as personal letters. When I read Nikhil Bilwakesh's review of the book I noticed a variety of inaccuracies: there are a number of mis-attributed quote excerpts, including the one the title came from ("to set this world right"). This was attributed to letters of Mary Moody Emerson when in fact they were from letters of Mary Merrick Brooks.

## letters

It is important for scholars who read these reviews to have accurate information about the book.

Cordially,

Donna L. Lybecker, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor of Political Science and Environmental Studies

Nikhil Bilwakesh responds:

The quotation in question is described in my review as a letter by Mary Merrick Brooks that stylistically resembles the unpublished writings of Mary Moody Emerson. You did not specify any other inaccuracies or mis-attributions in the review, and I don't believe there are any. ■

## Web Editor Needed

The Advocate is looking for a web-savvy, motivated individual to manage and expand its web presence. Familiarity with web design, data-driven code, and site creation software strongly recommended. This is a paid position.

For more information contact the Advocate at [advocate@gc.cuny.edu](mailto:advocate@gc.cuny.edu).

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# New Computer Blitz for Library, Computer Labs

The Information Technology department had a busy summer and students entering the library or the computer classrooms this fall will notice the difference. One of the most noticeable changes is the equipment; nearly 200 new PCs have been set up, and 200 more new PCs just arrived and are waiting to be installed over the next several weeks.

Replacing older equipment, the new PCs are made by Dell and, based upon advice given to IT by the Doctoral Students Council, do not have floppy drives. The Dells are much smaller than their older white- or black- counterparts; the new ones are slightly larger than your average shoe box, and sit atop desktops, secured against theft via security cables. Each monitor is now 19-inches wide, which provides an enlarged viewing format over the older public PCs located throughout the building. The new PCs already installed are in the library's C-level computer area, the computer classrooms on the C-level (room C415B, room C196.02, and room C196.03), and in the sixth floor computer lab (room 6418). There are also new PCs in each of the building's 25 Smartrooms.

This first wave of new public PCs was funded by the IT department's budget. The next installment of new Dells will be funded by the student technology fee. These new computers will be set-up during the fall semester and will replace older equipment in each of the PhD program departments where there are presently student-use computers, and the entire second floor of the library. The 200 new PCs for this phase arrived at the GC in late August, and are currently awaiting installation by the IT staff.

All of the new PCs have Microsoft Office 2007 installed on them, with the exception of computer classrooms identified for use with the SecureExam software, a program used to allow students to complete examinations on the computer. The reason why computers associated with SecureExam still have the older version of Microsoft Office is because Office 2007 is incompatible with SecureExam. There is a new version of SecureExam which, according to Robert Campbell, Assistant Vice President of Information Technology, "will have a dramatic impact upon its use," and will be compatible with Office 2007.

New software available this fall is Sibelius (a music notation application for Macs), and S-Plus which is used for statistical and graphical analysis.

## GRADUATE CENTER technology

Additionally, the new public PCs contain a revised standard software package that includes Internet Explorer 7 and Firefox internet browsers, new versions of Map Info, Mathematica, Atlas-TI, E-Views 6, and EndNote 11, and include for the first time Zotero and PureEdge, the latter of which appears in Windows as "ICS Viewer 6.0." Also added to the new software package are three open-source applications: OpenOffice, a multiplatform and multilingual office suite; Gimp, for digital graphics and image editing; and VLC, a free media player.

As the *GC Advocate* goes to press, less than 50 of the older remaining "white" public PCs in the GC remain. These computers have been identified to be replaced as soon as possible, based upon funding capabilities. The IT department has created a new minimum standard for all public PCs, which is a Dell GX260 or better. Those PCs which fall below this standard are also being designated for replacement as soon as funding permits. One other designated area of improvement is to upgrade all public PCs that fall short of the standard of at least 1GB of memory.

Elaine Montilla, Director of User Services, was quick to point out that the replacement of older, outdated computers also targeted the GC's public Macs. All but two of the library's Macs were replaced over the summer with 20-inch monitor, 2GB iMacs. There are four new iMacs on the library's C-level concourse, near the Help Desk; two on the first floor by the windows; and nine on the second floor along the 34<sup>th</sup> Street side near Fifth Avenue. These purchases were funded by the IT department's budget, and also included the acquisition of 14 black Macbooks to replace the older laptops of the GC's pusharounds. These Macbooks were received during the last week of August and are being rolled out in early September. Montilla stated that IT is setting up Parallels, which is the system that allows Macbooks to run Windows.

Again, just as the speed of installing wireless internet coverage has been hindered by the lack of adequate staffing in IT, the installation of new equipment is also being hampered. Campbell noted that he had 11 full-time vacancies and seven part-time positions which they were trying to fill. The openings significantly impact

the IT's ability not only to roll out new software and hardware, said Campbell, but also, their ability to engage new projects. It is not a lack of will or funds that prevents these jobs from being filled, but rather, the hiring process for CUNY civil positions which is known for being extremely challenging in its bureaucracy.

Other news or note-worthy items from the IT that students should be aware of as they start the fall semester:

- IT is working on starting an inbound fax service for GC students. Under this system, inbound faxes will be converted into pdfs, which will be filed on the GC network. Matt Liston, Director of Enterprise, Networks, and Systems for the Information Technology department, said that "any fax sent there could not be of a sensitive nature," because anyone could open the faxed pdf file. Faxes will be purged once every few weeks. IT is trying to finalize the inbound fax service and will release the fax number within the next month.

Two fax machines for students to send faxes are located on the library's C-level concourse in the old Help Desk area.

- A public drive (p-drive) is in the works, which will allow anyone

who logs into the GC network to access files in the p-drive. "This will be like a common refrigerator," Liston said, "as again, anyone will have access to any materials in the p-drive, these items will be unsecured." Like the inbound fax service, files in the p-drive will be purged periodically.

- The Help Desk now has a Hotmail live messenger account, so that students can chat live with an IT technician during the hours that one is on duty. The account name is [gc.helpdesk@hotmail.com](mailto:gc.helpdesk@hotmail.com).
- There is an Information Technology Handbook for students available at the Help Desk or online at <http://web.gc.cuny.edu/informationtechnology/presentations/handbooks.htm>, which provides general information and orientation to new and returning students.
- The IT department has a new and improved website where students can find answers and assistance to their questions. Students and other members of the GC community are encouraged to go to <http://web.gc.cuny.edu/informationtechnology>, check out the new site, and to send feedback (both positive and constructive) to IT so that they can improve upon it. ■

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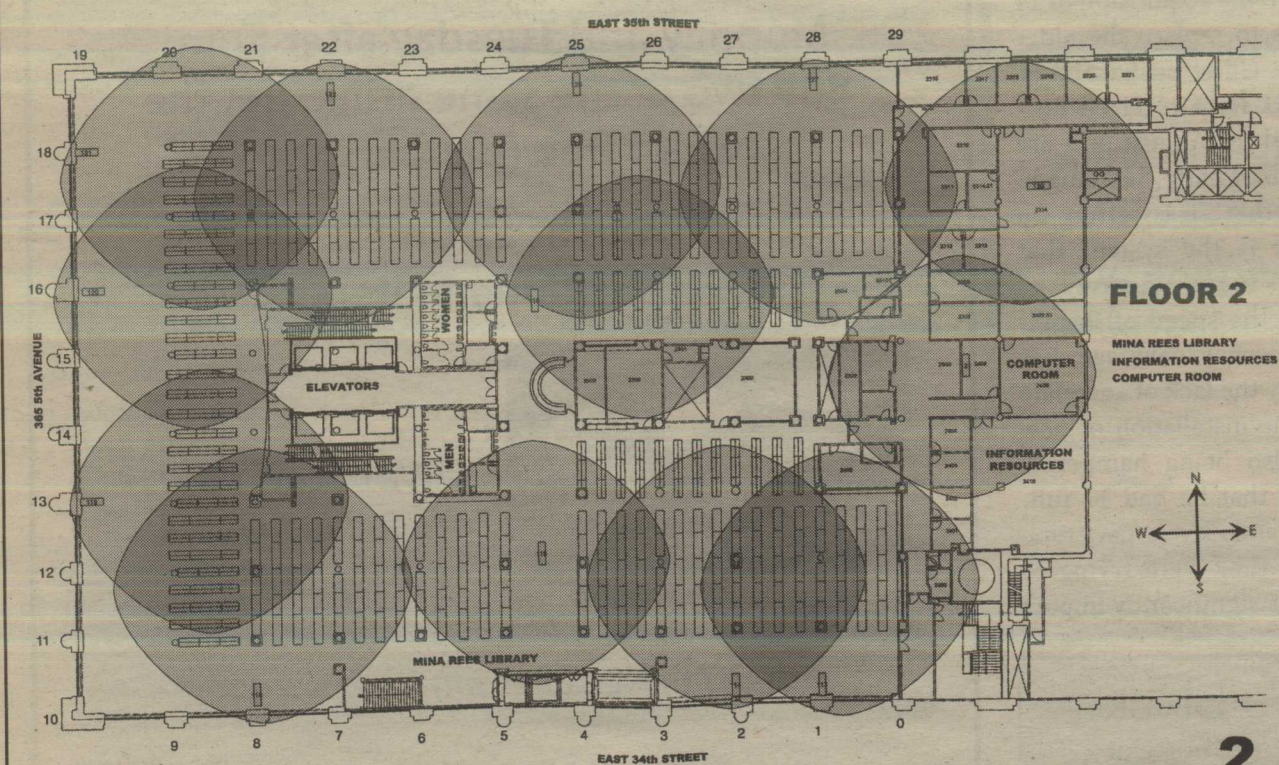
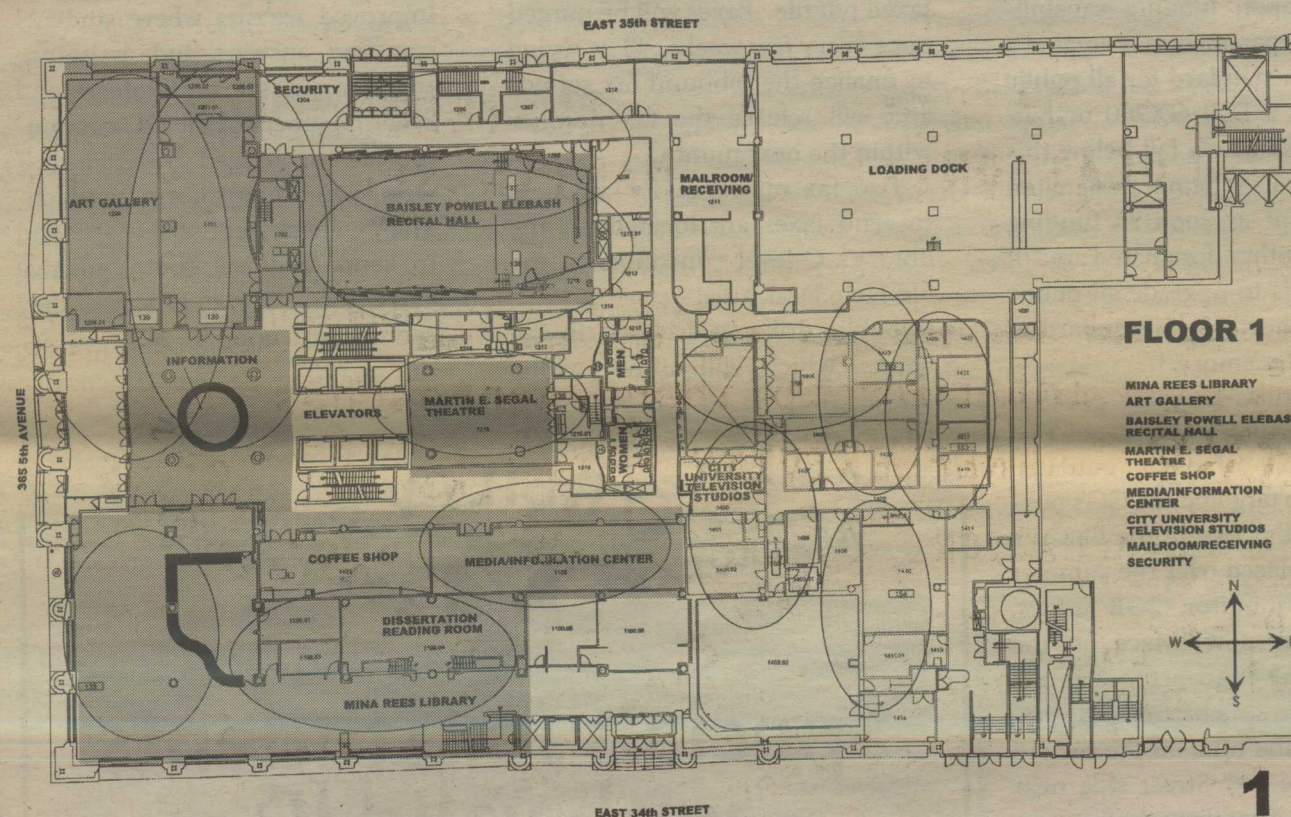
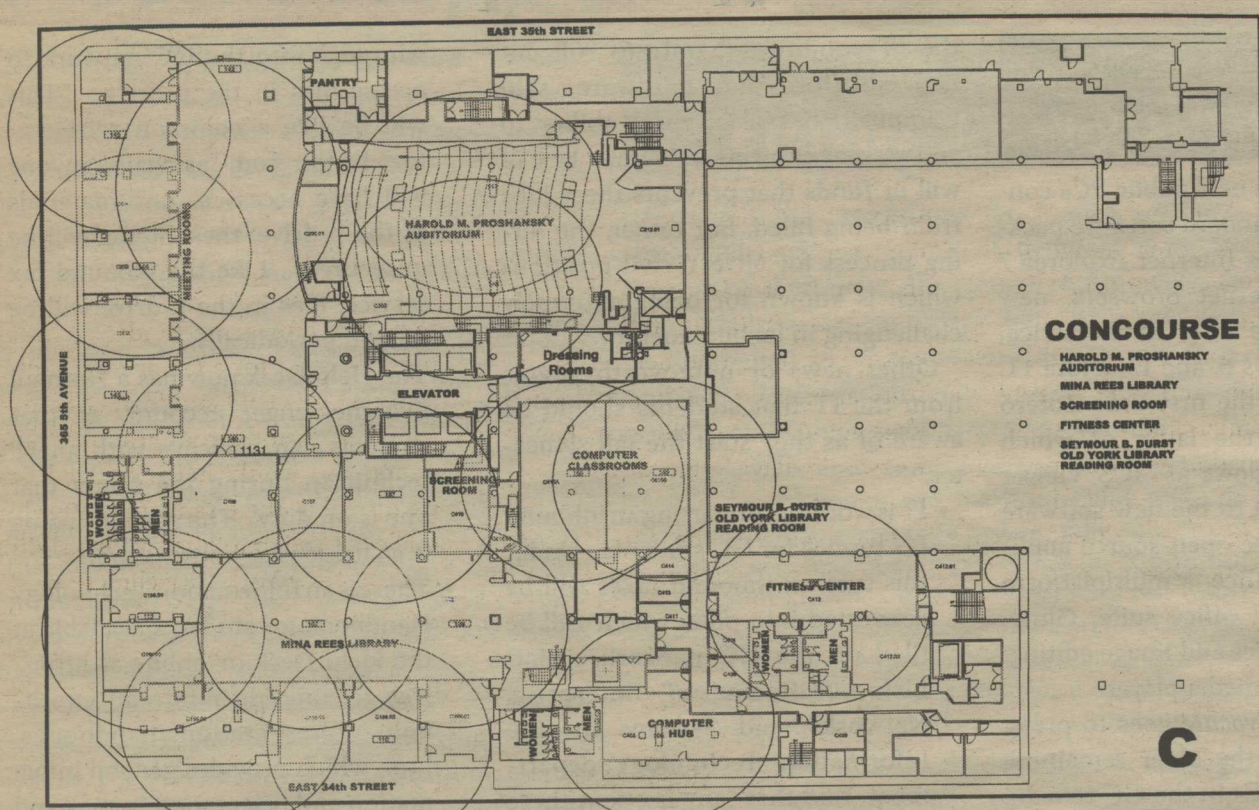
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# Phase 1 Wireless Network – Areas of Coverage



The floor plans shown give an approximate idea of the wireless internet access points in the Graduate Center. Readers should note that for the first and second phase deployments, the back area of the first floor (where the CUNY television studios are located) is not included in wireless internet access.

## Wireless

*Continued from page 1*

to their GC drives only if they connect via VPN or Citrix. "You will have to treat it as if you were logging in from home or off-campus," said Liston.

The GC wireless internet service was funded by a combination of the student technology fee and the GC's own operational funds. As of the start of the fall semester, the Information Technology department has roughly 50 wireless access points left which it will begin to deploy over the next several months. Areas that are slated to receive these access points during this second phase of wi-fi rollout are (in no particular order) the Science Center (room 4102), the President's Conference Rooms (rooms 8201.01 and 8201.06), the meeting rooms on the ninth floor (rooms 9204, 9205, 9206, and 9207), the Doctoral Students Council and other student office areas on the fifth floor, the computer classroom in room 6418, and the PhD program suites. There are 27 PhD program areas which will be receiving a wireless internet access point: Anthropology, Art History, Biochemistry, Biology, Chemistry, Classics, Clinical Doctoral Programs (audiology, nursing science, physical therapy, public health), Comparative Literature, Computer Science, Earth and Environmental Sciences, Economics, Educational Psychology, English, French, Hispanic and Luso-Brazilian Literatures and Languages, History, Linguistics, Mathematics, Music, Philosophy, Physics, Political Science, Psychology, Sociology, Speech and Hearing Sciences, Theater, and Urban Education.

When asked why it would take an entire semester to deploy the last 50 access points, Robert Campbell, Assistant Vice President for Information Technology, cited the lack of staff. "We could have everything set up within the space of one month," he said, "if we had dedicated staff members to do so." Pointing to the vacant positions within his department (11 full-time and seven part-time), Campbell indicated that the lack of staff was affecting IT's ability to deploy wireless coverage, among other things, in a more timely manner.

In order to get the first phase of wireless internet access points deployed in time, IT had to use outside contractors "where we had to when we didn't have the expertise," said Matt Liston. One other reason for the delay in installing the remaining access points is the nature of setting up the system. IT has to obtain approval for each location – especially within each program department – and then measure and install the access points.

Part of the wireless internet program being implemented this year is the option of internet printing, which would allow those utilizing the wireless system to print directly from their electronic devices. The software for this feature has been tested by IT, and over the course of the fall semester will be rolled out so that the ability to print from the wireless internet network will be in place by the start of Spring 2008. Again, the speed of installment will be affected by the understaffing of the IT department.

Enough of the announcements. How well does the GC wi-fi work? As tested by the *GC Advocate* staff throughout the summer, it works fairly seamlessly in the main student areas. The access points in the library are strong enough that a roaming laptop user can maintain internet connectivity throughout the second floor in moving from the windows further in towards the center of the building amongst the stacks. Coverage in the C-level computer area of the library was also strong in all locations, as was a test of the library's first floor. It is also possible for multi-taskers to eat lunch in the Dining Commons or break for coffee in the 365 Café while emailing or surfing the 'net. ■



## Admissions

Continued from page 1

Although Goldstein has his supporters among some math professors and college presidents, including Lehman College President Ricardo Fernandez, who, although hesitant at first, told *The New York Times* "perhaps I have become more convinced that students are able to rise to the challenge," the announcements have also generated a lot of criticism.

The CUNY mission statement declares that the university will "maintain and expand its commitment to academic excellence and to the provision of equal access and opportunity for students, faculty and staff from all ethnic and racial groups..." but some have argued that the new admission standards are grossly undermining that historical commitment to equal access. Most notably, critics cite the startling statistic that since the end of remediation in 1999 the number of African American students attending the top five CUNY senior colleges has fallen from 20 to 14 percent, with African American enrollments at City College dropping by a full 12 percent.

According to *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, the average SAT math score for African Americans in New York state was a mere 431, a full 69 points below the new requirements.

These new increases, however, come at a time when general SAT math and verbal scores are actually falling nationwide. According to the Aug. 28, 2007 *New York Times*, the average SAT verbal score fell for the second year in a row one percent from last year, while the math section fell three points from 518 to 515 — still five points above the new admissions standards for the "elite" senior colleges.

Students who said they intended to apply for financial aid, however, scored only 508 on the math score, two points below the new CUNY standards. Overall, Math scores on the SAT have fallen a full five percent since 2006. What all of this means, whether you support the idea of higher admissions scores or not, is that, just as in 1999, there will undoubtedly again be a significant drop in the number of working class and African American students able to attend CUNY's top senior colleges, and an increasing number forced instead to attend one of CUNY's many community colleges first before transferring.

As Stephen Steinberg, professor of sociology at Queens College, told *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, "this is yet another grim reminder that affirmative action is dead... The end result will be a segregated system with the vast majority of black students restricted to community colleges." ■

## Health Center

Continued from page 1

tor, adding "it is my hope to have a replacement for Mary sometime this semester." When asked if he could be more specific, Schoengood explained that he could not fairly offer any more specific time frame for Clancy's replacement, but did say that he thought "this is going to be played out in a relatively short time."

Part of the problem, suggested Schoengood, is that, although the administration and the Doctoral Students Council knew as early as last September that Mary Clancy was intending to retire in July, the process of finding a new director and nurse practitioner has proven to be

a lot more complicated than anyone expected. Although Schoengood said that he could not talk about the specifics of any contract negotiations, he explained that his office had originally expected to sign a new deal with the same health care provider much sooner. "It was indicated to me that if and when she retired they would work out a deal for a new contract," said Schoengood. However, that contract has turned out to be a lot more difficult than anticipated and Schoengood added, "it's very frustrating, and if I had known this [was going to be so difficult] last year we would have gone down another road."

The Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs also assured the

GC Advocate that whether or not they find a permanent replacement for Mary Clancy tomorrow or next month, they will do everything they can to find someone to either temporarily staff the health center or offer some kind of off-campus care.

In the meantime, Ms. Annabella Bernard, the administrative coordinator of the Health Services Center, is directing interested students to facilities and clinics in Manhattan where they can find some kind of comparable services for a fee or on a sliding scale. This is cold comfort, of course, for those uninsured graduate students who would have received free treatment at the Graduate Center but make too much to qualify for a sliding scale at New York City clinics. ■

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# Learning Teaching Excellence (the Hard Way)

RACHJEL PORTER

When I first began teaching in the sociology department at Queens College I was also new to the Graduate Center. At the end of each semester emails go out looking for adjuncts and those emails continue right up to, and sometimes well beyond, the first day of classes. I thought that teaching would be an interesting supplement to my professional work and my studies. By the time I spoke with the department chair I had about two weeks to prepare my class. I was hired to teach sociology of death and dying, an advanced level undergraduate class. The chair could not have been more accommodating and encouraging, but I felt like a poser putting together a syllabus on a topic of which I had little more than a layperson's knowledge.

Since then I have prepared many other classes, sometimes with more and sometimes with less time to do so. I continue to marvel at the broad discretion I've had in developing and conducting my classes. In deciding what readings and assignments to require, how much to expect of students, and how to determine their progress, I am left almost entirely alone. As far as I know, no one reviews my syllabi to let me know if I have missed a key component of teaching research methods, an important article in the sociology of crime, or a required exam at the end of the semester. No one tests my knowledge of the material I teach and no one tests my competence to teach it. Sure, a faculty member will observe me at some point during the semester, but in my experience these kind colleagues seek to support adjunct effort, perhaps making one suggestion for pedagogic improvement such as "write on the board more" but not offering more sustained critiques either formally or informally. In other words, I was not always sure that I would give myself the laudatory reviews that I received, and I knew there were areas where I could improve.

For example, I was regularly concerned that I was not as successful as I could be at engaging students. By choice I teach a required class (research methods for social science). Each semester I ask the students if anyone is here because you want to be. No hands go up. Because you have to be? Lots of hands. But I love research and I want the students to end up getting something out of my class — getting a lot out of it actually — even if they never apply their knowledge professionally. To engage students I encourage conversation, I use examples that could be relevant or interesting to them, I cajole, I encourage. But every semester some students don't seem to get even the simplest points I try to make. Every semester there are at least a couple of midterms that make my heart sink. To wit: yesterday I defined a basic term, "variable," in my Fall 2007 research methods class, then I gave a few examples. Then I asked for some examples from

the class. Hands shot up, but the first person I called on did not give a suitable example, he was confused and unclear. Others got it and offered, "age," "race," and "gender" in rapid fire, but I was left wondering how I could have been clearer for that first student.

Another always potentially demoralizing experience is grading papers. Some papers are terrific. They are well-written, focused, and interesting. But too many papers suffer both in writing and content. This type of paper fails to present a coherent thesis, fails to understand the role of secondary literature, and fails to demonstrate even logical reasoning. Writing centers help students who seek them out, but not all students do. Even if I recommend seeking assistance from a writing center, I feel that I have an obligation to indicate problems when I see them. This is a slippery slope though: it seems ineffective to point out a problem without guidance about ways to address it. It also seems likely that a heavily marked paper will discourage a student more than develop the student's skills. And how much time can I put into each piece of writing (on my adjunct salary) anyway?

What can I do better? I think to myself. What do you do? I ask my friends who are tenured professors at

## dispatches FROM THE FRONT

CUNY and other schools across the country.

Proceeding this way, I taught for three years while I also worked full-time and tried (unsuccessfully) to keep up with my responsibilities as a student. But after my son was born I realized that something had to give and at the beginning of 2007 I left my job to focus on school and being a mom. My new schedule gave me more time to think about teaching. I began to wonder whether other graduate student teachers harbored concerns about the quality of their teaching as I did. And I began to imagine what could be done to improve teaching.

Many schools have faced this challenge — it is not unique to CUNY nor is it unique to adjunct and other student teachers. While some teaching skills develop with the experience and confidence of the teacher, others are strengthened by instruction, guidance and effort — exercises that all faculty can engage in. Some university websites (such as Harvard <http://bokcenter.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do>; The University of Michigan <http://www.crlt.umich.edu>; and Vanderbilt

University <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/cft/index.htm>) offer resources such as tip sheets, articles, and theory much of which are available to anyone.

Here at the Graduate Center the Provost's Office offers classes in professional development that are open to all students. Now at my instigation and with much help from Carl Lindskoog of the Adjunct Project, the Adjunct Project has begun a new initiative on teaching excellence. Our first event on Sept. 25<sup>th</sup> is a roundtable discussion on teaching that I will chair. Participants will be a faculty member, an adjunct, a professional from a CUNY Learning Center, and one from one of the CUNY Teaching Centers. Carl and I are organizing the event and planning additional events. We hope this event will generate interest among CUNY teachers and lead to the involvement of more people around the Graduate Center as well as resource development, peer-to-peer learning, and development of best practices. Our goals for the event are to generate interest in developing teaching skills and resources for all CUNY faculty; provide information about the resources that do exist; and encourage dynamic discussion about how to make teaching more engaging and effective. ■

## Towards Adjunct Empowerment

CARL LINDSKOOG

As the academic year begins, some Graduate Center students are facing a college class as teachers for the first time while others are resuming their now familiar role of adjunct teaching. Veteran and first-timer alike, we are all heading back to work. And as we do, we should take a moment to consider how we experience our workplace: the classroom.

As adjuncts, graduate assistants, and fellows at CUNY, do we have sufficient training and resources to equip us to do our jobs well? Can we say that we work under appropriate conditions, that we are offered the appropriate compensation, and that we have the kind of job security and benefits that allow us to fully focus on our teaching? If not, do we have an effective mechanism to redress our work-related grievances? In short, are we empowered workers?

The answer, according to many Graduate Center students I have spoken to, is a resounding no. Most students do not feel a sense of security or empowerment in their job. Instead, they express surprise at being thrown into a classroom with very little training and few resources. They are frustrated by trying to survive on low wages and inadequate benefits; they are bewildered by their precarious hold on a teaching position that may be here today and gone tomorrow. Still, graduate student workers do astonishingly

## adjuncting

well in these extremely difficult circumstances. We manage to survive on these limited resources, benefits, and wages, but we cannot thrive.

What is it about our work experience at CUNY that forces us to operate in survival mode rather than as truly empowered workers? One significant factor, I believe, is our isolation. Disconnected from each other, we are left on our own to survive. Real empowerment, however, lies in creating meaningful connections with other student-workers and in forming effective graduate student-worker organizations. If our weakness comes from our limited resources and power as individuals, our empowerment must come from our collective activity.

There are many ways we can start to break down the isolation we graduate student-workers experience. The Adjunct Project, as I envision it, can be a key resource to help students connect with other graduate student-workers, to share training and pedagogy resources, and to organize around our collective concerns.

Graduate students can begin to move out of isolation by attending the monthly Adjunct Project meeting where they will meet others who are struggling with the same workplace challenges. They can contact

the Adjunct Project to receive information on teaching materials or they can attend the upcoming Panel on Teaching Excellence, another excellent opportunity to meet other graduate students and to receive answers to their teaching questions. Graduate students can even begin to directly work for improvements at the workplace by joining the Professional Staff Congress (PSC) campaign for a new contract. The Adjunct Project has worked hard to ensure that graduate student concerns were reflected in the current PSC contract demands. As a result, the extension of graduate student health insurance among other things is currently on the bargaining table, and graduate students can join the contract campaign to work toward these much-needed demands.

No matter how graduate students choose to participate, each level of increased involvement can lead to lasting and powerful connections with fellow graduate student-workers. True empowerment requires us to seek each other out and to build a lasting organization that will allow us to work collectively towards empowerment in the classroom. ■

Carl Lindskoog is the coordinator of the Adjunct Project. He can be reached at [clindskoog@gc.cuny.edu](mailto:clindskoog@gc.cuny.edu)

### FIRST ADJUNCT PROJECT MEETING OF THE SEMESTER

• Friday, Sept. 21 – 4:30 pm – GC 5414.  
Food And Drinks! All Are Welcome!



# On the Other Side of the Table Now

This fall, the *GC Advocate* is launching a new column focused upon graduate student life outside of the classroom and the GC. If you are interested in writing about your experiences or blogging them for us on our website, please send an email to [advocate@gc.cuny.edu](mailto:advocate@gc.cuny.edu), call us at (212) 817-7884, or stop by our office in room 5396.

Meet Dr. Joe Sramek, a recent graduate of the History Department who is a first year tenure-track assistant professor at Southern Illinois University – Carbondale. Sramek's research interests focus upon British imperialism in South Asia prior to 1850, and the intersections of British colonial policy with gender, race, and class.

Sramek is a veteran of the CUNY system, logging several years teaching at various CUNY campuses, the New School, and Manhattan College while completing his work at the GC. He said that the job market is tough, taking him "two years, 144 job applications, 13 American Historical Association (AHA) interviews, and four final round interviews," to land his job this past spring. Now that he has undergone two years on the job market, this fall, Sramek will blog for us what it is like to be starting out and starting fresh in a new place all the while beginning to revise his dissertation into a book. If you'd like to read some of his published work, check out the Summer 2006 edition of *Victorian Studies* for his recent article on British tiger hunting and masculinity.

## grad life

### JOE SRAMEK

Since moving to Carbondale in early August, I would have to say that most of my major life adjustments so far have been professionally-related. Granted, there are a lot of personal adjustments I'm making right now, too. Until this past summer, I had been a life-long New Yorker so suddenly living in the rural Midwest is a bit different than what I had been used to (although I did grow up in the Hudson Valley so having lots of trees around me again is a good thing!). After years of being a night-owl or a modified night-owl back East, I'm finding that I can't sleep past 7:30 most days, even weekends. And, after living for years in the outer suburbia of New York City or in the city itself where traffic is always a problem, it feels really strange to be able to get to campus in five minutes and to the other side of town in no more than ten.

The biggest adjustments I've had to make so far, though, have all occurred on the professional level and basically can be boiled down to one thing: *I am no longer a graduate student.* I have rapidly become aware of this crucial fact

in several ways. First, I now get memos and a lot of them. There have been numerous rounds of orientations for new tenure-track hires, some helpful, many not, but all together much more time consuming than anything I've ever endured as a graduate student holding both a Teaching and a CUNY Writing Fellowship. But perhaps the biggest adjustments I find myself making so far are at the department level, and particularly, in my interactions with SIU graduate students, so let me devote most of my first column to this.

First some background: my department had both its Modern Britain and its British Empire historians leave within the last five years, and, as a result of the zero-sum game of academia and the absolutely essential need to expand our offerings in Native American, African-American, African, and Middle Eastern history, where the last four hires prior to me have been, I am basically the replacement for both professors. (Due to recent Illinois public higher education cuts – from a Democratic governor no less – I suspect that there may not

be many new hires for some time to come, and they most certainly won't be in British history if or when they ever come). In addition, our Modern Irish Studies person, whom we shared with the English department, is retiring this year and dumping his history students on me.

So, right off the bat I have one Ph.D. student at dissertation stage, three others wanting to do British or Irish history who are still taking courses, and a fifth doing Modern Germany who, nevertheless, wants me to do a field in British history with him on his orals next fall. Thus, without any time under my belt as a new faculty member in a new school with a Ph.D. program which I'm finding is structured somewhat differently from CUNY's, I have had suddenly to come up with orals readings lists as well as advise my furthest-along student about his dissertation proposal. And, if this weren't surreal enough, I also have a graduate research assistant with whom to work this year.

As I haven't yet been able to open my dissertation without cringing and will not be ready to begin writing until, at the earliest, next spring, I basically feel

at a loss of how best to utilize his help at this point.

As you can probably imagine, I feel like saying: "Wait a minute! I just got my Ph.D. I don't know the faintest thing about advising other graduate students: I was one myself not that long ago." Instead, what I find myself saying is this: "We will expect you on your orals to be able to demonstrate that you understand the major historiographical interpretations of British and Modern European history," or, in

the case of my student who is writing his dissertation proposal, "I think you should be thinking about how you could make your project (which is about eighteenth-century Catholic upper-class families in Ireland and whether or not there were Catholic and/or Irish mindsets that early) as much a project that touches on British history as Irish as you'll have a better time on the job market." But since when did I become one of "them?" Part of the "we?"

However this process occurred and however much at times I might want to run away from it right now, the truth of the matter is that I *am* one of them now, even if wearing that mantle feels awfully pretentious to me at the moment.

And that, above all else, is the hardest adjustment I find myself making right now as a new tenure-track professor straight out of graduate school. I wish someone had told me about all this, but I guess, just like being a new

parent, there are no "rough guides" on how to be a new tenure-track professor at a research institution with a Ph.D. program.

I imagine that now with the college football season upon us and soon the all-important men's college bas-

ketball one – go Salukis! – I will be blogging in future columns about adjusting to life in a small college town with a serious athletic program. And I will be discussing the differences I am noticing between SIU and CUNY students. In the meantime, please feel free to send any comments or questions you might have to [sramek@siu.edu](mailto:sramek@siu.edu). ■

Starting September 20, read about Sramek's encounters at SIU on our website, [www.gcadvocate.org](http://www.gcadvocate.org).

*The biggest adjustments I've had to make so far basically can be boiled down to one thing: I am no longer a graduate student.*

don't submit  
contribute

[advocate@gc.cuny.edu](mailto:advocate@gc.cuny.edu)



# Attention New Students: Eat Thai Noodles...

...and other things nobody told me when I started at the Grad Center that I wish someone had

DANIEL D'AREZZO

It isn't that the Grad Center has secrets that are being kept from new students — just go to the website, [www.gc.cuny.edu](http://www.gc.cuny.edu), and you'll find just about everything you need to know, if you're good at navigating websites — but when you're new to the Grad Center it sometimes seems there's a surfeit of information, so you tend to focus only on what is most relevant

as a graduate student. Although the following is by no means exhaustive, my hope is that this article will help new students become acquainted with their surroundings sooner than I did in my first year.

Although there is a lot of it, much of the information floating in the ether is relevant only to certain segments of what is an incredibly diverse population at the GC. For example, about

to the official reception and orientation for all new students on Tuesday, August 21.

At this year's general orientation, however, Professor Linwood J. Lewis, who received his doctorate in psychology from the Graduate Center in 1996, was the keynote speaker. It was his remarks that gave me the title for this article with his first tip for incoming students: "eat Thai noodles," he said, calling them cheap, quick, nutritious and flavorful. He followed this up with "show your administrators some love. . . and respect." You may not even know who these people are right now, but by the time you need them you will definitely want to. The assistant program officer (APO) and the executive officer (EO) in your program, according to Lewis, "can save your life." Although he did not provide specific instances, Lewis was probably not referring to CPR or the Heimlich maneuver; he meant, I assume, something along the lines of helping you graduate on time and with as little hassle as possible. Indeed, APOs can make your life easier or more difficult depending on their mood. His third piece of advice, not surprisingly, was to "party with the English students," a reference to the Friday afternoon forums that the English department holds almost every week: interesting speakers, good wine and finger food. (Dr. Lewis said that he had actually had the good fortune to meet and

marry a student from the GC English department.) He also suggested that you "love your dissertation better than yourself" because "you'll be living with it for years," and that you finish your work and leave as quickly as possible. Your dissertation doesn't have to be perfect, he said, just done; it is the beginning, not the end, of your professional work. Lewis ended his speech with the self-affirming: "you are smart and beautiful and you deserve your Ph.D." suggesting that students tape this phrase above their work desks. Provost Linda Edwards's first tip for new students: "be proactive, take the initiative, seek out faculty and consult with them." She said there are 225,000 students at CUNY and 5,000 faculty members. Do the math. That's a teacher-student ratio of 1:45 — not exactly Amherst College (1:8). Echoing Lewis (there would be echoing and re-echoing all morning at the orientation), Edwards said to find multiple mentors and to "be visible," not only in classes but in the life of the department — join professional societies (there may be funds available to help pay dues) and attend lectures and professional meetings. Her final piece of advice was to "be responsible": by being on time for class (don't expect to hold your professors to this standard, by the way), by getting papers in on time (take an incomplete only if your house burns down), and by developing useful contacts, you are on



at the moment, like getting a place to live and starting your classes and keeping up with the work. That's all necessary and good, but you might thereby miss something that could be essential to your happiness and suc-

cess as a graduate student. Although the following is by no means exhaustive, my hope is that this article will help new students become acquainted with their surroundings sooner than I did in my first year.

To: Adjuncts, future adjuncts, graduate assistants, and fellows  
From: Members of The Adjunct Project  
Re:

## Panel on Teaching Excellence

Tuesday, September 25<sup>th</sup>, 6:30 pm  
Graduate Center, Room 5414

The Adjunct Project is proud to present the first annual **Panel on Teaching Excellence** in its ongoing initiative to ensure high standards at CUNY and serve GC student workers, featuring the perspectives of teachers ranging from Graduate Center faculty to your fellow adjuncts.

- ~ Receive answers to your teaching questions.
- ~ Discuss effective teaching pedagogy and practices.
- ~ Meet other adjuncts with similar concerns.

Refreshments will be provided.  
RSVP to [clindskoog@gc.cuny.edu](mailto:clindskoog@gc.cuny.edu).



Provided by  
The Adjunct Project

[www.cunydisc.org](http://www.cunydisc.org)

under "Projects"



your way to "satisfying employment," which is no small thing in the scheme of one's life.

Associate Provost Julia Wrigley, acting dean for Academic Affairs, emphasized that "each program has its own distinctive culture" and that "you have to learn the culture" in order to pick up on "the unspoken things — such as how to prepare for exams." Wrigley also said to "look ahead" and "orient yourself to the future" — i.e., don't just focus all your attention on the semester ahead of you but spend some time mapping out your graduate years with an eye to the requirements you will eventually have to fulfill, and the time you think it will take you to accomplish them. She likened getting an incomplete to being stuck in the past, impeding your forward motion. Wright also endorsed the not-for-credit professional development courses offered by the GC, which include classes on effective academic writing, teaching strategies, improv classes that develop the art of adaptability in the classroom, and for non-native speakers of English, classes on improving spoken English and accent reduction. You can find these courses on the GC website in the same place that you find other courses: go to the Student Web, click on Class Schedule & Course Catalog, then go to Current Course Listings, search by Fall 2007 term, and in the Subject pull-down find Professional Development.

Gregory Donovan, co-chair for Student Affairs of the Doctoral Students' Council, spoke briefly (sadly he was allotted only five minutes on the program) about what the DSC can do for you, pointedly remarking that, despite its name, the DSC also represents master's degree candidates,

who make up around five percent of incoming GC students. Donovan talked about some of the professional and recreational resources that the DSC provides, including the Adjunct Project, headed by Carl Lindskoog, which represents the interests of teaching fellows, adjuncts, lab assistants, and TAs working throughout the university.

Donovan also talked about the 26 student chartered organizations that the DSC supports, many of which exist to bring people of similar backgrounds or interests together. This community aspect is particularly important at a non-residential school like the Grad Center, which has no dormitories and little public space to speak of. Donovan also mentioned that the DSC sells discounted movie tickets, which can be purchased for a mere six dollars in the DSC offices on the fifth floor. For those interested in applying, the DSC also offers professional development, travel, research, and cultural affairs grants of up to \$600 — just the help you might need to apply for that national conference you've been meaning to go to but were afraid to try.

Perhaps the most important lesson of all, though, was the one emphasized by several orientation speakers: do whatever you can to find a mentor or mentors. Of course, I'm not sure how you do that. I don't recall now whether I made an appointment to see Professor Brownstein or whether I just dropped in on her. I had been invited to enroll in the Master of Arts in Liberal Studies (MALS) program and wanted to know more about it, so I talked to Professor Brownstein and explained what I was interested in writing about and she persuaded me that MALS was a good fit for me. She has

been an invaluable resource ever since. I can't say if it will be that easy in every department; but, as Dr. Wrigley said, CUNY is "an engine of social mobility," and the faculty and staff for the most part genuinely want to help students succeed, here and in the world.

All of this information was incredibly helpful, but there are some things that, no matter how hard the administration tries, students tend to figure out by chance. For instance, although I've been at the GC for a year now it was only recently that I learned about the Dining Commons on the eighth floor from another student who had invited me to join him there for a cup of coffee. I had mistakenly assumed that our sole dining commons was the canteen on the lobby level, which is officially known as the 365 Express and proffers chiefly soups, salads and sandwiches. The eighth-floor commons on the other hand actually serves relatively healthy and delicious hot meals at sometimes quite reasonable prices, and the large skylight in the Dining Commons is a particular blessing in the often light-deprived environment of the GC.

When I first enrolled at the Graduate Center I had intended to go on the library tour for new students but never got around to it; there was always something else for me to do. This year, in August, the library had four tours. If you missed out on them, you can go to the website <http://library.gc.cuny.edu> and explore.

Speaking of the library, for those who haven't noticed yet there are several computer workstations in the basement of the library and most of



Carl Lindskoog

them are new and most of them actually work (see GC Tech column on page 3). They are wired to three large printers and amazingly you can print to your heart's content for free. You can access hundreds of journals and get pdf versions of the articles, which you can print out and read at your leisure — of course, since you care about the environment, not to mention CUNY budgets, you will remain conscious and vigilant about limiting your paper use. As for Information Technologies, in case you didn't know, which you might not have, you already have a GC e-mail account set up in your name (first initial and surname) @gc.cuny.edu, which you can also access from home by going to the GC website and clicking on Outlook Web Access at the bottom of the home page or typing <https://wa.gc.cuny.edu>.

Unfortunately for me, I made a lot of mistakes my first year and I had to learn a lot of things the hard way. What has saved me, despite all this, I suppose, is that I've learned to ask for help, to be humble, and not, I hope, to abuse the good will of the people I importune. Go, thou, and do likewise. ■

#### STUDENT CHARTERED ORGANIZATIONS & CLUBS

The following organizations are followed by their room number and phone extension, if they have one. If they don't, then "n/a" is given after the organization name. More information is available on the web at <http://www.cunydc.org>.

- ♦ AELLA (Latino & Latin-American Students Association) - rm. 5388; x7866 or x7867
- ♦ Africa Research Group - rm. 5490; ext. 7872 or 7873
- ♦ Africana Studies Group - rm. 5495; ext. 7864
- ♦ American Studies Group (aka CUNY Americanists) - rm. 5393; ext. 7880
- ♦ Association for Computer Machinery
- ♦ Chinese Students & Scholars Organization (CSSA) (info flyer) - rm. 5390; ext. 7850 or 7851. A party to welcome new members will be held at 7 p.m., Friday, September 14, in Room 5409.
- ♦ Ethnobiology Study Group (ESG) - rm. 5399; ext. 7860 or 7861
- ♦ Feminist Studies Group - rm. 5486; ext. 7876, 7877. The 2007-08 co-chairs are Keridiana (Kery) Chez and Randy Cota. To join, you can e-mail [kerychez@gmail.com](mailto:kerychez@gmail.com). On October 12, the FSG will host the second annual Feminist Pedagogy Conference at the GC. For more information, visit <http://www.gc.cuny.edu/womenstudies/wgp>. The website for FSG is <http://www.cunydc.org/fsg>.
- ♦ Free CUNY - rm. 5495; ext. 7865
- ♦ The French Interdisciplinary Group for 17<sup>th</sup>-Century Studies
- ♦ The Future Is Green Club
- ♦ Global Studies Collective - rm. 5488;

ext. 7874 or 7875

- ♦ International Socialists' Organization - rm. 5388; ext. 7846 or 7847
- ♦ Japan Study Group - rm. 5399; ext. 7860
- ♦ Korean Student Association - rm. 5394; ext. 7854 or 7855
- ♦ L'Atelier - rm. 5389; ext. 7848 or 7849. Offers 8 weeks of FREE French language workshops, Fridays 2-4 p.m., starting Sep. 28 (room to be announced). Looking for singers, actors or aspiring actors to improvise, prepare songs and scenes for stage and video, which will be presented at a soirée at the Boris Vian Café, Nov. 30, 2-5 p.m.
- ♦ Luso-Brazilian Studies Group
- ♦ Middle Eastern Studies Organization - rm. 5398; extension 7890, 7891
- ♦ PART (Art History Journal) - rm. 5393
- ♦ Pearle Kibre Medieval Study - rm. 5397; ext. 7858 or 7859
- ♦ Postcolonial Studies Group - rm. 5395; n/a
- ♦ QUNY/ The Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgendered and Queer Student Group - rm. 5498; ext. 7862 or 7863
- ♦ SPTSA/ Social and Political Theory Students Association - rm. 5492; ext. 7868 or 7869
- ♦ Taiwanese Students Organization - rm. 5392; ext. 7852 or 7853
- ♦ Turkish Students Association - rm. 5391; ext. 7878
- ♦ Women of Color Network

#### OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

- ♦ Civil Engineering Doctoral Student Council

#### THE ADJUNCT PROJECT

One of the principal ways the Graduate Center offers financial assistance to students is by providing work as adjuncts, graduate assistants and fellows. The Adjunct Project is a resource for those students and represents them in the Professional Staff Congress/-CUNY. If you have such a position, your dues are already paid and you need only sign up. Carl Lindskoog, Adjunct Project coordinator, wants you to know your rights and benefits and also, as much as possible, to improve them. The pay, he recently wrote, is "shockingly low," and he estimated that, at the hourly rate of \$58.68, teaching "two courses per semester yields \$10,562 before taxes. With office hour [available only if the two courses you teach are

at the same CUNY campus], you can add approximately \$880/semester or figure an annual income of about \$12,322."

In order to live and study in New York, adjuncts typically do more than eat Thai noodles — they also borrow money, a subject of great concern today. You can subscribe to the Adjunct Project listserv by sending a request e-mail to [clindskoog@gc.cuny.edu](mailto:clindskoog@gc.cuny.edu). Pizza is served at 4:30 p.m. every third Friday of the month in Room 5414. On Tuesday, Sep. 25, at 6:30 p.m. in Room 5414, the Adjunct Project is sponsoring a Panel on Teaching Excellence. R.S.V.P. to [clindskoog@gc.cuny.edu](mailto:clindskoog@gc.cuny.edu). For more information about the Adjunct Project, go to [www.cunydc.org](http://www.cunydc.org) and click on "Projects."



# Passionate Politics and the Politics of Passion

JONAH P.B. GOLDWATER

You wouldn't ask just anybody to make medical decisions, only a trained doctor, reasoned Plato. So, too, you wouldn't ask just anybody to make political decisions, but only a trained ruler. For as long as there has been the idea of self-rule of the people, there have been those who question the people's capacity to do so. The people, known variously as The People, volk, the mob, or perhaps even the unwashed many, have often been thought too uncouth, too uneducated, but, most of all, too emotional, too tied to animal instincts and feelings, to govern themselves.

There can be no doubt that the Enlightenment faith in the universal distribution of human reason was a necessary (though hardly sufficient) condition for the birth of American democracy, and, more generally, democracy in the modern age. For it was only on the assumption that each individual (by virtue of being human and possessing that uniquely human trait, reason, was thought capable of being autonomous, or self-governing) that democracy, the collective self-governing of the people, even made sense; conversely, if the people were not able to self-govern, then someone else would have to do it for them, and democracy would fail.

But the Enlightenment notion of Rationality was the product of metaphysicians, and was often conjoined to a theological notion of the immaterial mind, if not in letter than in spirit. That the brain is a physical organ suggests that its products reflect the nature of the source, and that scientific study of the brain should temper philosophical speculation about its capacities. Reason may not be God-given, a faculty of an immaterial mind with a teleology pointing squarely at Truth, but instead, is a faculty of an organ with an evolutionary history, which, like all such products, reflects whatever ad hoc measures were available at the time. The human brain is not so dissimilar to the brains of other presumably non-rational beings, and Reason, with or without a capital "R," is not divorced from our pre-human history.

Foremost among the ways the actual brain doesn't work is by a "pure reason" that understands and evaluates reality immediately, without the mediation of emotion, metaphor, and unconscious processes. Such facts, according to a new generation of cognitive scientists turned public advocate, have political consequences, foremost among them being that any political campaign that fails to understand how the brain actually processes information and makes decisions, and instead relies on an eighteenth century philosopher's notion of mind, is doomed to failure. Among these cognitive scientists are Drew Westen, who just published *The Political Brain: The Role of Emotion in Deciding the Fate of the Nation*, and George Lakoff, author of *Whose Freedom?: The Battle Over America's Most Important Idea*, who started the cognitive-scientist-cum-progressive-advocate genre with his 1996 *Moral Politics*. Both take aim at what they perceive as a false philosophy of mind — the assumption of the existence of a "dispassionate" and non-metaphorical Reason in the brains of the electorate — underlying the campaign strategies of party democrats. Advances in scientific knowledge are always valuable. But what remains to be seen, however, is just how democracy, born of the faith in the power of reason to triumph over emotionality and mob mentality, survives its newest Darwinian test.

Westen takes his and others' experiments to have proved Hume's famous dictum that reason is passion's slave. For Westen, "the political brain is an emotional brain. It is not a dispassionate calculating machine, objectively searching for the right facts, figures and policies to make a reasoned decision."

## book REVIEW

- *The Political Brain: The Role of Emotion in Deciding the Fate of the Nation* by Drew Westen. (Public Affairs, 2007.)
- *Whose Freedom?: The Battle Over America's Most Important Idea* by George Lakoff. (Picador, 2007)

Moreover, what passes for reasoning, especially in politics, claims Westen, is rationalization in favor of pre-existing emotional biases. Lest one think there is perhaps a class of intelligentsia immune to such stubborn closed-mindedness, Westen argues that this "emotion driven thinking" is not more true of less knowledgeable voters, but instead the more knowledgeable just have more complex rationalizations for their biases.

In light of such scientific facts, Westen argues that democrats, ironically enough, have an "irrational emotional attachment" to the "myth" of the dispassionate rational mind, and so make a fundamental error in their campaigning, in that they campaign to minds that don't exist. They stick to facts and figures, making arguments based on maximized expected utility, attempting to appeal to reason instead of offering "compelling emotional narra-

Drew Westen of  
Emory University



tives." For Westen, emotionality trumps an independent reason overwhelmingly and soundly, and, moreover, for good evolutionary reasons: organisms have used emotions for far longer than reason has existed, and reason is an integrated addition to, not a replacement for, the emotions. By contrast, the republicans, who ironically often don't believe in evolution, best understand — at least intuitively — the evolutionary heritage of the human brain, and so, rightly, at least based on empirical as opposed to moral premises, attempt to curry favor with the electorate via emotional appeals. Moreover, such appeals are to those things that are "themes at the heart of our evolutionary history — survival, reproduction, connection to kin, and connection to others."

For Westen, the best lesson the democrats can learn is that politics is a product sold in the marketplace of emotions, not in the marketplace of ideas, and he laments that the democrats draw their inspiration from "the debate team rather than

the marketing team," and that "republicans, unlike democrats, have tended to maintain productive links between Madison Avenue and Pennsylvania Avenue."

That political discourse should be reduced to advertising does not seem lamentable to Westen, as he supposes the reduction simply follows from the neuropsychological principles of how networks of emotional associations become connected and physically instantiated in the brains of the electorate over time. By contrast, attempting to remain aloof and "above" such methods would simply be unscientific, insofar as such attitudes are rooted in a belief in the power of an independent reason to trump the emotional associations and unconscious processing occurring in the brain. According to Westen, the democrats need to exact their own advertising campaign, and set the right images, associations, and thought-processes in the brains of the voters, for avoiding this tactic would constitute allowing the electorate to respond solely to the networks of associations and unconscious cues from those who frame the terms and brand-images of the debate.

Westen is aware that the reduction of public discourse to marketing slogans will be irksome, and so irk some. He offers his advice in a noble spirit, and in order to help the progressive cause of a democratic society. He writes with passion and with a sharp wit, though his metaphors are often mixed and sometimes clumsy. But what is most problematic is that he seems unaware of why the dispassionate mind of the Enlightenment was so important for the birth of democracy, and so he seems unaware that without a viable system to replace that model of mind, if it is indeed false, that the very idea of the self-governing of the people — democracy — is possibly threatened.

Westen does briefly respond to the charge that appeals to emotion are intrinsically unethical with the claim that this is simply false, that there is no mapping from ethical/unethical to rational/emotional; one can appeal to one's "higher emotions," like hope, or one can be manipulative or unethical by selecting which "factual" argument to present to reason, for example. But this doesn't dig deep enough.

Democracy is meaningless without the concept of free choice, for if a person is not free to choose one candidate over another, the political process is a sham. This may seem a platitude. But Westen fails to address the crucial idea, which has its roots in ancient thought but comes to the forefront in the Enlightenment, that emotionality is actually opposed to freedom. The key idea is that Enlightenment freedom is not just doing what you want, because you don't choose what you want. Doing what you want can be seen as being "passion's slave" — being compelled to follow whatever the emotions command you to do. For Rousseau, Spinoza, Kant, and many others, reason, not emotion, was the key to autonomy, or self-rule, and this, perhaps most fundamentally, meant freedom from the passions.

The key distinction such thinkers made is between what one receives, passively, and what one does, actively. "Passion" comes from the Latin *passio*, meaning "suffering," and "being acted upon." In being acted upon, one is "passive," and to have passion is to be acted on by something not oneself. (This notion of "passion" is the same as in "the Passion of the Christ;" Christ's Passion is his passive suffering.) On this model, emotions are something that happen to you, not something you do.

'Passive,' of course, is the opposite of "active," and for the Enlightenment figures, passion was the opposite of action. It was Reason that was thought the stuff of action — autonomy as freedom from the



passions was to decide for oneself how to live, or what to believe, according to Reason.

This is the context in which philosophies of democracy in the modern age were born. Whereas mobs and men in the state of nature are governed by their passions, not themselves, Reason allows one control, or autonomy, and the freedom to choose for oneself (including the freedom to reject traditional hierarchical institutions.) It follows that politics aimed at the emotions are aimed at that primitive, slavish, undemocratic part of man, whereas to appeal to reason is to appeal to that democratic part of man that is free to choose.

As above, this distinction may be partly metaphysical — if to have emotions is to be acted upon by something not oneself, it follows that although emotions are inside one's physical bodies, emotions, on this model, are thought of as metaphysically outside of one, where the self and the locus of reason are thought intertwined. Granted, this may be too much metaphysics for the contemporary mind. But one can preserve the distinction between the outside and inside of one's self, as distinct from what is within one's physical organism, without recourse to metaphysics, and, moreover, doing so is crucial for the ethics of emotions in politics.

Accordingly, one can make the distinction between what is unconscious and what is conscious as mapping onto what is outside and inside of one's self, because one doesn't choose what one unconsciously thinks or feels; free choice only falls within the purview of consciousness, because it is in the arena of consciousness that factors and data of the senses from the external world can be viewed, assessed, weighed, and acted upon.

But according to the new cognitive science, most thinking is unconscious, most thinking is emotional, and most emotional thinking is unconscious — as Lakoff puts it, consciousness is just the tip of the iceberg. Conjoined with the idea that freedom and consciousness are linked, this in fact tends to confirm the Enlightenment insight that one doesn't choose what one feels. If people have no control

over their unconscious feelings or decision-making, appeals to the unconscious decision making faculties constitute coercion, and are akin to being acted upon by something not oneself. For without the message being available to a free consciousness, one cannot evaluate it and so one cannot act on it by choosing whether it is a message one wishes to accept or reject.

More generally, if how one feels determines how one votes, as Westen contends, whoever determines how the electorate feels, be they advertisers, political parties, or some ungodly union thereof, determines how the electorate votes, and the people are not exercising free will when they cast ballots. Though there's some wiggle room when it comes to conscious emotions, if it's thought that anything conscious comes within the purview of free will, the fact remains that, as Westen argues, "allegiance to party — a largely emotional allegiance — remains the central determinant of voting behavior today" and that "political affiliation tends to be handed from generation to generation like a family heirloom." So even if one's political party oriented emotions are indeed conscious, it follows that voter behavior is determined by external factors — tradition and an emotional attachment to it — rather than from an independent rationality. In other words, conscious or not, pre-democratic feelings for tradition and conserving the beliefs of ancestors seem far more efficacious than the rational mind in making political decisions, and this constitutes a failure to be free from such passionate constraints. But it was on that very basis of being free to reject tradition and the hereditary culture, if such external institutions were found "irrational," that conjoined the Enlightenment faith in democracy with the faith in reason, and rendered the idea of the self-rule of the people, independent of tradition and culture, intelligible.

Perhaps it is my philosopher's bias, but lurking too far behind Westen's project is that bugaboo concept, truth, which we must now face.

Contemporary philosophers of mind talk about

the "intentionality" — the "aboutness" — of thought, which amounts to a thought's ability to represent the world, either truly or falsely. However, philosophers, especially those with a friendly view of the Enlightenment and scientific traditions, typically have not or do not extend "intentionality" or "aboutness" to emotions. Yes, one might have to be angry *at* or *about* something, rather than just plain angry, but it is philosophical orthodoxy that emotions do not represent The Way Things Are. But it's important to see here that it's not that emotions are false, instead of true. It is that they are neither. In contemporary philosophical parlance, emotions are not "truth-apt," that is, not apt, or fit, to have anything to do with truth. Accordingly, emotions are thought "merely subjective" and have nothing to do with objectivity and truth.

And this is exactly why religiosos and Romantics have been anti-Enlightenment from the start. For both, emotion is the path to Truth; for them, Truth feels like something. Certainty, that most hallowed of religious emotions, must, to be who is certain, convey Truth, and that's truth with a "capital T".

Here the evolutionary science actually supports the religious view of emotional truth against the philosophical view; while the Enlightenment tradition says emotion is "merely subjective," both religion and evolutionary science affirm the idea that emotion is "about the world." For Westen, as so many others, emotions evolved because they "work;" anxiety directs our attention to predators, for instance, although, as Westen writes, "the gut is not a perfect instrument." The contrast implies that to "work" is to be true, and to be imperfect is to be sometimes false. But that emotions can be either assumes what the traditional philosophical view denies — that emotion is representational — that it is truth-apt at all, and so can be sometimes right while sometimes wrong. (And if emotions can represent "how things are," perhaps religiosos and mystics are right to think that their religious emotions represent religious reality; perhaps feelings of God represent truly the divine nature, as has so long

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been contended.)

Of course these two views on the path to truth *should have diverging political implications*. It follows from the aforementioned worldview, which argues that emotions are not truth-apt, that an appeal to the emotions in politics is similarly not an appeal to our truth-tracking capabilities. From this perspective, emotionality in politics can only distort perceptions and distract from the truth; an appeal to emotion, especially in the face of statistics and quantification more generally, can only be misleading, manipulative, or demagoguery, as it takes attention away from the objective and onto the subjective.

But from within the religious worldview, subjective certainty in one's own faith and ideology seems the path to truth, whereas the quantitative study of the objective world is denigrated and seen as mere "fuzzy math," or ironically as simply another person's subjectivity — science as just another religion. From this point of view, a politics that is pure policy — facts and figures and fuzzy math — misses the point by failing to connect with people's emotion-based notions of truth, and with their sense of identity with a larger whole that "just feels right" and true.

Construing Westen's story this way (which he doesn't), conservatives think that emotions are a guide to truth, whereas democrats don't, and, moreover, they think they are intrinsically misleading. But since people tend to think their own emotions are guides to truth, as the evolutionary science would suggest, the republicans have an audience, and the democrats don't. Republicans tell emotional stories with narratives, and protagonists, heroes, and villains, which organize a coherent worldview based around republican values. By contrast, democrats eschew such narrative and emotional story telling, and stick to lists of data, issues, and policy decision, attempting to appeal to reason. (Hence the cottage industry in suggesting the democrats adopt the republican strategy.)

For the cognitive scientists, and for republicans, perception is emotional, and perception — and hence emotion — might as well be reality, especially if one is invested in it being so. For democrats, perception may be emotional, and for that reason may not represent reality. In theory, science is a corrective for such erroneous perceptions and misguided emotion. But as perception is easier to recognize than reality, and science takes a lot of fancy book learning, perception and emotion are closer to the heart of the people, who fail to use Reason, and the republicans win.

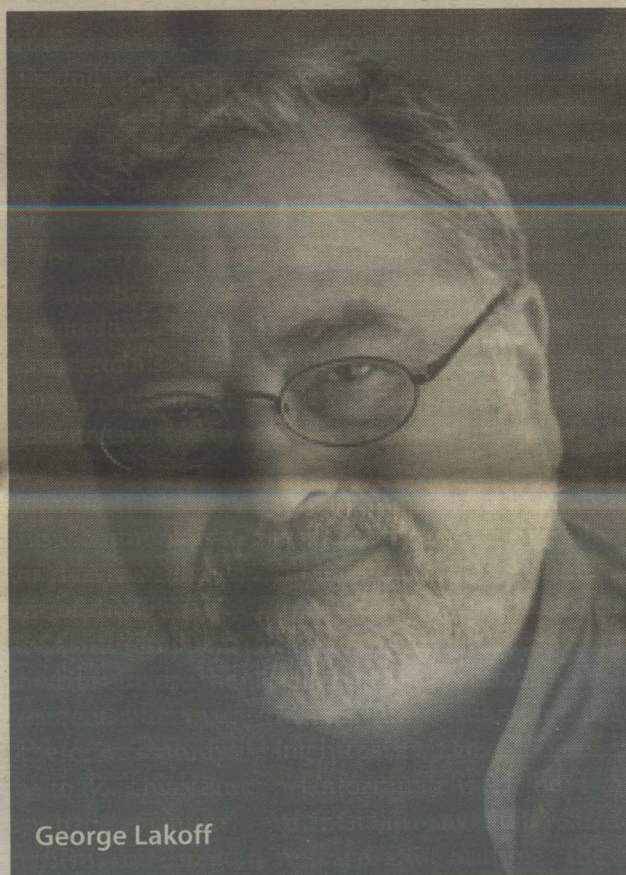
Westen is understandably frustrated with the inability of democrats to fight back against republicans, writing that the failure of democrats is due to "a fear of aggression that remains one of the genuine Achilles' heels of the left." Perhaps the strongest aspects of his book are the speeches Westen writes for a counterfactual history of democratic campaigning, suggesting what the democrats should have said in the face of republican attack. The speeches are fine examples of political rhetoric, and in some cases are in fact quite moving.

Westen looks at a Bush/Gore presidential debate "from the standpoint of primate politics," and claims that Bush won "the classic display of aggression aimed at establishing dominance." Westen even goes so far as to suggest that Gore should have handed Bush a "good ole southern ass-kickin'" because "strength lets voters know that a leader will protect them and their families."

Westen claims desiring a strong leader is rooted in evolutionary psychology, especially, one can infer, from emotions connected to status, security, and other social-hierarchy oriented emotions; if politics is emotional, and status, strength and security are emotional, undoubtedly perception of a strong leader will have emotional reverberations, and so influence voting patterns. Westen argues that what amounts to trying to be the bigger man, in the sense

of remaining aloof and above mere tree rattling (and perhaps feces throwing), all the while decrying the existence or desirability of such "primate politics," registers with our unconscious emotional/perceptual systems as weakness, and an inability to lead, regardless of the conscious beliefs people profess on the matter. (Here Westen makes an interesting point — that relying on polls is misguided because people do not have access to their own unconscious decision making, and so in fact answer poll questions about e.g. negative campaigning incorrectly.) To argue that "primate politics" should have no place in politics, that perceptions of social hierarchy akin to those of our tree-dwelling cousins are irrelevant, is, as far as Westen is concerned, to fall prey to the myth of the dispassionate mind, and ignore the empirical evidence concerning our evolutionary history, and specifically, amongst the higher primates with complex social hierarchies, the importance of perceptions of status and rank (though Westen says surprisingly little on this last point.)

It's possible, though, that it is not just the dispassionate model of the brain that accounts for the democrats' inability or unwillingness to be more aggressive. It may follow, even if indirectly, from George Lakoff's model of progressive morality, and his account of the psychology of progressivism



George Lakoff

itself. Lakoff, in his book *Whose Freedom?* further develops ideas from previous books *Moral Politics* and *Don't Think of An Elephant*. He argues that virtually everyone operates on the "nation-as-family" metaphor, wherein people understand the nation as, well, like a family. He notes that in monarchies, the royal family is the head of the nation, and that Americans have founding fathers; people naturally and wholeheartedly refer to motherlands, fatherlands, send their sons and daughters to war, pray to a Holy Father, etc. He then argues that conservatives have an idealized psychological model of a "strict fathering" family, whereas progressives have a "nurturant parent" (interestingly, not "nurturing mother") model, and when projected onto the nation-as-family metaphor, yield different moral visions of how a nation-cum-family should operate, which then yield wildly divergent implications on virtually every moral and political issue. (This suggests, incidentally, that he disagrees with Westen, who claims that the democrats simply offer "laundry lists" of isolated policies instead of a coherent narrative. Lakoff claims that "progressives have an overall cognitive and moral vision that is just as unified [as conservatives], and just as coherent a view of freedom, but it mostly remains unconscious.")

Lakoff's discussion of the strict father vs. the nurturant parent and how they map onto a variety of political issues is profound and his analyses are

stunningly apt. But they imply that the problem Westen cites — the democrats "fear of aggression" may be systemic and endemic to progressives. Lakoff argues that conservatives see the strict father as the strong moral authority, and as someone whose job it is to be strong enough to protect the family from the evil in the world, and to win in a competitive world. "Mommy," on this model, is too weak for that. Lakoff does not discuss why "nurturant parent" as opposed to "nurturant mother," is contrasted with "strict father." But from the "strict father" or conservative perspective, the "nurturant" qualities of progressives, such as empathy, which Lakoff argues is the primary progressive moral emotion, are traditionally stereotypically feminine, not masculine qualities, and so strike conservatives in the strict father model as "feminine weakness." Moreover, the ability of conservatives to set the frames of the public debate increases the number of people who will operate within the strict-father psychological model, and will thereby increase the number of people who view the democrats as too weak to fight evil and compete for spoils in what then appears as the masculine strict father world. The failure of democrats to not be more aggressive causes an increasingly negative feedback cycle.

Lakoff, who seems to reject a philosophical concept of ethics based in something other than occurrent emotions and embodied metaphors, seems not to be on any ground to say that the nurturant parent model is better than the strict father model; nurturing and empathy are only "good" from within that progressive framework. But an independent view of morality is required, as the very notion of empathy is itself divisive, and is related to fundamentally different views on the world.

To empathize with someone is to identify with someone, that is, to feel identical to him or her. And this itself might be a fundamental problem. The republicans do not empathize with everyone — this much is obvious — and so do not identify with everyone, in which case they don't feel identical with everyone. Instead of identity, they see difference. The conservative worldview is Manichean — in religion this manifests itself as perceptions of saved vs. unsaved, and good vs. evil. (As Lakoff puts it, "absolute categories of right and wrong behavior make possible a clear distinction between heaven and hell,") and in society and foreign affairs it manifests as perceptions of us vs. them, and innocent vs. guilty. Of course, this can all be summed up in George W. Bush's immortal words, "if you're not with us, you're against us."

Lakoff argues that conservative morality "mistakes nurturant morality as having no morality at all." But he doesn't explain this phenomenon, although why this is so is perhaps the most fundamental issue at hand. Because for conservatives it's an us vs. them, Manichean sort of world, and such differences between people are absolute categorical differences, and to empathize is to be seemingly identical with, then identifying with someone in the other category erases the line separating the categories. This is why it so infuriates conservatives, for example, when they think that instead of punishing criminals who are viewed as categorically different from the innocent, and who are therefore deserving of punishment, the "liberal" wants to understand the criminal, that is, to empathize and so identify with the criminal, from his point of view, to understand those factors that led to the crime. In the conservative Manichean mind, this is tantamount to not drawing the moral distinction between good and evil or innocent and guilty at all, and because this Manicheanism is what the conservative worldview is built on, the progressive approach is fundamentally threatening.

In a certain sort of Manichean or conservative mind, for identification to be meaningful, it must be restrictive. That is, it isn't enough to identify, and have an identity simply by being similar to others; one must also define oneself by who one is not. In short, the existence of The Other is required



for a meaningful identity. Many people identify as members of a culture or group, and this feeling of sameness is a source of pride. But who is proud of being an Earthling? Nobody, because everyone is an Earthling. But if Martians, representing a little green Other, were to attack, then perhaps Earthlings would identify with each other as Earthlings, and stand identified with each other, as opposed to the evil Martians. (Kurt Vonnegut employed this idea masterfully in *The Sirens of Titan*.)

The democrats want everybody to be the same — a brotherhood of Man, with no Other — and it drives the republicans crazy, who feel that being good, for instance, requires the existence of evil. In a rebuke of political correctness, Westen complains that democrats are more worried about offending than moving people. From the above, this is explainable. The democrats, with their pathos of empathy, and so of identification and sameness, do not want to offend, for offending someone by categorizing them as an oppressed or marginalized group is to distinguish them, to stigmatize them as less than fully whatever everyone else is. In short, the democrats do not want to offend because they do not want to create The Other.

Westen does not develop this idea either. But he senses it. He urges the democrats "to develop a master narrative, an ideology that stands *for* something and that stands *against* something," and that, "if the master narrative doesn't alienate about 30 percent of the electorate, it isn't a good narrative." In other words, Westen senses that part of being meaningfully emotionally identified with something is to be emotionally opposed to something else. Empathy is too universal; it identifies with everyone. Westen wants the democrats to make a distinction — to distinguish themselves from conservatives, for instance, and not to act as if they are the same. (Doing so without the ball-busting aggressiveness is just being "republicans lite," as some have complained of the democrats in the past.)

Despite the values of empathy and identification, and the progressive drive for sameness, it is perhaps a depressing and bitter irony that simultaneously the democrats have been branded as a liberal elite, separate and aloof from the people, and that somehow the conservatives have been cast to play the populist role in public affairs. As Lakoff puts it, "populism is about identifying oneself as an ordinary person, oppressed by the elite." That the democrats, who have traditionally been more concerned with the fate of "the little man" than the republicans have fought every business tax cut and proposed improvement in working conditions, is a supreme irony. How has that happened?

Empathy and sympathy can seem a lot like pity, and it has long been speculated that pity is merely a sign of superiority — that only from a superior position can one pity. People generally don't like to self-identify as victims and as needing pity, and so often people are violently opposed to receiving charity, and feel offended at being a "charity case." By caring for the little man, and being pro-victim, the Left implicitly puts itself above the object of the pity, and so must descend, or condescend, to help. As such, the Left is intrinsically condescending, and so elitist, looking down at those who truly are victims but refuse to admit it. On the other hand, the republicans refuse to acknowledge that the system victimizes people, and in its place propagates the myth of the self-made man and its corollary that failure to achieve is one's own fault, in virtue of one's own inability to buckle down and work hard and make something of oneself.

This mindset belongs to the strict-father morality that progressives must counter. The challenge is that people in its grip think that exactly what they need is such a strict father, even if that father is abusive and incompetent. And simply pointing that out isn't enough. ■

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battle of algiers (1966)

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JEAN PAUL SARTRE

OCT 16 8PM



matewan (1987)

"You can't accuse Sayles of shilly-shallying when it comes to his labor politics. And *Matewan*, as humorless and bleating as *Silkwood*, is likely to appeal only to those who've paid their dues."  
RITA KEMPLEY, WASHINGTON POST  
Of *Fellowship of the Ring*, Kempley said: "Spectacular scenery, stupefying effects and epic scope... a dream come true..."

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punishment park (1971)

"In an imagined world all too close to reality, draft-dodging radicals are given a stark choice: go to prison or spend three days in Punishment Park. Peter Watkins's riveting pseudo-documentary reveals the grueling consequences of option B... a 57-mile desert trek to reach a US flag, with a pack of rifle-toting National Guardsmen just a couple of hours behind." MATTHEW LEYLAND, BBC

NOV 13 8PM



fourth world war (2003)

"The Fourth World War is destroying humanity as globalization is universalizing the market, and everything human which opposes the logic of the market is an enemy and must be destroyed. In this sense, we are all the enemy to be vanquished... Anyone who believes themselves to be free and is not."  
SUBCOMANDANTE MARCOS (11/20/99)

NOV 27 8PM



the take (2004)

"After Argentina's economic meltdown in the late 1990s, groups of unpaid and unemployed factory workers decided to take matters into their own hands. Since the amount they were owed in wages roughly corresponded to the value of their employers' material assets, the workers thought it fair to take control of the factories..."  
STEVE ROSE, THE GUARDIAN

DEC 4 8PM



fight club (1999)

"A kind of litmus test is — this always works on all my friends — 'How do you stand toward *Fight Club*, the movie?' All the liberals claim, 'Ah, it's proto-fascist, violent, blah, blah, blah.' No, I am for it. I think the message of *Fight Club* is not so much liberating violence but that liberation hurts."  
"LIBERATION HURTS: AN INTERVIEW WITH SLAVOJ ZIZEK" (2004)



# The Artist as an Old Man

LAVELLE PORTER

Samuel R. Delany's latest novel *Dark Reflections* is a beautiful, heartbreaking book written by one of the most prolific and consistently engaging American writers working today. Though no longer writing in the science fiction and fantasy genres in which he made his name as a young literary prodigy, Delany (now 65-years old) continues to turn out captivating fiction.

One of the most consistently "fantastic" elements of Delany's early Science Fiction and Fantasy novels and stories was his penchant for placing artists in esteemed positions in their respective societies, wherever their location in time and space. *Dark Reflections*, however, gets down to "reality" as Delany follows the struggles of Arnold Hawley, a black, gay poet (and, it bears mentioning in this particular organ, an underpaid adjunct writing teacher) in his 60s living in the East Village of the early twenty-first century. The novel tells Hawley's story in three non-chronological parts. The first section, "The Prize," finds the aging poet in New York working on an eighth book of poems as the twentieth century slips into the twenty-first. The second section, "Vashti in the Dark," is set in the 1970s and tells the story of his disastrous, short-lived marriage to a young white street girl he meets in Tompkins Square Park. The last section, "The Book of Pictures," goes back to explore Arnold's college days in Boston where he begins his first adult homosexual explorations with a black delivery boy. In the devastating conclusion of the novel, when a coincidence forces him to revisit that (aborted) encounter in Boston, he realizes things were not as they seemed and is forced to reckon with a lifetime of missed opportunities.

Though Delany has never published any poetry of his own, he is an accomplished poetry critic (his essay "Atlantis Rose," in the collection *Longer Views*, is among the best criticism on Hart Crane), and his

## book

### REVIEW

• *Dark Reflections* by Samuel R. Delany (Carroll & Graff, 2007)

wondrously ecstatic and exquisite prose style often bleeds into the poetic. *Dark Reflections* finds him putting his knowledge and love for poetry to fine use in telling the story of Arnold Hawley.

Delany is meticulous in the socio-historical details surrounding Arnold Hawley's life, and Hawley seems to have a knack for missing out on the momentous events and movements of his lifetime. He is in touch with the black poetic tradition, but unmoved by the militancy of Black Nationalist politics, and when he becomes a teacher he is increasingly irritated by his students' pig-headed insistence on capitalizing the word *black*. Arnold does hang out with some friends at the Stonewall Inn when he moves to New York City (before the 1969 riots that made the bar famous), but he remains indifferent to the gay liberation movement, seeing it as a celebration of the embarrassing and unsavory aspects of gay life. In the 1980s he never fully participates in the communal grieving and outrage of the AIDS epidemic. (It is only by accident that he discovers a former friend of his died of AIDS.) Even the ritual bonding over the trauma of September 11th is lost to him: he doesn't own a television and spent the day at home by himself, not knowing anything was out of sorts until the next morning when he goes out to the corner bodega.

If that description sounds like Arnold is a lonely man, he most certainly is — in his personal and his artistic life. He does have a few friends, but Arnold has purposefully resisted being drawn in to any particular ideological camps or artistic movements

in the name of artistic individuality. As Delany puts it, "his lonely and ascetic principle was: art is the one human enterprise in which, when you are doing what everyone else does, you are doing something wrong" (278). Arnold is also extraordinarily sensitive to criticism. His overly protective attitude towards his book-length prose poem, *High Toned Homilies With Their Gunwales All Submerged*, borders on the tragicomic. Arnold pridefully counts the publication of this challenging, experimental work as a stylistic coup, but he is wounded by two unsympathetic published reviews and a couple of harmlessly misguided comments at public readings and soon gives up on trying to promote it. Arnold's fragile ego even begins to beg the question; how did someone so sensitive to the wounds of criticism and rejection last even this long? Delany doesn't force a firm moral judgment on Hawley's decisions to remain isolated, but there's no question that Arnold's timid life is full of missed opportunities.

Moreover, when he does take risks things seem to go wildly awry. The middle section of the novel, "Vashti in the Dark," tells of Hawley's disastrously short-lived marriage to Judy Haindel, a young white street girl he meets in Tompkins Square Park, where Arnold goes from time to time to sit, read, and write. Judy knows Arnold is gay from the start and she actively encourages him to go out and experiment with men. However, the impulsive marital experiment ends traumatically, and their relationship is among the most memorable sequences in the book. For Arnold, the whole affair inspires one of his more successful poetry collections (also titled *Dark Reflections*). The last section of the novel is a return in time to his college days in Boston. One day Arnold meets a muscular young black delivery boy named Slake Bowman who tries to seduce him. Arnold rejects his advances, but later tracks Slake down again to resume the encounter. Arnold is shocked by what he finds when he finally meets

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Slake and his white lover Joey, and it causes him to literally run away from them. Later in life, and near the end of the book, he comes across a bit of stray information linked to the two men, and the sledgehammer of a conclusion forces him to reconfigure his interpretation of Slake and Joey and reconsider the decisions he has made over the course of his own life.

Arnold Hawley is among Delany's most reserved main characters, defying the usual expectations of pornographic excess and brazen sexual exploration in Delany novels. In particular he stands in stark contrast to John Marr, the black gay philosophy student in *The Mad Man* (1994) who dives headfirst into Manhattan's sexual underworld of public parks and porn theaters. Arnold is so timid that on my first reading of this novel his naiveté seemed almost implausible. On the second pass I realized that he was, for different reasons here and there, just all too willing to retreat from confrontation and exploration out of fear, which is usually justified by the belief that one is preserving a sense of comfort and safety. Arnold is also, like so many pre-Stonewall gay men, a victim of the gross misinformation about homosexuality in his time. (When he is young, a doctor tells him that at most, one in five thousand men might be stricken with the "disease," and that there are no documentable cases of Negro homosexuality at all!) The best thing we can say about Arnold is that, unlike David in James Baldwin's *Giovanni's Room*, at least he isn't cruel, selfish or manipulative in his sexual uncertainty. I wanted to write "confusion" to end that sentence, but Arnold isn't really confused about his sexuality. He knows, and eventually accepts, that he is gay, but he has resigned himself to also accept the social limitations that come with it.

Delany's penchant for materiality is always at work in his writing, always present in his razor sharp attention to the mundane economic details of life (no doubt attributable to his old school Marxist leanings). You never lack to know where his character's meals are coming from and how their rent is getting paid. For Hawley it is only an untenured adjunct teaching job at the fictional Staten Island

State University that keeps him afloat. In fact, when confronted with the possibility of losing that job, and hearing about the death of his Aunt Bea (who raised him after his parents died in a house fire), Arnold has a nervous breakdown that finds him spending four days in frightened, naked abjection on the rooftop of his East Village walkup, not wanting to suffer the misery, shame, and humiliation of being evicted from his apartment. Hawley, contemplating that breakdown later says, "A poet under thirty cracking up had a romantic tinge. (Isn't that what Plath and Sexton had lived – and died – off of?) A pudgy black man, well over sixty, losing his grip for a couple of months, even if he *had* published seven books of poems, was pathetic" (53).

*Dark Reflections* is, among many other things, a novel about the experience of growing old. We are witness to Arnold's deteriorating body in a variety of details. He is plagued with assorted pains and ailments, and is growing more self-conscious about how his age is reconfiguring his social life, physical mobility and artistic ambitions. We observe his increasing emotional and physical fragility when he twice finds himself crying, once from the emotional sting of an awkward encounter with a hot-shot young poet, and once from a coughing episode on the subway that causes his eyes to water and forces him to sit down and eventually miss his stop. As he collects himself and leaves the station one stop beyond his destination he says, "it isn't fair. When you get this old, every little thing makes you cry. It *just* isn't fair..." (99).

Lest this all sound too somber and foreboding, there still are moments of pleasure and joy in his life as a writer. When he is able to work on and

complete poems it puts him back in touch with the love of language that led him to poetry in the first place. Arnold is an astute literary scholar and bibliophile, and *Dark Reflections* is full of delightful moments of cultural and intellectual pursuit. At the end of the day he is a working poet, and despite the poverty and the paucity of critical attention, he

can at least relish the victory of having made a life for himself in the world of poetry, which is no small matter.

Delany's novels always bear some points of contact with the autobiographical. Characters, locations, episodes, and themes in his fiction often overlap with the extensive and copious memoirs, anecdotes, open letters, and autobiographical essays he has published over the years. (And yes, the novel does contain the standard description of characters' hands and bitten nails, one of Delany's own well-documented fetishes.)

Delany's constant self-representation in his work, like a literary Woody Allen, feels wholly unique and unprecedented in American letters. He is every bit as poignant and exhilarating describing the quotidian life of an old poet as he was describing the lives of ambitious young artists and intellectuals in his earlier fiction. It is only fair to speculate that he is drawing on experience in his penetrating depictions of aging, coming to terms with mortality, and the sticky territory of "literary reputation."

Delany has often repeated the aphorism, attributed to Robert Graves, that "all true poems are about love, death or the changing of the seasons," and the quote fittingly re-appears in *Dark Reflections*. Delany doesn't offer up any easy solutions to Arnold Hawley's dilemmas. He simply describes, with intensity, compassion and unflinching honesty, the contours of one man's life, love, passions and regrets. ■



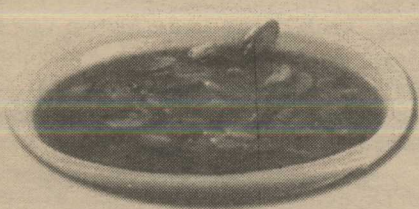
Samuel R. Delany

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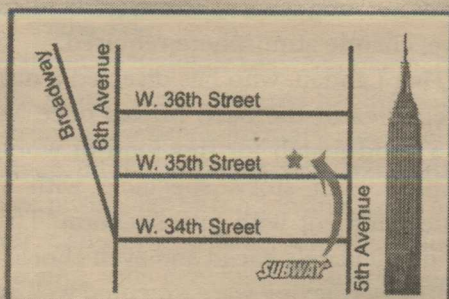
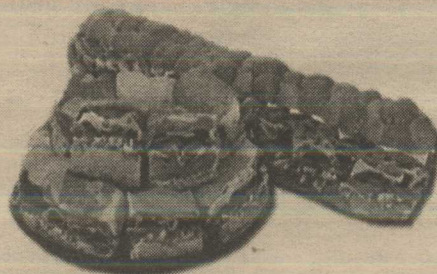


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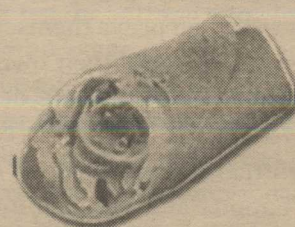


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# Postmodern Pastiche, Via Euripides

FRANK EPISALE

When *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* hit bookshelves last month, critics throughout the English-speaking world wrote tortuous, elliptical reviews in an attempt to evaluate the end of the series without actually giving away any information about the ending itself. It was satisfying or not, it wrapped up loose ends or didn't, but we can't back up our opinions or give too many examples of what we mean because we don't want to ruin the reading experience for you by revealing too much of the plot. Excerpts from the book are of limited use in conveying the pleasures of reading *Harry Potter*, of course, because nobody has ever accused J.K. Rowling of being a great stylist. The reader gets caught up in the plotting and storytelling and, over the course of seven books, grows attached to the characters. The primary reason to read these books is to find out "what happens."

Fifth century Greek tragedy, of course, worked a bit differently. Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, and their largely forgotten colleagues riffed on known tales from history and legend, working and reworking story material that was already familiar to their audience. The question in these plays is never what happens next; instead the audience anticipates how the events will unfold, how artfully the playwright and the actors will render them, and what themes and insights might be brought to light along the way.

Euripides's *Iphigenia* plays (*Iphigenia at Aulis*, *Iphigenia in Tauris*) are arguably an exception to this. Drawing on emerging complications and seeming contradictions in the *Iphigenia* story, Euripides constructed a last-minute, off-stage reprieve for *Iphigenia*: just as she is sacrificed, she is whisked off by the goddess Artemis to become a priestess at Tauris. Somehow Agamemnon and Menelaus's men have sacrificed and burned an animal in her place.

To anyone who might accuse me of giving away the ending of Charles Mee's remarkable *Iphigenia 2.0* when I point out that Mee's version ends not with a messenger declaring an offstage miracle but with the limp and bloodied body of *Iphigenia* carried onto the stage in her father's arms, I would say again that these plays, these stories, aren't about plot. I would also say that Euripides's notorious use of *deus ex machina* and similar devices is some-

## theater

### REVIEW

• *Iphigenia 2.0* by Charles Mee. Directed by Tina Landau. Signature Theater Co.

major influence on Euripides and his peers, whether they were writing about it directly or through the lens of the legendary Trojan War. These plays have been revived with increasing frequency in recent years as our own senseless wars in some of the same parts of the world have seemed to lend these texts new relevance. The parallels are limited, though, resulting in juxtapositions of startlingly resonant moments with others that are unnervingly alien. These juxtapositions sometimes seem to crack and fragment the plays themselves, as we are witness simultaneously to the follies and failings of our own civilization and those of one long since fallen.

Charles Mee's work doesn't try to paste over these cracks and tensions; it thrives on them. Arguably, Mee's plays, particularly those based on and adapted from Greek tragedy, are actually about the fault lines between the past and the present. Fractured and fragmented, pasted together from a variety of sources, these plays are an embodiment of the idea that history, like art, is a process, that there is no identifiable "original," but there is also no authentic "universal."

*Iphigenia 2.0* incorporates text not only from Euripides, but also from a variety of sources ranging from the etiquette guide written by an adolescent George Washington, to a strategy manual by Prussian military theorist Carl von Clausewitz, to blogs written by young brides. Between scenes, the passage of time is marked by dances and musical numbers, including a boy-band style sequence performed by actor-soldiers stripped down to their underwear, to the music of LL Cool J.

This playfulness is a welcome counterpoint to the terrible sadness that permeates the material. Still, playing "name that reference" and debating which of the young actors is hottest when flexing are only momentary distractions from what seems to be the central concerns of the play. How can the value of life be calculated and traded? Should leaders be asked to make the same sacrifices they ask of their people? Are women used as sexual and political currency in patriarchal empires? Most centrally: what can we learn, what are we not learning, from the past?

Mee's plays are surprisingly accessible and entertaining given the post-modern pastiche of their structure and the Big Ideas with which they grapple. They are also complex and ambitious enough to require a strong director and disciplined cast. When Mee writes stage directions like "And, bit by bit, / the world descends into a big party riot murder war / the home

and war fronts combined / dancing and embracing and weeping / and throwing and breaking things," it takes a strong team to successfully realize the explosive, chaotic atmosphere required.

Tina Landau, who has directed a number of Mee premieres in the past, proves once again that she is a good match for this kind of work. She blends politics with story, spectacle with subtlety, and entertainment with introspection. The production is immaculately paced and even choices that I found a little perplexing were executed well enough to win me over.

The cast, made up mostly of Landau veterans,

turn in strong performances all around. Like her friend and colleague Anne Bogart, Landau's work is built around a method called Viewpoints, a highly physical approach to directing and performing that draws attention to the actor as an athletic presence on stage. These actors dance, climb, leap, and glide around the stage in response to rhythms of the text and the music. Both postmodern dramaturgy and viewpoints staging can be tedious in the wrong hands, but this production is a reminder of how much promise they both have when coupled with craft and creativity.

Tom Nelis is particularly strong as Agamemnon, an almost impossibly polished politician (think Mitt Romney) who foresees his own downfall but is unable to escape it. Nelis marries the intense physicality of Viewpoints technique with the elegance and diction of a classically trained actor. Rocco Sisto, as Agamemnon's brother Menelaus, turns in a more complex and sympathetic performance than might be expected in a role that is sometimes interpreted as villainous.

Seth Numrich's Achilles is sweet and sexy as a befuddled young man who has been used to lure his girlfriend to her doom. Luisa Krause, in the title role, skillfully navigates the transition from flighty, lovestruck, young ingénue to tragic heroine and misguided patriot.

Kate Mulgrew (of *Star Trek Voyager* fame) is somewhat less successful as Clytemnestra, handing in a histrionic performance that would work better in a more conventional production. To be fair, though, part of Landau's vision for this production is clearly that it be a pastiche of theatrical styles in the same way that the text comes from a pastiche of sources.

Neither the text nor the production go out of their way to draw parallels between the Trojan War and our political present. Indeed, some aspects of the story are drawn in stark contrast to our current political culture. As already mentioned, the gods are not a presence in this version of the story. In lieu of Artemis's anger at Agamemnon, Mee frames *Iphigenia*'s sacrifice as a demand by the soldiers: If they are going to be asked to die for the upcoming war, their leader should have to make a similar sacrifice. This reads as a barbed reference to certain of our own hawkish officials who vote in favor of war but whose families remain relatively untouched by its consequences.

The most politically resonant moments of the play come in Agamemnon's opening monologue, which warns that "there are acts / that will set an empire on a course / that will one day / bring it to an end" and that all empires "are brought down finally / not by others / but by themselves."

One of the more cryptic elements of Mee's play, and of Landau's production, is an old Greek Man (Angelo Niakas) who helps with scene changes and occasionally speaks to the audience in a language most of them don't understand. It may be that this man represents a past that is trying to speak to us, to warn us. These lessons from the past, since we have not taken the time to learn the language, are thus rendered little more than an impotent theatrical gesture. ■

*Iphigenia 2.0* by Charles Mee. Directed by Tina Landau. With Jimonn Cole, Will Fowler, J.D. Goldblatt, Chasten Harmon, Jesse Hooker, Emily Kinney, Louisa Krause, Kate Mulgrew, Tom Nelis, Angelo Niakas, Seth Numrich, Rocco Sisto. Set Design by Blythe R. D. Quinlan. Lighting Design by Scott Zielinski. Costume Design by Anita Yavich. Sound Design by Jill BC Duboff.

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times misunderstood. Apollo's appearance at the end of *Orestes* and Artemes's reported intervention at the end of *Iphigenia* are not attempts to patch on a happy ending so much as they are assertions that human beings too often prove themselves incapable of digging themselves out of their own messes. War leads to more war, deceit to more deceit. There is no way to untangle and defuse the escalating tensions and resentments that have built up within and between the nations and families involved in the Trojan War without divine intervention.

The long and often brutal series of conflicts that made up the Peloponnesian War seem to have been a



# Sublime, Not Beautiful

MARK SCHIEBE

In an age where aesthetic experience continues to be packaged and repackaged into digitized bits by the dominant forms of media, the live performance of art stubbornly persists, and, for some of us, represents a kind of experience for which there can be no substitute. Any jazz musician worthy of the name will tell you that the best stuff he plays is live in front of an audience, where the possibility of airbrushing imperfections is not an option. The irreverent aesthetic of such an attitude is exemplified by pianist Paul Bley, who is known to have said "Practice makes perfect. Imperfect is better." Bley, the Montreal-born godfather of avant-garde jazz piano, recently spent five days at Birdland, performing with his friends, bassist Gary Peacock and drummer Paul Motian from Aug. 22-25. As with any time these three masters collaborate on the same stage, it was an event to be *suffered through* more than passively contemplated, equal parts trauma and bliss.

Too often, the binary of intellectual/emotional is used as a crutch to categorize the work of "serious" musicians and composers who work within classical and jazz traditions. Just as fans of modernist masters like Schoenberg must continually defend the composer against charges of "difficulty," so must fans of Bley's music defend the pianist against charges of intellectualism. Schoenberg was purging western classical music of traditional harmony, not of *emotion*, right? Intellectual boldness and innovation in music needn't come at the expense of deep feeling. This is not a zero-sum game. But the jazz avant-garde, by pushing on the edges of the idiom, has always been subject to conservative attacks from opposing quarters: on the one hand, those who feel the music is too intellectual, and on the other, those who feel it has abandoned "sense" altogether, in the name of primal, pre-idiomatic emotion. While such charges are not always off the mark, as a general rule they serve only to impede understanding and enjoyment.

Bley, perhaps best known for introducing saxophonist Ornette Coleman and his band to the wider world in 1958, represents the best aspects of the avant-garde. He is deeply fluent in the bebop tradition (his recording debut in 1952 featured bop icons Charles Mingus and Art Blakey) and his way of playing the piano, like Coleman's way of playing the saxophone, is best understood as an appropriation of the advances of bebop's complex approach to melody and harmony, and a widening of its application, not a retreat. Bley first began playing with Peacock and Motian in 1963, presumably taking them on loan from the pianist Bill Evans, with whom the two were already forging new ground on their respective instruments, and collectively, in the piano trio genre. The group added tenor saxophonist John Gilmore for a recording session under Bley's name in 1964, titled *Turning Point*. All three musicians were members of the Jazz Composers Guild, which Bley helped to found in 1964. The Jazz Composers Guild was an artist-controlled organization that presented its members in a series of avant-garde jazz concerts in New York, and was at the heart of the explosion of improvisational creativity associated with what became known as "The New Thing," an assertion of freedom from the restrictions of bop and postbop melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic structures. Bley and Peacock have gone on to make several duo recordings since the sixties, and their musical lives and private lives are also intertwined, Bley marrying the bassist's ex-wife, vocalist and composer Annette Peacock in 1966. (In a karmic twist, Bley's ex-wife, the composer Carla Bley, would go on to "partner" with Peacock's doppelganger Steve Swallow, the great bassist who was a regular member of Bley's trio in

## music REVIEW

♦ Paul Bley, Gary Peacock, and Paul Motian at Birdland

the sixties.) In 1987, Bley and Motian recorded a rare piano/drums duo session entitled *Notes* for the Soul Note label. More recently, in 1999, the three got together as a group in the recording studio for the first time in over thirty five years and produced *Not Two, Not One* (ECM, 1999), a stunning session demonstrating that advancing age has not curbed their creativity, nor their commitment, at all costs, to "make it new" every time.

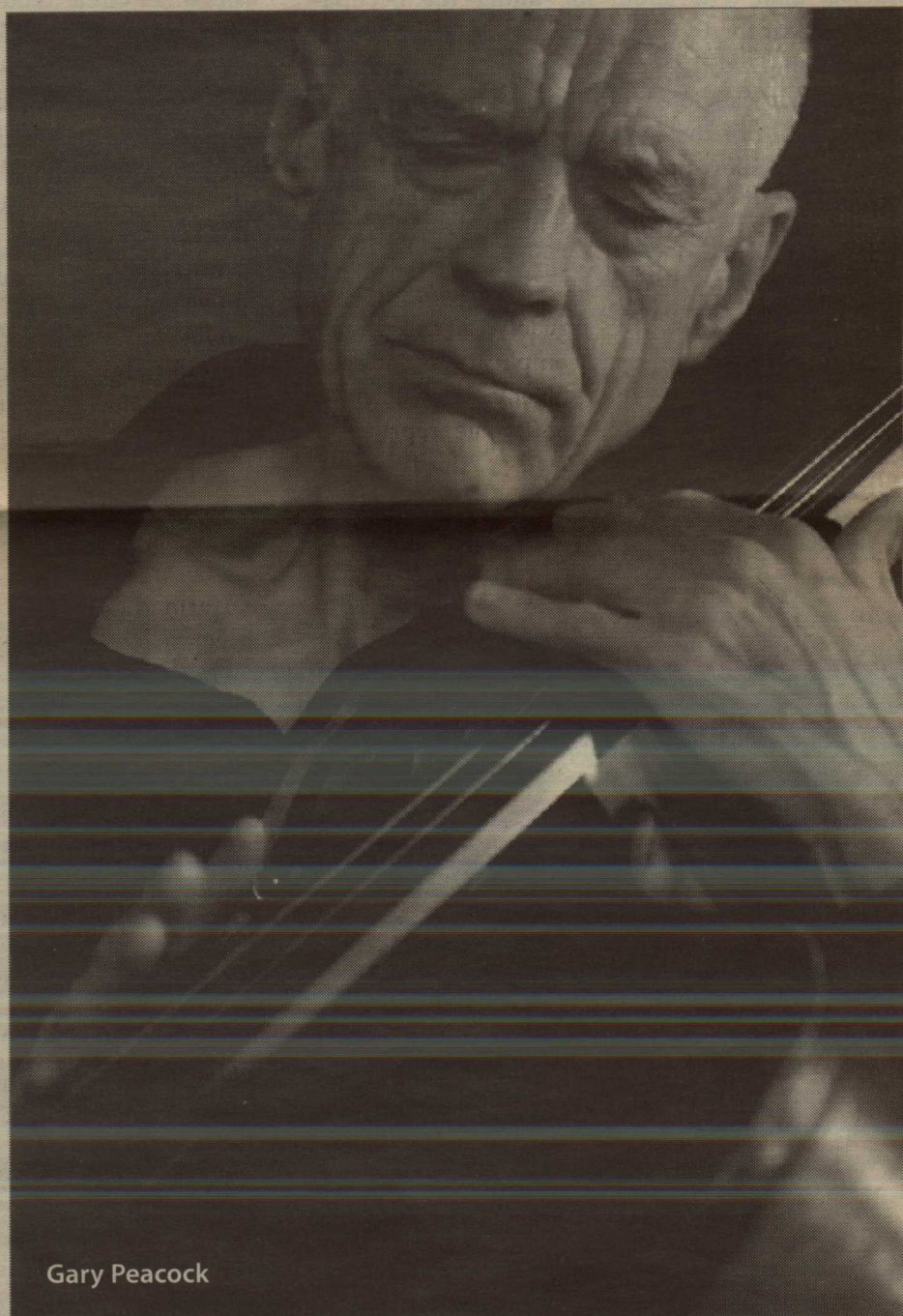
It was with the vibe of old friends getting back together to have a conversation that the three improvisers took the bandstand at Birdland on the 22nd. While the outward trappings of more conventional jazz performance (introduction of the performers, songs of three to 10 minutes, applause) assured tourists (from the looks of it, about half of the audience) that everything was going to be okay, the musical conversation between these three masters was, as always, a relentless and unforgiving exploration of topics opened long ago. The second set opened en medias res, with Peacock unaccompanied, unanchored by song form, setting himself, the band, and the audience adrift in a sea of melodic fragments, set against unexpected pedal points. Peacock trusted his instincts, knowing that his two bandmates were as likely inclined to push him farther from familiar shores as they were to provide liferafts. The bassist's deeply searching style, his way of making a note tremble between half-step intervals, his lightning runs into stratospheric registers of the bass, demands an unusually high degree of empathy from audience and bandmates alike, as it is more of an invitation to inhabit a newly opened sense of time and space, than to "sing along." And when Bley finally (it seemed like forever) began to play, he was less inclined to take the reins than to playfully toss ideas at the bassist, as was Motian, whose refusal to "keep time" has distinguished him from other drummers from the very beginning of his career in his work with the Bill Evans Trio.

While the intimate dialogue between piano, bass, and drums in Evans' early trios (the freeing of bass and drums from mere supplementary roles) set the definitive blueprint for modern trio jazz, Bley's sense of space pushes far beyond Evans', as he often "lays out" for minutes at a time, allowing silence, as it were, to sing. His penchant for juxtaposing a desolate, minimalist approach with overcrowded, frenetic passages of nutty counterpoint and dark,

Lennie Tristano-ish low register runs, give his playing a breathless cinematic sweep.

In the trio's second song of the night, "Isn't It Romantic?" Bley's version of the melody was more compressed suggestion than overt statement, as he repeated the first six notes of the familiar Richard Rodgers standard before tripping down the rabbit hole with a flurry of notes, making use of both the extreme high and low registers of the piano. The trio then floated along in a kind of jazz underworld where bebop lines mingled freely with the happened-upon blues motif, now and then sailing into more turbulent waters, while the original six notes of Rodgers' tune occasionally resurfaced to be (re)examined within the rapidly shifting musical context.

The violent tempo and mood shifts remained present throughout the set, which included a "free" ballad and an Ornette Coleman-inspired blues, the band continuing its collective war against musical complacency, and exhausting the audience in the process. Part of what makes the Bley/Peacock part-



Gary Peacock

nership so potent is the large share Peacock has in the thematic and melodic direction of the music, a role that is considerably diminished in his more well-known trio with pianist Keith Jarrett and drummer Jack DeJohnette. In that band, Jarrett dominates and Peacock excels in the more conventional role of bass support, packing his ideas into one solo chorus after Jarrett's ten (or so), and allowing listeners long and deserved breaks from the jaw-dropping density of his melodic and harmonic conception.

Needless to say, Bley's version of the piano trio offers no such shield from Peacock, and I left Birdland physically and emotionally strung-out, ready to sip a beer in a bar and let a "classic rock" juke box bring me back somewhere more comfortable, less terrible. ■



# Power Unbound

TIM KRAUSE

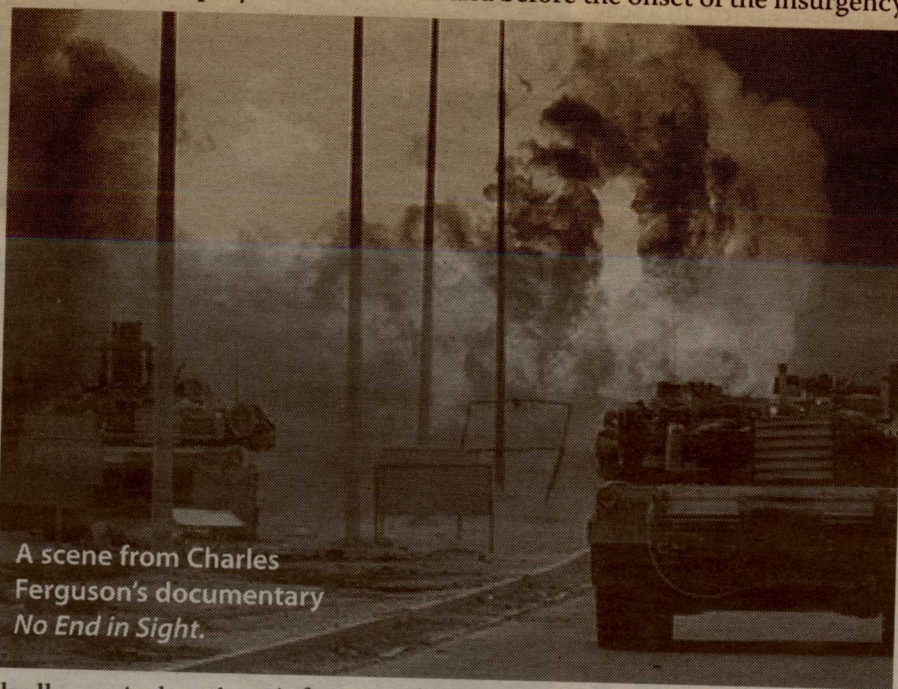
Two documentaries currently playing in theaters, Charles Ferguson's *No End in Sight* — soon to end an exclusive New York engagement at Film Forum and opening at the Quad Cinema on Sept. 7 — and Jason Kohn's *Manda Bala (Send a Bullet)*, at the Angelika Film Center, offer riveting glimpses of two highly different, yet highly similar, worlds: Ferguson's film the rarefied world of George W. Bush's administration during its march to war with Iraq and in the calamitous early months of the American occupation of Baghdad, Kohn's the apocalyptic city of São Paulo, Brazil. Both are affecting cinematic depictions, using quite different means and techniques, of power spun horribly out of control, the dysfunctional, dystopic Baghdad and São Paulo and their respective victims and elites merging into a single nightmarish portent of urban chaos, guerrilla warfare, and governmental impotence, the capital of the twenty-first century.

*No End in Sight* is really much more about the closed-door decision making of Bush Administration officials than it is about life under the occupation; indeed, the footage of occupied Baghdad and irate, bewildered Iraqi citizens presents its material not so much as subjects in their own right, but as human proof of the Olympian carelessness of the best and brightest of American policymakers from Sept. 11, 2001, to the summer of 2003. The film excels first and foremost as a talking-heads movie in the style of Errol Morris's *The Fog of War*, which focuses so intently on every tic and twitch of Robert McNamara as to, while highlighting his endless self-justifications and recriminations, simultaneously render him somehow more than human: a portrait of power and of one of power's servants, an important player on the historical stage. *No End in Sight* achieves a similar success in its unflinching, close-up interviews with officials such as former Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage, former United States Ambassador to Iraq Barbara Bodine, and former Chief of Staff for Secretary of State Colin Powell, Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson, all of whom bluntly and in detail — and, sometimes, as with the impish Wilkerson, with humor — recount their version of the events leading up to the US invasion in 2003. In the process they fairly demolish the ever more finely spun, but nevertheless wholly untrue, tissue of lies, untruths, prevarications, and outright fantasizing that imperfectly clothed the administration's nakedly cynical grab for power. That Bush's rationale for war was at once completely false and dangerously beguiling — the cries of Big Bad Saddam and his nuclear wolf frightening credulous Americans and a supine Congress into believing the gaudy fabrications of a whimsically dangerous boy president — will be no secret to most, or at least to anyone who regularly follows, say, the sardonic editorials of Frank Rich and Paul Krugman, or the jeremiads of Lewis Lapham and the editors of *The New York Review of Books*, to say nothing of the passionate partisans of the blogosphere, all of whom have been tireless in cataloging the administration's numerous malfeasances. *No End in Sight* puts a much-needed human face on the architects of the war, most of whom, as with those named above, reveal themselves as cautious, thoughtful professionals, men and women focused more on pragmatic questions than on ideological

## film REVIEW

- *No End in Sight*, directed by Charles Ferguson
- *Manda Bala (Send a Bullet)*, directed by Jason Kohn

agendas, men and women, too, of conscience: empire builders, yes — the larger question of the morality and ultimate efficacy of American power projected through military force is never raised, reducing a stark political problematic for the United States in the twenty-first century into a question of planning and mechanics — but at least empire builders conscious of *gravitas imperii*, the weight of rule, and not the rapacious brigands who ran America's ship of state aground under Bush's feckless captaincy. While the film's interviewees were also running the ship, albeit in a lesser capacity than the Dread Pirate Cheney, *No End in Sight* meticulously shows how Bush's inner circle assiduously ignored the advice of these experts, all of whom were summarily shoved aside when their ideas drifted too far from the White House's neoconservative party line. Thus the film, like *The Fog of War*, tempers its questioning of its subjects' complicity in the events they recount with a well-earned sense of their fallible humanity, and serves as a moving record of the effects, moral and otherwise, their decisions have had on them. A standout among the voices in the film is Major General Paul Eaton, who from 2003 to 2004 was in charge of training the reconstituted Iraqi Army. His story, filled with missed chances, betrayed loyalties, and dashed expectations, maps out better than most the lost chances, despite the folly of the war's initial planning, for some kind of stability following Saddam's fall and before the onset of the insurgency.



A scene from Charles Ferguson's documentary *No End in Sight*.

A few times during his retelling Eaton blinks back tears, overcome with sadness at the waste of life, American and Iraqi, during this disastrous war of choice. This and other moments in *No End in Sight* are real triumphs, moments in which we empathize with the film's subjects, recognizing them too as the war's victims — however removed from the blood and carnage — and, through this empathy, better understand the war's prolonged and tragic effect on us all.

*Manda Bala* is ostensibly a look at kidnapping rings in the city of São Paulo, a city that frighteningly embodies what may be the face of urbanity for millions in the coming century: a city of sharp contrasts between the hyper-rich and the dirt poor, in which glittering towers soar over a landscape of ramshackle shantytowns; a city given over to factionalism and violence, in which, perversely, kidnappers who prey on the city's rich use their

ill-gotten money to illegally fund development projects, such as orphanages and sewers, in the slums; a city obsessed with security and surveillance, in which one obviously paranoid man dreams of one day receiving not one but several subdermal microchip implements, so that he could still be locatable via GPS satellite should one of the transmitters embedded in his skin be found and cut out; a city in which crime and victimization are not so much the random events feared in any large metropolis but a phenomenon as ubiquitous as the smog of Los Angeles or the overcrowding of Tokyo, in which plastic surgeons grow rich from reconstructing ears cut off by kidnappers as grisly threats to their victims' families. In other words, *Manda Bala* is the wet dream of anyone who's ever pored over a book by visionary city historian-apocalyptic seer Mike Davis, or anyone, indeed, who's experienced or even thought about for a moment the startling, criminal disparities of life, death, rights, and dignity between the developed and developing worlds. The film's greatest strengths are cinematic, its phantasmagoric display of exotic, improbable locales, such as a frog-growing farm that acts as a money-laundering enterprise for the kidnappers, and fascinatingly enigmatic people, such as one of the kidnappers, who discusses his activities dispassionately and seemingly without interest, his gaze intense from behind a black-and-green ski mask. The film's weaknesses derive from these same strengths, as *Manda Bala* frequently eschews analysis and demographics in favor of expressionistic imagery and a pulsating Tropicália score; Kohn could perhaps have lingered longer on the hard data behind the dazzling shots, and proved a nexus of sociological fact to its protagonists' tales of violence and fear. One also looks for a corrective vision, however slight, that is lacking from the film's expose of São Paulo and its terrors; upon reflection, kidnapping gangs and frog farms seem not entirely unusual responses to the near-unstoppable pressures of population growth, poverty, resource depletion, and crime that face the developing world, and I missed a sense of urgent, if not outraged, advocacy that should perhaps accompany such a long gaze into the abyss (Kohn spent five years making *Manda Bala*). But the film is magnificent disaster tourism and eco-porn for all that, and at times reaches a poignant juxtaposition of image, narrative, and mood that renders most of the above criticism moot.

Finally, James Mangold's 2007 remake, due out Sept. 7, of Delmer Davies's 1957 masterpiece *3:10 to Yuma* is a perfect opportunity to see Davies's original film, a tense psychological study of murderer Ben Wade (played magnificently against type by Glenn Ford, who died almost a year ago today on Aug. 30, 2006) and the reluctant do-gooder Dan Evans (Van Heflin), who must keep Wade from escaping and get him on the eponymous train of the title, and from thence to prison. A good part of the movie takes place with the two men alone in small rooms, Ford deliciously plumbing Wade's seductive, evil side as he attempts to cajole, wheedle, terrify, and otherwise manipulate Dan Evans into giving him freedom. The trailer for the new version, starring Christian Bale and Russell Crowe, promises much more kinetic thrills and chills, revealing in 30 second spots more horses, gunplay, and explosions than graced the entire 92 minutes of Davies's original, which is the kind of taut, reflective moviemaking that Hollywood has largely abandoned today. But the original *3:10 to Yuma* is one of the most effective cinematic portraits of menace I've ever seen, a menace that Crowe (who plays Wade in the remake), no matter how successful he is as a thug and brute off-screen, will probably never summon up on-screen. ■



# NEWS FROM THE *doctoral students' council*

## INTRODUCING THE 2007-8 DSC STEERING COMMITTEE

Hello All! Welcome back to another school year at the Graduate Center. My name is **Alissa Ackerman** and I am beginning my second year as a student in the Criminal Justice Doctoral Program. I spend most of my time at John Jay College, where our criminal justice classes are offered. I study sex crimes and legislation regarding sex offenders in the community. As the Criminal Justice program representative and a member of the steering committee, my major focus this year will be on creating affordable health insurance options for Graduate Center students. I look forward to serving all of you and I am excited about everything this school year has in store.

**Greg Donovan:** As the incoming Co-Chair for Student Affairs of the Doctoral Students Council I would like to use this space to briefly introduce myself. I am beginning my fourth year here at the Graduate Center as a Ph.D. candidate in Environmental Psychology and a certificate candidate in Interactive Technology & Pedagogy. Previously, I've served as an At-Large Representative for the D.S.C., as a Student Representative on the Graduate Center Technology Fee Committee and as the Environmental Psychology Student Officer for Academic Appeals.

My writing and research concerns how cyberspace(s) re-negotiate the processes of identity development, education, and citizen participation within urban environments. These interests, particularly as they regard educational and participatory cyberspace(s), are what I would like to advocate for within and on behalf of the Doctoral Students Council. During my tenure I plan to work closely with other members of the D.S.C. and the G.C. community to develop an organizational structure that better affords community participation and the educational aim of the Graduate Center.

I'd like to conclude by personally thanking last year's Steering Committee for all of their hard work. Simply put, Michael Broder, Ericka Calton, Rob Faunce, David Hamilton Golland, Patrina Huff, Aaron Ibur, Charles Lieberman, Rouzbeh Nazari, Denise Torres, Brenda Vollman, Kate Wilson and Chong Wojtkowski, did an excellent job.

**Rob Faunce** is a 4<sup>th</sup> year PhD student in English, with emphases on queer studies, 20<sup>th</sup> century world literature, and intersectional theses. As a second year Steering Committee member and this year's Co-Chair for Communications, he is eager to keep lines of communication open with the GC community — so please feel free to contact him directly at [robfaunce@gmail.com](mailto:robfaunce@gmail.com) or the DSC Steering Committee at [dsc.steering.committee@gmail.com](mailto:dsc.steering.committee@gmail.com) whenever a question, comment, or concern strikes.

**Anton Masterovoy:** I am a 4<sup>th</sup> year PhD History Student. My academic interests are Soviet and Consumer history. As for my goals as a member of the DSC, I hope to represent the general interests of the student body and try address and resolve problems and issues as they come up. If I have to be more specific, I would say that as for most of us reading and writing constitutes the bulk of our existence, our library, computers, printers, and access to other CUNY/NYC libraries would be my priority issue.

**Nancy Medina** represents the Chemistry department on the DSC. This is her first term on the Steering Committee.

**Denise Torres**, the DSC Student Representative for the Social Welfare Program, is a former homeless health-care administrator and clinician who remains actively involved in assuring the delivery of health and behavioral health services to vulnerable populations. She has used her experience and collaborative approach to give voice to the SW program and the larger GC student body to create community and address issues of health and wellness. As the Chair for the Health Issues Committee, she is available to assist with student needs or concerns and is available at [denise.torres.msw@gmail.com](mailto:denise.torres.msw@gmail.com).

**Brenda Vollman** is a 5<sup>th</sup> year PhD student in Criminal Justice, serving a second term as an At-Large representative and returning as the Co-Chair for Business Management. Brenda's goal is to get all Programs and Chartered Organizations to spend the funds made available through the Student Activities fees. If you have any questions or concerns about student access to monies, feel free to contact this co-chair directly at [brenda.vollman@gmail.com](mailto:brenda.vollman@gmail.com) or the DSC Steering Committee at [dsc.steering.committee@gmail.com](mailto:dsc.steering.committee@gmail.com).

From the heart of a Doctoral Student Council rookie, I am incredibly excited to be a member of the DSC Steering Committee for the 2007-2008 academic year. My name is Danielle Wu, and I am a third year graduate student in the Department of Biomedical Engineering. My department is located at The City College of New York, and my research lab is at Albert Einstein College of Medicine in Bronx, NY. I have found it challenging to connect with the graduate student body beyond my department, and discovered, for example, some amenities are poorly represented to the graduate students located at other campuses. These same amenities are funded by the student activity fee and are equally offered to all students, but students are, without intent, unequally notified. I will like to bridge the gap and heighten awareness of the graduate students' privileges, and reach out to better engage the other campuses to build community, identity, and pride. The DSC is a group of passionate graduate students that dedicate their

time and visions to advocate lifestyle improvements, academic opportunities, socio-economic stability, and academic excellence for the graduate student body at The City University of New York. I look forward to a great year.

## FOCUS ON THE LIBRARY COMMITTEE

The DSC's newest committee, the Library Committee, was formed in the spring of 2007 in response to the copy prices at Mina Rees Library. At its inception, Rob Faunce of the DSC Steering Committee acted as chair and was joined on the committee by Ian Jones, Janina Scarlet, and Tina Meyerhoff. Through email communications, we developed a list of talking points that were addressed at an information session with Chief Librarian Julie Cunningham of Mina Rees, attended by Rob Faunce and Tina Meyerhoff.

This free-ranging session with Dr. Cunningham allowed us to express our concerns while also reacting to the answers freely given by Dr. Cunningham. Acting on one piece of information provided by Dr. Cunningham, the Committee drafted a letter to Provost Edwards, President Kelly, et al, demanding that the loan period for graduate students be restored to 6 weeks (it had been reduced to three weeks with little fanfare last spring). While our letter was favorably received by the recipients, and influenced remarks made by Provost Edwards at the Provost's Council meeting in late April, this still has yet to be rectified. Dr. Julie Cunningham, Chief Librarian at Mina Rees, is attempting to make this happen at the September 10 meeting of the Council of Chief Librarians, but we still need to keep the pressure. Send an email to the President's Office or the Provost, and demand that your needs be met by this Administration!

Going forward, we can continue to exercise our free speech to continue to improve our library through basic expressions of needs and wants. To sign up for the Library Committee, or to express ideas or concerns over the state and future of Mina Rees, please contact Rob Faunce on [robfaunce@gmail.com](mailto:robfaunce@gmail.com).

## IMPORTANT DATES

DSC Plenary Meetings:

- September 7
- October 19 (Fall party to follow)
- November 16
- December 14 (holiday party to follow)

DSC Steering Committee Meetings:

- August 31
- October 5
- November 2
- November 30

DSO Media Board Meetings:

- September 28
- November 9

GC Graduate Council Meetings:

- October 31
- December 13

## WHO IS THE DSC?

The Doctoral Students' Council (DSC) is a group of student representatives from all academic programs chosen by elections that are held each spring. There are also at-large reps elected by the student body as a whole. The DSC exists to serve student needs and represent student interests before the GC administration.

For more information about the DSC, the benefits and services it offers to students, and how you can become more involved, visit our website at our distinctive new URL, [www.cunyds.org](http://www.cunyds.org).

While you're there, check out the DSC bulletin board, the online location of choice for members of the GC community to discuss hot-button campus issues like funding and healthcare, as well as to find classified ads for jobs, housing, and more. And that's just the beginning. We hope to see you there!

## WAYS TO GET MONEY FROM DSC

As part of your payment to the GC each semester, you contribute a student activities fee. The DSC, along with relevant offices of the GC administration, oversees the disbursement of these and other funds available for various kinds of student activities. Here are some of the ways you can get a piece of the action:

- 1) Hosting a conference, performance, or film series? Apply for a Cultural Affairs grant.
- 2) Organizing a workshop or professional development seminar? Apply for a Professional Development grant.
- 3) Need funds for your department to have a party, subscribe to a journal, or purchase items for your lounge? Ask your department's DSC representative to apply for your program's allocation each semester. Keep in mind: departmental allocations increased from \$2 to \$3 per student, which may mean your department has more money to spend!
- 4) If you are interested in having ongoing discussions and events around an interdisciplinary topic, consider starting a chartered organization. Chartered orgs receive DSC stipends to hold events at the GC. Some also receive office space. Interested in starting a chartered organization? Contact the co-chair for student affairs, Greg Donovan, on Gregory.donovan@gmail.com.

## COFFEE HOUR!

The DSC is sponsoring a back-to-school coffee hour on Monday, September 17th, from 3pm-6pm. Come join us for free coffee, tea, and pastries! Meet members of the DSC Steering Committee, DSC Representatives, and your fellow GC students. Let us know what's on your mind and what services you'd like to see improved at the GC. ■



# Power Unbound

TIM KRAUSE

Two documentaries currently playing in theaters, Charles Ferguson's *No End in Sight* — soon to end an exclusive New York engagement at Film Forum and opening at the Quad Cinema on Sept. 7 — and Jason Kohn's *Manda Bala* (*Send a Bullet*), at the Angelika Film Center, offer riveting glimpses of two highly different, yet highly similar, worlds: Ferguson's film the rarefied world of George W. Bush's administration during its march to war with Iraq and in the calamitous early months of the American occupation of Baghdad, Kohn's the apocalyptic city of São Paulo, Brazil. Both are affecting cinematic depictions, using quite different means and techniques, of power spun horribly out of control, the dysfunctional, dystopic Baghdad and São Paulo and their respective victims and elites merging into a single nightmarish portent of urban chaos, guerrilla warfare, and governmental impotence, the capital of the twenty-first century.

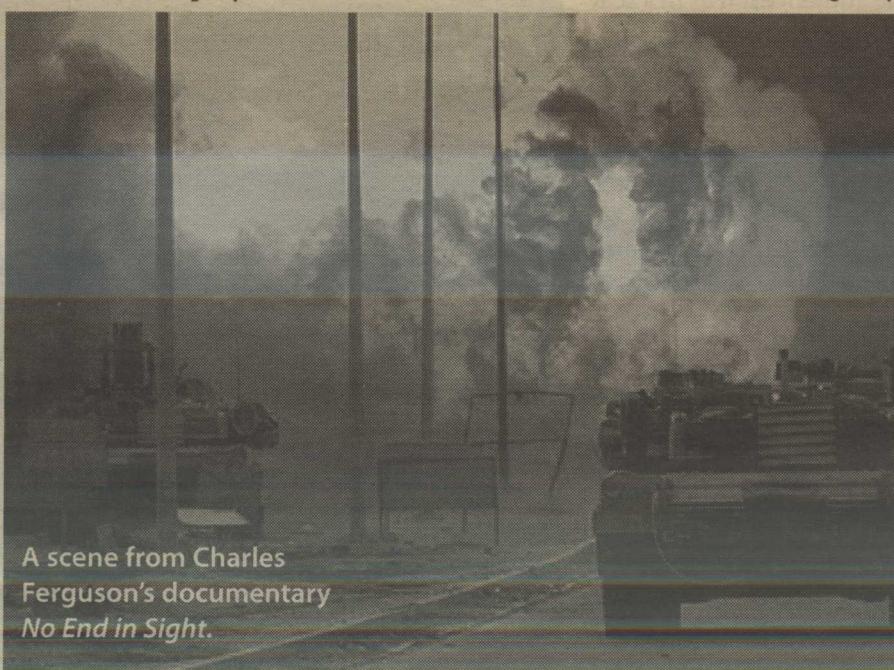
*No End in Sight* is really much more about the closed-door decision making of Bush Administration officials than it is about life under the occupation; indeed, the footage of occupied Baghdad and irate, bewildered Iraqi citizens presents its material not so much as subjects in their own right, but as human proof of the Olympian carelessness of the best and brightest of American policymakers from Sept. 11, 2001, to the summer of 2003. The film excels first and foremost as a talking-heads movie in the style of Errol Morris's *The Fog of War*, which focuses so intently on every tic and twitch of Robert McNamara as to, while highlighting his endless self-justifications and recriminations, simultaneously render him somehow more than human: a portrait of power and of one of power's servants, an important player on the historical stage. *No End in Sight* achieves a similar success in its unflinching, close-up interviews with officials such as former Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage, former United States Ambassador to Iraq Barbara Bodine, and former Chief of Staff for Secretary of State Colin Powell, Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson, all of whom bluntly and in detail — and, sometimes, as with the impish Wilkerson, with humor — recount their version of the events leading up to the US invasion in 2003. In the process they fairly demolish the ever more finely spun, but nevertheless wholly untrue, tissue of lies, untruths, prevarications, and outright fantasizing that imperfectly

clothed the administration's nakedly cynical grab for power. That Bush's rationale for war was at once completely false and dangerously beguiling — the cries of Big Bad Saddam and his nuclear wolf frightening credulous Americans and a supine Congress into believing the gaudy fabrications of a whimsically dangerous boy president — will be no secret to most, or at least to anyone who regularly follows, say, the sardonic editorials of Frank Rich and Paul Krugman, or the jeremiads of Lewis Lapham and the editors of *The New York Review of Books*, to say nothing of the passionate partisans of the blogosphere, all of whom have been tireless in cataloging the administration's numerous malfasances. *No End in Sight* puts a much-needed human face on the architects of the war, most of whom, as with those named above, reveal themselves as cautious, thoughtful professionals, men and women focused more on pragmatic questions than on ideological

## film REVIEW

- *No End in Sight*, directed by Charles Ferguson
- *Manda Bala* (*Send a Bullet*), directed by Jason Kohn

agendas, men and women, too, of conscience: empire builders, yes — the larger question of the morality and ultimate efficacy of American power projected through military force is never raised, reducing a stark political problematic for the United States in the twenty-first century into a question of planning and mechanics — but at least empire builders conscious of *gravitas imperii*, the weight of rule, and not the rapacious brigands who ran America's ship of state aground under Bush's feckless captaincy. While the film's interviewees were also running the ship, albeit in a lesser capacity than the Dread Pirate Cheney, *No End in Sight* meticulously shows how Bush's inner circle assiduously ignored the advice of these experts, all of whom were summarily shoved aside when their ideas drifted too far from the White House's neoconservative party line. Thus the film, like *The Fog of War*, tempers its questioning of its subjects' complicity in the events they recount with a well-earned sense of their fallible humanity, and serves as a moving record of the effects, moral and otherwise, their decisions have had on them. A standout among the voices in the film is Major General Paul Eaton, who from 2003 to 2004 was in charge of training the reconstituted Iraqi Army. His story, filled with missed chances, betrayed loyalties, and dashed expectations, maps out better than most the lost chances, despite the folly of the war's initial planning, for some kind of stability following Saddam's fall and before the onset of the insurgency.



A scene from Charles Ferguson's documentary *No End in Sight*.

A few times during his retelling Eaton blinks back tears, overcome with sadness at the waste of life, American and Iraqi, during this disastrous war of choice. This and other moments in *No End in Sight* are real triumphs, moments in which we empathize with the film's subjects, recognizing them too as the war's victims — however removed from the blood and carnage — and, through this empathy, better understand the war's prolonged and tragic effect on us all.

*Manda Bala* is ostensibly a look at kidnapping rings in the city of São Paulo, a city that frighteningly embodies what may be the face of urbanity for millions in the coming century: a city of sharp contrasts between the hyper-rich and the dirt poor, in which glittering towers soar over a landscape of ramshackle shantytowns; a city given over to factionalism and violence, in which, perversely, kidnappers who prey on the city's rich use their

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Finally, James Mangold's 2007 remake, due out Sept. 7, of Delmer Davies's 1957 masterpiece *3:10 to Yuma* is a perfect opportunity to see Davies's original film, a tense psychological study of murderer Ben Wade (played magnificently against type by Glenn Ford, who died almost a year ago today on Aug. 30, 2006) and the reluctant do-gooder Dan Evans (Van Heflin), who must keep Wade from escaping and get him on the eponymous train of the title, and from thence to prison. A good part of the movie takes place with the two men alone in small rooms, Ford deliciously plumbing Wade's seductive, evil side as he attempts to cajole, wheedle, terrify, and otherwise manipulate Dan Evans into giving him freedom. The trailer for the new version, starring Christian Bale and Russell Crowe, promises much more kinetic thrills and chills, revealing in 30 second spots more horses, gunplay, and explosions than graced the entire 92 minutes of Davies's original, which is the kind of taut, reflective moviemaking that Hollywood has largely abandoned today. But the original *3:10 to Yuma* is one of the most effective cinematic portraits of menace I've ever seen, a menace that Crowe (who plays Wade in the remake), no matter how successful he is as a thug and brute off-screen, will probably never summon up on-screen. ■



# Look Who's Teaching at CUNY?

MATT LAU

After last year's unbelievably successful marketing campaign — that not only led many subway riders to apply to CUNY colleges, but also shocked and surprised many New Yorkers who had been given assurances that only mentally retarded ex-cons taught at CUNY — Chancellor Goldstein has announced plans to expand the "Look Who's Teaching at CUNY!" campaign.

"We've received so much effusive feedback, in particular from the local graphic design community," said the Chancellor. "In fact I'll read you one of these encouraging comments to give you some idea. Quote: 'Your risky use of the 'throwback' starburst graphic, which had been all but indelibly associated with the original Batman TV series and such ingenious witticisms as 'WaBam!' and 'KaPow!' has been an inspiration to our entire creative department. Thank You. CUNY has single-handedly taken university marketing to the next level, where kitsch is no longer a four-letter word.' But was it ever?" added a playful Goldstein.

When a reporter in the audience suggested that the comment might have been sarcastic, the Chancellor grew quiet, then without warning changed the subject. "So how about those Knicks' off-season moves? Does anyone else think Zach Randolph is going to be a bust?"

His assistant later made the details of the new expanded campaign public. Of course, first of all, the new plan calls for featuring people who are actually famous in the continued version of the existing ad. But since very few famous people teach at CUNY, the Trustees are planning on hiring a few in the coming months. Ward Churchill, the illegitimate American Indian love-child of Winston Churchill, whose profound insights include "Stockbrokers equal Nazis" and "White People Stole This Land!" is just one of the names being mentioned on a short list of academic superstars. Slavoj Zizek, the imminent Slovenian psychoanalyst and film critic, has already declined, saying that he'd prefer not to work for a university whose

facilities are more dilapidated than those in the former communist countries of Eastern Europe.

Further plans call for variations on the original theme, including "Look Who Used to Teach at CUNY!" which could include, in English alone, the legendary black feminist Bell Hooks, *New Yorker* "Critic At Large" Louis Menand, and Judith Butler disciple David Kazanjian.

Another, albeit more controversial variation would be "Look Who's Still Teaching at CUNY!" This ad would obviously include "Sokal Hoax" victim extraordinaire Stanley Aronowitz, who is quoted more than a dozen times in physicist Andrew Sokal's infamous parody of postmodern theory, "Transgressing the Boundaries: Towards a Transformative Hermeneutics of Quantum Gravity." For continuity of political affiliation, the same ad might also feature Marshall Berman, who has not changed his tie-dyed t-shirt since attending his last SDS meeting in 1975.

Another, much more comprehensive variation would be "Look Who's NOT Teaching at CUNY!" In the New York metro region alone this list might include noted literary theorists Avital Ronell and Gayatri Spivak, along with professional black person Cornell West, former Mayor David Dinkins (who somehow sleeps during his own class at Columbia), current Mayor Michael Bloomberg, and Rajiv, who manages the Oxford Café ("The Educated Choice!") conveniently located half a block from the Graduate Center.

Other possibilities mentioned include "Look Who's Subcontracting Security Services to CUNY!", "Look Who's Preventing More Tenure-Track Positions from Being Created at CUNY!", "Look Who's Performing Custodial and Janitorial Duties at CUNY!", and "Look Who's Barely Graduating at CUNY!"

Of course any plan is guaranteed to include the future tense variation "Look Who Will Not Be Teaching at CUNY!" with pictures of Matt Lau and James Hoff. ■



ask harriet

by HARRIET ZANZIBAR

Dear Harriet,

First I gave up smoking. Then I gave up drinking. So now how am I supposed to meet women?

— Lonely Ascetic Graduate Student

What a sad story, LAGS. Now that your new, viceless existence has left you with a social life as empty as Bush's brain and as sexy as a Dick Chaney full-frontal pin-up calendar, you're facing the same conundrum that has bedeviled men since Eve first bitch-slapped Adam onto his drunken ass: The only thing women hate more than guys who smell like Marlboros and taste like Budweisers is guys who are too self-righteous to drink and smoke in the first place. Because the first guy is going to be too wasted to find his own gear shift and put it in drive, right? And as for the second guy — well, he's going to be too morally erect to be "upright" in any other useful way.

You do have a few options, apart from registering yourself on amishlove.com and matching up with just the right Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm to join you in a lifetime of Sunday go-to-meeting, butter-churning, barn-raising, and secret midnight fellatio with the shutters closed and the candles snuffed. One trick is to keep going out to bars *pretending* to be buzzed, as long as you're willing to submit to the kind of humiliations you'd normally be totally clueless about if you were legitimately toasted. Because once the girls find you've loosened up enough to dance like Elaine from "Seinfeld," but thanks to being secretly unimpeded by liquor you still have the stamina to stick it to them for more than five minutes at a time, you really have a chance at being a big hit. At least with me. Because, I swear to Oprah, I have yet to go out partying and meet someone who was blitzed enough to be fun while we're still at the bar who then actually took me home and, you know, gave me what I wanted for as long as I wanted it, instead of what normally happens, which is that he barfs on my breasts while we're still in the car and then passes out on the living room couch while scrolling through my Tivo recordings looking for softcore porn.

Otherwise, you'll just have to start paying attention to women in environments that aren't specifically dedicated to getting laid, like when you're standing on line. How successful you are can depend on what line you're standing on. The ATM line is too much pressure — it moves too quickly to really give you enough time to properly pick someone up. Trust me. The sandwich counter at a deli is better, especially one of those places where people are always ordering grilled paninis, because it takes a couple minutes to grill a panini, and so you can chat someone up and talk about what paninis you each ordered and make allusion to which part of your body is shaped like a hero sandwich. I remember this one guy I met at Starbuck's. His name was Steve, or Chet, and obviously my type: tall, dark, and loaded. He smiled at me while we were standing on line waiting to order, which I kinda marked him down for because the line at that Starbuck's moves too quickly for him to make any progress before you're face-to-face with the cashier ordering a grande red-eye and a triple-berry muffin, which is what happened. But then I realized that this was just his preliminary sally, because as we moved in step around to the wait-for-your-oh-so-complicated-aren't-you-special-coffee-concoction area he started to chat me up about how he'd always meant to try espresso shots in *his* coffee and whether I used Equal or Splenda. By the time they'd handed us our coffees we were not only already mentally undressing each other, we were mentally screwing each others' brains out. Of course, then Steve, or Chet, picked up his coffee, walked out of the Starbuck's, hailed a cab, and exited my life forever; but out of all the mental fucks I've ever had he was definitely in the top ten. I still can't go into that Starbuck's without getting hot flashes, which come to think of it has had the unfortunate side effect of making the Hawaiian counter girl there with the big brown eyes and that funny pink lip gloss start thinking I have this thing for her, which I totally don't, however much she might hint as she's handing me my change that she's totally, you know, amenable.

So actually that brings up your other option, LAGS, which is to go gay. Because as long as you're buff and hung, gay guys don't care whether you're toasted or not. ■

Got a problem? Do people point at you and laugh? Let Harriet help. Write to Ask Harriet c/o The Advocate at [advocate@gc.cuny.edu](mailto:advocate@gc.cuny.edu).

**CU NY** The City University of New York  
WWW.CUNY.EDU/LOOKWHOISTEACHING

**Look Who's TEACHING At CUNY!**

Mr. T  
Distinguished Professor, Foolology  
Brooklyn College &  
The Graduate Center

"Not just world-class talent — T-class talent! I pity the fool who trash-talks CUNY profs!"  
—Chancellor Matthew Goldstein