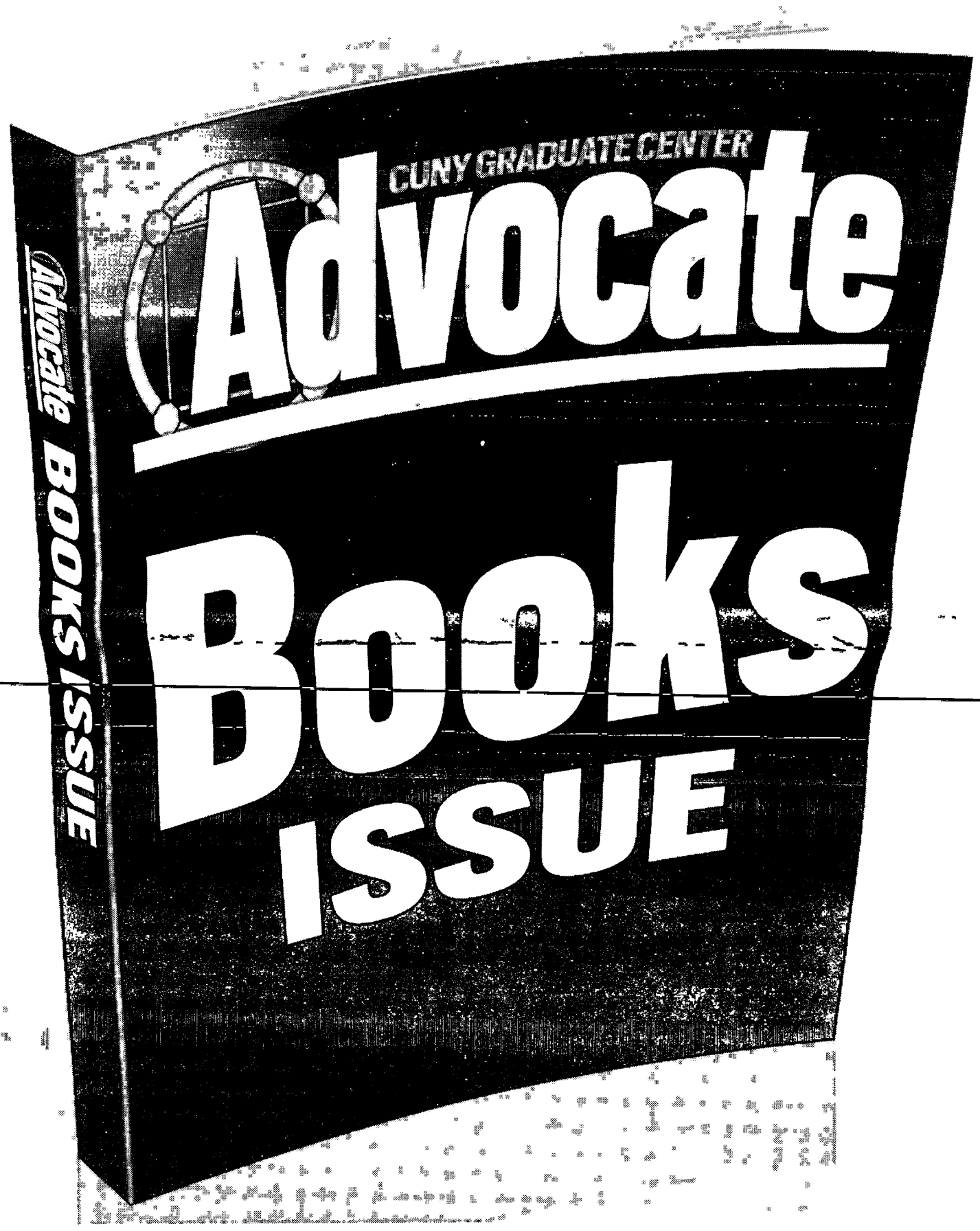
CUNY GRADUATE CENTER
Advocate
December 2008 http://gcadvocate.org advocate@gc.cuny.edu


Roberto Bolaño
page 11



ALSO INSIDE

What's Happening to America?: Mark Engler, Noah Mackert, Grace Lee Boggs and Scott Kurashige (page 23)

Christian Parenti on the New Afghanistan War (page 8)

Advocate
CUNY GRADUATE CENTER
December 2008

http://gcadvocate.org
advocate@gc.cuny.edu

CUNY Graduate Center
Room 5396
365 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10016
(212) 817-7885

PUBLICATION INFO
The GC *Advocate* is the student newspaper of the CUNY Graduate Center and is published seven times a year. Publication is subsidized by Student Activities Fees and the Doctoral Students' Council.

SUBMISSIONS
The GC Advocate accepts contributions of articles, illustrations, photos and letters to the editor. Please send queries to the email address above.

Articles selected for publication will be subjected to editorial revision. Writers who contribute articles of 1,000 words will be paid $50 and those who submit longer articles requiring research will receive $75. We also pay for photographs and artwork.

The GC Advocate is published seven times a year, in September, October, November, December, February, March, and April. Submissions should be sent in by the middle of the month. Print copies will normally be on the stacks around the end of the month.

FROM THE editor's desk

Shut It Down

> Those who profess to favor freedom and yet depreciate agitation are people who want crops without ploughing the ground; they want rain without thunder and lightning; they want the ocean without the roar of its many waters. The struggle may be a moral one, or it may be a physical one, or it may be both. But it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without a demand; it never has and it never will.
> —Frederick Douglass

If recent events are any indication of what's to come, it appears quite possible that CUNY is poised on the verge of a significant and powerful grassroots student movement, the likes of which have not been seen since the early nineties, when students across the university occupied buildings and shut down campuses at 11 of the 21 CUNY colleges. Then as now, students were fighting against a series of harsh budget cuts and tuition increases proposed by Governor Cuomo that threatened to undermine the University's founding mandate to provide an affordable and quality education to the children of the working class, black, and immigrant families of New York City. From City College to BMCC to Hostos, Hunter, Lehman, and Brooklyn Colleges, a relatively small group of students took their futures into their own hands and stood up to the administration and the governor.

Once again, seventeen years later, another Democratic Governor has proposed to slash the CUNY budgets and increase tuition at all of the CUNY senior colleges by $600 a year, and once again, students are waking up to the realization that their collective future and the future of their University just might be at stake. Since Governor Paterson chose to balance the state's budget by recklessly, and I would argue indiscriminately, cutting state services across the board, including huge cuts to Medicaid and the operating budgets of both SUNY and CUNY, students and faculty members from campuses all across the university have responded with a series of increasingly large and militant protests aimed at stopping the cuts and tuition hikes.

This new wave of protests began almost immediately after Governor Paterson's proposed budget cuts to CUNY were announced on November 12, when (only an hour after the Governor's announcement) over 200 students, organized by CUNY Contingents Unite—an organization of rank and file PSC union members—gathered to speak out against the budget cuts and the proposed tuition hikes in front of the Hunter West Building on Lexington Avenue. Students at the protest chanted "No Budget Cuts, No Tuition Hikes," and "Layoff Goldstein, Not Adjuncts." They also spoke passionately and intelligently about how the tuition hikes would impact them and how their educations and their livelihoods would suffer if the tuition hikes were approved. Watching them step up to the makeshift podium that day—which was nothing but a milk crate borrowed from the Hunter Starbuck's outlet—one could feel the sense of excitement and purpose that was animating these students, many of whom had probably never before spoken in public with such confidence and authority.

On November 18th, only six days after the Governor's proposed cuts were officially announced, CCU called an emergency organizational meeting to bring together students and faculty who were opposed to the cuts. Organizers were expecting a good turnout, but no one expected to see the more than 120 students who came out from several campuses packed into the small conference room on the 8th floor of Hunter West, eager to discuss what to do about the budget crisis. Since then, momentum has continued to build and students across CUNY have started to organize themselves in small groups on campuses all across the University. As the *GC Advocate* goes to press yet another demonstration, organized by students and faculty, is taking place at the Baruch College vertical campus, where the Board of Trustees is expected to approve all of the tuition hikes proposed by the Governor.

In addition to these growing protests, several student and faculty organizations, including the Professional Staff Congress, CUNY Contingents Unite, and the CUNY Student Union, are calling for a massive mobilization on December 16 in front of the Governor's offices on Third Avenue and 41 Street at 4pm to protest the Governor's new budget (due that day), which is expected to include significant cuts to CUNY, SUNY, Medicaid, and other vital state services.

As promising and exciting as these protests are, the Governor has made it clear that "noisemaking" will not be enough to deter him from what he narrow-mindedly sees as the necessary solution to the state's increasing budget deficits. Claiming that the Wall Street "well has run dry," (as if Wall Street has ever paid their fair share to New York State) the Governor is ready to fight tooth and nail to get his cuts approved by the State Assembly and it seems clear that any real attempt to resist these cuts and tuition hikes is going to require more than chants and slogans, petitions, and postcards to state legislators. Indeed, if the protests of 1991 have anything to teach us today, it is that it's also going to require more than just taking over a few buildings. As successful as the students were in mobilizing against the cuts and closing down campuses in April of 1991, they were far less successful in actually affecting the outcome of the state budget. Legislators battled over funding for CUNY, but at the end of the day, the $500 a year tuition hike and the cuts to CUNY were passed with minimal changes.

If we are going to be successful in resisting this round of budget cuts, and believe me, it is important that we resist, it is going to require a larger grassroots movement than the CUNY activist community. Winning this struggle will require the efforts of ordinary students and faculty members as well as the larger CUNY and city community. There are plenty of other ways to balance the CUNY budget than taxing the poorest and most vulnerable members of our community an additional [illegible] and other state agencies that aid the poor, the sick, and the elderly. If we are going to successfully convince the Governor and the assembly to pursue a more equitable path that truly puts the burden of these cuts where they belong: at the feet of the corporations and wealthy citizens of the city and state, it is going to require not only that we shut down campuses and protest in the street, but that we join forces with other city workers and citizens to resist these cuts across the board. Not only must we shut down CUNY, but we should recognize these cuts for what they are: a direct attack upon the working class families of New York, and seek to shut down the city as well. Since almost no city unions are willing to risk breaking the Taylor law with a strike, this will require the organizational skills of the rank and file members of the city's unions, from the PSC and the UFT, to the TWU and the NYSUT. Now is the time for the students and workers of New York City to recognize they share the same interests and fight these cuts together. Ⓐ

Adjunct Layoffs on the Horizon

Effects of Paterson's Budget Cuts Continue to Reverberate through CUNY Schools

Governor David Paterson's decision to balance the state budget by punishing public education systems has rippled through the CUNY system with remarkable speed. While considerable attention has been rightfully paid to the reduced quality of education at campuses across the city, less attention has been directed at the negative effects experienced by the thousands of adjunct lecturers and contingent employees who teach and work at CUNY. A number of academic departments have sent out ominous e-mails announcing that adjunct layoffs will be inevitable.

At Queens College, to site but one example, the Sociology department sent out an e-mail to the faculty announcing class cancellations and increased enrollment caps for certain introductory level courses.

Meanwhile, at Hunter College, the Political Science department told its faculty that "The uncertain state budget situation is likely to have an impact on our adjunct budget in future semesters. At this point, we have been directed to cut the adjunct budget by 5 percent for spring 2009."

For adjunct faculty who manage to keep their jobs, many will have their course loads reduced, and those who fall below two courses per semester may be forced to give up their PSC supported health insurance, a benefit that thousands of CUNY adjuncts desperately rely upon. The fact that adjuncts, who currently make up as much as 57 percent of the teaching faculty at CUNY, and have practically no job security, and can be easily dismissed, is nothing short of outrageous.

Compounding the ugliness of these impending job losses is the fact that, because of the contingent nature of their employment, most adjuncts will not be officially laid off. Instead, they simply will not be offered jobs for the next semester, creating the illusion that fewer layoffs are in fact being issued.

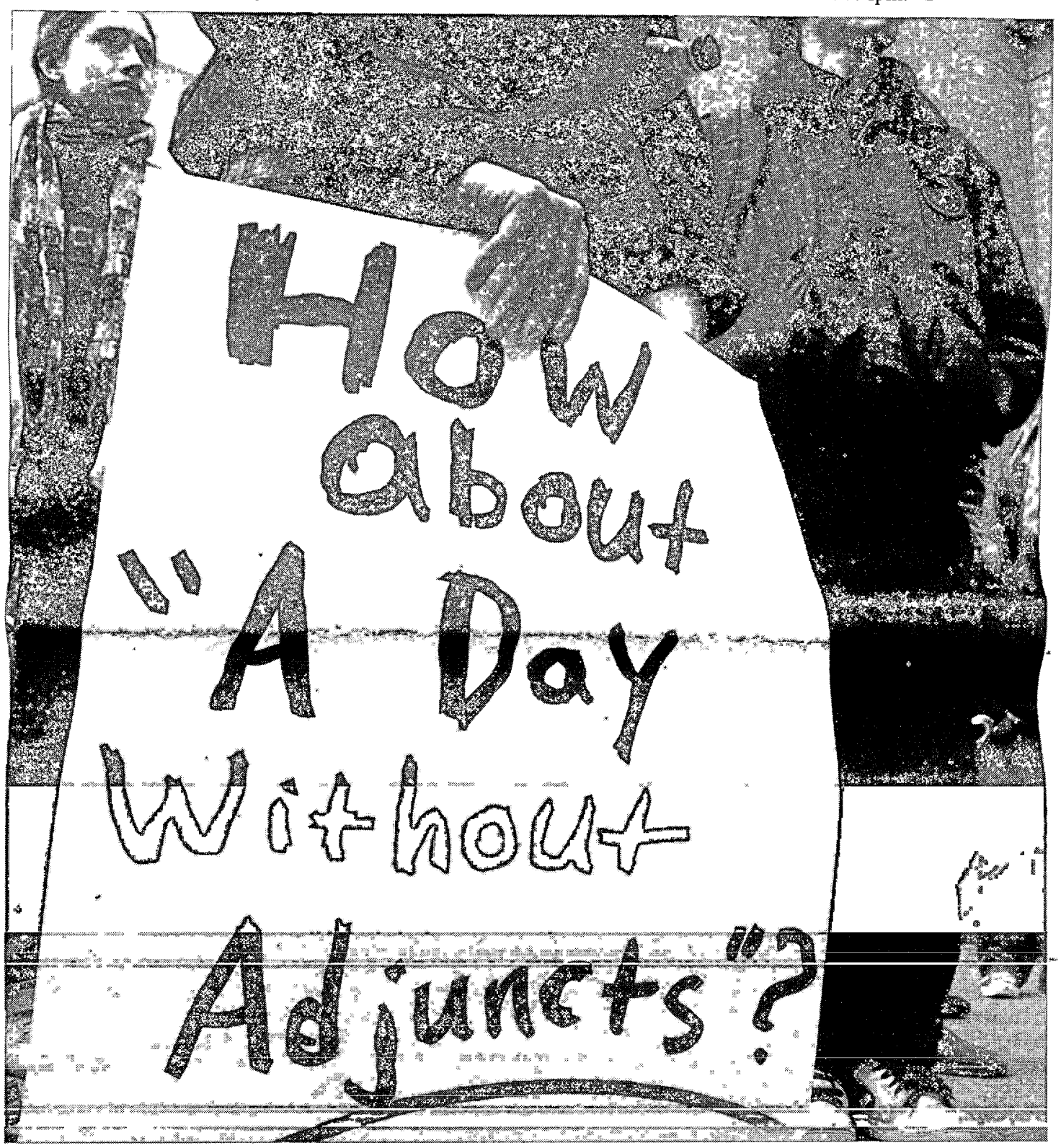
As if cuts were not insulting enough, the governor and the CUNY Board of Trustees are proposing to increase tuition for City University Senior Colleges by a full 15 percent. The CUNY Fiscal Affairs Committee, which met on December 2, has already approved proposals for a maximum $600 increase to full time tuition to be approved by the board of trustees on December 8. This increase is in response to the more than $51 million in cuts to CUNY this year and an expected $82 million in 2009.

For CUNY students and their families, many of whom are facing layoffs and dismal job prospects, this increase could not have come at a worse time. Some students say they will have to work extra hours, which means fewer hours to study, while others report that they will simply have to take fewer classes or drop out of school completely.

Queens College student Lilliana Ramnath told the *Post* "I think I'm going to have to take a year or two off, at the very least. I just won't be able to provide for my son and continue studying."

In response to these budget cuts and tuition hikes, student, faculty, and union groups across the university have been organizing a series of increasingly large and vocal demonstrations to urge the governor and the assembly to fully fund CUNY and other state agencies in 2009. The first was organized by the group CUNY Contingents Unite and took place at Hunter College on November 12th. Hundreds of students and faculty came together to publicly bear witness to the impact of the budget cuts on their lives. Perhaps most inspiring were the incredible number of undergraduates who spontaneously agreed to seize a makeshift "podium" and share their thoughts and stories about how the cuts are affecting them and what they plan to do about it.

Since then, students and contingent faculty have scheduled two more rounds of protest. The first will be held at the board of trustees meeting on December 8 at Baruch College (25th Street and Lexington) at 4pm. There is also a second huge rally planned for December 16—the same day Patterson is supposed to present his budget proposal to the State Assembly—in front of Governor Paterson's offices on 41st Street and Third Avenue at 4pm. Ⓐ



Protest at Hunter College on Nopvember 12, 2008.

cuny news IN BRIEF

NYU-CUNY Financial Aid Partnership a Fraud

An alarming flyer made the rounds at New York University early this month, encouraging students who could not afford the school's $50,000 tuition to consider transferring to CUNY for a few years before returning to complete their senior years and receive their prestigious degrees.

"The cost of a college education is a matter of concern for many students and their families," the flyer stated. "We encourage you to consider our new *In and Of the City* financial aid plan," a plan that purportedly would allow NYU students facing financial hard ships to "attend one of 29 CUNY campuses until they are financially able to return to NYU."

As it turns out, the flyer was a fake. Created by a group fashioning themselves "Students Creating Radical Change," (SCRC) the flyer was intended to raise awareness—at CUNY's expense we might add—about all the bad things being perpetrated against students in the West Village. Apparently, SCRC is concerned that NYU's recent investment activities might land "the smart students" in less exalted institutions, such as those found in the CUNY system.

But lest one think that SCRC in any way meant to demean CUNY and its students, the group made sure to deny any such thing. Buried at the very end of their public statement issued to the *Gothamist* was the following:

"Oh, one other thing: we have nothing against CUNY. We just thought a 'go to CUNY' plan would make a neat flier."

Thanks, we appreciate that. Ⓐ

Debting on the Future

JUSTIN ROGERS-COOPER

For many graduate students, becoming an academic means developing a set of personal beliefs about debt. My scholastic history is a history of debt and borrowing. During my suburban high school years northwest of Columbus, Ohio, my parents assured me that we could afford the very best college. My "hard work" would determine my future, not the cost of school. This sentiment, or belief, or dream, has basically informed how I make financial decisions to this day. It's scarily close to the old Horatio Alger American dream. With hard work and a little luck, everything will work out. But as the economy recesses and depresses, I've seen my own life back through the prism of this attitude toward debt, which is something that didn't exist on this scale in *Ragged Dick*.

Even though I had a part-time job at a CVS pharmacy all through high school, I didn't understand money. Because of a lawsuit that propelled my family out of North Carolina and into Ohio, I became solidly middle-class and relatively privileged: I bought my own gas, but my parents got me a car—a 1977 two-door, baby blue Buick LeSabre. It got eight mpg at a time when I usually filled up the twenty-five gallon tank for less than twenty bucks. I had no sense that the economy had a history. I remember reading Tom Kromer's *Waiting for Nothing* my senior year. It follows around a drifter during the Great Depression. It at once strengthened my interest for dystopian moments and confused me. Was that America?

I applied early decision to Skidmore College in Saratoga Springs at a time when the total cost of attending was rising several thousand dollars a year. I believe it cost, at the time, somewhere around $32,000. I got a limited financial aid package because I was from Ohio; to cover the rest, we took out private loans from Citibank. In today's dollars, that's about double the current cost of a four-year private college. I went to school during years of vast inflation, rising health care costs, and the increased necessity of a collage education.

I now understand that I got my undergraduate degree during a tech bubble that later collapsed, just as I'm getting my PhD during a housing and credit bubble that just popped. I also understand that my family's Horatio Alger optimism—primarily rehearsed, in my mind, by my father—is part of a larger ideology of borrowing and credit. It's as if my father's optimism, buttressed by the discourse of the American Dream, grew to be the ideological bedrock of my ideas about debt. And I learned these ideas during the Clinton and Bush years, when shopping was a sport, when new malls were opening, and everyone was taking out loans.

Since my father was a college professor, we were able to borrow less from Citibank the next few years because of a "tuition exchange" program. I left Skidmore nonetheless several tens of thousands of dollars in debt. I had a BA in English. I wanted to take a year off before grad school, so I went back home to Ohio, and then went to New Jersey. This year was sort of the one that didn't fit the narrative of progressive climbing that I replayed in my mind during moments of anxiety. That narrative was pure Alger: lower-middle class boy from Raleigh moves to Ohio when father wins lawsuit. Petulant hippy-punk moves to east coast liberal arts school seeking to write poetry and study literature. Over-confident English major goes to New York City for graduate study. *That* narrative had the peripheral, southern-accented dope transformed into the cosmopolitan, hipster doofus.

The in-between year after Skidmore is connected to the time I spent at CVS; they are the moments in my life when I've stepped outside my class bubble and worked at non-skilled jobs. In the fall of 2003, I worked on the I-71 highway south of Columbus, Ohio. I was a surveyor with a guy hired by a Columbus engineering firm that contracted out business with him. They were designing a new overpass bridge that connected the Columbus landfill with some local farms. On some of these local farms there were new suburban developments. There were mornings that the stink was so bad we had to breath out of our mouths.

I woke up at 6:30 am and had to be "on site" by 7:30. The drive took forty minutes. The guy had long hair, Dickeys pants, beige boots, and a baseball cap. He liked to listen to Howard Stern in the morning. When I arrived he'd be in his black Ford Explorer listening to his show on the radio. Usually I'd wait for about fifteen minutes for him to acknowledge me. Then he'd honk. This was the signal for me to join him. I'd crawl up into the passenger seat and we'd listen to the show until about 10:30. He kept his car running so the heat could stay on. It got really toasty in there. When it was time to work, he'd wake me up.

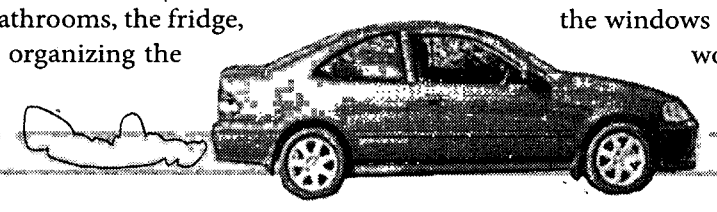
I did this through the winter. In January I moved to an exclusive, rich hamlet in New Vernon, New Jersey. I had a disabled friend from college who was living with his parents. In exchange for a bed and meals, my goal was to help my friend apply to jobs, find an apartment, and make professional contacts. For money, I'd perform odd jobs around the house and property. This included cleaning the bathrooms, the fridge, the walls, and organizing the attic. When the weather got warmer, I took down a deer fence, weeded the garden, and threw tennis balls for the dogs. Once, I found myself cleaning the house toilets next to the Hispanic immigrant my friend's mother hired to clean the house once a week.

It was around this time that my debt and financial insecurity started to make me afraid. I'm writing this piece half-way through my fifth year at the GC; I spent the first fours years of grad school trying to race through it as fast as possible. This had less to do with ambition than financial anxiety. The first year was the hardest. I lived alone on Steinway Street in Astoria in a lower-level basement apartment. It was a studio and I paid $860 a month for it. As an adjunct at Kingsborough Community College, I was only making $980 a month. It was a stupid decision. I justified it out of fear of living with a stranger, or perhaps my own inflated sense of self-value—I required *space*, I guess. My first year I was without aid from the Graduate Center. Citibank refused me a loan that my father cosigned on; in hindsight, this was the first time someone pricked my bubble. They said we had too much debt.

So I turned to the Mastercard that Chase gave me the previous year in New Jersey. I went to Ikea and bought a bunch of furniture that I thought would really do the place right. I furnished the living room and kitchen. I put everything on the Mastercard: food, tuition, drinks, airplane tickets—and gas. I brought my 1992 Toyota Corolla from Ohio because it made sense to drive to Kingsborough from Astoria (about an hour both ways, which was faster than the subway). I also kept my Ohio plates; I drive back to Ohio four or five times a year, even now. For some reason, I never wanted to get too comfortable with living in New York, and having a car was necessary anywhere else. And I am convinced I will end up anywhere else. At the same time, based on that studio apartment, I was clearly *too* comfortable here.

Those were the great months when the credit card debt wasn't in the four digits yet. Eventually, my Mastercard payments got so high I stopped using it, and started taking out federal loans. I should have done that from the beginning. But I didn't take out federal loans because student loans were something I did with my dad. When I decided to take them out on my own, I realized how I cultivated my own blindspot, how much I relied on my father, on his blessing, on his judgment.

Eventually, every part of the car's body died. The doors didn't work, the A/C didn't work, the radio didn't work, the defroster didn't work, the windows didn't work. I went home to Ohio and found a new car in the driveway, a 1999 Honda Civic, courtesy of my dad. I say this partially out of embarrassment. But he surprised me with it, it was in his driveway, he was writing his book on genocide, and we gave away the old one to charity. He told me it was an investment. I would drive back to Ohio more, for one. And I have. But these are, in part, rationalizations. I'm profligate like this: I want to move around very easily. I cut my commute from Astoria to Queens College from over an hour to 15 minutes.



As I read about the credit crisis, the public conversations about debt, spending, bankruptcy, bailouts, and budgets are somewhat uncanny. Over the past few months, I'm sometimes left reading the business pages wondering just where I fit into the psychology of credit and debt that has become the revised neo-liberal narrative of the United States during the past 30 years. Like the federal government, the futures markets, the subprime mortgage lenders and buyers, and the credit swappers, I too have borrowed dollars against future gains. Like everyone else in America, I've gambled enormous sums of money to finance a dream. And every time I hear about another job pulled off the market, I strategize about how long I can remain in the cocoon of my debt-financed bubble. When I think about "glass ceilings," I've always felt I was privileged enough to be on top of one. But lately, I think more and more about that ceiling cracking. I think about falling.

When I think about that fall, it occurs to me that I've been using this debt to, in part, fund a comfortable lifestyle. The debt-bubble I'm in, and that which I've been given, might be best understood through my car. The car has been the symbol and the vehicle of my debt-world. All this time, it's not that I've been paying solely for my education; I've been borrowing for the lifestyle I had in Ohio, and the one I expect to have after I get a job. I'm scared to give it up, the way my body warms in Astoria, the quick trips to Brooklyn and Ohio, the dinners out, the organic broccoli, the books, the beer. I'm scared to leave New York; I'm scared to stay. I'm scared about not getting a job—it's not that I can't handle the sense of professional failure, should that occur. It's that I've wagered so much money on a dream sustained by rehearsed ideological optimism. And sustained, I fear, by the very middle-class privileges that the American empire promotes as a birthright, and wages resource wars to protect. New York, not Washington, is the heart of that empire.

And I worry that I'm a New Yorker now—I'm worried, too, that I always was. Ⓐ

political analysis

In Midnight's Shadow

DANNY NASSRE

Those concerned about the fate of humanity might want to take a look at the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists'* Doomsday Clock, the publication's symbolic warning of how close we are to destroying ourselves..

Your concern might grow when you discover that the clock is currently set at five minutes to midnight (the closer to midnight, the greater the danger), its latest setting since 1984, during an especially tense period in the Cold War. It was three minutes to midnight then, so we're two minutes safer now—whatever that means. A metaphorical clock, however, might not be the best way to capture the state of global security, so the *Bulletin* explains that "the world stands at the brink of a second nuclear age."

The United States is the world's leading nuclear and military power, so, by default, our policies have the greatest effect on the worldwide nuclear situation. In trying to determine if we are, in fact, heading towards a "second nuclear age," the first place to look is right here.

In principle, the foundation of American (and global) nuclear policy is the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Introduced in 1968, the NPT is the world's broadest treaty on nuclear activities. Ratified by all but four countries, it prohibits the possession of nuclear weapons by any but original the original declared nuclear weapons states, and obligates these states to undertake efforts to reduce their arsenals, with the eventual goal of complete disarmament.

A review conference for the NPT is held every five years. American press coverage of the most recent conference, in May 2005, was far from extensive, but the *New York Times* did run a lead article on the meeting the day before it began. It noted that the American delegation would highlight issues of Iran and North Korea's non-compliance, and the loopholes that allow for the production of nuclear weapons via nuclear energy development, while essentially ignoring its own obligations under the treaty. "[President Bush]," it said, "is seeking agreement from a smaller club, called the Nuclear Suppliers Group....This approach is intended to work around the United Nations, and avoid subjecting the United States to a broad debate about whether it is in compliance with its own obligations under the treaty."

So, how well is Washington complying? Article VI of the NPT calls on all signatories "to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures" to end the arms race and to negotiate a treaty on total disarmament. Even a brief glance at US nuclear policy in the past few decades might lead some to question the extent of our "good faith" in this regard.

Signed by the United States and the Soviet Union in 1972, the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (ABM) allowed only two ABM sites for each country (reduced to one each two years later) and prohibited the development of sea, air, mobile-land, or space-based ABM systems. These missile defense systems are intended to protect against enemy missiles by intercepting them. The ABM treaty aimed to discourage the increased proliferation and deployment of nuclear weapons that could occur to overcome such defenses.

The United States' undermining of the ABM Treaty goes back to the Reagan administration and its Strategic Defense Initiative, popularly known as "Star Wars." It was an attempt to develop a spaced-based system that would use lasers to intercept missiles. After Ronald Reagan's election to a second term, a *Foreign Affairs* article by McGeorge Bundy, George F. Kennan, Robert McNamara and Gerard C. Smith—all key figures in Cold War and defense policy—said that the plan does not "respect reality," and that the idea that nuclear weapons, even only nuclear missiles, can be made "impotent and obsolete," as Reagan suggested is an "illusion." They pointed out that at contemporary levels of missile deployment, even a 95 percent success rate for SDI intercepts would still result in the "disintegration" of both the United States and Russia, and noted that none of Reagan's advisors ever claimed that any success rate approaching this was even possible. The officer in charge of SDI, Lieutenant General James Abrahamson, admitted that "a perfect defense is not a realistic thing."

Assuming potential adversaries actually react to things happening around them, it probably wouldn't have been much of a defense at all. Bundy and the others noted that "any prospect of a significantly improved American defense is absolutely certain to stimulate the most energetic Soviet efforts to ensure the continued ability of Soviet warheads to get through," improving our chances for "disintegration".

The end of the Cold War saw the beginning of vital cooperation between the United States and former Soviet republics in the securing of nuclear weapons and weapons usable material in the latter's territories, but it has done little to curb American ambitions to develop new nuclear weapons and ABM systems. The Strategic Defense Initiative was never implemented, but plans for missile defense were kept alive, with modifications, throughout the Clinton administration. At the end of 2001, the Pentagon submitted its latest Nuclear Posture Review to Congress. The report emphasized that the United States needs "greater flexibility...with respect to nuclear forces and planning" than it had during the Cold War, and foretold the development of technologies that would enable "US non-nuclear and nuclear capabilities to be coupled with active and passive defenses." Most notably, a "variety of flexible, pre-planned non-nuclear and nuclear options," including extensive deployment of missile defense systems, were noted as a goal of current planning.

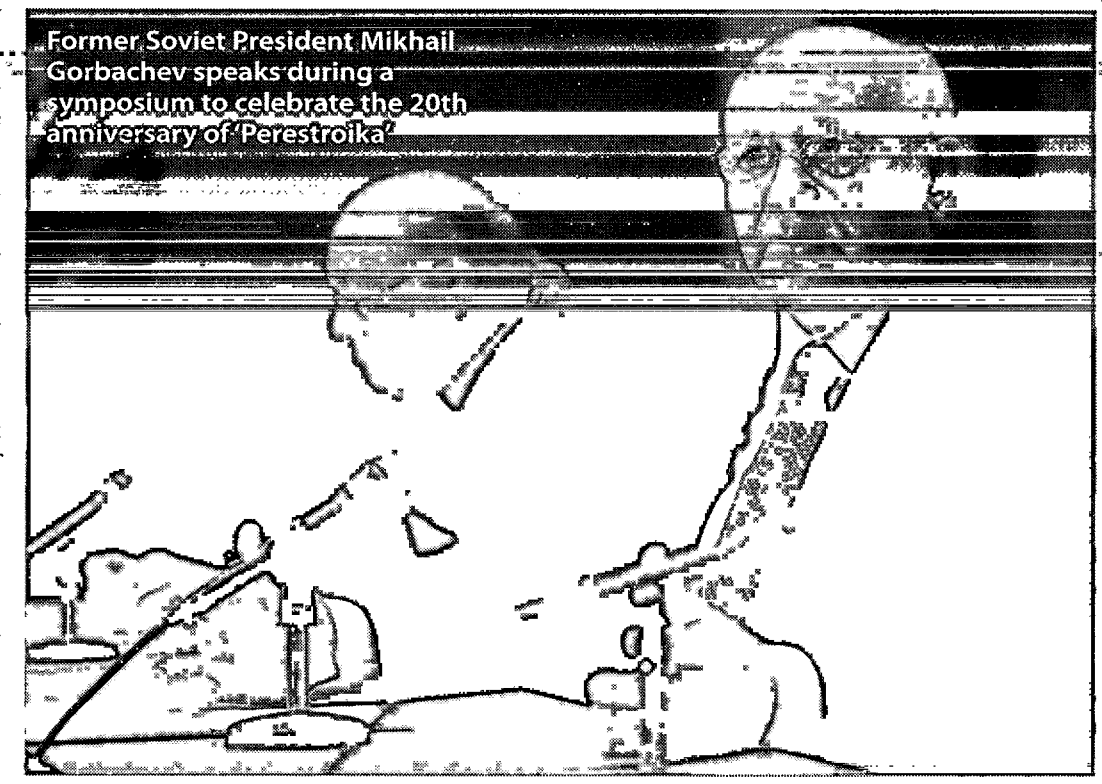
Around the same time, the United States withdrew from the ABM treaty, "following North Korea's example," as only the second state to withdraw from a postwar arms-control treaty, according to John Rheinlander, one of the American treaty negotiators. At an Arms Control Association conference held a year before the withdrawal, Rheinlander said that US rejection of the treaty would result in "a world without effective legal constraints" and deal "a fatal blow over the long term to the NPT regime." The Federation of American Scientists warned that the "framework of international law would disintegrate" if other countries were to follow the example we would set in withdrawing from the treaty. This argument was given almost immediate support by Russia's subsequent withdrawal from the START II arms reduction treaty, which would have further reduced the number of American and Russian deployed strategic weapons, and effectively limited the number of warheads on each missile to one by eliminating [illegible] try vehicles. The Russian parliament had recently ratified START II with the proviso that the United States continue to abide by the ABM treaty.

Willingness on the part of states to withdraw from these treaty obligations renew concerns about nuclear proliferation. In particular, proliferation increases the chances of an accidental launch of a nuclear-armed missile, a deliberate nuclear attack by a state, or the use of a nuclear weapon in a terrorist attack. All of these situations could presumably lead to a wide-ranging nuclear exchange. And there is growing agreement that each of these risks is exacerbated by the United States' current nuclear posture.

The possibility of an accidental nuclear launch is not as absurd as it may sound, especially when one considers the complexity and age of the technologies involved, and the "high-alert" status of the US and Russian arsenals—one which allows for deciding how to respond to a perceived attack after as little as twenty minutes of deliberation.

A 1998 article in the *New England Journal of Medicine* entitled "Accidental Nuclear War–A Post Cold-War Assessment," co-authored by several nuclear security experts, notes that a number of authorities consider a launch based on a false warning to be the most likely form of an accidental attack. They are quick to point out that "this danger is not theoretical," and mention two breakdowns in the US system in 1979 and 1980, caused by human error and computer-chip failures, which indicated that a massive Soviet strike was imminent. They also note a 1995 incident in which a US scientific research rocket launched from Norway activated Russian "nuclear suitcases," leading to an emergency conference which decided that there was, in fact, no threat of an attack, supposedly just four minutes before standard procedure would have mandated a decision.

Since this incident, Russia's early-warning systems have become even less [illegible] the number of early-warning satellites has been reduced from nine to three. Because Russia's deployed arsenal is especially vulnerable to surprise attack, with much of it in poorly-defended silos, mobile units, and docked submarines, it has a greater incentive to respond to perceived threats quickly.



Former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev speaks during a symposium to celebrate the 20th anniversary of 'Perestroika'

A recent report by the Federation of American Scientists says that "the next time Russia interprets a benign event as a potential nuclear attack, it is not clear that it will have enough information to decide that it can afford to wait."

Unfortunately, American policy leading up to and continuing after Washington's withdrawal from the ABM

Richard Nixon and Leonid Brezhnev at the signing of the SALT accords in 1972

Treaty is creating a situation in which Russia will become more reliant on this questionable and deteriorating early-warning system. In January 2000 negotiations, the United States tried to push for Russian acceptance of an American missile defense system—which was supposed to defend against missiles from antagonists such as Iran—by assuring them that Russia would not be threatened as long as it maintained its high-alert posture and its extensive deployment of weapons. In an article on the negotiations, the *New York Times* quoted John D. Steinbruner, a nuclear expert at the University of Maryland, as calling the Clinton administration's position "pretty bizarre," since "we know their warning system is full of holes." The article also noted that "experts agree that Russia's network of early warning radars, satellites and computers is decaying and increasingly prone to false alerts," and quoted MIT physicist Lisbeth Gronlund as saying that the United States is paying the price of "the continued threat of Russian unauthorized, accidental and erroneous launches" for "what she characterized as an unworkable antimissile dream."

Gronlund's characterization of missile defense as a dream isn't necessarily accurate. It depends on what your goals are. A 1999 analysis of missile defense by the RAND Corporation says that the "reason the general problem [of creating a ballistic missile defense system] is worth solving is not that some rogue would launch an unprovoked, and patently suicidal, nuclear or biological attack on US territory," a situation it calls "far-fetched." Rather, the report concludes, missile defense is for situations in which "in the face of utter defeat by US conventional forces, an enemy regime could threaten such an attack in order to deter the United States—and conceivably carry out the threat if the United States were not deterred." This latter "coercion" scenario is not far-fetched, according to RAND, which describes ballistic missile defense as not simply a shield but an "*enabler* of US action."

Crucially, RAND notes that the United States would probably not normally be deterred from acting abroad to protect vital American interests, so that missile defense would be especially useful in situations where we are acting to defend "less-than-vital interests." So, according to one of the nation's premier defense think tanks, a primary purpose of national missile defense, which it endorses, is to protect the United States from itself when a country's nuclear weapons are insufficient to deter us from attacking it to protect less-than-vital American interests.

This assessment is not controversial, and becomes increasingly relevant when one considers the burgeoning dominance of American nuclear power. In *Foreign Affairs*, Keir A. Lieber and Daryl G. Press claim that the era of mutually-assured destruction, the Cold War paradigm, is coming to an end, and that "it will probably soon be possible for the United States to destroy the long-range nuclear arsenals of Russia or China with a first strike." Their article details improvements to American nuclear forces since the end of the Cold War, such as the deployment of highly-accurate Trident II D-5 missiles on submarines, the equipping of nuclear-armed cruise missiles on B-52 bombers that are probably invisible to Chinese and Russian radar, the upgrades to the B-2 bomber that render it invisible to radar, and the placement of higher-yield warheads on Minuteman ICBMs. They also catalogue the waning effectiveness of Russian and Chinese nuclear capabilities, especially Russia's warning system, which they call a "mess." According to them, Russia would have no warning of a US nuclear attack from submarines in the Pacific, and only a few minutes' notice if the attack were to come from certain parts of the North Atlantic.

The United States deliberately seeks "nuclear primacy," they say, and not for deterring terrorists or rogue states. Such an explanation "does not add up," in light of the fact that the Pentagon is upgrading the warheads used in most submarine missiles to attack hard targets such as bunkers or ICBM silos. The United States already has over a thousand weapons that could attack bunkers or caves where terrorist weapons might be stored; therefore, additional upgrades are probably being made to allow the United States to take out a very large number of hard targets. "The current and future US nuclear force," they say, "seems designed to carry out a preemptive disarming strike against Russia or China."

Missile defense is part of this quest for primacy. Lieber and Press agree with critics of missile defense that say it would fail to defend against a major nuclear attack, but point out that it "would be valuable primarily in an offensive context, not a defensive one—as an adjunct to a American first-strike capability, not as a standalone shield." The United States would be able to decapitate a nuclear power's arsenal in a first-strike, and then withstand the relatively small retaliation by means of its ABM systems.

Given this, one does not need to be too empathetic to understand Russian apprehension at the latest American plans for an ABM radar installation in the Czech Republic and missile interceptors in Poland. Nevertheless, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice dismissed Russian fears, saying "the idea that somehow ten interceptors and a few radars in Eastern Europe are going to threaten the Soviet [sic] strategic deterrent is purely ludicrous and everybody knows it."

Apparently not. Last summer, MIT physics professor Ted Postol and Brookings Institution fellow and former American diplomat James Goodby argued in the *International Herald Tribune* that Russian President Vladimir Putin's alternative proposal to allow the United States to share an early warning radar with Russia in Azerbaijan made "very good sense," as it would allow the two countries to combine their complementary tracking systems while easing Russian trepidation. As for the American proposal, they note that the system would enable the United States to track virtually every ICBM Russia launches at our eastern shores, and that the system can be upgraded over time with no external modifications—the radars can easily serve as forward lookouts for the soon-to-be-upgraded Theater High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) interceptor system, eliminating the need for the THAAD system to rely on American-based radars that would have difficulty effectively scanning large portions of the sky for Russian missiles by themselves. The consequence of this would be "that 1,000 or more THAAD interceptors could be, in principle, eventually used as part of a US national missile defense system aimed at Russia."

In a presentation to the American Association for the Advancement of Science last summer, Postol drew attention to National Presidential Security Directive 23 (NPSD-23), which says that the missile defenses it had planned for 2004 "will serve as a starting point for fielding improved and expanded missile defense capabilities later." This, he says, sends a signal to the Russians that the current plans are only the leading edge of a potentially "unbounded" expansion of the missile defense system. The creeping of NATO membership along the country's borders probably isn't seen as coincidental.

Russia's opposition to these plans has lead to its decision to suspend its participation in the European Conventional Armed Forces Treaty, and the issue remains a sticking point in relations between Moscow and Washington. *Even if an understanding is reached, it is likely to be one that involves maintaining* the Russian arsenal's high-alert status.

This posture is untenable. A figure no less prominent than former Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara called current US nuclear weapons policy "immoral, illegal, militarily unnecessary, and dreadfully dangerous."In his 2005 *Foreign Affairs* article, "Apocalypse Soon," McNamara noted that there is an "unacceptably high" risk of inadvertent nuclear war.

McNamara is hardly a dove. Indeed, he confirms the necessity of a large nuclear arsenal capable of withstanding an initial attack and inflicting unacceptable damage to the attacker for as long as nuclear-armed potential adversaries exist. But there is a difference between such a deterrent and the threat posed by a first-strike capability. This is why McNamara says that our commitment to ensure that nukes remain a vital part of the projection of our military power "is simultaneously eroding the international norms that have limited the spread of nuclear weapons and fissile materials for fifty years."

He notes that a large portion of US nuclear policy has remained unchanged since even before his tenure. Importantly, the United States has never had a "no first-use" policy. McNamara says "we have been and remain prepared to initiate the use of nuclear weapons by the decision of one person, the president against either a nuclear or non-nuclear enemy whenever we believe it is in our interest to do so," and gives a chilling reminder that launching a "nuclear holocaust" would only take

twenty minutes of deliberation by the president and his advisors.

McNamara's objections are currently relevant to the counter-proliferation efforts that are a big part of the Bush administration's rhetoric, if not actual practice. Ashton Carter, a former Assistant Secretary of Defense and Co-Director of Harvard and Stanford's Preventative Defense project, is critical of the short shrift given to counter-proliferation programs at the Pentagon while missile defense gets $10 billion annually. He warns that a "growing reliance by Washington on nuclear weapons for its security would complicate its efforts to marshal international cooperation against WMD terrorism and overhaul nuclear arms control regimes," and singles out the aforementioned earth-penetrating warheads in development as "ill-advised." Instead, he advocates for the expansion of non-nuclear capabilities so that nuclear weapons "play an enduring but background role as a deterrent of last resort."

Defense analyst Graham Allison of Harvard's Kennedy School advocates a variety of measures to revive the global non-proliferation regime, such as establishing a secured global fuel supply for nations to peacefully pursue nuclear power; and the creation of a standardized system of secure controls for nuclear material. These are among the most important steps that could be undertaken in the name of global security.

But as long as American nuclear policy is one of escalation, we should not be surprised if cooperation on this front is lagging. Allison notes that at the 2005 NPT review conference, the United States renounced disarmament commitments made at the previous review in 2000, and forbid the very word "disarmament" from appearing in conference documents. This lead to the refusal of non-nuclear states to cooperate on the issue of loopholes in the NPT that allowed North Korea and Iran to develop nuclear weapons programs.

Just as dangerous as the lack of cooperation is the antagonism US policies can generate. The long-term picture is difficult to assess, but growing fears among a number of experts and former policy makers should not be taken lightly. This anxiety extends across the political spectrum. In January, Henry Kissinger and other former Washington officials wrote an op-ed in the *Wall Street Journal* decrying the "increasingly hazardous reliance" on nuclear weapons, and warning that we cannot replicate our Cold War policies vis-à-vis the Soviet Union with a growing number of nuclear weapons states without "dramatically increasing the risk that nuclear weapons will be used."

Kissinger and the others noted that the world has become skeptical of the commitment of the nuclear weapons states to the NPT, and recommended the ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, which would prohibit the testing that would be important to the development of nuclear weapons by non-weapons states (Washington does not intend to ratify the treaty, because it doesn't want to rule out the possibility of testing new weapons)..

The problem of nuclear proliferation may have only gotten worse since the end of the Cold War, yet US nuclear policy is hardly a staple of popular discussion. According to the Pew Research Center, roughly 45 percent of Americans viewed nuclear weapons as a great threat to the world as of last summer, but it's doubtful that many have read things like the matter-of-fact claims in the country's most prestigious foreign affairs journal that the United States aims to dominate the international order through a nuclear first-strike capability.

The rest of the world might not be so surprised. The invasion of Iraq was likely seen as a preview of the American actions for which missile defense might serve as an "enabler." John Lewis Gaddis, professor of military history at Yale, pointed out the obvious: "the invasion of Iraq appears to have convinced leaders in those countries that they must have a nuclear capability of their own. Far from deterring them, the United States may have pushed them into finding ways to deter it." Noted Israeli historian Martin van Creveld was more to the point: "Had the Iranians not tried to build nuclear weapons [in the aftermath of the Iraq invasion]", he said, "they would be crazy." The fact that the United States gives enormous military aid to two of the four nuclear weapons states that are non-signatories to the NPT—Israel and Pakistan—and intends to cooperate on the development of nuclear technology with a third—India—cannot be lost on Iran.

The National Intelligence Estimate on Iran completed last year said that the country's "decisions are guided by a cost-benefit approach rather than a rush to a weapon irrespective of the political, economic and military costs." It might be time to consider how our policies factor into this cost-benefit analysis.

Another predictable consequence of invading Iraq was confirmed by the American intelligence community, which concluded that the invasion increased the overall threat of terrorism since the September 11th attacks and lead to a diffusion of fundamentalist ideologies around the globe, which is especially alarming given that terrorist groups are widely believed to be the most likely perpetrators of a future nuclear attack. The virtual consensus of security and defense experts is that a nuclear terrorist attack is among the gravest threats to international security, especially given the wealth of poorly secured nuclear material scattered around the world. Former Secretary of Defense William J. Perry said in a 2004 National Academy of Sciences meeting that he had "never been more fearful of a nuclear detonation than now.... There is a greater than 50 percent probability of a nuclear strike on US targets within a decade," and Robert McNamara publically admitted to sharing these fears.

We should not be surprised by repeats of the Iranian and North Korean confrontations, and attacks that may dwarf those of September 11th, if we maintain our current course. Some of steps towards altering it are obvious enough: reviving the ABM treaty; curbing the development of new nuclear weapons; reducing our arsenal, paying special attention to weapons that encourage counter-proliferation, such as earth-penetrating warheads; and reducing the alert status of deployed nuclear weapons to increase warning times—the vital measures that need to be taken to ensure the security of all nuclear weapons and weapons-usable material around the world require international cooperation that could only be bolstered by such changes in our posture.

The probability of a nuclear attack at any point in time may be low, but the consequences of such an event make it among the most serious threats facing the world. Ⓐ

adjuncting

Budget cuts. Tuition hikes. Job insecurity.

RENEE MCGARRY AND JESSE GOLDSTEIN

We heard it officially this week. The nation has been in a recession since 2007, and we've all witnessed CUNY feeling the pinch. Undoubtedly, there are times when we, as both students and adjuncts, feel powerless, and probably times when we feel scared and alarmed. Do we have to? And what can we do to feel more empowered?

Of course we can (and should) attend protests and rallies. We can (and should) call the governor, the chancellor, our legislators, and our moms. But we often don't feel the immediate impact of these actions. We all know that change takes time and effort, yet we can feel disheartened when our hard work seems unseen, ignored, unnoticed. Rallies and protests and phone calls are important, but they are singular actions that can leave us with post-event let down.

We need to stay active in this fight in our everyday lives.

Our suggestion? Let's each and every one of us take it to our classrooms. In my classroom, I spend day after day with students, never once hearing their stories, and certainly never telling them mine. I always have an excuse: I'm an art historian—how do politics fit into my class? It's just not my style. There are 90 students in that room! It will be chaos.

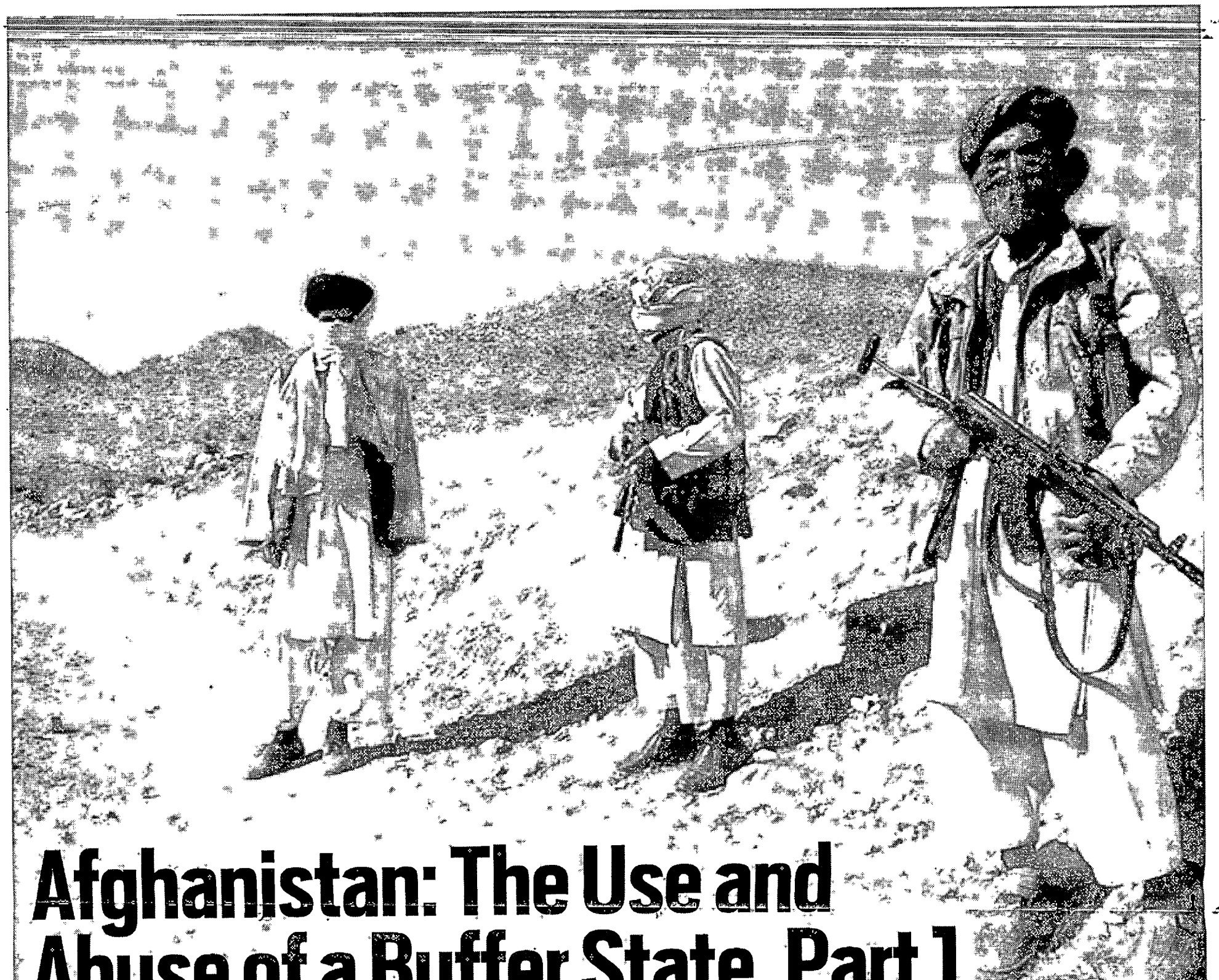
But then I wonder, what if, for just fifteen minutes, we talked about how a tuition hike would impact that girl who sits in the middle of the front row and has never missed a class? How would a long-term adjunct losing his job impact that kid who sits in the back and needs a letter of recommendation for graduate school? How many of my students would have to rearrange their schedules if yet another MTA hike went through? If my rent goes up, how many more jobs will I have to take on and how much less attention will my students get?

If, like me, you're not always comfortable engaging on this level with your students, think about how you can work these issues into your syllabus. Relax in your department lounge for awhile and ask other members of your department how they would approach topics that are outside of your usual range. Is there a way to work the history of CUNY activism into your class? Or the current city, state, and national economic crises? It may seem impractical at first, but once you start brainstorming with your colleagues, you'd be surprised what you can come up with.

Along those lines, the Adjunct Project is happy to announce that the week of March 30th through April 3rd will be CUNY Equity Week, an opportunity to extend and expand this process during the Spring Semester. For all or a portion of a class during this week, we are asking that both adjuncts and full-time faculty make a coordinated effort to incorporate information on adjunct teaching conditions into class lessons. You may have a class discussion, a persuasive letter exercise, a statistical analysis of adjunct and full-time wages for the same workload, or an extra-credit assignment to find a link between course materials and adjunct labor.

Additionally, this year we are providing access to materials that will help you and your students map the CUNY system. You can use our materials, and you can be as creative as you want to be. Start the conversation in your classrooms and your departments. Think about CUNY and where it is and where you want it to be. We'll also offer organized brainstorming sessions to help you determine how to best make CUNY Equity Week for you. If you're interested in working on discipline-specific projects, or anything involving the upcoming week, please contact us at theadjunctproject@gmail.com.

Another way we can become better teachers and students is to recognize the impact that juggling so many roles and responsibilities has on our lives and our health. With that in mind, the Adjunct Project is will host a series of wellness workshops over the spring semester. In these, there is the potential to take away a toolkit of exercises, nutritional advice, and coping strategies that will keep you safe and sane as you continue your career in school and beyond. Ⓐ



Afghanistan: The Use and Abuse of a Buffer State, Part 1

CHRISTIAN PARENTI

Note: This is the first part of a two-part article. The second half will appear in the February 2009 issue of the GC Advocate.

I

I will begin with a story that I hope casts some light on why and how the US occupation of Afghanistan is failing.

I was with my friend and interpreter Ajmal Nakshbandi. We were on the Shomali Plain just north of Kabul, near Bagram airbase, interviewing a former mujahideen commander who had served with the legendary Ahmed Shah Masud. The old commander was now part of an underground paramilitary network of veteran Tajik mujahideen who were organizing for what they saw as the coming ethnic civil war of all against all others.

What hit me was his description of the foreign troops in his area. He called them Americans. But I had recently been embedded with Americans just to the north. I learned from them that this part of the valley was not under American watch. I asked the old commander if he was sure the troops were American or if they might be from another country. This is easy to discern, because each NATO force has different flags and insignia, and many have distinctively different vehicles. I was interested in where the troops were from, because there is much debate about the different tactics of each NATO force. The Americans are known to be aggressive; others, like the Dutch and British, are seen as more sophisticated with subtler, softer, more effective tactics; still others, like the Italians and Germans, seem to have no tactics at all, and just stay out of the way of the otherwise irritable, often violent locals. These subtle differences loom large in the imagination of internationals working in Afghanistan; from the NGO offices and cocktail parties of Kabul it can appear that the whole conflict hinges on tactics.

Annoyed at my question the old commander answered: "We see their vehicles driving around and we don't know who they are. We just know they are foreign."

I left the interview recalling Louis Dupree's concept of "the mud curtain." For decades Dupree was the leading area studies specialist on Afghanistan; by the "mud curtain" he referred to Afghanistan's deep cultural divide between urban and rural society. The Afghan landscape, worked by the human hands, is hemmed in by the adobe walls that surround orchards and animal pens and form the defensive enclosures of family compounds, or Qalas. The "mud curtain" invokes these walls, the barrier between the enclosed families and everyone else on the other side. The idea aptly invokes the landscape created by the Afghan interpretation of purdah—the Muslim injunction to protect and shield women. The mud curtain is the built environment's equivalent of the burqa. The old commander's comments invoked the fact that from the other side of the mud curtain, the rural side, this foreign military occupation looks quite a lot like the last one. In other words, for the tribesmen who support the Taliban, and supported the mujahideen in times past, the US-led NATO occupation looks quite similar to the Soviet occupation.

Last time, the foreigners who drove around in armored vehicles called their project socialism and talked about economic rights. This time, the foreigners in armored vehicles call it democracy and talk about human rights. But from the other side of the mud curtain it all looks the same: some promise of material benefits like roads and schools and clinics, but attached to that are the foreign troops in armored vehicles, searching homes, entering the women's quarters, taking prisoners, and urging the local landlord class who grow opium and tax the tenant farmers to change their ways.

And—quite offensive to old patriarchs like the commander—the foreigners and their allies in Kabul demand that girls and boys go to school together and encourage women to work outside the home, often alongside men to whom they are not related, their faces exposed! In general, the foreigners are seen as arrogant and scolding; demeaning "the culture" and "the religion." In short, this occupation looks like cultural revolution from above, backed up by alien firepower. And that's what the last occupation looked like. In both cases, the cultural mores of the deeply conservative, religious Afghan countryside were assaulted head on. The reaction then, as now, was widespread and bloody resistance.

Because rural Afghans, particularly the Pashtuns of the south, see their local tribal culture as largely synonymous with their religion, Islam, an assault on one is an assault on the other. And so, their local war lends itself to larger uses as one of many jihads, and thus as part of the Global War on Terror. Olivier Roy noted this political concatenation in his book, *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan.*

II

Why did the United States invade Afghanistan? One answer is: to defend itself, or maybe just to avenge the attacks of 9/11. But this, perhaps legitimate, *casus belli* begins to lose some of its integrity upon closer examination.

First of all, the terrorism of 9/11 was a classic case of "blow back." The rise of al Qaeda and its later entrenchment in the Taliban's "Emirate of Afghanistan" were the direct, if unintended, products of US covert operations. During the 1980s the United States and Saudi Arabia funneled about $8 billion through the Pakistani Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) to the seven main Afghan mujahideen parties fighting the Russians and Afghan communist government. Without this flow of US and Saudi money, coupled with on-the-ground Pakistani support, the war against the Soviets would have never been as bloody.

As part of this jihad pipeline of money arms and volunteers, the young Osama Bin Laden came to Afghanistan and set up his network of so-called "Arab Afghans," which became *al Qaeda*. Then, after almost a decade of funding terrorism in Afghanistan, the United States walked away, and the victorious mujahideen set upon each other in a horrific civil war that destroyed half of Kabul. From that chaos emerged the Taliban. At first they were a Robin Hood-like militia, which despite many faults imposed a form of law and order on an otherwise viciously lawless land. By the late 1990s the Taliban controlled most of Afghanistan and gave sanctuary to Bin Laden, who had recently been chased from Sudan. In response to US troops stationed in Mecca and Medina, Bin Laden destroyed the twin towers.

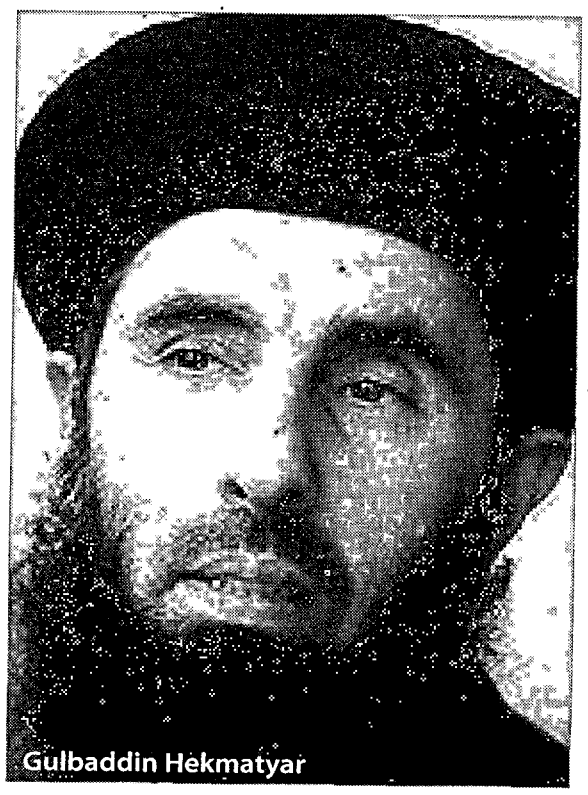
The United States also helped to arm and fund Islamist political parties that later became part of regional terrorist networks and are now killing American soldiers. Hezb-i-Islami, led by Gulbaddin Hekmatyar, is the best (or worst) example of this. During the anti-Soviet jihad of the 1980s, Hekmatyar was one of the US-Saudi-ISI pipeline's favorite commanders. Today this powerful Pashtun leader from eastern Afghanistan is now more or less allied with the resurgent Taliban. American aid to the mujahideen, which was then followed by withdrawal from the region, played a role in creating the context of crisis and social breakdown that allowed those Islamic guerilla movements to metastasize into the Taliban, *Hezb-i-Islami*, and *al Qaeda*. That's just a quick reminder of the deeper history of US involvement that was sometimes passive, sometimes active.

But there is a less attenuated, probably more pertinent critique of US failure in Afghanistan. If we look closely at how the Bush administration invaded, we learn much about why they invaded. Here are a few facts:

- In February 2001, at one of Bush's first cabinet meetings, "regime change" in Iraq was laid out as a goal.
- In the first days after the 9/11 attacks, Paul Wolfowitz, then under secretary of defense, suggested skipping an invasion of Afghanistan (from which *al Qaeda*launched its attacks) and going straight into Iraq. This proposal was seriously considered!
- Just after the fall of the Taliban, Bush pledged $4 billion in reconstruction aid. But in February 2003—one year into the Afghan occupation and a month before the Iraq invasion--in what was described as "a stunning oversight," Bush's proposed federal budget forgot to include money for Afghan reconstitution.

After that, President Hamid Karzai came to Washington pleading to congress "Don't forget us if Iraq happens." Congress hastily penciled in $295 million, which was only $5 million less than the Bush administration requested the year before for "the promotion of marriage and strong families." Only one year into the occupation, Afghanistan was already a distant memory or an annoying after thought. The fact that Wolfowitz actually suggested skipping Afghanistan reveals that country's place in American politics. The suggestion horrified people like Richard A. Clarke, the president's special advisor on counter terrorism, who reported the event in his 2004 memoir, *Against All Enemies*. Clarke also writes that the President demanded that he "go back over everything, everything. See if Saddam did this. . . . Just look. I want to know any shred."

In other words, Afghanistan is hostage to the administration's Iraq mania, but the fantasy of skipping Afghanistan was shelved because invading Iraq without first hitting Afghanistan would have strained credibility; it would have been politically untenable; it would have been to blatantly ignore the reality of Osama Bin Laden and *al Qaeda*. Without the "good war" in Afghanistan, "the coalition of the willing" would have been very small indeed.


Gulbaddin Hekmatyar

Why the Iraq obsession? Pick your preferred package of combined reasons. Some sought to create a model pro-US Arab state (that's not to be confused with creating a democracy). As we've seen from all the economic laws imposed by the occupation, the United States sought to create a radically free-market client state: a client state that would check the regional power of Iran. Transforming Iraq would wipe out the heart of Arab nationalism and improve Israel's long-term position. Some believed all of this would transform the whole Middle East. And, crucially, the administration, populated by oilmen, sought to establish US control over the world's main sources of oil. In the best case, they would control the oil industry; less optimally they would have broader participation in it. (The United States has pushed an oil law that would allow US petroleum firms full access to Iraqi oil, reaping potentially great power and profit, but Iraq's Shiite government has resisted it.) Geostrategically, if the Americanmilitary plays the role of Middle Eastern petroleum gendarmerie, Washington has leverage over the states in the European Union and in Asia that are most dependent on that oil.

Here's what Wolfowitz wrote in *The National Interest*, Spring 1994:

> The United States and the entire industrialized world have an enormous stake in the security of the Persian Gulf, not primarily in order to save a few dollars per gallon of gasoline but rather because a hostile regime in control of those resources could wreak untold damage on the world's economy. . . . Given this permanent stake in the security of the Persian Gulf, the Gulf War provided an opportunity to base security on a foundation of credible commitment by the United States and its coalition partners.

III

The Iraq war has many concomitant causes, propelled by distinct but mutually reinforcing economic and political interests. Among those interests are the following.

Private contractors, who are making out very well. Recall the Halliburton story. Cheney is the firm's president. He buys a company called Dresser Industries. Unfortunately for him, the new acquisition came with $4 billion in outstanding liabilities due to asbestos law suits. Without its government contracts, Halliburton, which is now profitable, would be in the red.

Weapons manufacturers. For 2007, the US military budget was $532.8 billion. Typically, the US military budget is designed to hide the pork. But a study of the previous year's budget, which was $445 billion, not including supplementals, found that this "war budget" wasn't actually driven by the needs of the Iraq and Afghan wars. The budget included $79 billion for high-tech weapons that have little to do with Iraqi an Afghan counterinsurgency. Another $69 billion went to research and development. This is essentially free money for Lockheed Martin and the other great aerospace and military firms. The spectacle of the war in Iraq, and the legitimacy lent to it by Afghanistan, means that few in the political class question the military budget. In this analysis, US soldiers in the field appear as hostages.

Oil firms. The oil majors do not control Iraq's oil and the Iraqi oil sector is in deep crisis, but companies like ExxonMobil have been, up until recently, doing fine due to high prices, a condition resulting to some extent from the crisis of the war. For three years running, ExxonMobil has cleared record profits; $39 billion in 2006, $36 billion in 2005, and $25 billion in 2004.

Neo-conservatives. Hard right elements of the political class are attached to the two wars for reasons of grand strategy. The early success of the Afghanistan invasion served as a media spectacle with which Donald Rumsfeld sought to justify the larger project of "military transformation." The project of transformation is linked to the neoconservative project of reinvigorated American imperialism in the face of a rising China and India. Even before 9/11 there was much frenzied talk about the newest high-tech military methodologies of empire.

At the heart of the discussion was the question of replacing military labor—that is, soldiers and politically problematic US casualties—with technology, capital, or "dead labor." These efforts to re-make the US military into a totally invincible superforce are known among defense geeks and pentagon apparatchiks as the "Revolution in Military Affairs" or simply "Transformation." The reason to have an unbeatable military should be obvious: it seems to allow for continued world domination by the United States.

Rumsfeld's theory of light, fast warfare was part of this, and the invasion of Afghanistan was used to justify this theory of "war made easy and cheap." The easy Afghan victory was then used to sell the invasion of Iraq. But that theory of warfare meant very few troops in Afghanistan during the crucial honeymoon period when a new state was being established. During the first two years of the occupation there were only 9,000 US troops on the ground. The Pentagon's "tooth to tail" ratio being what it is, that meant there was rarely more that a battalion (800 to 900 US soldiers) actually in the field at any one time. Ultimately, the early occupation was more accurately "a big manhunt." (Recall that critics of the war had suggested that, instead of an invasion, an international police action—a manhunt for Osama—would have been acceptable.)

IV

So that is some of why they went in and why they went to Iraq. But how did they go in? The administration's underlying desire to take Iraq also had negative impacts on the political process in Afghanistan. The rush to Iraq translated into a rushed Afghan political process.

The 2001 Bonn Process called for meeting a series of "milestones" on the path to building a new Afghan state. Most notably there was the loya jirga, creation of a new constitution, the presidential elections, and the parliamentary elections. But all of these deadlines were rushed—some were suspiciously timed to anticipated US electoral cycles in ways convenient to the GOP. For example, the much publicized presidential election was in October 2004, just before the US presidential elections.

Rushing the political reconstruction process mis-

shaped the government of Afghanistan. The main problem was that the warlords of the Northern Alliance, many of the old mujahideen, were allowed to entrench themselves deep in the Afghan state. After using the Northern Alliance in the invasion, the United States had the opportunity to thank them for their services and dismiss them. A mystique surrounded US power in those early days; some have called it "the B-52 effect": the warlords had seen such a shocking and awesome spectacle of violence unleashed from the sky that they were, by all accounts, cowed and ready for instructions.

Instead of being sent home to be mere landlord thugs, the United States invited the warlords into the government; this deeply dismayed the many capable, often politically progressive, Afghan exiles who had returned to help rebuild their country. (There are even several prominent former communists in the parliament, as well as liberals and technocrats, all of whom really want stability and development.) Creating a warlord government, however, was the quickest way to create short-term stability; and "success" in Afghanistan was the quickest way to Iraq.

With warlords running the government, a number of subsequent problems followed: corruption and drug dealing became part of the state's activities and undermined development. Now, stunningly corrupt warlords—like Rashid Dostum, Abu Sayaff, and Mohammad Mohaqeq—bathe in the flow of drug lucre and aid money.

As a result, Afghanistan is totally dependent on foreign aid, opium poppy cultivation, and remittances sent home by the five million Afghans living abroad. Since late 2001 the international community has spent $8 billion dollars on emergency aid and reconstruction in Afghanistan. But corruption has absorbed much of that.

According to Jean Mazurelle, the World Bank director in Afghanistan, "the wastage of aid is sky-high: there is real looting going on, mainly by private enterprises. It is a scandal." He has estimated that 35–40 percent of Afghan aid is "badly spent."

Most of the incoming money is spent by donor nations, either through the United Nations, NGOs, or private firms; only about one-quarter of the money goes through the Afghan government. President Karzai has called for that amount to increase. But giving more money to the government of Afghanistan won't help. The state is a ramshackle collection of 32 redundant and almost totally dysfunctional ministries that operate as little more than patronage, employment, and shakedown schemes. Wages are low, but the number of people employed is enormous. The Ministry of Communications has almost as many employees as the BBC—a massive polyglot, global operation. A big state sector would be fine if it worked, but in Afghanistan nothing gets done. At the Afghan national airline, Aryana (known among its customers as Scareyana), the latest chief decided to pay many of his employees not to come to work. It was a desperate attempt to keep the unqualified riffraff away from the jets.

In some areas police are said to buy their jobs, not because they so covet the paltry $50 to $100 a month salaries they receive, but for the opportunity to "tax" business and traffic at the district level.

And what of the official anti-corruption campaign? Alas its leader, Afghanistan's chief anti-corruption officer, is Izzatullah Wasifi, who served nearly four years in a US prison for trying to sell $65,000 worth of heroin to an undercover agent in Las Vegas back in the 1980s. The Afghan government is so graft-ridden that there is actually inter-ministerial bribery. A friend of mine who worked at the Ministry of Women's Affairs told me that his office had to bribe the Ministry of Transportation to get license plates for their vehicles.

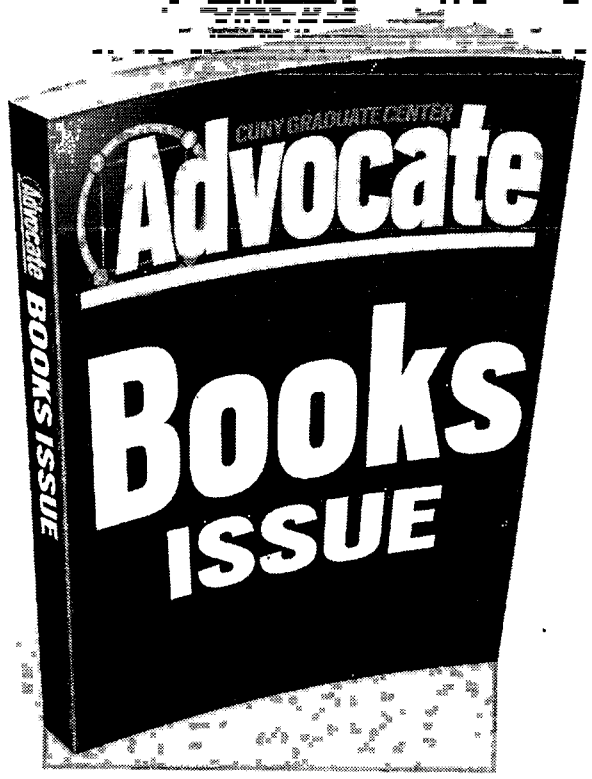
In other words, the Afghan state is totally dysfunctional. It is essentially a hollow vessel, in which patrimonial patronage networks use nominally public goods as private resources. In the worst cases, the shell of a state houses violent, corrupt organized crime networks.

What little reconstruction is underway is almost always done directly by NGOs or by private companies contracted directly by donor nations. Afghanistan's internal markets are so entirely dominated by Pakistan, Iran, and China that even two-thirds of all the wool used in weaving Afghan carpets is imported! War has decimated Afghan sheep herds that badly.

Stalled development leads to rising frustration, and this leads to continued instability and a growing insurgency. As for economic development, the Bush administration's commitment to a new Afghanistan was insufficient and marked by the same type of foot dragging and corruption that has defined contracting in Iraq. Instead of Halliburton and Bechtel, in Afghanistan we have Louis Berger as the lead firm, getting the poorly monitored sweetheart projects and being accused of shoddy work. The chairman of Louis Berger, Derish M. Wolff, has close GOP ties and was appointed to the State Department's industry advisory panel in December 2001.

To summarize: the administration rushed to Iraq, using Afghanistan as a trampoline, or as a type of "buffer story." To make Afghanistan look like a success the political process was badly rushed. This allowed the warlord class to capture the state and then ransom the national economy and political situation. Thus Afghanistan once again plays a version of its traditional role as a buffer state. Recall that in the Great Game of the past, it was the place where Russia faced off against Britain; then it was where the United States faced off with the USSR. By the 1980s the socialist East and capitalist West clashed in Afghanistan with arms, but earlier they had tangled there via a "soft power" conflict of competing aid flows.

Now Afghanistan is again a "buffer state" but in an ideological sense, rather than a geographic one. It is the seemingly "legitimate" defensive war that politically buffers the illegitimate, clearly illegal one in Iraq. Afghanistan provides the legitimizing narrative, the buffer story, rather than a buffer geography. Ⓐ



Bolaño's Inferno

TIM KRAUSE

▶ Roberto Bolaño and Natasha Wimmer. *2666*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008. 898 pages.

With the translation into English and publication of Roberto Bolaño's final work and masterpiece, the sprawling antinovel *2666*, Anglophone readers can now confirm his status as one of the last great twentieth-century authors, a writer on a par with Kafka, Borges, Pessoa, and Sebald. Like the others, Bolaño is a poet of elegant melancholic dread, of anxiety and despair finely tuned in a sonorous, introspective key. Bolaño is also one of literature's mad-obsessive stylists and experimenters, like Queneau and Perec and Cortázar, a concocter of secret histories like Calvino and Saramago (and, again, Borges), a chronicler of the horrors of twentieth-century Latin America like Fuentes and Vargas Llosa, but he surpasses all of these authors in the unsettling quality of his dark intimations, the omnipresent sense in his fiction of foreboding and doom, of ineluctable fate: our steady reading of his fractured, frightening texts mirrors the compulsions of his characters, all of whom press onwards in their dubious battles against the unknown, unable to break away. Everything in his texts, to use Bolaño's own words, appears to portend imminent "danger, the moment of revelation, unsolicited and afterward uncomprehended, the kind of revelation that flashes past and leaves us with only the certainty of a void, a void that very quickly escapes even the word that contains it." All is darkness and death, as dark as the slums of the Mexican city of Santa Teresa (real-life Cuidad Juarez) in which, like Faulkner's human voice speaking at the end of time, the mirthless laughter of the damned can be heard: "Some of these streets were completely dark, like black holes, and the laughter that came from who knows where was the only sign, the only beacon that kept residents and strangers from getting lost." Bolaño's works continually place the reader in such border states, confusing us, making us lose our way in his labyrinthine narratives, his tightly woven skein of stories: distillations of the uncanny, they linger in the mind long after reading, remembered like the shadowy, frightful contours of last night's dream—dreams are a frequent motif in Bolaño—but intimately familiar, like some half-forgotten traumatic memory. Unstable landscapes, cartographies of fear.

Mammoth and intricate, *2666* is made up of five parts that all focus on, to differing degrees, the novel's two main stories: the life and writings of the German writer Benno von Archimboldi, and the mass murders of hundreds of women—workers, young girls, wives, prostitutes—in Santa Teresa and the Sonora Desert. Each part takes up a strand of the two main narratives: the first, "The Part about the Critics" looks at four friends, scholars devoted to Archimboldi who hunt the reclusive author to Santa Teresa, where they believe he is hiding; the second, "The Part about Amalfitano," tells the story of a Spanish exile and one-time translator of Archimboldi, who leaves his native Barcelona for the backwater University of Santa Teresa; the third part, "The Part about Fate," narrates the attempts of Oscar Fate, an African-American journalist to write a magazine story about an aging Black Panther, only to be sent to cover a boxing match in Santa Teresa, where he meets Amalfitano's troubled daughter, Rosa, and encounters a few of her criminal friends, who may or may not be drug traffickers and murderers. The fourth and longest part, "The Part about the Crimes," details, body by body, the victims of the unsolved murders, providing—often in single, succinct paragraphs, each like some lost jewel rescued from the crime pages of an old newspaper—a snapshot of the victim's life, as well as the increasingly futile attempts by the police to identify the murderers and bring them to justice; the fifth and final part, "The Part about Archimboldi," brings the novel back to its beginning, telling the reclusive author's story in full, from youth to old age. The five parts of the novel do not so much directly connect as they overlap and echo each other: while characters from one part appear sometimes in the other parts, and while Archimboldi is an elusive presence throughout, the characters and situations keep recapitulating the novel's main themes—poverty and disease; crime, murder, and death; the isolation and nomadism of modern life; the existential terror behind all human existence, which seems to increase daily as we plummet into an uncertain future; obsession, particularly obsession with literature, language, signs, and meaning—while being quite unconnected in each others' lives. Even when characters are physically present together, Bolaño takes pains to highlight their separation from each other: the deepening tension and alienation felt by the critics of the first section, for example, who treat Amalfitano as a joke, and who himself barely registers his daughter Rosa's presence—and so on to the end, a chain of missed chances and halfhearted attempts at communication and connection.

The pleasures of *2666* are as vast as its size, and a quick sketch of the book's contents can barely suggest its richness. The part that has garnered by far the greatest attention is "The Part about the Crimes": justified, no doubt, as this central section of the book is certainly the novel's high-water mark in tone and execution, in which the steady accumulation of murders and bodies—told dispassionately, with a few touches of sardonic humor and ironic commentary, by an all-seeing omniscient narrator—creates an ever-increasing sense of onrushing doom, which the reader experiences vicariously, narcotically, as the pages are turned and the number of unclaimed, often anonymous, corpses keeps growing. The section (bound separately as a single volume in the three-volume paperback edition of the novel) functions both as realistic narrative, with all the trappings of a police procedural and the gritty naturalistic thriller, and as a metaphorical one, as the murders become a symbolic indictment of the excesses of the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries: unregulated capitalism, embodied both by Santa Teresa's *narcotrafficante* and criminal gangs and the *maquiladoras*, the giant piecework factories in which the poor men and women work assembling products for consumption in the United States; the endemic political corruption of Mexico and Latin America, fueled by the unregulated free market and huge sums of liquid cash; the poverty of the developing world and the rapid despoliation of the earth and its natural resources, seen crushingly in one of the novel's most potent symbols, the huge garbage dumps that ring the rapidly growing city, repositories of "the trash of the slum dwellers piled up along with the waste of the maquiladoras."

A hellishly liminal space, toxic and dangerous, but a

Archivo revista Paula

perfect vantage point to view Santa Teresa—and, with it, the onrushing crises of our new millennium—as police chief Pedro Negrete discovers when investigating the murders:

"Among the volcanic rocks were supermarket bags full of trash. [Negrete] remembered that his son . . . had once told him that plastic bags took hundreds, maybe thousands of years to disintegrate. Not these, he thought, noting the rapid pace of decomposition here. At the top some children went running and vanished down the hill, toward Colonia Estrella. It began to get dark. To the west he saw houses with zinc and cardboard roofs, the streets winding through an anarchic sprawl. To the east he saw the highway that led to the mountains and the desert, the lights of the trucks, the first stars, real stars, stars that crept in with the night from the far side of the mountains. To the north he didn't see anything, just a vast monotonous plain, as if life ended beyond Santa Teresa, despite what he hoped and believed."

In these and other passages Bolaño takes us to the antipodes of human experience, the depths of the slums and the beauties of the star-filled night, encircled by the looming nothingness without, the "vast monotonous plain" of nonexistence. Thus Bolaño establishes himself as a true seer of our postmodern condition, for a time of crumbling nation-states, burgeoning lawlessness and armed strife, and environmental catastrophe—a time cursed, among other curses, with a plastic garbage "island" (a monstrous agglomeration of trash) floating in the Pacific roughly north of Hawaii and stretching east to Alaska, unforeseen by Bolaño but a chilling real-world analogue to his vision of the future as a poisoned landscape, as a world of fear and violence, loneliness and death.

But focusing too much on this section, magisterial as it is, would be to ignore the other wonders of *2666*, not least its humor, which, like elsewhere in Bolaño's canon, springs forth from fissures in the hellish landscape. Bolaño is heir to the genres of Menippean satire and the picaresque, a practitioner of what Vladimir Nabokov disparaged in his acid-penned *Lectures on Don Quixote* as "Spanish fun": a style riotous and carnivalesque; predicated on the body, its pleasures and pains, and frank (and often obscene) in its depiction of bodily functions such as eating, sex, and the elimination of waste; stylistically heterogeneous and formally innovative; and tonally and ideologically anarchic, critical of both power and the powerless, of both the status quo and of attempts to remedy it. Drawing on the copiousness of Cervantes and Rabelais, Bolaño's work refuses to answer to any one critical label, and the incessant digressions of *2666* lighten the mood somewhat, rescuing it from the overpowering grimness of the murders. "The Part about Archimboldi," in particular, despite its detour through Hitler's Operation Barbarossa and the horrors of the Eastern Front, maintains a clarity and lightness of tone throughout, never once straying into the bathetic hash other writers have recently made of such well-worn material. "The Part about Archimboldi" is a short novel unto itself, at times reminiscent of Thomas Bernhard or Peter Handke, and a sort of victory lap for Bolaño and for the book *2666* itself: a last victorious raid on the European novel and its generic conventions, both a straightfaced parodic imitation and triumphant apotheosis.

Indeed, one of the most satisfying things about *2666* is this totality, its sense of overwhelming scale combined with meticulous detail; satisfying, too, is the book's totality when viewed against Bolaño's other works, its role as summation and capstone to a distinguished writing career. From the elegant and darkly suggestive short stories of the splendid collection *Last Evenings on Earth* (a kind of omnibus drawing from two volumes of Bolaño's stories), to the fugal monologues of *Amulet* and *By Night in Chile* (told, respectively, by the self-styled "Mother of Mexican poetry" and a Catholic priest collaborating with the Pinochet dictatorship), to last year's breakout success of the wide-ranging odyssey *The Savage Detectives* (Bolaño's other great epic novel), English readers have seen a kind of triumphant parade of books from the Chilean author, who died in 2003 of complications from liver failure: a near-Virgilian *rota* beginning with lyric works—Bolaño began his career as a poet, and a poet's sensibility toward the lyric, toward compaction and melody, informs even his longest works, mixing, often unstably, with Bolaño's opposing tendency toward longwindedness—and culminating in the great epic novels.

We must remind ourselves that this is an ephemeral trick of the Anglophone publishing world, and that Bolaño's reputation abroad has been assured for years: *2666* appeared in Spanish in 2004, and *The Savage Detectives* in 1998, a nine-year gap that should worry anyone largely confined to one language and the vagaries of its tastes and translation practices. As noted above, one of Bolaño's key motifs is literature and the disease of the literary: literature as compulsion, as drug, writing as lonely graphomania, reading as a hopeless attempt to compile the perfect bibliography, to read every last work, to understand it all. Bolañomania has wonderfully mirrored these themes, as legions of enraptured readers have breathlessly awaited the appearance of new English translations of Bolaño's work with the singlemindedness of his own entranced characters, like devotees of a religious sect waiting for the kingdom to break forth from a newly discovered bit of sacred text. Additional translations are forthcoming, but for now we may content ourselves with Bolaño's masterpiece: *2666* is a shocking, prophetic book, filled with revelations and wonderment, a terrific, unforgettable novel. Ⓐ

Social Justice and the Inner City School

SARAH OUTTERSON

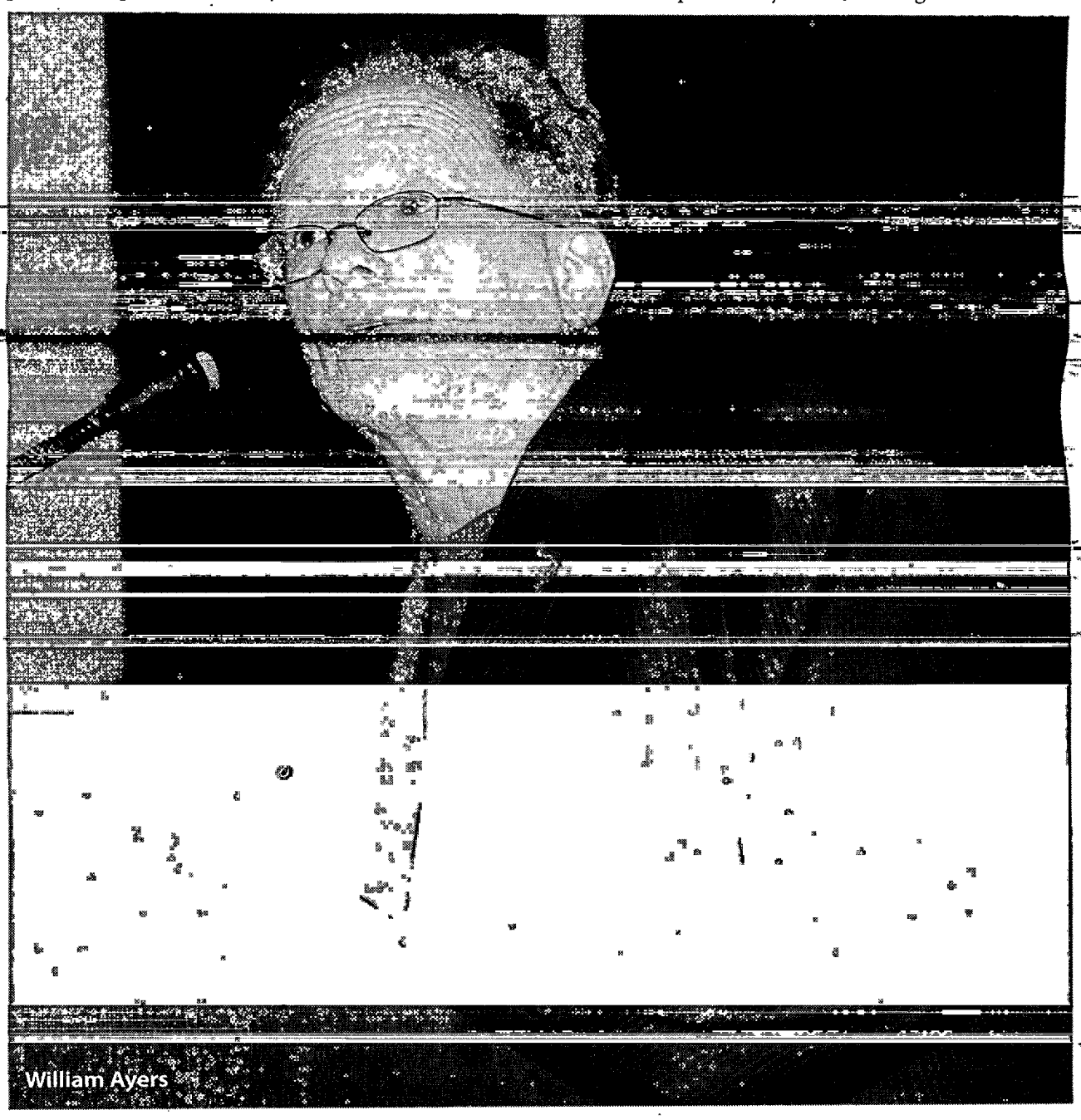
▶ William Ayers et al. *City Kids, City Schools: More Reports from the Front Row.* New York: New Press, 2008. 384 pages.

Before his radical history became fodder for conservative sound-bites in the presidential election, William Ayers was a writer on education reform and professor at the University of Illinois at Chicago. He and three other professors of education have just published a new collection of perspectives on the problems and possibilities of urban education, entitled *City Kids, City Schools: More Reports from the Front Row.* The editors, Gloria Ladson-Billings, Gregory Michie, Pedro Noguera, and Ayers, have compiled a wide range of writings—from policy analysis to poetry—into a focused vision of the connectedness between education issues and the economic, social, and moral structure of our society.

Reading this book while rabble-rousing attempts to discredit Barack Obama's candidacy by associating him with Ayers' radicalism are still fresh in one's mind is an amusing and disturbing experience. As a member of the Weather Underground, Bill Ayers bombed government facilities in protest against the Vietnam War in which "thousands of people were being killed every week," as he explained in a recent *New Yorker* interview. His memoir of his radical youth, "Fugitive Days," was released in the early days of September 2001, leading to a renewed condemnation of his activities, though none of the Weather Underground's attacks ever resulted in any deaths. Because of FBI misconduct in the investigation of the attacks, Ayers was convicted of no crimes. He continued his political activism in an academic form, eventually becoming a professor. Even before the Weather Underground, Ayers had been a radical educator at a Chicago "free school," set up on principles of self-directed learning and freedom. The very scholarliness and American-dream idealism of that activism, as revealed in this book, is illuminating when considering the brief episode of Ayers' appearance in the discourse about Obama's candidacy.

While coverage of Obama's connection to Ayers first appeared in February of this year, it was revived in October when Sarah Palin sought to condemn Obama for the lack of "truthfulness and judgment" shown in his "dishonest explanation" of his relationship with Ayers. Her concern ostensibly rested on the way that Obama called Ayers "just a guy who lives in my neighborhood," when in fact they had worked together on Chicago community boards and political events in Obama's early political career. However, the real emotional target for which Palin was aiming was not anger at Obama's dishonesty or cowardice, but rather fear at the idea of a president tolerating terrorism. The reiterated idea that Obama was "palling around with terrorists" reinforced the idea of foreign danger already associated with Obama as the product of a Kenyan father and an Indonesian childhood. Needless to say, the association didn't stick well enough to lose Obama the election.

Furthermore, while Ayers and the other editors of *City Kids, City Schools* have a clear progressive and activist agenda, their work is hardly militant or terrorist in outlook. Despite occasional detours into fiction and poetry, most of the essays are of the staidly footnoted education-policy persuasion, and they declare a firm commitment to—horrors!—community organizing and political involvement. Thus, as a specimen of Ayers' current political goals and methodology, the book reminds us how ridiculous the political pressure put on Obama to disassociate himself was. But let's pass over the personal demagoguery of politicians, inescapable but thankfully transitory, and return to the book itself, which presents a collection of meditations on the lasting issues surrounding urban education. The works included range in genre from journalistic anecdotes, to slam poetry, to research-based historical analysis, to fiction written in dialect, to theoretical essays arguing for critical pedagogy. Thus the title, *City Kids, City Schools*, serves more as a unifying thread than as a single topic for the book as it slowly broadens in scope from the personal experiences of city students to the effects of violence and immigration on urban education and society as a whole. Yet there is a perceptible clarity of theme even to this wide-ranging collection. The book presents education, and particularly urban education, as a battleground of social justice.



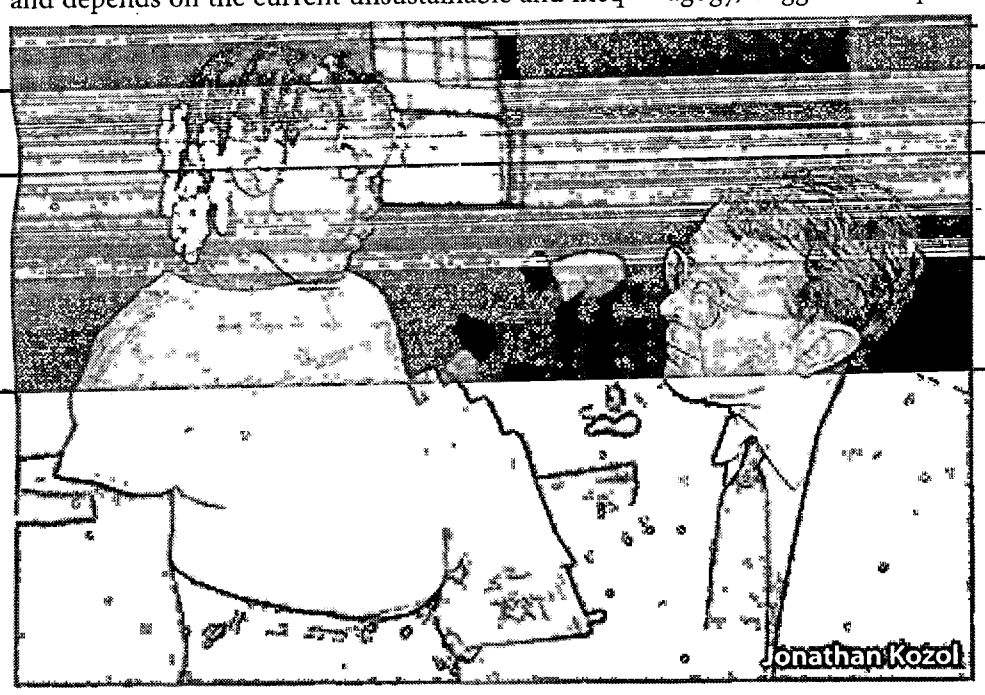
William Ayers

The book questions both the moral pessimism of the coded concept of the "urban" school—that is, as Ayers notes, violent, poor, overcrowded, decaying, hopeless—and the invisible segregation glossed over in the concept of "diverse" schools, most of which are, as Jonathan Kozol points out, populated solely by one or two demographics. The volume also addresses the varying effects of the cultural assimilation undergone by the children of immigrants, either contrasting the optimistic effort and cultural flexibility displayed by first generation immigrants, as Pedro Noguera does, with the pessimistic anger and futility felt by their descendants, or presenting the possibility of maintaining a bilingual identity despite assimilation, as in the chapter by Angela Valenzuela. The argument of the book is not limited to the specific problems of city students, but rather (as the editors write in their introduction) the book begins there because "cities are where the injustices and inequities of our society are brought into starkest relief." The project of the book is twofold: to remind us of these injustices and inequities, and to present the possibilities available for changing them, in schools, in cities, and beyond.

Yet the responsibility for this change does not rest entirely on teachers themselves. Many of the works in the book address the idea of the teacher as hero in order to question the assumptions and problematic power issues that concept suggests. The editors' general introduction to the book situates the cultural cliché for us by describing a MADtv sketch parodying the magical power of the hero teacher. Presented with an exaggeratedly menacing bunch of high school students, sharpening their knives on the barrels of their handguns, we are told in voiceover that "there's only one thing that can make these kids learn... a nice white lady!" Doubting colleagues and hardened students

are overcome with the simple invocation: "When it comes to teaching inner-city minorities, you don't need books and you don't need rules: All you need is a nice white lady." The editors argue that the dangerously stereotypical "resounding chorus of negatives" we hear about urban youth infects our concept of their capabilities and "scapegoats urban youth for larger failings in American society." Further, by suggesting that the "only chance of salvation" for these students lies with the "missionary teacher," we free ourselves from our complicity in the problems they face and from taking on responsibility for these problems ourselves.

This idea of cultural responsibility for social change, an essential tenet of critical pedagogy, is in the tradition of Paulo Freire, the Brazilian educator whose classic work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, argued that to overcome oppression, education and activism must both arise out of the needs and experiences of the people. *City Kids, City Schools* presents again and again the concept that improving education requires changing society too, while at the same time education can itself be a means of social change. The dual nature of this argument gives the book its apparent universality of audience. Grace Lee Boggs argues in her essay, "Education in Our Dying Cities," that "rethinking the purposes and methods of education in a post-industrial society" is the responsibility of everyone interested in living in "durable economies and healthy communities." The book presents its message as equally necessary for anyone who contributes to and depends on the current unsustainable and inequitable system as for the obvious audience of teachers or policy-makers. The goals of critical pedagogy should be the goals of all thinking citizens.


Jonathan Kozol

In this project, the format of the book exemplifies some of the very ideas that it is trying to teach. The book is structured into four sections, proceeding from "City Kids," to "City Teachers," to "City Classrooms, City Schools," to the final category, "City Issues: Beyond the School's Walls." Each, introduced by one of the four editors, contains a range of contributions in different styles and from different perspectives. The multivocal, multidirectional approach that the book takes is itself the critical, ethical method that the book suggests is necessary for multicultural education. Even in the midst of its most painful depictions of social problems in education, into which category much of the poetic and fictional work in the volume falls, the book extends a sense of responsibility and moral purpose beyond teachers alone. It asks us to acknowledge the ways in which we are all complicit in the misery of the poor; to force us to consider our ethical responsibilities; to ask us whether our society is formed for democracy; to ask why and not just how to do things; to shape our economic and technological systems around our universal human needs for meaningful work and community, not the other way around. The book implicitly presents itself as a pedagogical tool, meant not just for teachers, but for our entire society.

The specific vision here ostensibly focuses on K-12 education, the compulsory battleground that requires so much more daily persuasion and motivation than do college classes like the sections of Introductory Literature I teach, where at least students have in some sense "made it" and are choosing when and what to learn. Yet the way the book presents a vision of lifelong and communal learning (as in the essay on parents as writers, by Janise Hurtig) reinforces the idea of education as a space for students to consider their own experiences and actions as "disciplines" from which to spark learning. The goal of teachers and of educational structures in general then becomes to provide that kind of supportive space for success. Sue Books and Lisa Delpit discuss the particular effects of poverty on children, whose higher-order reasoning, self-reliance, and imaginative skills of poverty go unacknowledged or punished while the lower-order basic skills already absorbed by middle-class children place these invisibly privileged students ahead of the remedial track right from the start. Acknowledging the different cultural preparations of poor and middle-class children then becomes a way to fill in the gaps in the education of both, to the benefit of all.

Conversely, Gloria Ladson-Billing's essay "Yes, but how do we do it?: Practicing Culturally Relevant Pedagogy," suggests one specific way in which narrowness of social vision hurts us all. The essay describes the practices of teachers successful at "teaching for social justice." One of the problems Ladson-Billings identifies in producing this kind of teacher goes along with the idea of "hero teachers" of disadvantaged students critiqued in the introduction to the book. While teacher education has generally gotten the message that multicultural education is important, the typical program simply "ghettoizes issues of diversity." Information about social inequity and injustice is included in a separate course or workshop and not integrated into the pedagogy itself. The result is a mixed message provided to teachers "in ways that destabilize their sense of themselves and make them feel responsible for the condition of poor children of color in our schools."

This critique is devastating not only for its accuracy, but in the context of the book for the way in which it links the issues of the isolation and invisibility of poor students to the problematic isolation of responsibility to the heroic teacher. As Michael Eric Dyson reminds us in "Unnatural Disasters: Race and Poverty," his essay on the social conditions contributing to the effects of Hurricane Katrina, the point is not just to reveal injustices but to fulfill our social contract with each other, and to do so by responding to injustice systemically, radically, and collectively—not simply by appointing heroically empathetic saviors to take care of it for us.

How radical, exactly, is the vision of social responsibility presented by this book, then? The specter of Ayers' "radical" youth notwithstanding, the word "radical" resonates through the book. Indeed, we must go back to the "radix," or root, of our ethical concepts of purpose in education. *City Kids, City Schools* begins with a prologue containing James Baldwin's memorable 1963 speech, "A Talk to Teachers," which presents education as inherently and internally "revolutionary," a civil war within each person. Society is structured to attempt to create citizens that simply obey its rules, but "if a society succeeds in this, that society is about to perish." "Precisely at the point when you begin to develop a conscience," he says, "you must find yourself at war with your society." The book is resolutely committed to the concept of education as a site of social change, as Jean Anyon's final essay proclaims. Within that concept, there is also plenty of room for radical questioning of the exact form necessary for that education. Many of the works here imply the necessity of radical changes in educational structure and method.

For example, in his introduction, Ayers asks whether the authoritarian structure of our schools can possibly lead to the kind of democratic society we want to create. Boggs suggests that one of the results of an industrial educational system driving students into the dead end jobs of a post-industrial world is that dropping out becomes a worryingly rational and self-protective response. Luis Rodriguez addresses the destructive effect that "get-tough" legislation on immigration and drugs has on the tenuous but nurturing community structures that urban kids build for themselves. Noguera, Kozol, and Bakari Kitwana further explore how authoritarian systems of immigration control, education, and policing, respectively, act to suppress efforts at self-determination. Yet Ayers and Sapphire also present the power of education functioning within and in spite of destructively authoritarian systems. The ambivalent relationship between education and authority is reflected in the way Kozol and others admit that strict demands of students can be effective, or even necessary. Culturally-relevant pedagogy is all very well, but what about the necessity of learning despite student resistance? How to resolve the paradox? What can teachers do, and what should they do?

The result of the book's engagement with questions of authoritarian structure is a new and revised concept of the authoritative role of the teacher. Instead of regulating and controlling "violent," "uncontrolled" youth with military-style authoritarian structures, which is an efficient but ultimately inhuman method of education, authority can be deployed within an intimate and relational environment to "demand" success of students, Lisa Delpit writes, as when students ask teachers to "make me learn." In her essay "Lessons from Teachers," Delpit describes one teacher who symbolically named each of her students with her own last name on the first day of class, making them all her own children who were "going to learn more in one year than anyone ever learned in one year."

Thus, she seems to suggest, the paradox of authority in education can be resolved into a new model of student self-confidence and success based not in control, ideals of technical efficiency, demands, and punishment, but rather in mutual respect. The military authority structure can be replaced with familial authority and love. The analogy of the former model with, among other things, Stan Karp's discussion of the specific failings of the No Child Left Behind Act is unmistakable. *City Kids, City Schools* argues that the health of the community and the health of its educational system are irrevocably bound together. By attempting to remove the burden of "reforming the educational system" from teachers alone, and to destroy the twin stereotypes of violent youth and hero teacher, the theoretical project of this collection results in a decentralized and radicalized vision of communal education, in which all are potentially teacher-activists, particularly students themselves. Ⓐ

Supreme Right (and Wrong)

C. A. EVANS

▶ Martin Garbus. *The Next Twenty-Five Years: The New Supreme Court and What It Means for Americans.* New York: Seven Stories, 2007. 244 pages.

No one will accuse Martin Garbus of being a timid writer. His fiery new book, *The Next Twenty Five Years,* is a pull-no-punches indictment of the Bush administration, the Supreme Court, and conservative jurisprudence. For those already on his side, Garbus has written a crowd-pleasing exposé. Those presently unconvinced will be less interested in the rhetorical jabs and insider gossip and more interested in the book's argument. I suspect on this account they will find *The Next 25 Years* unsatisfactory.

The central contention of the book is that the Supreme Court is soon to begin (or has already begun) a dramatic conservative swing. Garbus oscillates in his descriptions of just how bad this swing will be, but even at his calmest he predicts significant retractions on abortion rights, progressive economics and affirmative action.

Garbus assumes that this swing will be a bad thing. For the purposes of finding common ground, I will grant that a return to the *Lochner* era of jurisprudence would be a disaster. Why is it that Garbus thinks the court is destined for calamity?

His argument has three basic steps:

1. The Bush administration is radically socially conservative;
2. Presidents appoint like-minded justices; and, therefore,
3. Justices Alito and Roberts are radically socially conservative.

This conclusion is striking and Garbus should be congratulated for an ambitious effort. Justice Alito is often thought of as a deeply conservative scholar, but Justice Roberts has been praised throughout the political spectrum (notably by liberal scholar Cass Sunstein of Harvard Law School) for his minimalism and moderation. So the issue is worth fighting over and it's worth granting Garbus enough common ground to consider his position.

How might a legal conservative who disagreed with Garbus object to this argument? He would likely criticize the argument as failing to establish anything substantive about Alito and Roberts' *jurisprudence*, while granting that the argument does accurately reflect their social values. Speaking for a jurist like Robert Bork: "It is true that Justice Roberts and Justice Alito have the personal political values of a radical conservative, but those political values are not the source of their jurisprudence. The judiciary and the legislature differ substantially in role. Justices Alito and Roberts make their decisions for legal reasons of federalism and minimalism."

This criticism seems intuitively plausible. Recent Supreme Court decisions are a study in legal wizardry. While Justice Alito regularly disagrees vehemently with Justice Stevens, they seem to do so largely on the basis of legal reasons. Fortunately, Garbus is prepared to meet this criticism with another three-step argument:

1. Legal disputes are a hurdle;
2. Any case which reaches the Supreme Court has cleared that hurdle;
3. Therefore legal disputes are irrelevant to Supreme Court disputes.

To defend this perspective, Garbus must give a liberal interpretation to the language of Supreme Court verdicts—and he does. According to Garbus, the endless discussions of legal technicalities are merely a cover for what is fundamentally a values dispute.

Take a recent landmark verdict, say *Exxon v. Baker.* In this case the Court decided that ExxonMobil, the world's second largest corporation, should pay a fixed punitive damage claim exactly equal to its compensatory damage claim. Exxon had to pay a $500 million dollar claim to compensate victims for economic damages—the court ruled in *Baker* that the maximum punitive (punishment) damage claim was equal to that sum.

The ruling substantially reduced the amount Exxon was scheduled to pay, and thus was widely considered a victory for the conservative wing of the court. In his majority opinion Justice David Souter argued that a one-to-one ratio of punitive to compensatory damages was a fair upper limit for cases of recklessness (allowing that it would be lower for negligence and higher for willful conduct). His technical, legal decision maintained that the primary purpose for imposing a one-to-one ratio was to avoid a 'mood of the court' standard for imposing punitive damages. In other words, taking the language of the opinion at face value, a neutral observer would likely understand the *Baker* verdict as being motivated by rule of law and *stare decisis* considerations. Chief Justice Roberts said as much in his Senate Confirmation Hearings, describing his jurisprudence as "federalism, minimalism and respect for precedent." In order to defend his thesis Garbus must dispute that legal issues motivated the courts dispute in *Baker.*

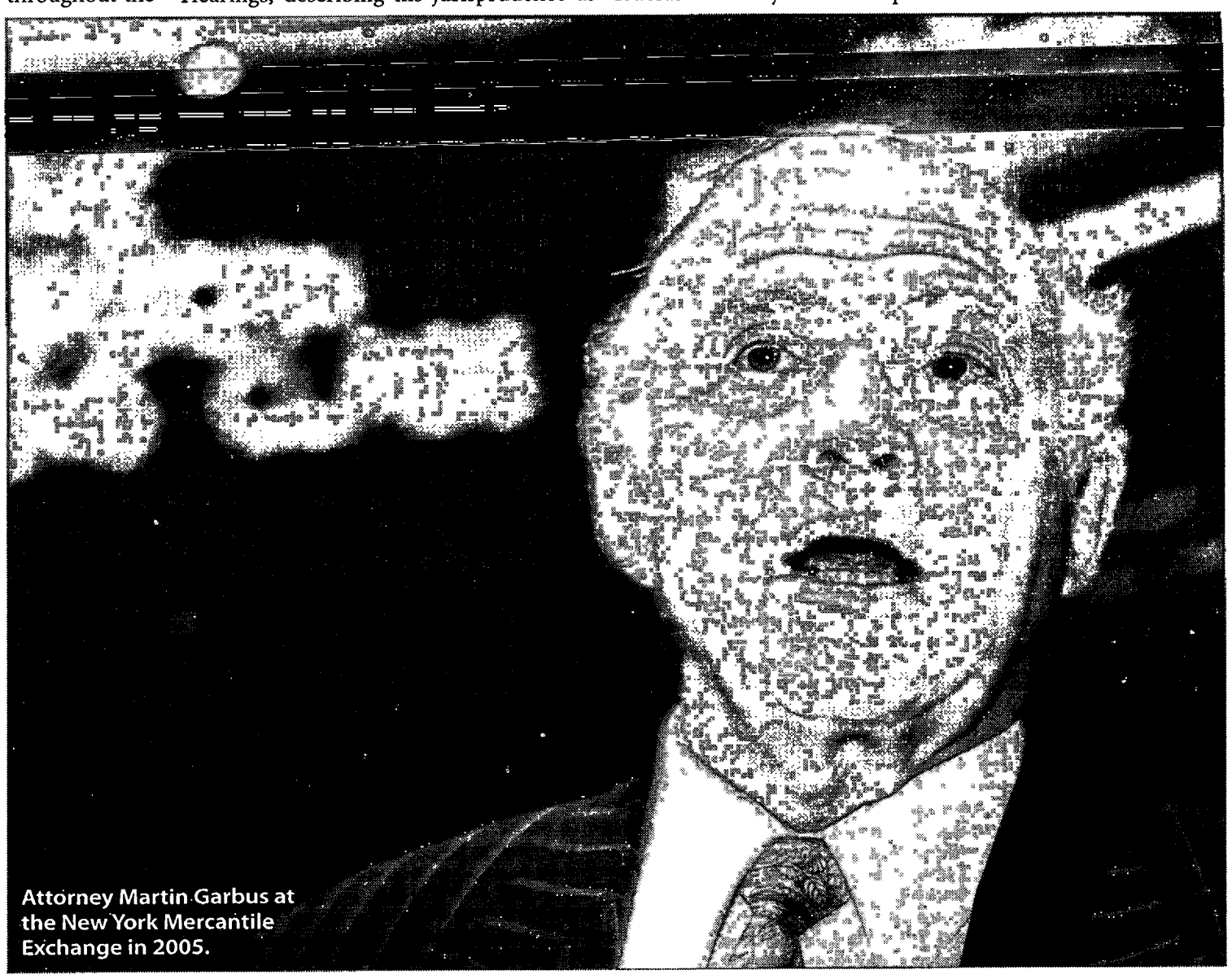
According to Garbus, the language of the decision is simply a cover. What's actually happening is that the conservative wing of the court (Scalia, Thomas, Alito, Roberts and Souter) has a values dispute with the liberal wing of the court (Ginsburg, Kennedy, Stevens and Breyer). Garbus alleges that the conservative wing is infected with a series of reactionary, possibly even racist values which they enforce as law. The liberal wing is by contrast progressive and high minded (at least most of the time), struggling valiantly to stem the regressive tide.

Instead of disagreeing over rule of law and legal standing, Justices Scalia, Thomas, Alito and Roberts actually just hate the poor. They find excuses to hide their politically motivated opinions from the general public—that's all their fancy legal rhetoric is.

The perspective of *The Next Twenty Five Years* is consistent. If you give consistent rules for re-evaluating evidence, you can make a Supreme Court decision read as a cover for a reactionary agenda. Indeed, with enough tinkering you could probably make it read as anything, including an Area-51 style cover-up of alien activity. There's nothing *a-priori* impossible about the view Garbus gives.

Nevertheless, Garbus is asking for a lot. He's asking us, the readers, to engage in rather developed heuristic gymnastics. Perhaps, knowing the Justices personally as he claims to, Garbus does not find this much of a leap. I, however, do—and I suspect many readers agree with me. I'm not interested solely in whether or not this interpretation of the Court is consistent, I'm interested in whether or not it is well-motivated. For that we will have to consult the book's second argument about the nature of legal disputes.

Why does the Supreme Court decide to hear a case?



Attorney Martin Garbus at the New York Mercantile Exchange in 2005.

The most common reason is to resolve a circuit split. A circuit split occurs when one appellate court defends a position in one case (X), and another appellate court defends a different position (not-X). Let's use a current example.

The Second Circuit Court of Appeals has jurisdiction over Connecticut, New York and Vermont. In the recent decision *In Re Salomon Analyst Metromedia Litigation*, the court held that a group of plaintiffs could count as a legal class so long as they could establish that each member of the class had suffered similar losses from public information *when the case proceeds to trial.* They only need to establish this complex legal fact before the actual trial date.

The Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals has jurisdiction over Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas. In the case *Oscar Private Equity Investments v. Allegiance Telecom Inc.,* decided just over a year ago, the court ruled that a group of plaintiffs could count as a legal class only if they could establish that each member of the class had suffered similar losses from public information *before forming the class.* They need to establish this legal fact before they even file their case together.

Since the ruling of the Second and Fifth Courts are mutually inconsistent, some higher authority must choose one over the other. Since Appellate Courts oversee the Federal District Courts, the only possible higher authority is the Supreme Court. We can expect to see this case, a split between the Second and Fifth Circuits, in the Supreme Court either this year or next.

What we have in this case is a dispute over the law between the Second and Fifth Circuit Court. Is this dispute a values dispute or a legal dispute? Garbus is committed to what I will call the *Hidden Values Thesis*:

(**H**) *All Supreme Court disagreements are disagreements over values*

The question is whether or not he is also committed to a stronger claim, the *Strong Hidden Values Thesis*:

(**H**$^+$) All Supreme Court *and appellate* disagreements are disagreements over values

Suppose Garbus maintained that he was committed to **H**, but not to **H**$^+$. Then, according to Garbus, some disputes at the appellate level are over legal issues. Thus, if Garbus denies **H**$^+$, he is committed to the possibility of the following situation:

1. Two circuit courts have a legal dispute;
2. The Supreme Court has been called upon to arbitrate that legal dispute;
3. The Supreme Court, in doing so, uses no legal reasons.

This seems manifestly implausible. The vastly more likely scenario is that (at least in cases like this one) the Supreme Court's decisions should be taken at face value. Why hold that legal disputes are possible, evident and likely at the second level of jurisprudence but that they suddenly become battles over political ideology when they reach the highest Court? There just doesn't seem to be much evidence in support of this claim.

Thus, it seems to me that Garbus should adopt **H**$^+$ as well as **H**. He should maintain that not only is the Supreme Court a political organ in disguise, but that the appellate courts are as well. After all, by the time a case reaches appellate court it has gone through endless lawyers, law clerks, judges and jurists. Why should the appellate court be any different?

Why does an appellate court consider a case? Appellate courts in the American Judicial System are higher than circuit courts. The most common reason to consider an appeal is if a principle of jurisprudence conflicts with the results of a trial case. For example, consider the case of *District of Columbia v. Heller*. In this case, a defendant was charged with violating a handgun ban. The defendant sued, arguing that the law violated his second amendment rights to own a firearm. The District Court for the District of Columbia dismissed the lawsuit.

Let us now consider a different case. In 2001, the District Court for the District of Northern Texas ruled, by dismissing a government indictment in the case of *United States v. Emerson*, that a similar handgun ban did violate the second amendment rights of a defendant. Presented with similar facts, the District Court decided in the favor of the defendant.

Two different district courts were presented with similar sets of facts and disagreed. Was this disagreement legal or political?

Suppose Garbus maintained that the disagreement at the District Court level was legal. Then, Garbus would have to maintain the following three propositions:

1. Two circuit courts have a legal dispute;
2. An appellate court has been called on to arbitrate that legal dispute;
3. The appellate court, in doing so, uses no legal reasons (from **H**$^+$).

Once again, this seems manifestly implausible. While it is consistent, it seems that the vastly more likely scenario is that the opinions of the District Courts should be taken at face value. Why think that a legal dispute magically changes to a values dispute simply by being decided at a higher level of jurisprudence?

In other words, I believe that Garbus should defend this thesis:

(**H++**) *All Supreme Court, Appellate and District Court disputes are actually over values*

Let us call this thesis the *Maximal Hidden Values Thesis*. I have argued that in order to defend his argument, Garbus must maintain this thesis. Does his argument follow with this new thesis intact?

1. Legal disputes are a hurdle;
2. Any case which reaches the Supreme Court has cleared that hurdle;
3. The Maximal Hidden Values Thesis; and, therefore
4. Legal disputes are irrelevant to Supreme Court disputes.

This argument is now *valid*. The conclusion follows from the premises. Before I objected that the argument was invalid because it required an overly liberal interpretation of the language of Court decisions. This objection no longer applies, because the Maximal Hidden Value Thesis establishes quite clearly that all Court decisions at all levels are disputes over values.

I believe this argument is a reconstruction appropriately supported by the text itself. In the introduction of *The Next Twenty Five Years*, Garbus extensively defends the idea that the judicial system is inherently a political rather than legal body. He strongly rejects the conservative, federalist thesis represented by Scalia's request for a less political Court.

Where are we? First, Garbus proposed an argument that the political conservativism of the Bush Administration has led to a radically conservative court. The conservative interlocutor objected on the grounds that the courts are not political in the way Garbus claims. Garbus, in refuting that objection, used the argument above, which turned on the Maximal Hidden Values Thesis. We have established that:

If the argument of *The Next Twenty Five Years* is sound, then **H**$^{++}$ is true.

I will now argue that the argument is unsound, because **H**$^{++}$ is false.

What is a legal dispute, as opposed to a values dispute? Presumably, in a legal dispute the following two conditions are met:

1. Both sides agree that the law determines the decision,
2. The sides dispute what the law actually says.

The crucial difference is the first condition. There is more common ground in a legal dispute because both sides agree that *if* the law says one thing, then that is the proper decision. In a values dispute the sides don't even agree that far, arguing instead over what the law should say.

Contrast the legal dispute over the Second Amendment of the Constitution of the United States with the values dispute over gun control. In the values dispute, one side argues that gun rights should be protected, while the opposing side argues that they should not. In a legal dispute, one side argues that a proper reading of the Second Amendment protects gun rights, while the opposing side argues that it does not.

Garbus proposes a suspicion theory—always a suspect thesis because of the risk of defending a position that is not falsifiable

In other words, when Justice Scalia and Justice Stevens argue over gun rights, the actual meaning of the Second Amendment seems to be decisive. When Mayor Paul Helmke (President of the Brady Campaign) and John C. Sigler (President of the National Rifle Association) debate gun politics, they don't place nearly as much emphasis on the Second Amendment. They do disagree about it, but both would maintain their position even if it were proven that the reading went in the opposite direction (they would then endorse a constitutional amendment).

According to **H++**, all court disputes at all levels are of the values kind. We've already shown that Garbus is forced to accept **H++**. What's the problem?

Well, imagine that there exists a vague law, by which I mean that two contradictory interpretations are plausible. Let's call this law **V**. By definition, **V** permits a legal dispute—each side takes one plausible interpretation. Therefore, if a law like **V** exists, **H++** is false, since the Court at any level could have a legal dispute over it.

If **V** implies that **H++** is false, and Garbus requires **H++** to be true, then Garbus must hold that **V** is false. In other words, Garbus must assert that no law can be vague. Let's call this requirement of his argument the ***No Vagueness Condition***. If this condition is false, then Garbus' argument is unsound.

It's easy to see where to go from here: the ***No Vagueness Condition*** is false. The great legal jurist H. L. A. Hart proposed the following ordinance as an example of a vague law:

"No vehicles in the park."

What does this mean? Does it refer to lawnmowers? Powered scooters? How about ambulances? Each interpretation is plausible, so jurists must propose a legal theory on how to interpret this law. By disputing one another's legal theory, judges engage in a legal, rather than a moral, battle.

Thus, the argument of *The Next Twenty Five Years* is fundamentally unsound. Garbus proposes a suspicion theory—always a suspect thesis because of the risk of defending a position that is not falsifiable. In analyzing the details of his theory numerous inconsistencies arise. His theory cannot deal with the vagueness of law, nor can it plausibly motivate the massive amount of re-interpretation of decisions required.

That doesn't mean *The Next Twenty Five Years* is a bad book. It's a fun read, especially for those already convinced who are looking for a personal perspective. But it fails as a sober argument in support of a legal thesis. Readers coming from the other side will be understandably, and justifiably, unconvinced. Ⓐ

Marcus Garvey and Black Solidarity in the 21st Century

LAVELLE PORTER

- Grant, Colin. ***Negro With a Hat: The Rise and Fall of Marcus Garvey***. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. 544 pages.
- Rolinson, Mary G. ***Grassroots Garveyism: The Universal Negro Improvement Association in the Rural South, 1920-1927.*** Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007. 296 pages.
- Shelby, Tommie. ***We Who Are Dark: The Philosophical Foundations of Black Solidarity***. Cambridge: Harvard U. Press, 2005. 336 pages.

As a walking tour guide I often lead tours through Harlem, telling the story of how this historic neighborhood rose to prominence in the 1920s to become the unofficial capital of black America. Among the stops along the tour route is a brown storefront building at 2305 Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Blvd. (formerly Seventh Avenue). Now an unassuming beauty shop called Salon Ambiance, it was once an office of Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), and the organization's newspaper the *Negro World*. On a recent tour with a group of young white British women, we stopped in front of Salon Ambiance and I launched into my standard abridged history of Garvey and his movement. While I spoke I passed around a laminated photo of Garvey decked out in military regalia with his distinctive plumed hat, riding in the back of a car in a UNIA parade. One of the women stared at the photo and her face grew visibly unsettled as I explained Garvey's rise to power. I told them that he was born in Jamaica in 1887, that as a young man he had embraced Pan-Africanism, that he had come to Harlem in 1916 preaching a gospel of black pride and self-determination, and that he had built this militant black nationalist organization into one of largest mass movements in American history. After I finished my spiel, the troubled woman softly said, in her lilting British accent, "He sounds a bit scary."

If Garvey can strike fear into the heart of a genteel white woman eighty years removed, imagine what it was like to see thousands of Garveyites marching in the streets of New York with their Black Cross Nurses, their African Legion paramilitary guard decked out in full military dress, led by a dark, sawed-off, stout Jamaican who dared to tell black people that they were not a group of groveling subservients but a "Mighty Race" of people whose destiny was to rule the world. Well, J. Edgar Hoover also found that image quite "scary." Within just three years of his arrival in Harlem, Garvey's UNIA had grown large enough and powerful enough to attract the attention of the United States Justice Department's newly formed Bureau of Investigation (BOI), headed up by Hoover, the leader who oversaw the agency's transition into the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).

With *Negro With a Hat: The Rise and Fall of Marcus Garvey* (2008) Jamaican-British scholar Colin Grant has filled a sizable void in black studies with a full-length comprehensive biography of Garvey. Until I began compiling an oral exam list on black nationalist thought two years ago, it had not occurred to me that such a book did not exist. David E. Cronon's *Black Moses*, originally published in 1960, still holds up as an engaging narrative of the Garvey's life, but its information is now largely outdated. Tony Martin's *Race First* (1976) and *Literary Garveyism* (1983) are both thorough and noteworthy contributions to the intellectual aspects of Garveyism. The chief source of primary material on Garvey is Robert E. Hill's massive Garvey Papers Project, published in ten huge bound volumes, with an archive housed at the University of California-Los Angeles. Grant has incorporated these and other resources (including the files of FBI informants who infiltrated the UNIA, the first black agents hired in FBI history) and has provided the most well-synthesized account of Garvey's life to date.

Marcus Garvey participating in a Universal Negro Improvement Association UNIA parade in New York.

While Grant's study focuses on the man himself, Mary Rolinson's *Grassroots Garveyism: The Universal Negro Improvement Association in the Rural South, 1920-1927* (2007) gives, perhaps, an even better view of the overall structure of the UNIA by providing a closer look at some of the people who decided to join Garvey's movement in the American South. The separatist racial politics of Garvey's movement remain as controversial as ever, and many see Garvey's black nationalism as an outmoded and ineffectual strategy for dealing with the challenges of our contemporary political situation. In *We Who Are Dark: The Philosophical Foundations of Solidarity* (2008) philosopher Tommie Shelby analyzes black nationalist thought sympathetically, but ultimately looks for less rigid and more politically practical forms of black solidarity.

Marcus Mosiah Garvey, Jr. was born August 17, 1887 in St. Ann's Bay on the northern coast of Jamaica. The youngest of eleven children, Garvey grew up in a very literate household. His father was an avid reader, and the family had an extensive library which the young Garvey used to his intellectual advantage. At the age of fourteen, Garvey left school and became a printer's apprentice, a vitally important experience for the future leader. It was here that Garvey began a lifelong interest in newspaper publishing. After moving to London in 1912, Garvey ended up working for Egyptian born Dusé Mohamed Ali's influential pan-African paper, *African Times and Orient Review*. According to Grant he gleaned just as much from Ali's numerous other business schemes as he did about the workings of the newspaper industry itself. The one consistent enterprise that Garvey always came back to throughout his life was the newspaper, from the success of the UNIA's *Negro World* in spreading the message of the movement, to the bitter editorials in *The Black Man* which he published in London in the 1930s after his deportation from the United States.

Colin Grant begins *Negro With a Hat* by relating the story of Garvey's death. And, in the sort of cosmic irony that would seem too trite were it fictional, it would be a newspaper headline that led to his death. Recovering from a debilitating stroke in his London home in 1940, Garvey was shown clippings announcing that "Marcus Garvey Dies in London." An old political rival had begun spreading rumors of his death and the premature obituaries were filled with damning and unflattering portrayals of his life. Garvey, distraught over these vicious accounts, collapsed from another massive stroke while reading them. He died two weeks later on June 10, 1940.

In 1914 Garvey first attempted to start The Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League (UNIA_ACL) in Jamaica when he returned there after traveling for two years in London. The organization's motto was, and remains, "One God, One Aim, One Destiny." (The UNIA-ACL tech-

nically still exists though its membership is small.) In 1916, like scores of other West Indian immigrants, he traveled to Harlem, which was quickly becoming a thriving black metropolis. Thousands of black migrants from the American South and immigrants from the West Indies were pouring into the neighborhood and creating a vibrant modern urban black culture. In 1918 Garvey set up a new version of the UNIA which grew and thrived. Garvey had already been practicing his skills as an orator while in London on Speaker's Corner in Hyde Park. In New York he honed his skills by observing the pyrotechnics of white evangelist Billy Sunday. He also drew inspiration from Harlem's own plethora of lively public speakers, including the black socialist Hubert Harrison who gave Garvey his first speaking opportunities. Garvey perfected his style and brought it to Harlem's version of Speakers' Corner, on 135th St. and Lenox, where he eventually began to draw crowds with his incendiary speeches.

Grant does a remarkable job of weaving Garvey's ascendance into the historical context of early-20th-century America. Garvey stepped into a perfect storm stirred by Harlem's growth as a cultural and intellectual capital of blackness, the return of black soldiers from WWI battlefields back to the Jim Crow south, and the continuing white supremacist racial violence carried out on the black community in the South. Garvey's ideas about racial separation were influenced by the awful violence of the East St. Louis, Illinois race riot of 1917, in which nearly 200 people were killed and thousands driven out of their homes. Led by Garvey's soon to be rival, the scholar and activist W.E.B. Du Bois, The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) conducted a silent protest march through the streets of Harlem in response to the riots, carrying signs saying "Thou Shalt Not Kill." By the time of the violence of the Red Summer of 1919 two years later, Garvey had perfected his brand of militant black pride, and had effectively established his movement as an alternative to the NAACP's peaceful marches and philosophy of integration. It should be noted here that Grant takes his title from Du Bois's derisive description of Garvey, a clumsy and even off-putting choice. But it does speak to the bitter rivalry between the two leaders and the importance of the differences (and contradictions) in their political philosophies.


Photograph of a Garveyite family taken in 1924.

With a consistently growing membership, the UNIA engaged in a number of economic enterprises, and Grant gives detailed accounts of these ventures, many of which were unfortunately rife with mismanagement. Of all the Garvey projects, the Black Star Line may be the most definitive statement on Garvey's enigmatic career. After purchasing an old WWI coal ship, The *SS Yarmouth*, Garvey planned to rechristen it as the *Frederick Douglass* and make it the first ship in The Black Star Line, a fleet of UNIA owned and operated ships that would, among other functions, carry people to the African continent. Garvey managed to orchestrate a rousing and raucous launch celebration with thousands of people gathered on Manhattan's west side at 135th St. near the Hudson River to watch it set sail. But due to complicated issues with the ship's insurance it was only allowed to sail out of view of the cheering throngs, then docked again at 23rd Street. The Black Star Line was promoted with the idea that those who invested might one day be able to repatriate in Africa ("Africa for the Africans!")...but Garvey himself never set foot on the continent.

In the end, Garvey was brought low by the Black Star Line, nailed on a technicality by an FBI campaign bent on stopping his movement. He was arrested in 1922 for mail fraud in connection with the sale of stock in the company. Garvey represented himself in the grueling four week long court case, lost the case, and beginning in 1925 he served two years in jail in Atlanta, GA. He was eventually pardoned by President Calvin Coolidge, but deportation was one of the conditions of the pardon and he sailed back to Jamaica from New Orleans in 1927. Still, whatever one might say about Marcus Garvey, Grant's biography makes it difficult to write him off simply as a charlatan. It paints the portrait of a man who was equal parts sincerity, hucksterism and delusional ambition, illuminating Garvey's dogged persistence and determination to do something big with his life. Through failure after failure, and setback after setback, Garvey held fast to a single-minded commitment to success.

In some ways historian Mary Rolinson's *Grassroots Garveyism: The Universal Negro Improvement Association in the Rural South, 1920-1927* provides us with a better understanding of Garveyism as a "mass movement" than *Negro With a Hat*. While Grant's work is mostly a focused character study, Rolinson tries to make sense of the motivations and ideas of the people who joined the ranks of the organization by focusing on a particular subset of UNIA members. *Grassroots Garveyism* provides some rare and insightful research on Garvey's influence among black Southerners. As she argues, "a closer look at this segment of Garveyites offers not only a glimpse into the elusive intellectual history of rural southern farmers but also a fuller understanding of the dynamics and nature of Garveyism." There were 1,176 divisions of the UNIA throughout the world by 1926. Eighty percent of these were in the United States. Of the U.S. chapters Rolinson places 423 of these in the Southern States. Definite numbers are hard to come by, but Rolinson finds records for over 9,000 actual paying members. However, she counterbalances that number with crowd estimates of people who attended pro-Garvey mass meetings all over the South over the course of his arrest and trial, estimates which suggest over 100,000 people may have been in attendance. She culled demographic information about the UNIA members from census records, and her interpretations of the southern UNIA is informed by careful readings of the *Negro World* for reports of southern activity. The nature of her research meant Rolinson had to rely heavily on conjecture, but she does a commendable job balancing this primary research with informed speculations.

What she finds is that more than a few rural southerners embraced Garvey's movement in the South. In the process she complicates the standard narrative of the Great Migration, which carries the assumption that the most militant and intellectually engaged blacks moved to the Northern cities, and that radicalization was only possible by moving to the freer spaces of the urban North. On the contrary, she illustrates a rich history of political engagement and radical defiance happening under the radar in the South. The premise of the book, she writes, is to show that "...however busy and burdened this group was, however few records they left behind, and however far their ideology may have deviated from the liberal integrationist framework, these African-Americans had strong impulses to determine and improve their own futures and found ways to do so through organization and independent thought." For the most part the book delivers on that promise. But still, the findings must be put in perspective. At the end of the day, as illuminating as her work is, it only sheds light on one area of an important but failed political movement.

Which brings us to the overall legacy of Garvey's movement. The UNIA was without a doubt an institutional failure. The organization itself was by all accounts poorly managed and squandered its mass appeal. Yet it would be a mistake to dismiss the importance of the UNIA and Garvey's career wholesale because of its tactical errors. The apex of the Garvey movement, and its most phenomenal spectacle, came in 1920 when a UNIA convention was held at Madison Square Garden. The convention itself was attended by some 25,000 people, and thousands more turned out to see the UNIA parade wind through the streets of New York. The whole event was staged as an orchestrated coronation of Garvey as the leader of the Pan-African movement, a sort of African president in exile. Grant writes that "as with many of Garvey's earlier promotions, the idea of African titles unrolled at the convention was meant more in gesture, albeit a grand gesture intended to inspire and unify the Negro world." And this may be where Garvey's greatest legacy lies, in precisely these sorts of symbolic gestures. At the end of the day his most significant contributions were mainly in the cultural and psychological realm, rather than at the institutional level. Garvey was not the first emigrationist, nor was he the first to try to cultivate a more positive attitude toward African heritage and the African continent. His African redemptionism carried the all too common vanguardist and elitist attitude of Western blacks towards Africa. Still, he effectively popularized positive views of Africa and blackness, teaching that Africa had a past and present, that it was not just a backward place from which black Americans should be grateful to have been "saved." Others had been teaching this for years, but none achieved so great an effect. His ability to get so many of the black rank and file to embrace his movement changed the game in black politics and forced other organizations to reevaluate their own strategies in order to reach the black working class.

Racism remains a problem deeply imbedded in American culture through institutional racism and structural inequality, and it is a problem that cannot be willed away with pronouncements of color-blindness. In *We Who are Dark: The Philosophical Foundations of Black Solidarity*, Harvard philosopher Tommie Shelby tries to understand how the concept of black solidarity can be used in a way that contests racist policies and politics, but does so without reifying antiquated notions of racial essentialism. I think Shelby

speaks for many black intellectuals and activists when he writes that his objective in *We Who are Dark* is to show that "...it is possible to dispense with the idea of race as a biological essence and to agree with the critics of identity politics about many of its dangers and limitations, while nevertheless continuing to embrace a form of blackness as an emancipatory tool." Evaluating the work of several important proponents of black solidarity, including the 19th century black nationalist Martin R. Delany, W.E. B. Du Bois, and members of the Black Power Movement, Shelby finds that black nationalist thought has often contained a mix of "classical" and "pragmatic" strategies.

Roughly simplified, the "classical" framework sees black political and national autonomy as the ultimate goal, whether that is achieved through emigration, or through some sort of internal configuration as an autonomous "nation within a nation." (Martin R. Delany is believed to have coined that phrase, taken up by later nationalists.) On the other hand "pragmatic" nationalism is "based on a desire to live in a just society, a society that need not be, nor even contain, a self-determining black community." In effect, Shelby shows how black nationalist intellectuals, even those who fiercely embraced "classical" black nationalism, ultimately made "pragmatic" concessions in order to achieve tangible progress and make substantive changes. To be clear, Shelby explains that his use of the term "classical" is different from Wilson J. Moses' *Classical Black Nationalism* which posits that the end of classical black nationalism comes with the imprisonment of Marcus Garvey in 1925. Instead his conception of "classical" is broad enough to apply to nationalist thought appearing in later historical periods. He also explains that his conception of "pragmatic" is based more on a colloquial use of "pragmatism" and less on the school of American philosophy associated with Charles Pierce, William James, and John Dewey.

> At the end of the day his most significant contributions were mainly in the cultural and psychological realm, rather than at the institutional level.

Shelby's work looks to emphasis these "pragmatic" aspects of black nationalism. Though he uses the term "nationalism," to show how this pragmatic political philosophy is situated within an intellectual history of black nationalist thought, his emphasis is really on the idea of black solidarity. Ultimately Shelby is not proposing an alternative nationalist project, as much as he is providing an incisive philosophical analysis of how the black political framework actually functions today and has functioned historically. As he writes, "The concept of solidarity defended in this book is not a radical departure from what many black Americans already accept." Indeed, most black Americans actually do function somewhere between the racial purity of Garvey and the "color-blind" bad faith of Ward Connerly. Shelby's form of pragmatic black solidarity is based on the idea that, "what holds blacks together as a unified people with shared political interests is the fact of their racial subordination and their collective resolve to triumph over it." Ultimately, he argues for a black American solidarity based on the understanding of shared struggle against racism within the American political system, a solidarity that is malleable enough to accommodate differences in culture, gender and sexuality, a solidarity that is open to the realities of multiracialism and interracial cooperation, and a solidarity that is less interested in cultural authenticity, ancient origins, or fantasies of an impractical territorial nationalism.

Today the Harlem streets that the Garveyites walked are now awash in Obama-mania. Weeks after the election Obama signs are still visible in apartment windows. On 125th street, one can choose from a variety of bootleg paraphernalia celebrating America's first black president. I realize there's been more than enough tiresome editorializing about the meaning of Obama's presidency and I won't add more. Yet I can't help but ponder the connections between the history of Marcus Garvey and the UNIA, the racism that they and other civil rights organizations (despite their differences) fought so tirelessly against, and the reality that Americans have just elected the son of a black Kenyan father and white American mother to its highest office.

These days it seems Marcus Garvey has become just another name on streets and parks in black neighborhoods, or a generic and ambiguous symbol of black history name-checked by conscious rappers and reggae artists. I hold out hope that the works reviewed here will contribute to a continuing engagement with the details of Garvey's life and politics, and with the history of black freedom struggles, so that those of us who teach the history of Garvey and the UNIA (and who teach the teachers of this history) will help students know him as more than just a name on a street sign. And hopefully we can take what we've learned from Garvey and black nationalists of the 20th century to come up with more creative ways of thinking about black solidarity as we move into the 21st. Ⓐ

Jameson Straight Up

SEAN GRATTAN

▶ Fredric Jameson and Ian Buchanan. *Jameson on Jameson: Conversations on Cultural Marxism. Post-contemporary interventions.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007. 277 pages.


Fredric Jameson

Gilles Deleuze wrote, "It is very hard to 'explain oneself'—an interview, a dialogue, a conversation. Most of the time, when someone asks me a question, even one which relates to me, I see that, strictly, I don't have anything to say." Or, as Deleuze and Felix Guattari later wrote, "philosophers have very little time for discussion. Every philosopher runs away when he or she hears someone say, 'let's discuss this.'"On both counts Fredric Jameson is an inveterate philosopher. It is impossible not to continually think of this while reading *Jameson on Jameson*. Any book of interviews inevitably falls, to some extent, into the trap of the long monologue, and this book is no exception. Nor is it a surprise coming from the man who coined the phrase metacommentary.

But perhaps Deleuze is right: what we want is not a debate, but a monologue. With each repetition Jameson's answers accrete a kind of textual (dare I say ideological) power so that even if you disagree with what he is saying the sheer totality of this work and, as he is at pains to point out, his entire corpus carries a hefty argumentative weight. The single-mindedness of Jameson's vision is often daunting, but quickly grows monotonous. As a result, one grows desperate for a surprise, a turn of phrase that might pull one out of a bored skim of keywords.

Jameson on Jameson is a collection of nine interviews conducted between 1982 and 2005, and it is the breadth of time between interviews and the relative lack of shifting or changing opinion on Jameson's part that I find shocking. In a later interview, Xudong Zhang quotes an essay describing Jameson's output as beginning with a concretization of theoretical frameworks and then moving to a free for all reading of cultural works. Jameson disagrees with this reading, saying there is always "tension between a whole methodological-philosophical side of things and the reading of any specific mass-cultural text." I am not going to argue the point on anything other than the experience (read: mine) of the text itself, but since (seemingly) there is little to no tension between Jameson and himself, the reading really takes on the qualities Zhang discusses. Though he often argues against this, Jameson seems caught within his own system of codes.

I am going to take it for granted that if you are even considering this book, you are well acquainted with Jameson in some context. Perhaps like me you picked up his tome on postmodernism as an undergraduate and thought "yes, a book with pictures!" These interviews are obsessed with that book, and I am not sure a reading of the interviews adds much to a close reading of *Postmodernism: or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Either way I don't have to tell you about what Jameson thinks, because I bet you already know.

On the surface this might appear negative, but in the moments when Jameson is surprising, he is insightful, witty, and for someone who once compelled us to grow new appendages to deal with the dizzying heights of postmodernism, practical and elucidating. For instance, as graduate students who most likely slave away as adjuncts somewhere; it is interesting to read Jameson's description of pedagogical Marxism. He describes how undergraduates "encounter a text as 'naïve or unreflexive readers' [who] bring to it a whole set of previously acquired and culturally sanctioned interpretive schemes, of which they are unaware." Teaching, then, becomes an intervention, an attempt to "make these interpretations visible...and thereby to encourage the student's self-consciousness as to the operative power of such unwitting schemes." When asked if our work as teachers is political, I find myself drawn to answers like Jameson's. For me, *Jameson on Jameson* sparkles with these momentary flashes of shockingly practical insight.

The recent collection *Archeologies of the Future*, highlights Jameson's longstanding engagement with Utopian desire, or what he describes as the immanent and seemingly universal feeling that despite all signs to the contrary, things might just get better. For me, I can't help but think of the Beatles here, and as we loudly hear Paul McCartney sing; "it's getting better all the time," John Lennon's backing vocal provides the illuminating counterpoint: "it can't get no worse." Jameson *is* very illuminating on the topic of Utopian desire in *Jameson on Jameson*: "unless...demystification is linked to the vision or the attempt to envision an alternate society together, unless there is a Utopian component or drive which is linked to the drive to demystify, then it seems to me that the most productive possibilities of demystification are not achieved." In a sweeping gesture Jameson carves out his positions amongst the many competing theoretical idiolects that he both trenchantly and humorously describes as a competing "set of brand names."

A good book of interviews should be as much about the interviewer as the interviewee, and there are certainly interviews that stand out. Zhang, as I mentioned earlier, is by far the most impressive interviewer; he presses Jameson on specifics, forces him into concrete declarations, and, as such, brings a heightened spirit to the exchange. Suddenly the dialectic emerges as a vibrant methodological position suited perfectly for a book of interviews. Feeling their way collectively towards more nuanced positions Zhang brings out a sustained passion on Jameson's part for the act of reading.

The final interview, and the one that is chronologically closest to the book's publication is another fine example of the interviewers' prowess. Srinivas Aravamudan and Ranjana Khanna productively raise questions about gender and the privileged position the Western world—specifically the United States—takes in Jameson's discussion of postmodernism. I Aravamudan and Khanna tenaciously draw Jameson back to the intricacies, nuances, and contradictions in his positions.

The final interview takes surprising turns, questioning Jameson on his religious positions, for instance; if you are curious he has "no religious temptations." The turn away from the warmed over repetitions of Jameson's positions in the rest of the book is both enlightening and fun.

There is a tension then between the format of a book of interviews and the net gain of reading a book of interviews. At times illuminating, but at other times stupor inducing (not because of the content of the interviews, but just because of the repetitive nature of the project) *Jameson on Jameson* works as a great shortcut to Jameson's project. I want more, however, I want more of the interviewers to press Jameson to not just rearticulate his central theses, but to actual prod him into defending some of them. Possibly a way of wresting control away from Jameson is to look into a good book of essays called *On Jameson: From Postmodernism to Globalization*, especially the very fine final contribution by Philip Wegner. As Jameson says, "reality takes care of the truth; the codes are our business." Ⓐ

"Yes, You Can Say No, But the World Will Have to Go"

ALISON POWELL

▶ Eric Weisbard. *Listen Again: A Momentary History of Pop Music*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2007. 323 pages.

Henry Rollins, most notably of the hardcore punk band Black Flag, once said, "I believe that one defines oneself by reinvention. To not be like your parents. To not be like your friends. To be yourself. To cut yourself out of stone." The idea that the definition, the refining of the self, is only possible through the trying on of various personas, is one familiar to philosophers and pop culture theorists alike. The joy of re-imagining one's self must come partially through the sheer potential of it; if I dye my hair this color and start speaking German, maybe I can escape my Midwestern upbringing. If I convert to this religion, perhaps I can "not be like my parents."

In the late 1930s, North Dakota native Norma Deloris Egstrom experienced her own personal metamorphosis. Born the seventh of eight children, her mother died when she was 4. She grew up under the tyranny of an abusive stepmother, Min, and the way she *escaped* was through work—waitressing and *singing* for low pay on local radio stations. One day, a radio personality in Fargo who was fond of her songs renamed her Peggy Lee, starting off a storm of reinvention that traveled all the way to Los Angeles where she became a legend. In 1942, she had her first hit, "Someone Else is Taking My Place." Peggy Lee was taking poor Norma Egstrom's place.

Peggy Lee went on to perform for vast adoring audiences, well into her old age, even wheelchair-bound. She fought for equal compensation for musicians, fueled by a conviction that she'd never be poor again. She used to quote Emerson: "God's will will not be made manifest by cowards." The catalyst that allows us to reinvent ourselves may be deceptively superficial, it's true, but it also takes courage to allow a name, a haircut, a move across the country to be our present identity's undoing, and to allow a new self to take its place. So a personal revolution from small-town North Dakota victim into artist, into icon, allowed the young Norma Egstrom to resist being overtaken with melancholy, futility, an upbringing surrounded by competing siblings and a frightful stepmother. Being an amazing singer is not enough. She had to transform herself into someone different, someone more powerful, more animal, in order to become the chart-topper who sang "Fever" with the devil-may-care seduction that shot her to stardom.

Listen Again: A Momentary History of Pop Music is a collection of essays from the Experience Music Project Pop Conference "where... academics and other culture mongers come together to stretch the boundaries of pop music culture, criticism, and scholarship," and the collection concerns itself mostly with the reinvention not of selfhood, but of narrative and myth through song. Part and parcel of this discussion is the question of how resistance, subversion, and agency (those pervasive culture studies trade words) make themselves apparent in the transformation of one musical narrative into another.

A moment in Peggy Lee's career serves to illustrate this approach. Those of you familiar with her heart-wrenching, downright existential "Is That All There Is?" will likely be gratified to learn that the origin of the song was not, in fact, a hedonistic desire by the writers to get everyone "to have a ball." Instead, the songwriters Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller were prompted to write the song because of an appreciation for Thomas Mann's 1896 short story, "Disillusionment. "The story features a clergyman's son whose witnessing of his family's house catching fire leads to a strange kind of religious disenchantment: "'So this,' I thought, 'is a fire. This is what it is like to have the house on fire. Is that all there is to it?'" He presents a litany of other disappointing, apathy-inducing experiences ("the dry agonies of baffled lust") and finally concludes, "So this is the greatest pain we can suffer. Well, and what then—is this all?"And "so I dream and wait for death. Ah, how well I know it already, death, that last disappointment! At my last moment I shall be saying to myself: 'So this is the great experience—well, and what of it? What is it after all?'"

A little over a half century later, and Leiber and Stoller have made Mann's story contemporary in a song, which will soon be transformed again by the detached, half-wilting, half-sung, half-spoken, masterful delivery of Peggy Lee. The chorus of the song is: "Is that all there is? / If that's all there is, my friends / Let's keep dancing / Let's break out the booze / And have a ball / If that's all... there is." The chorus is interspersed with dramatic memories—the singer watching her childhood home burn down, the singer at the circus (of this "marvelous spectacle": "there's something missing"); the singer left by her first love ("and I thought I'd die, but I didn't, and when I didn't I thought to myself 'Is that all there is?'"—as if the not-dying is itself the disappointment).

Franklin Bruno, the author of the essay "'Is That All There Is?' and the Uses of Disenchantment" is uninterested in the reinvention of the Mann story in and of itself. His thesis lies not in the reinvention of the literary in music, but rather, simply, the fascinating history of this great song and what it meant for audiences, and for Peggy Lee and later, Polly Jean Harvey. It is perhaps this that makes it one of the essays which stands out in this collection. Other essays are preoccupied with a theme of the reinvention of identity through musical borrowing, of the transference of power through music—this approach most commonly understood, for example, in the rightful preoccupation of many culture theorists with how white rock and roll co-opted the inestimable heights of African-American music. It is almost as though the main tension in culture studies which focuses on pop music is between a desire to shed a hundred variations of a song to find its "original identity" and an opposing desire, perhaps more theoretical, to articulate the great shell-game of musical attribution as itself a shell game. The latter, more postmodern approach ultimately must determine that all identities—sexual, gender, racial, regional, etc.—are, in fact, persuasive myths of our own making. The tension between seeking the authentic or revealing that the very concept of authenticity is, in fact, a ruse, is productive when it spurs on good scholarship. But reading a collection of essays like these together feels a bit schizophrenic, making a straightforward essay like the one about Peggy Lee's career and the mystery of "Is That All There Is?" a sort of relief.

Darby Crash of The Germs

Two other essays in the collection, Lavinia Greenlaw's funny and self-deprecating "On Punk Rock and Not Being a Girl" and Drew Daniel's memorial to The Germs' Darby Crash (and her youth), "How to Act Like Darby Crash" escape this cyclical conversation by being articulate and compelling about, simply, "What Rock Music Means to Me." And it seems that a collection of essays like these may make for a more fluid and purposely celebratory compilation. That is not

to say that academics can't, or shouldn't, write about pop and rock music. There's nothing about popular music that might make it less applicable to scholarship, and we enter in a strange space of being nostalgic about the present if we try to isolate pop music from the academy. Still, who was it who said, "writing about music is like dancing about architecture"? We must acknowledge the ways music cannot be read as a literary text; its lineage is less, well, delineated, than what we might find when in a Shakespearean tragedy, where we can cherry-pick the Ovidian references. A singer may manipulate a line a hundred ways in performance; a ragtime pianist like Jelly Roll Morton surely altered key story lines in his "Murder Ballads" differently every time he performed (alone or with an audience) this 80-minute masterpiece. So maybe music *is* fundamentally more amorphous and living and sloppy and resistant to definition than other kinds of texts.

So it follows that pop music would be less neatly "readable" when it comes to the construction of social identity through song. Griel Marcus powerfully begins his essay "Death Letters" with the 1930s Harlem poet Melvin B. Tolson's "Sootie Joe" line "Somebody has to black hisself up / For somebody else to stay white," and goes on to ask why "old music" (by which he means Old-Time music) "seems to be heard, today, as punk. It's heard as music of values: the values of harshness, cruelty, even sadism...The values of *say your piece and get off the stage: get it over with, tell the* truth as you see it and then shut up. There's a sense of affinity, not the smell of a raid on someone else's culture." So instead, he tells us, young hipster audiences fetishize Dock Boggs's "Sugar Baby," Son House's "Death Letter Blues" and Skip James' "Devil Got My Woman" (see the movie *Ghost World*, which Marcus calls a "modern punk movie"). Marcus swiftly and convincingly defines the "punk reinvention of old American music...[as] people taking the ancient sound as a foreign language in which you could say absolutely anything, mean every word, and pretend you were only kidding." This may be as good as any definition of the best of pop music.


Peggy Lee

Some of the essays in this collection strain more with a need to neatly categorize various social identities through song, trying to demonstrate how the metamorphoses of these songs cleanly reflect a changing America. The mildly bewildering "Whittling on Dynamite: The Difference Bert Williams Makes," attempts to show how Bert Williams's blackface band "Two Real Coons" legitimizes Spivak's precarious notion that "subaltern speech may be halting and self-defeating...but subaltern song is different." To be fair, the author eventually argues that "authenticity is relative," which is possibly the most important—and certainly most accurate—argument in the collection. "Magic Moments, the Ghost of Folk-Rock, and the Ring of E Major" by David Brackett loses its way when Brackett tries to use E Major to trace a lineage of "magic moments" and "cross-racial ventriloquism" where folk-rock demonstrates its affinity to and separation from African-American hymn and blues groups. An essay by Jason King also stumbles by ill-advisedly taking on the task of defining "vibe." The title of the article is "The Sound of Velvet Melting: The Power of 'Vibe' in the Music of Roberta Flack"; there is, it must be said, something slightly absurd about an academic discussion of what constitutes "vibe" or a "magic moment"—*especially* when what's at stake is an attempt to explain racial borrowing (in the case of this article, to show how a singer like Flack can be defended against arguments that she is the African-American version of Olivia Newton John. Of course she shouldn't have to be defended from such an absurd, essentialist claim; yet rather than making that point, King relies on the awkward assertion that the sole thing Flack and John have in common is their ability to "[produce] getting togetherness").

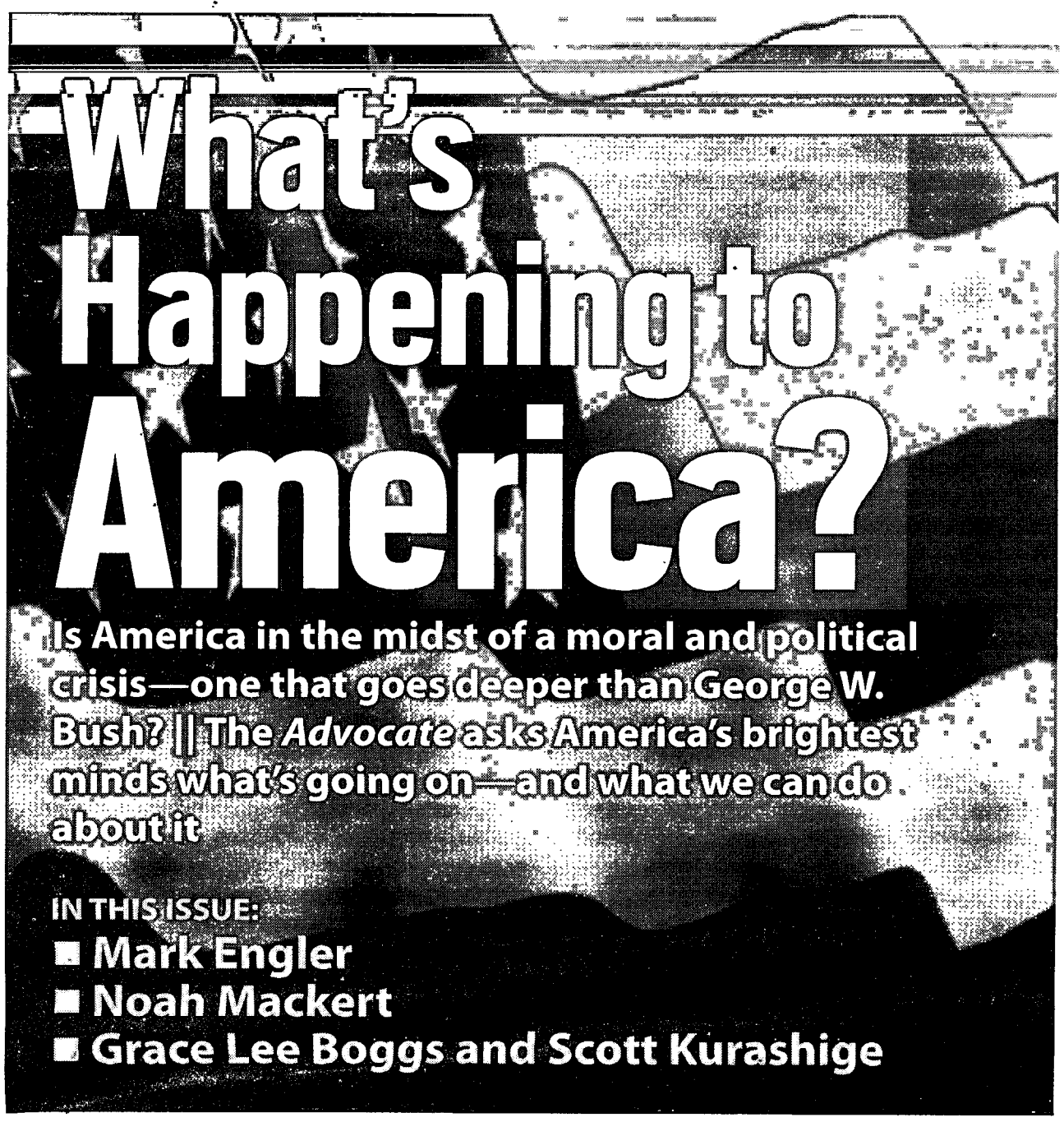
There is a way, of course, in which articulating the lineage of American music is useful—that's why we cherish our musicologists, that's why we know Elvis became Elvis only because of the history of African-American rhythm and blues in the South—but there's something discomfiting about the desire to produce clean and articulate racial conversations out of the transference of narrative in song. It may leave someone wondering, is that all there is? It can feel as though there is something paradoxically inauthentic about the forceful prioritizing of identity politics on these songs. The thing that makes Dock Boggs's masterpiece "Sugar Baby" work is not that the song marks a crucial moment of intersection between African-American and hillbilly music, although that's key. What really makes the song tick is the moment when the singer cries, "'Who'll rock the cradle, who'll sing the song? Who'll rock the cradle when you gone?'" and then answers, for the wife he has just killed, "I'll rock the cradle, I'll sing the song / I will rock the cradle when you gone." The creepy pathos here is more complicated, and powerful, than we're able to attend to if our antennae is only tuned to regionalism, race, and sexuality—in short, the politics of identity.

On the other hand, rock and roll and pop music are about nothing if not finding one's identity and articulating one's roots; if only, in the end, to destroy the discovered self. Brackett reminds us of the wonderful scene in *Ghost World* when the main character—a brilliant geek and an obsessive music collector (played by Steve Buscemi)—goes to a bar and, attempting to explain to a blonde at the bar the difference between blues and ragtime, is interrupted by her exclamation, "'If you're into blues, you've got to be into Blueshammer!' which turns out to be the white trio the old man is opening for. They come storming onto the stage, the apotheosis of fake, of cultural theft and blues rape, smashing out their own 'Pickin' Cotton Blues.'" The reason the moment in the film is funny is because its cringe-worthy; all music fans—especially fans of "Old-Time" music—negotiate a social contract which stamps a gold star on authenticity. These fans are often as cynical and skeptical as the rest when it comes to the reinvention of identity. Still, there is a need—a deep, nearly *patriotic* need—to believe in an authentic American musical voice that is constantly co-opted by other American posers, if only because locating and defending the Real Thing gives us all something to do. It's no crime to romanticize authenticity. The very act may be a way to praise wholeness—the birth of something before it is marred by co-optation, bastardization and confusion. That kind of romanticization bears its heart in articles that try to build themselves around the justification of such a thing as the "magic moment" or "vibe."

"The Buddy Holocaust Story: A Necromusicology" by Eric Weisbard, reminds us why rock "strikes some as so miraculous and others as an unbearable travesty of privilege impersonating impression." The subject of his essay is a young man named Bill Tate, who in the late 1970s capitalized on postpunk Americana with such songs as "Give Me Your Love or I'll Destroy the World" (which included the couplet "Yes you can say no / But earth will have to go"). The legacy of "Buddy Holocaust" ended (or began) when he killed himself by driving into a median on the Corona del Mar Freeway in Los Angeles at the age of 21. A friend called Tate's version of pragmatic nihilism "a response to the cold war and his inability to find a sexual partner." The story is a tragedy; it also problematizes a reading that says multiple, swapping non-personas are at the heart of rock and roll (or any kind of compelling, moving art, for that matter). There are real artists behind this music. Yet the identity of one overlaps with the next who covers their song. Of course, the cover will often be mistaken for the original. One author notes this happens every time someone sings Bobby Gentry's "Ode to Billie Joe" at a karaoke bar and opens with "Here's my favorite Reba song."

Sure, the overlapping identities comprising the history of American music can't logically lead us to the conclusion that the self in rock and roll is a moot or outdated notion. But a conversation about the meaning of pop music should have other avenues to saunter down than social-identity politics. The actor Shane West, who performed with the remaining members of The Germs well after Darby Jones's death (in order to promote a documentary about the band), reportedly got permanently tattooed with Jones's tattoos. When he's on stage singing Darby Jones's line, "I am not one I'm two" over and over and over again, doesn't this encourage us to consider more the idea of the postmodern fragmentation of the self (if not multiple personality disorder) rather than an "authentic," singular, individual or group experience of the world?

Perhaps rock music is always about the reinvention of the self; this at least complicates the assumption of a real individual lineage. Weisbard argues persuasively that "being sophomoric, partially educated but sure that you know it all, irrationally committed to impossible positions, so full of yourself that you burst, is as much a vital part of the rock masquerade as blackface or drag." Indeed. And these qualities, one assumes, remain unmarked by culture, and are instead blessedly, stupidly human, purely everyone's. Maybe nihilism in rock music (from Boggs's murder ballad to Buddy Holocaust opening a concert with "This is not going to be too mellow. In fact, if you leave during a song you'll be shot") is not about whittling down to the "real" self but instead exploding the self in reinvention, a philosophy of multiple personas. This kind of multiplication, the endless potentials for who we might be, perhaps leads us to better understand who we really *are* even if it scares or disappoints us: a response to the cold war and our inability to find a sexual partner. Yes you can say no but earth will have to go. I will rock the cradle when you're gone. Ⓐ



MARK ENGLER

The End of the 'End of America'

Over the past year, the writer Naomi Wolf scored a significant hit with her book *The End of America*. On October 31, just days before our recent presidential elections, *The Independent* of London published a commentary by Wolf reiterating the book's argument that our country was descending into fascism. She wrote, "If you look at history, you can see that there are ten steps for turning an open society into a dictatorship." She contended that the US government under Bush, with its warrantless wiretaps and extraordinary renditions, was well on its way toward completing each of these steps. Despite the strongly positive signs given by all available polling evidence at the time, Wolf doubted that an Obama victory could ever happen, saying that it would be "a miracle."

The notion that America is in a state of decay, whether moral or political, was a popular trope long before Naomi Wolf ever took it up, yet it grew ever more prevalent during the Bush years. Especially in recent times the question, "What is happening to America?"—the topic of this symposium – has invited the knee-jerk response that our country is going to hell in a hand-basket. Last summer, my large extended family gathered in Wisconsin for a reunion. A younger cousin of mine, an eighth-grader with a precocious interest in politics, recruited me to help him survey the political beliefs of our relatives. When asked whether America was heading in the right direction, everyone in the family, whether right or left, answered "No." It was the one question in the poll that everyone could agree on.

Wolf's argument, however, always seemed profoundly flawed to me. No doubt, the Bush administration perpetuated some frightening violations of civil liberties and undertook a troubling centralization of state power. But the idea that this represented a unique stroll down the path toward totalitarianism relied on an ahistorical nostalgia for a past United States, vigilantly lawful and democratic, that never existed. Stolen elections are nothing new in American history—and, as conservatives who ruefully remember Kennedy's victory in Chicago in 1960 will remind us, they have not always gone to the Republicans. Although activists of past decades may not have been hindered by Bush's "no-fly lists," they all too often faced Pinkerton goons, Jim Crow lynchings, and COINTELPRO raids.

If the victory of Barack Obama does anything, I hope that it will bring an end to the idea of "The End of America"—at least in this most facile form—and force us to reckon both with our country's troubled history and with the more subtle challenges that remain ahead.

Amid the current financial crisis and the disastrous war in Iraq, we are now hearing a fresher set of doubts about America's future. These predict an end of empire. They suggest that our country's superpower will falter, for better or for worse, and that we will be overtaken by rising rivals such as China and India.

These concerns are closer to the mark. But they, too, echo familiar choruses of the past. From the left we have heard persistent intimations that each new economic panic might be capitalism's last. From the center and the right we heard in the 1980s the fear that Tokyo was buying up America, and that we would soon be made to bow down, at least in an economic sense, before our Japanese overlords.

I worry that today's talk of the loss of imperial power might form another type of "end of America" rhetoric that does little to advance progressive efforts. It contributes neither to shaping a long-term vision of what our society might become nor to addressing the political demands of the moment. The decline of an empire is usually a decades-long process. Even if this is truly the fate of the United States, we cannot afford to remain spectators during that span.

In the short term, our challenge today is to prevent the Obama administration from following the same path as the last Democratic White House. Social movements must mobilize to ensure that the new president not only repudiates those brutish aspects of the Bush administration that led some liberals to cry fascism. We must also work to see that President Obama rejects the strategies of corporate globalization and domestic neoliberalism—the rule of the market over ever-greater swaths of public life—that flourished even during the Clinton years. We must make sure that putting Wall Street at ease is not the sole preoccupation of his public policy—especially considering that it was Wall Street at its easiest and most free-wheeling that created the economic crisis we are now experiencing.

In the longer term, we must question whether a New New Deal is the best future that we can hope for. Because, ultimately, we have good reason to believe that it is not enough.

In response to the editors' question, "What is the biggest open secret in American life?" another writer in this series responded that the sprawling, high-consumption form of American life that we have known in past decades "is absolutely unsustainable." I agree. A neo-Keynesian strategy that uses government spending to revive the American people's appetite for spending and consumption might well succeed, pulling us from what could have been a much deeper economic downturn. We should hope that it does. But then we will have to reckon with the fact that this very hunger is exactly what has been driving us toward collective destruction by route of global warming.

The hope that a future of complete tragedy might be averted does not need to be based in a vision of a past America that was pure and good. On the contrary, our best hope is in recognizing the deep national flaws that previous generations have already confronted and overcome—in acknowledging the work of movements that successfully brought about an end to slavery and poll taxes, the widespread elimination of domestic sweatshops and the creation of the weekend.

At their best, these movements have shown the ability both to adapt to new troubles and to envision a country better than what ever existed before. That, rather than yearning for a mythical early America or satisfaction with a return to more recent economic comfort, is what our future will demand.

Mark Engler, a senior analyst with *Foreign Policy In Focus*, is author of *How to Rule the World: The Coming Battle Over the Global Economy* (Nation Books, 2008). He can be reached via the web site http://www.DemocracyUprising.com

NOAH MACKERT

Lessons from the Bronx

Last winter, I watched a young teacher pull down a projection screen, walk over to an LCD projector and remove the lens cap. We saw a black and white photograph of three black men at a diner. Instead of eating, they merely sat, looking at the camera. The teacher walked back to the front of the classroom and asked, "How did these men use non-violent resistance to achieve their rights?"

Terrence raised his hand. He was 15, too big for his desk, too old for the 8th grade and only interested in class when serious issues were being debated. "Why ain't there any white kids in this school?"

It was a good question.

To give a full answer, you would have to go way back, to when New York was New Amsterdam, and the Bronx was forest. Dutch colonists, men like Lewis Morris, who built his estate with slaves from Barbados, and Jonas Bronck, after whom the borough is named, settled the land and drove out the Lenape American Indians, and their ancestors who farmed there for nearly three hundred years. Around the turn of the twentieth century, the Bronx evolved into a home for immigrants of all kinds: first Germans and Jews, then Irish, Italians, Poles and Slavs, and blacks and Puerto Ricans. It was known, during the roaring twenties,

through the depression and after the Second World War, as a place where people were stable, where you might be poor but you worked hard, tolerated your neighbor and saw that your kids went to college.

That was the golden age. What happened next, from the late fifties to the mid-nineties, has unfortunately come to define the borough worldwide. The fabric of society seemed to unravel. Heroin flooded the city, youth gangs took over the streets, and families disintegrated or moved out. The whites were gone by the mid-sixties, to Riverdale, in the West, or to Co-Op City in the North. City planners like Robert Moses built housing projects and superhighways atop poor but intact communities. Then, the money to maintain these experiments dried up. The Bronx began to burn; roughly 100,000 housing units were lost to fire and arson in the seventies alone. After a lull in drug-related violence, crack hit like a plague, and the murder rate skyrocketed. This nightmare, depicted in Paul Newman's 1981 *Fort Apache: the Bronx* and Adrian Nicole Leblanc's 2003 *Random Family*, the land of drugs, gangs, theft, rape and murder, is what most people picture when they think of the Bronx.

So it may be confusing to hear that when Bill Clinton stopped by the Madison Square Boys and Girls Club in 1997, he hailed the Bronx as a model of urban renewal. By that time, the population was growing again; construction was booming, ranch houses and 5-story apartment buildings with blue air conditioners in the windows stood in formerly vacant lots; and the murder rate had dropped to pre-1965 levels. "If you can do it," said Clinton, "everybody else can do it."

What happened? As with the current economic collapse, many factors contributed to the sudden fall and slow revitalization of the South Bronx. The descent into chaos resulted from some combination of bad welfare policies, bad housing policies, the de-facto segregation of the poorest citizens into high-density public housing, the development of suburbs and the creation of Co-Op City, the tendency of whites to leave browning neighborhoods, the destruction of communities by highway construction projects, the viral spread of cheap drugs, the epidemic of abandonment and arson, and the general economic collapse of the Northeast.

By the mid nineties, however, crack had receded, and $5 billion set aside in the eighties by Mayor Koch, a proud Bronxite, was helping to rebuild the borough. Community organizations worked to see the money spent wisely, on construction and basic services, but they were equally useful as watchdogs. In the early nineties, for example, the Northwest Bronx Community Clergy Coalition (NWBCCC) took Freddie Mac to task for providing improvement loans to landlords that were much larger than the value of the buildings. Today, the Bronx is still poor—one of the poorest urban districts in the country—but it is cleaner, safer, and more hopeful than it has been in a long time.

So what does the Bronx have to do with America? That depends on to what extent the lessons of the Bronx, particularly the South Bronx, America's original inner-city, apply to the depressed areas in Baltimore, Philadelphia, Washington D.C., Los Angeles, Oakland, Dallas, Houston, Minneapolis, Cincinnati and Detroit. Who deserves credit for saving the Bronx—community activists, lawyers, mayors, or the federal government? How will the Bronx continue its upward swing? Can schools eradicate poverty, or do we have to solve poverty to improve schools? Does anyone in the rest of America really care one way or another?

I have my own opinions about these issues, and so do a host of bloggers and columnists. But I wanted the opinion of real Bronxites, so I began calling my friends and former pupils to ask them: what is going on in the Bronx, and what does it have to do with America?

Ernest, a barrel-chested superintendant and single father, was guardedly optimistic. He believed a whole generation had been lost to the ravages of the 60s, 70s and 80s. "But the people have changed," he said. "The younger people today are more active socially and politically. With the older ones, I just don't see anybody out there." He said he was hopeful that the Bronx was improving, but "if the next census comes around, and the Bronx is still on the bottom in terms of wages, then how can you really talk about change?"

Dolores was similarly guarded. She is a solid, white-haired woman who is the primary care provider for her grandchildren and who lives on the top floor of a housing project. I asked her who had been an advocate for the Bronx. She thought a while and said, "I remember when President Carter came through. That was significant for us. But you know, when it comes to politicians, I don't trust none of them." She excused herself to tend to the stove. "I'm sorry, but I've got to teach these boys how to make fritters."

On the night of the election, I talked to Enrry, a ninth grader, and a former student. He was excited about president-elect Obama, as are all my former students, who are black and Latino, and whose parents overwhelmingly vote Democratic. I asked him whether he thought the Bronx was getting better. "Well, there's, like, a lot of new buildings, and the bus stops are new." We chatted for awhile about how things used to be. Then, at the end of our conversation, he asked me, "Mr. Mackert, if the Bronx is getting, like, real nice, are the rich people going to move in soon?"

And today, on the third of December, I talked to Eric, another ninth grader. He expressed neither hope nor fear—he was too busy at school. But he tried to stay informed. "Every morning I take the newspaper down to the cafeteria, and I read it," he said. His classes were going well. There was only one that was giving him trouble: criminal law. "And I've got a test coming up." I asked him what he was studying.

"Torts."

As soon as I can receive that kind of news without tearing up, I'll know we're making some progress.

Noah Mackert is a writer and educational consultant in New York City. He is currently working on a memoir about teaching special education in the Bronx. His writing has appeared in *The New York Times Magazine*.

GRACE LEE BOGGS AND SCOTT KURASHIGE

Where Do *We* Go From Here?

It was block by block, from the ground up, community organizing that won the White House for Barack Obama. Inspired by his eloquence and audacity, his commitment to change we can believe in, and his faith in himself and human possibility, tens of thousands of Americans, of all ages, ethnic backgrounds and faiths, members of unions, churches, synagogues, peace, women's and other community groups, discovered in them/ourselves the energy that comes from renewed hope and commitment to a just cause. So, especially after the Democratic convention, we/they went door to door, block by block, in neighborhoods all over the country, persuading strangers and folks who had never voted or who had lost faith in voting, to vote for Obama. It was a great feat—one worthy of celebration.

Where do we/they go from here? Some people will use the experience to advance their own careers. Others will be content with Obama's closing down Guantanamo and undoing similar Bush-Cheney abuses. Still others, outraged at Obama's appointments of unyielding Zionists, rightwing Democrats, and economic heavyweights whose only concern is growing the economy will organize protest demonstrations, trying to push Obama to the Left. Or they will regret that they did not vote for Ralph Nader or Cynthia McKinney.

We will not be among them. As Grace remarked in her first post-election column for the *Michigan Citizen*, "I think that Obama has already done our country a great service by encouraging tens and hundreds of millions all over the world to believe that America can change and that together we can change it. I do not delude myself that despite Obama's formidable multi-tasking skills, he will be able, in the Oval Office, as commander in chief of the US Armed Forces, struggling to extricate this country from two unwinnable wars which have become occupations, saddled with a trillion dollar deficit, and needing to court both Republicans and Democrats even for modest health care legislation that will not make us more healthy but only make health insurance more available, to initiate the profound changes in our values, in how we live, how we make our livings and how we educate our children, that are urgently needed at this milestone in our evolution when we are in the midst of a cultural transition as far-reaching as that from hunting and gathering to agriculture eleven thousand years ago and from agriculture to industry three hundred years ago."

Changes of this magnitude cannot come from the top down, only from the ground up. Thus, we need to look in the mirror, recognizing that putting demands on the state is not enough. We must also put demands on ourselves. At the end of 1966, four months before his anti-Vietnam war speech at Riverside Church, Martin Luther King Jr. wrote "Where Do We Go from Here?: Community or Chaos" in which he called for "a radical revolution of values" against "the giant triplets of racism, materialism and militarism." It would be fitting if on January 20 as we celebrate Barack Obama's inauguration we also commemorate MLK's 80th birthday by holding teach-ins on this little pamphlet.

Why is revisiting the writings from the last years of MLK's life such an urgent task? We know, for starters, that King was so deeply concerned about poverty in America that he was mobilizing a Poor People's Movement to bring about sweeping structural reform. Given the widening scope of the financial/housing/credit/unemployment crisis, the idea of ending poverty seems an even more elusive dream today than in the 1960s.

At the same time, however, we must listen to the voice of MLK the philosopher—not the Social Democrat but the dialectician who thinking historically, had recognized that Karl Marx, the young Hegelian, had been seduced by the materialism of the 19th century. King recognized that the unbridled pursuit of economic growth, which this country had embarked on at its inception, had brought miracles in technology, comforts and conveniences but was also the root cause of our racism, materialism and militarism, destroying community and participation and ending in our spiritual poverty, spiritual death and the need to grow our souls.

In a recent interview with Bill Moyers, self-described conservative Andrew Bacevich, a Boston University Professor and retired U. S. Army Colonel who lost his son in the Iraq war, raised the specter of this MLK warning when he pointed out that "Our major problems are at home, not out there somewhere."

What's Happening to America?

"We want to be able to pump gas into our cars regardless of how big they may happen to be, to drive wherever we want without having to think about whether or not the books balance at the end of the month. What neither Obama nor McCain can do is persuade us to look ourselves in the mirror, so we rely increasingly on the projection of American military power around the world to try to maintain this dysfunctional system."

Since the Vietnam War period, Bacevich warned, the United States has become an "empire of consumption." We refuse to live within our means. So we rely on our military power. We can't expect Congress to change this situation because "the imperial presidency" is its creation. It has thrust all power on the executive branch and now exists primarily to assure the re-election of its members.

So beyond the welcome surprises of 2008 (and the three decades of living in denial under Reagan/Clinton/Bush) lies a stark reality we must confront. American militarism has spun out of control, creating chaos around the globe while undermining our economic security at home. The world's finite supply of fossil fuels, the wellspring of consumer capitalism, is running out. There is no confident helmsman steering the ship of the global capitalist system, which may even be in a terminal crisis. And climate change is a runaway train that may soon reach the point of no return, if it has not already. No matter what your analysis of Obama's *politics* is, there is no doubt that we *are* in store for big changes that will—for better or for worse—work themselves out over 5, 10, 25 and 50 year horizons.

Embracing MLK's call for a "revolution of values," which links self-transformation and structural transformation, will require many of us—especially those who come out of the materialist tradition of American leftism—to develop a whole new vision of social transformation beyond New Deal liberalism, social democracy, national liberation, Bolshevism, or any other vestige of the industrial age.

What a movement to create a revolution of values strives for is something far more profound than a redistribution of the wealth created by an unsustainable and dehumanizing system. We are talking about a new model of community and of building more respectful and fulfilling ways of living, of relating to others, and of relating to the earth, so that we may transcend our profligate ways that have led America into an endless series of wars and led the world to the brink of ecological catastrophe. Of not just ending our dependence on foreign oil and giving tax cuts to the middle class, but of creating a real bottom-up economy that is more local, more participatory, more sustainable, and more rooted in self-reliance rather than dependence on transnational corporations.

Now we must also realize that the massive housing foreclosures destroying whole neighborhoods are the result of the sad reality that on much of Main Street as well as Wall Street we have created a casino economy by assuming that we can live endlessly on credit. By recognizing our own culpability instead of putting all the blame on others, we can discover the power within each of us to change the world by changing ourselves. One way to begin a new conversation, not only with Obama supporters but also with those who voted for McCain, is by providing examples of how we would be safer and happier if we lived more simply so others could simply live.

What we need are not stopgap measures like the bailouts concocted by George W. Bush and his Wall Street Secretary of the Treasury. What we need instead is a paradigm shift toward a solidarity economy whose foundation is the production and exchange of goods and services that we and our communities really need. Like the activists who sparked the first American Revolution in December 1773 by throwing overboard crates of tea on British-owned ships in order to declare their independence from English colonialism, we need to burn our credit cards to demonstrate our independence from the casino economy. At these rallies we need to declare our commitment to creating local economies based upon new principles and ethics of real work.

Building a movement to create a new economy based on new ethical principles and an appreciation of one another and of the needs of the earth will require us to think dialectically, to comprehend how reality is constantly changing due to the working out of new contradictions. There is no better place to start than to transcend the narrow parameters of debate surrounding "the future of Detroit," which the media and politicians wrongly equate with the future of the big 3 automakers. If we can think dialectically about the dilemma that Detroit thrusts in our face, we will better equipped to consider the challenges and possibilities confronting us in the age of Obama.

Detroit, on the one hand, is exactly as Thomas Sugrue portrays it in his brilliant historical work, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis*—blighted and barren, economically depressed and starkly segregated after decades of sprawl, discrimination, and capital flight. A city built for two million people is now home to just over eight hundred thousand. If you tour the many ruins of the city, you will come away with a strong sense that this is what the heart of a dying empire looks like.

On the other hand, the most radical activists in Detroit—those who understand that it is neither practical for working-class people to wish for auto industry jobs to return, nor desirable to bring back the dehumanizing culture of the industrial era—are creating a whole new way of living. Forced to endure an exodus of jobs, plummeting housing values, and financial crises for several decades running, a growing number of local residents are beginning to view deindustrialization and devastation as an opportunity to rebuild, redefine, and respirit Detroit from the ground up as a "City of Hope."

By choice and compulsion; the bearers of this new movement insist that we see the collapse of industrial capitalism as a moment of liberation, an opportunity to reclaim our humanity.

There is a wide range of activism in Detroit to address issues of work, education, arts, youth, spirituality, sexuality, policing, urban design, and much more. But the best symbol of a paradigm shift in thinking about radical social change is the urban agricultural movement. Next to a hulking abandoned factory, you can find urban farmers who have dug up entire city blocks to grow organic produce, connecting elders from the rural South with alienated youth whose schools have been turned into medium-security prisons. We are growing our own food in hundreds of community gardens, planting fruit trees, and creating a new kind of public high school where pregnant teens learn biology not mainly from books but by gardening and caring for farm animals.

On the west side we are establishing centers like Hush House where young people and returning prisoners rediscover and rebuild their human identity. On the east side, a district like Hope District where local residents grow not only food but their souls by weaving new dreams and doing work that serves the needs of the community.

The continuing meltdown of the global economic order won't be a pretty site for anyone, but because of these ongoing efforts Detroiters will be far more prepared than most Americans. As Rebecca Solnit wrote in a wonderful piece for *Harper's Magazine* ("Detroit Arcadia," July 2007) "Detroit is where change is most urgent and therefore most viable. The rest of us will get there later, when necessity drives us too, and by that time Detroit may be the shining example we can look to, the post-industrial green city that was once the steel-grey capital of Fordist manufacturing."

The questions we are grappling with in Detroit have begun to envelop people all over the map. Across the United States, the local foods movement is helping Americans cope with spiraling food prices, at the same time slowing down global warming and making us healthier because we are not importing adulterated foods grown on factory farms and transported thousands of miles in gas-guzzling trucks.

Indeed, urban agriculture may be the fastest growing movement in the United States. In Milwaukee, it is spearheaded by Growing Power, the tiny two acre urban farm started by Will Allen, the former pro basketball player, which not only supplies food for hundreds of Milwaukee families but helps them create their own gardens as a base for rebuilding their neighborhoods and also conducts workshops for urban agriculture pioneers from all across the country.

"We have to go back to when people shared things and start taking care of each other. That's the only way we will survive. What better way to do it than with food?" said Will as he was honored with a 2008 MacArthur Genius Award.

In neighborhoods all over the country the economic meltdown is forcing people to rethink the waste of suburban living and SUVs and the cost of shopping at malls rather than neighborhood stores. So this Thanksgiving people will be swapping stories of an older generation whose hands were more calloused but who cared not only for themselves but each other. *By these diverse means we are embracing the power within us to create the world anew, thereby freeing* ourselves from our elected officials in Washington who disempower us by promising solutions that encourage us to think like victims dependent upon them for crumbs.

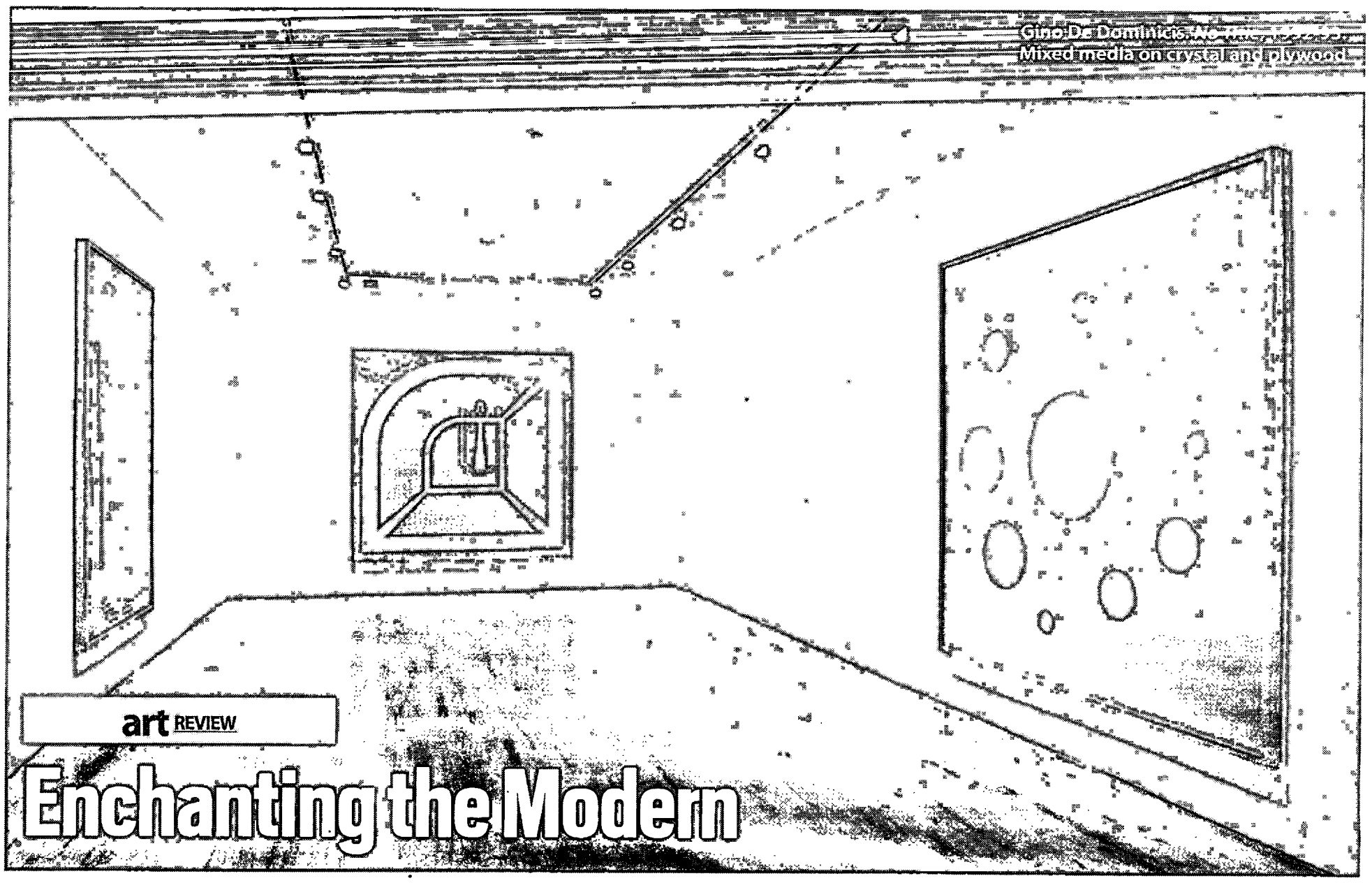
Movement elder Vincent Harding, reflecting on the meaning of Obama's election, offers the metaphor of midwifery to put it into context. "So as I sat one August night in Denver among the tens of thousands of on-site witnesses to Barack Obama's acceptance speech," he recently wrote, "it seemed obvious to me that my young brother seems to offer the place where all the 'we' people can stop our waiting and carry on our work to create the pathway, the birthing channel toward 'The land that never has been yet, and yet must be.' Not only is something trying to be born in America, but some of us are called to be the midwives in this magnificent and painfully creative process."

Harding reminds us that the new possibilities that are animating millions of Americans and people around the world did not spring out of thin air and they were not handed to us from above. They were potentialities that millions of us have nurtured for years. Now we must continue to care for them and help them blossom. We are the leaders we've been looking for. Ⓐ

Grace Lee Boggs is a 93-year-old philosopher/activist based in Detroit and the author of *Living for Change: An Autobiography* and *Revolution and Evolution in the 20th Century* (with James Boggs). She writes a weekly column for the *Michigan Citizen* newspaper and has been the subject of feature interviews on *Bill Moyers Journal* and *Democracy Now*.

Scott Kurashige is associate professor of History, American Culture, and Asian/Pacific Islander American Studies at the University of Michigan and author of *The Shifting Grounds of Race: Black and Japanese Americans in the Making of Multiethnic Los Angeles*, recipient of the 2008 Albert J. Beveridge Book Prize from the American Historical Association.

Both are board members of the Boggs Center to Nurture Community Leadership (www.boggscenter.org).



art REVIEW

Enchanting the Modern

NATASHA KURCHANOVA

▶ Gino De Dominicis at P.S. 1. On view October 19, 2008 - February 9, 2009. 22-25 Jackson Ave at the intersection of 46th Ave, Long Island City.

P.S.1, the official affiliate of the Museum of Modern Art in Long Island City, has recently become a more attractive place of pilgrimage for art lovers than its revered parent. A series of exhibitions opening there this past month enhance this trend. Amongst them, Gino De Dominicis' solo show stands out in scale and ambition. De Dominicis is relatively unknown in this country, but he has achieved a legendary stature in his native Italy. He entered the art scene in the late 1960sat the onset of the Conceptual art movement. Although the P.S.1 exhibition does feature some works from the late 1960s and early 1970s that appear to be influenced by this movement—such as a small drawing *1+0=0* or *The Rubber Ball Dropped from Two Meters at the Moment Immediately Preceding the Bounce*—the artist vigorously denies any ties to Conceptual art. According to Laura Cherubini, the curator of the exhibition, he always insisted on remaining outside the art "system" in order to oppose the dominance of the Duchampian readymade principle, underlying the Conceptualist aesthetic. In 1982 De Dominicis made an unequivocal gesture to that effect when he showed his painting *In principio era l'immagine* at the Sperone Gallery in Rome and displayed a toilet seat next to it to make the point that the painting was an art object, whereas the toilet seat was not, despite being shown in the same context.

Continuing the critique of Conceptual art by the Italian group *Arte Povera* De Dominicis made works such as the painting *Zodiac,* where he depicted animals, people, fishes, and ancient pottery with great truthfulness to life, all set against a bright blue background of photographic paper. Because De Dominicis is a very skillful draftsman, the painted figures, objects, and animals look like photographs. The entire work looks like a collage, which it is not—it is a painting. De Dominicis makes an unambiguous pictorial statement here in an attempt to return to images their power to enchant and transfix, rescuing them from their transformation into signs or ideas that could be best presented in ways not visual. In his audio recording *D-IO*, which broadcasts the artist's laugh ad infinitum, De Dominicis literally makes fun of the multi-tasking of much of post-1960s art—of its stepping outside the strictly visual framework of a two-dimensional painting or drawing and engaging with theater, performance, architecture, and technology. The title of the piece clearly refers to the famous "0.10" exhibition of 1915 where Tatlin and Malevich displayed for the first time their iconoclastic works, such as three-dimensional counter-reliefs and Suprematist paintings, including the *Black Square.* In *D-IO,* however, the artist proclaimed himself the Creator with a capital "C" ("D" stands for De Dominicis; "IO" is Italian for "I") and ridiculed the Russians' attempt to extend art into three-dimensions for the benefit of the communal utopia (Tatlin) and to bring painting to its "zero degree" (Malevich). *D-IO*, shown as part of an installation including *Unique Work: Unique Image of a Non-Existent Statue*—a 1973 painting of a laughing statue of the Virgin—serves as the ultimate rebuttal to the attempts to bring art closer to the earth, to desublimate it.

In a predictable and even inevitable way, this quest to return the sacred aura to a work of art was extended by De Dominicis into his own life where he transformed himself into a mythic figure of sorts. As a result, unbelievable stories about the artist abound and, because of his eccentric personality, it is sometimes difficult to separate truth from fiction. From his friends and acquaintances we learn, for example, that he is an inveterate gambler; that he comes from a noble family wealthy enough to own palaces; that he likes the night life, wine, and women; and that he, as his friend Andrea Bellini says, always "demands and receives absolute devotion, unconditional love." Giovanni Giuliani recalls that when he invited the artist to his palazzo to see the installation of one of his paintings, De Dominicis suggested sending an assistant to paint over the sixteenth-century frescoes on the ceiling, because he felt that they were making his work look less impressive. The supreme ego of the artist manifested itself on multiple occasions, which were transformed into stories and anecdotes by those who knew him as well as by the artist himself. As Alanna Heiss, the director of P.S. 1 recalled, describing his behavior at the 1972 Venice Biennale: "Gino spun tales and myths about himself without any corrective mechanism or inhibition. ... He was known to intentionally mythologize his past to a point beyond lying, to a level where fantasy became confused with reality, by not only himself, but also those around him." One of the most enduring myths that he perpetuated concerned his own death. He predicted his own death to the very hour, day, and year, and was supposed to have died on November 29, 1998—a fact that still remains unchallenged by Wikipedia. In 1999 a posthumous exhibition was organized by Alanna Heiss; some friends deplored his untimely end, but some had the temerity to doubt its authenticity. They were incredulous, because even at the beginning of his artistic career in 1969, the poster announcing the artist's first solo exhibition in Rome looked like an obituary. For the artist who suspended temporal sequence in his works and abolished the difference between the past, present, and future, this introduction was appropriate.

For De Dominicis, the medium of painting constitutes the supreme mode of artistic expression and what we see at P.S.1 this year is mostly paintings. Many of these paintings are meant to be icons—in form, technique, and spirit. The works are grouped not only by color—"golden" paintings in one room, "blue" in another, "red" in a third—but also by iconology. In different rooms De Dominicis investigates different attributes of iconic representation: for example, one room is devoted entirely to faces while backgrounds are the focus in another. A third room is dominated by studies in perspective, and clouds in a fourth. All of these studies are extremely abstracted and look as eternal as Brancusi's sculpture.

In the "faces" series, for example, we can observe the incredibly fine work of a brush or a pencil tracing the contours of a three-quarter turn of the head or its profile we usually see on an icon: a fine aquiline nose, a beautifully rounded contour of the face, a Mona Lisa smile (at least in one *Untitled* painting). In the room dedicated to "backgrounds," several canvases, display the lushness of the gold-leaf settings of Byzantine icons accentuated by what looks like almost accidental cut-outs of geometric figures—circles, lines, and triangles—which in fact may be painted on top of the gold. The artist is characteristically secretive about his materials and his methods: as a rule, labels do not clarify the subject of the work or the materials used.

Apart from icons and paintings inspired by religion and despite his dissociation from other artists, De Dominicis is strongly influenced by his compatriot Giorgio de Chirico. The "blue" room in particular has many of the same timeless, open vistas with sharp shadows and partially lit mysterious objects, and uninhabited landscapes. For many artists of his time, de Chirico exemplified a "new order" for which the European sensibility was yearning as a refuge from the Futurist and Dadaist turmoil and disintegration. The dimension of de Chirico's *pittura metafisica* which brings the discombobulated world back together in an eerie, surreal, eternal space is definitely present in De Dominicis' work, although he seems to pay more attention to materials, craftsmanship, and the sacred, awe-inspiring aspect of the work than de Chirico.

Death and eternal life are not the only subjects that De Dominicis deems worthy of exploring. Another recurrent theme in his work is unconditional, everlasting love. The basement room of the exhibition space, where *Zodiac* and *D-IO* are displayed, also features the *Urvasi and Gilgamesh* drawing from 1980, where—somewhat like in the *Etant Donnés* by Duchamp—a perspective opens up to our view. Instead of the Duchampian erotic spectacle, however, we see a Renaissance vista with lakes and mountains in the distance.

Upon closer inspection, it is clear the uneven edges framing the vista, which resemble a broken mirror, are in fact profiles of a woman and a man. The woman is Urvasi, a nymph from Indian mythology and the man is Gilgamesh, a Sumerian king and inventor who wished to live forever. As Gabriele Guercio remarks, for De Dominicis the imagined love between a celestial nymph and an earthly king, a goddess and a mortal, a woman and an artist exemplified a path to immortality. Apparently, the artist developed an interest in the Sumerians in the late 1970s, when he learned that the European civilization and spirituality may be traced to Sumerian myths, cultures, and institutions. The bringing together of an Indian goddess and a proto-European man who died several millennia ago into an image and a story about love is an act that transcends time and space, myth and reality, cultural borders between East and West and creates a beautiful legend, which we all want to believe. Consistent defiance of the laws of narrative and history brings De Dominicis to the image as the only force that is able to bear witness to what is left sacred to man—his immortality. Ⓐ

MUSIC REVIEW

Composers and Conversation

NAOMI PERLEY

- George Crumb, *The Sleeper*, *Vox Balaenae*, and *Voices from the Morning of the Earth* at Carnegie Hall.
- Works by Charles Wuorinen at the Guggenheim.

Many people feel intimidated by attending concerts, especially those focusing on new music. They don't know the scene, they don't know the music, they don't know the performers. Sometimes programme notes are helpful, sometimes they're not. So why not attend a discussion-concert?

Several of the city's cultural institutions offer concert series in which each performance spotlights a different composer, featuring both performances of some of his or her works and an on-stage discussion with the composer. Earlier this month, I attended concerts that belonged to two of these series: Carnegie Hall's *Making Music*, and the Guggenheim's *Works and Process*.

The concert at Carnegie Hall featured three works by the composer George Crumb: *The Sleeper*, *Vox Balaenae*, and *Voices from the Morning of the Earth*. At the beginning of the concert and immediately after intermission, Carnegie Hall's Jeremy Geffen interviewed Crumb onstage.

Seeing any composer in real life is always exciting. Just as in the pop music world, classical musicians tend to mythologize composers—but in some instances it goes much further than in pop music, as most composers are dead. We fantasize about what it would have been like to meet Beethoven in person, to see Liszt play his own devilishly hard compositions on the piano, to meet Brahms for a pint in the local biergarten... but ultimately we can never know.

Before attending this concert, I knew and admired a couple of Crumb's better-known works: *Songs and Ancient Voices of Children* and *Makrokosmos*. However, I knew almost nothing about the man himself. I hadn't given much thought to his age or even his place of birth, so I was quite surprised to see a white-haired man, with thick glasses, and a white moustache, come out on stage. I was even more surprised when he spoke with a West Virginia drawl.

When Crumb speaks about his compositions, they come alive. He recalls in vivid detail the ideas behind each of his compositions, and, what's more, he's willing to share these secrets with the audience.

Discussing the first work on the program, his song "The Sleeper," Crumb pointed out that he had only set certain lines of the Edgar Allen Poe poem of the same name because he just didn't like all of the poem; he found it to be too dark, and chose to set only the lines he found most beautiful to music.

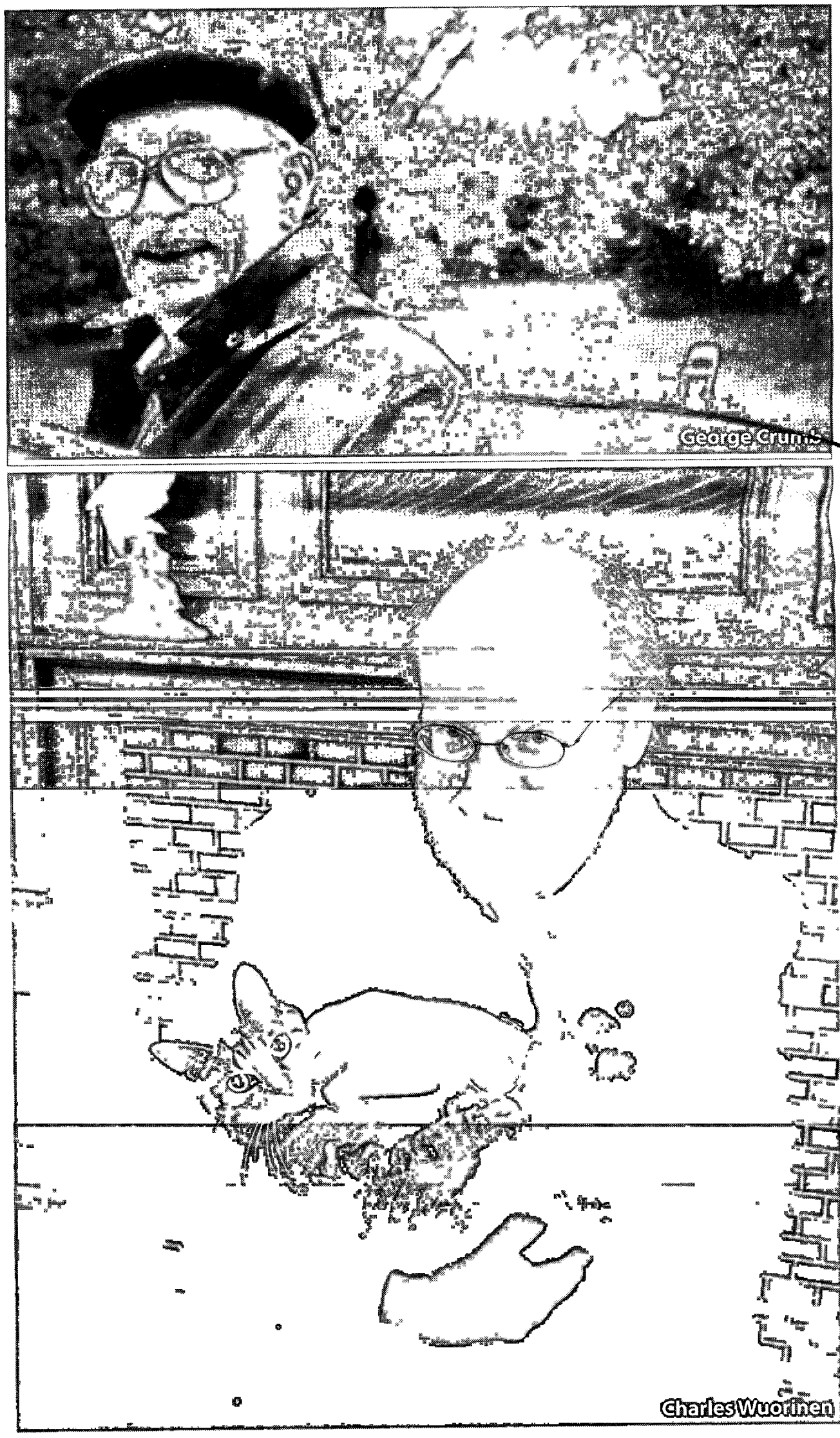
His comments on *Vox Balaenae* were equally revealing. The piece was composed in 1973, for piano, flute, and cello, and has become one of Crumb's best known works. The title is Latin for "voice of the whale." Crumb was moved to write *Vox Balaenae* after hearing some of the very first recordings of whale song. While these sounds are readily available today, up to the first forty years of George Crumb's life, it just was not possible to hear that sound.

Equally surprising were Crumb's revelations about one of the most striking aspects of a live performance of *Vox Balaenae*: all three performers are required to wear masks. While Crumb is known for emphasising the dramatic aspect of music-making, and waxed poetic about the "choreography" of Beethoven's string quartets, he insisted that this was not his intent with the masks. Rather, he had requested that the performers wear masks because his work represents the music of nature; he felt that the performers themselves should intrude as little as possible. Obviously, he remarked, that concept had backfired!

After intermission, Geffen and Crumb discussed *Voices from the Morning of the Earth*. This group of ten songs marks the final instalment in his *American Songbook* cycle, a project that has occupied him for the last decade. Crumb talked briefly about the genesis of the cycle: his daughter, Anne, who began her career as a Broadway singer but is now transitioning to the classical world; asked him if he would compose concert settings of some of her favourite Appalachian songs. He has since expanded beyond Appalachian folk songs; this final volume contains African-American tunes, such as "When the Saints Go Marching In," cowboy songs such as "Goodbye Old Paint" (also used in Aaron Copland's cowboy-themed ballet, *Billy the Kid*), and some more recent folk tunes by Bob Dylan and Pete Seeger ("Blowin' in the Wind" and "Where Have All the Flowers Gone?" respectively).

Crumb sets these familiar tunes for two singers, four percussionists (who together play over 150 different instruments in the work), and piano. Just as Ives, Bartok, and Mahler would situate the folk and popular music of their time into their own, often dissonant, sound-world, so too does Crumb. For example, one of the original tunes was based on the

continued page 31



theater REVIEW

Anthems for Doomed Youth

FRANK EPISALE

- *Surrender*. Conceived and directed by Josh Fox. Written by Josh Fox and Jason Christopher Hartley.
- *Black Watch*. Written by Gregory Burke. Directed by John Tiffany.

Publicity materials for the The International WOW company's *Surrender*, which closed in November but will return for a one-week engagement in January, point out that "99.5 percent of all Americans will not serve in Iraq or Afghanistan. The divide between soldier and civilian has never been greater in American history." This fact serves as the potential audience's "invitation to get some first-hand experience" which concludes: "Don't pass it up."

Surrender is an interactive evening of theatre co-created by International WOW artistic director Josh Fox and Iraq War veteran Jason Christopher Hartley, whose wartime blog (www.recognizant.com/myiraq) was published as the memoir *Just Another Soldier: A Year on the Ground in Iraq*. The first act of the piece begins when the audience enters the theatre. After signing waivers stating that they are physically sound, men and women are herded into separate dressing areas and handed army fatigues, boots, and a plastic bag in which to place their civilian clothes and any other belongings they brought with them. Once everyone is changed, their laces and buttons properly fastened, the audience is divided into squads, handed replica rifles, and assigned sergeants who will lead them through a series of combat training exercises under the direction of Hartley himself.

Basic marching commands—keeping rifles at "low ready" with safeties on; raising rifles to "high ready," and firing; entering and clearing a room in cooperation with other squad members; searching the dead; carrying the wounded—are conveyed with extraordinary efficiency by Hartley, whose military experience and professionalism are evident in his every utterance. The squad leaders, actors who presumably do not have real military experience, were trained by Hartley when International WOW was working on their film *Memorial Day* and, for the most part, perform admirably. Conducting training exercises with more than fifty people in the relatively confined space of a downtown theatre could have been a logistical train wreck. Despite some mild verbal abuse and the occasional audience member forced to drop and do push-ups as punishment for one error or another, *Surrender* is, among other things, an impressive feat of social engineering and traffic management.

In the second act, the "squads" are asked to put their new training to the test in a haunted house-like maze meant to simulate a combat mission in Iraq. Speakers overhead blast the soundtrack of war: bullets, planes, helicopters. Squad leaders shout instructions to confused participants, who rush to clear rooms, search bodies, and carry the wounded as best they can. The regimented, rational order drilled into them in the first act inevitably breaks down as things begin to go wrong. It also becomes clear that these rules, even as they break down, are what keep soldiers alive.

While engaging and productively frustrating, Act II does not succeed quite as strongly as Act I does. This is, in part, because the training exercises never pretend to be something other than what they are. Hartley refers again and again to the fact that he's conducting theses drills not with recruits in basic training but with a bunch of theatre fags in SoHo. This transparency, along with Hartley's authoritative presentation, lend *Surrender*'s opening sequence an authenticity it doesn't quite maintain once the "bullets" start to fly. As with haunted houses, the very knowledge that things are about to get "scary" makes it very difficult to actually be frightened by anything that happens. Nevertheless, Act II is a largely successful exercise in interactive theatre that gives at least a hint of the ethical and logistical confusion that confronts soldiers when they apply lessons learned in training to actual combat situations.

After the second act, during which one audience member has been "killed" and many others have found themselves far less focused and cool-under-pressure than they would have liked to believe, it is announced that the squads will be flying home. Cheap beer is poured. Scantily clad, star-spangled women dance provocatively to classic rock and hip-hop while the soldiers cheer them on. This intermission of sorts serves as a segue into the third act of the performance.

Act III is intended to be an expressionistic montage of scenes representing a soldier's post-traumatic reintegration into society. Unfortunately, it is a conceptual mess, with too many scenes, too many obvious images, and too few insights. Adding to the muddle are moments of "dramatic karaoke" during which audience members are called forward to participate in scenes, reading their lines from a screen while actors play the other parts. These scenes were uncomfortable on a number of levels, but not in the ways that Fox and company intended.

Despite the failings of its third act, *Surrender* is a uniquely worthwhile experience that finds theatre practitioners and audiences thirsty for engagement with, and relevance in, the world around them. The show's many successes and admirable ambition go a long way towards making up for its lapses into pretention and self-satisfaction.

* * *

In *Fahrenheit 9/11*, Michael Moore memorably mocks the "coalition of the willing" that aided the United States in our invasion and occupation of Iraq. Over stereotypical, arguably racist, footage from Costa Rica, Palau, Romania, and other coalition nations, Moore makes the oft-stated point that the great majority of the fighting in Iraq has been, and continues to be, done by US troops. Indeed, in our news coverage of the war, it is unusual (though not unheard of) to come across any reports focused on the achievements and struggles of our allies, even the British, who have committed, and lost, considerable numbers. The National Theatre of Scotland's breathtaking *Black Watch*, which is currently enjoying an encore engagement at St. Ann's Warehouse in Brooklyn, serves as a potent reminder that it is not only the United States military that has suffered loss of life, dignity, and reputation as a result of the Iraq War. The Black Watch is Scotland's oldest and most prestigious military unit. The brigade's long history and many honors are passed on to new recruits as a point of pride, as something to protect and preserve. When *New York Times* critic Ben Brantley (among others) declared *Black Watch* the theatrical event of 2006, and called it "one of the most richly human works of art to have emerged from this long-lived war," that initial run of the production quickly sold out. While I was grateful when it was announced that the show would return to Brooklyn for its final engagement, I was also skeptical that any evening of theatre could live up to the adulation that had been heaped upon *Black Watch*.

In some ways, I was right. The text itself, written by the respected playwright Gregory Burke, is unremarkable. A solid but unexceptional docudrama built around interviews with and anecdotes from regiment soldiers, *Black Watch* reads like any one of a dozen recent war plays. The text, though, is not the show. What render this production so extraordinary are its exuberant theatricality and the quality of its ensemble.

Two sequences in particular stand out as unforgettable: One which recounts the history of the regiment through a flurry of tightly choreographed and athletically performed on-stage costume changes; and the final scene, in which the ensemble marches in parade formation but finds itself collapsing as various individuals stumble and are rescued by their compatriots. It's a thrilling and devastating sequence that cannot adequately be described by either stage directions or the words of a reviewer.

While it would indicate a kind of historical amnesia to suggest that the current war in Iraq is the only unjust and incomprehensible one in which the British have engaged, there is an unmistakable disillusionment permeating the stories told by these Black Watch soldiers, a disillusionment born of wounded pride, traumatic memories, and the funerals of too many friends. Ultimately, *Black Watch* is about the seductive dual tragedies of masculinity and nationalism, two of the forces that have driven so many generations of men to their graves in the name of causes that have not been adequately explained, but which they are expected to take on faith and to defend with their lives. Ⓐ

Surrender. Conceived and directed by Josh Fox. Written by Josh Fox and Jason Christopher Hartley. Created and performed by the International WOW Company. "Dramatic Karaoke" by Sanford Wintersberger. Lights by Charles Foster and Scott Needham. Sets by Nicolas Locke. Choreography by Hettie Barnhill. Reviewed at the Ohio Theatre, 66 Wooster Street (closed; ran October 29–November 16 at the Ohio Theater, 66 Wooster Street. One week encore engagement: January 7–12, Wednesday–Saturday at 7pm. Sun at 4pm, Monday at 5pm and 7:30pm. Clemente Soto Velez Cultural Center, 107 Suffolk Street. Tickets: $20. See www.wowsurrender.org for further details.

Black Watch. Written by Gregory Burke. Directed by John Tiffany. Sets by Laura Hopkins. Sound by Gareth Fry. Lights by Colin Grenfell. Costumes by Jessica Brettle. Video Design by Leo Warner and Mark Grimmer. Featuring: David Colvin, Ali Craig, Emun Elliott, Ryan Fletcher, Jack Fortune, Paul Higgins, Henry Pettigrew, Nabil Stuart, Paul Rattray, Jordan Young. Produced by The National Theatre of Scotland. At St. Ann's Warehouse, 138 Water Street, Brooklyn. October 9 through December 21. Wednesday–Saturday at 8pm. Friday at 3pm. Sunday at 2pm and 7pm. Tickets: $55. See www.stannswarehouse.org for further details.

film REVIEW

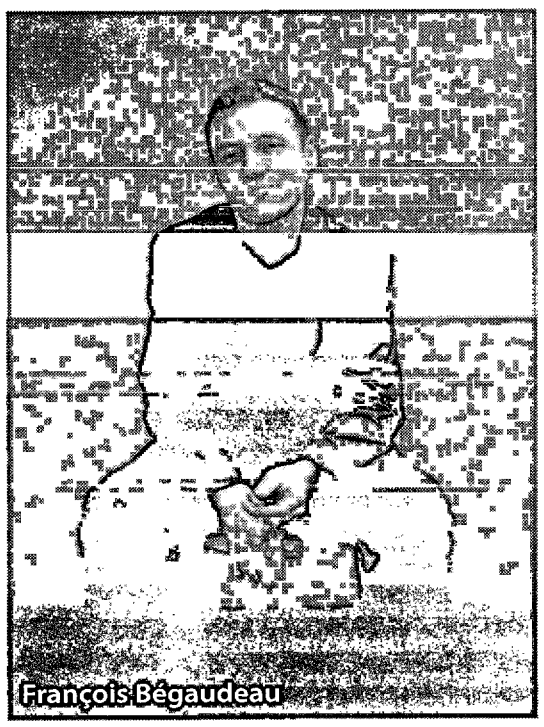
From Paris to New York


A scene from *Entre Les Murs*

NICHOLE WALLENBROCK

- *Entre les Murs [The Class]*, directed by Laurent Cantet.
- *Synecdoche, New York*, directed by Charles Kaufman

Although the English title of Laurent Cantet's seventh film, *The Class*, explicates the film's subject, a Parisian school's ninth grade class, it lacks the greater symbolism of the original title *Entre les Murs* (literally "between the walls" in English). This spatial reference, lost in translation, indicates the importance of the actual classroom that houses all the frustration and wonder of the fourteen year-olds who study French with Mr. Bégaudeau. (In fact, only three scenes of the film take place outside the classroom and they are still within the confines of the high school.) In this way the film maintains its focus on the school environment and how the structure affects students and their teachers, and only rarely alludes to what might occur outside the school walls.


François Bégaudeau

If you did not know, you would probably believe that *The Class* was a documentary. The students are expertly photographed, usually with a hand-held camera. But unlike *Rachel's Getting Married*, which desperately attempted realism with a whip-cam and shaky shooting, the camera floats and effortlessly focuses on acne-faced, braces-wearing, rebellious teens who appear so typically proud and confused, that the line between fiction and documentary disappears. Though neo-realist films have often cast non-professional actors, an entire ensemble of fourteen year-old non-professionals playing themselves in high school trumps any realism an older person off the street might offer. In addition, the principal teacher is played by the film's screenwriter, a real teacher who taught in Paris and penned a best-selling novel about the experience before making it into a script. So François Bégaudeau, like most of his students, shares his name with his character, and performs with all the honesty this suggests.

It is astonishing that one feature film about a high school class in Paris can address so many of France's contemporary problems in less than two hours. In particular, *Entre les Murs* looks at how French identity is defined by kids whose relationship to France is complicated by immigration, community, and a non-ethnic authority figure. Although Mr. Bégaudeau's class is relaxed, violence ensues when one student refuses to use the polite address of "vous" with his teacher, demonstrating the importance of language in maintaining order. Of course language is central in a French class—Mr. Bégaudeau's challenge is to make proper French relevant to kids who do not hear French spoken "correctly" outside of the classroom.

Never fear: *The Class* does not employ Hollywood's "white-teacher-in-a-rough-neighborhood" formula, popularized in films like *Dangerous Minds* and *Freedom Writers*. There is no happy ending where the children realize their worth and set goals, and there is no sad ending where the students despair, and engage in self-destructive activities. The film simply presents a year of high school existence and allows the audience to analyze this chapter's greater significance. The last shot of the film leaves the audience with a chill: the classroom, where the children and teacher have exchanged knowledge and emotions, is for the first time seen empty. The space swells and reverberates with the transient meaning of all that has taken place between the walls.

* * *

Meanwhile, a world away, anyone who saw the preview for *Synecdoche, New York* anxiously awaited what promised to be the king of Charlie Kaufman films. The trailer guaranteed all the confusion of time and space that has become Kaufman's signature. Even more exciting, this time Kaufman would direct! In the past, as screenwriter, he enhanced the surreality of his scripts with the creativity of music-video directors Spike Jonze (*Being John Malkovich)* and Michel Gondry (*Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* and *Human Nature)*. However, in *Synecdoche, New York* Kaufman is left to his own devices to either soar in amnesia or drown in self-pity. He decidedly does both.

Synecdoche, NY is the most ambitious installment of Kaufman's work, perhaps because it is the most self-referential. Therefore one imagines that Kaufman carefully considered our nation's finest actors before choosing Phillip Seymour Hoffman (who won an Oscar for *Capote)* to play the agonizing hypochondriac. Although Hoffman's ability and range cannot be denied, his talents seem lost in the circular world of Kaufman. Where Truman Capote *went* from a witty and gay best-selling author to a morbidly intoxicated loner, Caton, in *Synecdoche, NY,* changes more through age-altering make-up than through character development. We know that Caton is a talented artist because he wins a prestigious grant to write and direct a play, yet no statements or actions worthy of such awards are apparent. Moreover, one assumes that despite his paunch and negativity, Caton attracts beautiful women (Michelle Williams, Samantha Morton, Hope Davis) because of his artistic genius; on closer examination the women's enchantment with Caton appears only as the icing of a generally dystopic, but fully hetero, male fantasy.

In short, this is a study of one (white male) artist's consciousness, of his internal fears, failures and desires—a fact which could improve or ruin the film for you depending on how much you identify with Caton. Obviously Kaufman identifies with the director of his creation, and in fact the director/character relationship is not dissimilar to that of Fellini and his alter ego Guido in *8½*. In both films, macro- and microcosms blur while exploring the interior world of a creative mastermind (a man whose imagination is really none other than that of the film's director). And, although casting the overweight Hoffman as oneself is much more self-deprecating than casting pretty boy Mastroianni, it is fully appropriate in a pessimistic film with a depressive perspective.

Yet where Guido's failure ultimately becomes a triumph in *8½*, *Synecdoche, NY* ends as a post-9/11 failure. The world Caton attempts to recreate in a warehouse swings out of proportion until he is left wandering through the remnants of a war-ravaged industrial city. The last thirty minutes, which drag steadily closer to Caton's demise, simulate his fatigue and despair leaving the audience equally exhausted. This oversight in editing overshadows Kaufman's circular mirroring twists which keep the script alive in the film's first half. Eventually, what was as grotesque and haunting as a Francis Bacon self portrait, becomes tired, dull, and repetitive. Yet this might be precisely the view of life Kaufman wanted to portray. Ⓐ

DSC Halloween!

Pictured: Rob Faunce (top), Gregory Donovan and Suzanne Tamang (right), Kyle Ferguson (bottom) at the DSC Holloween Party in October.

More DSC Party Time Ahead

If you thought our Halloween party was fun, wait until you do the holidays with the DSC!

The DSC Holiday Party: GC 5414, around 8:00pm, December 12—come trim the tree with good cheer!

Reps Needed

If you are a student from an unrepresented (or under-represented) department, please consider representing your department at the DSC. Simply contact Co-Chair for Communications Rob Faunce (robfaunce@gmail.com) for more information; a complete list of reps' rights and responsibilities is available from Rob on request.

The unrepresented departments are Audiology, Business, Earth & Environmental Science, Electrical Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, German, Liberal Studies, Mathematics (2), Nursing Science, Physical Therapy, Physics, Psychology: Clinical, Psychology: Cognitive Neuroscience, Psychology: Educational (2).

The underrepresented departments are Music (PhD) and Sociology. Ⓐ

Music Review

Continued from page 28

pentatonic scale, which has been used in folk music around the world. It became associated in the early twentieth century with Asian music in particular, though, and here Crumb plays with this association by accompanying this very American folk tune with Asian percussion instruments and idioms. And in his raucous setting of "When the Saints Come Marching In," Crumb adds to the original tune the cacophony of six marching bands playing at once in a parade—creating an effect not so different from his predecessor, Charles Ives.

The performances of all three works were inspiring, particularly the performance of the flautist in *Vox Balaenae*, who, among other extended techniques, must at times play the flute while singing. As you can imagine, this is no mean feat, but not only did she pull it off, she had a beautiful singing voice to compliment her excellent tone on the flute. All three instrumentalists together created a captivating performance that left me spellbound. Even without hearing Crumb speak, this concert would have been a highlight for hearing them play this challenging work.

The standout on the rest of the program was Anne Crumb, who sang in both *The Sleeper* and *Voices from the Morning of the Earth*. Her American accent perfectly suited her father's works. Her acting experience helped her to convey the varied emotions of the songs, without quite falling into the realm of overacting. Her fellow soloist in *Voices from the Morning of the Earth*, baritone Randall Scarlata, and the instrumentalists were quite competent too, but Ms. Crumb clearly stole the show.

The Guggenheim's *Works and Process* series is more far-ranging than Carnegie's *Making Music*. Not only does it cover a wider range of performance arts, from classical music to jazz to ballet to spoken-word, but it offers many more programs—twenty-five total in 2008 alone!

The concert I attended honoured the composer Charles Wuorinen's 70th birthday. It began with a short work—*Praegustatum for James Levine*, for solo piano, performed by Wuorinen himself. Then came *The Mission of Virgil*, a work for two pianos dating from 1993. This performance marked the premiere of the piece as a ballet, fulfilling Wuorinen's original intention for the work. After the intermission was Wuorinen's song cycle *Ashberyana*, composed in 2004.

In this instance, I had mixed feelings about the discussions. Wuorinen's music is notoriously difficult both to perform and to listen to, as it comes directly out of the harsh, dissonant atonal tradition of Arnold Schoenberg. Wuorinen would seem to be a perfect candidate for this type of event; his music needs explaining in a way that the music of more accessible contemporary composers might not. Yet he seemed reticent to talk about his own music, stating repeatedly that he just "didn't remember" all that much about this or that aspect of a piece, because he had composed it awhile ago and simply didn't think about it anymore. However, each discussion featured other personalities who were integral to the two big works on the program, the choreographer Sean Curran and conductor James Levine, and they both had many interesting things to say.

The Mission of Virgil was inspired by the British poet/painter William Blake's illustrations of Dante's *Divine Comedy*. Curran outlined the general narrative of each movement, pointing out along the way things that the audience should watch for in his production. He also discussed the process by which he came up with the choreography: studying Wuorinen's music and consulting with the composer, and studying many different depictions of Dante's masterwork, including those of Salvador Dali.

As in the Crumb concert, the second half of Wuorinen's concert featured a song cycle, *Ashberyana*. Scored for baritone, trombone, two violins, viola, cello, and piano, in this cycle Wuorinen set poems by the American poet John Ashbery. Maestro Levine, in discussing the work, found the pairing to be quite appropriate: he sees Ashbery's poetry as being primarily about language, and Wuorinen's music as being primarily about music; in other words, art for art's sake. Levine also made some interesting comments about performing Wuorinen's music. He praised Wuorinen for the clarity of his performance indications, something not readily apparent to the audience but that has a big impact on the quality of a performance nonetheless. In relation to *Ashberyana*, Levine praised the clarity of line, despite Wuorinen's potentially heavy orchestration, as well as his naturalistic text-setting.

The outstanding performance of the evening belonged to the Sean Curran Dance Company. Their movement throughout the ballet was fluid and beautiful, and provided an elegant visual counterpoint to Wuorinen's score. "Flight from the Three Beasts," featured one dancer alone on stage; the three beasts were a triple projection of the dancer's shadow onto the rear wall of the stage—the dancer was being chased by himself. "Monsters of the Prime" also featured some interesting lighting: one could only see the silhouettes of the dancers, who stood on each other's shoulders to create writhing, ten-foot-tall, many-limbed creatures.

I wouldn't want to say that either series, the Guggenheim's or Carnegie's, is better than the other. I enjoyed both concerts a great deal, and the performance level at each was very high. I gained more from the discussion with George Crumb than that with Wuorinen, but that's something that will vary with each personality that these series choose to feature. These are by no means your only options for hearing composers speak in New York.

Besides those that live in the area and are regularly featured at various concert series, composers from across the country and around the world frequently stop by in New York. The city's many music schools also offer a number of cheap or free programs featuring composers, ranging from concerts to masterclasses.

* * *

Upcoming performances in Carnegie Hall's *Making Music* include: Elliot Carter on Dec. 12, and Peter Eötvös on Jan. 29. Upcoming *Works in Process* performances at the Guggenheim include a discussion of Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf* Dec. 13-21. Ⓐ

Advocate Editor James 'Jimmy' Hoff(a) Prevents Starving Writers from Organizing

MATT LAU

Mark Schiebe awoke one morning from unsettling dreams to find himself transformed into a music critic who makes only fifty dollars a month. It was no dream. Across the *GC Advocate* community, writers are now so broke they can't even afford to starve. Yet, the more startling fact is that their leftist boss at the paper, James "Jimmy" Hoff(a), like an apparatchik of yesteryear, refuses to raise wages to the levels enjoyed by the untouchable underclasses of the global south's teeming mega-slums.

Although the *GC Advocate* has made noticeable strides in the last few years—including its new sexy tabloid style cover, its contributions from noted left-wing celebrities like Cynthia McKinney and Joseph Stalin, and its "Back Page" investigative reporting into the most salacious and explosive truths at CUNY—the wages of its most essential workers, its writers, give them less than a dollar a day to live on.

"If you think about it," said music writer Anton Borst, "the magazine only comes out seven times a year. That's only $350 a year! We'd make more money pan-handling while reading our articles aloud on the street." Film writer Tim Krause put it like this, "There are more words in most of my topic sentences then there are dollar bills in my bank account thanks to 'editor-in-chief' James Hoff."

"The next time I'm asked to write a book review about the struggles of my people, it will be about us writers, not the descendents of slaves," said book reviewer Lavelle Porter, who, incidentally, could totally take Hoff(a) in a fight.

James "Jimmy" Hoff(a) in the *GC Advocate* office. Behind him is his feared lieutenant, Michael "Matewan" Busch.

The discovery that Hoff and the other senior paper nomenklatura have received substantial raises in recent years is what finally drove the writers to unionize. "We wanted to show our bosses that they can't go on writing passionate editorials about the Nader campaign and refined analyses of the vicissitudes of Venezuelan democracy under Chavez while we can't even afford to buy more than five beers a month at the gentrified, new O'Reilly's," said a writer who spoke anonymously out of fear of reprisals from Hoffa and his thugs.

Unfortunately for the writers, Hoff(a) has plenty of moles amongst their hapless ranks. "As if it isn't easy to flip these pathetic writers!" quipped Hoff(a). "They'll do anything I say for a Chipotle burrito or a review copy a *Revolutionary Autoerotic Meditation: A Brief History of the Queer Buddhist Resistor Movement*!"

Before writers could even come to Hoff(a) for recognition as a union demanding that their wages be increased by at least 200 percent, Hoff(a) sent word that they had all been fired and were going to be replaced by unemployed graduates of CUNY's School of Journalism. Hoff(a) was also able to use another set of unemployed CUNY Journalism alumni as a kind of latter-day private army of the Pinkerton Detective Agency.

"Honestly, now that I'm a Writing Fellow, I've kind of fallen out of the CUNY labor loop," said staff writer Carl Lindskoog. "I didn't even know about the strike. I was just going by James' office to throw some darts and check my email when these 'Democracy Now!' rejects put me in a chokehold with their dreadlocks. I think I have scabies."

"No, I'm not like Andrew Carnegie, championing democracy while I ruthlessly crush my own workers," said Hoff as he left O'Reilly's at 4am on a Tuesday after another night of debauchery. "But I do have a review copy of David Nasaw's new Carnegie biography. I'll give fourteen cents to review it. If I outsourced it to China I'd only pay ten." Ⓐ

ask harriet
BY HARRIET ZANZIBAR

I Just Want Someone to Be Bored With

Dear Harriet,

Over the years you've been asked a lot of strange questions about relationships and love, but you've never really addressed the most important one of all: How do you make a relationship last?

— Afraid of Being Bereft and Alone

Now *that* is a good question, ABBA, and it's also a very timely reminder that not all of my readers are wild-haired cultists with furry squirrel suits in their closet harboring dreams of one day indulging in a three-way in which they're blissfully sandwiched between Madeleine Albright and the Gerber baby. I was recently on a website devoted to cataloging (and snarking) about the endless parade of perversions available on the internet and someone had actually created a thread about "certain grad school newspapers" in "New York City, home of the perverts" that foster "depraved conversations" about "sex and sex-related activities." It was all maddeningly vague but I think, based on a passing reference in the thread to the manliness of fisting, that they were actually referring to the column last May that was guest-written by my mother.

What I find interesting about your question, ABBA, is that you refer to relationships and love, but I think it's pretty clear that they're not the same thing, and you ask not about making love last but about keeping the relationship as preferable to the forlorn alternative in which we sit on the end of our bed in an empty apartment, contemplating the smudged windows that look out onto a soulless amalgamation of concrete and steel and glass infested with men and women whose sole object is their own personal satisfaction, thinking that they became that way because they are wandering life alone without companionship, without the anchor of a human being inside their mind and heart.

If love and relationships are separate entities, separate conditions, then we must consider the relationship in isolation, apart from the love that may have brought it into being.

Can a relationship persist after the love has worn away? Is that a good thing? Are we still better off with someone, rather than being left to fend for ourselves in this nasty, cutthroat, Hobbesian world of greed and desperation around us?

My friend Marie has been in several relationships that lasted years, and everyone always wondered how she did it. I have finally come to the conclusion that she's got an advantage over a lot of the rest of us: She's completely clueless. The warning signs of relationship peril were all there—her partner's mysterious absences, fights about nothing, passive-aggressive notes left on the fridge, and so on.

Yet Marie blissfully went on coasting, leaving things exactly as they were, being just active enough to keep her partners from thinking she didn't care—because she did care, but not enough to fix things or walk away. So this would go on forever until finally the guy had to shake her by her figurative lapels and let her know things were not good. And the funny thing is, after she promised that her wake-up call was received and heard, she's hit snooze again for another year, until finally the boyfriend, still in love but fed up, was forced to walk away. The cynic in me wants to applaud Marie for keeping her relationships going so long, but was she really happy? She wasn't alone, but I have to believe that some amount of the psychic pain her guy was experiencing infected her as well. It seems like she was better off, but I really wonder.

So perhaps we're back to keeping love alive. There's one thing I believe, ABBA, and that's that love is not a passive thing. Work at it. It must be fed and cultivated, like that nice-smelling basil plant in the plastic dish in my kitchen window. You keep love alive by acting on it, making the moments you spend with your loved one matter. Because if you stop watering that basil plant in the window, you might still have a kitchen, but it won't smell as nice. Ⓐ