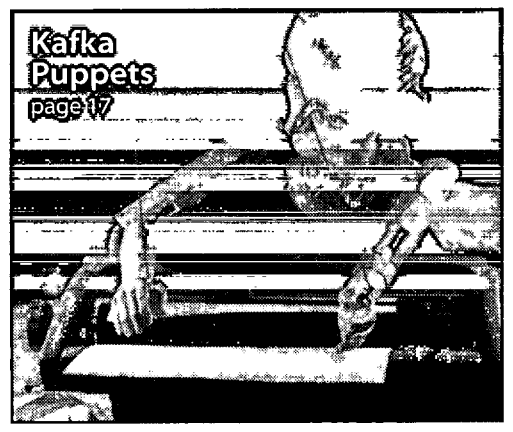
CUNY GRADUATE CENTER
Advocate
May 2009 http://gcadvocate.org advocate@gc.cuny.edu



The End of an Icon?
Future of the "Peace Pentagon" Uncertain

ALSO INSIDE

Advocate

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

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
James Hoff

MANAGING EDITOR
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LAYOUT EDITOR
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CONTRIBUTORS
Meena Alexander
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FROM THE editor's desk

Writer's Block

"You don't know what it is to stay a whole day with your head in your hands trying to squeeze your unfortunate brain so as to find a word."
—Gustave Flaubert

"The imagination is man's power over nature."
—Wallace Stevens

It happens to all of us at one time or another. The blank page, the blinking cursor, the creeping and debilitating panic, the constant distractions, the getting up and walking around and sitting back down and getting up and walking around again. Usually it can be overcome by a force of will, an exertion of ego—as Mailer thought—the suspension of critical judgment, and a lot of furious freewriting. Sometimes, however, like an unwelcome obsession, it can take hold of you and whole hours, evenings, entire days simply disappear.

For the last two days, I have done nothing but bang my head against the wall of my windowless office trying to come up with something to say for this, the last *GC Advocate* of the year. Swine Flu, Bird Flu, Fox News, Arlen Specter's defection, Air Force One, Obama's first 100 days…nothing seemed to click. I had heard somewhere that former *Harper's* editor Lewis Lapham used to spend the afternoon at the bar knocking back martinis before coming up with "Notebook" articles for the magazine, so I figured, what the hell. A few pints at O'Reilly's couldn't hurt, and at least I'd be blocked and drunk instead of just blocked, which is no fun sober.

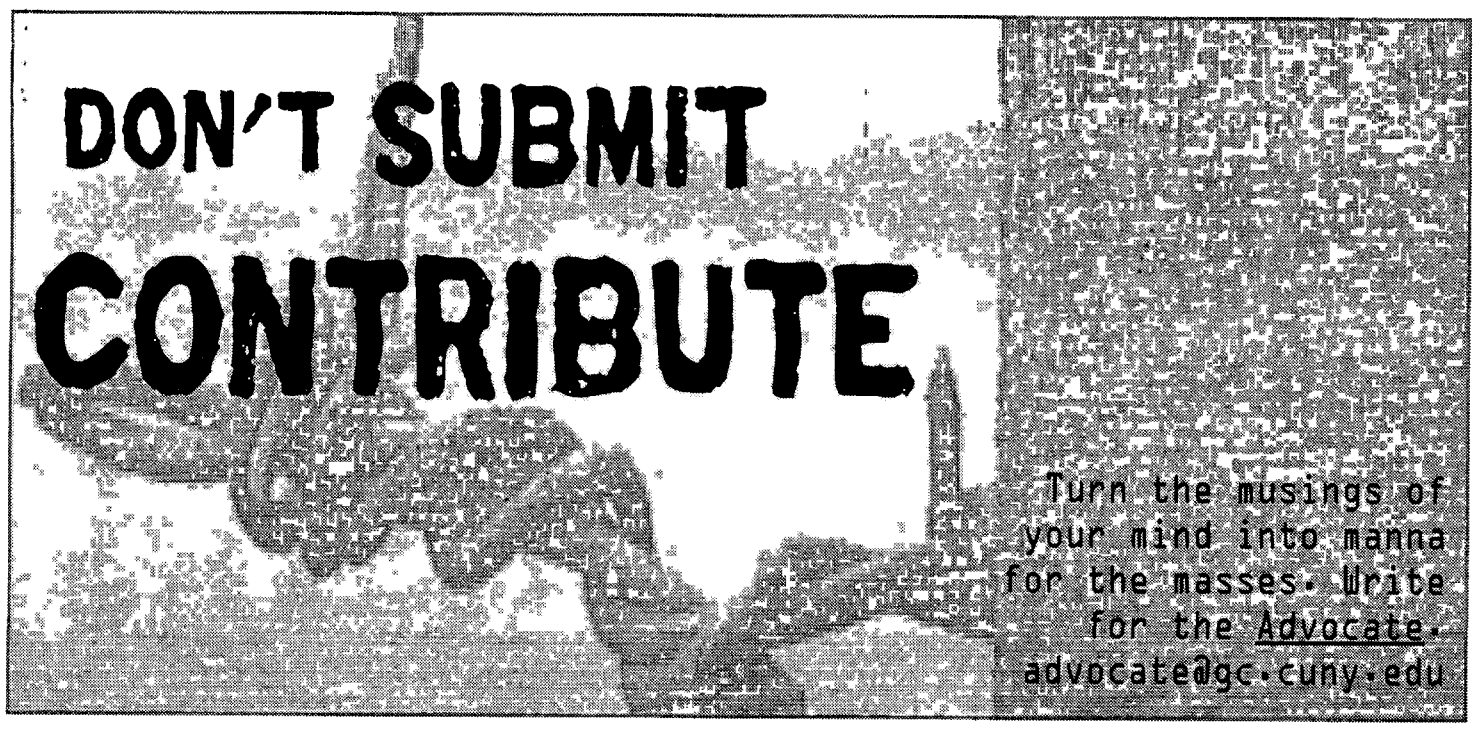
Sitting in O'Reilly's talking to a friend, I realized, like an epiphany, that one of the reasons I was having so much trouble is that I had spent the last couple of weeks working daily and diligently on my dissertation, and that I was so happily wrapped up in the otherworldly esoteric intricacies of that work that the thought of writing about something as pedestrian as politics was not only uninspiring but on a certain level repugnant. My head was in academia, and for once so was my heart, and I realized I was blocked precisely because I did not want to write or even have to think about CUNY politics and Chancellor Goldstein, the pathetic job market ahead of me, or the beat down the NYPD delivered to those poor New School students last month. I wanted to be left alone to write my dissertation in peace, and to hell with the rest of it. But how, I thought, was I supposed to write about poetry and the value of modernist aesthetics when the world of torture memos and suicide bombings kept knocking at my open door? This dilemma, of course, is nothing new, and one that many graduate students are intimately acquainted with. In a world full of so many problems it is not always easy to see how one's own work connects to the bigger picture.

As I enter that magical ninth year at the Graduate Center (Louis Menand told the *New York Times* "it often takes about nine years to complete a dissertation in English") I am quickly beginning to feel like one of those sorry saps I swore I would never become: ABD and out of funding, roaming the stacks of the GC library year in and year out, utterly demoralized and obsessed with their own insignificance. Of course, it is easy to become distracted and disheartened by the daily indignities and seeming immateriality of graduate life and work, and I cannot begin to count the number of times I have had this discussion with friends of mine. And of course, any conversation of more than two or three humanities students inevitably leads to the fateful: "why did I become a graduate student?" "I could have been a doctor or a lawyer." "I could be out there, really doing something, making a difference, or at least making a living, but instead I'm sitting here trying to figure out the difference between ontological and epistemological."

In no profession, except perhaps politics itself, is one more keenly aware that one's ambitions and one's current condition are so far apart, or more desperately afraid to consider what one has given up. In no profession, either, is one more aware of the distance between what one studies and the "actual world" that, at least on the surface of things, seems to do just fine without you and all of your "intellectual labor."

The world of our imagination (that is, the world of our ideals and our ambitions, our visions of what is noble, right, and good), as poet Wallace Stevens knew, is periodically under assault from the pressure of a reality that cares nothing about our happiness or sense of value. Stevens also knew that the imagination was itself a weapon, "a violence from within that protects us from a violence without," and that the surest resistance to a hostile reality was not always the most direct. We may rally and we may fight, we may (and probably should) take over our administrative buildings and college campuses and tell our governor where he can put his new budget; but we must also do the work of the imagination. We must write the dissertations and the books, and the boring, overly annotated journal articles, not only because they will eventually, with luck and plenty of patience, get us a steady and decent position, but because they provide us with the ammunition to defend ourselves from the daily onslaught of bad news and injustices that typify our times.

Faced with nothing but a blank page and a world of often overwhelming violence, it is our obligation not only to recount the hard facts of that world in all of their immediacy, but to draft the possibilities, the subversions, and the alternatives necessary for continually transforming and structuring those facts in more satisfying and meaningful ways. Ⓐ



Student Enrollment to Hit All-Time High

As the economic crisis continues to deepen, many New Yorkers are choosing to return to school, and are looking to do so as cheaply as possible. CUNY has enjoyed a sharp 12 percent increase in applications over the past year, which will likely lead to CUNY's highest enrollment ever next semester.

According to CUNY overlord Matthew Goldstein, rising numbers of applications are to be expected during moments of economic turmoil. Speaking with the *Daily News—Advocate* staff was too busy adjuncting to take his call—Goldstein noted that "When the economy takes a dip [people] run to higher education institutions to shore up their skills."

Goldstein also notes that the financial squeeze suffered by working class citizens makes CUNY schools particularly attractive. At $4,000, CUNY's annual tuition for four-year colleges stacks up nicely against other American universities, where school fees can run as much as $50,000 a year.

CUNY officials expect a total enrollment boost of 25 percent by year's end, and made sure to note that the system's colleges have more than doubled the number of incoming freshman graduating at the top of their high school classes, while also increasing the number of graduate students by roughly 25,000 since the start of the decade.

CUNY community colleges have also enjoyed a significant bump in enrollment, where the number of incoming students has jumped 6 percent already this year. Increased enrollment makes sense, as the job skills offered at CUNY's community college campus are in high demand right now, among employers and employees alike.

Even on the Cheap, Education Costs are Difficult to Bear

While rising numbers of first-time and returning students to CUNY campuses is news to be cheered, incoming students face the unpleasant task of figuring out how to pay for their educations—a particularly daunting challenge in the current environment.

CUNY officials reported that while the number of applications to the system have increased at a healthy clip, these numbers are dwarfed by those of students seeking federal education assistance. In the past year, federal financial aid requests have ballooned by 33 percent, a striking departure from the usual annual increase of 13 percent.

Congressman Anthony Weiner, representing parts of Brooklyn and Queens, chose Baruch College in Manhattan to highlight the importance of increased demand for federal assistance. "We now have another indicator of how difficult it is for middle class New Yorkers," Weiner said. "The number of people asking for financial aid to make ends meet has gone up as the economy has gone down." Despite money allotments set aside for financial aid assistance in the recent federal stimulus package, Weiner argued that the government must take further action to continue insuring that working-class Americans have the opportunity to pursue their education. "We need students being able to come here. We need Baruch to be able to sustain its programs. And the federal government needs to take an active role."


Congressman Anthony Weiner

While Students Struggle to Make Ends Meet, CUNY Fundraising Goals Exceeded...and then Some

Students struggling to find money for CUNY might want to get in touch with Matthew Goldstein. Our esteemed chancellor can't seem to stop people from throwing their money at him.

In late March, Goldstein announced that he had reached CUNY's fundraising goal of $1.2 billion...three years in advance. The chancellor noted that over 200 donors have agreed to hand over at least $1 million each, the largest gift coming from City College graduate Bernard Spitzer. The father of ex-governor Eliot lavished the university with a gift of $25 million which he asked be funneled in its entirety to his alma mater in Harlem.

CUNY expects that by 2015, the chancellor will have extracted over $3 billion from potential and continuing donors. Others are skeptical, noting that the economic downturn will likely tighten the amounts philanthropists would otherwise consider.

Whatever the result in three years' time, the current flush of money is to be welcomed...we think. While CUNY promised to direct spending to student services, scholarship endowments, and new faculty hires, full details have yet been articulated. Stay tuned.

Elections

for Program Representative, Media Board, At-large Representative, the Disciplinary Panel, Student Academic Appeals Officer, and the Student Elections Review Committee

are being held online from 04/01/09 to 05/01/09.

To vote for Program Representative (matriculated students only), Media Board, At-large Representative, the Disciplinary Panel, Student Academic Appeals Officer (matriculated students only), and the Student Elections Review Committee, follow these three steps:

- ▷STEP 1: Go to https://eballot3.votenet.com/dsc/.
- ▷STEP 2: Login with your username and password:
  USERNAME: (Your 9 digit Banner ID #)
  PASSWORD: (Your first & last initial followed by your year of birth)
- ▷STEP 3: **ELECT!** Once you have logged in, a personalized election ballot will be made available to you.

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FOR FURTHER ASSISTANCE WITH THE ONLINE VOTING PROCESS, PLEASE VISIT: **http://www.cunydsc.org/vote**
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adjuncting

Stifling the Economy of Ideas

RENEE MCGARRY

Sometimes data and statistics fail us. I work in the humanities so I'm not entirely surprised to say this, but I was shocked when I saw the data released in a recent report by the American Association of University Professors on the Economic Status of the Profession. Swimming in charts and graphs, it looked as if academics were faring fairly well: salaries were up and it initially appeared that tenured, tenure-track, and contingent faculty were doing all right.

I don't interpret data, and taking the graphs and charts at face value made it difficult for me to reconcile our current subjective situation and the numbers. Fortunately, the AAUP did interpret their statistics, and the situation is as grim as it appears in our own minds and lived experiences.

The economy is hardly stable, which is a large part of the reason that we cannot rely on overall averages to tell us the whole story. Energy costs at the beginning of the 2007-2008 academic year were at an all-time high. These costs then rapidly fell for any number of reasons. This explains why transit costs are the only cost of living expenses that show a decline during the past academic year. (This may seem particularly ironic to New Yorkers, who are faced with balancing the MTA budget on their own backs—with a 20 percent increase in the cost of a monthly Metrocard.)

Even with energy costs decreasing, the cost of everything else was, and continues to be, on the rise. There may have been, as the AAUP states, a "one-time bump in average salaries" from the 2006-2007 academic year, but when adjusted for inflation, full-time faculty salaries in 2007-2008 are only 1.2 percent higher than they were in 2001-2002. The actual inflation-adjusted increase is lower for employees of public school systems such as CUNY. The cost of housing, over the past year alone, was up 2.4 percent, food was up 5.8 percent, and health care was up 3 percent. It's no wonder, then, that even those in the highest echelons of academia are finding it more and more difficult to maintain their lifestyles.

Clearly the nation is facing an economic crisis, and it is carrying over into our education system. According to the AAUP, "in some states, public college and university faculty members are subject to the same salary and hiring freezes, benefit cuts, dismissals, and furloughs that are being applied to other state employees as governors and legislatures struggle to balance budgets in the face of revenue shortfalls. The problem with this shortsighted approach is that it treats faculty members and other higher education workers only as a "cost" to the state, rather than as the engine for growth they really represent."

This statement is interesting for many reasons, not least of which is that the public and academics themselves often view academia as an island, one that has very little impact on the real world. Think what you will of your own and your colleagues' research (and what a dim view of it that is), we are also in the business of educating people. Time and time again during economic downturns, we see the public returning to school, either because they were laid off or they see further education as a means to advance their career. The public isn't wrong: "data reported by the U.S. Census Bureau show that, on average, a person who had completed a bachelor's degree earned almost twice the income of a person with only a high school diploma in 2007. Going on to earn a master's degree raises income again by more than 20 percent, and obtaining a professional degree doubles the salary of a four-year college graduate." As applications increase and faculty members are asked to teach more and larger classes, they are actually aiding in our nation's economic growth.

But budgets need to be balanced, and colleges and universities have been asked to take the hit. It's ironic that as enrollment increases in both two- and four-year colleges, budgets are being scaled back and tuition raised. It's not accidental—here at CUNY only 20 percent of the tuition hike is being turned back over to the university system. The remaining 80 percent will be used to balance the state budget. It's also important to note that CUNY officials are pleased that we are getting such a large amount back; that's a much larger number than has been seen in past tuition increases.

Obviously, increased enrollment has an impact on tenured and tenure-track faculty. They are asked to teach more and larger classes and are often asked to sacrifice some of their specialty courses to teach the basics. Sometimes it's hard for contingent employees to feel sympathy for full-time faculty, but these are real issues. It impacts our own future as potential tenured professors, and it also means that contingent workers are being let go at higher rates.

There seem to be two paradoxical strategies to dealing with rising enrollment in universities when it comes to contingent workers. The first is to hire more of them. In 1975, only 30 percent of university faculty nationwide was part-time. In 2007, the number reached just over 50 percent. This number doesn't come as a surprise. At CUNY, over 60 percent of the teaching faculty are contingent. The second strategy is to, as the AAUP so neatly puts it, rely heavily on the "*contingent* aspect of contingent appointments" and let contingent employees go without cause or recourse. This provides university systems with a "highly flexible" workforce, which is really just a euphemism for paying less money for people with equal education and skills.

Contingent workers in universities aren't all the same. When I was out doing class visits for Campus Equity last month I repeatedly asked classes "What is an adjunct?" Inevitably, the first (and often only) answer that came up was that an adjunct is a graduate student, someone still working on getting her PhD, often overworked from that particular set of responsibilities. I think that graduate students are the most visible of the contingent teaching faculty at CUNY. We often talk about our experiences in school and classes, and, as one student said, "tend to act all crazy and tired all the time." I gently explained to all of these classes that adjuncts can be graduate students, but they also can be [illegible] people with the same education and professional accomplishments as full-time faculty. Additionally, they can also be people out working in their own fields and professions and bringing that experience back to the classroom.

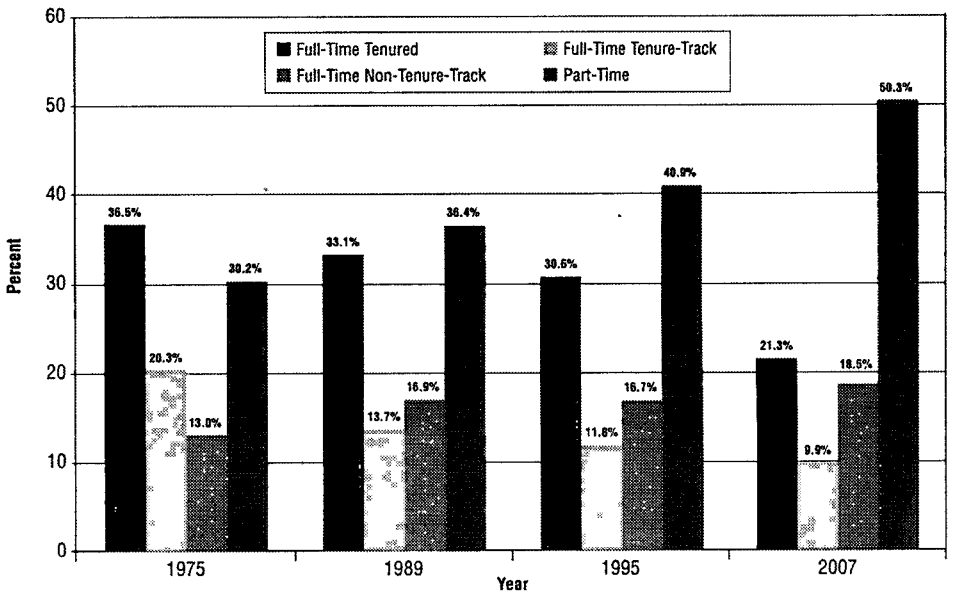
Following a corporate model, it's nice to have all those options. But education isn't a corporation and it becomes impossible to sustain any level of academic freedom within this model. While we often discuss the economic consequences of being so heavily reliant on contingent workers, we gloss over this crucial idea: it damages the university community and the ideal of the university when over 50 percent of teaching faculty do not have academic freedom. Academic freedom has been sacred to the academy, and the use of contingent faculty is a seamless and almost invisible way to erode this fundamental principle.

The AAUP's 2008 release "Looking the Other Way? Accreditation Standards and Part-Time Faculty," argues that there are no sustained and systemic ways of protecting the academic freedom of contingent workers. Four of the seven large accrediting commissions make no mention of protecting part-time faculty in standards, and the remaining three, Middle States included, vary greatly. Most of these statements are broad; Middle States has the most specific: "Academic freedom, intellectual freedom, and freedom of expression are central to the academic enterprise [and] should be extended to all members of the institution's community (i.e., full-time faculty, adjunct, visiting, or part-time faculty)." Without specific definition of any of the three protected categories, this statement becomes useless. Allowing for such broad interpretation affords universities the opportunity to use statements made by contingent faculty within and outside of the classroom as reasons for dismissal (when they don't even need a reason to dismiss!)

Academic freedom can be profoundly misunderstood. It is often touted in the conservative media as some[illegible] single controversial statement made by a politically unpopular professor somewhere. While professors in these instances deserve the fullest protection afforded them, academic freedom goes beyond this. It allows full-time faculty, graduate students, and (hopefully) contingent workers the ability to pursue their own research and political interests without retribution. Without it, academics might not have the opportunity to change from someone who studies Renaissance Italy to someone who studies Colonial Mexico. That might seem trite, but without the ability to make these changes scholars become stagnant and the academy begins to lack fresh ideas and new insight. If scholars cannot pursue their own academic and teaching interests (and cannot speak their minds) an atmosphere of fear develops within institutions and the ability of professors to add to the body of knowledge becomes severely limited.

Given the state of higher education both locally and nationwide, we often focus on questions of the economy. But what becomes of our own economy of ideas and idea exchange when colleges and universities rely too heavily on unprotected classes of workers? In order to maintain a truly flexible workforce, if that is how academics will be considered in our current world, universities must recognize that protecting academic freedom affords individuals opportunities for growth and flexibility, and protects them when someone better, or cheaper, comes along. Ⓐ

Trends in Faculty Status, 1975–2007
(All Degree-Granting Institutions, National)



Source: U.S. Department of Education, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, Fall Staff Survey.

in memoriam

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1950—2009)

ROBERT REID-PHARR

The tremendous impact that Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Distinguished Professor of English at the Graduate Center, has had on the intellectual lives of an entire generation of scholars cannot be overstated. As a writer, teacher, mentor, and friend her sophisticated, precise engagements with questions of sexuality, desire, affect, and emotion have revolutionized literary and cultural studies, gender studies, critical theory, and feminism. Her many books, including *Between Men* (1985); *Epistemology of the Closet* (1991); *Tendencies* (1992); and *Touching, Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (2003) are at once foundational works in queer studies and queer theory while also being rare examples of creativity, sensitivity, theoretical sophistication, and intellectual rigor.

After graduating with a B.A. from Cornell and a Ph.D. from Yale Sedgwick taught at a number of institutions including Amherst College, Boston University, Hamilton College, and Cornell University, finally becoming the Newman Ivey White Professor of English at Duke University. While at Duke she helped to secure that department's reputation as an international leader in both critical theory and gender and sexuality studies. Arriving at the Graduate Center in 1998, Sedgwick continued to distinguish herself as a generous, attentive teacher and a breathtakingly productive scholar.

In addition to her work in gender and sexuality studies, Sedgwick published poetry, a memoir, and seminal essays on both psychoanalytic theory and Buddhism. Elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 2005 and to the American Philosophical Society in 2006, Eve was plainly nice, archly funny, witty, wry, and unfailingly interested in human emotion, culture, and life. The profound loss that her many friends, students, and colleagues feel is only eclipsed by the sense of awe evoked by having been privileged to work and study in the presence of one of this nation's greatest intellectuals. Teacher, friend, visionary, and pioneer, she will be greatly missed and long remembered.

STEVE KRUGER

I first encountered Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's writing in the mid-1980s. A graduate school friend, a fellow medievalist, had *Between Men* on his desk in the library; writing a dissertation on twelfth-century Latin love lyrics found in English manuscripts, he was using Sedgwick to think through the erotics of these obscure poetic texts. It was a while before Sedgwick found her way into my own work: in the late 1980s and early 1990s, when I turned my attention to contemporary lesbian and gay writing, and especially writing about HIV/AIDS, I also found myself turning to Sedgwick, and particularly her formulations about "homosexual panic." In understanding the constructions of masculinity at work in the AIDS crisis, I depended on her observation that, "at least since the eighteenth century in England and America, the continuum of male homosocial bonds has been brutally structured by a secularized and psychologized homophobia, which has excluded certain shiftingly and more or less arbitrarily defined segments of the continuum from participating in the overarching male entitlement—in the complex web of male power over the production, reproduction, and exchange of goods, persons, and meanings" (*Epistemology of the Closet* 185). Later, I met Eve Sedgwick in person, though I'm not sure whether that happened in the Spring of 1998 in the halls of the English Program's former home in the Grace Building, when Eve began teaching at the Graduate Center, or at a downtown party for the magazine *MAMM*, which was focused on breast cancer advocacy, and for which Sedgwick wrote an advice column.

Years of shared oral examinations, dissertation defenses, Friday Forum events, discussions of course offerings, Admissions Committee meetings—all the dailiness of academic life—leave too many impressions to reflect on here. But Eve always showed herself to be thoughtful, sharply intelligent, and, most of all, generous in the attention she gave to students, to colleagues, and to the program of which she was such an important member.

In reflecting on my years of reading and knowing Eve Sedgwick, I keep returning to one moment in *Epistemology of the Closet*, in the first chapter, where Eve lays out her stunningly complex understanding of how the closet shapes modern regimes of knowledge and power. Within this discussion, she deploys a quirky juxtaposition of texts—the recent Supreme Court decision in Bowers v. Hardwick and Racine's *Esther*—to reflect on how (in Bowers) a potential, imagined act of coming out on the part of "a closeted gay court assistant, or clerk, or justice, who might have had some degree, even a very high one, of instrumentality in conceiving or formulating or 'refining' or logistically facilitating this ruling, these ignominious majority opinions, the assaultive sentences in which they were framed" (74-75) might be similar to and yet radically different from Esther's highly efficacious, religious/ethnic coming out in Racine's version of the biblical story. Within this complex argument, parenthetically framed, comes this Sedgwickian reflection:

(Even today, Jewish little girls are educated in gender roles—fondness for being looked at, fearlessness in defense of "their people," nonsolidarity with their sex—through masquerading as Queen Esther at Purim; I have a snapshot of myself at about five, barefoot in the pretty "Queen Esther" dress my grandmother made [white satin, gold spangles], making a careful eyes-down toe-pointed curtsey at [presumably] my father, who is manifest in the picture only as the flashgun that hurls my shadow, pillaring up tall and black, over the dwarfed sofa onto the wall behind me.) (82)

The passage stands in a tangential relation to the main lines of Sedgwick's argument, and it could probably be taken out of *Epistemology* without changing too much how we read that book's argument. Why, then, do I find it compelling, so compelling in fact that I "remember" seeing the snapshot Sedgwick describes, even though that cannot really be the case? In part, it is Sedgwick's remembering herself in the scene of her own theorizing that is remarkable: rather than keep the dynamics of religious/ethnic, gender, and sexual knowing at a comfortable distance, here—as so often in her work—she shows herself brave enough to consider her own implication in the complex structures she analyzes. And the self painted here is not a simple one; at the same time that she carefully curtseys at her father, she is transformed into something powerful, "hurled" and "pillared" into another form, a tall,

black shadow that "dwarfs" the domestic scene she inhabits. Something here resonates with my own dimly remembered scenes of Purim masquerade—was I the clever, avuncular Mordechai, or the "befuddled but omnipotent king" (Esther 7:6) Ahasuerus? but it also chimes with my memories of Eve, polite, even shy, on the one hand, and yet an enormously powerful intellectual, ethical, and political presence. This snapshot, brought to life in a flash in her writing, gives us one of many images to remember her by.

MEENA ALEXANDER

I was in Sarnath. Walking over the rough green grass in between the stones, I saw a line of children in their red checked uniforms, boys and girls with bright black hair, waiting to see the stupa. A few children skipped away from the lines the teachers tried to make them stand in, and were lost for a few minutes in the low pile of ruins. A child knelt down, put out her hand, and stroked a brick. Over and over again she touched the brick, running her fingers over the cracks, the split grains. That brick had once been part of an ancient monastery. Eve flashed into my mind. She was ill. She is meant to be here I thought and later in the deer park standing next to the spotted, freckled deer, in the gathering heat, I thought of her again.

Eve loved the tone, the textures of things and her Buddhism existed not in spite of, but quite precisely through her finely tuned sense of how desire cuts and courses through us, marking the world, our world, with a rich and fierce complexity.

We were colleagues and I used to sit with her, for just a few moments here and there, on a comfortable chair in the fourth floor lounge, in her office or mine, or more likely we'd stand in the corridor, lean against the wall and speak of this and that—Cavafy and the palimpsest of memory; how our department printer was not working; textures of woven cloth; lines from the *Heart Sutra* on disappearance; the difference it makes for a window to jut open so the breeze can blow in.

In Eve, thought and feeling were so finely woven together that her brilliance was always true to her awareness of the sensual body, of how light strikes flesh and passes through. It was written sometime ago. I would like to dedicate this poem to her.

Deer Park at Sarnath

It seems impossible to begin
To speak of those gone ahead
Intact, fired by breath:

Through flowering mustard
They race past a main road
Northwards to the deer park.

In the terrible kindness of the dead,
They whisper as they pass --

Inscribe yourself if you can
On brick or bone or slate
Then surrender it all with grace,

Rejoice in these trees
Jutting windward.

A threshold cut in rock
With seven kingdoms visible
Is still no stopping place.

Clouds consume the palaces of the gods
Stone chariots stir in soil
All Sarnath is covered in dirt.

There is no grief like this,
The origin of landscape is mercy.

ROB FAUNCE

Eve demanded dialogue. The only rule in her classroom was that you must speak. She cannily noted in "The Pedagogy of Buddhism" that, like the psychotherapist's office, the classroom is not a space where students can simply inhale "right answers" proffered by a professor; her reaction, with those of us lucky enough to be her students, was to let us be her collaborators and eschew one "right" answer. Eve, with her beautifully calm demeanor, was an iron panda—demanding our rigor while she kept us in her bear embrace. How fortunate we've been to be so protected while we blossomed under her stewardship!

Eve didn't switch gears—she was always the shy, bright, intense lady, full of ideas and love, and whether you were a bubbly first-year intoxicated to be in her eminent presence or a grief-stricken colleague, she was contemplative, compassionate, and considerate of your worth as an individual. Knowledge is not always easy; neither, of course, is love. Eve made both seem easy by living authentically with integrity, rigor, and intense commitment to ideas.

In the days after my mother suddenly passed, Eve (and her marvelous Hal) invited me to dinner, and the gift she gave transcended mere compassion and sympathy. She interrogated me, characteristically, with the charm and ruthlessness of an iron panda—demanding I explore my most raw emotions, interpreting my responses, and collaborating with me to establish apparatuses of mourning that not only helped me sustain in those numbest days of my life but enriched our understanding of loss, hope, internal objects, and the affects of grief and mourning. Tea and flowers could never properly thank her for that concomitant gift of her warmth and intellect, but I honor her best by keeping her with me, as that most cherished of what Melanie Klein termed "internal objects" that we access when we need to feel loved and nurtured. As we mourn this great lady of arts and letters, I suspect she will live on not just in her immense academic legacy, but as good internal objects for the many colleagues she nurtured and with whom she will constantly be part of the dialogue. Ⓐ

political analysis

Letter from Dakar

MICHAEL BUSCH

Beneath a half-completed section of highway overpass on the dusty outskirts of Dakar, Moussa spreads his arms widely to the concrete slab above his head. "This is what the tycoon classes want for Senegal!" he announces with theatrical triumph. "New roads for their new cars!" Then, lowering his arms, he says in a deadly serious tone, "But we do not need new roads. We need to eat."

From the moment we start talking politics, Moussa—a gaunt, thirty year old cell phone technician whom I've met through a friend—insists on bringing me to this lonely stretch of fledgling infrastructure to illustrate the incongruity between government priorities and the reality of everyday need in Senegal. The construction of the country's first tolled road consumes hundreds of millions in federal monies and World Bank loans, while just blocks away, ordinary Dakarois struggle to hawk trinkets, bootleg perfumes and counterfeit watches—all to scrounge together enough change by sunset to purchase something for dinner. Moussa's point is clear: building modern thoroughfares may be a forward looking state investment, but ordinary Senegalese face an immediate threat: hunger.

With soaring food prices in Senegal—a country crippled by externally imposed free trade agreements, stagnant incomes and rising unemployment—if you ask everyday people to pick between investing in the future and eating tonight, they'll opt for the latter. As Moussa explains, "Senegalese, we work hard but cannot afford to buy even rice anymore. Imagine, rice! Our main dish!" Unsurprisingly, the crunch has disproportionately affected the lives of the poor, disgruntled majority.

Tensions came to a head a last year when locals took to Dakar's streets in protest of precipitously rising food prices. Wearing t-shirts boldly proclaiming "We Are Hungry" across the chest, hundreds of protesters marched downtown only to be met with tear gas and police batons. Undeterred, activists returned a month later in substantially greater numbers to demand government subsidized foodstuffs and the president's resignation. The protests have been in vain.

Since then, the situation has grown worse as shockwaves from the global economic crisis have plagued the country's economy. Hopes that declining oil prices would in turn lower the cost of agricultural commodities have not been realized. Last summer, food prices jumped 74 percent in the cities, and at market today, bags of rice continue to cost double the amount than a year and a half ago. More troubling still, people have even less money to spend than before.

"After the rising price of food, declining remittances are the most serious threat to Senegal's economic stability," a Dakar-based UN officer tells me over breakfast one morning. Speaking off the record in his modern downtown apartment overlooking the Atlantic Ocean, he makes clear that "Local people depend on them." While the World Bank estimates that remittances account for nearly 9 percent of the country's annual GDP, the actual amounts of money flowing to Senegal from overseas workers are likely double that amount.

That is, until recently. Whatever the actual numbers, remittances are sharply down since the onset of the global downturn. With Senegalese workers overseas facing the threat of unemployment and rising costs of living, "Migrants are sending less money, or they are sending it less often—once every three months instead of once a month," according to Monsour Tall of the UN's Habitat program. Speaking with the BBC recently, Tall noted that "The effect is very dramatic because the fall in remittances has arrived at the same time as last year's sharp rise in prices."

The net result finds average Senegalese hungrier and at increased risk. UNICEF's Senegal office reports that the financial crisis has left an additional 20,000 households—roughly 200,000 people—without secure access to adequate amounts of food. With reduced access to food, families are forced to eat less frequently, meals are smaller, and nourishing ingredients are replaced with less healthy substitutes. One solution to combat these desperate measures lies in increased government intervention in the form of food handouts, credit initiatives and programs to revitalize domestic agricultural production.

Such interventions, of course, require substantial investment, which may not be forthcoming in the current international environment. Reduced foreign aid, upon which Senegal relies heavily, is "the third threat to Senegal's future stability," my UN contact tells me. "It is far from clear that governments will continue to give as in the past," he says between bites of a croissant. "We will see."

In the meantime, turbulence marks the political landscape. Senegal boasts a proud tradition of consistently successful democracy. The country has enjoyed repeated, peaceful transitions of power following elections, and has never known a military coup. Perhaps most significantly, the government recently made peace—albeit a fragile one—with separatists in the southern reaches of Casamance. Current developments, however, have revealed cracks in what is widely considered a solid political foundation.

I arrived in Senegal shortly after the country's March elections, a critical round of nationwide voting marked by fears of violent eruption. For many observers, the regional and local outcomes amounted to a referendum on the ruling party's performance in advance of the presidential election in 2012. But while minor episodes of violence and intimidation were reported in the weeks before polling, election day itself passed peacefully without incident.

Still, the results were a slap in the face to President Abdoulaye Wade's ruling Sopi party, a coalition that came to power in 2000 promising "change" and that, up until recently, has enjoyed unprecedented popularity. Skyrocketing food costs, rising unemployment, and creeping suspicions that the elderly president is grooming his son Karim to assume power, however, produced dramatic defeats of Sopi all across the country, including in the president's power base, Dakar.

The introduction of Karim Wade as a possible successor to his father's office was met with public skepticism and distrust. It was widely assumed that Karim would take a seat on Dakar's municipal council, then quickly rise through the regional ranks, and run for the presidency in 2012, all without any significant public service. Dakar's Sopi mayor promoted this perception by publicly promising to hand over his office to Karim in the event of victory. The opposition successfully built on this doubt by painting the Wades as a monarchy in the making, and a threat to the country's solid political tradition.

"This isn't the United States," Oumar, a civil servant, tells me excitedly as we share the backseat of a taxi making impressively slow progress through downtown Dakar's interminable gridlock. "Here, the people do not allow for the son to follow the father into power. It does not matter what Wade wants. The people decide. Senegal is a democracy."

That may be, but while Sopi was taken to the cleaners on the whole, Karim eeked out a victory for his municipal seat. At the same time, the opposition's capture of a majority of Dakar's local offices, including the mayorship, effectively shut the door on Karim's political ambitions—at least for the moment. Whatever the future holds for the younger Wade, it is clear that his road to power will not be paved with public complacency. But does it matter?

"Wade, not Wade, the problem is the same," Oumar says later that evening. "Life here is expensive." We sit in his modest but beautifully decorated home where I have been invited for more talk and a bite to eat. Not surprisingly, our disucssion has returned to the topic of food.

"In Senegal, we eat rice at every meal. Rice with fish, rice with chicken, rice with vegetables. And we import all of it from Asia. Senegal can grow rice also. We need to learn how to do it more efficiently." When I ask Oumar about the prospects of government subsidies and loans to the country's rice farmers, he agrees that state investment would help. Will it ever happen, I ask. "I don't know," he says. "It will be expensive, and the government makes money from taxing the imports. It will be no different afer Wade."

Just then, Oumar's pregnant wife enters the room carrying a large silver platter heaped with a steaming portion of rice with fish. It smells divine. She places the dish on the floor, leaves, and quickly returns with a basket of bread. Oumar takes a spot cross-legged next to the food, and beckons me to join him. "Come, let's forget politics and enjoy what we have for tonight." With that, we each tear a piece of bread from the loaf and scoop up some food from the plate. Oumar raises his up in toast, and I do the same in return. "Welcome to Senegal, Michael. Bon apetit." Ⓐ

Foul Play at Bard?

Controversy Ensues After College Terminates Kovel

JOHN BOY

As contingent workers in the CUNY system, many members of the Graduate Center community have become inured to the constant threat of losing their teaching positions at short notice. Following Governor Patterson's budget cuts last summer, many long-serving adjuncts found themselves out of a job as department chairs balanced budgets on their backs. So it may not be surprising to hear that Bard College, a private liberal-arts school in Dutchess County, New York, recently terminated the teaching appointment of one of its untenured faculty members.

Unless that faculty member is Joel Kovel, a long-time professor of social studies, internationally renowned lecturer, and erstwhile holder of the presidentially appointed Alger Hiss chair at Bard College. According to the Graduate Center's own Stanley Aronowitz, distinguished professor of sociology, "Joel Kovel is one of America's major social, ecological and psychological theorists. His *White Racism* remains a classic in the analysis of the psychology of racism; *Enemy of Nature* is one of the major contributions to radical ecology." An author of ten books and numerous peer-reviewed articles, Kovel is a familiar name across a wide array of academic departments, including psychology, anthropology, philosophy, sociology, and environmental studies. Joel Kovel is also a *public* intellectual in the truest sense of the word. Not content to merely write op-eds for newspapers, serve as president of a professional association, or lend his name to petitions and causes, Kovel consistently grounded his intellectual agenda in political and moral concerns. Following decades of antiapartheid and ecological activism, one of his chief engagements in recent years has been with the question of Israel/Palestine. What he has had to say on the issue is controversial—so controversial that it cost him his job at Bard earlier this year, he claims.

Joel Kovel

He is not alone. The American Association of University Professors (AAUP) and the Middle East Studies Association (MESA) have taken Kovel's allegations of academic oppression seriously, along with dozens of blogs and academic email discussion lists that have posted his statement. A Facebook group of the radical professor's supporters has grown to over 670 members.

The story as Kovel tells it is fairly straightforward. It portrays his recent termination as the result of a series of escalating responses to his anti-Zionist activism. These punitive responses were made possible by quietism and a lack of principle that has come to pervade Bard's campus community and now renders open discussion of Zionism impossible. At the center of the allegations is long-time Bard College president Leon Botstein, who also serves as the musical director of the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra of the Israel Broadcasting Company. He rejects Kovel's allegations as "patently ludicrous."

First, the allegations: In the fall of 2002, Kovel published an article in *Tikkun Magazine*, the progressive publication edited by Rabbi Michael Lerner, arguing as a morally concerned Jew for the need to acknowledge the nefarious underbelly of "Jewish exceptionalism." In the piece, Kovel pinpointed Zionism as the source of the moral failures manifest in Israel/Palestine. Within a few weeks President Botstein summoned him to his office and informed him that his presidential appointment as Alger Hiss professor would be terminated in 2004. Following another *Tikkun* article a few months later, a college dean, Michele Dominy, suggested at executive vice president Dimitri Papadimitrou's behest that Kovel, then sixty-six years old, should consider retirement. Kovel refused. Subsequently the administration decided to keep him on faculty on a five-year, halftime contract as "distinguished professor," cutting his pay and teaching load by 50 percent while continuing to grant him full benefits. This is the contract the university is refusing to renew when it expires later this year.

Over the course of the next three years, Kovel worked on the manuscript of his most recent book, *Overcoming Zionism*, which argues in favor of a single democratic state in Israel/Palestine. It extends his earlier line of argument, namely, that Jewish exceptionalism is at the root of the violence and unrest in the region and has to be overcome as a precondition for lasting peace and justice in the Middle East. During campus talks this argument was construed by some of his detractors as a call for "the destruction of Israel." When the book was published by British publishing house Pluto Press in 2007, the Michigan chapter of a Zionist group founded by neocon Daniel Pipes successfully pressured University of Michigan Press to halt its distribution of the title in the United States for several weeks. Eventually 650 letters of support persuaded Michigan to resume sales, but Kovel was disturbed to find that none of his tenured Bard colleagues joined in protesting the press's self-censorship. The only support from Bard came from two non-tenure-track faculty. Kovel cites this as one among numerous occasions that forced him to recognize the degree to which critical debate on campus was stifled despite Bard's image as the college that puts the "liberal" into liberal arts. (After all, they have a chair in honor of Alger Hiss, the McCarthy-era State Department bureaucrat accused of being a Soviet spy that anticommunists love to hate.) As a scholar who asks uncomfortable questions he was marginalized on campus.

Kovel argues that the 2008 evaluation of his work, which cited declining quantitative and qualitative indicators of student satisfaction with Kovel's teaching, must be seen in this context and that the decision not to rehire him in the fall was not simply based on practical, pedagogical or financial considerations. The evaluation was produced by a committee that included Bruce Chilton, a New Testament scholar characterized by Kovel as a Christian Zionist activist. His involvement in "Zionist circles" places Chilton "on the other side of the divide from myself," Kovel writes in his statement. The fact that Chilton served on the evaluation committee is "highly dubious" and made it impossible for the committee to produce fair, good-faith results. In light of this, Kovel argues, his termination should be considered invalid.

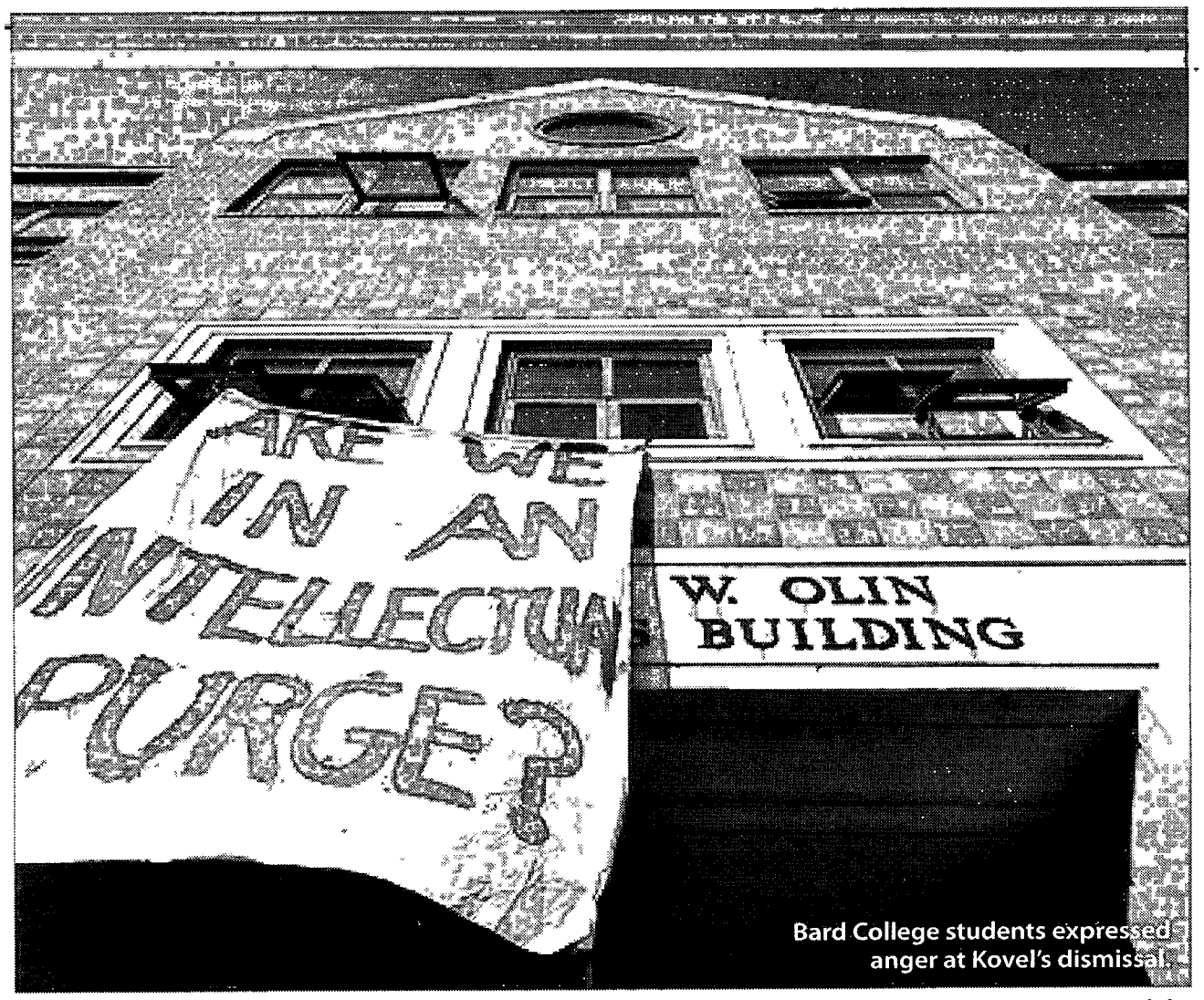
So much for the allegations. In an interview, Botstein stated that Kovel's claims were "trumped up" and lacking a credible evidentiary base. In response to the implication that Botstein decided to remove Kovel from the Hiss chair after he went public with his anti-Zionist views, he cited the donors' intent that the chair should be a revolving chair in the humanities. They decided it should be passed on to somebody else. In an email, Tony Hiss, Alger's son, confirms this. To fulfill the aim of exposing students to a wide variety of ideas and insights, "it was arranged from the start that it would be a 'rotating' chair, one that would be handed on periodically from one discipline to another, in order to celebrate all the humanities." This is also the reason why the chair is outside the tenure system. "We all admired Joel Kovel, but felt that after his fifteen years in the chair, the purposes of the endowment suggested that it might be time for other voices and disciplines to have a chance to step forward." While Botstein had no direct say in deciding that the chair should be given to someone else, he did make a proposal for a successor that the donors accepted. The new Alger Hiss professor is Jonathan Brent, a scholar of literature and history, ardent anticommunist and editor of Yale University Press's *Annals of Communism* series who comes just short of being an apologist for McCarthyism. Needless to say, he believes Alger Hiss actually was guilty of espionage. "Why he would have been offered such a position—or accepted it—is beyond me," Kovel told the *Advocate*.

Regarding Kovel's allegation that he was pressured to retire after losing the Hiss chair, Dean Dominy told a student forum in March: "I've never said to Professor Kovel that it's time to retire. He was never asked by his colleagues to retire." Providing a somewhat different perspective, Botstein said he "had the clear indication that [Kovel] was going into semi-retirement" when they sealed the deal of keeping him on as halftime distinguished professor: "The five-year contract was understood as a closing contract." He claims Kovel requested part-time status to make time for traveling and writing, and that the administration explicitly said "it was discretionary whether we would renew him or not" at the end of the five years, though they offered the prospect of yearly extensions of the contract after its expiration. Kovel refutes this characterization. The part-time agreement was not reached in the understanding of being "transitional to retirement." The letter of appointment to the half-time position states that, aside from going to half-time, "[t]he other conditions of your current contract will remain in place."

According to Botstein the decision not to renew Kovel's contract was based on two main considerations: financial constraints and increasingly negative student evaluations. Like many colleges around the country, Bard College has seen a drop of philanthropic income, making it difficult to cover the 20 percent of the college budget covered by nontuition sources. Botstein, an oft-quoted expert in the art of fundraising, called the approximately three million dollars recently lost in board member Ezra Merkin's Ponzi scheme "trivial" compared to the budget shortfall caused by decreased philanthropy. The only way to close the gap was to cut personnel cost. Ten administrators were dismissed and all senior administrators, Botstein included, have taken a 10 percent pay cut. On the faculty side, the goal was to cut "at the margins of the faculty." This means that "re-arranging" has concentrated on adjuncts teaching less than half time and who do not advise students—an integral part of the Bard curriculum, according to the college president. He mentioned, however, that Kovel, though teaching half-time, did some advising as well. Botstein specified that most part-time positions were eliminated—and at times replaced by full-timers—in the dance, general education, and language departments. In Kovel's division, international relations and politics were most effected, but that reflects a reduction in the number of visitors the college hosts in these disciplines. The nonrenewal of Kovel's contract thus does not fit the college-wide pattern of dismissals.

Matthew Deady, professor of physics at Bard and president of the local AAUP chapter, followed up on Kovel's charges that the evaluation process was riddled with irregularities. In an email excerpting key passages from the report on the inquiry into his allegations, Deady writes: "This investigation found no procedural or contractual improprieties which contributed to the decision to not renew Prof. Kovel's contract." The report adds that all representatives of Kovel's division were properly consulted, and concludes, "no evidence was found to support a claim that any member of the Bard community acted out of a political disagreement with Prof. Kovel, nor was any evidence found that his political positions weighed into his [College Evaluation Committee] evaluation or the non-renewal decision." Kovel responded to the report in an email to the faculty list which so far has gone uncontested. In it, Kovel pointed out five flaws in Deady's report that call into question its conclusions, among which a failure to "consider strong evidence from students that their own evaluations of [Kovel's] teaching had been manipulated" stands out.

This leaves the final contention raised in the ousted professor's statement: that Bard grants Israel impunity, stifles meaningful debate, and exhibits a lack of principle. Botstein rejected this assertion forcefully: "Joel Kovel is a liar. It's completely a delusional, narcissistic form of lying which has no credibility." He enumerated several reasons. Kovel himself was allowed to teach a course on "expounding his views on the question of Israel and Zionism." In March, Noam Chomsky spoke on his views on Israel at Bard. "The discussion of Israel has been an open and constant debate on this campus." Bard also has hosted the Palestinian intellectual Mustafa Abu Sway, an outspoken critic of the state of Israel, as visiting professor of Islamic studies. The college recently announced its partnership with Abu Sway's employer, Al Quds University, a Palestinian institution located in Jerusalem and the West Bank. The George Soros-funded venture will enable Palestinian students to attain joint degrees with Bard College and is the first of its kind to be initiated by an American university.



Bard College students expressed anger at Kovel's dismissal.

Kovel is doubtful these examples suffice to establish that critical discourse has a place on the Bard campus. In an email, he wrote that "what constitutes critical discourse is not to be measured like the blood level of hemoglobin. Its determination is subtle and qualitative; nor is it a function of who shows up to teach or lecture, but rather of the circumstances and power relations according to which things happen." That a faculty member of two decades would be permitted to teach a course on Zionism is not surprising, though he adds that approval was granted grudgingly and with the proviso that he not admit naïve freshmen. Chomsky was invited by students and naturally the administration could not intervene without causing an uproar. Abu Sway acted as a liaison for Bard's Palestinian partner institution, so naturally he was allowed to teach as well. Regarding Bard's engagement in Palestine, Botstein told a *New York Times* reporter in February, "It is clear that being a Zionist and favoring the security and healthy future for the State of Israel is absolutely compatible with creating a Palestinian state. That's why we're very proud of what we're doing." Given this attitude, it is debatable to what extent Zionism is really being put into question. Writes Kovel: "Critical discourse is to cast a cold eye on the program and not to just assume it is an unqualified good, like food shipments to a famine. A critical eye would see the various factions within Palestinian society and reflect on the fact that Israel would have a special interest in strengthening those factions that favored accommodation with the Zionist state, thereby weakening Palestinian resistance."

Botstein explained the lack of an official response to University of Michigan Press's self-censorship as follows: "We were completely out of the loop of the publication of his book. We did nothing to advance or suppress it." Had Kovel informed the college administration of his difficulties, "we would have been in favor of the book being published." Then, Botstein blustered about "Joel Kovel's so-called controversial views," claiming that nothing he writes on the subject of Zionism is truly controversial. If that was the case, Kovel responded, would *Overcoming Zionism* have been banned in the United States after being decried as "hate speech"? Would University of Michigan Press have terminated its lucrative distribution contract with Pluto Press over Kovel's book if there was nothing controversial about it? Asked about his other critical works and their reception by the Bard community, Kovel mentioned that his book on ecosocialism, *The Enemy of Nature*, while widely debated, never got any attention from his own college's environmental studies department. "This may have something to do with the fact that its thesis is that global capitalism must be brought down if civilization is to survive," the author wrote. While President Botstein attempts to explain away the controversy and attribute it to a paranoiac "delusion" on the part of the ejected professor, there are enough indications of a conflict.

Deady, the AAUP chapter president, pointed out that Bard at present has "a system that has too much potential for terminations that leave no one satisfied." The fact that Botstein can have academics like Kovel serve at his convenience reflects what many have called his grandiose leadership style, but also the erosion of the tenure system in the United States and academia more widely. While the last word on the Bard controversy is yet to be spoken, discrimination cannot be ruled out due to a lack of transparency or paper trail in the hiring and firing process. Ⓐ

Chronology

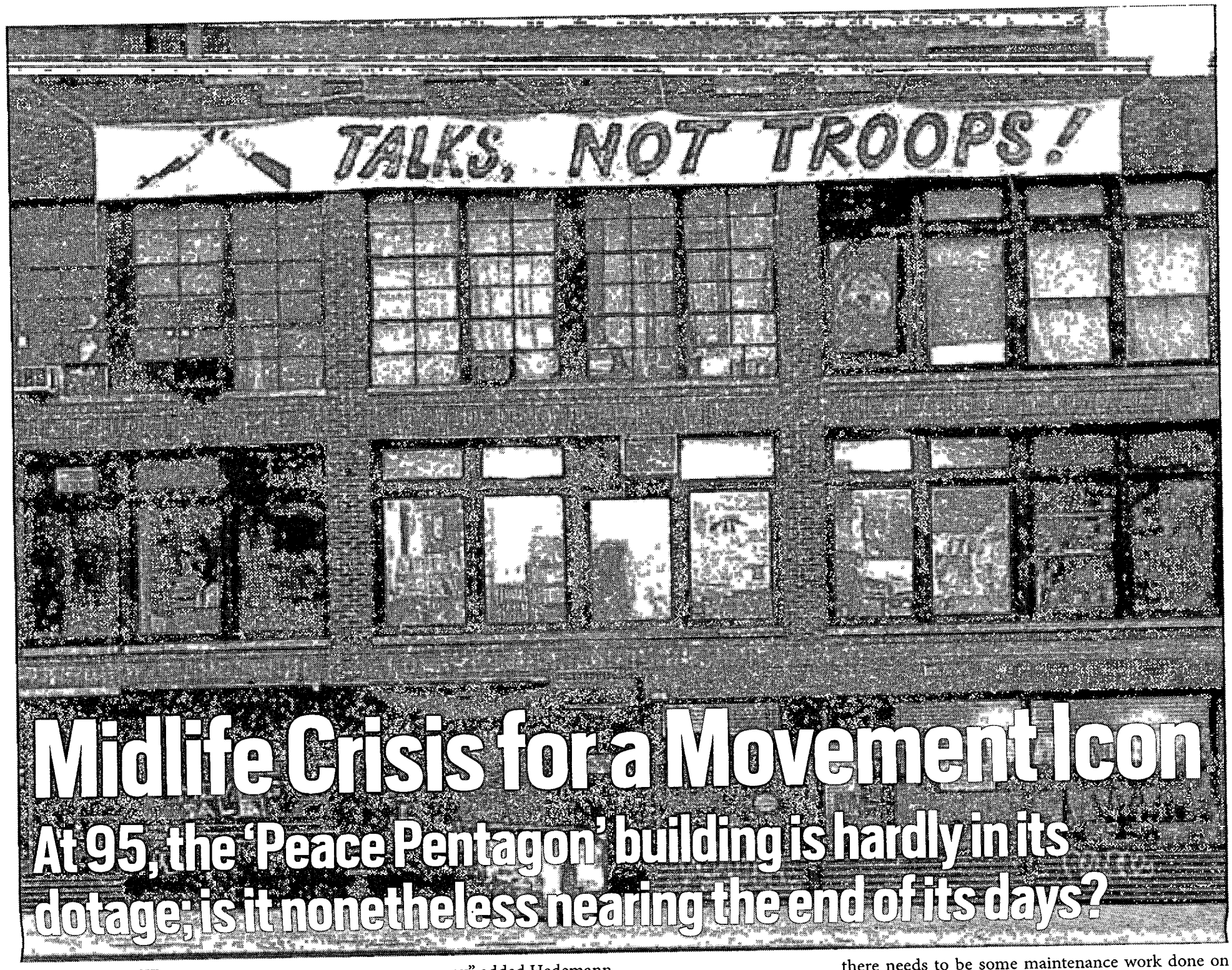
1988: Joel Kovel is appointed Alger Hiss professor of social studies at Bard College by President Botstein with a five-year contract. He replaces the inaugural holder of the chair, the anthropologist Stanley Diamond. This endowed chair is outside the tenure system.

1994: Kovel is reappointed.

1999: Kovel is reappointed.

2004: After fifteen years, the Alger Hiss chair goes to Jonathan Brent, a scholar of literature and history. Kovel is moved to a five-year, half-time distinguished professor contract.

2009: Kovel is told his contract as distinguished professor will not be renewed and he will be moved to emeritus status at the end of the academic year. Subsequently, he publishes a statement that alleges the noncontinuation of his contract was politically motivated and invalid due to procedural irregularities.



Midlife Crisis for a Movement Icon

At 95, the 'Peace Pentagon' building is hardly in its dotage; is it nonetheless nearing the end of its days?

JOHN OTROMPKE

The year was 1997 when Molly Klopot first entered the building at 339 Lafayette in Manhattan, and like many people, she was initially struck by the amount of activity that went on in there.

"When I first came into the room, I met a very stately and tall old woman who represented our organization at the United Nations meeting on South Africa. There were several desks and about a thousand cards scattered all over with people's names on them, including current and former members. It looked like the place had seen a lot of activity," said Klopot, who will turn 95 years old this month.

"After my husband died, I went to an international women's congress in Cuba, and when I came back, my sister-in-law wanted me to report on the meeting, and I came here to see if they had any papers of the speeches. The woman I met, who was the chair, got me to volunteer, and right after that she died, which is how I came to be chair," said Klopot, chair of the New York Metro branch of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) and a co-founder of the Granny Peace Brigade.

While WILPF, a 95-year-old organization which has included members such as Jane Adams and Mr. and Mrs. Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., is one organization at 339 Lafayette which has a long history, it is not the only one.

"As issues come and go, so do groups, such as CISPES, the El Salvador group that was part of the building in the 1970s and 1980s," said Ed Hedemann, organizer and activist with the War Resisters' League, which has had offices in the building for the last 40 years. "There was a group called the Enola Gay action coalition here because in 1994 the Smithsonian was going to unveil the Enola Gay for the 50th anniversary of Hiroshima. Other groups like War Resisters' League are not the type to come and go. War and militarism unfortunately don't seem to be going away," added Hedemann.

Unfortunately, the same may not be true of 339 Lafayette, also known as the 'Peace Pentagon,' which may be in danger of being sold or demolished, according to those who work in the building.

The A.J. Muste Foundation, which owns and operates the building, is considering selling the building, and buying an office condominium, or a floor in another building, to house the non-profits currently located in The Peace Pentagon, citing the expense of making the significant repairs on the building which are foreseen, amid the current recession. The Muste Foundation writes grants to fund peacemaking and education projects around the world, as well as owning and operating The Peace Pentagon.

Put Out to Pasture?

"This is an old building, in its senior citizenship," said Jeanne Strole, co-director of the A. J. Muste Memorial Institute. "The building is currently having some issues," said Strole, who declined to comment more than half a dozen times when interviewed for this article.

"Half of the street is fenced off," said WILPF's Klopot. "If you take a 6 train and get off at our stop, if you want to change going uptown you have to get out and pay another fare. They're talking about making it so you can switch without having to pay another fare," explained Klopot, who assisted the husbands and children of WILPF members in building new furniture and painting their office shortly after she took over.

Still, Klopot has not joined issue in the debate over what is to happen to the Peace Pentagon. "Space in New York is very expensive, but there's no sense in worrying about it at this point. What will be will be," she said.

"While the MTA is doing a major three or four year project, the reason the scaffolding is up is that there needs to be some maintenance work done on the building," said Maria Bick, distribution and administration manager for Paper Tiger, Inc. "But the bricks are tight enough; the scaffolding has been up for over a year, and I haven't seen a single brick fall out," added Blick, who also serves as building liaison for the Friends of 339, an organization founded about a year ago, the same time Blick first learned the build ing might be in jeopardy.

Because part of the Muste Institute's assets do include the Peace Pentagon, the organization has a responsibility to benefit other organizations in the building. "As a 501(c)(3) with a particular mission statement, any income we generate has to go back to the work of the organization," said the Institute's Strole. "The building program is something our Board of Directors is committed to preserving, because it's part of our mission statement," she added.

Still, the dispute between the owners and occupants of the building has left life in the Peace Pentagon in an uncertain state. The Foundation is giving thought to simply selling the Peace Pentagon, while many of the occupants want to keep the building, and make any upgrades or repairs which are necessary.

Life During Wartime

"'Slum' might be too strong a word for the neighborhood as it existed when I first visited in 1973," said the WRL's Hedemann. "It was an old industrial neighborhood that had seen better days. When I first went to work there in 1973, there was a liquor store across the street, and a lot of alcoholics hanging out. My first impression of the deli...was that this was not one of those prim and proper orderly establishments," he said.

The War Resister's League, which moved into the building in 1969 following a suspicious break-in at its earlier location across from City Hall, initially bought the building with like-minded organizations, but set

up the Muste Institute as the owner in the mid-70s.

"This was because the War Resisters' League continues to be involved in illegal action, like war tax resistance and civil disobedience, so it is possible the building could have been seized by IRS because of these activities," Hedemann said. So the owners felt it would be better to create the A.J. Muste Institute, named after a long-time peace activist, who died in 1967, and who was also the subject of a biography by Nat Hentoff called 'Peace Agitator,' according to Hedemann. Muste's grandson still sits on the board of the institute.

"My other impression at the time was that the building was also very busy. There were far more important things to do than to be tidy. There were leaflets everywhere, and posters announcing this action, or that event," Hedemann said.

Historic actions devised or participated in by the organizations housed in the Peace Pentagon included a number of protests through-out the years, including the largest arrest in New York City to date, Hedemann said.

"We were planning in 1972 and organizing against the air war in Viet Nam, and there was a demonstration where two people snuck into the Waldorf Astoria to get a room in order to throw leaflets out the window. Then in 1976 there was a continental walk for disarmament organized out of the building. People walked from California to Washington, D.C., and there were twenty feeder walks." Ten to twenty thousand people were involved in the walk, which took nine months, Hedemann said.

Demonstrations organized out of the building set, and then beat, the record for the largest New York City arrests.

Other demonstrations organized out of the building set, and then beat, the record for the largest New York City arrests. "In 1979 the main organizing for the Wall Street Action, on the 50th anniversary of the '29 crash, took place here. A demonstration was organized where over 1,000 people were arrested for blocking the New York Stock Exchange, which was the largest arrest in the city's history at that time. Then in 1982 the U.N. held a special session on disarmament, and there was a rally with over one million people in Central Park on June 12. That wasn't organized out of the building, although there were groups participating in it. But what was organized here was an event called 'Blockade the Bomb Makers,' where there were demonstrations held at the U.N. missions of the five countries that admitted they had nuclear weapons. There were 1,600 people arrested on June 14, 1982, and remains the largest arrest in city history," Hedemann added.

What is to be Done?

Some hope that the building's glory days are not all in its past.

"Our wish for the building is to build a peace center, not just to be in the location, but to use our location to embody the spirit of the social justice movement and project it outward, as well as nurturing it from within," said Paper Tiger's Maria Blick.

Paper Tiger itself, approaching its third decade, has already been a trend setter. The organization was founded in 1981, when its slogan was 'Smashing the Myths of the Information Industry.' Paper Tiger moved to the building on Lafayette Street in 1983.

"We have been really blessed with having a space like this," said Blick, who has been a part of the organization for four years. "A big part of Paper Tiger is operating on an extremely low budget, so we can create our media without outside influence or sponsors breathing down our necks. When we've had a financial crisis, we've been able to at least keep our home," she added, noting the Muste Foundation has given the organization tens of thousands of dollars in in-kind donations over the years, in the form of reduced rents. Currently the organization pays $475 per month in rent- about a quarter of the market rate, Blick noted.

According to Blick, it's not just the non-profits, but all the tenants of the Peace Pentagon who pay below the market rate in rent. "The financial crisis is not due to the fact that building needs repairs, but it is due, dare I say, to a lack of initiative on realizing the full potential of the building," she said. Blick said that the commercial tenants in the five storefronts also pay less than half the market rate in rent. The Muste Institute's Strole had no comment. A refurnished building could continue its non-profit mission and still bring in about half a million dollars per year in rents, were the economy not in recession, Blick said.

While there has been talk within the building of buying a floor in an office building or a business condominium, such a solution might not serve the same purposes accomplished by the Pentagon's current historic home, said Blick. "Moving to another building, we might end up in a place not consistent with our politics," she said, noting that the War Resister's League originally bought the Peace Pentagon upon being evicted by an unfriendly landlord following a suspicious break-in in the late '60s.

"There have been a lot of politically quite radical groups that have been housed here over the years, which people might have issues with, if we were sharing space with an accounting firm or a modeling agency," she added.

Options include keeping and repairing The Peace Pentagon, or selling it and buying either another building, or a floor in an office condominium, to provide space for the current occupants. But whatever the future of the building, the Muste Institute's Strole says that any funds the organization gets if it sells the building will go back into the peace movement. "We have a counter recruitment fund, which suggests alternatives to military enlistment in the United States. We also have an international nonviolence training fund, and sponsor some projects in Latin America, some in Southeast Asia, and nonviolence education projects in Palestine, for example," she said, noting that the organization's donations are ordinarily in the hundreds of thousands of dollars annually, although the grant-making program is on hold for the time being.

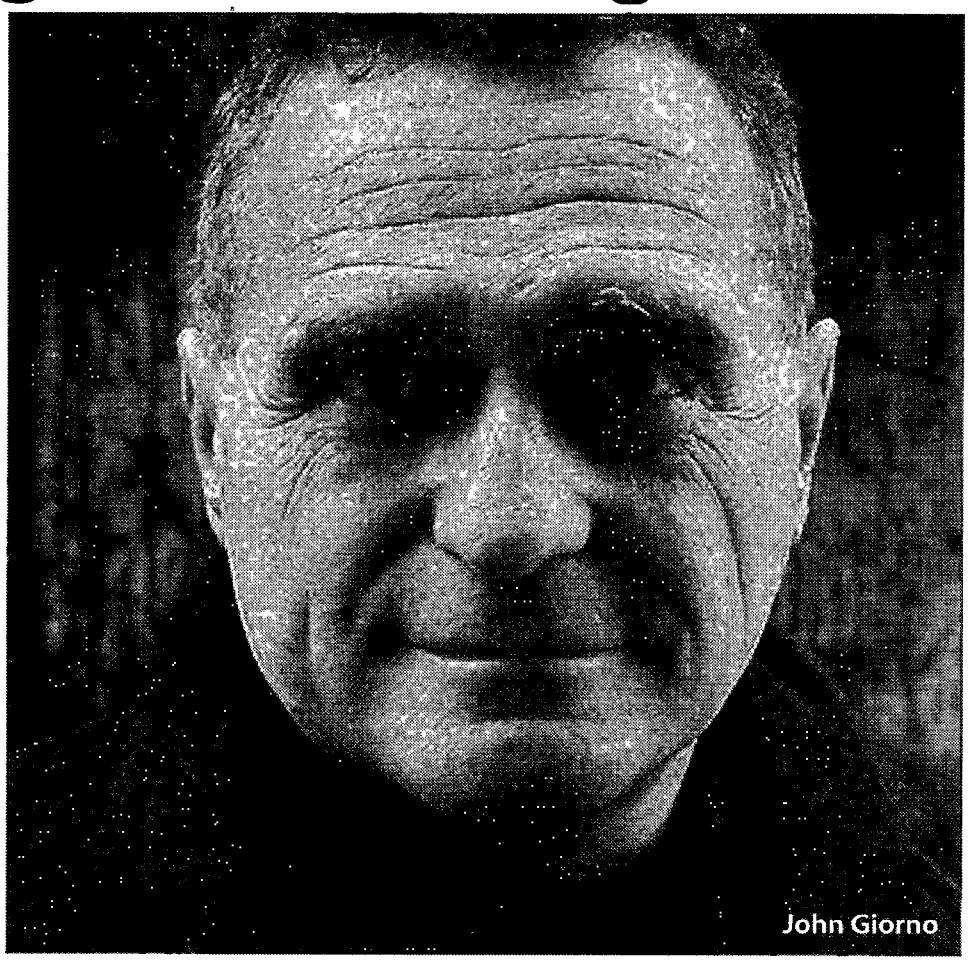
In either case, this is a momentous period for a historic building in New York, for its occupants, for the building, and for the peace movement itself. The efforts made by all the parties may have momentous consequences for generations to come. Ⓐ

book REVIEW

Reality is Very Haunting: Reevaluating Giorno

▶ *Subduing Demons in America: Selected Poems 1962-2007* by John Giorno. Edited by Marcus Boon. Soft Skull Press, 2007. 387 Pages.

JASON SCHNEIDERMAN


John Giorno

I.

John Giorno is the most important poet you've never heard of. Elaine Showalter calls him the father of performance poetry, though Cristin O'Keefe Aptowicz's definitive history of slam mentions him not at all, save Dan Nester listing him as an influence in his Introduction. The American Academy of Poets has a single poem by Giorno in their archive, though the Poetry Foundation has no listing for him at all. Giorno was born in 1936, the same year as June Jordan, C.K. Williams, and two years after Amiri Baraka and Audre Lorde—but his name is absent from the poetry anthologies that include them. You're more likely to find Giorno reading at the St. Mark's Poetry Project than at NYU; more likely to find him reading at a Museum than at St. Mark's. His most famous appearance is largely anonymous. He's the star of Andy Warhol's experimental film *Sleep*. He's almost like Ray Johnson or Lou Andreas-Salomé—present at everything important, friends with everyone important, but keeping a lower profile than the stars they pal around with.

Part of the reason that John Giorno seems so far off the poetry radar is that he's so well known in the art world as a sound artist. He's included on seminal sound recordings like *10+2:12 American Text Sound Pieces* with better known sound artists like John Cage and Brion Gysin. Giorno's signature sound of a single voice repeated against itself at a slight delay is replicated on the page, but it's more powerful on a record. Giorno's "Give It to Me Baby"—which you can sample on iTunes—has a high-pitched, thin, female voice reading the poem, while the same voice returns at a five-second delay with it's tones electronically altered. You can feel the influence of Giorno more strongly in Yaz's album *Upstairs at Eric's* or Lady Gaga's "Poker Face" than in any of the Pulitzer Prize winners for poetry in the last five years. Tracie Morris is a contemporary figure with a similar footprint. She's a poet, but her sound experiments resonate with the art world, not the poetry world (she was included in the 2002 Whitney Biennial, but has yet to find her way into a Norton anthology; Giornio's big break was the Paris Biennale in 1965). Soft Skull Press's *Subduing Demons in America: Selected Poems 1962-2007* is an attempt to return John Giorno squarely to the world of poets, without downgrading his other accomplishments. As editor Marcus Boon asks at the beginning of his introduction, "Is he really a poet? Is he an artist? A multimedia wizard? A Beat? A Buddhist? A rock 'n' roller? A Warholian Superstar?" The fact of the book insists on his being *really* a poet, while leaving open other possibilities. I'm inclined to agree.

Giorno's work is defined by his use of found text, repetition, and erratic line breaks. Boon's introduction explains that Giorno's technique "is different from traditional lyrical approaches, in which words are considered a true reflection of the self, but different also from the avant-garde tradition, which posits that there is no such thing as a self and therefore only random, indeterminate aggregations of meaning exist" (xviii). Boon compares Giorno's work to meditation where "thoughts arise in the mind in a natural way, coming and going, arising into awareness without attraction or aversion. The words are neither his, nor *not* his" (xviii, emphasis Boon's). In "Give it to me Baby" Giorno mixes a sexual escapade, instructions for making shishkabob, news-clipping accounts of violence, real estate listings, and commercial jingles. Giorno's poems are often hard to quote in small sections, because the work is so massive, and the feeling of the piece arises from the collage—and the collage dramatically alters throughout the piece:

Brush
meat
with marinade
and vegetables
with out.

The huge
prick
was in
my cunt.

Expansion level
for 2 extra Bedrooms
and Bath

I felt it
everywhere.

.....

As he arose
I clasped
my arms
around his neck,
and crossed
my legs
over his back.

Hi Ho Hey Hey
chew your little
troubles away.

While firemen
worked,
looters carried off
furniture,
appliances,
television sets,
and liquor.

Hi Ho Hey Hey,
chew Wrigley's
Spearmint Gum.

"Give it
to me,
baby!
Oh, man!
Give it
to me
all the way!
Fuck me,
fuck me,
fuck me,
and don't
ever stop!"

It focuses
the image
of the channel
you select
by shielding
the direct signal
from all outside
interference.

Some youth
hurled bricks at
firemen.

The effect of reading this poem is to be constantly short-circuited. No single voice can ever arise to fully take on a personality or experience pleasure or reveal an emotional investment. What is it that's happening? There's no center. The sex is not erotic, the violence is not scary, the information is not interesting, and the recipe is not appetizing. But the flatness of affect is itself compelling, and the recording of it (with the flat doubled voice) mirrors that flatness of affect. The sound of it all is the sound of it all, and Boon is right to compare Giorno's technique to meditation. In a 1974 interview with *Gay Sunshine*, Giorno says, "Meditation makes perception clearer. Reality is very haunting. It's always there. It's like we all live in a giant haunted house, and the point is [to] make friends with it." Giorno is refreshingly clear that meditation is about boredom, and about confronting personal and worldly demons. He resists a (Hindu) feel good meditation in favor of a (Tibetan Buddhist) meditation practice that puts one at risk. "They bliss you out and leave you hung up there. Which is better than not doing anything at all, but why not go the whole way? In the Hindu yogas, it's all milk and honey, and cheesecake. Making everything good and easy and sweet. Purifying yourself, removing yourself from the problem. Whereas there's this giant shithouse of the world made up of good and bad." Giorno is firmly grounded in this shithouse of a world—his goal is not to leave it, but to find a way to live in it. The collage poems have the diffuse center of meditation—the heard voice moves neither by argument nor by explanation but by drift.

Other poems take on the kind of circulation and feedback of a pop song, where the lyrics flow and fade, alongside melodies and back up singers and instruments. In this section from "Grasping at Emptiness" the words attain a kind of pop song circulation:

spend the night with me
stay
until
the break
of day
stay until the break of day,
share
this night
with me
share this night with me
in my arms
in my arms
in my arms,
I keep
looking
for the feeling
I lost
when
I lost you
I keep looking for the feeling
I lost when I lost you
I keep looking for the feeling I lost
when I lost you,
and it was
bullshit
and it was bullshit
and it was bullshit

spend the night with me,

stay until the break of day

share this night with me

in my arms,

I keep looking for the feeling
when I lost you,

and it was bullshit,

The eyes circulate over the page because the text is repetitive. For Giorno, the line is not, as has been frequently theorized, a small pause, or an additional stress, but rather a new formulation of the text. I've never been entirely convinced by Charles Olson's field of composition, but in these poems, I begin to understand how the page as a visual surface might interact with the flow and tumble of a poem. At other times, the repetitions feel like copies and feedback. With love lyrics, one tends to have the sense that the territory is familiar, that the circulation is the culturally established set of feelings, but Giorno starts in the familiar before moving to unexpected explorations and arguments. His repetitions begin to push and pull in a different way. In the long poem "Subduing Demons in America" the motion is tidal, washing in and out in waves. Boon explains that "Giorno, for me, is a poet whose work sometimes actually benefits from being skimmed or scanned, and in reading him, it helps to tune in to a tempo…." In "Subduing Demons in America," one can do almost nothing else. The repetitions create a sense of feedback and rewinding. The ideas keep coming at the same time that they're being played back. The desire for linear development is both encouraged and frustrated as the phrases move lurchingly forward and back.

your mind keeps looking at the rocks	looking
looking	for something
for something	and not
and not	finding it
finding it	looking for something
looking for something	and not finding it
and not finding it	looking for something and not finding it
looking for something and not finding it,	because you have
because you have	forgotten
forgotten	you are
you are	water
water	because you have forgotten you are
because you have forgotten	you are water
you are water	because you have forgotten you are
because you have forgotten you are	water
water,	the heavy
the heavy	water
water	the heavy water
the heavy water	flowing
flowing	the heavy water flowing
the heavy water flowing	forward
forward	flowing forward
flowing forward	forward,
forward,	on
on	and on
and on	on and on
on and on	on and on,

In stating that he has rejected both modernist and postmodernist maxims, Giorno is not just being self-congratulatory. He fits neither with the modernists, following Pound's dictum that a poem is a rhythm cut into time, nor is he pursuing a postmodernist attack on the transparency of syntax and language. He trusts language like a modernist, but plays with it like a postmodernist. He allows the work to percolate, the ideas bubble up, repeat, and then allow forward motion. It's not choreographed for the reader's voice, but for the reader's wandering eyes.

Many of Giorno's poems do have unified speakers and coherent selves with a coherent audience. "Suicide Sutra" from 1974, begins like a Fluxus experiment: "Everyone is invited to participate in this poem. This is an audience participation poem. Please follow the instructions as you read them, and tighten the muscles of your body. Tighten each individual muscle and hold it. You should become uptight." The poems begins with the kind of muscular instructions familiar to anyone who's taken a yoga class:

Tigthen
your fingers,
tighten
your hands,
tighten
your wrists,
tighten
your forearms

Though it later takes a far more ominous turn away from simply tensing and releasing:

There is
a gun
in your hand
there is a gun in your hand,
a 38-caliber
revolver,
and it's pointing
at your face
and it's pointing at your face
and it's pointing at your face,
and you pull
the trigger
and you pull
and you pull the trigger,
the bullet
shoots slowly
toward
your head
shoots slowly toward your head,
you are committing
suicide

It guides the reader through suicide by gunshot, and then moves on to death by napalm, before arriving at reincarnation, where the poem concludes:

It's like being
born,
a flower
opening,
and it is effortless
and it is effortless
and it is effortless,
and becomes
cooler
and cooler
and cooler,
and calm
and calm
and calm.

You haven't gotten
anywhere,
only
here.

The poem acts as a kind of guide to his work—how to move into them, to vicariously experience the strands of his poems, before returning to the altered, but stable, self. Many of his early poems are small personality sketches that would seem at home in a collection by Gary Snyder or Jack Gilbert:

I'm Tired of Being Scared
An unemployed
machinist,
who traveled
here
from Georgia
10 days ago,
and who could not
find a job,
walked into
a police station
yesterday
and said,
"I'm tired of being scared."

But it's often hard to find the line between found and composed text. In a sequence of similar character studies, the lyrics to the Rolling Stone's "(I can't get no) Satisfaction" appear. At his most autobiographical, Giorno slips to prose, as he does in the introduction to his 1972 volume *Cancer in My Left Ball.* But his most autobiographical is also his most obscure. In his introduction, "This Book is Cancer," he explains the experience that led him to the poem: "I had cancer in my left ball, which had gotten to be the size of a lemon and rock hard… They made this twelve-inch gash down the middle of my stomach, ripped out all my intestines and whatever else was in the way, then cut out fifty lymph nodes and sewed me up" (144). But part of what is so fascinating about Giorno is how unified thought and emotion are for him. Despite being heavily medicated, he describes the first few days as "white pain and hell fire. All in all it was my best tantric meditation. I sort of miraculously healed… To be in a bed next to a man who dies, to hear his last gasp, to know the moment he dies and hang on it, is pretty interesting." The word "interesting" is shocking, but comforting. And that engaged/detached tone remains steady for the whole of the book. The last poems in the volume, from 2007's *Everyone Gets Lighter* are often quite funny and straightforward with titles like "Just Say No to Family Values," though retaining all of his innovations of style.

II.

Giorno might also be the most radical arts administrator in history. In 1967, he started his record label, Giorno Poetry Systems. GPS recorded a stunning line up of literary and political figures including John Ashbery, Ted Berrigan, Joe Brainard, Jim Carroll, Robert Creeley, Allen Ginsberg, Denise Levertov, and Bobby Seale, among many others. His hugely successful Dial-a-Poem project was announced in the *New York Times* on January 14, 1969 as "a new service, yolking the genius of the telephone company to the genius of living poets." The same article credits him for organizing readings in Central Park with audiences as large as 400 people. Dial-a-Poem started at the Architectural League, but after a move to the Museum of Modern Art, the project began to attract negative attention. Hilton Kramer referred to the information show at MoMA that included Dial-a-Poem as "the estheticization of political clichés." Giorno recounts how "The *New York Post* picked up on it and on page two was a two-column story with headlines on how you could call the Museum of Modern Art and learn how to build a bomb." The *New York Times* on September 3, 1970, ran a piece titled "Museum May Keep Dial-a-Poem Phones," that described the projected as featuring "many radical figures and writers, many of them denouncing government policy and advocating

Continued next page

book REVIEW

'No War But Class War'

▶ *Dynamite: The Story of Class Violence in America* by Louis Adamic. AK Press Edition (2008)

ABE WALKER

The contemporary US labor movement does not have a reputation for militancy. By almost any standard, American unions stack up poorly compared to their European, Asian, African and Latin American counterparts. American workers strike less often than workers almost anywhere else in the world, and the total number of days lost to work stoppage as a percentage of total days worked is embarrassingly low. The Bureau of Labor Statistics recorded only twenty-two major strikes in 2005. By comparison, in authoritarian China, where independent labor unions have no legal status and the strike weapon is outlawed, groups of workers walked off the job 19,000 times in 2005. When American workers do strike, they do it so quietly it rarely makes the news, and if the police get involved, it's usually only to redirect traffic.

Given this, it's easy to forget that 100 years ago, the American workplace was the site of perpetual, unmitigated violence. During the period extending roughly from 1886 to 1935, the conflict between labor and capital could be labeled a "class war" in more than a metaphorical sense. Labor rebellions were routinely put down by private company police, armed thugs-for-hire, state militias, the national guard, and in at least one instance, the United States Army itself. This story has been told and retold, in whole and in part, by numerous labor historians. But what's striking about Louis Adamic's *Dynamite*, originally written in 1934 and recently re-issued by AK Press, is that he stresses something the other historians know but refuse to admit: the violence was often two-sided.

This should be no surprise to any serious student of American history. The United States is a nation born of bloodshed, and there was a time when the Second Amendment had defenders others than right-wing extremists. But the other popular histories of American labor—such as *Labor's Untold Story*, originally published by the Communist-led United Electrical Workers, and Jeremy Brecher's *Strike!*—take the moral high ground by downplaying the violence of workers, while emphasizing the violence of the state. To be sure, in the frequent pitched battles that were waged during this period, labor casualties consistently outnumbered police and military casualties by a margin of at least ten-to-one (sometimes significantly higher). And wanton acts of cruelty, like the 1914 Ludlow Massacre where hundreds of striking miners and their families were gunned down in cold blood, were the exclusive domain of the state. Clearly, it would be wrong to suggest that workers were the *primary* instigators of violence. But it would be *equally* wrong to depict the workers as poor, defenseless victims, armed with nothing but their moral certitude and their historical prerogative. When attacked, workers readily fought back with fists, rocks, guns, incendiary devices, and organized bombing campaigns. To minimize or deny this reality is to distort the historical record.

The AK Press edition of *Dynamite* includes a foreword by Jon Bekken, an activist and organizer with the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). Bekken

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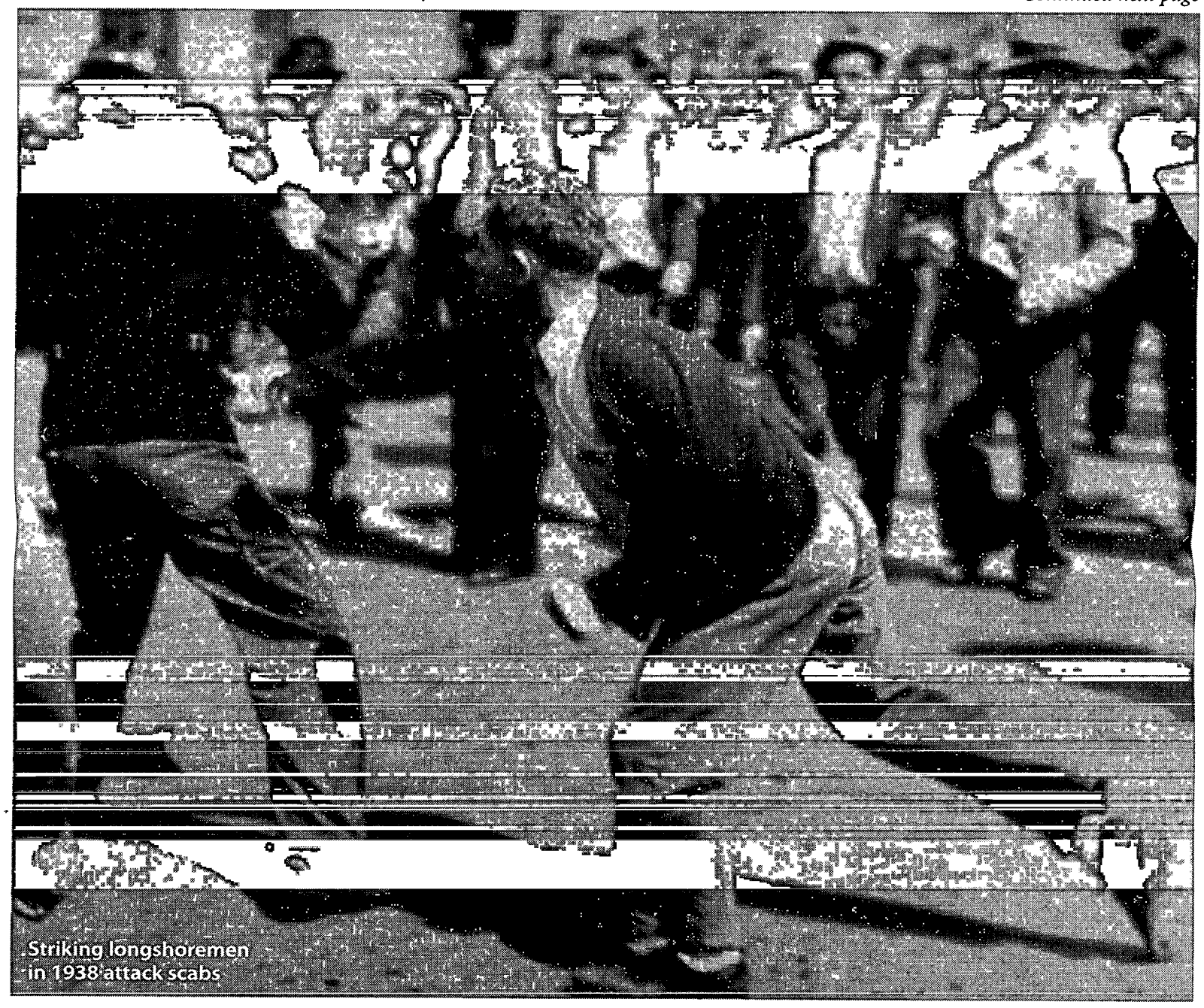


Striking longshoremen in 1938 attack scabs

Continued from previous page

violence, some in poetry, others in prose."

Then in 1971, he began working with Abbie Hoffman to record programs for Radio Hanoi, and he ended up fleeing the country for India to avoid prosecution. Jane Fonda's appearance on Radio Hanoi in 1972 prompted a congressional inquiry. By Giorno's account, it wasn't so much the fear of prosecution as that "The hassle was the typical Movement hassle: a community of thirty people, nobody doing anything and everybody is fighting about who makes the decisions, and how authority is shared. So it was Abbie battling with everybody and me doing all the work, because I knew how to do it. It got exhausting and depressing and I said 'Fuck It!' I got on a jet plane and flew to India." And once in India he began meeting the Tibetan Bhuddist figures who would influence America shortly. "I was driven in a VW bus... and found myself in the Dalai Lama's living room with the Dalai Lama.... I met Nyichang Rinpoche... and after a while was taken to Darjeeling to Dudjom Rinpoche."

Giorno's interviews are full of stunning phrases and sentences: "The poisons are the creativity, transformed." "It all boils down to everything is just like pornography. If it gets you off, what the fuck!" In the *Gay Sunshine* interviews, he comes across as the best dinner guest ever—charming, accomplished, and gentle, but firmly grounded. When I first read the interviews, I couldn't quite believe that he'd done all those things, and yet, as I began to check, it all seemed backed up.

Part of what makes Giorno's escapades so plausible is that he's shockingly handsome—how else could he have bedded enough art world superstars (Robert Rauschenberg, Jasper Johns, Andy Warhol) to fill the Whitney—though by his account, none of them were famous when he was their lover, and he managed to alienate them all once they had become so. The Italian good looks of Giorno's youth are reminiscent of the actor Enver Gjokaj, and at a reading I attended last year, he had lost none of his charisma. He has an open face, and seems entirely available and forthright and honest.

If the final question about Giorno is where to put him, the answer seems like a Zen Koan: everywhere and nowhere. His recordings, activism, and poems seem to exist on a parallel track to whatever we might call mainstream. He asserts his position in that place for insistently underground voices that are cherished passionately, but not anthologized or taught. He makes clear that he's not interested in the kind of PR work that results in true fame. David Lehman's book about the New York School Poets, *The Last Avant-Garde*, argues that there can be no more avant-garde, because the incorporation of the avant-garde to the mainstream has become predictable. It's a formula, not a hope.

But Giorno, so close to the famous, and alarmed by the compromises they made for fame, seems pleased to remain in the margins where he can be himself. There's something charged about the discovery of his work, a thrill in the eccentricities of his style, though the possibilities he reveals feel more like their own accomplishment. He doesn't point the way forward, he shows what he's become. Ⓐ

briefly situates the text in its historical context, but his main intellectual project is apparently to defend the legacy of his own organization. The IWW receives significant attention in the text, and Adamic's assessment is mixed. Bekken quickly—though unconvincingly—refutes the suggestion that the IWW reciprocated the violence unleashed against them (well, except sometimes, but only in self-defense), and dismisses the assertion that sabotage was ever a major part of the IWW's strategy. (The truth is probably more complicated. From 1912 to 1915, the union issued a series of pamphlets advocating sabotage, which it later disowned as the political climate grew more repressive. The contemporary organization distances itself from these pamphlets, which are displayed on its website alongside a bold disclaimer: "The following document is presented for historical purposes... workers who engage in some of the following forms of sabotage risk legal sanction".)

Bekken's defense of the IWW is clearly self-interested, but his uneasiness is consistent with the contemporary Left's dogmatic commitment to pacifism. Today, much of the Left has a fetishistic obsession with nonviolence, filtered through a distorted version of the legacies of Martin Luther King and Mahatma Gandhi. (Neither ever articulated a strategy of nonviolence *as doctrine*). Many contemporary political activists conclude that the only legitimate protest tactic is an unbending adherence to nonviolence, even– especially –in the face of violence. This position was bolstered by a particular strain of second-wave feminism, which claimed that violence against the state is tantamount to violence against women. Under this rubric, civil disobedience is bracketed off as acceptable, while more militant tactics are universally condemned. To offer an example, "liberal" NBC news anchor Keith Olbermann recently devoted the better part of his evening program to an extended polemic against the anti-capitalist protesters at the G20 economic summit in London, who—in the course of being tear gassed and beaten by riot police—broke some windows at the Royal Bank of Scotland. His objection was not to the protesters' demands or to their ideology, but to the fact that they would deign to destroy private property.

There are a number of problems with this logic. First, it assumes that movement organizations freely "choose" from a grab bag of potential tactics. In reality, as Adamic's text demonstrates, particular tactics are necessitated by particular historical conjunctures. Some situations may call for a hunger strike, while others may call for armed combat. To unequivocally denounce either of these tactics makes little sense. For example, as cited in *Dynamite*, a Chicago-based German language newspaper boldly proclaimed on May 1, 1886:

> Bravely forward! The conflict has begun... Workers, let your watchword be: No Compromise! ... Clean your guns, complete your ammunition. The hired murderers of the capitalists, the police and militia, are ready to murder.

This might sound like needless provocation. But as it turned out, the provocation turned prophetic, for two days later police opened fire on a group of locked-out workers at the McCormick Reaper Works as they tried to block scabs from entering the factory, setting into motion a chain of events that would culminate in the infamous Haymarket Riot. In the face of an employer-sanctioned state-sponsored militarized police force-cum-death squad, the locked out workers had no realistic choice but to arm themselves and fight back.

Much has changed since then. The iconic image of a picket line, repeated numerous times on television news and in the popular imagination, features workers marching in circles about the sidewalk in front of their place of business, moving constantly to allow for the free passage of pedestrians—and strikebreakers. Indeed, strikebreakers are typically permitted to cross the line unimpeded—though perhaps not without some gentle taunting. Adamic reminds us that a true picket line's function is to physically prevent strikebreakers ("scabs") from entering the plant by forming an impenetrable line of defense.


Graphic Section — Chicago Sunday Tribune — Camera News Reviews

Violence Weapon of Reds in the U. S.

Labor Preyed Upon by Alien Fanatics

Newspapers alleged that Communists favored violence

It must be noted that there are major inaccuracies in Adamic's narrative, some of which undermine his argument and ultimate conclusions. By contemporary academic standards (and perhaps even by journalistic standards), the book falls short. But it's important to keep in mind that the subfield today known as "labor history" did not yet exist in Adamic's time, and his research is almost entirely original, based exclusively on primary sources. Not until the 1960s, with the rise of social history and the academy's sudden interest in the lives of working-class people, did scholars begin to engage in serious study of American unions. Due to these shortcomings, it may be more useful to read *Dynamite* as a historical document *itself*—a window into a moment when the fate of American labor was still very much undecided.

Adamic's text was written at the apex of a critical historical juncture. After fading briefly in the aftermath of the Palmer Raids and the (first) Red Scare, labor was once again on the march. In fact, 1934 saw a wave of general strikes in a number of key cities, including San Francisco, Minneapolis, and Toldeo. 1934 is probably the most important year in American labor history, rivaled only by 1919. Yet one year later, everything would change. FDR with the help of his labor secretary, Francis Perkins, proposed the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA), which offered labor unions legitimation and provided some basic protections in exchange for more government regulation and supervision. Its chief enforcement mechanism was the contract, which for the first time gained real legal status. Once brought under the wing of paternalistic politicians, labor's prominence would briefly increase, but its real power and autonomy soon declined. Tellingly, in the years that followed, labor would abandon its historical demand for the shortening of the working day, focusing instead on the much more moderate demand for gradual wages increases. To be sure, unions didn't fade right away– indeed, WWII and the immediate post-war years were marked by another surge in strike activity—but these strikes were largely wildcats ("illegal" strikes initiated by rank-and-file union members without the consent of the union bureaucracy). Labor's fate was already sealed.

In 1947, President Truman signed the Taft-Hartley act, which undermined some of the more generous provisions of the NLRA by locking many unions into no-strike clauses and outlawing the secondary boycott, a popular tactic that allowed for the generalization of local struggles. Labor seemed to briefly revive in the 1960s, but by the time the 1970s oil crisis hit, these social struggles had largely dissipated and the movement was once again quiet. The final blow came in 1980, when Reagan fired striking air traffic controllers and sparked a decade of vicious anti-union government policy. Since then, American unions have been the laughingstock of the industrialized world. Better governance along the way might have mitigated labor's decline, but as David Montgomery argues in his classic text *The Fall of the House of Labor*, it was that labor's decision to buy into the NLRA that precipitated its downfall.

Writing in 1934, could Adamic have seen any of this coming? After spending the better part of the book chronicling the movement's glory days, Adamic's last chapter ends on a pessimistic note. He laments the bureaucratization and professionalization of the American Federation of Labor (AFL), problems that would only grow worse in the ensuing years. His criticisms portend the rise of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), which, though initially more militant than the AFL, was firmly ensconced in government bureaucracy almost from the start. Adamic offers no real analysis here, and hedges on important political questions. In the last pages of the book, he seems to endorse an uncharacteristically moderate social democratic vision, writing "society must compel business to function for the social good." At other times, he describes labor's prospects in terms that would make even the most unreconstructed Marxist blush: "the American working class will be violent until the workers become revolutionary in their minds and motives and organize ... into unions with revolutionary aims to power." Yet on one point, he is absolutely clear: the government is not a natural ally in labor's struggle against capital, and any successful strategy for labor must be created not through political alliances, but through the working class's own capacity for self-activity.

Confronting Adamic's text seventy-five years after the fact demands that readers ask themselves a number of difficult and politically loaded questions: to what extent is our seemingly peaceful labor system already (and always) bound up in the latent violence of capital? The very notion of a post-war labor "peace" conceals the underlying violence upon which that "peace" was brokered. The illusion of labor peace is predicated upon the state's power to unleash violence against workers should they break their end of the deal. Was the subsumption of the American labor movement under layers of government bureaucracy—in exchange for an end to violence—on the whole a victory for workers? Or has the post-war labor peace been an unequal compromise? Certainly, no unionist is nostalgic for the days when a worker could be shot dead for walking a picket line, but the alternative we have isn't that great either. Ⓐ

art REVIEW

Generation 'Ehh'

▶ The Generational: Younger Than Jesus. At the New Museum, on view till June 14, 2009

CLAY MATLIN

Let's get right to the point: if this is the best the so-called Millenials have to offer (myself being one of them) then the art world as we know might as well pack up and leave. It's been a good run. Everyone should be proud. Lots of great memories. Tons of money. Successful careers. Names in the pantheon. It was bound to come to an end sometime. But that it was going to be so soon no one could have known. So mediocre is the New Museum's newest and perhaps most important show, *The Generational: Younger Than Jesus*, that if this is the best of the future then the future is bleak and boring.

Culled from the recommendations of 150 artists, critics, and curators, 500 artists, all younger than the age Jesus was when he was crucified at the age of 33, were narrowed down by the curators Lauren Cornell, Massimiliano Gioni, and Laura Hoptman to get to a final headcount of fifty artists from twenty-five countries. It must have been a Herculean task—if one wants to get a sense of its enormity, one can purchase the show's *Artist Directory*, a phonebook sized tome of those who made the cut and those who didn't. But, as is the fate of so many things of the Herculean variety, the ambition proved to be its own undoing. This is not to say that an attempt to try to give a state of the young art world is invalid, quite the opposite, but the situation that we are presented with could easily have been predicted. The last two major group shows at the New Museum, the terrible Unmonumental and the better After Nature, set the stage for Younger Than Jesus by showing us the New Museum's chosen aesthetic. And what have we learned from the exhibition? Well, apparently young artists really love video and photography. Conceptual art is back. And painting and sculpture are too much work.

It is well within the New Museum's institutional right that it have its own sense of the type of art it believes to be important, but asserting that the New Museum is in fact the most qualified voice and venue to tell the viewing public what is definitively happening seems tenuous at best. That there was a dearth of good painting is especially troubling. Only one can be recommended, the Polish painter Jakub Julian Ziolkowski whose medium sized to large scale canvases have a strangely surrealist freneticism to them but also manage to succeed in their illustrative qualities. I'm not sure what it means that so few painters, let alone good ones, were represented in the show. Perhaps patient, considered work is falling by the wayside in favor of the immediate gratification of more technologically driven mediums such as photography and video art.

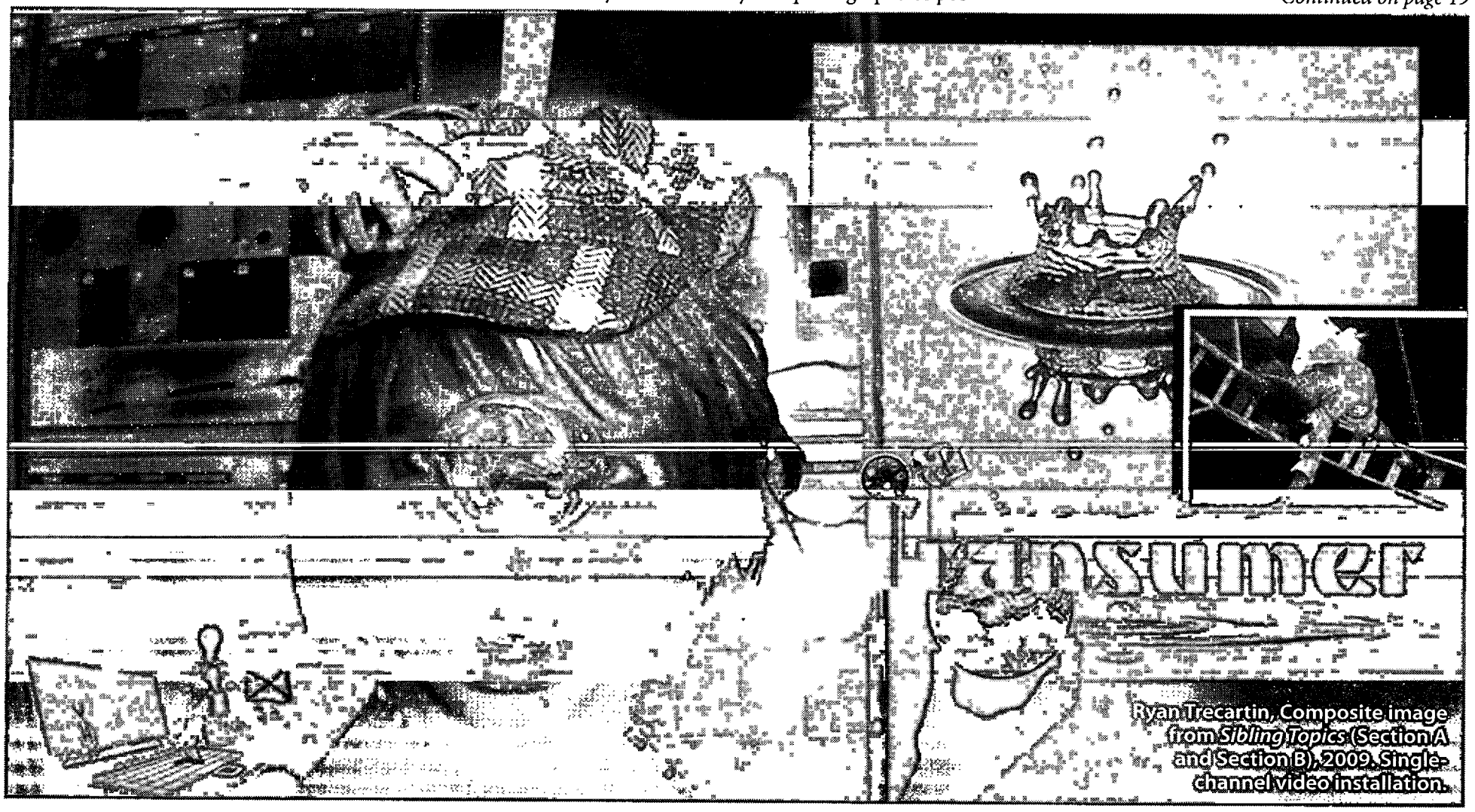
Although the New Museum makes no claims otherwise, there seems to be no real cohesion to the show other than the age of the artists in it. It's a shame really, because this could have been a chance for the New Museum to shine. As Holland Cotter observed, "it is, despite its promise of freshness, business as usual. Its strengths are individual and episodic." Personally, I didn't get it. There is no real narrative structure, no consistent through line. There are, however, a number of middling, dull works. For *The Consequence* British conceptual artist Ryan Gander has instructed the museum that whatever gallery attendant is on duty on the fourth floor he or she is to wear a white Adidas tracksuit with two dark bloodstains on it. The title of course is directly linked to the unknown story that we make up in our heads. I had to look for the blood, that was my consequence. Two insignificant bloodstains do not a compelling narrative make. Polish video-artist Anna Molska's video of two beautiful, muscular young men dressed in some sort of warrior costumes pushing around enormous puzzle pieces and magically making something that approximates Malevich's *Black Square* feels more like a failed fashion shoot from "America's Next Top Model" than a work of any consequence. Both artists are on the fourth floor. Stay away from the fourth floor.

Czech artist Kateřina Šedá's video, however, depicting her depressed grandmother drawing her way out of her sadness is truly a moving work. Elad Lassry of Israel engages with the same mimetic themes that Richard Prince addressed in the early 1980s when he re-photographed magazine ads. Prince, however, did it better. Chinese photographer Cao Fei's images of cos-players (people that dress up as characters from video games and comic books) have no weight. They look exactly like what they are: photographs of people dressed up in constumes; not very interesting and reminiscent of freshman year photo-lab work.

Continuing to list all the mediocre art that comprises *Younger Than Jesus* would be unfruitful while making me look like some sort of angry Hilton Kramer-esque critic, constantly lamenting the downfall of art. *Younger Than Jesus* is not entirely devoid of good art. Oddly enough, the best piece is video, which as a heavily saturated medium can't usually make such a claim. Three artists in particular stand out. Add me to the list of people overwhelmed by Cyprien Gaillard's 30-minute video, with its spectacular soundtrack by the French composer Koudlam. Gaillard's video, told in three parts and shot at a distance, is a stunning meditation on violence, desperation, desolation, and the problem of forced community building. It begins with rival gangs of "underground fight clubs" in St. Petersburg, Russia housing projects beating the shit out of each other. It then cuts to an elaborate light and fireworks show projected onto a Parisian suburb housing project before it is imploded. A weird, almost sentimental send-off of an obsolete object that is at once the face of a community and yet is not deemed worthy of existence. The final third is an aerial view of snow-covered public housing in a suburb of Kiev. The camera shakes as the airplane flies around buildings and grounds. The buildings look as if they have always been abandoned, that there was never any intent to have people live in them. Gaillard lets us know that America doesn't hold a monopoly on failed community building and public welfare. It is a work that is both disturbing and exhilarating. It's one of the best things I've seen in New York in two years.

Philadelphia-based video artist Ryan Trecartin's absurdist installations/video works are so screwball that they defy explanation. His heavily made-up, gender bending performers rant and rave, the digital effects are decidedly low budget. The viewer sits in a two-room installation that resembles a plane and watches as Trecartin's performers bounce around the television screens. The work is not only morbid and perverse but hysterically funny, each video displays a distinct narrative that veers toward Dadaist exuberance. South African video and installation artist Dineo Seshee Bopape is wonderfully strange. Her installation

Continued on page 19



Ryan Trecartin, Composite image from *SiblingTopics* (Section A and Section B), 2009. Single-channel video installation.

theater REVIEW

'Pull the String! Pull the String!'

▶ *Puppet Kafka*. Written by B. Walker Sampson. Directed by Gretchen Van Lente. Presented by Drama of Works, at Here Arts Center

FRANK EPISALE

The instruction manual to the widely praised video game *Assassin's Creed* (Ubisoft, 2007) makes explicit comparison between control of the game's avatar and the manipulation of puppets. A subsection of the manual titled "Contextual Puppeteering Controls" explains that "[e]ach body part is linked to a button (head..., weapon hand..., empty hand..., and legs)." While this conceit is intended largely to reinforce the game's meta-virtual conceit (the player plays as a contemporary character who in turn controls an "ancestor" via video-game like controls), it is far from the first time that the connection between puppets and avatars has been made. While there is very little scholarly work on video games and virtual worlds, a considerable subsection of what has been published employs the avatars-as-puppets metaphor (though, to be sure, there are articles that dispute the comparison as well).

Some articles attempt to legitimize video games as a site of scholarly exploration by linking them to an existing discourse; others view puppetry as one way to theorize the forms and functions of a field that no one is entirely sure how to frame. There is some irony to both of these threads, as scholars and practitioners of puppetry have themselves long sought to achieve both an aura of cultural legitimacy and a system of productive theoretical frameworks. A few articles propose the puppet metaphor as a lens through which to envision new models of pedagogically useful games for children. There is some irony in this as well, since children aren't the ones who need a meat-based metaphor to understand the appeal of video games.

There is a certain appeal and possible usefulness to the idea that there is a connection between digital avatars and puppets. The idea of "digital puppetry" has been around for some time, and can be summed up as the manipulation of computer-animated avatars in real time, rather than in pre-rendered sequences. These virtual objects, like real-world puppets, respond to the performer/player whether the actions are scripted and rehearsed or completely improvisational. The rise of console gaming, particularly large-scale "sandbox" games in which the player/performer can move freely around a sprawling environment and interact with largely non-linear storyline (*Assassin's Creed*, the *Grand Theft Auto* series [Rockstar Games, 1997–], the forthcoming *Infamous* [Sony, 2009], etc.), has moved the puppet/avatar metaphor to the mainstream, building on the considerable success of "massively multiplayer" game experiences like *Second Life* (Linden Research 2003–) and *World of Warcraft* (Blizzard Entertainment, 2004–). *Second Life* has proven particularly intriguing to performing arts scholars and practitioners, as virtual theatre festivals, dance companies, and improvisatory performances have sprung up and, in some cases, begun to develop followings. Games like *Little Big Planet* (Sony, 2008) and *Rag Doll Kung Fu* (Valve, 2005; Sony, 2009) evoke puppet theatre as well, by employing doll-like characters and ragdoll physics.

Still, it must be acknowledged that modifying "puppetry" with "digital" results is a fundamental change. I was recently interviewed by filmmaker David Soll, who is working on a documentary about the current New York puppet-theatre scene. Since the late 1990s, there has been an oft-observed proliferation of both puppet-based theatre and the use of puppets in actor-based theatre. One of the questions Soll wants to ask in his film is: why now? In part, the answer is a matter of logistical circumstance. Funding and workshopping opportunities from national and local not-for-profits, increased exposure to puppet traditions from around the world, and the option to study puppetry within the academy have all played a part. Soll seems to suspect that there is something more at play, however.

When I mentioned the connection between puppets and video games, Soll acknowledged that there are some interesting conversations going on around that idea, but added that he thinks the link is a false one. He explained that he experiences video games and virtual worlds in a completely different way than he experiences puppet performances, and considers them parts of very different spheres. More specifically, he argues that the tactile, analog nature of puppetry is a big part of what sets it apart from other forms, and that the enthusiasm for puppet forms among a small but growing segment of the performing arts community has everything to do with this.

A scene from *Puppet Kafka*

Soll's argument was very much on my mind when I attended Drama of Works's *Puppet Kafka* at Here Arts Center. DoW's work, which I've followed since 2002's *The Ballad of Phineas Gage*, frequently foregrounds highly physical relationship between puppet and puppeteer. In *Puppet Kafka*, Markus Maurette and Meghan Williams's set is scaled appropriately for the marionettes (designed by Miroslav Trejtnar) but the actor-puppeteers inhabit the same space, and are forced to crouch and crawl and bump awkwardly into doorways and furniture. Some such moments were certainly accidents, but Van Lente and her team seem to have created the awkward situation intentionally.

The awkwardness has everything to do with the story material, of course. Excerpts and plot points from Kafka's most famous fiction are juxtaposed and interwoven with biographical material both documented and speculative. The uncomfortable stage setting is meant to evoke the discomforting impact of Kafka's prose. If the actors are the imagination, the conscience, the animating force of the puppets, the cramped quarters reflect how uncomfortable and stifled these characters feel in their own skin. In keeping with this notion, the actors manipulate their puppets as if they are playing with dolls. Their hands are all over them, all the time. There is no attempt at illusion, no attempt to distract the audience from the bodies of the performers. The physical, tactile, analog nature of puppetry is on full display.

While the "stars" of the production are ostensibly the marionettes (beautifully carved by Miroslav Trejtnar), the variety of puppet forms on display is impressive both in terms of craft and ingenuity (as it so often is in contemporary puppet theatre). Kafka is represented in one scene by the marionette and in the next by a "K" carved out of wood. When he is emotionally wounded and feels small, the "K" falls to the ground and is replaced by a "k." Shadows are projected through one "wall" and onto another. The famous dung-beetle from *The Metamorphosis* is represented by a hand-puppet stitched together from bread baskets, feathers, and pipe cleaners.

All in all, *Puppet Kafka* is not my favorite DoW show. The play is difficult to follow if it's been a while since you've read *The Trial*, etc., and the psychology underlying the overall conceit is a little simplistic, despite being masked by formal complexity. The rough edges I have often praised in DoW's work, are sometimes a little too rough here, as actors visibly struggle to remember their lines and bump their heads on doorframes as they enter the stage.

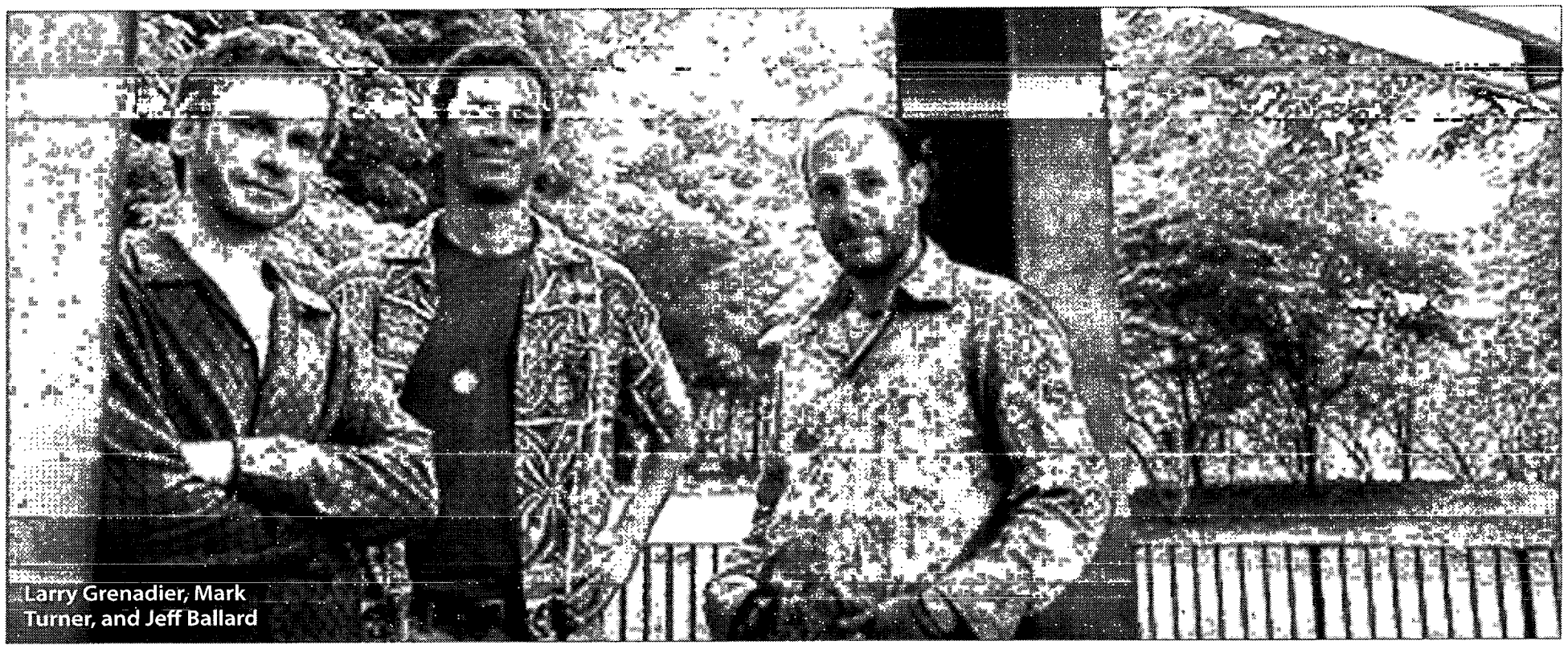
And yet, the show still fascinates. These bodies and objects in space, just a few feet from the audience, dance in close quarters and maintain constant contact with one another. The puppets, which were carved, stitched, and glued into creation, now move not independently of, but in conjunction with the bodies of flesh-and-blood performers. The individual performances are hybrid performances; when a puppeteer moves from one puppet to the next, she becomes a different performer, representing a different character. The deeply personal connection between performer and object ironically helps the production as a whole to become a study in alienation.

This process probably has more to do with cyborg theory than with video games, but the cyborg metaphor doesn't quite work either. The magic of these puppets is in no small part their reliance on "craft" in a quite literal sense of the word. All of the narrative and aesthetic sophistication and complexity begins with a block of wood, a carving knife, and a dancing body. Ⓐ

Puppet Kafka. Written by B. Walker Sampson. Directed by Gretchen Van Lente. Marionettes by Miroslav Trejtnar; additional puppets by Van Lente. Lighting by Bruke Brown; sound by Matt Tennie; sets and props by Markus Maurette and Meghan Williams; video by Pete Dimas. Performed by: Jason Howard, John Ardolino, Scott Weber, Deborah Beshaw, Tatiana Pavela, and Adam Sullivan. Presented by Drama of Works, at Here Arts Center, 145 6th Ave. Wednesdays–Saturdays at 7pm, Sundays at 2pm. $18; $12 students. Closes May 10th, 2009. Visit www.here.org or www.dramaofworks.com for tickets and more information.

music REVIEW

The Sign of Three: Mark Turner, Larry Grenadier and Jeff Ballard



Larry Grenadier, Mark Turner, and Jeff Ballard

▶ Fly: *Sky & Country* (ECM, March 2009)

MARK SCHIEBE

My personal and admittedly partial lineage of the jazz saxophone trio starts with Sonny Rollins's pair of 1957 recordings *Way out West* and *A Night at the Vanguard*. *Way out West* was a studio album, with bass icon Ray Brown anchoring and Shelley Manne on drums. The cover pictures Rollins in full cowboy get-up, Stetson, gunbelt and holster, the lone hornman in the desert. The explosive live set entitled *A Night at the Vanguard* paired the saxophonist with Wilbur Ware (bass) and the young and still developing Elvin Jones (drums), who three years later would storm the citadel with the John Coltrane Quartet. Rollins was instinctively attracted to the trio configuration for a couple of reasons. The absence of another horn provided extra space for his tenor explorations, allowing him to develop at length thematic seeds he planted in the early choruses of a solo and which often bore brilliant fruit on the tenth or even fifteenth chorus of the song. Charlie Parker, the inventor of bebop saxophone playing, who had died three years earlier, once said that anything more than two choruses was "just practicing." Rollins might have responded that anything less than two choruses was "just warming up."

The idea of a horn playing "on" chords without a piano "comping" the harmony behind the soloist had been pioneered at least five years earlier when Gerry Mulligan and Chet Baker formed their "pianoless quartet," which allowed Mulligan to compose melodies for two horns in counterpoint, rather than the standard (then and now) horn melody in unison with the piano supplying the harmony. Rollins seemed to like the pianoless format because he was an intensely lyrical player who emphasized the priority of melody over harmony, and without a piano filling in a preexisting harmony he could, in the process of improvising, discover new harmonies under the standard melody of the song. So beginning with Mulligan/Baker and Rollins, the pianoless format had really been a kind of jazz frontier; it was about what could be done with more space, both in terms of melodic development and harmonic freedom.

The pianoless format became far more common in the 1960's after Ornette Coleman's pioneering free jazz albums from 1959. On *The Shape of Jazz to Come* and *Change of the Century* the leader's elastic blues lines and trumpeter Don Cherry's spastic explosions were heard in a kind of improvised counterpoint with bassist Charlie Haden, a running dialogue between horn and bass. This music was less about melody against harmony, and more about melody against melody. In Stockholm in 1965, Ornette recorded in the saxophone trio format with bassist David Izenson and drummer Charles Moffett on *Live at the Golden Circle*, this time ditching his trademark plastic horn for a metal one. (His playing was never the same...) By 1961, Coltrane's pianist McCoy Tyner was "laying out" large sections of the leader's solos, allowing Coltrane to conduct his explorations simultaneously vertically and horizontally. In 1964, the tenor player Albert Ayler recorded *Spiritual Unity* in New York City with the like-minded Gary Peacock (bass) and Sonny Murray (drums). Peacock and Murray think more texturally than rhythmically, creating washes of sound, while Ayler communes with Dionysius through blues-drenched howls and screams. No words could do justice to the sustained and joyous energy of *Spiritual Unity*, a record that has achieved cult status but has made less headway among wider groups of jazz listeners.

By the 1980's then, a substantial if slender body of saxophone trio work had been recorded. It took the master tenor player Joe Henderson twenty-five years before he tried the format, recording *State of the Tenor* live in 1985 at the Village Vanguard with Miles Davis alums Ron Carter on bass and the underrated Al Foster on drums. Two years later, with the crucial substitution of Charlie Haden for Carter on bass, Henderson's trio recorded a sublime live set in France (*An Evening with Joe Henderson*). The archetype for this trio's style is most certainly the early Rollins recordings, as Haden "walks" quarter-note bass lines throughout the set, but his superior sensitivity to the harmonic nuances of Henderson's playing sets up breathtaking moments of improvised counterpoint as they explore such Henderson favorites as the Latin-colored "Invitation" and Thelonius Monk's knotty ballad "Ask Me Now."

In 1988, bassist Dave Holland pared down his usual quintet and sextet linups to give extra space to the innovative young alto saxophonist Steve Coleman on *Triplicate*. Joined by his frequent cohort Jack DeJohnette (drums), the result was one of Holland's freshest records to date—far more spontaneous than much of his last five or six efforts, which have fallen into comfort and predictability. Coleman has gone on to become an important bandleader in his own right. The 80's and early 90's brought the "young lions," a new generation led by Wynton Marsalis (and his institutional backers) dedicated to a resurgence of "respectable," tradition-based approaches. Wynton's brother Branford is joined Reginald Veal (bass) and powerhouse drummer Jeff "Tain" Watts for the post-Coltrane exercises *Bloomington* and *The Dark Keys*, where no new ground is broken. And a more recent, self-conscious trio effort was recorded by another young lion, tenor saxophonist Joshua Redman, who is arguably the current jazz improviser with the widest audience. (Sincerest apologies to Kenny G fans who think he is a jazz musician). On *Back East*, Redman tips his (cowboy) hat to Rollins by covering two of the latter's selections on *Way Out West*, and employing a variety of trio configurations featuring a handful the best postbop players on the New York scene (bassist Larry Grenadier of Fly appears on six of the tracks). On *Back East*, Redman does what he does well, taking elements of the tradition (in this case the trio tradition), and distilling them into a style that is uniquely his, always tasteful and soulful, though never quite goose bump inducing.

* * *

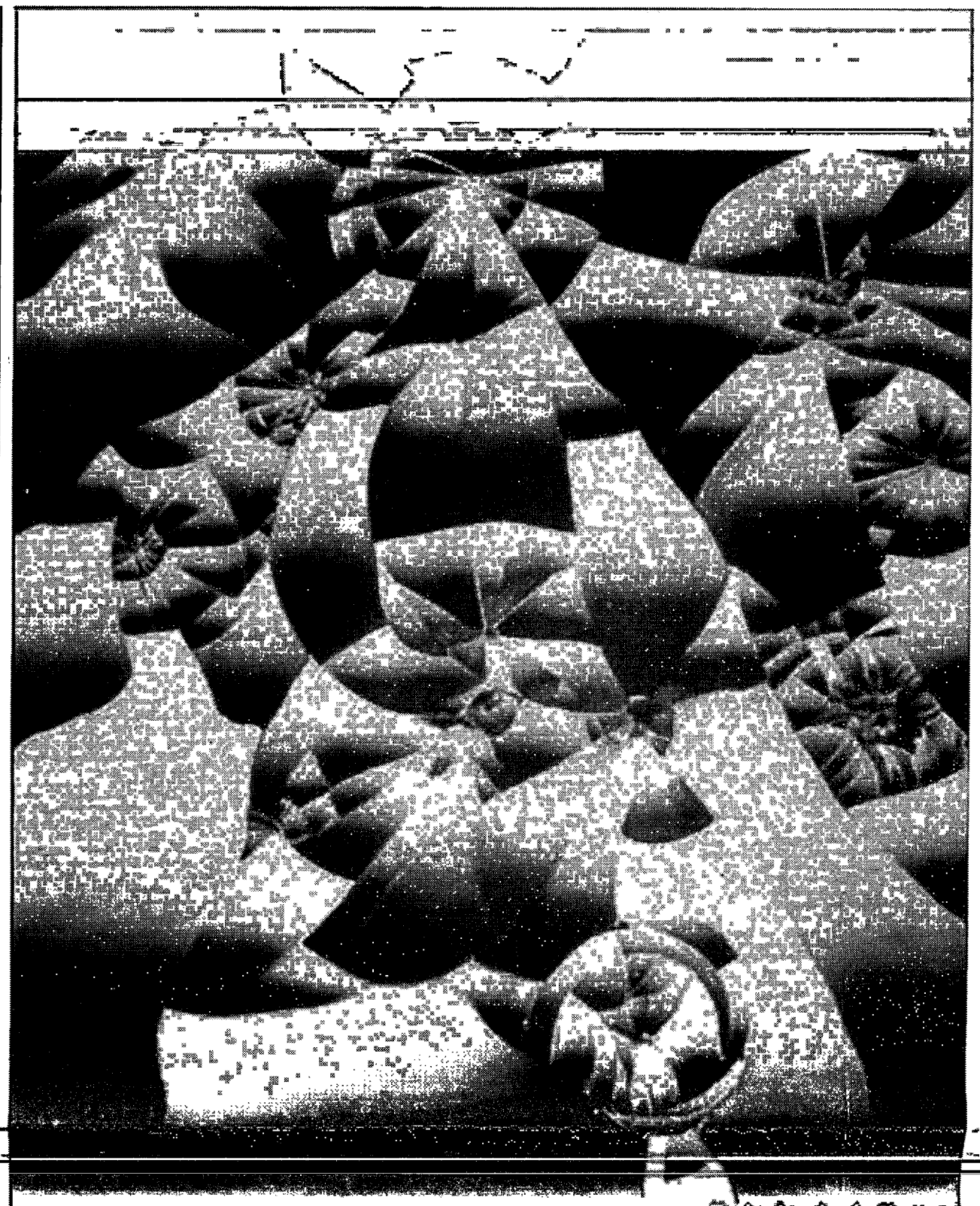
All of which brings us to *Sky & Country*, the second release from the New York-based jazz trio Fly, comprised of Mark Turner on tenor saxophone, Larry Grenadier on bass, and Jeff Ballard on the drums. Fly's roots are west coast as Grenadier and Ballard met playing in high school and college together in the late 70's in northern California and Turner grew up in Long Beach. Predictably, after their paths diverged, all three ended up in the thriving New York postbop scene in the 90's and Grenadier and Ballard currently form the rhythm section of the pianist Brad Mehldau's important trio. Two of the most in-demand players on their respective instruments, Grenadier has toured extensively with such high-profile acts as the Joshua Redman quartet and the Pat Metheny trio, while Ballard is a member of Chick Corea's working band. Turner, who has recorded four albums under his own name (check out *Dharma Days*), had also worked with Ballard for several years as a member of the guitarist (and kindred spirit) Kurt Rosenwinkel's group. So when the three decided to form Fly in 2002 and to record their eponymous debut two years later, there was already a deep familiarity and a lot of shared territory.

The band does not identify as a saxophone trio, as they strive toward a more collective approach to trio playing, with no one instrumental voice as the leader. This in itself is not novel, the idea having been pioneered fifty years ago by the pianist Bill Evans, who allowed equal creative freedom to the traditionally subordinated bass player and drummer. This approach in a saxophone trio, at least on such self-conscious terms, is somewhat new, however. "What we do in this band," Ballard says, "is work collectively. I always use gears and mechanics as an analogy. The way we've written the tunes, there are these functional elements. A bass arpeggio may be outlining the chords, but it's also laying down the rhythmic foundation, which any of us might respond to. It's wide, it's not constricted. But what I love about it is the interdependency." Turner adds: "We're trying to distill that element of interdependency within the repertoire. We've been writing music where the tunes themselves will make that apparent. And the solo sections are engineered, in a sense, with that in mind."

Turner, Grenadier and Ballard eschew such currently fashionable gimmickry as covering British pop and indie rock tunes (done sublimely by Mehldau and less successfully [though with some commercial success] by the Ethan Iverson-led piano trio The Bad Plus). Instead, their compositions are all originals, with each band member contributing material. For Fly, composition and improvisation are seamlessly integrated, and on *Sky & Country* it often sounds as if the compositions are mere sketches setting up melodic or rhythmic motifs, and leaving an optimal amount of room for each player to explore. Turner commented on the trio format in an interview for *Jazz Weekly*, "I like the simplicity of it. It is just three people... There is no...How can I put it... Harmonic middleman." It is on the one hand an album that takes on a kind of rarefied mood, full of hints and guesses. Says Ballard, it's about "filling the spaces, and not filling the spaces. It's about what's inferred, what's in the air."

This, of course, is the introspective side of the group. What makes Fly work is a heady blend of introspection with groove, plenty of which is provided by Grenadier's supple, funky bass and Ballard's irrepressible polyrhythmic undertow. On "Lady B," the opening track, Turner displays his vaunted command of the tenor's altissimo register, soaring and landing in unexpected places, pursued and sometimes overtaken by Ballard's ecstatic thirty-two-note answers. Those of us who have seen Turner live know the collective breath-holding that takes place during these flights. His sound and vocabulary are utterly his, a wicked fusion of Coltrane and (the largely forgotten west coast tenor great) Wayne Marsh. On the title tune Turner plays soprano saxophone, the first time I have heard him do so. The song begins with Turner and Grenadier reticent, almost testing tones, picking the sound palette, before a meandering rock feel is established by the bass and drums. Turner's soprano floats above the groove as he gets an almost flute-like tone from the horn, prodded lightly by Ballard's bass drum suggestions. On this track, as on others, these musicians make the stripped-down sound of the trio format work to their advantage, achieving a lazy, pensive flow—a modest, even a minimalist sound.

Sky & Country is a record whose beauty lies in its nuances, Turner's grace notes as he slips into or out of a melodic run (the "wow: he did that on purpose" moment comes on the third or fourth listen...); the way Ballard tunes each drum in his set, conceiving of each as a separate instrument; the contrapuntal consonances and dissonances established by Turner and Grenadier. Frankly, this is a difficult, demanding record because of the uncompromising musicianship of those involved. Yet the payoff is well worth the effort. *Sky & Country* is a noteworthy step forward for these three players, all of whom stand at the pinnacle of the art form, and who have collectively produced the best saxophone trio record since Joe Henderson's collaboration with Charlie Haden and Al Foster twenty-two years earlier. Ⓐ



Tauba Auerbach, *Shatter III*, 2009. Acrylic and glass on panel.

Art Review

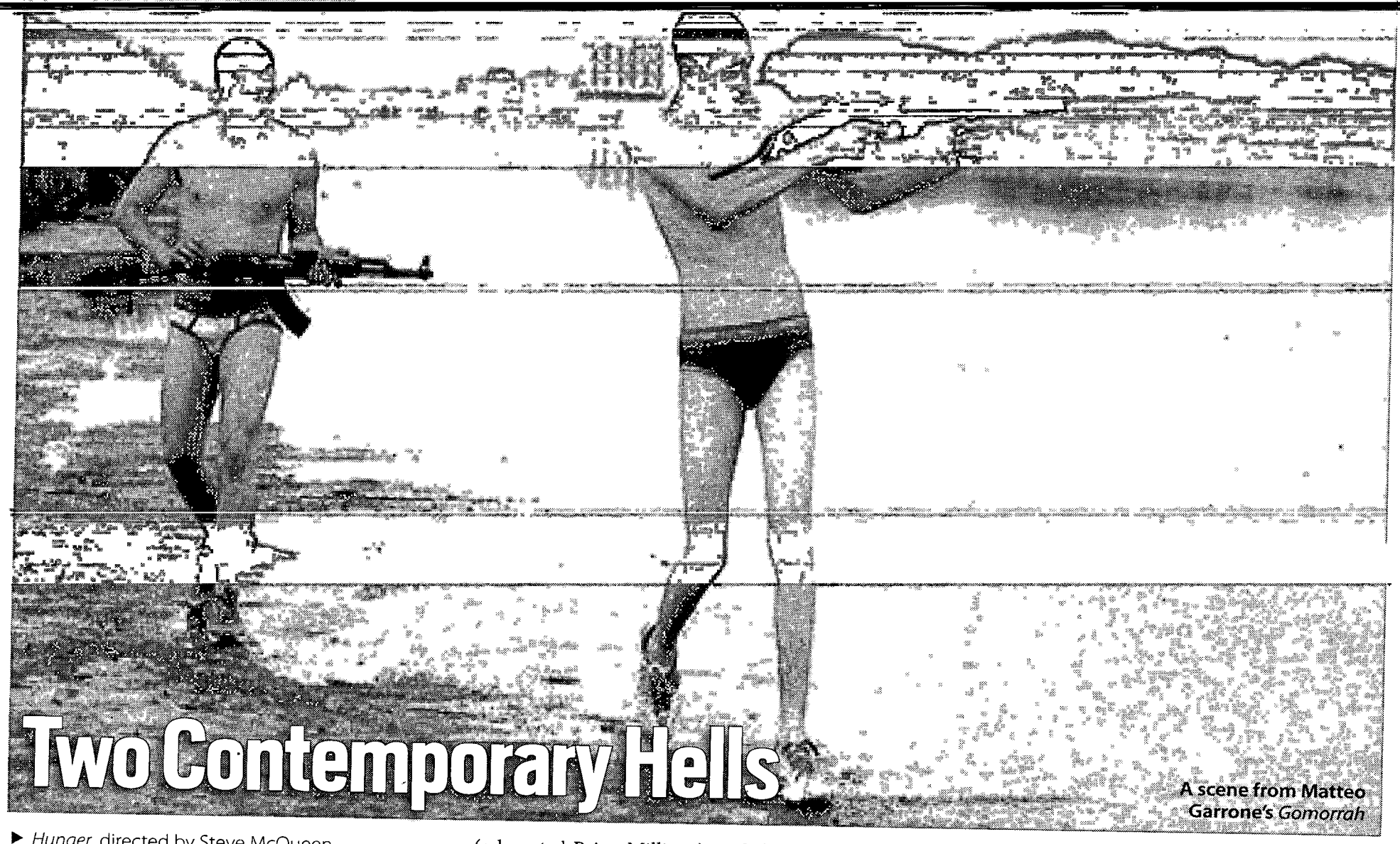
Continued from page 16

thewebula/uhthwebula (the process of making someone into a zombie which is also the same word for taking a picture) features black walls, reflective foil, plants painted black, a disco ball, and glitter on every available surface. Couple that with her moody black and white video *dreamweaver*, which features her with what looks to be a beard, sunglasses, an umbrella, and white sacks tied around her waist while a single exposed light bulb swings above her head as the only source of light and nonsensical mash-up soundtrack plays in the background, and the effect is incredibly haunting. It is as if one has stepped into private ritual from another world, producing an experience that is ghostly and unsettling.

I was heartened that most of the reviews (Holland Cotter of the *The New York Times* and Peter Schjeldahl of *The New Yorker*) reserved heaping praise on *Younger Than Jesus*. It's good that they didn't buy in to the intoxicating qualities of youth. The same can't be said for *New York Magazine's* Jerry Saltz, a habitual praiser of youth. Perhaps the main problem with his assessment of the exhibition, other than his belief in it as a success, is that he somehow manages to argue that the sublime has "moved into us" and is no longer the province of "God or nature or abstraction." The sublime, and thereby its potential, is always in us. It is not an exterior event but its power rests in its inherent interiority. Burke understood this and so did Kant. The external terrors trigger our internal collapse. We step into the sublime experience because it, the fear of our death, what Burke calls "the king of terrors," is awakened within us. The sublime is there to remind us of the immanence of our death and the reality of flesh. Kant argues we are made better, more human, in our experience of the sublime. This does not happen with *Younger Than Jesus*. There is no being "made better." If anything, one exits it entirely unchanged. And that is why it amounts to a nothing experience.

The very problem with the exhibition is that it really isn't "bad" in the sense that the work in it is awful and unconsidered. There are standouts, including German minimalist artist Kitty Kraus along with the ones I have already mentioned. But most of it is just a sort of bland rehashing of work we've already seen. It doesn't feel terribly original. The one thing that remains consistent is that it's all remarkably thoughtful; even the works I have singled out to chastise are smart and thoughtful.

But that isn't enough. Being thoughtful and smart doesn't make art good. It makes it thoughtful and smart. There is a difference and that is where *Younger Than Jesus* gets lost in its own ambition. It's not a terrible exhibition and it is without question important. If one has been following the art world at all for the past five to ten years then none of this should be surprising. The problem lies in the fact that so much of it is spectacularly mediocre, signifying that, possibly, art is on its way to a long period of pedestrian work that neither surprises nor excites. And this is fine. Art can't always be great but let's not celebrate this. Perhaps there is hope. Maybe video art is going to be the new important medium. A lot of people think so. I'm not sold, though. Three really good artists, video or not, out of fifty isn't great odds. Ⓐ



Two Contemporary Hells

A scene from Matteo Garrone's *Gomorrah*

▶ *Hunger*, directed by Steve McQueen, and *Gomorrah*, directed by Matteo Garrone, both at the IFC Center.

TIM KRAUSE

Hunger and *Gomorrah*, two films now showing at the IFC Center, offer grim, unsparing views of the human condition—a kind of Platonically perfect "bad vibes" double feature, if you will, a downbeat, unsettling night (or series of nights) at the cinema. Both are topical, both are necessary, and both are difficult, endlessly rewarding, viewing experiences.

Steve McQueen's *Hunger* tells the story of Bobby Sands (played with rare intensity by Michael Fassbender) and his fellow Irish Republican Army members, who, as captives of the British, staged a hunger strike in 1981 that eventually ended in Sands' death. It is a quiet triumph of a movie, a harrowing and eminently lucid film that portrays violence and suffering movingly but not sensationally, with a calmness and depth of focus that shows pain, and the body's experience of pain, in all its horrific detail. The film starts with two main plotlines: one shows policeman Ray Lohan (Stuart Graham) going to work, methodically dressing, checking his car for bombs, and, finally, beating IRA prisoners in several brutally visceral scenes; the second plotline narrates the prisoners' story, focusing first on a new prisoner, Davey (a haunted Brian Milligan), and then moving on to Bobby Sands, the leader of the prisoners: an unlikely hero, part tortured saint, part simple Catholic man from the North.

Hunger moves us slowly into the world of Long Kesh prison, first showing the everyday routines of men, guards and prisoners alike, living and working among extraordinary squalor, bloodshed, and fear. We see the IRA prisoners huddled under blankets, refusing to wear prison uniforms, the walls of their cells smeared with feces, the floors running with urine, all attempts to rebuke the cruelty of their guards and the aloofness of the British government; we see, through Lohan's eyes, the regimented world of the guards, all barracks camaraderie and dirty jokes, with only slight revelations—such as Lohan's perpetually scarred knuckles, cut time and again on the bodies of his prisoners—of the daily violence at Long Kesh. It was especially shocking to watch the guards' scenes on the day the Obama Administration released the Bush torture memoranda; or, today, to think about these scenes while typing this review, just having read of further developments in the case of Ian Tomlinson, who was walking home from work during the London G-20 protests, and who died after he was beaten by the police.

Tomlinson did not die, as was originally thought, from a heart attack but from internal injuries after having been attacked from behind and knocked down to the ground by a policeman in full riot gear. Not the least of *Hunger*'s successes is its ability to speak to two worlds at once, the world of the events that it depicts, and the world outside the theater, in which similar events daily proliferate: the film thus functions as a mirror, not just for the dark times of the Troubles in Northern Ireland, but for our own troubled, darkened times as well.

The topicality of *Hunger*, however, pales before its luminous cinematic style. McQueen fills the screen with delicate, atmospheric touches, and uses generously long takes in portraying the prisoners' resistance to the guards' abuses. These quiet stretches are punctuated by episodes of viciousness and depravity that are shocking not only in their unflinching specificity—Sands' forced haircut, administered by Lohan, whose bloody scissors keep cutting off bits of Sands' skin; the gauntlet of armored, Perspex-shielded riot police through which the prisoners, naked, on all fours, must pass, as the riot police hit them mercilessly with their fists and nightsticks—but also in their near-balletic choreography, McQueen's exquisitely composed shots and sweeping camera rendering the unthinkable violence a beautiful, horrifying, disturbing spectacle.

McQueen has been faulted for the more aestheticized elements of his presentation of the prisoners' ordeal—rightfully, I think, for using numerous, not so-subtle Christological symbols and motifs when depicting Sands and others, which at times feel unerringly right (as with the unexpected pieta following Lohan's murder by an IRA gunman), but other times fall flat (as with some of the more obvious Sands-as-Christ moments). But McQueen's constancy of method and purpose succeeds more often than not, as with the film's spectacular set piece, a fifteen-minutes-plus dialogue between Sands and his priest, Father Moran (played with steely reserve by Liam Cunningham), which brings Sands' history, as well as his motivations for the hunger strike, to the fore. While scarifying, the film is edifying as well, the pity and fear it evokes transformed into a widening of the viewer's experience, a greater knowledge through art of the extremes of human life. As a friend pointed out, *Hunger* is loosely structured on Dante's *Commedia*, with the

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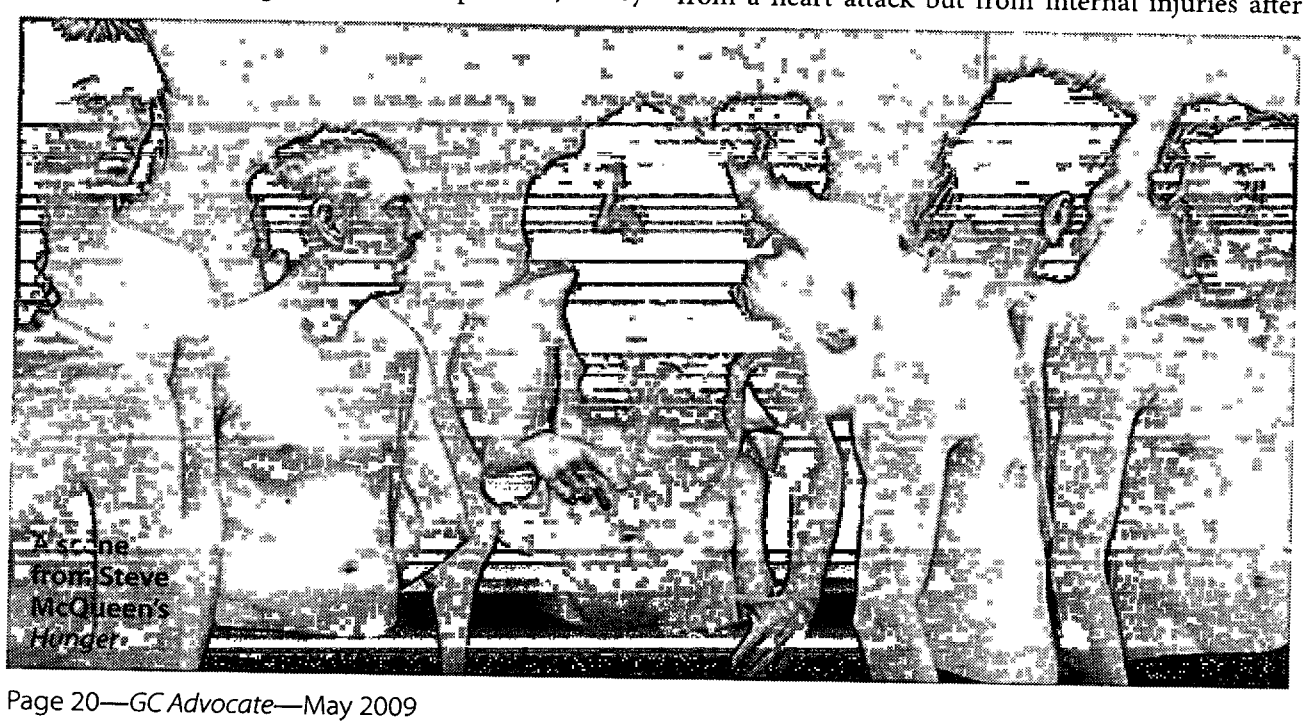


A scene from Steve McQueen's *Hunger*

The State of French Cinema

▶ French Cinema in 2008, at the César awards.

NICOLE WALLENBROCK

My expectations for the 2008 César awards were high. Since the French make better films, dress better and speak a better language, surely their Academy Awards would be superior. What's more, I was suffering from cinema depression; a week earlier I had watched the Oscars, grimacing at Hugh Jackman's song and dance numbers and feigning surprise when *Slumdog Millionaire* slam-dunked best picture in a year of mediocre Hollywood. I needed cinema affirmation.

Initially, I thought my expectations were met when 2008 President of the César Awards, Charlotte Gainsbourg—pencil-thin in black glitter with a luscious pout and long disheveled bangs—introduced the ceremony with all the style and elegance of her model mom and rock-star dad. However, as soon as the epitome of chic left the stage her foil appeared, Antoine de Caunes, comedian and TV personality, speaking in a high-pitched Muppet voice—you know the French love Jerry Lewis! Unfortunately, though I had survived the Hugh Jackman and Béyoncé butchering of the musical into a Oscar medley the week before, I now found myself watching a budget-cut French version of the same routine; de Caunes cockled "Singin' in the Rain" with his strangled-chicken voice, while gleefully splashing in puddles of stage-rain.

Why sing a song from an American musical in English at a *French* film award ceremony? France prides itself on inventing film, nest-ce pas? Perhaps the answer could be found in the camera constantly panning American stars Dustin Hoffman and Sean Penn. In fact, as soon as de Caunes took his raincoat off and yelled in English "the musical is back!" he informed the audience that *the* Sean Penn was present. The audience then applauded even more than they had for his wet chicken song when de Caunes interrupted (in English again) to say "Yooo air so fucking grrrate man!" Yes, Hollywood and its Oscars were never far away from the César award ceremony, and as Gertrude Stein once said, "An award ceremony is an award ceremony is an award ceremony..."

And is Hollywood far enough away from contemporary French film? French cinema in 2008 was dominated by gender: the gangster film (*Public Enemy No. 1* and *The Death Instinct)* and the fragile female sanity of a maid (*Sassarine*). That is to say, the year's most celebrated films did not break any formal rules and primarily repeated clichés established across the pond. In fact, the most liberating French film of 2008, came from a director of yester-year. Founding New-Wave left-bank director, Agnès Varda, made *Les plages de Agnès* (*The Beaches of Agnès)* to celebrate her life, loves, and career to mark her 80th birthday.

Les Plages d'Agnès

Les Plages d'Agnès won the César for best documentary, though the film defies categorization. While Varda revisits nearly all of her films in the 110-minute feature with clips and commentary, she also re-

Continued on page 22

Guillaume Depardieu and Max Baissette de Malglaive in *Versailles*

Continued from previous page

hell of the prisoners' cells and the Long Kesh torture chambers giving way to the purgatorial catechism between Sands and Father Moran, and finally ending in the paradoxical paradise of Sands' death from starvation, the dank prison cell traded for antiseptic hospital whites, mock-angelic doctors and their instruments in place of demonic guards and their bludgeons, and, throughout, Sands' suffering, stoic nobility: a vision of unmediated darkness that yields stubbornly, bit by bit, to images of beauty and grace at its end.

Matteo Garrone's *Gomorrah*, on the other hand, is pure hell. I hated almost every minute I spent watching *Gomorrah*, and suffered many kinds of viewerly torture—profuse sweating, nausea, rapid heartbeat, and other symptoms of an incipient panic attack—which is something of a cinematic triumph, a testament to the filmmakers' intent and its realization: a "mob" movie that revels in crime and violence while offering an unblinking critique of society's (including moviegoers') complicity in, and consumption of, the same. A meta-mob, meta-crime movie, then, as devoted to the causes and effects of violence as it is its bloody, spectacular depiction, Garrone's film explores the world of the Naples Mafia, or Camorra, while simultaneously using the hydra-headed crime syndicate as a metaphor for the rapaciousness of unfettered free-market globalization. *Gomorrah*'s unsettling double vision is announced in its opening scene, in which unnamed underworld soldiers encoffin themselves in the luminous tubes of tanning beds. We see their near-nakedness at length, an almost touching nod to their humanity—a catalogue of sagging flesh and bad homemade tattoos—until the inevitable happens, and the fake-sunbathing thugs are summarily dispatched, their bodies ripped open, like the viewers' ears, by a cascade of gunshots from offscreen. We are at first transfixed by the extreme close-ups and unmoving camera eye, with the long takes given to each dreaming mobster forcing us to gaze, for what feels like forever, on their soon-to-be-violated bodies; the violence done, we are left to consider the ideologies, social and aesthetic, that allow for such violence and, perhaps more importantly, allow for its representations—as commodities, sites of knowledge and discourse, as targets for our affections and as repositories for our collective memories.

Gomorrah borrows from the "multiple-and-reinforcing-narratives" school of contemporary cinema to tell four separate-but-thematically-interconnected stories. We meet Don Ciro (Gianfelice Imparato), a bagman and all-around courier for the syndicate who finds himself adrift in the increasingly violent world of his young competitors and associates; Pasquale (the dignified Salvatore Cantalupo), a Camorra tailor with a near-magical gift with textiles who, in need of money, contemplates working for competing Chinese factories, risking death if caught; young Totò (Salvatore Abruzzese), a street kid working for the Camorra who loyally, dumbly serves his bosses like a hungry dog its master; and, finally, the would-be killer duo, Tony-Montana-quoting thug team of Marco (Marco Macor) and Sweet Pea (Ciro Petrone), who represent the new criminal generation at its most feral and dangerous, and who provide the film with its most outlandish gangster-kids-on-crack moments. Each of the narratives dramatizes the plight of the human pawns drawn into the Camorra's ever-widening ambit, the dominant motif being one of *mortification*: the turning of people into tools, the crushing of normative human values and social relationships, and the senseless waste of life in the pursuit of wealth and objects. Throughout *Gomorrah* uses the visual motif of an underworld—the weapons cache found by Marco and Sweet Pea that eventually dooms them; the vast, multi-tiered Piranesian prisons of the housing projects where Totò lives (a bravura scene shows a wedding on one level, drug running on another), and through which Don Ciro flits like a forgotten ghost—constantly reinforcing its vision of global capitalism as hell on earth for all save a few. At times *Gomorrah* seems like the unfolding of some brutal atavistic ritual from pagan times, a violent, bloody offering to some inscrutable god, as in the film's last shot, which shows the bodies of Marco and Sweet Pea carried away by a bulldozer, whose mechanical arms and bucket hold the corpses aloft while a still-active Mount Vesuvius lowers threateningly in the background. At other times *Gomorrah* feels like an unwanted-yet-privileged glimpse of an apocalyptic future, with the survivors of some unnameable cataclysm living in the warrens of bombed-out megalopolises, reduced to the level of tribal organization and morality, all laws gone but the laws of survival and naked necessity, with violence, hunger, fear, and death ruling capriciously over prostrate humanity. *Gomorrah* is neither, of course—it's both "just a movie" and a movie, however stylized, about "real life, right now," not a prophecy or myth or some futuristic parable. But it's a testament to Garrone's strengths as a filmmaker that even the most realistic moments of the film burn with an infernal, otherworldly intensity. Ⓐ

Continued from page 21

flects on her life's pleasures, sorrows, dreams and fantasies. Several times she makes old photographs new on film by finding actors to play herself as a child and as a young woman. She then interacts and poses with them in New Wave style—never shying away from showing the director directing, or revealing the camera to the camera. This approach is not a jarring demystification of cinema as it was in the 60s. By tracing Varda's artistic evolution, the mise-en-abyme welcomes the audience and then holds them deep inside a rich imagination. In this way, *Les Plages d'Agnès* liberates cinema from common formulas and paradigms, and offers Varda the ultimate expression. Mortality is especially present in several of the film's most poignant moments; while Varda throws single red roses at photographs she took in the 50s of great actors from the National Theater she sobs. "Although the photographs give others happiness, they bring her a sense of sorrow," she explains, "these great actors once young and beautiful are now dead and gone." The death of her late husband, Jacques Demy, from AIDS is a recurring source of sadness in the film, and the viewer feels the stark loneliness of turning eighty alone. However, *Les Plages d'Agnès* spirals and circles through reality and art, past work and celebrity encounters, never dwelling on death or its proximity. Agnès Varda, the wise fairy, guides us through a self-portrait of her creativity, celebrating the joy of life and its pains in equal measure.

Versailles

Though Varda speaks of her sejours in Cuba and China shortly after their revolutions in *Les Plages*, she hardly mentions the Algerian War (1954-1962) the war that began and ended during one of Varda's most celebrated periods of creativity. In general, directors in the French cinema of 2008 were political, but less than recent years: *Caché* (2005), *Les Indigènes* (2006), *L'ennemi intime* (2008). This year directors allowed viewers to make associations without forcing an ideology. *Versailles,* Pierre Schöeller's first film examines poverty in France, but primarily received attention due to the surprise death of leading actor, Guillame Depardieu. (Guillame, son of Gérard, had a motorcycle crash in October and could not recover due to drug and alcohol abuse.) In fact, French critics discussed Depardieu's performance, which won a César nomination and the film's subtle cinematography, but did not grapple with the film's social commentary.

The first half of the narrative of *Versailles* centers on the destitute taking shelter in the woods surrounding the palace of Louis XIV. Homeless Nina (Judith Chemla) wanders aimlessly through the Versailles forest with her young son (Max Baissette de Malglaive) when she finds Damien (Depardieu) dressed poor but Calvin Kleinish (are they the same thing if you wear all black?). He warmly welcomes the mom to his shack to shack up. However, when Damien awakes from post-coital slumber he finds Nina has left him alone with her excessively cute pre-verbal son. After the boy's adorableness wears Damien down, he figuratively becomes the boy's father and decides to leave the squatter camping lifestyle for a prodigal return to his middle-class beginnings. As it turns out, Damien's homeless romp was part of a rebellious, angst-ridden phase.

Although other homeless campers are featured in the film's first half, Damien's middle-class roots prompt a larger question: Is squatting simply a way to challenge the capitalist system? Or is it in fact endemic in a society with a 10 percent unemployment rate? Homelessness and unemployment are a choice—at least for the young attractive white French characters that represent the homeless in *Versailles*: when Nina abandons her son, she easily finds a respectable job caring for the elderly and after Damien returns and gains employment in construction he puts on a backpack and abandons the child. Schöeller enforces this understanding of poverty as rebelliousness by casting Guillame Depardieu, who was rumored to have a

Agnès Varda

temper and drug problems long before his death. The actor has the intimidating presence of his father, with a much slighter frame, and his anger and frustration at parenting the foundling and at his own parents' bourgeois lifestyle, demonstrate the predictable but believable acting style characteristic of the Depardieu family. It is the sublime cinematography of nature in the first half of the film that is more interesting than the acting or the storyline. The Versailles grounds offer Julien Hirsh plenty of opportunities to boast his understanding of natural light, which he also demonstrates in Pascale Ferran's superb film of 2006, *Lady Chatterley*.

***L'instinct de mort* (*The Death Instinct*) and *L'ennemi public no.1* (*Public Enemy Number 1*)**

Even though Guillame Depardieu died in the year he was nominated for best actor, he still failed to win the César over Vincent Cassel's performance as Jacques Mesrine. The most popular French films of 2008, *L'instinct de mort* (Death instinct) and *L'ennemi public No.1 (Public Enemy Number 1)* together form a bio-pic of France's most famous criminal, a bank robber at his peak in the 70s, who increased his fame by escaping twice from prison and interviewing with top-selling magazines such as "Paris Match." The films are based on Mesrine's autobiography but heavily adapted by screenwriter Abdel Raouf Dafri who also directed the tv series "La commune," depicting life in a violent ghetto. The films follow a gangster formula, complete with car chases, gunfights, and suitcases of cash, but also takes on the prison-escape genre.

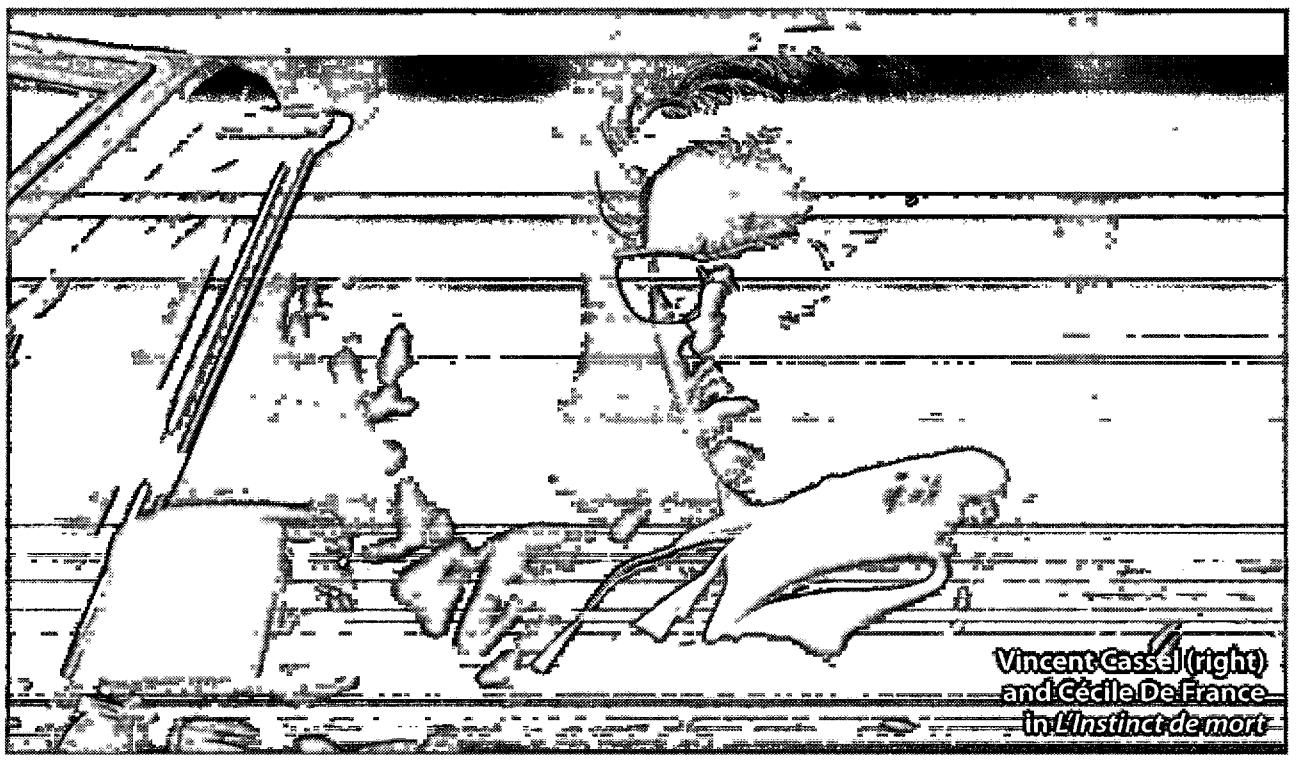
Both of the films glorify Mesrine, but with frequent allusions to the Algerian War that seek our attention. *L'instinct de mort* begins where Mesrine learns to kill in the Algerian War. Mesrine as a soldier, follows orders to torture and execute supposed FLN members in prison, but shows his gallant side when he kills a male Algerian instead of a female. When he returns from war, Mesrine is bored by his employment possibilities and enticed by the money and women of the gangster lifestyle. He begins killing for mob boss Guido (Gérard Depardieu), who incidentally is part of the OAS (Organization of the Secret Army) and they shoot Arabs together while jeering racist insults. Near the end of the second film, *L'ennemi public no.1*, Mesrine decides to kill a right-wing journalist who has contradicted him. With another prison escapee who is also a left-wing activist, Mesrine meets the journalist at a cave entrance, and then baits the journalist inside, by offering an interview. After verbally assaulting him, Mesrine strangles the journalist with a scarf saying, "You want to know what I learned in the Algerian War? I'll teach you."

The symbolism of the sequence is overt; the French killed many Algerians who were hiding in caves with bombs, and strangulation was a common torture technique. Thus the murder of the journalist completely subverts the racism against Arabs demonstrated in the first film, and ensures the audience's forgiveness. If Mesrine kills Arabs by order or for money in Part I, before the end of his life he does penance by torturing and assassinating a xenophobic nationalist mouthpiece. Mesrine does not suffer for the crimes he committed during the Algerian War, but takes vengeance on their interpretation in the years following Algeria's liberation. The likes of this journalist and his politics, which recall the National Front, could easily be found in contemporary French media. This makes the brutal murder more engaging for the 2008 public, and doubles their respect for the mindless violence of the hero.

Cassel interprets Mesrine's bow legged confident swagger and fast-paced Parisian slang with the bravado indicative of his character's criminal career. Cassel's duty to the role was so intense that he physically transformed himself by gaining a pot belly, which is apparent in several pretzel love scenes. This achievement garnered Cassel the César for best actor, and Jean-François Richet, in charge of the impersonation and all the action editing, a César for best director. However, though the Mesrine features were the most successful films at the French box office in 2008, they did not win the board's selection for best picture. It was Mesrine's alter-ego Séraphine (Yolande Moreau), an early twentieth century maid *cum* primitive artist, who walked the stage for best actress, and her film (*Séraphine)* which stole the best film trophy from the bank robber. In this instance the César committee did yield to the Hollywood pressure of the action film, but transgressed the box office to award a lesser-known biographical film on a lesser-known artist.

* * *

As an endnote, I saw all of these films and four more at "Rendez-vous with French Cinema." Uni-France, the association of French film producers, and French cultural services, bring together a bouquet of French cinema annually at Lincoln Center and IFC. Usually directors attend their films for an introduction and Q&A after the screening. I recommend the festival highly. Ⓐ



Vincent Cassel (right) and Cécile De France in *L'Instinct de mort*

NEWS FROM THE **doctoral students' council**

Reservations, Elections, and Google Groups

Adjunct Project

Keep up to date with the DSC's Adjunct Project at http://opencuny.org/adjunctproject/.

The Adjunct Project exists to advocate for the rights of all graduate students working as adjuncts in CUNY, and liaises with other labor organizations to fight for fair working conditions.

Reservations!

If you check in at www.cunydsc.org, you'll find that you can now check Room Reservations for 5414, 5409, and 5489 along the left-side tabs. Similarly, you can retrieve the form for room reservations at our website, www.cunydsc.org, and submit to dsc@cunydsc.org for processing via email. Very easy!

If you wish to borrow our coffee urns, that form is also at www.cunydsc.org. Isn't progress wonderful?

Please note the various rules and responsibilities that go with reserving DSC rooms and coffee urns—up to and including accountability for the student events that go on in the rooms, and the care and upkeep of DSC property. These rules and responsibilities are clearly delineated in the forms you fill out, so there are no surprises!

To-*do List*: Elections!

As you read this, elections have begun: keep checking www.cunydsc.org/vote for constant updates on the election, and for complete instructions on how to participate (the same ones you hopefully received on a beautiful blue-green-on-white postcard, or in print in The Advocate, or in an email forwarded from your APO, EO or DSC rep or someone else...). Your voice matters! It always does!

Remember: no paper ballots this year! Go green, and participate. It's your vote, your voice, your DSC!

The DSC Webpage

Have you checked out the website lately? www.cunydsc.org continues to be a hotbed of excitement, with news, information, and direction on the issues of the day. Remember to regularly visit www.cunydsc.org to keep up to date with the DSC!

DSC Group Page

Have you joined the DSC's Google Groups page? It is free and available to all students, and provides you with direct access to many important announcements, as well as allowing students to post their own messages and receive replies from other students. Of course you can elect to receive no messages through this system, even after you are registered.

Once you are registered with the group, you can configure your profile so that you receive messages in one of four ways:

1) No emails at all (you go to the group page to view posted messages)
2) Individual emails
3) Digest emails in abridged form (you receive one email per day with the headings of recent postings)
4) Digest emails (you receive one email per day with the full body of recent messages)

It takes less than a minute to sign up and gives you more control over how you receive information. You don't have to have a Gmail account to register with the group. You can visit the group at http://groups.google.com/group/cunydsc.

DSC Calendar

The DSC has the following meetings scheduled. Guests are always welcome.

Plenary Meetings (all plenary meetings are held in room GC 5414)

- April 24, 6:00 p.m.
- May 8, 5:00 p.m. (2008-9 reps)
- May 8, 6:00 p.m. (2009-10 reps)

Steering Committee Meeting

- May 15, 5:00 p.m., room 5409 (2008-9 and 2009-10 Steering Committee members)

Other Committees of the DSC

Please check on our regularly updated website, www.cunydsc.org, for listings of other meetings of the DSC as they are scheduled and published to our website.

Chartered Organization News

In accordance with DSC Bylaw 2.6, the DSC Steering Committee voted to initiate the de-chartering process of the following four groups on March 6, 2009:

- Association for Computer Machinery
- The French Interdisciplinary Group for 17th Century Studies
- The Future is Green Club
- International Socialists' Organization

Each of these groups have failed to submit rosters, activity reports, or check requests for at least the past three semesters.

It is the DSC's preference that these organizations be re-activated, rather than de-chartered. Re-activation will entail the submission of a valid roster as well as a group constitution. Please consult DSC Bylaw 2 for what constitutes valid rosters and constitutions.

Please contact Gregory Donovan, the DSC Co-Chair for Student Affairs, if you are interested in "re-activating" one of these groups: dsc@gregorydonovan.org.

Up-to-date information on this de-chartering process can be found at: http://cunydsc.org/index.php/De-Chartering_Process

A Word from Members of the Media Board

We are pleased to announce that James Hoff has agreed to return again as Editor-in-Chief of the *Advocate*. James has been, for so many years now, an active presence in our community, steering the Advocate's content to aggressively protect the rights and privileges of our students; his continued leadership will guarantee that the *Advocate* will continue to be a well-designed, well-executed monthly newspaper serving the needs of the graduate student community at the Graduate Center and beyond.

We are also committed to encouraging students to be more involved with the *Advocate*. Part of the mission of the newspaper is to address concerns across disciplines that affect student life at the GC.

Please continue to read the *Advocate*—whether in print or on the web (a web presence we hope will be improved over the next year for easier navigation and readability).

Please consider writing for the *Advocate*—a variety of voices is so crucial to creating a newspaper that accurately reflects the rich tapestry of our community. Information is available on the *Advocate* website (gcadvocate.org)and via email at advocate@gc.cuny.edu on how to become a part of the *Advocate*—your student newspaper.

And if you have praise or concern regarding the newspaper, please feel free to direct it to the DSC at dsc@cunydsc.org, and they will forward it to the Media Board.

Rob Faunce, Chair, Media Board
Denise Torres, Member, Media Board

Many GC Professors Almost Public Intellectuals

MATT LAU

Once in a while they are on public radio, even more rarely are they on public television, and none dare dream of becoming a media pariah, *a la* Ralph Nader. The thought of it is tantalizing, the possibility too slim. As a recent report from the Graduate Center's Center for the Promotion of the Graduate Center puts it, "many of our professors are almost considered public intellectuals."

The most surprising finding in the report is not that none of them are actually as boring as Noam Chomsky, as smug as Stanley Fish, or as swarthy as Slavoj Zizek, but that so many of them *almost* are.

Indeed, the report details a plan to bring GC professors tantalizingly close to actual public intellectuals, at least in terms of their physical proximity. "The 2008-09 Public Events series on Power, in addition to attracting many extremely articulate and not-at-all insane people to the microphone during the question-and-answer period, had the happy side effect of creating photo-ops of GC professors alongside famous people, even if Photoshop enhancement was sometimes required."

Although it ended up featuring a mind-numbing number of variations on the theme of Power, the Great Issues Forum started off reasonably enough with "Economic Power," "Political Power," "Cultural Power," and "Power and Science" last fall. But since then, it has begun to generate a kind of "Great Issues Forum Bubble" with events of significantly less value being given the same publicity.

There was "Fashion and Power," which our sources tell us President Kelly required all GC Professors to attend. More recently, there was "420 and Power," which featured a group claiming to be GC students extolling the virtues of solar powered carbon-free drug use, by taking the entire audience at Proshansky Auditorium up to the roof of the Graduate Center to demonstrate the lighting of a "water-pipe" with a magnifying glass.

Against the advice of many, the program is being extended into next year, with a series of new events. "Summer Vacation and Power": a 40-hour slideshow featuring photos from the exciting lives of GC Professors; "Somnambulism and Power": featuring GC security staff discussing the dreams they have while dozing off near the entrance to the library; and "Coffee and Power": featuring a debate on the wisdom of pegging the price of Grad Center coffee to that of a subway ride.

In a recent *365 Fifth* photo that some allege shows signs of doctoring, GC Sociology professors David Lavin and Paul Attewell appeared with guest expert Paris Hilton in a panel discussion on the sociopolitical ramifications of body image psychoinversion.

But, proponents argue, thanks to the Great Issues Forum, certain Professors have been given once in a lifetime opportunities. For example, Neil Smith and David Harvey, the Hall and Oates of Marxist Geography, were both given the chance to sit on stage with Naomi Klein, a journalist of half their intelligence, but twice their sex appeal.

Critics argue, however, that some Professors have stumbled when given the opportunity to address audiences larger than their seminars or the readership for their books, roughly 20 people in either case.

Only one GC scholar who is ready for his close-up has shunned the media spotlight, Professor Jerry Watts. When he won the Nobel Prize for Blackness, Professor Watts did the only thing he could to keep it real: he declined the award, even though it would in all likelihood have bumped his books on Ellison and Barak up the sales ranks on Amazon.com, from 2,112,847th and 2,026,641st to probably somewhere in the top 1 million. But Professor Watts is already a public intellectual in another since. As the unofficial Diogenes of Midtown, he can often be seen trading lectures on "The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual" for cigarettes in front of the Grad Center. Ⓐ