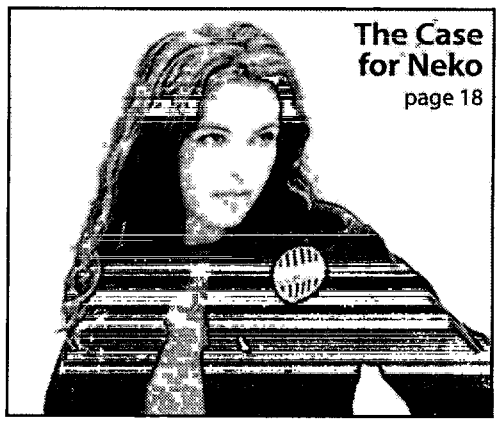
CUNY GRADUATE CENTER

Advocate

September 2009 http://gcadvocate.org advocate@gc.cuny.edu



The Case for Neko
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W.B. Ofuatey-Kodjoe (1937–2009)

ALSO INSIDE

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FROM THE editor's desk

A Riot of their Own

"White riot –I wanna riot
White riot—a riot of my own"
—*The Clash*

"Government...bullshit
Black and white... fight"
—*The Subhumans*

At first the talk was all about the prospects of a "post-racial" America. Obama's success among white voters (he received a larger percentage of the white vote than any democratic candidate since Carter) and the lack of any recordable "Bradley effect," caused many white (and a handful of black) commentators to ponder the possibility that America had perhaps finally transcended its bitter history of racial injustice. Today, after months of racially charged populist outrage, this talk seems not only hopelessly optimistic and naive, but just plain ignorant. Indeed, former president Jimmy Carter, himself no political cynic, recently found it necessary to point out and condemn the racialized rhetoric of the largely white anti-government movement that has sprung up since Obama's victory, and while we should all be extremely concerned about the potentially negative consequences of such rhetoric, it's causes and its sources seem to be a lot more complicated than just good old-fashioned Southern white-supremacy. Underneath the resentment and anger, the Nazi iconography, and the subtle and not so subtle racial slights, there is a real and justifiable sense of outrage that has been overlooked, and more often than not, cynically denigrated by the left, which is usually more sympathetic to anti-establishmentarian displays of public anger.

The organizers of these various protests are mostly neo-libertarian and conservative free-market groups who advocate an extreme federalist interpretation of the constitution, small government, and abolition of the income tax (some even going so far as to advocate for the elimination of public schools). However, the people showing up to these protests appear to be pretty ordinary working- and middle-class people who for the most part appear to be either oblivious, confused, or unsure about what exactly their movement is really about. Like the left, whose protests were sometimes rightfully criticized for not having a central agenda, these protests seem to be more about expressing a populist sense of fear and anger in solidarity with others who share those emotions. That this outrage has now taken a racial turn should come as no surprise to students of American history, for the white masses, easily manipulated by factious political and economic interests, have often tended to blame black and immigrant underclasses whenever things start to go wrong. The fact that a nominal member of that historical underclass has now proven that "even a black man" can be president, has only added to the sense of economic insecurity that has fueled such bouts of racial antagonism in the past, making people who before were very little of one or the other, at once both more racist and more political.

Incited by the idiot rantings and barely contained racial and xenophobic prejudices of Glenn Beck and Lou Dobbs, these protestors believe that Obama is the source of all of their suffering; and his skin color, his Arabic name, his activist background, and questions about his national origin, all make him an easy scapegoat for the fears and insecurities of middle America, as well as an irresistible magnet for those Brooks Brother's bigots and middle class nationalists already convinced by Dobbs and others that African Americans and immigrants are somehow the source of all their problems. This kind of scapegoating can be seen throughout American history, including the Jim Crow south, where fears of black retribution and congressional representation sent the white masses into paroxysms of social panic. But the subtle insinuations of violence and racial satire exhibited by many of these protestors is nothing compared to the outright murderous race riots of the nineteenth century. In New York alone there were two major race riots from 1834-5, which ended in the burning and destruction of black and abolitionist homes and establishments, and just like the Draft Riots of 1863, these events were more about economics than race; more about jobs than slavery. Now, as then, the general bigotry, distrust, and fear exhibited toward Obama has a lot more to do with social and economic insecurity than with any actual belief that whites or Anglo-Saxons are somehow superior to Africans or Hispanics.

Although the protesters opposed to public healthcare and the stimulus package have been desperately misdirected and misinformed, the underlying anger that has made those protests possible is palpable and significant. Like Americans across the country many of these protestors, now living on unemployment for maybe the first time in their lives, have seen their jobs disappear almost overnight and have watched as their paychecks failed to keep pace with the cost of their healthcare or their rent. Many of them, no doubt, have seen their mortgage payments increase dramatically even as the value of their homes has continued to plummet. They've watched their sons and daughters, their grandchildren, and their neighbors shipped off to Afghanistan and Iraq, even as their school districts have scrambled to do more with a lot less. And all of them have suffered from the fallout of one of the biggest economic meltdowns in the last eighty years, and have watched in mostly silent anger as those responsible for that crisis have continued to prosper from a combination of corporate bonuses and government bailouts.

Simply put these people are angry and easily attracted to any movement that promises them a sense of control and a feeling of belonging. And for this the Left is not without blame. Instead of coming to their aid the Democratic Party and the bi-coastal academic left (obsessed with identity politics and oblivious to the suffering of ordinary working-class America) has been content to poke fun at the stupidity and ignorance of the middle and working classes that make up a good portion of the country's interior.

As factories closed and Wal-Mart began its anti-labor occupation of the Mid-West and the South, Democratic politicians did nothing to help and much to exacerbate the problem, while culturally enlightened liberals fled, as they always have, for the Hollywood hills and the towers of Manhattan. Safe in their glass cages they asked themselves "what's wrong with Kansas" even as they watched the rest of the nation sink first into a coma of post-consumption debt fueled by years of wage stagnation and lender greed, and then slowly into joblessness and eventual bankruptcy.

Instead of uniting working-class blacks and whites to fight together for greater representation of their shared interests, the left was content to spend its time talking about identity and equal opportunity, teaching college kids how to be nice and eventually how to use their new found skills and political correctness to get ahead of their less enlightened peers of all races from Iowa and Oklahoma, Georgia and South Carolina. The idea of social solidarity and class consciousness that was at the core of the left's historical agenda has been replaced with an ethos of technocratic equality and a vision of a multi-ethnic rainbow of ruling elites. Blacks like Obama who attended Harvard now have a greater chance of becoming a politician or corporate lawyer than ever, but the chance of a black man or a group of black workers joining or forming a union is as low as it's been in almost a century.

Clearly any party interested in its own future will at least recognize the political potential of this new group of left-behinds and seek to find better more suitable ways to channel that anger into more constructive protest. But this is unlikely. The Democratic Party's bungled health care bill (which is looking more and more like a boon for the health insurance companies) and its virtual abandonment of card check legislation (which would guarantee a significant increase in national union membership) shows all too well that it has neither the power or the inclination to push through the much needed social changes that in themselves would create greater equality and solidarity among all the working classes regardless of race or ethnicity. That so many could be so easily convinced to act against their own interests is indeed a testament to the power of racial and class identification. That middle class America has been largely abandoned by the same party that helped create it is symptomatic of the nature of political entropy, and the fact that the Democratic Party is now seeing such anger directed at its own president is no surprise. Ⓐ

letters TO THE EDITOR

On Class Violence

This review ["No War but Class War (May, 2009)] misrepresents my Introduction, the bulk of which is dedicated to placing [Louis] Adamic's book in historical context, referring readers to more recent scholarship on the conflicts Adamic discusses, and noting the need for an analysis of the labor movement more rooted in the struggles of the rank-and-file. (The IWW receives a single paragraph and some scattered references in my Introduction; proportionately far less than in the book.)

Nothing I wrote could be interpreted by any honest reader as endorsing pacifism; I repeatedly point to examples of workers defending themselves against the assaults of the employers and their goons, while noting that building a new society without bosses and exploitation is fundamentally a task that requires workers' organization and direct action at the point of production. The romantic idea of workers confronting the modern state and the employing-class's hired goons armed with hunting rifles and table knives is really quite irrelevant to any practical effort to transform society. (I am unclear as to why my argument that the IWW did not advocate violence is "unconvincing," by the way; I quote Adamic conceding this is true, and I point to a famous murder prosecution in which it has been proven that the man an IWW organizer was charged with killing was not dead…)

*The discussion of sabotage also ig*nores what I wrote. That the IWW advocated sabotage in its publications before World War I is quite clear—though it is also clear to anyone who takes the time to read those publications that the IWW meant something quite different by the term than did the prosecutors who brandished those pamphlets to send thousands of IWW organizers to jail. As I note (and this reviewer concedes), the IWW stopped using the term in 1915, so when I say Adamic is incorrect in stating that the IWW advocated sabotage in the 1920s, I am simply stating a fact. The IWW never ceased its advocacy of workers' direct action on the job—rather, it adopted terminology less prone to misrepresentation by its enemies.

President Truman did not sign the Taft-Hartley Act, even if he was a frequent user of its anti-labor provisions. The more fundamental question, of course, is the sort of labor movement that is needed both to effectively defend workers' interests and to realize the social transformation that is so urgently needed. Contracts and improved labor laws cannot, as the reviewer notes, solve either challenge. Adamic, unfortunately, ducked the question, labeling those who sought to place it at the center of their organizing as "ultra-emotional." My brief Introduction seeks to offer a more constructive approach.

Jon Bekken is the Editor of Dynamite: The Story of Class Violence in America *by Louis Adamic, AK Press (2008).*

Abe Walker Responds:

I appreciate Jon Bekken's careful critique of my book review, but I hope to clarify a few points:

Bekken implies that I am anxiously awaiting the moment when the working class engages the bosses in armed struggle. This could not be further from the truth. My review was not an effort to glamorize violence in some silly fetishistic way, and I have no desire to watch working people get slaughtered, which would be the inevitable outcome of such a fight. Furthermore, I never suggested that trade unionists should deliberately provoke violence, nor that the labor movement should devolve into left-wing militias. Nor did I present violence *itself* as a viable strategy for rebuilding the labor movement. Instead, I call into question the conventional wisdom that unions should absolutely and unconditionally reject confrontational tactics of any kind. And I point out that the disappearance of violence is only a symptom of a decaying labor movement that has long lost its desire to cause any trouble. (Parenthetically, much of the "violence" discussed in the book stretches the definition of the term. Does blowing up an unoccupied building constitute violence? Pulling up tracks to destroy a railline? Setting fire to the state militia house? In these instances and others, what Adamic describes as "violence" would be more accurately characterized as property destruction).

While I concede that I may have mischaracterized the extent of Bekken's attention to the IWW, I believe my description of his central argument is substatively accurate. Bekken, like many IWW supporters, seeks to refute the crude caricatures that have dominated the public perception of the IWW at least since the Palmer Raids. This is a worthy project, but it does no damage to the IWW's legacy to remind readers that the organization's reputation for tactical militancy was not unfounded. Whether or not sabotage was ever an important component of the IWW's tactical arsenal is a question for historians to debate, but the fact that the organization has so clearly reversed itself on this issue deserves mention. And most historians would agree that, whatever the organization's "official" position may have been, IWW rank-and-filers participated in militant struggle—up to and including actual violence—at various points throughout the group's early history.

But this is really beside the point, since my review is not a defense of violence. Instead, I posed a loaded question: What would happen if union members and their leaders demonstrated more willingness to break the law? Most scholars look to the 1935 Wagner Act as the defining moment in American labor law. But a closer look suggests a different lineage: the very first recorded strike in American history was led by a group of journeymen shoemakers in Philadelphia in 1804. Brought up on conspiracy charges, the strikers were found guilty, their union was effectively bankrupted, and the resulting decision (*Commonwealth* vs. *Pullis*) declared unions "illegal combinations." This remained the law of the land, with only slight modification, for the next century. Not until the 1914 Clayton Anti-trust Act specifically exempted unions did organized labor gain some degree of legitimation, and it wasn't until the '30s that unions everywhere won official recognition and the government-protected right to collectively bargain. So American unions have been on the wrong side of the law for at least as long as they've been on the right side.

Given this legacy, I highlight the hypocrisy of union leaders who have disowned their radical history. Today, demonstrations are reduced to "parades," strikes devolve into theater pageants, and political independence gives way to multi-million-dollar "Get Out the Vote" campaigns. To reiterate, the point here is not to advocate militancy for the sake of militancy, but to affirm that labor's strength lies in its ability to disrupt production, not showmanship.

In the months since my review was written, labor struggles in Europe offered some inspiring examples of the disruptive tactics I am advocating. In an event that drew international media coverage, French workers at a Caterpillar plant took their boss hostage for twenty-four hours to protest job losses—an action popularly referred to as "bossnapping." In an unrelated incident, workers at an auto parts factory rigged the building with explosives and threatened to blow it up if concessions were not granted. Neither instance actually caused any bodily harm, but both clearly flouted the law and flirted with violence. Perhaps these actions might offer a shot in the arm to an American labor movement that has no memory past 1935.

"Hey Abe—keep plucking that chicken!"

Countdown Correction

To The Editors:

I am an assistant to Mr. Keith Olbermann, the host of *Countdown* on MSNBC. I am writing in regards to a recent article in your online May issue of *The Advocate* entitled "No War But Class War" by Louis Adamic. In this article the author states:

> 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.

This statement is entirely untrue. I would like to know what evening the author believes this happened, because we are completely unaware of this occurence.

Please understand the defamation this could cause and correct this statement immediately.

I look forward to the explanation and correction of this misleading statement. Please let me know the steps you expect to take in order to clear this up.

Thank you,

Margaret Judson

GC Advocate Editor Responds:

The *GC Advocate* regrets what was indeed a misinterpretation and exaggeration of Mr. Olbermann's comments about the G20 protests and will be more diligent about fact-checking such statements in the future.

We concede Mr. Olbermann did not devote a majority or "better part" of his show to the topic of protestors and never said, nor, as far as we can tell, implied that he was upset only about the destruction of private property. Olbermann did, however, according to *Countdown* transcripts [illegible] scribe the protests as having "a particularly violent undertone" and reported that "some of the ubiquitous bankers in the city, London's equivalent of Wall Street, [were] heeding warnings to slop [sic] out the suits they would normally wear for jeans and sneakers in order to avoid being attacked." Olbermann's guest, MSNBC political correspondent Richard Wolffe later—in response to Olbermann's questions about whether or not the "nature of the protests" had shifted—described the protestors as:

> A rag-tag group. It's a bunch of anarchists and pacifists. One thing that is very different here is there is no organizing principle. Bush gave them a focus which was about the war. It's even more disorganized than it normally is and there is no rallying cry.
>
> So, you are getting the hardcore here of anarchists. A lot of the regular folks who may have sympathized with them before when it was about Bush and about Iraq, they're really not there.

Clearly Olbermann and his guest seem to have had "issues" with these particular protests, which were, in many ways, more about class than simple partisan politics. And this is, after all, consistent with the spirit of Abe Walker's criticism of the media left. Ⓐ

in memoriam

W. B. Ofuatey-Kodjoe (1937–2009)

IRVING LEONARD MARKOVITZ

Ofuatey was always there when I needed him.

Each and every time that I was in the hospital—broken ankle, broken hand, gall bladder and pancreas—Ofuatey did not wait for an invitation; he was at my bedside.

We all know that Ofuatey was also there when students needed him.

In my over thirty years of teaching at the Graduate Center I have never seen an executive officer so dedicated to the fulfillment of his duties as Ofuatey. He was constantly available to students. He went in to the office on Saturdays, Sundays, hot summer days and storms in winter. He put aside his own scholarship. He taught extra courses because of student expectations and interests. He helped students stay in the program and to finish their dissertations. A number of students e-mailed me upon learning of his death to say "You know, he is the reason that I stayed in the program."

It is easy to speak good of the dead. To say nice things is a virtue. However, I am not sure that Ofuatey would have liked too much uncritical adoration. At some point close to the beginning of these eulogies for him, he would lose patience. He would say "What kind of stuff is this? Why are you carrying on like that?"

Ofuatey was not a meek little lamb. He was not always content to mind his own business. He was in many ways—difficult. He was tough, he was demanding, he was stubborn.

But that is part of who he was. To think otherwise is to not do him justice. It is to not take him as he was: a complicated person who demanded that he be accepted by others as himself.

To celebrate Ofuatey's life, we do not want the easy love of innocent ignorance.

For nine years Ofuatey was the Executive Officer of the Political Science Program. For those nine years I was a member of the executive committee. For nine years we fought like cats and dogs over many issues, over changing the nature of the first exam, over eliminating the methods requirement, over hiring priorities. Frequently, particularly during the last three years, our arguments would become very intense and our voices very loud. On at least one occasion, people came running in from the hall to see what was the matter.

And after all the screaming and yelling, we never "made up." We never apologized. We never reconciled. Why? Because there was nothing to make up about, or apologize about. We always took up where we had left off. And where we had left off, and where we had begun, was from an unspoken understanding, an instinctive sense that we both ultimately wanted the same thing, whether it was the good of the program, or the good of Ghana. We stood on the same foundations. We had the same goals. And we each intuitively understood how we could differ, and yet still be together.

His great sense of humor—not only for grandfather jokes, but his wicked enjoyment especially of hypocrisy exposed, or mendacity on display—would cause him sometimes to giggle, but other times to explode in uncontrollable laughter.

Ofuatey came from one of the leading Ga families of Ghana. His mother, who I had the privilege of knowing, was a leading figure in the nationalist struggle against the British. She was a major supporter of Kwame Nkrumah, the George Washington of Ghana. She founded the national women's organization, and was later recognized by, among other things, having her picture on a Ghanaian postal stamp.

There was about Ofuatey a certain generosity of spirit and of hospitality that is also true of his family. My son, Jonathan, who learned to walk in Ghana, and especially Amy, my daughter, who was older, remember to this day the enveloping warmth of Ofuatey's family, of his mother and his older sister when we were their guests in Accra.

Ofuatey himself could easily have played an important official part in Ghanaian politics. Ofuatey always felt guilty, I think, that he had not been more involved. He sent his children back to Ghana frequently. His dearly beloved son, Nene, who passed away so tragically so recently, attended his alma mater high school, Achimota, probably the best school of its kind in Africa, where he was incidentally a school mate of our own Kwame Akonor.

Ofuatey was a scholar. His scholarly work will endure. There is in all of Ofuatey's writings above all, a sense of obligation to the pursuit of social justice. There is, secondly, a deep love of country, of Ghana, and of a profound dedication to the ideal of Pan-Africanism. There is, also, a commitment to the search for truth, and a critical stance towards authority.

Most academics who write can be secure in the knowledge that few people will read what they have to say. Now I am not saying that Ofuatey had huge audiences. However, a few of the people who did read what he had written would have been able to put him into uncomfortable places, or to do far worse. Ofuatey always knew that, and it never stopped him from saying what he felt was necessary.

Ofuatey dreamed of a Ghana that minimized the gap between the rich and the poor; a society in which ethnic and class barriers were effectively eliminated; and where people were not driven into a "culture of silence." One person who never submitted to the culture of silence was Ofuatey Kodjoe.

Compassion, empathy, determination, strength of character—part of a mosaic that included stubbornness, persistence, obstinacy—made Ofuatey not merely a good friend, but an extraordinary human being.

We should have no reluctance to take Ofuatey as he was. He was a person like no other.

None of us are self-made. We all depend on others. We are formed not just by the memories we have but by all sorts of encounters. I remember Ofuatey's thoughtfulness, his kindness, his generosity. We get to know and to appreciate, and if are lucky—to love somebody, not all at once, but bump by bump, through those good and bad episodes over time.

I count it a privilege to have been Ofuatey's colleague, sometimes his challenger, always his friend.

ROBERT BIONDI

During Ofuatey's tenure as Executive Officer of the Ph.D./M.A. Program in Political Science, I worked with him as his Assistant Program Officer from 1999 to 2003. On my first day on the job, I asked him how he wanted to be addressed. He said "you can call me Ofuatey, or Kodjoe, or even Professor Ofuatey-Kodjoe. *Never* call me Wentworth." When I asked why, he said, "Would *you* like it if your first name was Wentworth?" So right away I learned that Ofuatey was a man who did not stand on ceremony.

Ofuatey was a proud man. He was proud of his accomplishments, of his culture, and of his family. Yet he was also a modest man. In relation to his faculty, the role of an Executive Officer is very much the first among equals, and this is how Ofuatey interacted with his colleagues. I would say that the love he inspired among his students will become legendary. In relation to me, Ofuatey pretty much gave me free reign in managing the office. He always entertained my ideas as to how we could improve management of the program, and there was great synergy to our relationship. Of course there were times when Ofuatey and I disagreed, but in any good working association, it's natural. The key factor to our relationship was the knowledge that, during a crisis, Ofuatey and I would back each other up.

Ofuatey did not know how to be false, and he did not suffer gladly duplicity in others. Once, during a particular situation in the program, he brought that massive fist of his down on his desk and demanded: "Why must everyone around here be so political?!" To which I replied: "Well, we are political science." To which he responded with his usual hearty laugh. So during the four years I worked with Ofuatey, I learned that while it's important to take one's studies seriously and to take one's job seriously, it's just as important not to take one's self too seriously, and even certain situations.

A few years ago my wife, Kim, and I talked about what factors contribute to a person's legacy. We agreed

that academic and professional achievements are certainly important; we called this the Earthly Legacy. But Kim and I also spoke about something we called the Humane Legacy—which is how a person interacts with other people on a daily basis, and how that person is respectful of others, inspires others, challenges people to do their very best—and most vital of all—how that person conducts themselves with honor. Kim and I agreed that no matter how impressive the achievements of a person's Earthly Legacy, it is that person's Humane Legacy that is more important. So, by virtue of his Earthly Legacy, we know Ofuatey will be remembered as a leader in his field, and by his Humane Legacy he will continue to inspire a great many people. And as I said to Kim: "No man can truly die if his Humane Legacy lives on in others."

RUTH O'BRIEN

Sitting at Ofuatey's memorial last spring, I was struck by how all the stories had the same ring to them, a ring that struck me as very true—almost resonating with his deep bass voice—true because it was the same story for me. Thus, I wanted to contribute to the chorus about this remarkable man.

First, I will never forget where I was the day I first met him–where I was standing, what time of day it was, what he was wearing or how small I felt next to him in his commanding, elegant Ghanian attire. Ofuatey had that affect on you. My sons still remember him, though they met him only fleetingly. My mother too.

And I will never forget the lessons he taught me. He used to sit Sherrie Baver and me in his office. He would sit on the two relatively big cushioned chairs and pontificate. Sherrie and I would both sit on the edge of our seats, listening hard, soaking it all up. Sometimes we would have a spirited disagreement, punctuated with laughter and Ofuatey's fist pounding.

In just a quick but profound line or two, he would offer us these assessments about people—faculty, administrators, and students alike—that were so stunning you'd have to go home and process them for awhile. You didn't always get them at first, but then it just came to you how right he was…

It was also the way he was—his personality so big and booming; the political science office always had such an incredible atmosphere. I can still feel it.

When I disagreed with Ofuatey, he was vociferous. One thing I remember most was the time that I said something about how administration was not for me. He said "NO," in his adamant way. Ofuatey thought I had something—he insisted on it—but said it would take a lot more, and I'd have to show a lot more dedication.

Ofuatey planted that very first seed. He was a marvelous mentor, a wonderful tutor, an inspiring leader. He was also someone I didn't always agree with, but a man who brought great meaning into my life.

JOSEPH ROLLINS

It is with a great sense of honor that I announce on behalf of the Political Science program the establishment of an award in W. B. Ofuatey-Kodjoe's name. In addition to serving as our program's Executive Officer from 1994 2003, Kodjoe established himself as a distinguished authority in the areas of international and comparative politics, Pan-Africanism, international law, and human rights.

In order to ensure that the tradition of study exemplified by Kodjoe's scholarship continues at the Graduate Center, the award will be given in future to outstanding, advanced students conducting research in the fields of International Relations, Comparative Politics and/or human rights, the same scholarly pursuits to which Ofuatey dedicated his academic career. Details concerning amounts of money associated with the award, criteria to be established in the selection process and the timing of its release have yet to be determined. As soon as these details become public, the Program in Political Science will follow up with a formal announcement. Ⓐ

Look Who's Teaching at CUNY! No, Really This Time!

Former Governor Eliot Spitzer marked his return to the public spotlight this August by accepting a job as adjunct lecturer in political science at City College. Spitzer, who many observers believe is using his City engagement as the first stop on the road back to public life, is teaching a course on law and public policy.

No stranger to scandal, Spitzer sparked a minor controversy before the semester even began. In City's announcement of its new BMOC, college spokesperson Ellis Simon defended the high profile hiring by noting that Spitzer would be receiving the standard adjunct salary—$4,500. Surprised to learn that they'd been receiving *even less* money in their paychecks than they previously thought, adjuncts flooded the *New York Times* City Room blog and other internet news sites demanding to know when adjunct salaries had received such a boost. They quickly learned that Mr. Simon had simply misspoken, and that Spitzer was in fact being paid the highest possible amount for an adjunct instructor.


Elliot Spitzer

To its credit, the PSC responded to the incident by shifting attention away from Spitzer and to adjuncts not enjoying the former governor's hourly rate. The union's vice-president Steve London pointed out that "The point is not that Spitzer is paid too much, but rather that most adjuncts are paid too little." Added Barbara Bowen, the PSC's president, "The subways are covered in ads that say, 'Look who's teaching at CUNY,' but they never mention the part-time faculty who teach more than half the CUNY courses. Unlike Mr. Spitzer, thousands of adjuncts at the City University live on their substandard CUNY salaries, often less than $30,000 a year."

President of Baruch Steps Down

As the summer wound down and CUNY began gearing up for another semester, the system received something of a surprise when Chancellor Matthew Goldstein announced that the president of Baruch College, Kathleen Waldron, would be stepping down from her position. In her place, Professor Stan Altman will serve as interim leader of the school while the search committee looks for a permanent replacement.

Waldron served with distinction during her tenure, and gained the reputation as an effective fundraiser for Baruch. Within months of taking over the college presidency, alumni gifts to Baruch jumped by $54 million, as she drew on extensive contacts developed through years in both the public and private sector. Before coming to Baruch, Waldron was both an executive with Citibank, and dean of Long Island University's School of Business.

While reports of Waldron's exit have not mentioned the reason for her abrupt resignation, sources have informed the *Advocate* that the president's exit from Baruch was not of her own doing. It is unclear at this point who is responsible for this change of leadership, or what factors influenced the decision making involved. The *Advocate* will continue to monitor this story as it develops, however, and will report back as soon as any more information comes to light.

President of City College Leaves CUNY in New York-Ohio Swap

There's nothing mysterious about the recent departure of City College's president, Gregory Williams: he got a better job. Williams leaves the CUNY system after over a decade presiding at the helm, where he oversaw City College's renaissance of respectability. During his years, CCNY's student enrollment grew by over 60 percent, raised funds for the college to the tune of $300 million, and cultivated connections that led to significant enlargements of CCNY's campus infrastructure, perhaps most prominently exemplified by the construction of the Bernard and Anne Spitzer School of Architecture, named after the couple whose son recently joined the CCNY faculty.

Williams is headed to the University of Cincinnati, where he will take the reins from outgoing president Nancy Zimpher, who, interestingly, is on her way north to become chancellor of the SUNY system. Williams was himself looking to win that job a number of years back. According to Williams, the opportunity to head back to his native Midwest made the decision an easy one at which to arrive, but noted that leaving CCNY would be "difficult." He will be missed. Said CUNY's esteemed dark lord of the chancellery, Matthew Goldstein, "The outstanding gains and advancements of the City College of New York during President Williams's eight years of exemplary service are a matter of public record."

CUNY System Bigger and Badder than Ever

Adjuncts will be pleased to know that while at the same moment teaching rosters at CUNY campuses are being whittled down to the bare bones, the number of students enrolled across the system is growing bigger by the semester! According to the *CUNY Newswire*, "The number of students enrolled in credit-bearing courses, 259,000, jumped from 243,000 in fall 2008 and broke the 253,000 record set in 1974, when there was no tuition charged for attending CUNY. University data show a total increase of 6 percent in headcount for the 2009–10 academic year."

Speaking from his summer getaway on the Death Star, Chancellor Matthew Goldstein recently told the *Newswire* that increased numbers of student enrollments reflect CUNY's commitment to excellence in education. "The University's strong enrollment gains make a powerful statement," he said. "Students and families connect with CUNY's consistent focus on academic quality, on providing value, and on the changing needs of our students, present and future."

BCC Financial Aid Director Better with Money than Expected

Those seeking to locate the funds missing from grad student paychecks would do well to check the coffers of Bronx Community College Financial Aid Director Marlo Garvin. The forty-three-year-old Garvin was recently discovered to be a career conman with a remarkable rap sheet resume that boasts over a dozen arrests and four convictions related to credit card and checking fraud.

These accomplishments, along with Garvin's various other activities (which apparently include swindling recent immigrants to the United States out of tens of thousands of dollars while posing as an immigration lawyer) were impressive enough that the

Continued on page 10

political analysis

Battle over CAFTA Rages in El Salvador

MICHAEL BUSCH

As El Salvador transitions from decades of conservative rule to the administration of leftist President Mauricio Funes, the country faces an international showdown triggered by a restrictive free-trade agreement between the United States and Central America. Canada's Pacific Rim Mining Corporation is suing the government for its refusal to allow it to mine gold in El Salvador's rural north. If Pacific Rim succeeds in securing the $100 million settlement it seeks, a troubling precedent would be set. At stake is a question that affects all nations: Can private interests trump national sovereignty under international law?

Pacific Rim initiated arbitration proceedings against El Salvador with the World Bank's International Center for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID) on April 30, 2009. The corporation argues that El Salvador violated investment rules in the US-Dominican Republic Central America Free Trade Agreement (DR-CAFTA) which is confusing on its face, seeing as Canada is not a party to the accord. (Pac Rim funneled the lawsuit through a US subsidiary.)

Company officials charge that the government has violated their "investor rights" by refusing to approve an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) submitted by the company. Without this approval, Pacific Rim cannot obtain a mining permit.

The company insists that its operations pose no threat whatsoever to El Salvador's ecological stability and public health, but a wide array of community leaders, activists, and environmental experts disagree. They contend that Pacific Rim's assessment offers little evidence supporting the company's "green mining" claims, and serves as a smokescreen to obscure the adverse socioeconomic impacts gold mining is likely to produce in the small, densely populated nation. These social movements contend that it's Pacific Rim that should be sued. Says Rodolfo Calles of the anti-mining activist group Mesa Frente a la Minería Metálica: Pacific Rim and other "extractive companies in question have violated national laws, caused environmental damage, provoked economic losses, generated conflicts among communities, corrupted government officials, and offended religious leaders."

Thus far, El Salvador's movement against precious-metal mining in El Salvador has succeeded in compelling the government to fight Pacific Rim's strong-arming. But questions remain concerning Funes's resolve to stand defiant in the face of international pressure. These concerns have grown in recent weeks following a spate of murder and violence directed at anti-mining activists.

This wave of intimidation began with the murder of Marcelo Rivera, a teacher, community leader, and political activist involved in the anti-mining fight. Rivera, who went missing on June 18, was discovered weeks later in a remote section of Cabañas department. An autopsy revealed that he had been tortured extensively before his windpipe was crushed, and his body dumped in an unused well. Activists continue to challenge Salvadorian authorities, who claim that this was an ordinary crime committed by members of a Salvadoran gang, to investigate what they say was a politically motivated assassination.

Since then, local media have been targets of sabotage and threats for their coverage of the Pac Rim lawsuit. Information Radio Victoria discovered its transmitter stolen shortly after reporting on the mining case, and at least four journalists covering the issue have received death threats. Bay Area IndyMedia reports that the journalists were "threatened to be the 'next on the list' and would fall victim to those who 'also spoke in San Isidro,' making a clear reference to the link between these events and the disappearance and murder of...Marcelo Rivera."

Violence has also been directed at the Catholic Church, which has stood as a staunch ally of anti-mining activists throughout the dispute. A colleague of Rivera's, Father Luis Quintanilla—himself a frequent target recently of threats against his life—was stopped by four hooded men on a road in Cabanas and forced from his vehicle. The priest threw himself down a gully to avoid what many believe would have been his murder. Quintanilla later released a copy of the text message he received shortly before the incident. It reads, "Extermination...you motherfuckers better stop stirring people up if you don't want to end up like Marcelo. We've got eyes on you."

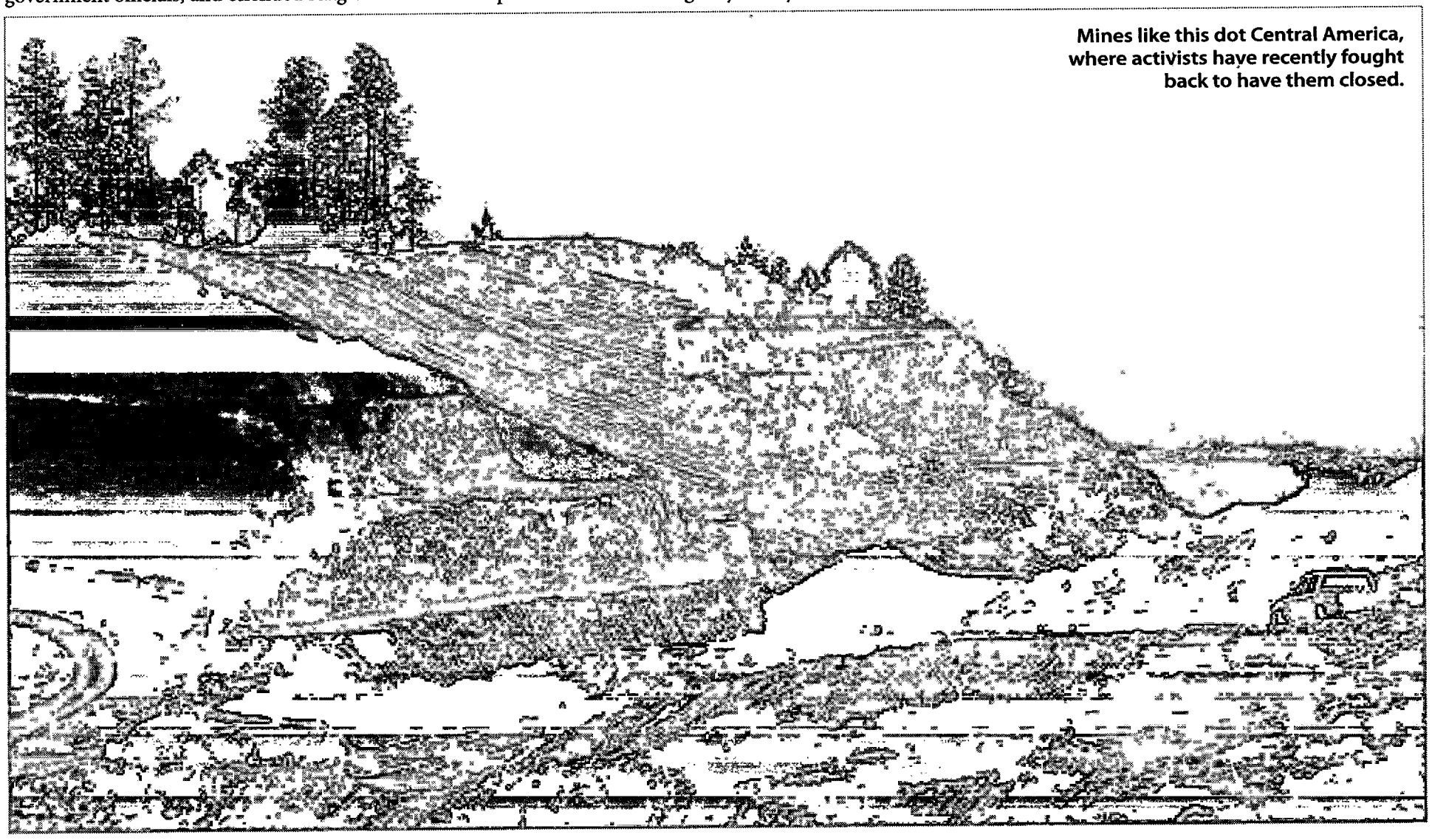
Background

Pacific Rim began exploring the country's potential for gold exploitation nearly seven years ago, charting a vein system that covers considerable portions of El Salvador's northern reaches. It commenced operations at what it claims was the invitation of the government's Ministries of the Economy and the Environment, which issued exploration permits in 2002 under the neoliberal administration of Francisco Flores. Since then, the corporation has identified some twenty-five sites for gold extraction across seven national departments, and invested upwards of $80 million.

While global corporations haven't historically seen El Salvador as promising territory for mining, Pacific Rim significantly extended its base of operations as gold prices exploded on the international market. With the value of gold nearly tripling since 2001, the company assured shareholders that it was discovering "bonanza gold grades" and making "exciting gold discoveries" that would expand opportunities for future investment and high returns.

Meanwhile, Salvadorian environmentalists, civil society organizations, and others in the country grew increasingly alarmed about the potentially adverse effects of gold mining. Critics point to the threat of water and soil contamination from chemical residue in the wake of mining operations (miners use cyanide-laced water to extract gold from subterranean rock, which, experts contend, makes its way back to local reserves tapped for drinking). That all of Pacific Rim's sites are located along the country's longest river, the Rio Lempa, has environmentalists especially worried. The river's basin extends nearly halfway across the country, supplying much of the nation's drinking water. Moreover, the Lempa runs through Guatemala and Honduras as well, increasing the likelihood that contaminated water could spread throughout the region.

Pacific Rim denies that these concerns are real. The corporation claims that it would detoxify any water used for mining, leaving local water sources cleaner than they were previously. "You could basically stick a cup in the water and drink it," Pacific Rim's Barbara



Mines like this dot Central America, where activists have recently fought back to have them closed.

Henderson recently boasted to the *Miami Herald*. "We've met all conditions under the law. So there's no basis for the government of El Salvador to fail to make a decision [about issuing mining permits]."

Not so, say experts. Robert Moran, an independent, nonpartisan hydrogeologist, undertook a technical review of Pacific Rim's environmental assessment in 2005, concluding that "it would not be acceptable to regulatory agencies in most developed countries." In his final report, Moran notes that "The public EIA review process is clearly lacking in openness and transparency...only one printed copy of the EIA is available...within all of El Salvador. The public must review and submit written comments on this 1,400 page document within a period of ten working days. No photocopies or photos of any part of this document may be made." Moreover, Moran points out that the EIA completely ignores "many of the environmental impacts encountered at similar gold mining sites," and voiced concerns about the fact that "the significant uncertainty of [its] seismic risk calculations" and a number of other issues were presented in the document in English only.

Local Activists Fight Back

These concerns were met with popular unrest. La Mesa Nacional Frente a la Minería Metálica in El Salvador (the National Working Group against Mining in El Salvador), an umbrella organization for coordinating nationwide action, has led the charge. Beginning with local organizing and small-scale protests, La Mesa and its partner organizations have managed to make mining a central issue in Salvadoran politics. Activists scored an early victory when Pacific Rim agreed to freeze its operations at the company's Santa Rita mining site in 2006, while negotiating a resolution to its clash with local anti-mining organizations. Though the meeting failed to reach a mutually acceptable compromise, local organizers successfully used the gathering to attract the attention of the media and the government, and garner broad national and international support.

Momentum behind the movement increased further when the Conference of Bishops of the Roman Catholic Church issued a statement of opposition to mining operations in El Salvador. In addition to enumerating the adverse consequences of mining to El Salvador's people and environment, the bishops castigated Pacific Rim's economic justification for gold mining operations. "No material advantage," the bishops warned, "can be compared with the value of human life."

The combined effect of local resistance and religious backing had a decisive impact on government decision-making. With public opinion polls showing a clear majority in opposition to gold mining, and despite its initial enthusiasm for Pacific Rim's mining proposals, officials from the ruling conservative ARENA party refused to issue the company permits to begin extracting gold from underground deposits. In essence, the government ceased to acknowledge Pacific Rim's existence. Repeated complaints and applications for permits were filed by the company with government ministries, and promptly ignored.

Since then, La Mesa has continued to push the envelope. Not trusting that government silence on the permits issue equaled support for their cause, the organization presented a bill for congressional consideration in 2006 that would ban all precious metal mining in El Salvador. While the bill was almost immediately withdrawn from deliberation, it wasn't forgotten. Shortly after Funes took power, the *Frente Fabarundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional* (a left-wing opposition party, better known as the FMLN) resurrected the proposed legislation and presented it to El Salvador's National Assembly for a vote. According to the *Latin American Herald Tribune*, the proposed law would grant Pacific Rim and other foreign companies six months to discontinue operations before being ordered to leave the country.

Legal Action

With its prospects for obtaining permits grinding to a standstill within the government bureaucracy, and opposition forces gaining the advantage locally, Pacific Rim filed a notice of intent in December 2008 to bring El Salvador before an international arbitration tribunal to resolve the dispute. Specifically, the company claimed that El Salvador violated the spirit of nondiscrimination enshrined in Chapter 10 of the DR- CAFTA agreement, by allowing domestic companies to pollute while denying the same privilege to Pacific Rim.

The agreement, which El Salvador signed in 2006, allows multinational corporations to sue governments covered by it for cash compensation when their potential for profit has been undermined by measures that are tantamount to expropriation. But because Canada isn't a signatory to DR-CAFTA, Pacific Rim isn't technically entitled to Chapter 10 protections as it claims. Nevertheless, the corporation routed the lawsuit through the backdoor of its US-based subsidiary Pac Rim Cayman LLC, and relied on the services of an American lobbying firm to ensure support from Capitol Hill.

Under DR-CAFTA's Chapter 10 proceedings, parties to a dispute are mandated to respect a 90-day consultation period before filing their claims in court. Pacific Rim's December filing ensured that their threatened lawsuit would coincide with El Salvador's national election three months later. According to Burke Stansbury, an activist with the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES), the claim was timed to affect the electoral outcome. They "either us[ed] the threat of a lawsuit as leverage or [as] a strategy to help ARENA win the election," Stansbury told the *Pacific Free Press* in February.

If this was true, Pacific Rim miscalculated. Outgoing president Antonio Saca remained firm in his rejection of the corporation's demands, rendering the case a non-issue during the election. Yet Saca's refusal to give in to corporate pressure—whether politically motivated or based on genuine concern for his country—had the effect of kicking the Pacific Rim can down the road for the incoming Funes administration.

On April 30, Pacific Rim filed for arbitration with the ICSID, demanding a $100 million payout for damages. "The company's claims under CAFTA," the company announced in a press release, "are based on the government's breaches of international and Salvadoran law arising out of the government's improper failure to finalize the permitting process as it is required to do and to respect the company's...legal rights to develop mining activities in El Salvador."

La Mesa's Rodolfo Calles sees things differently. "Operating permits are not automatic; that is, the current mining law does not oblige the government to provide [permits] after having allowed exploration. Pacific Rim submitted an Environmental Impact Assessment that did not meet environmental requirements, and was not able to demonstrate that its mining projects would not pollute the environment...In our view, it is Pacific Rim that should be sued, not the Salvadoran state; It is the company that should compensate the country and not vice versa."

Early indications, however, suggest that Funes will pursue a compromise solution instead of risking a costly settlement. "We're not in a position to be losing litigation. That money should be allocated to social programs," El Salvador's Secretary of Technology recently noted. Indeed, if the arbitration tribunal rules in Pacific Rim's favor, El Salvador would be profoundly crippled by the $100 million payout. Perhaps more troubling still, the verdict would send a signal to other multinationals in Central America that the law sides with corporate interests over the protection of local populations.

Nevertheless, a negotiated settlement offers equally disturbing possibilities. The most likely would be an amendment to existing environmental and mining laws, allowing foreign corporations easier access to El Salvador's natural resource deposits. In all likelihood, the Mesa Nacional/FMLN-sponsored anti-mining legislation would be shelved indefinitely, and opportunities for peaceful resolution of local concerns increasingly foreclosed.

On top of Pacific Rim's case, on March 16, another international mining firm added to the pressure by threatening an additional DR-CAFTA lawsuit. A joint venture of American companies, Commerce Group Corp. and San Sebastian Gold Mines, Inc. (Commerce/Sanseb), filed a notice of intent to claim compensation for additional $100 million for the government's alleged failure to renew a permit to mine gold and silver at the San Sebastian Goldmine near Santa Rosa de Lima, in the department of La Unión in El Salvador.

The prospect of mounting lawsuits has led to calls from activists demanding that El Salvador revisit the terms of its international trade agreements. "The demand of Pacific Rim against El Salvador recalls the need to review international treaties signed by previous governments, especially CAFTA, and reverse—or at least modify—those aspects that are most harmful and violate our sovereignty."

Hopeful Signs from Washington?

The mining companies' lawsuits—along with the violent repression of recent protests in Peru—represent the latest example of failure by US trade agreements to bring prosperity and progress to the region. US policymakers, including Barack Obama, seem to acknowledge as much: bilateral trade agreements with Panama and Colombia continue to stall, and pressure to amend the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) continues to build.

Yet hopes that the social movement against mining in El Salvador would find an ally in Obama have been unrealized. The president, who voted against the passage of DR-CAFTA as a senator, spoke out passionately on the campaign trail against free trade agreements (FTAs) that privileged economic gain over the welfare of local populations under threat. And "with regards to provisions in several FTAs that give foreign investors the right to sue governments directly in foreign tribunals," Obama promised, "I will ensure that this right is strictly limited and will fully exempt any law or regulation written to protect public safety or promote the public interest." As president, however, Obama has so far failed to meaningfully act on an issue he himself acknowledges desperately demands attention and change.

The president reportedly will outline a new vision of equitable trade in a major speech at the Group of 20 meeting in Pittsburgh at the end of this month. There, Obama will hopefully forge plans for a new approach to trade that would meet his goal of preventing foreign corporations from gaining "an economic advantage by destroying the environment" and amend NAFTA and possibly other FTAs to "make clear that fair laws and regulations written to protect citizens...cannot be overridden at the request of foreign investors."

In some respects, unfortunately, it's already too late for Salvadorans affected by Pacific Rim's activities. The failure of Funes and other likeminded "partners" throughout the region, like Obama, to stand up for these communities under threat, sets a regrettable precedent—that concern for corporate profit overrides that for human beings and their environment—a precedent that would invest even Obama's most eloquent rhetoric with the hollow timbre of false promises. Ⓐ

adjuncting

Teacher Pay Around the World

ALISON POWELL

Just a week ago, the *New York Times* featured an article in their "Economix" blog: "Teacher Pay around the World" (Sept. 9, 2009, http://economix.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/09/09/teacher-pay-around-the-world/). The article presents a mass of statistics collected by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) about education around the world, focusing on how the United States measures up. As it turns out, "compared to other developed countries, in the United States teachers generally spend more time teaching but apparently without an equivalent advantage in pay." The study tells us that American teachers in primary, lower secondary education and upper secondary education divisions spend, on average, 1,080 hours teaching each year. For this effort, though internationally the public primary-school teacher earns $43,633, America's teachers receive an average of $39,007.

This shouldn't come as much of a surprise to those of us in academia. Though we're teaching as adjuncts or fellows at the college level, we must be especially aware of the plight of teachers at all levels. It seems unnecessary to point out that, as college degrees become more ubiquitous, the expectations and compensation of secondary education teachers and graduate students and adjunct faculty become more and more similar. If our colleagues are being expected to teach classes in schools which are over-attended and understaffed, and to do so with lower pay and longer hours, the inequities are likely to spread to adjuncts.

As the OECD notes, comparing the compensation of teachers in much less wealthy countries to the lesser compensation of American teachers makes this all the more disconcerting. Here in the United States, a seasoned teacher—someone with fifteen years of experience—makes a salary that is 96 percent of the country's gross domestic product per capita. Across the board, a teacher with identical experience makes 117 percent of GDP per capita (it turns out that the best place to teach, financially anyhow, is Korea: there, the average teacher makes 221 percent).

At the secondary level and below, more American teachers are women: 69.4 percent compared to 65percent across the OECD (at the post-secondary level the numbers change to 41.6 percent compared to 39 percent). This reminds us that inequity in pay is often a symptom of a larger problem of workplace gender discrimination.

In short, "The demographics of teachers in the United States look similar to those of teachers elsewhere in the developed world." This should concern us not only as adjuncts, but as citizens.

The Tenuous Faculty

About a year ago, *Inside Higher Ed* (www.insidehighered.com) published an article titled "For Adjuncts, Progresses and Complexities." The article quoted a lecturer in anthropology at San Jose University who complained that after teaching four or five courses there a semester since 1987, he was still considered part-time faculty: "Higher education," he said, must confront the "glaring disparities and inequities between the tenured faculty and the tenuous faculty.'"

There is potential to languish ambivalently in the adjuncting world; particularly in New York City (ironically, considering the cost of living). Many of us will rush from college to college teaching an ever-changing handful of classes as we muddle through our dissertations. This reality is something for which we must all take responsibility; as graduate students and professionals, it is on us to usher ourselves along the stages of our degree. Still, an individual who is continually re-hired to teach courses, who participates in departmental meetings and has input on curriculum should be treated as more than part-time filler. Unfortunately, there isn't much in the way of job security for contingent academic labor; so much so, we're not even quite sure what job security would look like.

An individual who is continually re-hired to teach courses, who participates in departmental meetings and has input on curriculum should be treated as more than part-time filler.

The *Inside Higher Ed* article describes how the University of California lecturers' union (an American Federation of Teachers affiliate) was able to negotiate a "gold standard" contract for non-tenure track professors. The writing program at UCLA was described by one lecturer "as one in which most decisions are made by a staff composed entirely of lecturers, who evaluate one another, manage the program's budget, and are given curricular responsibilities based on their expertise."

Non-tenure track faculty in this category can only be let go for "narrowly specified reasons—criteria the university has yet to use successfully." Across the board at American universities, adjunct complaints are sloppily handled; the person who made the original complaint is often the same person making the "final decision" about the hiring or firing. The UC grievance system allows for independent decision making, and crucially, "In a provision that responds to the sense that at many campuses a complaining parent or a false rumor on RateMyProfessor.com can ruin an adjunct's career...lecturers in (the) union cannot be dismissed or punished on the sole basis of student evaluations." As for job security, if one lectures at the University of California for six years, one has a presumed reappointment.

That's the good news; here's the less good news. The union in this case made these gains over twenty-five years of slow, plodding progress. The article quotes Robert Samuels, president of the University of California lecturers' union, as saying: "A lot of union organizers or academics want all or nothing—the same job security or nothing"; but, the article continues: "…. his union's success wouldn't have happened that way. 'You can't get everything right off the bat,' he said. But you can come back, with more ambition, time after time."

Other non-tenure-track professors who were part of progressive universities agreed with the California lecturers on a few main issues. An organizer in British Columbia warned of the importance of "striking while the iron is hot," and being together enough to act when a union-friendly government is in power.

A president of the non-tenure-track faculty union at Southern Illinois University, Alan Shiller, described a "process his National Education Association-affiliated union won for adjuncts to be given the status of 'established' after teaching thirty-six credit hours. Such faculty members get the rights, among other things, to have seniority on course assignments, and the 'right of first refusal' on courses they have taught in the past.

He also said that the adjuncts are protected from 'the power of the department secretary.' He said that until the union raised the issue, course assignments were routinely being made by secretaries, who if they couldn't reach someone after one call, just went to someone else. He said that tackling these issues created 'real job security for members."

It seems the message of this meeting was three-fold: be creative, be patient, and be organized.

First Things First: Getting Paid

The similarities between American teachers at all levels—what's required of them and how they're paid, along with problems with job security—are important to understand on a global level, literally and metaphorically. On one hand, our compensation is revealed as even more paltry when compared to that of other, less wealthy nations (not to mention the fact that shoddier education standards, and more frazzled teachers, is not going to help the United States compete in a global marketplace). On the other hand, these concerns are systemic, structural, multi-faceted; they exist in the context of labor inequities nationally. And what about CUNY? First things first: this week, a number of recently appointed or reappointed Grad A, B, or C Assistants failed to receive their first paycheck. It seems to have been an organizational or clerical error, but a consequential number of CUNY's adjuncts, who had attended orientations and dutifully signed the stacks of paper required to get "in the system" are now scrambling to pay their rents. This is a problem, obviously, and if this has happened to you, the Adjunct Project advises you to take the following steps:

1. Go to Human Resources (do not call—go) on the 8th floor of the Graduate Center, and explain to them that you were not paid. Have your appointment letter and any other potentially relevant paperwork. When they tell you that you won't be paid, calmly ask for a 50 percent advance on your salary.
2. Write an email to the Associate Provost of your division (Dr. Louise Lennihan for the Social Sciences and Humanities, llenni@gc.cuny.edu and Dr. Ann Henderson for the Sciences, ahender@gc.cuny.edu.) Explain who you spoke to in payroll, what they told you, and the date you signed your appointment letter.
3. Let the Adjunct Project know. We've already notified the PSC of this problem but would like to know the number of people this has impacted.

The main message we'd like to send from the Adjunct Project is: you must contact the Associate Provost. It's imperative that they understand concretely how this issue is impacting adjuncts. Even if you are able to secure an advance, keep in mind this is a problem that is symptomatic of larger issues. It was only last year that our adjuncts were finally able to secure basic health care; now we are fighting to get paid on time!

It's worth noting that it's unclear why this problem occurred, and what part of the system failed us. CUNY staff, in Human Resources and elsewhere, are spread too thinly as it is. As adjuncts, we should keep this in mind as we discuss it with the Provost's Office and elsewhere. We need more staff and better funding at all institutional levels, so that this kind of thing never happens again.

Upcoming Events

The Adjunct Project holds office hours both in the GC Mina Rees Library on Tuesdays from 2:00-4:00 and for the month of September, on Wednesdays from 4:00-5:30, this month (September) in the Art history lounge, 3rd floor. Come see us to discuss any issue you have relating to your adjunct position, including compensation, healthcare, and human resources issues.

Come to the Adjunct Project's Health Insurance Party on October 15th, room 5414 at 8 p.m. Refreshments will be provided, as will door prizes! You must present either your NYSHIP card, a union card or a filled out NYSHIP application as your invitation. We look forward to seeing you there. Ⓐ

The Second Language of 'Standard English'

ALISON POWELL

A recent editorial in the *New York Times* by Stanley Fish, "What Should Colleges Teach?" generated enough controversy and enthusiasm to merit that he write two follow up pieces. In the first, Stanley Fish argues that the problem with English composition courses is they don't teach composition at all; rather, they are poorly masked cultural studies courses focusing on history, political thought, and the like. Echoing George Orwell's famous piece "Politics and the English Language," Fish criticizes the prioritizing of a general, catch-all "humanities" education in composition courses if it comes at the expense of basic grammar and mechanics.

Fish's perspective generates in me (an English composition, creative writing and literature instructor), an ambivalent reaction. On one hand, the transformation within academia brought on by waves of queer theory, feminist theory, culture studies, postcolonial studies, etc., was inevitable and has improved scholarly endeavors in ways that are profound and overwhelmingly positive. And importantly, the weaknesses Fish attributes to the focus of these disciplines—in particular, his belief that undergraduates are worse writers because colleges have instead tried to make them "better citizens"—may very well come from any number of reasons, including a general decline in the American public school system (not the use of, say, popular film in the classroom to teach cultural analysis).

But it's important to note that Fish is not critiquing at its base the importance of these disciplines. Of the composition courses he examined before writing the editorial, he says: "instruction in composition was not their focus. Instead, the students spent much of their time discussing novels, movies, TV shows and essays on a variety of hot-button issues—racism, sexism, immigration, globalization. These artifacts and topics are surely worthy of serious study, but they should have received it in courses that bore their name, if only as a matter of truth-in-advertising."

After six years of teaching college English—creative writing, composition, and literature courses—I agree for the most part with his main ideas. The first difficulty, of course, is that no two universities are alike, just as no two communities are alike. My former undergraduate students in the Midwest (Indiana and Missouri) were fair to middling writers, but their critical thinking skills left much to be desired. Much of this was due to a failure in the public education systems in those states (which are notoriously lacking), as well as a general culture which discouraged critique of authority—and by authority, I mean anything ranging from your high school principal to MTV to the National Rifle Association. I was (and continue to be) very fond of my students from these states and feel I can understand as a Midwesterner myself (though not accept) their reticence to question the status quo.

By contrast, I have my students in New York. I am often in awe of their sophistication regarding social issues at such a young ages, yet find they struggle somewhat more with basic mechanics and writing skills. The significant consequence is that, though my students here bring much diversity of experience to the classroom (in terms of age, race / ethnicity, sexual orientation, political orientation, and economic background), as well as a generally sophisticated and complex way of looking at politics, media, and the world around them, they have a very difficult time expressing this in their essays. This leads me to believe that my students do not need assistance learning how to think critically, in particular about their society or about pop culture. Fish notes that the emphasis in composition courses is often on these subjects, and I would agree wholeheartedly that there is something fundamentally misguided (if benevolently intended about such an approach. Instead, my students need help articulating their already interesting, complex, and idiosyncratic ideas about the world, at the most basic level. They need help identifying and using the nuts and bolts of the English language.

> "if students infected with the facile egalitarianism of soft multiculturalism declare, 'I have a right to my own language,' reply, 'Yes , you do, and I am not here to take that language from you; I'm here to teach you another one.'"
>
> Stanley Fish

Both these groups of students have writing issues which are basic enough to fundamentally impinge on the expression of their arguments: passive voice, subject / verb agreement, spelling and punctuation, etc. I'm not sure in what ways (or why) the secondary education system is failing our students, but because I myself am trained to teach rhetoric, argumentation, and literary interpretation, I frequently find myself at a loss for how to address more basic problems.

Can anyone stomach another sentence diagram? I'm not sure when I last did a sentence diagram—after all, I'm only a bit more than a decade older than my students, and was thus more or less subject to the same public school upbringing. I'd be lying if I said I was entirely comfortable breaking down the more advanced nuances of grammar and sentence structure. Yet Fish acknowledges this, asking: "What good is it to be told, 'Do not join independent clauses with a comma,' if you don't have the slightest idea of what a clause is (and isn't), never mind an 'independent' one? And even if a beginning student were provided with the definition of a clause, the definition itself would hang in mid-air like a random piece of knowledge. It would be like being given a definition of a drop-kick in the absence of any understanding of the game in which it could be deployed." Instead, he advocates for a slow and steady approach, in which a composition course is more or less a series of lessons that works on the sentence level, breaking down various structures both to see how they function in the English language and as pieces of a larger argument.

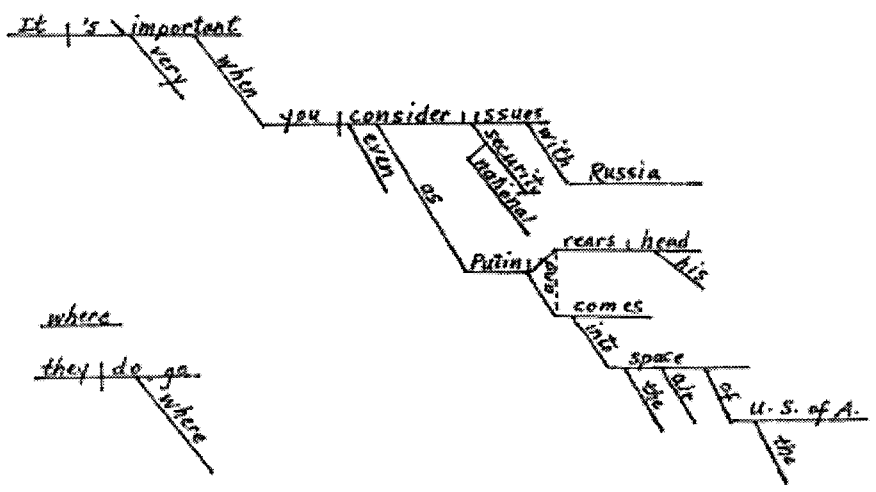
There is the issue of how diversity expresses itself in writing. My background and passion is in creative writing and poetry, so my own hesitations arise when I think of teaching a class that bulldozes difference—that attempts to eradicate unique expressions or ways of speaking in formal writing. After all, Flannery O'Connor wouldn't have become the writer she is if she had abandoned all her Southernisms in favor of a more anesthetized, standard English. But the fact of the matter is I'm not teaching creative writing, and as O'Connor's own essays make clear, she knew when and how to turn it off (and strongly advocated doing so). Fish addresses this in his third editorial, saying: "...you must clear your mind of the orthodoxies that have taken hold in the composition world:...'We affirm the students' right to their own patterns and varieties of language—the dialects of their nurture or whatever dialects in which they find their own identity and style.'" He continues: "The issue is whether students...will prosper in a society where norms of speech and writing are enforced not by law but by institutional decorums. If you're about to be fired because your memos reflect your "own identity and style," citing (dialects of nurture) is not going to do you any good.

He in no way disagrees that the prioritizing of "standard English" is wielded unfairly against those who are less formally educated, but points out that while "it may be true that the standard language is an instrument of power and a device for protecting the status quo, that very truth is a reason for teaching it to students who are being prepared for entry into the world as it now is rather than the world as it might be in some utopian imagination—all dialects equal, all habit of speech and writing equally rewarded. You're not going to be able to change the world if you are not equipped with the tools that speak to its present condition.

You don't strike a blow against a power structure by making yourself vulnerable to its prejudices.... And if students infected with the facile egalitarianism of soft-multiculturalism declare, 'I have a right to my own language,' reply, 'Yes , you do, and I am not here to take that language from you; I'm here to teach you another one.' (Who could object to learning a second language?) And then get on with it." Despite the many ways that language changes—being itself a living, breathing, adaptable animal—it is still true that the American workplace has marked a certain writing style as being that which is useful, strong, intelligent, analytical and practical. And that style typically follows standardized sentence structure and grammar rules which, in my experience at least, we are increasingly failing to offer to our young students.

I am one of those English teachers that assigns reading—and a lot of it. My students read Hemingway, Stein, Updike, O'Connor, Faulkner, Bambara, Tan, and the like; essentially, I assign as many words to them as possible without inciting potential mutiny. And they're accountable for it, and must write in class spontaneously and often about what they've read. This is simply because, like most teachers, I teach the way I learned, and I learned to write by reading, and then reading some more. The knowledge that our public schools and American culture generally is gently but consistently recoiling from the art of reading gives me energy and conviction about my courses.

But Fish's essay has convinced me that it's time to face my own demons and come up with some grammar and sentence structure exercises that at least approximate being interesting. I like this idea that teaching students how to write is akin to teaching them a second language—I may make this analogy in class tomorrow, before a lesson on sentence fragments. And then I'll get on with it. Ⓐ



health ISSUES

Student Health Services: Still there, Still Needed, Still Yours...So Speak Up!

COLLETTE SOSNOWY
HEALTH ISSUES COMMITTEE

In the wake of the hard-fought-and-won battle over NYSHIP health insurance for student employees of CUNY and the (unrelated) creation of a new student position, the Health Education Coordinator, I'd like to review the role that The Wellness Center—Student Health Services (SHS)—can and still plays in health care services for Graduate Center students. Obtaining basic health insurance for students working at CUNY was a major victory; however, as Renee McGarry and Jesse Goldstein pointed out in the previous issue of the Advocate, there are still many students not covered by NYSHIP or any insurance at all. This moved us closer to the larger goal of guaranteeing coverage for ALL Graduate Center students, but there are still gaps to be filled. This is where Student Health Services can step in.

At the risk of repeating information you may already know, here's what SHS offers: the Nurse Practitioner, Adraenne Bowe, provides basic medical care, including routine physical exams; episodic treatment for acute health problems; gynecological pap smears; testicular exams; tests for pregnancy, HIV, STDs, and tuberculosis; immunizations (HPV, MMR, Hepatitis B, seasonal flu vaccine, and occasionally others), and she is able to write prescriptions. All of these services are free to students, thanks to the funding of the Doctoral Students Council. Lab tests are offered at a reduced cost and un- and under-insured students are referred to free and low-cost clinics and providers whenever possible.

These services remain a vital resource for students with no or limited coverage. They also fill a gap in the NYSHIP policy, which doesn't cover routine physical exams, except to reimburse $60 once every two years. A routine exam, the most basic of health care procedures, can prevent larger health issues from developing later on by screening for them regularly. Why NYSHIP will not to pay for basic care, yet be willing to pay for more expensive procedures, which might be prevented by early detection, is beyond me, but I don't write the policies. Luckily, students can get routine physical exams for FREE at SHS. Students who are covered under other policies are still eligible for SHS services, and can avoid co-payments by getting basic services there.

Free vaccinations for students also close a cost gap in many insurance plans. Notably, the retail price for the HPV vaccine (brand name: Gardasil) is $125 per shot or $375 for the three-shot series, which is the required dose. Unfortunately, it is only FDA-approved for women under 26, which rules out a large part of our student population, but we have it and it's a boon for those who can get it. Other vaccines generally cost around $50 each, making these a bargain as well. Unfortunately, the kind of vaccines SHS is able to offer is somewhat limited to the whims of the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. HPV is offered because it's a relatively new vaccine and Merck, the pharmaceutical company that manufactures it, is heavily promoting it and apparently gives it to the city. Despite her efforts Ms. Bowe hasn't been able to get other basic vaccines for the clinic, such as tuberculosis and the combined Hepatitis A & B vaccine. "They [The DHMH] simply won't give it to me," she explained.

While my point is to encourage students to use the health services that YOU are paying for through your students fees, which are administered to the Wellness Center by the DSC, I encourage students to request even more services. The more you use the Student Health Services, and the more you make your voice heard about what health services you need and want, the more the Graduate Center administration will have to address students' basic health rights. Were all students covered by even basic insurance, the services provided by SHS would be less vital. In the meantime, however, they are crucial! Make the most of them and demand more!

Dr. Robert Hatcher, a clinical psychologist, has been hired as director of the Wellness Center. Starting later this fall, he will oversee both SHS and the Psychological Counseling and Adult Development Center, which up to this point, have been under the same umbrella (The Wellness Center) but which operated independently. With an incoming director, now is an excellent time to be loud and clear about what you need and want from the Wellness Center, rather than leaving it to the administration to guess or decide for you.

SHS and the Office of Student Affairs will be gathering data from the last few years about student use of the SHS and insurance coverage rates of GC students. Data collection in the past has been intermittent and mostly limited to head counts. For example, in 2003, from January to December, there were a total of 370 visits by male students and 750 visits by female students. The fall semester months have generally been the peak months. All good to know, but it doesn't give us much information. What services are students asking for? Why are there half as many men as women seeking care here? Is SHS being under-utilized? In answering these and other questions, we can assess the efficacy of what we do have and more effectively work towards getting more health services and greater insurance coverage.

The DSC would like to hear from you! Have you used Student Health Services? How satisfied were you with the care you received? What else is needed? Visit the Health Issues Committee blog at http://opencuny.org/health/ or Send your comments to dsc@cunydsc.org. Ⓐ

cuny news IN BRIEF

Continued from page 5

powers-that-be at CUNY appointed him to an $85,000-a-year gig running financial aid operations at Bronx Community College. Their defense? "We never bothered to do a background check." According to reporting by the *New York Post*, a simple Google search would have yielded a comprehensive account of Garvin's extracurriculars.

RF-CUNY Workers Walk Out for Fair Contract

From the PSC, we learn that members of the CUNY Research Foundation, (RF-CUNY), "frustrated by months of deadlocked contract talks...held a one-hour walkout at the beginning of the workday on Monday, September 14.

"The action began at 8:30 when the PSC began picketing at the front and back entrances to the RF-CUNY's West 41st Street headquarters. After an hour of boisterous chanting and marching, the workers entered the building with PSC President Barbara Bowen to seek a meeting with RF-CUNY President Richard Rothbard. But the RF turned off the elevators to prevent Bowen from reaching Rothbard's office. Rothbard, who recently received a 44% raise, did not meet with the PSC union members, who have been without a new contract since the beginning of the year."

Turnout was encouraging. Roughly 90 percent of RF-CUNY employees at the Central Office participated in the one-hour strike, and were met there by support bands of PSC executive and other members. The chapter chair, Anthony Dixon, noted that hard times due to the American recession, are no excuse for avoiding contract negotiations. "The Research Foundation is not being affected by the economy. They have enough money to give higher increases, but they just choose not to."

Cafeteria workers

As the *Advocate* goes to press, interesting developments are occurring at Hunter College, where cafeteria workers staged a work-stoppage protest during the middle of the lunch rush to object to their unfair work conditions. According to Stir it Up, a food services rights organization:

> While politicians in Washington quarrel over health care reform, Unite Here Local 100 members at the Hunter College cafeteria took the future of their health coverage into their own hands last Thursday. AVI Foodsystems, a food service company that took over the food service contract at Hunter from Sodexo this fall, has thus far failed to provide the health care coverage or pension plan that the Hunter College cafeteria workers received from their previous employer. In response to AVI's refusal to sign a contract that provides these benefits, workers organized a union meeting in the middle of the Hunter College main cafeteria.... in the middle of the lunch hour rush. The cafeteria managers, as you can imagine, were not too happy.

A video of the protest, as well as information detailing upcoming rallies for the workers is available online at http://stiritupcampaign.org/.

DC 37 Head Removed from Office for Impersonating George W. Bush

It's Missing Money Month at CUNY! Apparently no one told Coleen Carew-Rogers that the era of George W. Bush is over. The head of District Council 37—New York City's largest municipal union which represents thousands of CUNY employees—was removed from her post and charged by board members with "misspen[ding] money and flout[ing] democratic rules." At issue is the over $1,000,000 in member dues Carew-Rogers lost in risky and ultimately failed investment schemes, the patronage purchase of a Cadillac using union money, a $30,000 party tab Carew-Rogers billed to the union for a get-together celebrating her mentor's retirement, and tens of thousands of additional dollars in personal purchases Carew-Rogers and members of her staff racked-up using union credit cards.

Linda Bowman, president of DC 37 Local 5024, told the *New York Times* that "For the past couple of years she has been violating the constitution on a consistent basis. She doesn't hold membership meetings. She doesn't consult with the executive board on any expenditures. She just basically dictates things."

In order to address the systemic corruption that has long characterized DC 37 standard operating procedure, board members decided to bring a new sheriff to town...literally. At the start of September, they voted to appoint retired hard-boiled detective Carlton Berkley to the union presidency. Berkley, who became an administrative assistant at John Jay College after a career foiling bad guys, has vowed to "root out the corruption in the local and then go after any more corruption in DC 37." Ⓐ

THURSDAY OCTOBER 8

CUNY GRADUATE CENTER ROOM 5414

365 5TH AVE., NY, NY

6-8PM

WINE & CHEESE

HEALTH CARE REFORM

Is there anything in Obama's plan and existing bills in Congress for social justice advocates to cheer about? What should be our response? How will proposed legislation affect the most vulnerable groups—immigrants, women of color, students, young people, poor people, unemployed workers? What models exist for truly progressive change in health coverage and provision? And how do we get from here to there?

Special Guest – David Pollack, M.D.: Professor for Public Policy, Departments of Psychiatry and Public Health and Preventive Medicine at Oregon Health and Science University; former Medical Director, Office of Mental Health and Addiction Services, Oregon Department of Human Services; Robert Wood Johnson Health Policy Fellow in the office of Senator Edward Kennedy (1998); community mental health advocate in the state of Oregon for 35 years

Chair – Robert A. Padgug, Ph.D.: Professor Department of Health & Nutrition Sciences, Brooklyn College; advocate for health reform with West Harlem Health Forum and Physicians for a National Health Plan

Kimberly Libman, MPH: Ph.D. candidate in Environmental Psychology at the Graduate Center, chair of the Doctoral Student Council Health Issues Committee

Lynn Roberts, Ph.D.: Assistant Professor, Coordinator of Community Health Education in the Urban Public Health Program at Hunter College, CUNY

Leonard Rodberg, Ph.D.: Professor and Chair of Urban Studies, Queens College; co-founder of Physicians for a National Health Program; activist in the struggle for health care reform since 1974.

Anahi Viladrich, Ph.D.: Associate Professor of Urban Public Health, Hunter College and Graduate Center; Director of the Immigration and Health Initiative

Some Teaching Mistakes Other People Have Made (So You Don't Have to)

NICHOLE STANFORD

As some old sage said, "Even fools learn from their own mistakes, but the wise learn from the mistakes of others." In the spirit of that anonymous proverb, here are a few accrued lessons that adjuncts have volunteered from mistakes they've made:

Negotiating Your Department

In the frenzy of your hiring procedures, you'll inevitably miss some really essential pieces of information. Here are a few leads:

- "Find out what the turnaround time for papers is at your college. No one ever told me that, and I had bad student evaluations for a while. They went way up when I found this out." (Anonymous)
- "Barring a student from attending (due to lateness) or suddenly ending class due to lack of student preparation—I was told by our dept. staff that both of these are illegal." (Nancy Derbyshire)
- "Get to know the secretaries because they know and ultimately control EVERYTHING, including your files, your supplies, your teaching schedule, and your students' complaints. Don't schmooze or anything, but do respect them, because you want them on your side." (Anonymous)
- "If you are an adjunct or new hire, it would be a mistake to expect: an office, a computer, a printer, a working and available copy machine, a sympathetic secretary, an ID card before the fifth week, a paycheck before the seventh week, students who buy their books before the first assignment is due, administrators who care, everything to go as planned. You'll have to actively pursue all of the above." (Frank Crocco)

In addition, here are a few departmental policies to check on: plagiarism, attendance, any required first-day procedures, required texts, requirements for your syllabus and final, and (if you happen to be teaching composition) whether or not you must teach research. Other things to check on: audio-visual aids, setting up voicemail, your mailbox, ordering texts, classroom observations, sick days, keys, and electronic grade submission.

Your Classroom Presence

Your attitude and boundaries will set the tone for the whole class. Be professional and enforce consequences, especially at the beginning. You can always be more lenient later on, but it's virtually impossible to tighten up; students feel betrayed or simply won't comply with "new" rules.

- "Don't be flexible at the beginning. As far as the students know, class always starts on time, you log every tardy, sleeping in class makes you 'absent,' and there are no extensions on deadlines—ever. I didn't understand going in that my students didn't really know *how* to be students yet. I treated them like old hands at the school game. Result—kids talking in class, going out to make phone calls, and an embarrassing evaluation day." (Jenny Weiss)
- "If you're young (like, I was 21 when I first taught a college class), don't tell your age (even if the students ask) until late in the semester, if ever." (Anonymous)
- "Refuse to indulge college-kid humor about drinking: participating at all in those rib-nudge jokes and asides alienates some students because it is absolutely not true that they all drink." (Anonymous)
- "Jocularity is good, but there is a fine line; too much humor sends mixed signals." (Rebecca Williams)
- "If you don't know something, don't make it up. Tell them that you don't know but that you'll find out and follow up. And then do it. They will respect you more for not lying and for keeping your word to find out the answer." (Emily Sherwood)
- "[Assign] an oral presentation the second week. Have a paper due at the end of the add/drop period. Those…are particularly useful when you have 40 enrolled in your lit class, but the fire warden says your room should only hold 30." (Rob Faunce)
- "Don't give out a personal phone number." (Anonymous)
- "Be courteous and respectful to your students: part of this is setting clear standards for evaluation in the first meeting, establishing rules, and sticking to them (within reason). But it also means being kind: I have heard several students complain that many of their professors don't treat them nicely (nasty comments on papers, not greeting the class when they walk in, embarrassing them when they don't know the answer in class, etc.)." (Kate Kinney)

And I would add that you should hold yourself to the same standards to which you hold your students. Hypocrisy is the best way to ensure your students' resentment. Be punctual, be respectful, return papers on time, and apologize if you screw up.

Internet Protocol

Because this is a relatively new medium for communication, most departments don't have a policy for internet correspondence, and many teachers falsely assume that students intuit what's good web etiquette. Here are a few ideas:

- "Establish email protocol! This applies to content and accessibility. You can quickly become consumed by this technology if you don't establish limits, and I know that I am not the only instructor who has received inappropriate (and frankly weird) images and messages via email." (Kate Kinney)
- "Set up an e-mail policy that is explicit about when you will be checking e-mails, how long it will take you to respond, and your expectations about student responses to e-mail (for example, I say I will respond within forty-eight hours to any e-mail, which means that if they don't get a response, I didn't get it—this avoids the excuse that they e-mailed me something but I didn't get it)." (Jessica Cantiello)
- "Don't let your students know that you are on Facebook! I have had several students attempt to befriend me—ugh!" (Rebecca Williams)
- "Awkward! Now I decline all friend requests from students, during and after the semester, with a polite explanation that I never 'friend' students." (Anonymous)
- "Send me e-mail from an address that has the name of the school in [the subject line], or that clearly identifies you by LAST name. An e-mail from getsasslikewhoa@hotmail.com (true story!) will most likely go in my spam file. Most of them don't know that there's anything wrong with sticking with an e-mail address that reflects the truest version of their 8th-grade selves. I've distributed copies of an *New York Times* article about clueless college students not getting jobs because they have no sense of online professionalism." (Jason Schneiderman)
- "I quit accepting emailed papers when students were inexplicably absent the day a paper was due. They get to stay home in their pj's and get credit for a paper they finished late while everyone else had to finish the night before and attend, and now I have to print it on my dime? I think not." (Anonymous)
- "If you [receive] insulting, demanding or inappropriate e-mails from students, just don't respond. If you feel you must reply, reply curtly telling them to see you after class or during office hours." (Jason Schneiderman)

And set boundaries for yourself. Your students can reach you any time via email, but that's no reason to work more for the same amount of pay.

Stacking the Lesson Plans in Your Favor

Graduate student adjuncts are usually hired to teach entry-level, non-elective courses, meaning most of your students don't really want to learn your material. One option for getting them interested in your presentations is to demonstrate how much they need you by turning the setup into a problem-solving situation. For instance, you can have them try to write an essay or do library research with no instructions. After they've failed miserably (recognizing the problem), chances are they'll actively seek your knowledge and even ask great questions (find a solution). These are a few more time- and pain-savers:

- "Design your class time (lectures, discussion, exercise, whatever) so you are not doing the work for them, i.e. explaining/telling what they should know, but instead leading them to work through problems with you as a guide instead of a crutch. Confusion can be productive. Frustration can be as well." (Diana Colbert)
- "As an adjunct, most of the work you do outside of the classroom is not paid: construct a syllabus and lesson plans that are realistic with your schedule (and set objectives for yourself and your students that are attainable as well)." (Kate Kinney)
- "Putting more items on a syllabus than you'll realistically get to frustrates students." (Nancy Derbyshire)
- "Assign way less reading and spend way more time on it. This helps students learn to stop hallucinating about what they imagine is happening in a text and actually look at it, line by line." (Kate Broad)
- "I've also learned never to play my favorite song for my class because they'll make fun of it and I'll get defensive." (Nichole Stanford)
- "In the past, I've made the mistake of hearing about a method of grading and…trying to introduce it into my course mid-semester. As it didn't arise organically from my own planning and vision for the course, I found that I wasn't always sure exactly what this exercise was supposed to accomplish." (Dominique Zino)
- "I have trouble when I change my course too drastically from one semester to the next." (Chris Leary)

I also recommend, since you're probably an adjunct, holding "office hours" during class. While students work on an in-class assignment, instead of finding something to occupy your time, have each come

up to sit with you at your desk for a five-minute conference to discuss a current or upcoming assignment.

Clever Ways to Avoid Awkward Classroom Moments

If you plan to incorporate a discussion format into your classroom, make provision for it early. Make sure students are comfortable with one another from simple class exercises (for instance, interviewing each other with questions you assign). Give the students the discussion questions the night before as journal questions, or have them freewrite on the discussion question for a few minutes before you pose it aloud to the group so that they'll already have formulated thoughts.

- "Wait a few weeks before assigning group work—see how the students vibe with one another—there's nothing worse for a new teacher than having a dysfunctional group in class." (Rebecca Williams)
- "For getting-to-know-you exercises on the first day, don't leave it to students to pair themselves up. Assign them so if there's an odd student out it's not because of peer rejection. This goes for group work as well." (Diana Colbert)
- "I never realized it, but only half my class was participating in discussions. A professor who observed me suggested that I switch up the seating order they had created for themselves, so that I ended up making eye contact with (and thus drawing in) new people. I've also learned to pull aside the discussion hoarders, compliment them on how well they know the material, and ask them to help me involve other students in the conversations. That way, they get the recognition they're craving, and they quit silencing the others." (Anonymous)
- "Always provide for contingencies in your lesson plans. If you've got a group work assignment that depends on having done homework, what will you do with students who haven't done their homework?" (Mia Chen)
- "Sometimes students don't do the assigned reading, so I like to have short pieces ready for class discussion when that happens." (Margaret Galvan)
- "What I've learned: don't ask students any questions I couldn't (or wouldn't want to) answer myself." (Molly Pulda)
- "For classes where many of the students are under-prepared for college-level work, give examples of the kind of paper you want. Save copies of good papers to be used as examples for future classes." (Diana Colbert)
- "Never continue with what doesn't work. Stop a bad seminar in the middle and ask what your students want to talk about." (Ashley Foster)
- "When in doubt, go outside. When my class is stagnant, I've taken to taking them outside—NYC is a great text—lots of research assignments lurking in billboards, etc. It also takes the pressure off you as the instructor for a little bit." (Erica Kaufman)

If a class still seems uneasy with group discussions mid-semester, maybe the students are uncomfortable with your style of authority or they sense your own uneasiness. Have them break up into groups to discuss each question among themselves, and then report back to the class as a whole. Maybe you can slip into a few groups and participate where things are already flowing.

Grading Pains

The typical trajectory of the new adjunct's grading tendencies: (1) spending way too much time the first semester or the first year responding to student work, (2) regretting and resenting it, and (3) trying to find ways to speed up the process. Try to skip the first two steps, if you can. And be clear about your expectations in the course and with each assignment to avoid later conflict.

- "Think of (and present) the syllabus as a contract of sorts. Perhaps even ask the students to sign it. This way, you are bound to it in the same way that the students are—I find that this lessens end of semester grade change pleas. I also usually put a clause in it someplace that entitles me to 'change the schedule as I wish' so I am not necessarily trapping myself, just making it clear to the students that if we both do our jobs, things will be stellar." (Erica Kaufman)
- "Provide assignment sheets for each major assignment with expectations, formatting details, and a grading rubric, if possible." (Jessica Cantiello)
- "I never thought I'd be someone who used grading rubrics (seems so rigid), but I've started doing my grades on a point system and that makes it really easy to show students halfway through the semester where they are and to assign final grades at the end." (Kate Broad)
- "Now I also try to tell students what skills are essential to the current assignment so that I can share with them the purpose of the activity from a teacher's perspective (and remind myself of it too!)." (Dominique Zino)
- "[I've learned not to take] too long to return graded work (announcing turnaround time helps all-around)." (Nancy Derbyshire)
- "I like to work up a final grade rubric, photocopy it thirty times, and fill it out for each student. Then I staple a copy of it to their final paper; if they come to get it, or if they've given me a SASE, they can see my math. Invariably, students email me with grade complaints, and it is a relief to know that I have a physical record of my math and assessment." (Nancy Derbyshire)
- "When grading, try to open with encouraging comments. (I know it's not always easy. But you can always, at the very least, recognize the effort it took to sit down and attempt the assignment.) The goal is to keep them writing." (David Bahr)
- "Try to grade papers in spurts. Sitting down to grade 25-30 papers at once will test your patience and make you mean." (David Bahr)

If you're interested in the grading contract idea, you can find a sample of one for an English composition course at adjunctlifeline.blogspot.com.

Odds and Ends:

You'll still have to learn from your own mistakes, but here are a few more ideas:

- "Always carry chalk (or other board-writing implements) with you, for sometimes your classroom may not have them." (Margaret Galvan)
- "Class time will invariably be too short/long." (Tali Noimann)
- "Organize your preparation material as well as you can to save time in later semesters, and to make preparing a teaching portfolio easier when it's time to go on the market." (Diana Colbert)
- "Don't assume that, just because you wrote something on the syllabus, students will know about it." (Jessica Cantiello)
- "Consider keeping a blog, which students are required to check when they miss class, where you post announcements, journal questions, homework, or syllabus revisions (so you don't have to answer the same questions repeatedly)." (Anonymous)
- "Take the time to teach basic reading and writing skills. If you assume students know how to actively read, annotate texts, frame arguments, organize their writing, etc., you'll spend time backtracking instead of moving forward." (Diana Epelbaum)
- "Trust your instincts. If you think a student is making up a dead grandparent or the significant personal tragedy, you're probably right. If you trust that a student needs a hand, give it. If someone needs two extra days, and they've earned your trust, do it. Just follow your gut, and you'll usually be right. And when you're wrong, you'll learn." (Rob Faunce)

The Big Picture:

Regardless of any weird moments you encounter of your own making or mistakes you commit, remember you're still the expert in the room. Even if you lack the years, you have way more knowledge and experience than your students.

- "It took me a long time to learn that all of us, as teachers, are individuals. We each have our own strengths. Learn to trust those strengths and don't try to be someone you are not. The students detect this, and you'll hate your job. Enjoy the process. I've met great people." (David Bahr)
- "And remember that you'll make it through the semester somehow, even if it's not pretty." (Mia Chen)
- "Don't get so caught up in the teaching that you forget that you are a grad student. (I think this one is really important, especially for all of us who teach too much.)" (Emily Sherwood)
- "Life is more important than your course. If students miss class or fail to turn in work, don't shame them or get angry. Point out their options: prioritize school for now, drop the class, or at least maintain this amount of work to earn a C for the semester while still managing whatever crisis has arisen (as will inevitable happen for some students)." (Anonymous)
- "Forgive yourself. The first two years of teaching are hard enough without punishing yourself for the growth process. You've got to forgive yourself and keep on keeping on. And when a whole semester goes to pot, remind yourself that you start again next semester. It's all good." (Rob Faunce)

Finally, one more thing about adjuncts and mistakes: I encourage you not to give a lot of free labor—grading, student conferences, emails, etc.—to your classes out of guilt or obligation. CUNY gets what it pays for (part-time, underpaid, often fabulous but overworked teachers). Teach what you can, and do a great job, but don't let the job encroach on your own studies and life. If your paid hours aren't sufficient to equip students, it's CUNY's responsibility to pay for more teaching or office hours. Certainly don't perpetuate this unfair system by throwing in a bunch of free time; let the administrators learn from their mistakes too. Ⓐ

book REVIEW

Our Perfectionisms, Ourselves

▶ Andrew H. Miller, *The Burdens of Perfection: On Ethics and Reading in Nineteenth-Century British Literature* (Cornell UP, 2008)

MIA CHIN

It would be difficult to imagine anybody better positioned to understand how much of a burden perfectionism can be than the typical graduate student. She spends countless hours agonizing over a cover letter for a job she doesn't want to have to accept; a seminar paper that should have been turned in over a year ago; an outfit for her first class teaching slack-jawed, apathetic students; an email to a professor who may or may not ignore it; and, need it be said, that ungainly instrument of torture she hesitates to call a dissertation. Of course she knows better. Of course she should listen to the appeals of her remaining supporters and her own sanity and just send it off already, but the questions eat away inside her: What more do I need to have read? Is this too much? Too little? Should I sleep on it, let it sit for a while? What can I do to make this better? Exhausted by these questions, she wonders why she must continue with her perfectionism—only to note that perfectionism is what got her into grad school in the first place. The grad student experiences perfectionism as a source of anxiety, despair, shame, humor, pain, and, ultimately, gratitude: not just one burden, but many.

Andrew H. Miller's *The Burdens of Perfection* has little in the way of direct advice for our poor perfectionist, at least on the surface. Shielded by layers of hard-won cynicism, she probably least fears the perfectionism which Miller takes as his subject: moral perfectionism, the desire not to do better, but to be better.

Miller specializes in Victorian literature, a period filled with perfectionist longings of all sorts. From Samuel Smiles, who coined the phrase "self-help" in his book of that name, to Charles Dickens, whose archetypal Ebenezer Scrooge still undergoes his regrettable change of heart every December, to George Eliot, whose novel *Middlemarch* monumentalized the era's earnest devotion to gradual individual and collective progress, Victorians from all walks of life fed the era's insatiable demand for the belief that a better self, a better world was possible, and attainable. The subject certainly merits attention, but Victorianists are perhaps as likely to turn their noses at moral perfectionism as cynical grad students.

Miller notes right at the outset that literary critics have "rather fled from discussions of moral psychology": "[W]ho would not want to flee the hectoring moralism with which it is so easily associated—portentous, pious, humorless?" Victorianist work of the past ten years has tended to favor instead, he observes, either a historicist model, situating literary works within a more finely grained historical context, or an ideological critique, analyzing a text's ideological dimensions and ramifications. Critics have eschewed the moral and ethical in favor of the social and the political.

Instead of following these well-trodden critical paths—with which he is undoubtedly familiar as co-editor of *Victorian Studies*—Miller offers an idiosyncratic, intricate, and expansive map of Victorian mental life. Mental life seems the right phrase. He twice quotes the Victorian philosopher F. D. Maurice: "The thought of one person, if it is really his, calls forth the thought of another, to resist it, conspire with it, or to complete it." (Miller's own thoughts extensively conspire with Stanley Cavell, whose book *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome* deals with moral perfectionism in western philosophy.) "Maurice is addressing not so much moral choices," Miller explains, "but a prior matter, the entry into moral deliberation and intellectual reflection itself, the advent of conscious thinking, mine, now, freshly achieved." The book's richness lies in its ability to call forth this intellectual reflection; it stirs the reader into thinking about himself, about how he relates to himself, about how closely his self is involved in the reading of a novel.

In fact, it is often easy while thinking these thoughts to forget that *The Burdens of Perfection* is about perfection and its burdens. It is less an anatomy of moral perfectionism than a constellation of ideas strikingly juxtaposed to it. The first two chapters, for example, discuss a pervasive, general skepticism as the basis of perfectionism. Fair enough: skepticism, as life in grad school teaches us, is perhaps the primary means by which perfectionism burdens the mind. From there, though, Miller moves to "allegories of mechanized identity." Miller draws together an impressive range of thinkers who imagined, and feared, human-like automata, or rather, automata-like humans: William James, Robert Browning, John Stuart Mill, Thomas Carlyle, all of whom Miller suggests are responding to the philosophical skepticism of Descartes and Spinoza. William James envisions a proto-Turing test, in which an "automatic sweetheart. . . absolutely indistinguishable from a spiritually animated maiden. . . perform[s] all the feminine offices as tactfully and sweetly as if a soul were in her." Mill, on the other hand, argues that one who is unable to control his impulses acts mechanically, "has no character, no more than a steam-engine has a character." The end result of this skepticism regarding the nature of human life is a deep sense of isolation, a sense that communication, even if possible, is pointless. The chapter closes powerfully with a reading of Dickens' celebrated comparison of life's inexorable motion towards death to a journey on that characteristically Victorian mode of transportation, the railroad train:


Andrew H. Miller

> Dickens invites the thought that our mortality is a train within which we ride. The conditions of such travel require that the things near to hand, which we can almost touch, fly from us; while those that seem not to fly from us but to stay within our view are at a deceitful distance. Either way, with things near or far, our mortality expresses itself in the sense that the things among which we find ourselves in this life elude our grasp. Skepticism has been rendered metaphysical, sending its trunk lines across the world.

And what has any of this to do with moral perfectionism? One must flip back a few pages to find this sentence: "It is as if the fantasy of human perfectibility brought with it, or responded to (perhaps with mechanical regularity), the threat of mechanization." Moral perfectionism has something to do with—or simply *is*—mechanization, but Miller makes no attempt to give a more precise answer. In the introduction, he characterizes his work as "implicative" rather than "conclusive," the latter referring to the arguments offered by historicist or ideological approaches. *The Burdens of Perfection* allows room for further reflection, indeed makes the under-determination of its argument paramount.

Miller's main point concerning moral perfectionism is that it follows a trajectory. The extreme skepticism involved in perfectionism doesn't so much become resolved as recathected, shifted into a second-person relationship, a close bond to some exemplary other, paradigmatically—in the marriage plots of the Victorian novel—a spouse. This second-person relation between the moral perfectionist and the one he admires arises from an impasse between third-person and first-person points of view. Drawing on the work of Richard Moran, author of *Authority and Estrangement: An Essay on Self-Knowledge* (2001), Miller points out that the third-person omniscient narration most often found in Victorian fiction enables a very particular relationship to oneself: "eyeing myself as if I were someone unfamiliar, I can entertain, assess, develop, contradict, neglect, woefully misunderstand, underappreciate, and be bemused by my ideas and beliefs and emotions as I can those of a stranger." To adopt this disembodied perspective, though, has the effect of divorcing oneself from one's own intentions. The first-person perspective, on the other hand, may be more conducive to formulating intentions regarding oneself, but restricts knowledge of external circumstances and realities. If this oscillation between third and first person, between objectivity and subjectivity, carried out within one person's mind leads to "weakness of will"—as our typical graduate student can attest to—reciprocal second-person relations with an admired individual offer a way out. Hence the weight Victorians, both real and fictional, placed on intimate friendships, revered teachers, a desired, idolized mate. We, sadly, are more likely to move in the other direction, as fleeting discussions with trusted mentors and colleagues give way to hours spent alone in front of a computer screen.

A more standard book of literary criticism would proceed to illustrate perfectionism's trajectory through a series of close readings of texts, chronologically arranged. Miller instead divides the book into seven chapters on mechanization and desire, weakness of will, casuistry, helplessness, knowingness, shame, and lives unled. The list gives some idea of the book's wide-ranging scope. Each chapter unites a variety of texts, authors, and genres, along with a number of contemporary Anglo-American philosophers not often heard from in literary criticism. Texts discussed in one chapter reappear in another for a second, a third look (Charles Dickens' *Dombey and Son* and George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* recur most frequently). Particularly striking are the chapters on helplessness and lives unled. Miller begins "Perfectly Helpless" by noting the tendency for Jane Austen's critics to claim how difficult it is to write about her novels, so subtle are their effects. From critical helplessness, Miller moves to readerly helplessness, a common enough experience, albeit one most critics would be helpless to analyze. He cites Victorian novelist Margaret Oliphant on Austen, who describes feeling "a certain soft despair of any one human creature ever doing any good to another. . . a sense that nothing is to be done but to look on, to say perhaps now and then a softening word, to make the best of it practically and theoretically, to smile and hold up one's hands and wonder why human creatures should be such fools." Austen's characters, helpless to act otherwise, break through the constraints of social convention and external circumstance, magnifying

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BOOK REVIEW

Poetry in the Age of Bush

▶ *State of the Union: 50 Political Poems.* Edited by Joshua Beckman and Matthew Zapruder. Wave Books, 2008. 112pp, $14.00

JASON SCHNEIDERMAN

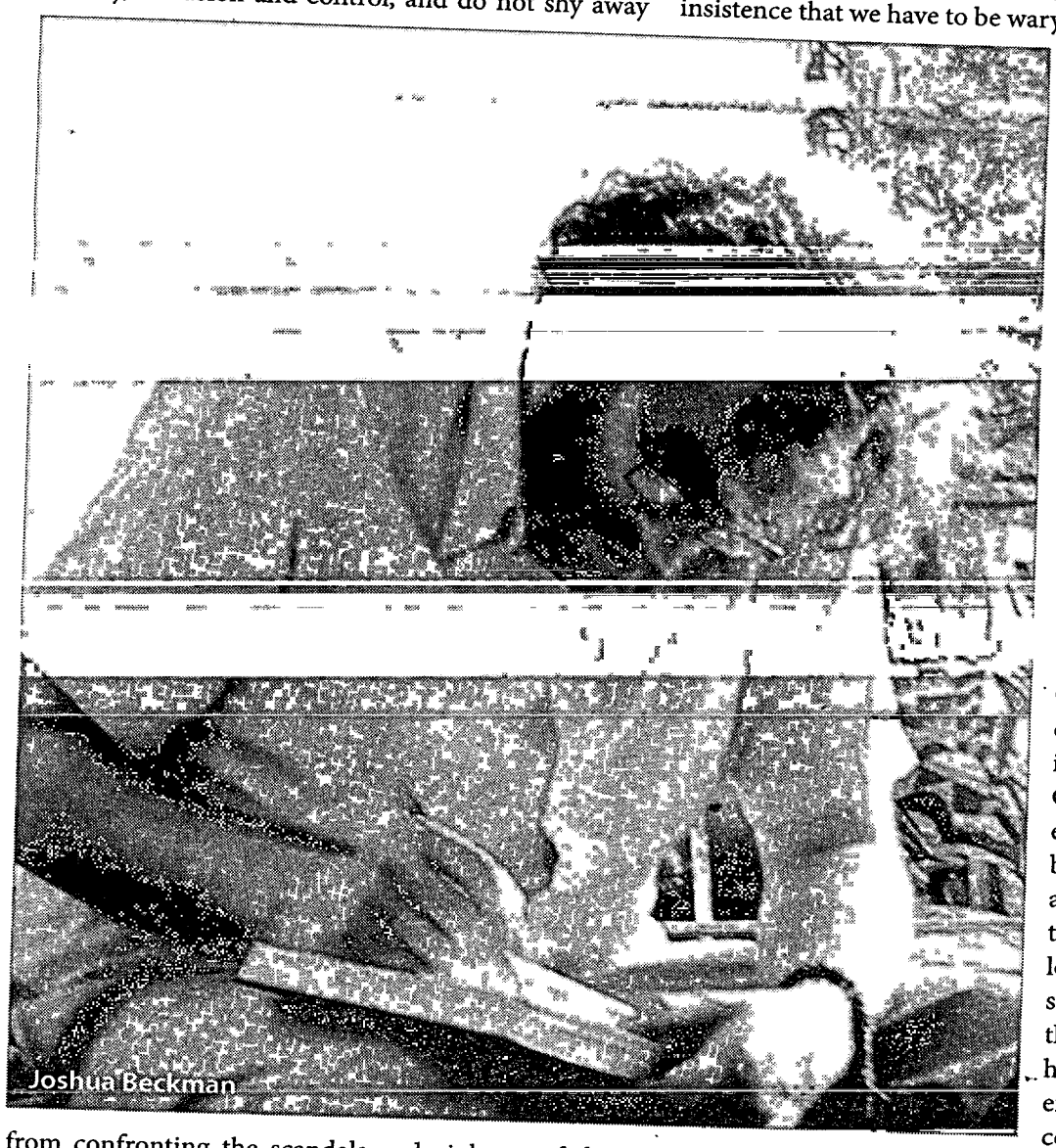
There's no introduction to *State of the Union*, a new collection from Wave Books composed of, as the subtitle puts it, *50 Political Poems*. There's no afterword, no manifesto, no explanation of how the word "political" might be meeting the word "poem." Even the press release is silent on just what editors Joshua Beckman and Matthew Zapruder might have had in mind when making their selections. But while it may be easier to review a book that is clear on what its politics are, this refusal of explanation returns the poem to centrality. Dan Chiasson, in reviewing an anthology of poems by Guantanamo detainees wrote, "It is hard to imagine a reader so hardhearted as to bring aesthetic judgment to bear on a book written by men in prison without legal recourse…You don't read this book for pleasure; you read it for evidence." It's hard to imagine any of the poets in *State of the Union* wanting to be read for evidence—neither in the documentary mold of Muriel Rukeyser, nor the earnest tableaus of Margaret Atwood.

These poems all address themselves to the period of time between the attacks of September 11, 2001 and the end of the George W. Bush years and you need to come to the poems with knowledge of the politics and events of that period. The poems mostly address what it felt like to live through the Bush administration, with its combination of secrecy, mendacity, bellicosity, intrusion and control, and do not shy away from confronting the scandals and violence of the administration. By refusing an explanation of what it means to be a political poem, the collection puts the burden on the reader and the poems to find how these poems might be rightly called political. But very few of the anthologies designed to address these difficult times go about defining what politics is. Neil Astley makes the claim in *Staying Alive: Real Poems for Real Times* that poetry is the best antidote to the "debasement of language," and he quotes Brodsky as insisting on poetry coming before "biography and politics. In Garrison Keillor's introduction to his highly popular anthology *Good Poems for Hard Times*, he addresses politics obliquely, assuming that the reader already knows what "politics" are:

> America is in hard times these days…politics even more divorced from reality than usual, the levers of power firmly in the hands of a cadre of Christian pirates and bullies whose cynicism is stunning…American poetry is the truest journalism we have.

This feels less like a claim for poetry than an attack on journalists. In William Carlos William's famous phrasing, "'It is difficult/ to get the news from poems/ yet men die miserably every day/ for lack/ of what is found there." Keillor tries to put the news back into the poems—in fact his claim is that the news is best gotten from poems, but this anthology is more aligned with Williams. *State of the Union* is the collection of what's not found in the newspaper. You'd be hard pressed to get the news from this collection, and yet it's full of what the news reports couldn't capture—it's full of what it was like to live through the news, to live with the news. The best poems in the volume sprawl out into unintelligibility and confusion, embodying how it felt to endure the frustrations and obfuscations of the past eight years.

So is that what a political poem is? The expression of what it feels like to be governed? If politics is simply that which has to do with governance, then in a democracy it seems that we can never be outside of politics. The original formulation of "the personal is political" was that "the political is personal"—it was an insistence that we have to be wary of how the government polices our pleasures and our lives, not that we had to police our pleasures and lives to fit a particular mode of governance. But the notion that good art should be apolitical is a powerful position for those whose personhood is politically dangerous (e.g., Oscar Wilde) though it often fails as a defense (as, for example, Oscar Wilde demonstrated in both instances). McCarthyism firmly entrenched a gap between political activism and artistic production, at least in the mainstream—though the art world has hardly been disengaged since the cold war. These poems don't bother to position themselves against a call for political action, rather they simply show that poetry, like politics, is part of our world. Human experience is never far from the organization of power.


Joshua Beckman

Some poems are explicitly concerned with the government. Lorenzo Thomas's poem "The Marks are Waiting" is in two sections—the first part a free verse poem that feels consistent with most of the collection's tone: "Our new acuity / Has been misread / As short attention span." The second section is a prose gloss on the free verse that precedes it. It's the most directly argumentative section of the anthology:

> If history can still be understood as a record of the deeds of leaders, then the recent history of the United States is the record of bizarre plots and frantic attempts to cover their behinds performed by an amazingly conscienceless batch of born-again hypocrites and felons in waiting.

Thomas builds a fairly straightforward argument that since World War II, the military involvements of the United States have been a distraction from the operations of power. This may be precisely what Garrison Keillor meant.

Most of the best poems approach the period obliquely. The poets here are primarily lyric poets, interested in mood, tone, disjunction and persona. The form of the poem is always central to these poets. As Thomas shows by example, if prose were the best medium, they would use it. John Ashbery might be the case study for how a poem can be political. The tendency towards syntactical collapse in his work has long made it difficult to critique or explain his work. Impossible to paraphrase, his work is most often considered as a thing of beauty, almost never as a thing of meaning. Within his isolated phrases there seems a glimpse of how we are living. "We have shapes but no power," seems like an excellent way of describing the fact that the anti war protests did nothing to stop the war, despite being the largest protests in the history of the world. But more importantly, the slippery nature of his work perfectly captures the curious twists of language we had to suffer. How wonderful to see the collapsing nature of language wrested from the clumsy truisms of Rumsfeld and returned to Ashbery's well wrought urns.

The main grace of the anthology is that the writers are all so intelligent. Thomas Sayers Ellis contemplates the dollar sign as an "s" trapped behind the number 11. "S for September, s for suffering, s for save us. / Damn you, Autumn, / flags are not flowers." By refusing the dollar sign as a simple symbol and taking it into pieces that might send new messages, Ellis offers a stunningly elegant resistance to the consumerism that replaced sacrifice and the flag waving that replaced mourning in the wake of September 11. John Yau's "Ing Grish" traces the inclusions and exclusions of Asian American identity politics while placing them in the larger scope of America's abuse of those communities. Lucille Clifton's "September Song: A Poem in Seven Days" is precisely the plain spoken but nuanced response that one would expect from her talent.

The poem traces the feeling of each day, capturing the stunned confusions as she balances the competing impulses that everyone in American had to manage. Joe Wenderoth's poem about the fading yellow ribbon bumper stickers on cars is the perfect image of the failures of consumerism as a response to tragedy. Mary Reuffle's beautiful "Kettle" contemplates the difficulty of comprehending human cruelty. As she washes the kettle, using her fingers to find the blemishes, she thinks of the advice given to killers. "I kept telling myself perfectly clear minds/ killed the Jews." The poem ends with the stunning lines, "we should try to be more like animals/ and less like them at the same time."

When the poems do stray towards straightforward polemic, the aesthetics tend to wear thin. Matthew Roher's "Elementary Science for Dick Cheney" starts out as a rewrite of Szymborska's "In Praise of Feeling Bad About Yourself." Szymborska's poem begins:

> The buzzard never says it is to blame.
> The panther wouldn't know what scruples mean.
> When the piranha strikes, it feels no shame.
> If snakes had hands, they'd claim their hands were clean.

Rohrer's opens:

The shark is not evil,
not mean. The wolf
is not mean. The fox
is not mean.
The bunny isn't good
the doe is not especially good.

But whereas Szymborska finds a conclusion in the general: "among the signs of bestiality/ a clear conscience is number one," Rohrer settles his ire on Cheney: "It is you, the vice / president of our country, who is despicable." Part of what makes Szymborska more successful is that she implicates herself—the suggestion is that as speaker, she has done wrong, and has an unclear conscience. Rohrer draws a clear distinction, placing Cheney as the bearer of the burden. The poem ends, "it is a very good thing/ to watch you die." But of course, the darth vader jokes that circulate around Cheney are precisely that he doesn't die—against all odds and health concerns. The poem becomes a left wing fantasy about the end of enemy number one, but it's not really satisfying as a poem. It's perhaps what left wing rhetoric needs more of—directly targeted anger that refuses to turn back on itself. Rohrer's rebuke to Szymborska would seem to be that sometimes we have to point the finger rather than suggest that we should all feel bad—though Szymborska's poem is already a rebuke to Cheney's lack of remorse.

C. A. Conrad's effervescent "Dear Mr. President There Was Egg Shell Under Your Desk Last Night in my Dream" satirizes the insularity of the Bush Administrations by taking an intimately chatty epistolary approach. The letter expresses concern for George W. Bush's upbringing by his father George H. W. Bush: "i want to say i'm sorry about your parents i'm sure other children of CIA brass need a little craziness to get a little loose do a line of coke get naked and run around campus were you freer back then of course you were i'm an idiot for asking..." and generally freely associates about the need for love. The lower case "i"s get on my nerves, but that seems a petty complaint about a poem that manages to so wittily juxtapose the discipline and secrecy of it's subject with the friendly banter of the writer. The subject of the poem is really what happiness, concern, and openness look like, and the reader sees here how these are political concerns. A counterintuitively "political" goal, Conrad suggest that we should stop looking to our fears to govern, and return to our foundational pursuit of happiness.

Beckman and Zapruder have put together an anthology that shows that art does not need to overlay politics on to its essential-art-self, but rather that the political is an unavoidable engagement art must make, that human organization is politics, and human expression is of the political realm. What distinguishes this collection from the more polemical anthologies it might be compared to (*Poets against the War, 100 Poets against the War*) is nuance. Politics demands positions. Politicians have to vote yes or no, and we've seen politicians ridiculed when they try to nuance their positions on votes, or in the case of Barack Obama, when they don't vote with a yes or no.

But it's foolish to insist that one's politics be as binary as one's voting record. While the period after September 11 subjected many of us to a lot of terrible political poetry, Beckman and Zapruder have provided a coherent argument that politics and poetry are not incompatible—it's just that each has to have a nuanced and carefully constructed idea of the other. Ⓐ

CEASING TO BE

The idea is simple. Lucretius wanted to rid
the world of death fear by writing
On the Nature of Things. He says we fear
death only believing the mind somehow
continues even after the skull that holds it
is broken and harmless vapor leaks out
into everything dissolving. It's
true I fear my death, but I fear
the death of others more, because that's
a death without death through which
I must live. Or I fear my death
for the death others will have to live through
without me. That and probably pain
are why people are afraid. Anyway a world
without death fear would be even more scary.
Not that it matters. Death and fear. One
hand of steel, one of gold. Even you
wouldn't know which to cut off or reach
out for first Lucretius, because it is always
very dark here in the future.

—Matthew Zapruder

THERE'S TOO MUCH OF EVERYTHING

Summer is already halfway gone
its transparent belly carrying
us past New Awe Beginning. Who
has not already started Proust
or Infinite Jest or The Collected
Reasons to Quit Coffee or visiting
every minor league ball park
forever will be vaguely pierced
with at least a little failure. Aeschylus,
Sophocles, Euripides, say
my own personal raindrops
hitting the eaves. The porch
of this American Bungalow is an easy
place to listen to National Public
Radio and the sound of dishes
being done. Also the green scientific
pages of my favorite Rediform notebook
fill with observations. Torn map
to me means the actual one
we carried so many times around
the city it fell apart. Metaphor means
enemy. So well I remember the feeling
of hiding something in a drawer
coursing like electricity through me
but not for my life what it was.
A black bat manifests for an instant
against the last metal color of the sky.
Then it is lost in similar darkness.

—Matthew Zapruder

Review: *Burdens*

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this readerly helplessness. And yet, this helplessness before the book in front of me is in some way a helplessness before myself, the life I have lived. "In assembling the characters of a novel in my mind," Miller writes, "my intimacy with them is more like an intimacy with myself, or with some aspect of myself, than it is with another, with someone over there." Readerly helplessness ultimately stems from a strongly felt inability to alter an irrevocable past, a past which has been "perfected," in the sense of completed, finished, whether it is the past portrayed in novels or remembered in life. Of this inability "we need to be reminded": "In such moments, as I only stand and wait, the novel allows me to understand my difference from others as a version of my difference from my past."


Margaret Oliphant

Miller further explores this experience of one's past self as achingly other in the book's final chapter, "On Lives Unled." A comment of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick which Miller quotes serves to link perfectionism's concern for the future with a deeply textured relationship to the past: "Because the reader has room to realize that the future may be different from the present, it is also possible for her to entertain such profoundly painful, profoundly relieving, ethically crucial possibilities as that the past, in turn, could have happened differently from the way it actually did." (Sedgwick, after Cavell, is Miller's most frequent source of critical inspiration.) Unled lives—the subject of Miller's current project—are all the lives one could have led but didn't, or one particular life among these. For the perfectionist, these lives can be held particularly closely, mourned for particularly plangently. Miller builds on Sedgwick's influential reading of Henry James' "The Beast in the Jungle," arguing that unled lives, like the closet Sedgwick deconstructs, are part of a "set of conditioning, historically specific pressures, social and psychological, that situate characters within a determinate identity characterized by the longing to inhabit apparently unattainable identities." Marcher, the story's protagonist, longs for the life he could have led, and feels the poignancy of its unattainability all the more deeply as he can no longer fully remember it: "The lost stuff of consciousness became thus for him as a strayed or stolen child to an unappeasable father." To this moment Miller conjoins the premise of Charles Lamb's strange, elegiac essay "The Dream-Children." "Forgetting the past," he writes, "is understood to be like losing a child one never had. A hard thought to bring home emotionally, this amounts to saying that forgetting your past is like the sudden feeling you might have on awakening, after a long reverie in which you have been surrounded by all that children can represent for you: you recognize your childless reality and try desperately to recapture the promise of your dream."

Thoughts hard to bring home emotionally: these are what *The Burdens of Perfection* aims at evoking, and excels at achieving. Actual alleviation of perfectionism's weight, though, is a less likely result, especially since the book is liable to leave one more puzzled by perfectionism than before. Yet, like the characters who redirect their energies towards another character in a second-person relationship, the perfectionist you or I are likely to be may derive sustenance from a renewed attention to ourselves, or hitherto only dimly apprehended aspects of ourselves. Miller's book is profoundly, generously, and generatively self-indulgent—not in the sense of "oversharing," but in its unashamed sense that one's self can always be a source of unexpected interest. If all this sounds like an apolitical repudiation of the much-needed politically conscious criticism of the past two or three decades, something distinguishes this from much of the work from the so-called ethical turn in literary criticism. Paradoxically, I believe it stems from Miller's refusal to assimilate his ethical project to politically desirable ends, a characteristic of recent ethical criticism (on this, see Dorothy J. Hale's "Aesthetics and the New Ethics" in this May's *Publications of the Modern Language Associations*); instead of showing the ethically desirable outcomes of novel reading, Miller focuses on how novel reading foregrounds the intricate process of ethical deliberation itself, noting that the outcome may not necessarily be positive. Adorno's position that radically avant-garde, politically ambiguous art offers a truer critique of late capitalism than explicitly political art seems apposite. Philip Davis, reviewing *The Burdens of Perfection* for *Victorian Studies* called it "one of the best books on Victorian writing to appear in the last ten years." High praise, although it follows the less flattering remark that while Miller asks his audience to read the book like a novel, it doesn't read like one. Indeed, few would approach Miller's book with the same disposition they bring to novels (nor with the same disposition they bring to most scholarly books), but, as with the best novels, one gets the sense that upon a first reading, one will only be able to absorb a small portion of its wisdom, that this will be a book worth returning to over the next ten years and beyond. Ⓐ

art REVIEW

Archive Art: A Rosler Project Revisited

▶ *If You Lived Here Still...* by Martha Rosler. At the e-Flux Gallery, 41 Essex St., New York.

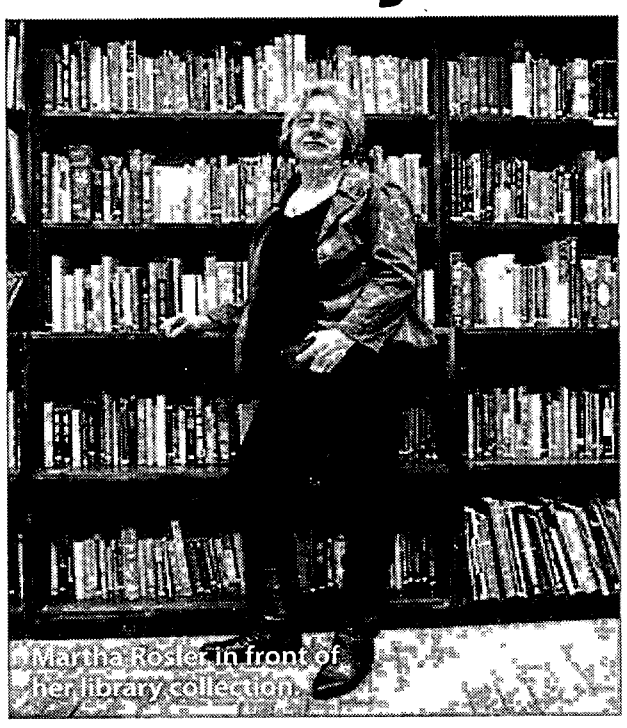
SARAH MILLS

Martha Rosler's homeless project is back, only this time in archival form. The exhibition, "If You Lived Here Still...," currently on view at New York's e-Flux gallery, revisits numerous materials on homelessness and housing, which Rosler first began collecting for the exhibition, "If You Lived Here...," held at the Dia Art Foundation in 1989. In the mole-hole space under 41 Essex Street one finds a documentary video, a slideshow projection, a tac-board wall of documents (flyers, posters and advertisements), five file boxes (with lecture notes, real estate holdings, letters and articles) and five work-station tables—all part of the 1989 exhibition which now makes up the current archive. This text-laden version of Rosler's ongoing project includes several new document additions as of August 28, 2009. These inclusions have helped keep the essence of her activist-oriented, research-based artwork alive. Since homelessness has reached record levels in New York City recently, e-Flux seeks to encourage viewing and research by opening up the archive to the public. However, it is uncertain as to whether the transformation of the archive into an art exhibition subtracts from or strengthens the intensity of Rosler's original concept.

In the heyday of the original Dia exhibition, Rosler confronted multidimensional aspects of America's and New York's festering-sore-like social system to address the causes of, and remedies for homelessness in America. Her work, in keeping with the spirit of many other socially-minded artists from the early 1990s, embraced tasks—such as holding public meetings, conferencing with architects, interviewing the homeless—akin to those of a small-town politician, social service educator, urban planner or human rights activist (out went Modernist aesthetics and formalism, in came interventionism). At different times over the course of the year-long exhibition, Rosler recruited and involved a team of urban planners, designers, architects, film makers, Rutgers University students, homeless people, and advocacy groups.

These people along with other key collaborative players—the artist Dan Wiley, the self-organized group of homeless people known as Homeward Bound, and the Atlanta-based group of young architects and designers known as Mad Housers—formed the core team in Rosler's real-world, real-time engagement approach. Their entire exhibition production consisted of four public meetings, a three-part exhibition cycle followed by "Town Hall Meetings," and numerous auxiliary events. The first exhibition, "Home Front," acknowledged those in jeopardy of losing their homes in various cities as well as their bench-sleeping prevention efforts. "Homeless: The Street and Other Venues," followed as a second exhibition, responding to questions of "(in)visible" homelessness. More answers finally arrived in the last of the three exhibitions, "City: Visions and Revisions," which examined urban problems and solutions of all kinds—from realistic to utopian schemes. This collective and cumulative project, while belittled as non-art by US art critics at the time, seems to be one of the more appropriate ways in which an artist utilizes the high art of exhibition making. Borrowing Dia's authorial "space," both mental and physical, Rosler was able to draw attention to a new platform from which the voices of the city's homeless could be better heard.

E-flux's present archive installation seeks to reactivate similar concerns, to revive awareness a second time around, of an issue increasing in its severity in New York City: that of homelessness and the almost-homeless which Mayor Bloomberg's take-a-hike plan (one-way ticket "home" for homeless people) has failed to curb. Yet, I am not entirely convinced that any one particular argument is clearly articulated within the confusion of discursive propaganda found at the e-Flux space other than the one inherent in the exhibition experience itself: that despite the rise of media attention, new social programs, and activist involvement, there remains a never-ending and still increasing occurrence of housing loss.



Martha Rosler in front of her library collection.

My first serious encounter with Rosler's work came in a course on twentieth-century photography. This medium, aside from her own art historical writing, is what Rosler is best known for and it shows up often in her art projects—photomontage, photo-texts duos, and documentary photography—which range from installations to video to the gelatin-silver print. After studying other photographers who captured poverty, housing or property loss as subject matter in their work (I'm thinking mainly of the Farm Security Administration photographers here), I soon developed an appreciation and preference for Rosler's work, particularly her photo-texts entitled *The Bowery In Two Inadequate Descriptive Systems* (1974-75).

Not that the FS A photographs lacked any particular aptitude or insight, but they drew upon a Christianizing humanism when rendering their images, evoking pity and sorrow from all those who had a bit of change in their pocket and a stable home. Rosler's *Bowery* photographs oppose any necessity of creating sympathy for the down-and-out "bum." In fact, she avoids the representation of the human subject altogether and instead creates a visual account of an emptied-out urban environment ridden with beer bottles, litter, and other human remains. Juxtaposed next to each of her forty-eight black and white photographs are a few typed words: synonyms for drunkenness in the middle of a white page. The absence of the human subject, referenced to only by images and words of their environment, allows the viewer to come to terms with the circumstance and presence of homelessness itself without sentimentalizing individuals, an act that might ironically yield an enabling passivism or misunderstanding of real socio-environmental factors.

The disallowance of contemplating human subjects, which proved profound in the Bowery photo-texts, is precisely what I dislike about Rosler's archive project at e-Flux. There is too much absence or talking around the subject that leaves me wondering: what is really being addressed by her work? The inundation of text-based materials from the late 1980s—a pamphlet pinned to the wall from the "NFHA: National Fair Housing Alliance," a magnet with writing, "311 Save Your Home Hotline," an article on the "Protest in Detroit; Photographers Show a City 'Demolished by Neglect,'" and a book entitled *Artists' Housing Manual*—speaks to the ambitiousness of Rosler's personal media collection on housing issues more than anything else, but leaves unanswered the question of who her intended audience is. Rosler's exhibited archive also raises questions about the consequences of particular art-exhibition practices, which I believe do injustice to the real concerns found in the works of some artists, including Rosler. The organization and layout of materials at the e-Flux space made them impossible to really use; pamphlets and documents were overlapping and tightly pressed underneath a thick layer of plexi-glass on a workshop table. More flyers were pinned to the wall—again, presented in a way that precluded any thoughts of thumbing through their contents.

A month earlier I was leafing through fifteenth century pages barehanded in an open-air pavilion at the State Archives in Venice. This gallery, by contrast, asked me to wear white gloves when flipping through twenty-year old files. It is not the ironic, hyper-genetic preservation issue that annoyed me most, but rather my sense that the archive was not meant to be a user-friendly archive-art project at all. Instead, it is an archive visually on show, at a safe distance so that the viewer can admire the materials but not necessarily learn from them. The formal aestheticizing cleanliness, and the white cube setting that accompanies too many institutionally-conformed art exhibitions and which had, indeed, seemed intentionally ejected from Martha's first "relational" project, felt clearly reinserted for this show. The exhibition style beckoned art connoisseurship, point blank, whether it wanted to or not.

Art on the theme of homelessness has not always crystallized under the auspices of an art-designated space. Two years prior to the opening of "If You Lived Here...," Krzysztof Wodiczko, a prominent Polish artist, beamed up individuals displaced by urban planning in Boston, New York, and in many other cities by projecting their photographed image onto monumental buildings in a work he called "Homeless Projections" (1987). A year later, based off ideas he received from interviews with homeless people, Wodiczko began designing "Homeless Vehicles," which were tubular carts designed for sleeping and carrying bottles and cans. I tend to favor Wodiczko's ambitions to Rosler's for the simple fact that Wodiczko views society's perception of homelessness as more of a problem than housing loss itself. However, I would also entertain the idea that Rosler's and Wodiczko's work is, together, complementary and harmonious. Rosler's work provokes, creates space for unknown voices to be heard, cheerleads, fights verbally and textually, wakes up the public, and continues to document the challenges of the entire affair in an archive. Wodiczko takes the hands-on approach by inventing practical tools with an aesthetic, urban sensibility. One finds emotional fervor in Rosler's work, such as her 1989 Times Square animation "Housing Is a Human Right." In contrast, one finds stability in the Buckminster Fuller-like inventiveness of Wodiczko. We should feel lucky to have both artists living in the New York City area, at least part of the time.

For the current revisited exhibition, I am certain that e-Flux and Martha Rosler were well aware of just how timely the archival publicizing would be. The show opened August 28, 2009 and will close October 31, 2009, just days shy of the mayoral elections. Is all the info-loading to push politics? I actually don't think so. But, the drop-hint texts, marrying negative connotations with the word "Mayor," found scattered about the archive space, were no subtle message either. I am left wondering to what extent the political nature of the "archive presentation" will provoke critical rehistoricization of Rosler's less politically geared content. Ⓐ

music REVIEW

On the Musical Genealogy of Neko Case

Middle Cyclone by Neko Case (ANTI-, 2009)

JUSTIN ROGERS-COOPER

This review is an attempt to assess the latest work of Neko Case within a broader genealogy of mostly North American guitar songwriters. It imagines these songwriters as a collective voice cut into discrete consciousnesses, contributing to one long, dissonant narrative of the rolling American stone. For the sake of argument, then, Neko Case's *Middle Cyclone* might stand as a statement of minor importance. It's a fine album of creaky pianos and bright chords, tucked away in the middle of a continent in the first seasons after George W. Bush, in the decades before the oil wars became water wars. It's a minor classic of the early internet age. It can mean these things because the guitar was valuable protest software for the twentieth century brain, and an artist like Neko Case is one of the more urgent contemporary specialists still commanding its acoustic affect.

Neko Case writes classic songs. The trick to writing acoustic classics in particular seems crucially tied to a rhythm of hopeful melancholy endemic to all great songs, from John Lennon's "Working Class Hero," to Animal Collective's "Flesh Canoe," to Sera Cahoone's "Baker Lake." Because you can't really dance to it, great acoustic songs have to make you walk, nod, or drive. If they make you cry, because the sentiment clicking inside you is indirectly expressed. The best pop music does this too at times, like the opening of Wilson Picket's "If You Need Me"—"if you need me/ call me." It's understandable that in America poetically crafted emotions like despair and yearning are softly political, since so much commercial affect is meant to make you happy, meant to make you laugh, meant to make you want fun, meant to make you want sex, or meant to make you disgusted with yourself. The great indie songs of our moment are sensible to us because they come from the popular traditions of folk, grunge, and what's known as "alt-country." They hang together precisely because they are *not* "fun" the way Miley Cyrus' "Party in the USA" might be "fun" to "tweens." This is, however, why indie fans secretly admire fun songs made by their favorite dissonant musicians. Bob Dylan's "Subterranean Homesick Blues" is a prime example.

The roots of Neko Case go back a few generations. In the mid-twentieth century depths of post-war McCarthy commie hunts and black and white TV, the fecund seeds of Woody Guthrie and Johnny Cash grew instantly rustic ballads of the post-cowboy: the humming tramp-rebel, hungover and earnestly anti-authoritarian. Guthrie, of course, is more widely known for protest songs than Cash. But Cash's voice captured an edgier, sexier, and more intimately combustible '50s genesis of Salinger novels and Elvis Presley—popularly existential, somewhat wry, and on the edge of danger. For those so inclined to measure the implicit politics begotten by them, one has to start by emphasizing how they place history into the ordinary lives of the songs' characters. In the blood of Cash's song "The Long Black Veil" is a dishonest exchange between a man and the law, and honor falls on the man's side. Indeed, one of the most celebrated recordings of this song happened at Fulsom Prison in 1967.

Cash can get even more straightforward. In "The Man in Black," he sings "I wear black for the poor and beaten down / living in the hopeless hungry side of town." What unites the middle-class exile and the "beaten down" is the destructive loneliness of an atomized life. The former has more choices than the latter, but both can potentially make money singing. Yet if the blues are about turning the hard life into art, then Cash and Guthrie songs are blues' in-laws. All indie rock is a distant relative, too, because it attempts to produce that humming, emotional identification with a speaker left by herself to artfully moan. Some complaining is sexy.

In the '60s, the songs of Joni Mitchell and Joan Baez arose to explain the uncomfortable but sprightly place where the personal became political. They sang in elegant, medieval voices about the tension of relationships built to decay in a culture that disposes its art into museums like stuffed birds in a natural history diorama. It's no accident that their voices, like those of Neko Case, would turn to interrogate any contradictory desires for another space by winding new words through an old sound. Think of Mitchell's "California," or the way Baez's early '60s stuff sounds like lost recordings from a stunning Renaissance peasant. In "It's All Over Now Baby Blue," Baez sings, "whatever you wish to keep / you better grab it fast." Compare this with Mitchell's "River," where she can say, "I wish I had a river so long / I would teach my feet to fly." They are the arch forerunners of Neko Case because they signal desire as the only constant in a world where everything solid eventually melts.

Through the singular and exceptional figure of Bob Dylan, whose own early 1960s persona can be seen as an uncanny blend of Cash and Guthrie, the roots of the guitar-song in American popular music became a democratic source of catchy perspectives on the emotional tailwinds from larger economic and political shifts. John Lennon, too, has an Americaness filtered through his love and association with New York, passed to him through Dylan's joint, made concrete in Central Park's Strawberry Fields. There is a living hand that carried "Imagine" into Neil Young's "Rockin in the Free World," and from there even the Indigo Girl's "Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee," and Tracy Chapman's "Talkin' Bout a Revolution." Dylan and Lennon together beget Neil Young, whose fingerprints are all over work like Eddie Vedder's *Into the Wild* soundtrack, itself written for a film attempting to trace the mysterious protest behind a dude's decision to permanently hit the woods. Neko Case is just off to the side of them, singing on a porch, watching a tornado spin close.

The movement ran away in the '90s. The romantic destruction that lurks behind the *Into the Wild* character Vedder channels in that soundtrack isn't far from Pearl Jam's somewhat forgotten '90s hit "Jeremy." In fact, Vedder's character from *Into the Wild* and his character Jeremy from *Ten* are close cousins of that psycho-family known as the deranged white American male, his thoughts bursting with suicide

and homicide. Kurt Cobain isn't quite the opposite of Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, the Columbine shooters, but more like their artistic great-uncle who shared their obsession with guns but not for the same purpose. There's a reason, though, that Gus Van Sant made them two of the three subjects of his *Elephant, Last Days, Gerry* trilogy about '90s male madness. School-age guys have killer urges. Cobain couldn't stop singing about high school adolescents, either on *Bleach* (an incessant chant of "no recess") or in "Smells Like Teen Spirit."

In the political spectrum of an alienated anger that characterized the psychotic extremes of the white middle-class '90s, Cobain's shotgun suicide became the radical inversion of the Columbine shooting and Timothy McVeigh's Oklahoma City bombing. Grunge amplifies and distorts the affect of anger. It makes more sense as an anti-political emotion than any politics as such. In his critique of McVeigh, Noam Chomsky called that brand of thinking "anti-politics." It bled out in the wake of NAFTA, and puked up a death groan for the absolute absence of practical revolutionary ideas exorcised by the culture wars. It's the screaming, stupid: 1994 was the year of Cobain's explosion, *and* the passing of NAFTA, *and* the Republican Revolution's "Contract with America." Not coincidently, Jon Krakauer's original article about *Into the Wild* appeared the year before. In 2007, note the way Vedder positions the character of Christopher McCandless on "Society": "I think I need to find a bigger place / because when you have more than you think / you need more space...Society / crazy indeed / I hope you're not lonely / without me." This voice of self-centered melancholy is the strength and weakness of this period. It's the voice of the middle-class narcissist driven *to death* by the majoritarian strangeness of consumer culture, and is directly relevant for understanding our current group of indie guitar artists.

Earlier this decade is where a not insignificant split occurs in the tone and lyrics of the guitar-based transatlantic rock tradition. Though they're both politically active, the difference between Eddie Vedder and, say, Thom Yorke of Radiohead isn't just one of tone, but of practicality: Vedder is a far-left liberal who believes in voting and, once upon a time, fighting corporate monopolies like Ticketmaster. As Yorke sings on *Kid A*'s "Idioteque," he counters that optimism from a bunker, laughing until his "head comes off," the ship sinking: "ice age coming / throw him on the fire...we're not scaremongering / this is really happening." For Yorke, the problem isn't reforming the system. For him, the system is the problem. This direction informed what paths new songwriters would follow. For the most part, the specific brand of '90s despair would transform from anti-politics to an excitable anxiety about the culture of climate change, resource wars, fear of terrorism, peak oil, and—until 2008—enormous wealth bubbles. As the music industry collapsed along with Lehman Brothers, the songs of Wilco and Neko Case were already popular downloads on college campuses. They were played with Vedder and Arcade Fire.

Among contemporary American singer-songwriter traditions, the old tradition of the folky political song has passed through its anti-political stage and found its way into another realm altogether: the odd and exciting genre that might be called "doomer" songs. Bob Dylan's "Things Have Changed," from the *Wonder Boys* soundtrack is perhaps one of the cornerstones of this genre. Although the beat is basically a frisky blues trance, Dylan's character culls together the best of the apocalyptic American beat-down bums that mumble stories all through his recent records. They sound like aged, aimless ex-ministers lurking around a Cormac McCarthy novel, prone to violence and out of weed. "People are crazy and times are strange," he sings, "I'm locked in tight / I'm out of range. I used to care / but things have changed." He goes on to catalogue a restless night of hot nightmares and last second desires: "if the Bible is right / the world will explode...feel like falling in love /with every woman I meet." There is nothing like this new-school millennial angst, so prescient in its fanatical rapture, to mark those early Bush years when kids threw bubble-wealth parties as American war planes bombed Afghanistan. This is the Dylan that can hang with Radiohead's *Kid A* and Arcade Fire's *Neon Bible*, which contains perhaps the ultimate "doomer" track of the decade, "Keep the Car Running."

And then there is Neko Case. Neko Case says that the characters in her songs "live between the world and history, or memory, they kind of fall between the cracks." Like Joni Mitchell, Case writes songs on *Middle Cyclone* that resemble her best work: torn-up lovers seeking spiritual solace in the morning cup of coffee, or from a speedy race up a country road in an old truck. Not unlike a doomer song, her characters are waiting for something big, but it's a big gesture from a long-lost friend, or a weird sign from the woods. On the upbeat song "This Tornado Loves You," she touches Guthrie and Arcade Fire at once: "I have waited with a glacier's patience / smashed every transformer with every trailer / 'til nothing was standing." These lines come out of an apocalyptic ecology that forces grid-crash in the name of some dark heart's desire. She is singing from the perspective of the tornado. It destroys lives as if it were sucking them to death as a necessary food: "I left them motherless, fatherless / their souls they hang inside-out their mouths / but it's never enough/ I want you."

For Neko Case, love can be perverse like this. The need for it hangs in the chest like the need for money. On the album's calm title track, she says, "Can't scrape together quite enough / to ride the bus to the outskirts / of the fact that I need love." A piano trickles through the song like a xylophone under water. Her character is desperate, vulnerable, and full of terminal insight. "It was so clear to me / that it was almost invisible," she croons. "I lie across the path waiting / just for a chance to be / a spider-web / trapped in your lashes / for that I would trade you / my empire for ashes / but I choke it back / how much I need love." It's a haunting song, but it makes you feel alive with longing. Her people are trapped by old desires for new bodies. As the only constant, desire becomes one's best friend. On her earlier and magnificent *Fox Confessor Brings the Flood*, her fans would instantly recognize the intense, sad recognition of its opening frame from "Hold On, Hold On": "the most tender place in my heart / is for strangers." This is a person addicted to the devil of unknown faces at parties, or in the street, and who claws through remote corners of foreign beds rummaging for him or herself in the dreams of post-laid sheets.

But Neko Case doesn't write doomer music. She writes about the gorgeous nomads sipping the sensitive moments recovered from that '90s anger. Her voice soars; it's awesome. Her music renovates old country houses. If music could go green, hers would. It plays in the holes of the continent where people grow vegetables in their garden and, like Michael Caine's stoned activist in *Children of Men*, they laugh and smoke pot in the tiny sustainable corners of their rural quarantine.

The record is best heard in this long context, because it unleashes the wistful acoustic interplay of the pianos, the guitars, and her voice. It's a rainy Sunday afternoon record. It doesn't have the impulsive charm of her previous work. It succeeds as an album and not as a collection of songs—there really aren't "singles" on it. To the extent she drops images of birds, car alarms, and teenage marriage, her voices seem crossed with moody memories of old farm towns and the regretful sighs of lovers three times the age of their first engagements. It's not nostalgia that animates the emotional dynamics of the record, but the sudden remembering of lost sex that burns in the mind: "you kept me wanting, wanting, wanting / like the wanting in the movies and the hymns." In this way, her songs are about loss; they communicate a desire that remains zealously hungry as the body shuts down. They are as smooth as lullabies. They're sewn together with riffs that wouldn't be out of place on R.E.M.'s *Out of Time*. This record is a minor piece of perfection from maybe the most poetic and impressive of this decade's songwriters. Ⓐ

theater REVIEW

Public Failures

▶ *The Bacchae* and *Othello* at the Delacorte Theater and at NYU's Skirball Center.

FRANK EPISALE

A great text, a major director, an accomplished design team, and a skilled cast performing in a beautiful outdoor theatre on a summer night in North America's cultural capital: By all rights, this should have been one of my favorite evenings in the theatre.

It wasn't.

JoAnne Akalaitis's baffling and deeply unsatisfying production of *The Bacchae* in Central Park's Delacorte Theater this summer misfired in almost every possible way. For weeks, I watched the Facebook status updates of friend after friend change from excitement and anticipation when they landed tickets to confusion and disappointment once they had seen the show. As word spread that the production was a clunker, tickets became easier to come by, and more and more of my friends and colleagues twittered their enthusiasm in the morning and their frustration in the evening. Instead of debating whether the production was any good, Graduate Center theatre students and faculty argued over what aspect of the production had failed most profoundly, and what the fundamental cause of the failure might have been.

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Arguably the greatest theoretical and practical debate surrounding Western theatre in the second half of the twentieth century centered on the clash between the ideas of Antonin Artaud (1896–1948) and Bertolt Brecht (1898–1956). The two serve up a lot of convenient binaries: a surrealist from France and an expressionist from Germany, both broke from the movements that nurtured their early careers, but for rather different reasons. Brecht's work became more and more aggressively political as he embraced Marxism, while Artaud was alienated from the Surrealists, in part, because of his refusal to join the Communist Party.

JoAnne Akalaitis

These biographical contrasts between Artaud and Brecht hint at the more central reasons for their place in theatre history, and the way in which they have come to represent two seemingly opposed points of view regarding what theatre is, what it should be, and what role it should play in the larger culture. As Brecht's political views came increasingly into focus, his ideas about aesthetics and emotions developed in tandem, leading to his notion of a dialectical "Epic Theatre," and his trademark "alienation effect." Artaud's work, on the other hand, remained aggressively, defiantly, apolitical. While Brecht sought to separate the elements of theatre, to disrupt emotional involvement, and to encourage the audience to be aware of themselves and their capacity to change the course of events, Artaud wanted the audience to lose themselves completely in a multi-sensory spectacle that would cleanse and even obliterate them.

These seemingly opposing poles of theatre aesthetics echo theories and practices from throughout theatre history, recalling rituals of possession and exercises of civic engagement in a variety of cultures. Friedrich Nietzsche famously asserted that both of these aspects of theatre, which he termed the Apollonian and the Dionysian, are essential to tragedy, claiming that the latter is too often overshadowed in a theatre that has become overly rational.

If ever a play demanded the presence of the Dionysian, it's Euripides's tragedy about Dionysus himself. Indeed, *The Bacchae* can be read as a warning against denying and suppressing Dionysian impulses. Unfortunately, JoAnne Akalaitis did not heed this warning. Nor did composer Philip Glass, who has been collaborating with the director (the two were also married at one point) since before either of them was famous. Oddly enough, in a publicity interview given to the *New York Times* before the show opened, Akalaitis and Glass both seem to understand what the show requires. They talk about the show needing to make sense "in your body" more than "in your head," that the play "defies rationality and defies explanation."

And yet this blood-soaked play of lust and drunkenness received a chaste and bloodless production that somehow felt too rational even as it made very little sense. Glass's music is a major component of this failure, his famously Buddhist brand of postmodern minimalism at stark odds with choral lyrics about ecstasy and abandon. The formidable Karen Kandel (Chorus Leader) struggled valiantly to bring some fire to the chorus but she and her compatriots were unable to break out of the stupor-inducing pulse of Glass's music. Choreographer David Neumann clearly tried to infuse the dance sequences with a sense of ritual, but was hampered by both the music and by costume designer Kate Voicc's orange-pink jumpsuits

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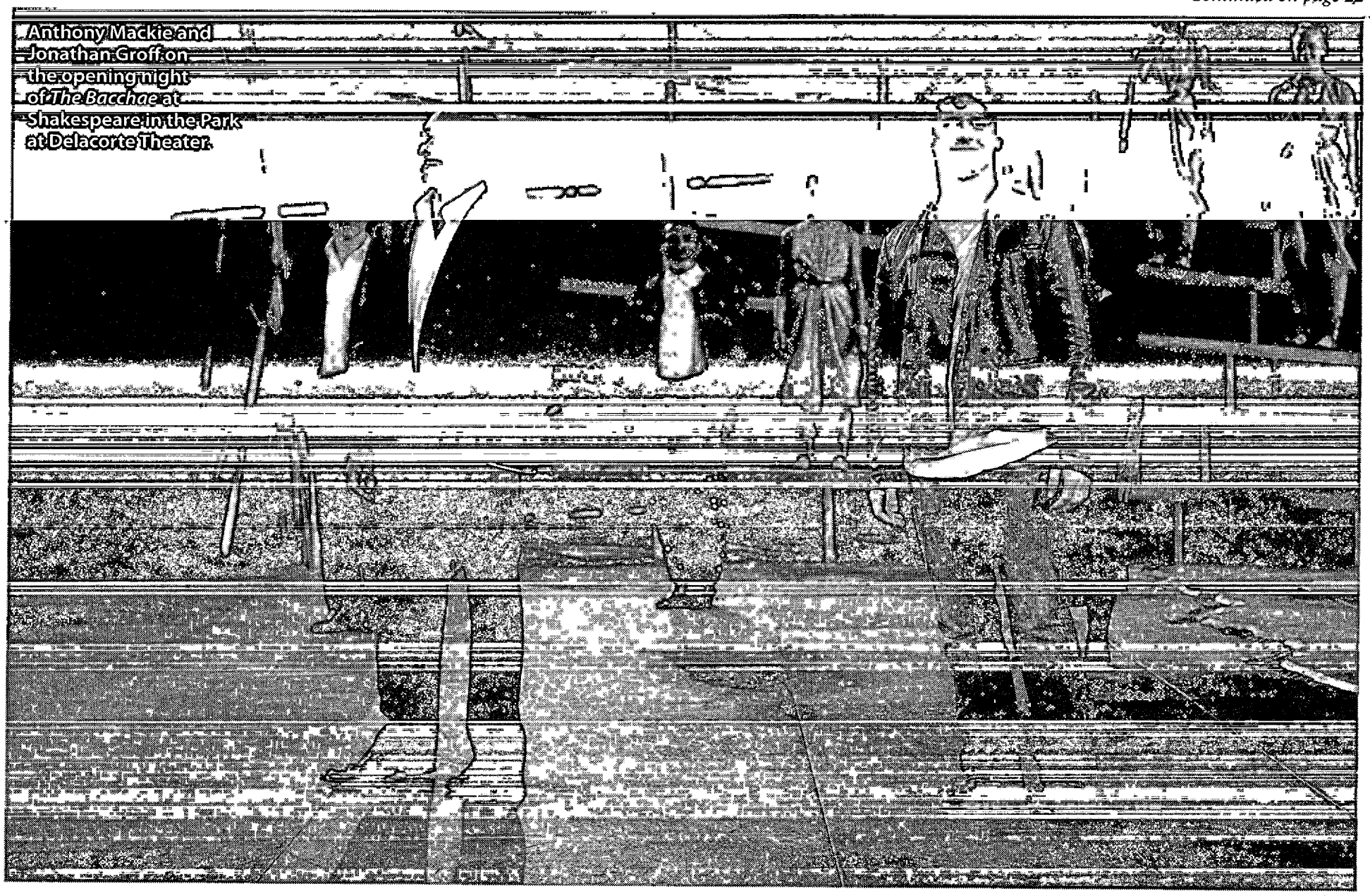


Anthony Mackie and Jonathan Groff on the opening night of *The Bacchae* at Shakespeare in the Park at Delacorte Theater.

film REVIEW

Films I Saw This Summer

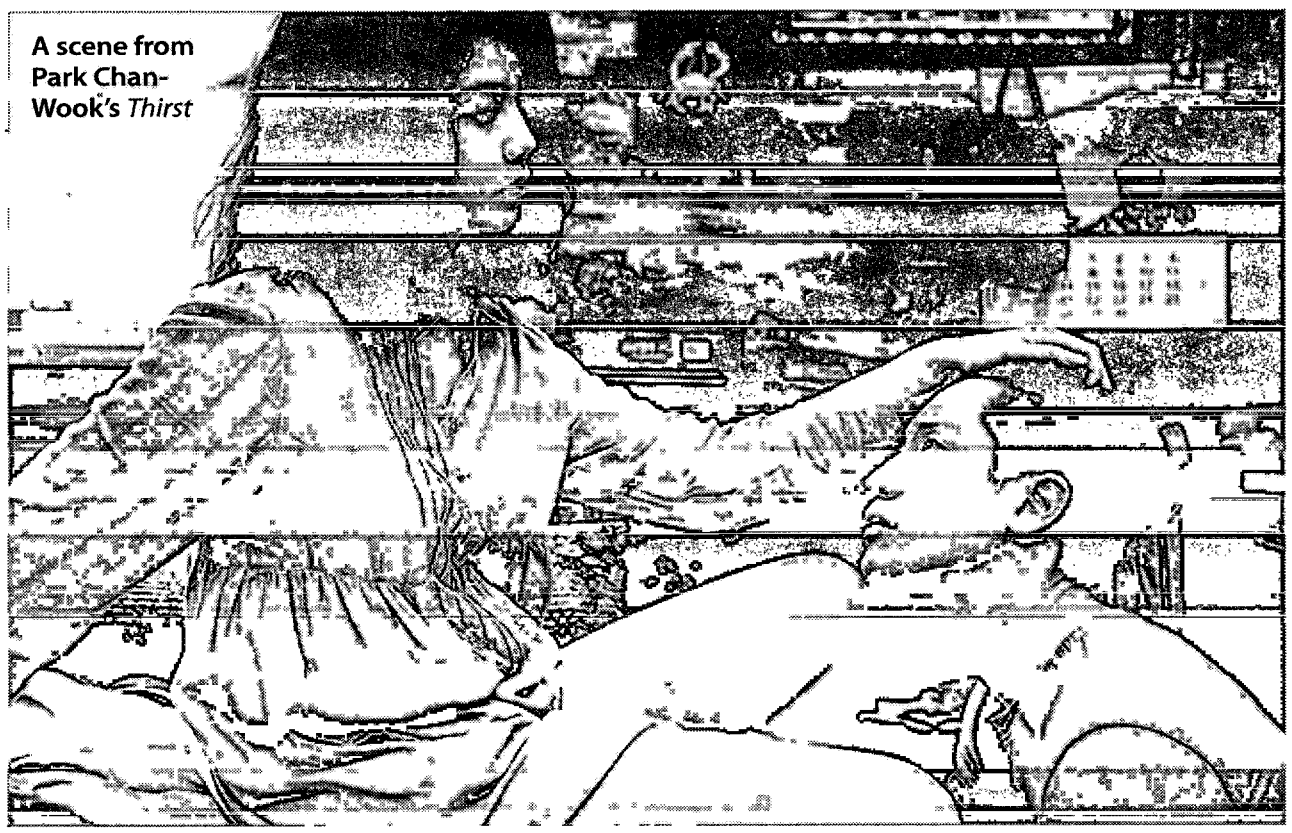
Arta Dobroshi in *The Silence of Lorna*

NICOLE WALLENBROCK

Thirst

With all the teen-vampire fanaticism, the foreign art-film take on Dracula might pass you by. However, Swedish filmmaker Tomas Alfredson's *Let the Right One In*, and the Korean Park Chan-Wook's *Thirst* are original romances where bloodlust is anything but skin deep. Park is best known for his vengeance triology, (*Sympathy for Mr. Vengeance*, *Old Boy*, and *Sympathy for Lady Vengeance*). In these films, characters who are subjected to violence become heroes when they retaliate with elaborate murder schemes. One suffers through gore in his films' first half, but the conclusive proof of justice is in fact more blood and pain. Eventually, the carnage becomes more delicious than disgusting, for it is all bloodshed in the name of fairness.

The plot of *Thirst* is primarily shaped by Emile Zola's *Thérèse Raquin* (1867). However, Park sets the naturalist French novel in modern day South Korea, and uses vampirism as a metaphor for the novel's tragic, addictive love affair. Perhaps Park's most inventive touch was to transform Zola's Laurent, a gambler who can no longer afford the brothel, into the upright priest Sang-hyien (played by Kang-ho Sang, who also played the lead in Park's 2002 breakthrough film, *Sympathy for Mr. Vengeance*.) The film openly references Robert Bresson's 1951 classic *Diary of a Country Priest* as Sang-hyien explains his struggle to suppress sexual desire in a voice-over while vigorously writing in a journal. The priest punishes himself by whacking his penis with a wooden stick when it becomes erect. When this does not suffice, he participates in a dangerous medical study in South Africa. There, ignorant doctors infect Sang-hyien with the vampire virus through a blood transfusion. When he returns to Korea, his sexual desire for Tae-joo (Ok-viri Kim), the wife of his sickly childhood friend, engenders a new obscene desire for human blood.



A scene from Park Chan-Wook's *Thirst*

The sex scenes between Ok-viri Kim and Kang-ho Sang are reminiscent of the best of David Cronenberg and Catherine Breillat, exploring passion from both perspectives with animalistic flare. The sniffing, sucking, licking, and biting, is as audible as it is visual; in a particularly sensuous moment Sang-hyien gives two long strokes of the tongue to Tae-joo's clean pale arm pit. The film is reliant on their chemistry, as their addiction to blood and to each other spawns the jealousy and torment that become their ultimate downfall. Kang-ho Sang's striking good looks make him the seductive vampire, while his awkwardness and inconsistent righteousness demonstrate his character's contradiction. As in *Sympathy for Lady Vengeance*, Park transgresses gender roles to make the female a force to be reckoned with: Tae-joo intermingles her desire for blood and her desire for revenge on her in-laws. Ok-viri Kim as Tae-joo shows timing and character development, from a shy and needy young woman to a bold vampire selfish with hunger. Blue costumes and white powder aid her transformation into a shining ravenous imp.

The violence of *Thirst* is not as startling as Park's best films, and the CGI that normally ties scenes together, at times appears too animated (Tae-joo's and Sang-hyien's bouncing from rooftop to rooftop resembles early Nintendo.) Yet the characters' complexity and strength, and the modernization of the nineteenth century storyline, render *Thirst* a fascinating chapter in the recent frenzy for vampires. Park Chan-Wook couples the actors' intensity with self-awareness, directing a film that is as tragic and true as it is humorous.

The Silence of Lorna (Le silence de Lorna)

The Dardenne brothers, Luc and Jean-Pierre, first won international attention in 1996 with *La promesse*, a film that dealt with Belgium's clandestine immigration and which showcased the acting debut of the then fifteen-year-old, Jérémie Renier. Five films later, the Dardenne brothers are still exposing the misfortunes of immigrants and the extremely talented Jérémie Renier—now 28 years old. However, as the title indicates, this film is Lorna's story, a young Albanian

Sam Rockwell and director Duncan Jones preparing a scene for *Moon*.

immigrant, expertly played by Arta Dubroshi. Lorna immigrates to open a snack bar in Belgium with her boyfriend. However, her path to citizenship has been paved by an international crook that arranges marriages for foreigners. Junkies are ideal for citizenship marriages, as they accept a small amount of cash in exchange for a ring, and usually die of an overdose within a year. Claudy (Renier) complicates the plan when he sincerely cares for Lorna and attempts to come clean. Lorna's boss wants to force his overdose, and Lorna feels utterly responsible for Claudy's life.

The inverse of Hollywood production, the Dardennes' superb realism is captured with a single camera, natural lighting, and brilliantly honest performances. Even in a secondary role, Jérémie Rénier proves his commitment to performance. Flushed and emaciated, Renier forces us to sympathize with the complexity of addiction. Dubroshi's restrained expressions and blank stares convey Lorna's internal conflict in the film's first half. Eventually, Dubroshi exhibits Lorna's conundrum with self-utterances and a fearful demeanor. *Le silence de Lorna* follows a social-realist tradition that comments on the unjust world; frequent shots of money affirm its unwavering importance, and Lorna's final situation is the outcome of a long struggle to succeed in Western Europe.

Recently at an opening of a festival of their work at the Walter Reade theater I met Luc Dardenne. When I asked him why the brothers always chose to make features about poverty and the underclass, he responded, "because traditionally the poor are on the sides of the frame, in the corners. We want to place them in the center."

Hump Day

It might surprise viewers to know that the writer/director of *Hump day* is a woman. Lynn Sheldon's independent feature is almost exclusively about men, and the awkward line where homosexuality and homosociality meet. Ben (Mark Duplass) is a newlywed happily contemplating the prospect of children when his wild college buddy, Andrew (Joshua Leonard), shows up at his door. Soon after, Andrew finds a party of non-conformist artists and invites Ben along. Late in the night, after untucking his shirt and bong-toking, Ben agrees to participate with Andrew in a home-video porn festival, Humpfest, claiming it is part of a larger statement of artistic integrity, straight men having gay sex.

What begins as intoxicated party babble, begins to take shape as a possible venture. The men question the project's symbolic value; for Andrew it will mean the completion of a project, for Ben it will prove he is larger than his current lifestyle's suburban values. Still, both men refuse to directly confront what their desire to participate in Humpfest might suggest about their sexuality. Lynn Sheldon teases the question, and makes every glance between the men questionable. This ambiguity looks to trouble the traditional audience's expectations of male friendship, and satirizes the typical buddy flic. Nevertheless, the film is wrought with the purest cinema comedy, straight men pretending not to be...or perhaps, the reverse.

Moon

Much of the buzz surrounding *Moon* was due to the director's famous rock-star dad, David Bowie. Indeed, it seems the apple does not fall far from the tree when it comes to mythologizing outer-space. Bowie, aka Ziggy Stardust, starred as "the man who fell to earth" in Nicholas Roeg's 1976 film of the same name and his son's debut continues where his father's space lore left off.

A script that draws on themes found in *2001* and *Solaris* further enhances this nostalgic return to a bygone era of sci-fi. Sam Rockwell plays Sam Bell whose dualism lies in more than his role's true-to-life first name. A lone technician who sends masses of fuel from the moon to earth, his sole conversation mate is his computer, Gerti (Kevin Spacey), who responds to Sam's need for human interaction with dead-pan comic relief. When a crash occurs, and Sam Bell recovers to be awoken by his doppelganger, a competition ensues; who will be the real Sam Bell, Sam or Sam? Rockwell's performance seems incredibly human, especially when his character(s) struggle with the concept of not being so. The film retains some optimism where it might have spiraled into dystopia and is likewise an auspicious debut for its director, Duncan Jones. Ⓐ

Theater Review

Continued from page 20

that looked like something MC Hammer might have worn on a trip to Indonesia, or to a screening of Berry Gordy's *The Last Dragon* (Michael Schultz, 1985).

Jonathan Groff, both miscast and misdirected as Dionysus, was less wine than wine cooler. Akalaitis's decision to direct her young star to play a petulant adolescent plotting revenge for a perceived slight may have seemed clever at first, but the pouty teen never gave way to the vengeful god. Groff, who exploded onto the theatre scene in back-to-back roles in *Spring Awakening* and *Hair*, is a charming and heart-throb pretty performer, but was out of his depth here. The audience was never given a glimpse of Dionysus's power, the presence and influence that had supposedly driven all of the city's women into a days-long fit of drunken passion. Groff was not alone in his struggle. Accomplished actors from André de Shields (Teiresias) and Anthony Mackie (Pentheus) to Joan Mackintosh (Agave), all turned in lackluster performances in roles that should have allowed them to shine.

One actor did manage to escape the shackles of this failed production. As the messenger who has to deliver the news of Pentheus's horrific death, Sisto gave the evening's only memorable performance, a precisely calibrated monologue that communicated both the character's anguish and the actor's prowess. It is not coincidental that there was no music underscoring this scene. After Sisto's monologue, the show had to pause to allow for enthusiastic applause. The audience was grateful that, for a few minutes, the director and her design team had gotten out of the way and let the actor and the text do their job.

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To Akalaitis's credit, *The Bacchae* was not overlong. At about ninety minutes, the production was only slightly longer than it would take to read the text of the play aloud. The same cannot be said for Peter Sellars's four hour-plus *Othello* now playing at NYU's Skirball Center. I was fortunate enough to receive free tickets to the show's dress rehearsal so I can't write a full review (the press opening isn't until well after the deadline for this article) but because the show has been in development for so long (it enjoyed a brief run in Vienna this past June) I doubt it will change much before the review embargo is lifted.

Ponderous, self-indulgent, and too long by half, this production unfortunately obscures its several good ideas by drowning the action in lethargic, navel-gazing pauses that simply don't work for an uncut Shakespeare text. Elizabethan plays had lots of words. A pause, a silence, should be a big deal, and carry a great deal of weight. In this production, however, there are so many weighty sighs and silences between and within lines that the genuinely important pauses, those that might shed some light on Sellars's take on the play, are lost in the shuffle.

Philip Seymour Hoffman, who almost always brings a little too much Eeyore to his stage roles, is particularly lethargic as a depressive and insecure Iago (a vision of the character that could have been interesting but is mostly boring here). John Ortiz is a strong and intriguing Othello, but too often seems as if he is trying to carry the show by himself, spurring his scene partners to pick up the pace. This is too bad, because Sellars successfully complicates the race and gender issues of the play in a way that could have been genuinely provocative if there were some sustained energy at work. Often accused of over-conceptualizing and politicizing his productions, Sellars is relatively subtle here, perhaps too much so. The hinted-at connections between geopolitics and identity politics, between sexual jealousy and professional jealousy, are intriguing but underdeveloped. The couple of scenes that do sparkle stand in stark contrast to those that drag unnecessarily.

The Public Theater, which coproduced *Othello* with LABrynth Theater Company (the Public also produced *The Bacchae*) normally has a generous student ticket policy. Student discounts for *Othello*, however, are only available to NYU students. If you have a friend at NYU who can get you a reasonably priced seat, that's great. If you're going to have to pay full price, don't bother. Ⓐ

The Bacchae (closed) by Euripides, translated by Nicholas Rudall. Directed by JoAnne Akalaitis; original music by Philip Glass; sets by John Conklin; costumes by Kaye Voyce; lighting by Jennifer Tipton; sound by Acme Sound Partners; soundscape by Darron L. West; dramaturg, James Leverett. With: George Bartenieff, Sullivan Corey, André de Shields, Jonathan Groff, Karen Kandel, Joan MacIntosh, Anthony Mackie, Steven Rishard, and Rocco Sisto.

Othello by William Shakespeare. Directed by Peter Sellars; set by Gregor Holzinger; costumes by Mimi O'Donnel; lighting by James F. Ingalls; music and sound by Robert J. Castro. With: Julian Acosta, Gaius Charles, Jessica Chastain, Liza Colon-Zayas, Saidah Arrika Ekulona, Philip Seymour Hoffman, Leroy McClain, and John Ortiz. September 12–October 4, 2009. NYU Skirball Center (586 LaGuardia Place). Call 212-352-3101 or visit publictheater.org

A New Era Dawns for the DSC

A New Start

As you know, this year started off with the biggest payroll fiasco that we've seen to date. And, as student representative and student advocates, we in the Executive and Steering Committees of the Doctoral Students' Council have responded as quickly as possible. We have met with many different levels of administrators, trying to work out a coherent account of what went wrong when no coherent account was available. And we have worked with the tireless coordinators of the Adjunct Project, Renee McGarry and Alison Powell, to help disseminate this information and provide you possible solutions if you didn't get paid.

And we must also thank the Bursar, Ab Abraham for the countless hours of unpaid overtime that he put in so that he could process paycheck advances for those students who didn't get paid. If you do have any unresolved horror stories, please email them to us so that we can help (dsc@cunydsc.org).

Here are the DSC people who have already started and will continue to work for you this year.

New Leadership

First, **Suzanne Tamang** has replaced Gregory Donovan as the new Co-Chair for Student Affairs. She comes from the Computer Science program. Last year she served on the Steering Committee and on the Graduate Council's Committee for Structure. We're glad to have kept her around.

Shawn Rice has stepped into Rob Faunce's old office, Co-Chair for Communications. You will undoubtedly get way too many emails from him this semester regarding things that we hope you find informative, relevant, and useful.

Chris Sula returns for his second shot at the Co-Chair for Business. Over the summer, we all appreciated Chris' energy and dedication: he spent most of his summer trying to catalog and make sense of all of our financial records dating back to 1991. He hails from the Philosophy program.

Ally Foster from the English program consented to remain in her position as the University Student Senate Representative. We all admire the endless patience that she has to remain in this position.

Jill Belli, also from the English program, is serving her second term on the Steering Committee.

Anick Boyd from the Comparative Literature program has become a new Steering Committee member. You might know her in her alternate capacity as the "nice one" from the registrar's desk.

Kyle Ferguson, also from philosophy, spent his summer training chimpanzees at a lab in Louisiana, and now he happily serves on both grants committees.

Kim Libman is also a fresh face on the Steering Committee. She is from Environmental Psychology where she studies urban food environments and plans to bring her expertise to work for us as she now chairs the Health Issues Committee.

From Anthropology, **Christine Pinnock** has returned to the steering committee for a second term and keeps us all mindful that some Graduate Center students are often in the field or stationed in labs not at 365 Fifth Ave.

Jared Simard, a representative of the Classics program, is starting his first term on the Steering Committee. He aims to make student participation in program governance easier and more transparent.

We hope to do many things this year. We hope to convince facilities to put in more electric plugs around the building to keep up with the number of students who want to use their laptops for more than two hours at a time. We plan to act as student advocates by trying to ensure that students have adequate representation within their programs. And, as usual, we plan to fight hard to expand the Travel and Research fund.

Emergency Loan Fund and Dissertation Fellowships

Last years' DSC did a few things that were under-publicized but deserve much credit. The first is that they created four new dissertation fellowships to be distributed across the major fields in the Graduate School. They also contributed a large amount of money to an emergency loan fund, and their donation was matched by a generous alumnus. The emergency loan fund is meant for students in times of crisis, be they crises brought about by a sudden change in financial aid status or, perhaps, an employer failing to pay on time. Lastly, they also earmarked monies to try to make the ever-precarious and always underfunded Travel and Research Grant program more stable.

Free Legal Advice

In the last weeks of the summer, in late August, the Co-Chairs had an idea to start offering free legal services to students. We didn't think that we would be able to realize this idea until at least the spring semester, but we asked the CUNY School of Law if they have any training programs for their students to provide legal advice or other services.

The dean then pointed us to the Community Legal Resource Network, a group of CUNY School of Law graduates who have banded together to provide affordable legal services for those who normally wouldn't be able to afford them. The CLRN already had relationships with Baruch and Queens Colleges, and so we were able to use the same structure and network for the Graduate Center.

Now, since the first day of the semester, we have free legal advice available for you one day a week, alternating between afternoons and evenings. Sign up for an appointment on the DSC website (www.cunydsc.org), or stop by for a walk-in appointment.

New Website

Over the summer, we redesigned the website so that we could streamline the process of many of our services. For instance, to enter the locker lottery (for lockers in 5409 and 5414), one used to have to fill out a paper form and drop it off by our office. Now you all received an email with a link to simple web form to sign up for the lottery. (Un)fortunately this worked well, which is a testament that paper forms are so 2002.

We received 291 locker requests, up from 110 the year before. That shows that we made the process easier, and, in turn reduced the chance of any person getting a locker from 54% to 21%. We'll now work on getting more lockers.

Similarly, we have moved old paper systems to the website, like Room Requests, Check Requests, Grant Applications, and Legal Appointments. You can also see all of the events going on in 5414, 5409, and 5489 by clicking on the reservation calendar on our website.

We've also started posting short updates on an almost-daily basis, which get fed into our Twitter (www.twiter.com/cunydsc) and Facebook (www.facebook.com/cunydsc) pages. So far, posts have included announcements about important meetings and funding opportunities, as well as reminders about services we provide. They were also crucial in getting the word out about the payroll crisis.

Please, Get Involved

We will work for you, but we'd rather work with you. Please, bring us your concerns. If you're having trouble with services on the campus and don't know how to address them, come talk to us. If you don't like what we're doing send us an email (dsc@cunydsc.org), or better, come talk to us in person, or even better still, come to one of our meetings and address the DSC as a body. We are here to represent you, and we can't do that well if we don't know how you need to be represented.

Also, come unwind with us at our parties. This semester, we'll be throwing a Halloween Bash (costumes optional). The party will be a few days before the holiday, but we can celebrate anyway (October 23rd @ 8pm in room 5409). We'll also have an end of the semester party to help you blow off steam. That one is on December 11.

Plenary Meetings

Plenary Meetings (all are in 5414 and start at 6pm):

- Septemer 25,
- October 23,
- November 20,
- December 11.

Professor Watts Arrests Cop for Loitering Outside the Graduate Center

MATT LAU

Late last week, "The Diogenes of Midtown," GC professor Jerry Watts, made a citizen's arrest of an NYPD patrol officer outside the Graduate Center. Many are calling it the astonishing and unlikely sequel to America's most famous racial-profiling incident, the arrest of Harvard professor Henry Louis Gates in his Cambridge home earlier this summer.

After receiving a few complaints from his students that an officer had been out in front of the Grad Center building in excess of thirty minutes on Wednesday afternoon, Professor Watts arrived on the scene to investigate.

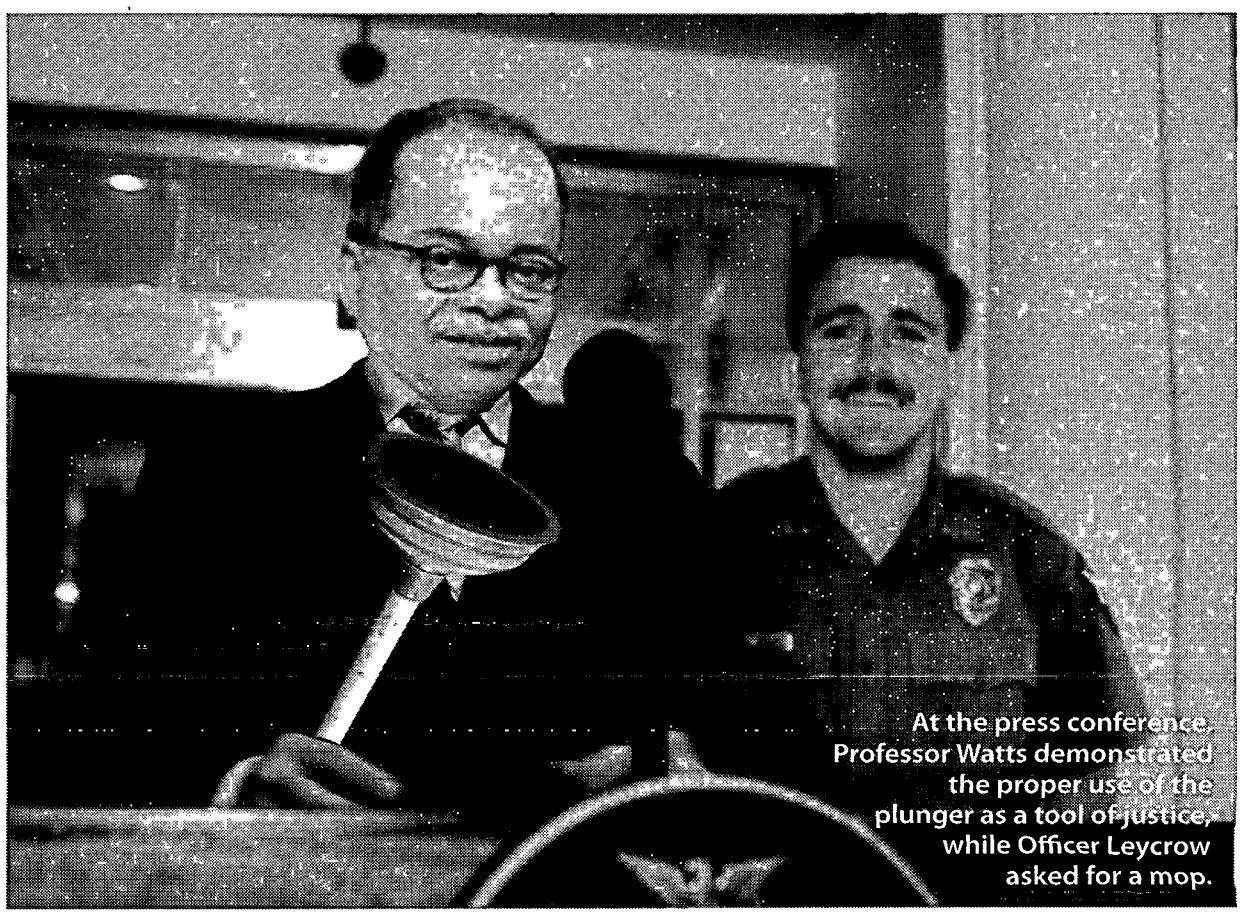
"I WAS SUSPICIOUS BECAUSE I REMEMBERED THERE WAS AN AFRICANA STUDIES GROUP MEETING ABOUT TO START, BROTHER," said Professor Watts. "WAS HE GOING TO CHECK TO SEE IF THEY HAD A PERMIT FOR ALL THOSE DRUMS? WAS HE LOOKING TO TRY OUT HIS NEW FIREARM ON ANYONE WHO TURNED THEIR BACK ON HIM? BOTH SEEMED PRETTY LIKELY, BROTHER."

When Professor Watts approached the officer and began questioning him, Officer Leycrow became enraged and indignant. "Do you know who I am?" witnesses reportedly heard him rhetorically asking Professor Watts. "I am an NYPD officer! You have no right to question me."

"SHIT, BROTHER," said Professor Watts, whose aura of negritude was like kryptonite to the befuddled officer, "YOU MIGHT AS WELL HAVE INSULTED MY MOMMA AS TOLD ME THAT. I'M FROM A LITTLE TOWN CALLED FRESHOFFACOPSASS AND YOU MAKING ME HOMESICK."

Like many a haughty academic before him, Officer Leycrow was paralyzed with fear from even a short exchange of words with Professor Watts. Unfortunately, Professor Watts mistook Leycrow's immobility for defiance and felt he had no choice but to arrest him.

"WHAT ELSE WAS I SUPPOSED TO DO?" Watts asked me the next day. "THERE I WAS LOOKING AT THE SCARIEST, WHITEST COP I'D EVER SEEN. YOU KNOW WHAT WOULD HAVE HAPPENED IF I'D TURNED AROUND AND WALKED AWAY? HE PROBABLY WOULD HAVE FIRED FIFTY ROUNDS, BROTHER. AND MAYBE ONE OF THEM WOULD HAVE HIT SOMETHING. I COULDN'T RUN THAT RISK, BROTHER."



At the press conference, Professor Watts demonstrated the proper use of the plunger as a tool of justice, while Officer Leycrow asked for a mop.

The New York State Fraternal Order of Police has accused Professor Watts of brutality for holding the officer in the IRIDAC office on the 7 floor for hours before dropping the people's charges against him.

But Watts feels he was doing the officer a favor. "HE URINATED ON HIMSELF OUT OF FEAR, BROTHER. I FELT KIND OF BAD ABOUT THAT. I WAS ONLY JOKING WHEN I TOLD HIM I WAS GOING TO GO GET A PLUNGER. THEN I DIDN'T WANT TO RELEASE HIM UNTIL HIS PANTS HAD DRIED, BROTHER."

At a news conference on Friday, President Obama weighed in on the controversy. "I believe Professor Watts, by arresting a patrol officer for patrolling, in other words, for doing his job, acted stupidly. I mean, what would happen if all my fellow African-Americans went around preemptively arresting every police officer they thought was about to brutalize someone?"

Obama, suddenly reflective, paused to consider the answer to what he'd just asked.

"I TELL YOU WHAT WOULD HAPPEN, BROTHER," said Professor Watts, who emerged miraculously on stage next to the President. "BROTHERS AND SISTERS EVERYWHERE WOULD BE A HELL OF A LOT SAFER."

When I asked Professor Watts whether he would participate in Beer Summit II, he had this to say, "I DON'T THINK SO, BROTHER. THE WAY OBAMA'S HANDLING HEALTHCARE, HE'D PROBABLY MANDATE THAT I HAVE SOME WATERY BEER I DON'T LIKE AND THEN MANDATE I PAY HIM TEN DOLLARS FOR IT. MEDICARE FOR ALL! IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE." Ⓐ

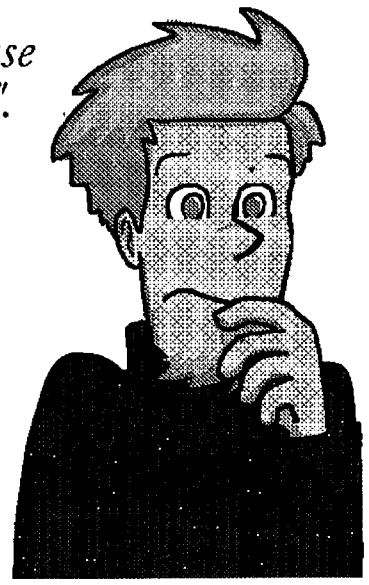
ph.d. comics BY JORGE CHAM

Post hoc vs Post-Doc

The Post hoc Fallacy

To incorrectly assume "A" is the cause of "B" just because "A" preceded "B".

e.g. "All Professors have Ph.D.'s, therefore getting a Ph.D. means you'll get a Professor job (right?)"



The Post-Doc Fallacy

To incorrectly assume you'll have a job just because you have a PhD.

e.g. "Now what??"

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