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Joyce Carol Oates, the Figure Behind an Invisible Voice

Author, playwright, poet and Princeton professor visits Bard for the world premier of new play and to share some insights

by **emily schmall and fran iariado**

A reader can sense a thin, barely perceptible yet vital presence in the works of Joyce Carol Oates. Adorned in a long black sheath, she drifted into Olin 301 soundlessly. She quickly became animated however to the surprise and delight of a room full of ambitious young writers, talking about her life and craft.

Like her appearance, Oates's literary voice is never dominating, but rather serves as a passive influence on all her writing. "Stories are about voices. You pick one voice that you want to stay with," she said. She defies the glamorized image of the popular and successful writer on all accounts.

Oates clearly does not want her voice to lie in the shadows. When asked about her narrative style, she encouraged the class to write in the first person, saying "It's so much more elastic. It allows for accessibility and directness." This was not the only advice she gave to the many young writers at Bard. Students curious about her prolific amount of writings and constant stream of production were given an unexpected response. In reference to her lengthy novel *Blonde*, Oates said that in today's society, long novels come at a price to the writer.

Describing how she had been entrenched in depression for months on end, Oates may have effectively deterred some who had considered a

career in writing. "When I turned from page 999 to 1000, I thought I'd entered into an abyss of complete madness. I felt I was drowning." She divulged of her insights before speaking to the school and public about her recently written play, "Dr. Magic."

Invited by her friend and colleague Professor Bradford Morrow, Oates came to see the production of a play she had written especially for Bard students.

The Princeton professor, author, essayist and playwright Joyce Carol Oates witnessed the world premier of "Dr. Magic." The play was performed by Bard students, directed by Claire Titelman and was set to music composed by Sergei Chavnin. Only given a week to rehearse, the play was cut exactly to half of its original length. What remained of the piece was enough to shock the audience with the tension and disturbing subject matter it presented.

A couple from New Jersey celebrates their anniversary by volunteering as subjects of hypnosis at a magic show. Soon entranced by the guiles of Dr. Magic, the angst and dissatisfaction in their marriage is revealed. The most striking moment of the play is one in which the husband circles his wife madly, using a device to electrocute her whenever she fails to answer the extremely personal questions driven to her by Dr. Magic. Oates asked to what extent we have



Oates explaining the cover of *Faithless: A Transgression* (March, 2001), which was an editor's decision. "I was a little stunned. Can one be a little stunned?"

free will. She did this by showing that a loving couple could be turned against one another by the manipulations of a stranger.

However, as is often the case in the writer's work, Oates inserted her personal experience to end the play on a hopeful note. Believing that there are such things that can overcome all madness and insecurity, the writer concludes with the couple embracing, having been able to defeat Dr. Magic's ploy by the strength of their love.

Like many of her works, Dr. Magic provokes ethical discussion, although Oates says that this is not her reason for writing. According to the author, her works stem less from a need to speak on issues than they do from a personal reaction to what she sees as controversial. Speaking about a writer's social responsibility, Oates said, "There is definitely an ethical component [to the writing], but I wouldn't say that I write because of that. It's more like an emotion."

Despite her unprecedented literary success, public admiration and critical acclaim, Oates is surprisingly unpretentious. While many writers characteristically despise any critic, Oates embraces hers. "I'm somebody who finds that a challenge to my authority would be very interesting, a challenge would be useful to learn something more."

She is also very aware of her own frailties as a human being. Candid about the agony of the writing process and her insecurity and self-doubt as a writer, she continues tirelessly with a sense that she has yet to reach the height of her potential.

Responding to a student's question of how to recognize that a work is done, Oates said "If I thought I hadn't fully realized the material, I'd keep on writing." It seems that she applies this mentality to other aspects of her life too.

She could not decide which was better—running or dancing—and says that she often longs to have the muscular legs of a twenty-year-old so that she could exercise all the time. This admission also served to humanize the writer by showing that she spends time outside the den of her mind and her work. Though the perplexed glances around the room showed that Bard students generally do not share in her enthusiasm for physical activity, the applause she received stepping down from the stage showed their decisive enthusiasm for the writer and her literature.

New Club Works as Unit of Defense

Bard students take on unjust laws of Native American communities in upstate New York

by **sarah knox**

Bard's new Native American Club, still in its infancy yet full of passion and ambition, is intent on raising awareness about the mistreatment and discrimination of Native Americans. Their primary concerns at present are the atrocities being committed against the people of the Oneida Territory. The consortium analyzes the issue from all angles, trying to understand the complexity of the situation and suggesting different possible civil liberty suits that could be employed effectively.

The club's president, Taun Toay, says that his foremost goal is to "create interest and involvement in Native American issues that are normally overshadowed by mainstream media." He is interested in extending the initiative beyond the bounds of the club, and making the effort towards social change with respect to Native Americans a community concern.

The club has begun its involvement in the issue perhaps most familiar to Bard students: the battle to maintain land for Native Americans on the Oneida Territory just east of Syracuse. Several of the club's members are already very much involved in this particular case, and their knowledge and experience on the topic is a great addition to the club's plans for further action. The Oneida tribe consists of roughly fifty inhabitants that

occupy a thirty-two acre territory. The tribe is being ruled over by the dictatorship of one man, Ray Halbitter, who was raised on the territory, attended Harvard, and who upon returning to Oneida was democratically elected

by his people as their leader. However, Halbitter has abused his power and taken on his own plans to drive the Oneida people off of their land and replace their homes with a housing complex. In the process of his despotic quest, Halbitter has established an unforgiving "nation police" force to prevent opposition, and has deemed the existing housing uninhabitable and therefore fit for demolition.

Due to the fact that they live on specifically designated land, Native Americans have different rights than most citizens of the United States. The people of the Oneida Territory have not been able to appeal to the court system or turn to the US law for support, much to the convenience of the government that wants nothing to do with them. Because of the vagueness of the legality of the situation, the Oneida people have no one to turn to for help.

The Native American club plans to get involved by continuing their visits to the territory. They hope to raise awareness of the issue by gaining media coverage, so that not only the Bard community gains awareness, but also the general public and ultimately the government. They feel that within the nature of the case lies a serious potential for civil liberty suits, and that with enough attention brought to the situation they can help to establish rights for not only the Oneida people but eventually for other Native Americans facing similar problems in other parts of the country. Toay feels that "there is a strong interest in civil action and activism within the group, which I encourage to the utmost." Their ambition might prove to take them far in this noble cause.

Brockopp Responds to Denial of Tenure

by **tom cannavino**

Religion Professor Jonathan Brockopp received an unexpected blow this summer from Ludlow: his tenure was denied. The Islamic maven has recently answered the verdict with a formal grievance that involves The American Association of University Professors and Bard's reputation within Islamic academia at large.

Professor Brockopp alleges that there were certain formal and substantive violations in the evaluation of his tenure case. Brockopp states that faculty evaluators failed to collect oral testimony from students before December 1 and that the Faculty Evaluation Review Committee, the highest faculty committee with the most power in making tenure decisions, was improperly constituted. The original committee for 2001-2002, included Professors Karen Sullivan, Amy Ansell, Burt Brody, and John Pruitt, who were elected by members of the faculty within their divisions, and John Ferguson and Carol Ockman (as alternate), who were elected by the faculty of the entire college.

When Karen Sullivan stepped down, the languages and literature divisional chair appointed Franz Kempf as a replacement without holding an election in accordance with normal proceedings. Amy Ansell also stepped down and the Social Studies divisional chair waited until April to appoint Sanjib Baruah as a replacement, also without holding a standard election. In both cases, Carol Ockman, the intended alternate, was ignored.

The grievance procedure is not an appeals process; tenure can never be granted as a result. The three-member grievance committee might, however, decide to make a binding decision that Professor Brockopp's tenure case be formally reexamined. Two of the three grievance committee members have already been named: Stuart Levine and Ethan Bloch.

Among Brockopp's concerns is the integrity of academic discourse here at Bard, which, according to Brockopp himself, is "a basic presumption of respect for one another as professionals, which means taking

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American Foreign Policy

by kate crockford

In an Age of Dishonesty

Bush administration hawks and the right-wing Likud government in Israel publicly declare that Saddam Hussein is a lunatic who aspires to destroy Israel and possibly even deploy WMD (weapons of mass destruction). The former assertion may be true; that Hussein has funded violent Palestinian organizations in support of the intifada is a commonly accepted fact. The latter statement, however, is laughably far-fetched and yet has recently, due to repetition, become a virtual axiom in "official" British and American rhetoric. But unfortunately for Bush, Blair and their comrades, there are no facts to support that conclusion.

Many studies and reasonably trustworthy experts (e.g. Scott Ritter, one of the last UNSCOM weapons inspectors to serve in Iraq, and incidentally a card-carrying Republican and former marine) have recently come out, supported by first hand experience or well-researched facts, and declared these accusations baseless. Advocates of war have belittled many of these sources. Thus this author, hopeful to convince those who believe what comes out of the White House to be true, uses information obtained from a moderate, government agency to support the following arguments.

In its October 2002 publication entitled "Iraq's Weapons of Mass Destruction Programs" the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) concludes: "Saddam probably does not yet have nuclear weapons or sufficient material to make any."

*. President Bush, however, in one of his softest and least specific condemnations of Hussein's purported WMD programs, stated on October 7, 2002: "We all agree that the Iraqi dictator must not be permitted to threaten America and the world with atomic weapons." Apparently President Bush does not consult with his own intelligence forces. Realistically, he is probably attempting, through spreading misinformation, to muster up a farcical just war cause in order to rally the American public behind a war that has much more to do with realpolitik than with concern for the safety of Americans or Iraqis.

Regarding agents of biological warfare, another front from which the President seeks to launch his good vs. evil campaign, the CIA document concludes that "[Iraq's] capability was reduced during the UNSCOM inspections and is probably more limited now than it was at the time of the Gulf war". So why now? The administration was correct to assume that

a fearful population, preyed upon after experiencing tragedy of grand proportions on 9/11, would vote Republican in the recent election. The administration is extremely clever; not only does war talk a year after the atrocities win them control over the House and Senate, it also comes at a time when Americans are ready to take chances in order to assure their personal safety. (This author will not

entertain at length suggestions of a link between the terrorists who hit New York and Washington and the Iraqi regime; White House officials have quietly admitted that, while they tried, they cannot prove ties between al-Qaeda and Iraq exist.) In other words, the time for war, any war, is now.

It is important to briefly consider the geopolitical sphere in order to provide context and possibly raise new considerations concerning possible real motivations for a war in Iraq.

Specifically, it is relevant to contrast Hussein's capabilities with those of its somewhat hostile neighbor, Iran; it necessarily widens discussion pertaining to motivations for war, and illuminates the dark corridor of contemporary political rhetoric, allowing us a glimpse of the behind-the-front realpolitik driving this administration:

According to Eric Margolis of the *Toronto Sun*, "Iran is expected to produce a few nuclear weapons within five years to counter Israel's large nuclear arsenal, and is developing medium-range missiles, Shahab-3s and -4s, that can easily reach Tel Aviv." Iran's "growing industrial base" and relative wealth in comparison to impoverished Iraq is rightly viewed as a threat to Israeli military dominance in the region. Many upper-level Israeli government officials recognize Iran, not Iraq, as the potential threat.

Shaul Mofaz, the newly appointed defense minister in Israel, has threatened to attack Iran's nuclear installations. These stark and yet unsurprising comments precluded an ominous statement by prime minister Ariel Sharon that went entirely unnoticed in American newspapers. Sharon revealed Israel's interest in an attack on Iraq when he told the Israeli press that he would call for an invasion of Iran "the day after" Iraq is defeated by the Americans.

of such a situation are obvious: control of two of the most powerful, oil producing, OPEC nations in the Middle East would ensure American hegemony to an even greater extent. Saudi Arabia, a powerful OPEC nation, and once a "friendly" state, has begun to irritate the US government and the US is

siles. Iran is a different story.

Iran has the technology to produce WMD and the capital to support production. Thus the real threat is Iran and not Iraq. Declaring war on a sovereign state not in violation of security-council resolutions is difficult, however, and thus the White House and the Israeli government must get troops into the region using different means; they must use the war in Iraq as a cover.

Having done a reasonably good job of convincing the American public of Hussein's menace, the Pentagon will be able to send massive amounts of troops and weaponry to the region. The US government cleverly avoids confronting the American people with the truth about its ultimate aims. Indeed, this prediction paints a sorry picture of contemporary politics and official policy. Unfortunately, if we are serious about our endeavors and consider the consequences of war we realize that it is much worse than simple government

dishonesty.

The next important question we must raise is this: what is the White House willing to risk in order to sustain and extend worldwide hegemony, a goal explicitly stated in the recently released document "The National Security of the United States"? White House rhetoric continuously harps upon its undying allegiance to freedom and democracy while its actions and intentions imply that it is willing to risk the lives of millions, including American service people, in order to augment the wealth of a handful of elites. A war on Iraq will translate into dire consequences not only for Iraqis, but also for American soldiers, their families, and the taxpayers who support it all.

A study entitled "Collateral Damage: The Health and Environmental Costs of War on Iraq" was recently published by Medact, the British affiliate

of the Nobel Peace Prize winning American organization, Physicians for Social Responsibility. The study examines the impact of war on agricultural production, food and water supplies, waste treatment centers, transportation and the effects on the environment, among other things.

Bob Schaeffer is spokesman for the latter organization's Massachusetts branch. "We're saying that

there'll be a very large short-term impact and an even more profound longer-term impact," Schaeffer said. "The report uses the word 'human catastrophe' even if it does not escalate to the level of poison gas, civil war or nuclear weapons." He reports estimated casualties at a low of 50,000, possibly reaching 250,000.

The danger a war in Iraq poses for American service people is equally frightening and deplorable. Gulf War syndrome, a debilitating disease tens of thousands of American veterans have developed since serving in the early nineties, is thought to be the result of exposure to depleted uranium, a radioactive element used by the US military for the first time in missiles and bombs dropped on the infamous 11 mile stretch of highway in Iraq now called the 'Highway of Death'. Iraqi and many western doctors agree that the chemical has caused an increase in cancer and birth defects in the country. If sent to war, American soldiers will fight in the same perilous conditions because the radioactive material's potent danger has a half-life of a million years. Numerous Gulf War veterans advocacy groups, predictably ignored by the government and silenced by corporate media outlets, have warned against an invasion and denounced the government's disregard for the welfare of its own fighting forces.

Thus, a war on Iraq, arguably only a destructive means employed en route to the ultimate goal of invading Iran, is immoral for numerous reasons. War in Iraq is immoral in terms of the inherent disregard for the lives of Iraqi citizens, who have been through enough misery due to sanctions, and for American servicemen and women, who do not need cancer any sooner than nature demands. War in Iraq is a waste of money: Pentagon figures estimate the cost at somewhere around \$200 billion for the invasion and \$40 billion a month after that, excluding what it will take to rebuild the civilian infrastructure in a thoroughly destroyed geographically immense state. Americans do not have adequate health care; many have none at all, and our education system fails many of our children.

For these reasons, and—a myriad of others that are not addressed in detail herein (including the effects of economic sanctions, suspicious ties between White House officials and weapons manufacturers, the fact that the US supplied Hussein with most of the weapons he has and the chemical warfare he used on the Kurds, the repercussions of a US-controlled Middle East in terms of human rights, and the possibility of peace for the Palestinians and Israelis) war on Iraq is irresponsible. History will remember the Bush administration's endeavors into the Middle East, exercised dishonestly and recklessly, as a destructive foray we can optimistically hope turns out to be less substantial than the foreign policy catastrophe during the sixties into Vietnam.

(Don't forget: coming soon to a television near you—pundits yelling about the danger Iran, not Iraq, poses to the American people.)

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White House rhetoric continuously harps upon its undying allegiance to freedom and democracy while its actions and intentions imply that it is willing to risk the lives of millions, including American service people, in order to augment the wealth of a handful of elites.

US hawks in the White House have similar designs for Iran. Betting on the eruption of an Iranian civil war between hostile ethnic groups amidst the chaos created by a US invasion, the hawks are drawing up plans for a second, newly installed puppet regime in the region. A "friendly" regime in Iran would ensure American supremacy in two of the most strategically important states in the region. The implications

Israel's military and weapons systems are extremely advanced; it also has the world's wealthiest and most powerful nation to back it up under any and all circumstances. Israel has the world's most advanced anti-missile system, Arrow, with two batteries operational, and numerous batteries of the latest U.S. Patriot missiles in place. Iraq, however, possesses next to nothing in terms of long-range mis-

'Hearts and Minds' Revisited in Time of War

The Free Press talks to filmmaker and journalist Peter Davis at the re-release of his film at Weis Theater

by **kent johnson**

Last Monday, filmmaker Peter Davis presented the DVD re-release of his award-winning film on the Vietnam War, *Hearts and Minds*, in Bard's Weiss Cinema. The film, which received the 1975 Academy Award for Best Documentary, was shot over the course of two years (1972-1974) and was one of the first to show the Vietnamese side of the conflict. It was inspired by a personal interest.

"I, myself, wondered why we went to Vietnam in the first place," said Davis, referring to he and his crew's initial confusion at what they wanted to convey through the film. "Every scene in this film addresses that question, why, and what did it do to us?"

Although the film presents a wide range of interviews, from conversations with General William Westmoreland, Former Secretary of Defense Clark Gifford, and Daniel Ellsberg, to unrelenting patriot and former POW George Cukor, embittered G.I. Randy Floyd, and Vietnamese civilians, *Hearts and Minds* is unabashedly against the Vietnam War. Davis juxtaposes disturbing clips from Hollywood war films, pro-Vietnam speeches from four presidents from Eisenhower to Nixon, and deadpan accounts of bombing raids from American G.I.s, with the haunting cries of Vietnamese who lost their homes and families as what American government officials termed 'collateral damage'.

Davis's agenda is hardly restrained, but political figures like Westmoreland and Cukor seal their

own fate with statements like "Orientals just don't place the same value on life as we do," (Westmoreland) and "Vietnam would be a beautiful country, if it weren't for the people..." (Cukor). The film takes its title from Lyndon B. Johnson's famous assertion that "the ultimate victory will depend on the hearts and minds of the people who actually live out there."

Although short on time, Davis granted the Free Press a brief interview after the screening:

F.P: What was the initial response to *Hearts and Minds*?

P.D: The response from the public to *H & M* was very intense, both pro and con. Those who were moved by it wrote or spoke movingly about it, particularly Vincent Canby who was the highly articulate film critic for *The New York Times*, and who praised the film enthusiastically. Those who disliked it, including some on the left who felt I had no real 'program' for change, were equally intense in the other direction. I remember the viewer from *Time Magazine* was dismissive, saying I should have "left Hell enough alone" and that I loaded the dice far too much against government policy. One theater in Connecticut was trashed by members of the American Legion. And so on.

And your own reaction?

P.D: Gratitude and surprise, sur-

prise that the film created the stir it did. My own feelings upon the completion of the film itself could be summed up in one word: relief. I never thought I could get through it. The film took two years, which took forever.

What about funding and distribution?

P.D. The film was 'unconsciously' paid for by Columbia Pictures, through a small independent film company called BBS, which was headed by Bert Schneider, who had a six picture contract with Columbia. When Columbia saw *H & M*, they refused to release it. But Bert rounded up a group of investors to buy it from Columbia and turn the film over to Warner Brothers, which did release it. The release was held up a few weeks by a lawsuit from Walt Rostow, who managed to obtain a temporary restraining order on the film. Lawyers from both sides argued before a judge, who at length said he wanted to see the film. As he walked out of the screening he was heard to say, "A picture really is worth a thousand words," and the next day he cancelled the restraining order, which meant the film could be released.

What were the biggest obstacles you faced in the actual making of the film?

P.D: The hardest part of making *H&M* was going to Vietnam, which frankly frightened me, and then later, being confronted with 200 hours of film, which also scared me because I didn't think we'd ever be able to con-

struct a coherent film from the mass of footage. The hardest part of working in non-fiction film, this is probably true of fiction film as well, is raising the money to make the film you want to make. In the case of *H&M*, the money actually came to me, in the form of an offer from Bert Schneider, an executive sent from heaven. One can't expect that kind of lightning to strike twice. The most difficult thing in journalism is simply keeping one's eye on the ball, not allowing the distractions of either ideology or snow jobs from officials to take you off course from making the best and truest report you're able to write or film.

What is it like for you to see these images again, over 25 years later?

P.D: Seeing it again reminds me of war's horror, period. I suppose the emotional impact changes over time, but I'm the last person to judge that, since the film still speaks to me of war and its terrible consequences, of policy that leads to death, of policy-makers who do not understand the inevitable pain and loss their policies lead to.

Peter Davis is also the director of "The Selling of the Pentagon," a film that exposes the Defense Department's use of propaganda in Pro-Vietnam War promotion films, and "Middletown," a "cultural anthropology of one American life in one town in the Mid-West."

The Didactic Exchange of Red Hook ESL

Bard Anthropology student explores the human aspect of language instruction in Red Hook

by **kate grim-feinberg**

Last Thursday evening, while many Bard students were on campus studying, I was in Red Hook teaching English to Kinpo, a Tibetan monk. At the other end of the table, Megan Ennis worked with Toni, from Peru. Throughout the room, six other Bard students and community members taught English to about fifteen adults. Since the Red Hook ESL Center opened last May, we have had students from El Salvador, Mexico, Columbia, Greece, Korea, and China, in addition to Tibet and Peru. I started the ESL Center last semester as my Trustee Leader Scholar (TLS) project, out of an interest to get to know people who live in our community but are isolated by a language barrier. As a student of anthropology, this experience has been particularly valuable to me.

It hardly seems a well-rounded education to spend your semester on campus locked up in a room reading and writing. I can read about people in Africa and the Caribbean all I want, but I won't really understand anthropology until I go out into the community and get to know the people around me. This is where it ceases to be a "study" and becomes meaningful action. My dad, an anthropologist, always explained to me that anthropology is the study of people. What a fascinating concept, that we, simply by virtue of being people, are worthy of study.

But the study of people is not a study of people in the way that geology is a study of the earth and psychology is a study of the mind. The point is not to pick people apart and examine them and find a scientific explanation for how they function. The point is to bring people together, to dissipate the fear of the "other" by getting to know one another as human beings. The moment you objectify another human being, you take away that individual's humanity, and what is left has nothing to do with anthropology. In order to study a person, you must let that person study you. You must let someone into your life and let yourself become entangled in theirs.

Last semester, fifteen students in Melanie Nicholson's course, *The Hispanic Presence in the United States*, completed an ESL teacher certification program with Literacy Volunteers of America (LVA), and taught weekly English lessons to Spanish-speaking people in the area. At first, many of us wondered if teaching would put us in hierarchical positions. We had the knowledge that they needed. But did we really have all the knowledge? They knew plenty about this community and this country and this world that I had never dreamed of. And this sneaking suspicion that they really knew much more than me was frightening. How could I sit in a room in the

midst of my parent-funded college education with someone the same age as me who left his mom and his dad and his schooling in another world two years ago to travel thousands of miles with hardly any money, risking his life to cross the border, making his way through a strange land to Red Hook, New York, on the faith that his cousins would be here and he would find a house and a job that pays enough to make it all worth it? And how could I presume that I was the one with the knowledge?

Inspired by a highly successful ESL drop-in center ran by LVA in Poughkeepsie, I spent a great deal of last semester making the necessary connections to set up a similar center in Red Hook. Pastor Kenneth Jetto, along with the board of St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church at 7420 South Broadway in Red Hook, offered the church's parish house to us every Thursday evening. After recruiting several community volunteers, we opened the doors of the Red Hook ESL Center three weeks before the semester finished. Maggie Gray and Carolyn Rodewald, two community members who helped me set up the center, served as administrators over the summer. When I returned in the fall, the student population had grown from three to thirty on some days, and the project had been featured in a Poughkeepsie Journal article. As a drop-in center, people come when they can, and although many students

and volunteers are consistent, there is a new dynamic every week. Parents can bring their kids for childcare as well.

Fifteen more Bard students were trained in ESL instruction this semester, and we hope to offer another workshop in the spring. Volunteers, like students, are welcome to come whenever they can and need not make a weekly commitment. The center will be open in January and over the summer, regardless of Bard's schedule, so any interested students who will be here over breaks are encouraged to volunteer. Students who are not certified in ESL are welcome to help with childcare and assist trained tutors. Please contact us if you are interested in next semester's ESL certification workshop.

The ESL Center is open every Thursday from 6:00-8:00pm at St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church Parish House and Chapel at 7420 South Broadway in Red Hook. The parking lot is behind the church, off of Fisk St., which is the first left on S. Broadway after the traffic light in the center of Red Hook. A car pool leaves from in front of the Old Gym at 5:40 every Thursday, and returns around 8:30. Contact Kate Grim-Feinberg at 752-4520 or kg287@bard.edu, or Emma Ferguson at 752-4551 or ef224@bard.edu.

Brockopp Tenure Denial

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the time to thoroughly research professors' scholarship and teaching, and to represent colleagues in an honorable fashion."

Brockopp also claims that he received virtually no criticisms at his first and second evaluations at the College and that even Michèle Dominy, Dean of the College, had served as a faculty evaluator and as a classroom visitor during his previous evaluations. A puzzled Brockopp stated that Dominy's opinion "presumably changed in tenure evaluation."

In the tenure evaluation, Brockopp was accused of offering narrow courses with respect to methodology and geographical coverage. He claims that he finds it "shocking" that this judgment was made, "particularly because my courses cover a huge range within the Islamic world and include the psychological, anthropological, philosophical, and sociological study of religion."

One of many issues that confound the case is the role of September 11. According to Brockopp: "The faculty realized that September 11 really shouldn't play any role in the evaluation of a professor of Islam," but the President "both in private meetings and in the letter of denial" made reference to September 11. When asked whether September 11 changed anything in the evaluation of his tenure application, Professor Brockopp somberly replied, "Yes—and that's deeply disturbing."

Administrators have been quick to defend their decision. President Botstein, in the usual laconic vein, stated, "In the course of normal business, in the process of evaluation, one-third of candidates do not get tenure. [Brockopp] is entitled to believe that he deserves tenure, but it was a judgment call, and he did not."

Now, Professor Brockopp finds himself looking for another job, and according to many of his colleagues, he will be hired rather quickly by another college or university. A. Kevin Reinhart, a professor at Dartmouth, writes: "For a scholar at this stage in his career his publishing record is exemplary. He has published in a wide variety of scholarly journals and collected works, all of them of the first rank. . .Jon has authority. He knows what he is talking about. He reads widely in both Euro-American and Islamic-language scholarship. He can handle pre-modern texts with convincing ease, and he reads and converses with contemporary Muslims and can convince them of his knowledge as well." Furthermore, David Powers, a professor at Cornell, claims, "Over the course of the past decade, Brockopp has emerged as one of the most distinguished young scholars of Islamic studies in the United States."

Gerhard Bowering and William A. Graham from Yale and Harvard respectively, also express sentiments of great surprise that

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SOA: A Memoir

by **jon dame**

The School of the Americas, a military training institute in Georgia, was recently "replaced" by the so-called WHISC, or Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation. Although some of the curriculum has changed to give a few token classes on human rights, the purpose and nature of the school remains the same. The army cynically thought that this essentially cosmetic name change would deflect some of the public outcry against the school. But not even the most sophisticated PR will deter those who want to shut down the school of the Americas, or SOA. They have a staggering body of evidence, thirteen years of protest, and the faith, conscience, and outrage of hundreds of thousands on their side. The demonstration against the school just gets bigger every year. This November I had a chance to witness this storied protest with twenty other Bard students.

The Logistics of Protest

The protest aside, the major task of the weekend was simply getting everyone down to Georgia and learning to operate as a group. The good folks at Kline hooked us up with all manner of bagels, bread, cheese, vegetables, granola bars, Snapple, a five-pound bag of pretzels, etc. Not-nuggets, somehow, were neglected, but many of us could not have afforded the trip without these free provisions.

We had to forgo our obligations, classes and all, to leave on Thursday night; the trip would ultimately last four full days. First we had to drive non-stop, taking the wheel in shifts, and arrive in Georgia twenty-four hours later. You haven't taken a true road-trip until you've traveled with twenty kids in two Econo-line vans loaded to the gills, navigating through Jersey traffic, and stopping for lots and lots of bathroom breaks. As well as meeting some incredible radicals and activists, the weekend also afforded us a tour of some of the greatest truck stops in America.

Arriving in Columbus, Georgia, home to Fort Benning, which houses the SOA, we found ourselves beat tired in a drizzling rain. Although we had planned to camp out for our lodging, the group of us ultimately wimped-out and rented a couple hotel rooms. The trip was, after all, a full day's work without having to set up camp and sleep in soggy tents. So instead we rolled out our sleeping bags on the floor of a hotel room, and convened for the first of one of our many group meetings.

Although most of my fellow demonstrators were not members of the Student Activism Committee, we tried to operate on that group's system of consensus. This meant frequent circle discussions and group decisions instead of executive leadership. Although some compared this patient process to the trust games at summer camp, consensus decision-making was, like enduring a marathon van ride, a necessary forfeit to make the trip work.

The Lessons of Rebellion

Saturday was the day of rallies and workshops. In the morning we bussed ourselves around to seminars and trainings in different hotel conference rooms. I attended the student caucus, which was several dozen college kids trying to establish national days of protest in a spasm of organizing that was restricted to an hour-long meeting. I thought it was a little hasty, but it was encouraging to see so many concerned students from all across the country. Many of our group members went to the peacekeeper's training, and returned with semi-official-looking yellow armbands. Peacekeepers are trained in conflict de-escalation by the SOA Watch, to help keep protests from becoming violent or confrontational. SOA Watch, the non-profit that organizes the opposition to the School, emphasizes non-violence as crucial to the vigil, and has maintained a flawlessly peaceful protest for its entire history.

After the morning's workshops, we headed off to the gates of Ft. Benning itself for the Saturday rally. This meant passing through the police metal-detector and backpack search perimeter of the event. Being scanned by metal detectors just to get to a rally was a violation of our constitutional rights protecting us from unreasonable search, and each demonstrator that passed through told the officers, in speech or in writing, that they submitted but did not consent to the search. We're talking about a protest that has never once



Soldiers patrolling Putumayo, Colombia. Photo by Gary M. Leech, www.colombiareport.org.

friendly about not consenting. Saturday's rally featured the usual procession of political speakers and emotive musicians I've come to expect from these events: many of them amateurs, but some truly inspiring. While one folk songstress crooned about the usual love over greed deal, a gravel throated blues strummer ignited the crowd with his

... people of the activist persuasion tend to run in the same circles, our collective path through life is narrower than we sometimes assume.

energetic "Corporate Scandal Blues". There was also a authentic Andean music troupe who thrilled everytime they came on stage.

We could walk up towards the fenced-off gate of the fort, and stare

rally. I received a red headband and a matching protest flag as part of the "Resist" group within the parade. It was our job to walk before a massive red puppet, chanting Argentinean protest songs and occasionally charging forward, yelling at the top of our lungs à la Xena. Other sections of the performance were the blue "Hope" protesters and the yellow "imagina-

tion" marchers and samba drummers following around a big sun puppet. The folks running this whole deal were your average radicals: better at building paper-maché puppets than at organizing hundreds of people into a parade. But as usual, from the chaos emerged inspired performance: the entire parade was accompanied on stage by music and the stories of the recent Argentinean rebellion, the first time a country has ever defied the IMF. The crowd cheered us again and again as we marched around drumming on pots and singing.

Gathering back at the vans just before dinner-time, we all concluded that we did not need any more camp food, but some really greasy Chinese food at the end of a long day. We found a gaudy looking Chinese place and gorged ourselves on the buffet, sharing food amongst those who could not afford the bill. After that it was off to the Safety and Orientation session, held at a local rented-out

theater by the SOA Watch. As we filed into our seats I recognized a shaggy red-haired figure already seated. I stopped and extended my hand to him, causing him to look up, but still not recognize me for a moment or two.

Suddenly he grabbed my hand and embraced me, laughing. It was Jim Moore, one of my old radical friends from high school, on a trip to the SOA from Beloit College. We were

both in happy disbelief that we had run into each other here. The Deep South, after all, is not where you expect to see your old buddies from rural Maine.

But my expectations would not stand. Later that evening I was back in the same theater for the SOA Watch salsa dance party, and ran into yet another Maine acquaintance. I could barely recognize this man who walked by me, because in the five years since we'd last met I'd become a foot taller than him. But nonetheless, there was Noah from my U.U. community church. I'd scarcely begun talking to this guy when a young woman walks up who had apparently come down on the same trip as he from Kalamazoo College. That's right, another familiar face. This one was one of my sister's best high school friends, Megan. The situation was getting ridiculous.

Yet, perhaps not as strange as I thought. Truth be told, people of the activist persuasion tend to run in the same circles, our collective path through life is narrower than we sometimes assume. I'd be more surprised if I didn't meet up with one of these folks again, at one cause or another. For people of conscience, it's a small world after all.

At that night's safety and orientation session, we were explained the format of the protest and given sober warnings about the risks of crossing the fence. Last year's demonstration had been the first to face a barbed wire fence in front of the gates of the fort. This had cut down significantly on the number of protesters crossing and had coincided with increased penalties for those who did. Last year, first time offenders had been given jail time for trespassing on the base. Any one of us who skirted around or under the fence could be handed three months in prison and a five-thousand-dollar fine. That's pretty intense. Although many of our group, including myself, had been seriously considering risking arrest this year, almost all of us decided against it after this meeting. The one student among us whose conviction to cross held was Alea, a soft-spoken, unaffected 17-year-old from SUNY New Paltz. She would be arrested the next day.



Demonstrators hold crosses bearing the names of people allegedly murdered by members of the SOA. All photographs courtesy of www.soa.org.

in its thirteen years become violent or destructive, and they wanted to take away our 4th amendment rights so we could exercise our 1st. The search was most likely designed to limit the flow of demonstrators onto the sight, and although it was upheld the day before in district court, the SOA Watch legal team will be challenging the decision in appeals court. For the record, the officer who searched me was nice enough, and said everyone who had passed through that day had been

over to the soldiers and federal marshals that stood watch behind. They shifted around anxiously, watching the protest from behind mirrored glasses. "Come on guys," I thought, "at least try not to look like a cliché."

Later that afternoon I wandered over to the "Puppetistas" puppet parade rehearsals. These were open to anyone who wanted to march around with a sign as part of a performance for the rest of the

Solidarity Seems a Chilling Experience

Sunday morning came after another pleasant bout of sleep on the floor of a hotel. As had become our pattern, we were a little behind schedule getting to

Although the air was brisk that morning, it was not for the weather that I found myself shivering again and again.

the protest site that morning. We arrived about 10am, just in time to see the Indigo Girls take the stage. We weren't watching the event stage however; we were focusing on getting ourselves outfitted for the vigil march. Many of the group clothed themselves in trash bags, with duct-taped writing on the front. Most of us wrote on our faces with marker: peace and anarchy signs, doves and crosses, etc. We also carried banners and bouquets of roses improvised out of aluminum foil. It all sounds pretty ridiculous, but we fit right in at this protest.

All around me I was amazed by the variety of demonstrators. Commenting on the ease of the march, our group leader Emily had once remarked that "this is a protest designed for people with hip-replacements." Indeed there were senior citizens everywhere you looked, from new retirees to octogenarians in wheelchairs. But there were also high school and college students, punked-out anarchists, Christian missionaries and young parents with their children. This was a uniting issue if I had ever seen one.

The vigil started at 11am and

Each time that présenté was sung out, another row of ten demonstrators would start walking slowly toward the fenced entrance to Ft. Benning. These groups would cross the official federal property line, approach the fence, and place memorial objects on it. We had a fairly good spot in line, but by the time I reached the gates myself, walking alongside the twenty students from Bard, the fence was already carpeted in pictures, signs, ribbons, and thousands of white crosses. Each small cross bore the name of a victim of one of the SOA massacres. There were also signs, coffins, crosses, etc. placed among the landscaped shrubbery in front of the gate. Here, also, there was a die-in and many had sat down to meditate silently. The space in front of the gate had been completely transformed into one of creative mourning and protest.

I had also arrived at the fence just in time to glimpse, through the chain-link, the first of many demonstrators to walk onto the base and volunteer to be arrested. She was a nun, no less than 70 years old. As I walked away from the gate area, to make room for



Protesters line the gate at Fort Benning as military personnel looked on. Those who crossed were promptly arrested.

turn on the stage, and the Puppetistas had another successful parade performance. I spent a lot of time looking around the information tables, as there were plenty of pamphlets, books and bumper-stickers to peruse. There was also an entertaining exhibition by the so-called Radical Pink Hot Block, anarchists dressed in pink and leather. Their demonstration included playing United-Nations-spin-the-bottle, for political reasons that were hard to discern, but they get props for creativity. I also took plenty breaks back at the van, usually to grab something to eat out of the back. Each time I left the protest area, I passed by the small but amusing counter-protest, basically consisting of a couple dozen locals dressed in patriotic colors, celebrating "God Bless Fort Benning Day." I applaud them for their willingness to stand up for what they believe in, but I am mystified why they thought it appropriate to blast Salsa music on their sound system during our vigil for the massacred of Latin America. Only in the U.S.A.

When we finally met back up in late afternoon, the only information we had about Alea was the report that none of the arrested would be arraigned until the next morning. Unfortunately, with the student action committee already almost out of funds, we could not keep the vans an extra day, but she would receive other transportation back to New York. So, reluctantly, we all packed ourselves back into our vans, and took to the road north.

Upon Reflection

I could write much more about the trip from there to here, including our stop at the friendliest restaurant in Georgia, Waffle House. But the short of it is, one day later, almost to the minute, we pulled into Kline parking lot. After eating fast-food and granola bars for four days, we were grateful, for once, to get ourselves a hot meal at Kline. Laboriously we unloaded and cleaned out our vehicles, and

then we had one last group meeting, and the obligatory group hug, before we dispersed.

That was my trip, for what it's worth, to the School of the Americas's protest in Columbus, Georgia. I made a lot of new friends, of every kind and caliber to be found at Bard. I also learned a lot about group dynamics, and about seriously creative resistance. Yet, as unique and valuable as this protest experience was, activism around the "School of the Assassins" cannot be merely an annual event. I encourage anyone who wants to know more about the SOA to contact one of those who went down to the event, this year or previously.

There are countless problems and injustices in U.S. foreign

policy. But the School is unique because it is a leverage point for public demonstration on these issues. Most U.S. foreign policy abuses are abstract concepts like military aid, sanctions, covert-operations etc. But the SOA is a real place, functioning right here on U.S. soil, guarded by the police and staunchly defended by the military. And it can be proven by a staggering pile of evidence to be a training ground for assassins, despots, and terrorists. If we can show the injustices perpetrated and continuing in Georgia, then we can expose the unholy nature of the entire U.S. military-industrial complex, including the violence inherent in the advance of capitalist globalization. Now that'll be a trip.

If we can show the injustice perpetrating and continuing in Georgia, then we can expose the unholy nature of the entire U.S. military-industrial complex...

went as follows. Four singers took the stage and started reading off the names and ages of those Latin Americans known to be killed by graduates of the SOA. Soberingly, at least half of the persons listed were younger than twelve years old. The singers intoned the names and ages, alternately in English and Spanish, as a Catholic priest would sing a Latin prayer at Mass. Each name was read patiently and rife with emotion, reminding us that each of these souls lost was tragically important. After each, the crowd of thousands would intone back "Presenté" and raise a hand or a cross in the air, to indicate that this person was present with us this day. All else was hushed or silent. This went on for over four hours, there were simply thousands of names to be read.

Although the air was brisk that morning, it was not for the weather that I found myself shivering again and again.

others to proceed in, I moved down an open road to the right to follow the next group of activists who would skirt around the fence. Among these was our friend from SUNY New Paltz, Alea. I watched as the group of them marched leisurely through a small patch of woods, past a line of soldiers, leading back to the central area behind the gate, where they were patted down and had their hands restrained with plastic ties. It was all very calm and serious, but still an odd site to see non-violent citizens arrested for simply walking onto a federal base.

All in all, 96 people crossed the fence and were arrested for trespassing that day. Ten more than last year. Perhaps more importantly, over ten-thousand demonstrators crossed the property line as part of the vigil march, a massive showing.

After this the day wore on; there were plenty more speakers and folk singers taking their

...continued from page 3

Brockopp was denied tenure. Omid Safi, a professor at Colgate, goes so far as to claim that Brockopp's tenure denial "has sent shock and disbelief through the whole Islamic Studies community." In spite of his strong support among colleagues, Brockopp is concerned that this tenure denial will make it more difficult for him to find a new job in academia. Furthermore, regardless of his new position, the tenure clock and salary scale will be set back to square one.

But perhaps the most shocking result of this tenure denial is not the effect it will have on Brockopp, as a professor, but the effect it will have on Bard as an institution. Omid Safi comments, "The denial of tenure to Professor Brockopp has so tainted the view of many scholars of Islam about Bard that many of the brightest recent Ph.D.s have decided (and have been advised by their advisors) to stay away from an institution that would deny tenure to such a teacher-scholar. I know this to be a fact."

Where's the Old Gym?

The past three issues of the *Free Press* have included a series on the history of the Old Gym from the perspective of students at this college. The fourth and final chapter of this history will not appear in these pages but in a zine that will include the entire series, from 1896 to the present. The zine, *A Student History of the Old Gym*, will also feature pictures from the past 80 years of student activity and an essay on Bard administration's current plan to tear the building down. This essay will incorporate the ideas of William Morris (1834-96) the English poet, artist, and socialist reformer, who fought for the preservation of old buildings in the 19th Century, forming an organization called the Anti-Scraps. The zine will be published before the end of this semester so keep an eye out for it. *Matt Dineen*

music reviews. music reviews. music reviews.



• ToniO Hubilla [TH] • Alex Cannon [AC] • JW McCormick [JM] • Tosh Chiang [TC] •



A listen to any one of the lyrical, poetry-driven songs on Mecca Normal's tenth album assures you that whether or not this experiment in beat rock is something you can get close to, one thing is certain; Mecca Normal are having fun. And they'd have to be after over twenty years together, if this underground duo weren't still getting their own rocks off, first and foremost, then we wouldn't have this album. From the twisted, surprisingly un-deadpan delivery of "What About the Boy?" to the gagged, unformed words that make up "In January," Mecca Normal are committed to doing their own thing and frankly it rocks. Which is not to say it makes you move, not to say that it snares you with hooks, not to say that it's always as mellow as the album's first song, the rather sweet welcome-to-the-human-race ballad "Is This You?" If the band were consigned to any of the above, they'd hardly be the highly literate independents that they are. Singer (and sometimes chanter) Jean Smith's poetry is neither the dripping, placid entity that too many female vocalists with a similar aesthetic attempt, nor is it the howl of a punk priestess along the lines of Patti Smith or Lydia Lunch. Instead it is a free-flowing plea, an unpretentious confessional stream of familial loss, insight, and a recurrent sense of belonging someplace at last, even if that place is in the hollow of your own daydream. If you must have comparisons, "Ice Floes Aweigh" name checks both Margaret Atwood and Joni Mitchell and it's a pretty damn good statement of aesthetic, if that what it's meant to be (though perhaps Laurie Anderson fans should also take note).

The easiest criticism to make of the band is that they are too vocally driven, too preciously deep at the expense of music. It's true that Jean's partner David Lester is less concerned with pushing his guitar into your head and more concerned with crafting ornate musical shadows on which Jean can inscribe her tough voice. This is probably the determining factor in whether or not you can get comfortable with The Family Swan, whose fairly consistent song structure is the bardic free press. vol4. issue4

ture teeters between lullaby and self-indulgent spoken word, but refreshingly never become either. [jm]



Do not be mistaken. This is not a hardcore record. This is not a noise record. This is a psychedelic record, and by psychedelic, I don't mean any of this Darkside of the Moon bullshit. I'm talking 'Piper at the Gates of Dawn'. I'm talking about Acid Mothers Temple at their spiciest. I'm talking about the Boredoms's work on the Super AE & Vision Creation Newsun albums. This isn't yr mother's flower-power, "all we need is love" bullshit psychedelia. Black Dice are no longer the scruffy Void influenced hardcore kids screaming in yr face compelling you to bang yr head into the bathroom wall. No. They've developed & they've grown. Black Dice are now the scruffy ex-hardcore kids screaming in yr face through fifty different effects processors, telling you to take the brown acid & enjoy yourself.

On their latest full length outing on DFA records, Black Dice have traded in their heavy groove of some of their past work & opted for psychedelic textures & sound scapes. 'Beaches & Canyons' defines new territory for this Brooklyn-based quartet. While their earliest incarnation was as a "hardcore" band, was mostly about being frantic & noisy, 'Beaches & Canyons' is neither. Dissonant swirls of analog electronics, topped with crooned and mumbled vocals. Nicely paced, heavy build ups that explode into a pool of psychedelic noise, undeniably tight grooves falling into beautiful messy chaos. Five mesmerizing & hip-notik tracks of jacked up electronics & processed sounds.

Unfortunately, as much as I would love to say that this record hails the end of the "neo-garage-rock" fad, or even the beginning of the end for electroclash (that possibility soon left my mind as soon as I realized that this record was released on the DFA's record label), & the beginning of a wonderful new amalgamation of good freak-out psychedelia, avant-garde experimentation, & punk rock energy, the truth of the matter is, it doesn't.

Most of the themes expressed throughout the course of the album can hardly keep my interest for the six or nine minutes that they go on for, let alone two LPs. And this has been

Black Dice's biggest problem since the beginning. They have trouble filling out their albums. Their early eps, & the 10" on Troubleman fucking rock. The 7" on GSL kicks my ass every fucking time. So why is it that 'Cold Hands', their full-length debut, & this new excursion, fail to capture my attention like the rest of their output? I tried to explain it to my friend Kevin once. I likened listening to a Black

Dice record to losing a fist fight (a lot of their early shows actually were). The first punch hurts. The second punch hurts even more. The third hurts like a fucking mother. But after that, yr body goes numb. It has to. Otherwise it won't survive. If it were just a brief brawl, you could at least walk away from it with a new insight or two on proper & improper etiquette. But after being beaten down like that unfortunate character in that movie about those kids, it's really hard to make anything of any situation.

But Beaches & Canyons is not without it's merits. As usual, the artwork is phenomenal, and as a whole, the album develops pretty nicely; the last two tracks do kick my ass. That's all I ask guys. Just make a record that's going to kick my ass, and leave me talking about it for days. [th]



No more talking animals! If you're not as disappointed as I am right now, you should be. Not only that, but the animal lyrics have been replaced with instruments...take that PETA.

On their latest effort, The Mountain Goats (aka John Darnielle) have given up the low-fi boombox hiss of their previous records for the bright lights of Tallahassee, their first major label debut-- a concept album about The Goats' infamous "Alpha" couple, and the first record to be entirely recorded in a studio. Migrating cross-country in hopes to escape the problems they've left behind, this album chronicles what happens when a married couple on the fringe of collapse reaches the end of the road: Tallahassee, Florida, their last stop on a journey to self-destruction/the Atlantic Ocean, or however you choose to see it.

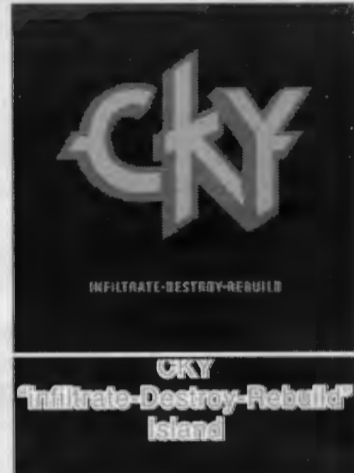
For this album, Darnielle collaborates with Extra Glenns band-

mate Franklin Bruno and multi-instrumentalist Peter Hughes who add drums, bass, keyboards to the mix, and, in the process, create an uncharacteristic Mountain Goats album which leaves the listener waiting. The problem isn't the addition of the extra instruments, but rather the manner in which they're manipulated. Often attempting to add layered dimension to his basic songs, the bass and drum parts hardly vary from the guitar lines and instead detract from the subtle charm of Darnielle's songwriting. Whereas the sporadic use of a violin in "Elijah" (on The Coroner's Gambit) creates a moving meditation on the road home, the bass in "The House That Dripped Blood" (on Tallahassee) mimics Darnielle's guitar work, creating a loud, monotonous drone. Otherwise a lyrically strong song, its charm is hampered by its overt instrumentation.

It's not that this album is sub-par in itself, but rather it is lacking in comparison to its predecessors. It does however show promise for the future. The piano on "No Children," the cd's best track, is stellar, dancing up and down the keys, complementing the driving and consistent guitar play. "Oceanographer's Choice", the next to last track on the album, also showcases a progression in their use of drums. Although the organ often remains a standard bar-length key tone, the drums drive the guitar in a raucous manner as hisses rain over the instrumentation, contorting its shape from basic tune to the eerie howl of a rock requiem. This also showcases the album's best use of dynamics, a process often lacking between the interplay of instruments throughout the rest of the record.

Darnielle, a songwriter known for his brilliantly crafted dirges on the majestic aspects of everyday life, once again displays his ability to seamlessly create introspective and multifaceted lines. Although this album does have a few amazing tracks, it is hard for me to recommend it as a whole knowing that it has been done, and done better, by the same people who made this record. If you're a first time listener, I'd suggest that you pick up The Coroner's Gambit or All Hail West Texas (both future indie rock classics) before you listen to Tallahassee, a far less even album.

For avid fans, this album is rewarding, but only after several listens and the conscious recognition that experimentation creates varied results. [ac]



There are some albums that, though seemingly worthless at first listen, gradually indoctrinate you into its mysteries, teaching you how to listen all over again and rewarding your valor with untold depths of expression. This, on the other hand, is pure unadulterated crap. Though a first impression of stupid is inevitable, upon closer inspection, the careful listener will find CKY both stupid and empty. The ten songs that make up this painfully wretched album are scarcely separate, with guitars and drums played the same way in every single song usually with an annoying moog droning along in the background. It's not as though a couple of these songs don't have any initial charm- the opener "Escape From Hellview" wouldn't be out of place in, say, Tony Hawk Pro Skater- but having to listen to it more than once amounts to coming face to face with the utter banality of this stuff, the same caliber of musical refuse that filled up the post-grunge radioscape for most of the 90s. Ostensibly punk or metal, depending who you ask, CKY is really neither, but attempts to use both styles to cover up for unimaginative, repetitive musicianship. It doesn't work. Moany lead singer Deron Miller articulates the CKY formula for us in "Flesh Into Gear": "myself appears/dissected pretentious/a simple sound...could win the whole world over." Crikey, let's hope not.

Worse than bad, Infiltrate-Destroy-Rebuild is boring and fails to distinguish itself from any other metal/punk band that has just as little to say but does happen to have a drummer related to one of the JackAss guys. Granted then, CKY makes a certain bid on being the soundtrack to stupidity and all those power chords and dumb microphone tricks would probably sound super if you got drunk, but then you'd run into the pussified final track "Close Yet Far," unremittingly awful despite being the only song on the album with a different tempo. And anyway, there are far better bands worth getting drunk for. Certainly, one could probably find something to this album

continued on next page...

if they looked hard enough, but that would mean missing out on something better. CKY owe their popularity to the fore mentioned connection with JackAss (where they should have stayed) and their current stint opening for Guns N Roses (!), a lesson that proves that even a band called Camp Kill Yourself may court those elusive fifteen minutes just as long as they're willing to shorten their band name into a fuckin' fragrance for a man or a woman. Rest assured, CKY are not for either. [jm]

Mirah makes bard kids googlie-eyed...

popsicle riot, the haggard and Sexxtional rock as well

by tosh chiang

Hot damn it was another free-for-all rockout courtesy of the ever so swanky Ladies Misbehavior Society. The intense Red Room night started head first with a dose of fun riot-pop rock from Popsicle Riot-- for not only did they rock but they rapped. Not only did they dance but they swaggered. Not only were they cute but rock-steady tough with the ever so rawkin' "fuck you Ronnie" vocals. Popsicle riot—whew!

After that came Sexxtional, which featured a scream-singing cutesy Tami Hart switching from loopy aggressive basslines to downstroked guitar chords. According to the Mr. Lady website, Sexxtional plays "agro-sex rock, a hazardous byproduct of a sexual environment." But whether or not it was more agro or more sex, their tunes certainly had the people in the red room jumping. After that The Haggard jumped onto the floor and pummeled their hardcore beated riffs into the room. A duo composed of Emily from Sexxtional and "STS" (what that stands for I'm not quite sure), the Haggard utilized grovel-growled vocals and that ever so snappy hardcore snare repeat beat to push their queer-punk agenda. And then it was Mirah.

Ah Mirah...what to say? The girl with the sexiest voice in rock and roll, a voice like a cool breeze, finally made it to Bard after two previously failed attempts. She readied her rig of an electric guitar via fuzz pedal and poured out those craftily heartfelt songs, those tunes where every note matters, those bits where she could make a mistake and make you smile, where she was just so sweet and great and yes I was in the front and yes goolgie-eyed watching her behind her black-rimmed glasses. Near the end of her set, or rather for the encore—something hardly seen in the red room, Mirah asked that the audience participate in enacting a left to right percussion-bang ensemble to accompany one of her songs. After thanking everyone for doing as she asked and for getting comfortable, Mirah then closed her set and made everyone feel some sort of specialness. Later on as the bands were dishing out the merchandise, members of their touring party could be seen getting their dance-groove on to the Quails. But nevertheless, what began as a hot show, concluded with some of Mirah's so soothing cold cold water.



Tammy Hart = frat rat?



Adria of Posicle Riot



Floor-up view of Mirah

Tim likes Pavement...

top ten reasons to get Lux and Redux, the definitive pavement re-issue

by Tim Abondello

- 10) Reasserted for more faithfully lo-fi driving bass, cocky drumbeat(ing)s, and dual guitar dirty laundry.
- 9) Six previously unreleased tracks from the Slanted sessions...
- 8) More alternate versions of the classic, "Here", than chords in the goddamn song.
- 7) Eight unreleased gems from the bands first two Peel sessions.
- 6) A go at Silver Jews' "Secret Knowledge of Backroads" is the only cover song you'll find on this crowd pleaser.
- 5) The entire Watery Domestic ep plus three unreleased outtakes that rock so hard they hurt themselves.
- 4) After this offering of seminal recordings, hear them screw it all up live in an entire concert from 1992.
- 3) Plenty of style to go around - "so much style that it's wasted"
- 2) Unslack expanded liner notes.
- 1) Destitute drummer Gary Young receiving royalties 10 years later is reason enough.



Tim likes The Mummies too...

top ten reasons to get the "Never Been Caught" reissue

- 10) Remastered in Mono for absolutely no reason.
- 9) From the band that brought you "Fuck CDs it's The Mummies", you get the "Never Been Caught" lp plus 5 out of print singles for the first time on CD - Oh the humanity.
- 8) Nevermind Nirvana single collections: there are no hard feelings from Courtney on this one.
- 7) Hear just how shitty your state of the art stereo can sound with this trash in it.
- 6) The Stripes n Strokes wish they wrote these rock songs, so do The Mummies.
- 5) It will help keep these lowlives from having to get real jobs.
- 4) "When The Mummies were a band, before Garage Rock paid the bills, they had to walk ten miles up hill in both directions to practice everyday".
- 3) 10 years later, its about time Budget Rock cashed in.
- 2) They just don't write love songs like "Stronger than Dirt", "Little Miss Tee-N-T", and "Your Ass (Is Next In Line)" anymore.
- 1) At least there is no reunion tour.



Want to write for the music section??? Contact tosh at tc584@bard.edu

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Bowling for Columbine: Pack Your Bags for Canada

by **liv carrow**

Micheal Moore, the "left's Rush Limbaugh," whose latest film Bowling for Columbine has brought him even further into the popular political lime-light, documents the increasing gun violence problem in America, using the recent Columbine, Colorado and Flynt, Michigan school shootings as an angle to attack a dangerous and singly American problem.

Moore's documentary provides a virtually flawless delivery of his argument; that American gun violence problem has nothing to do with the reasons usually given for it, such as a violent history of rebellion, preservation of the Constitution, violence in the media and in entertainment, or drug related street crime. Moore claims that the gun-happy American attitude stems rather from the intrinsic racism in the American character, problematic relations between whites and blacks throughout the history of the African-American diaspora into cities and suburbs, and the culture of fear that has taken over the popular American consciousness based around such tensions.

Moore is nit-picking in his arguments; he has no shame in requesting interviews from all but the most untouchable people (Charlton Heston, parents and victims of the Columbine shootings, K-Mart CEOs, etc.) and no hesitation in stating his purpose; proving that guns in America are out of control.

Many of the excuses used for gun violence are conditions that are also present in other countries. Moore argues that Germany's history is more violent, Japan's video games more

violent, Canada's gun ownership ratios equally high, British family life more strained, and yet none of these countries, or any other country in the world for that matter, have as many gun killings as America. The excuses can be applied to other societies, yet the societies do not respond with the same fervent violence that Americans do when handed a gun. Other people simply to not kill each other as often as Americans do.

Moore even interviews rocker Marilyn Manson, who is avidly anti-gun, about the fact that so many adult figures blamed his music for the Columbine shooting and other various teenage tragedies. Manson, who seems far more articulate and intelligent than the NRA head Charlton Heston in his interview, explains that people attack him because he is a "poster boy for fear." Fear is the direction Moore takes his quest when all other routes are exhausted.

The culture of fear in America is unlike that of any other country. A silly-seeming historical cartoon by "South Park" creator Matt Stone documents the cycle of fear Americans have experienced through their history. They were afraid of being oppressed, and fought back. They were afraid of Native Americans, so they killed and oppressed them, an issue that still arises and is quietly shoved on the back burner by fearful politicians. White Americans imported slaves, who soon came to outnumber white owners in many areas, so they too were feared. When the slaves were freed, whites became even more afraid, and during the large-scale

African American movement into the cities around the turn of the century, the fear grew so great that most whites "ran away to the suburbs." Soon, blacks were in the suburbs too, which is where we find ourselves now in the midst of a gun violence crisis. With each step that took them from the Mayflower to the suburbs, white Americans bought, sold and made more guns. Guns became progressively more popular and available, as well as more technologically advanced and varied in design.

Moore documents the media and entertainment portrayal of black Americans and how it has changed to reflect fearful attitudes. "COPS," the long running popular TV show, features 50% more blacks committing violent crimes than whites in each episode, and when the show's producer was interviewed, he claimed that while crime happens everywhere and is committed by all races, the show gets better ratings when the criminals are urban minorities. Also, police do not tend to rough up white shoplifters and carjackers as violently as black ones, so the violent element of the show makes it more popular. This portrayal of blacks as scary, violent criminals only escalates tensions, and the media coverage of such criminals and events vastly outweighs white-collar crimes and crime committed by whites.

These are the underlying arguments in "Bowling for Columbine"; the entertainment value is mostly in the interviews Moore conducts and the activist stunts he pulls to get his agenda across. The most effective of these confrontations came when Moore, accompanied by two shooting

victims from the Columbine shooting with bullets still in their bodies, went to the K-Mart national headquarters to request that ammunition for assault weapons be removed from K-Mart's shelves nationwide. The three bedraggled protestors were handed off to a few empty PR representatives before bringing in news reporters the next day. With the help of the media, they were given an appointment with the marketing head of K-Mart, who released a statement promising that 90 days from the protest, assault ammo would be removed from K-Mart stores. This surprised even Moore, who expected less than what he asked for, and elated the Columbine kids.

In another equally entertaining yet disturbing scene, Moore ventures to the posh LA home of Charlton Heston, and is surprisingly granted an interview with the NRA head and egomaniac fallen star. In Heston's self-portrait laden home, Moore asks him why he arranged NRA rallies in Denver and Flynt, Michigan days after each town respectively had a tragic school shooting. Heston claimed that the Denver rally could not be cancelled, but he could not effectively excuse the post-shooting Flynt rally, which was hastily scheduled immediately after the shooting. He claimed that he did not know of the event until he arrived at the heavily picketed rally venue. Moore's questions soon grew too difficult for Heston, and he rudely scuttled away from the interview, turning his back on a photo of the 6-year-old girl shot in Flynt, Michigan.

Moore's chubby hand pushes forward pictures of various other American social problems in his

investigation of the gun problem. Welfare reform, welfare-to-work programs, high rent, poor healthcare, and enforcement of drug laws which criminalize many and escalate gang related violence are some of the issues Moore related with the violence problem in America. These arguments are well made, and while they are not the focus of the film, they add a nice flavor of left-wing politics and anti-Bush sentiment to the mix of other disturbing American problems.

The argument behind "Bowling for Columbine" appears to be as un-American as it can get. Moore, however, seems to possess a faith in America, and a glimmer of hope for the American people, that they can escape the fear and hate crammed into their throats daily by the government, the media and the entertainment industry. Instead of advising viewers of the film to hop on a plane and get out of this country which seems to be rotting from the inside out to its trigger-happy extremities, he gives hope for change, and has enough faith in his audience to go out and try to do something.

Although most American gun-owners probably will not see this film, many other people will, and we can only hope that some who do will not be the same stale little batch of activists and lobbyists, protestors and letter-writers, who have been lonely fighting injustice on every other front. Moore's hope is that the outrageous violence in this country will appall new and old audiences, who can start working to eradicate guns and fear from American minds and homes.

007: Still not Dead

by **jon dame**

Pierce Brosnan, the man with the sexiest name in show business, lends his hairy chest and jaunty grin to the role of 007 for the fourth time in Die Another Day. Joining him is it-girl Halle Berry, the first Oscar Laurette to take-on the glorified pin-up model job of "Bond Girl." Judi Dench returns to her patented glare-and-dead-pan routine as "M." Dame Dench is an experienced, talented, and respectable thespian, but we all need a break from our day jobs sometime. Illogically rounding off the crew on this twentieth Bond retread—ahem—I mean sequel is the New Zealand-born director of Once a Warrior, Lee Tamahori.

This movie was schlock. "Hold a minute!" you say "Bond movies are supposed to be schlock; fun, cheeky, amusing schlock! Schlock Bond movies are an American, mock-British institution!"

But the fun and amusing pretense is worn through long before the credits role in this two-hour epic of Cinema-Formulae. When Bond's patented cheekily suggestive puns returned in Goldeneye in the early 90's, it all seemed refreshingly silly and sexy. But now when James exchanges bouts of saucy quips with some supermodel, it doesn't make me smile with amusement, it makes me cringe with embarrassment. All the devices in this movie that are supposed to be comfortingly familiar throwbacks to a long Bond tradition

instead expose how hackneyed and out-dated the entire genre is.

Brosnan does his best to lend some dignity to the frappe with his icy growl, but trust me, if you've seen the preview for Die Another Day you've seen all the good dialogue in the movie. This miserable writing is compounded by Ms. Berry's stunning lack of charisma on screen on this outing. She makes a hell of an entrance in an Ursula Andress-style emergence from the surf, filling out a retro orange two-piece as only Halle can. It's a great moment, but it's all down-hill from there. Genuinely impressive in last-year's Monster's Ball, Berry falls totally flat here, her voice tinny and almost annoying, her character a weak effort at badass.

To be sure there are an excess of breathless and improbable action sequences here. The best moment in the film arrives during a decent chase sequence across a frozen tundra in the ubiquitous rocket-launching sports cars. No longer feeling any need to explain fictional technologies, the director throws in watch-lasers and robot-suits at will. And the most entertaining use of this license comes when Bond opens the sun-roof of his car, which is sliding upside-down across the ice, and launches the passenger-side ejection seat to flip his car neatly back right-side-up.

Yet the filmmakers have little time for such amusing #subtleties" as



one action sequence races toward the next one as if timing went out of style with the last millennium. Bond drives a hovercraft! Bond drives an ice-rocket! Bond sky-dives! Bond Parasails! Bond...surfs? Sooner or later, bond is going to run out of extreme sports. This quantity-over-quality approach is especially regrettable during an initially promising fight scene in a fencing school where Bond and his opponent grasp desperately for new, sharper weapons to hack at each other without pausing to include the humor and rhythm that you would hope to see from the famed British spy.

MGM should try to rethink their methods before they try to foist these same devices on us again. A middle-aged British guy narrowly escaping some danger or another to the swelling of those ubiquitous Bond trumpets just doesn't thrill like it used to. And five times, in one movie, in front of five different computer graphics, well, frankly, that's not thrilling at all.

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