

OBSERVER: Volume 19. February 7, 2005

The Beginning of Bush's Second Term

One Day Under the Sun: The First Multi-Party Elections in Iraq in Over Half a Century

By Charles Frauman

At first glance, the elections in Iraq would appear to be a "resounding success," just as President Bush described them. There was high turnout, and fewer people than expected were killed by suicide bombings and mortar blasts. Democracy prevailed—or so it would seem. However, the low Sunni turnout, questions surrounding the elections' very legitimacy, and the insurgent's incessant claims that the war will go on should be reason enough for pause.



Voters turned out in large numbers, proudly displaying the indelible ink stains on the tips of their fingers to reporters and cameramen waiting outside polling stations—a precautionary measure to prevent voters from voting twice. Shiites waited in long lines, in some cases until after the polls were supposed to close but which stayed open to allow anyone still waiting in line a chance to vote, braving the elements for a new free Iraq. Louay al-Tahan, an Iraqi businessman, posted a letter on the BBC website expressing the enthusiasm that many of the Iraqi people felt on election day: "Everybody was smiling and happy, even the security people—something we are not used to here in Iraq." Youssef, an Iraqi doctor, wrote joyfully about his experience, saying: "It took me about three and a half hours to do this so I missed the last two sets of the final of the Australian Open in tennis."

The Kurds turned out to vote too, though with different intentions in mind. They want either to retain the

substantial autonomy they now have, or to expand it and declare independence. If the latter route is pursued and an independent Kurdistan is eventually formed, the governments of Turkey, Iran, and Syria would protest mightily. Iraqi expatriates had to make two journeys—once to register, the second to vote—to often distant and scarce locations where voting was permitted. Out of 250,000, some 90% made the trips anyway.

The aim of the election was to put in place a Transitional Iraqi Assembly from a selection of 275 members, whose role it will be to elect a president and two deputies. Then a prime minister, who will possess the most power in the new Iraqi government, will be chosen. The Transitional Assembly will draft a constitution by Aug. 15th to be submitted to a referendum by the 15th of October. Parliamentary elections are to take place Dec. 15th. Voters also cast their ballots for 18 provincial assemblies.

Every third name on a party list or coalition had to be a woman's, with the hope that women will make up at least 25 percent of the seats in the assembly. Dr. Salama Al-Khafaji, a dentist and a Shiite Muslim in favor of a secular government and a fervent supporter of woman's rights, remarked, "There are now open opportunities for women to work in politics, in social reform and in any other field." Seats will be allocated according to proportional representation, which means that each party will receive the same proportion of seats it gets in the National Assembly as it does in the popular vote.

While Saddam Hussein was still a reigning despot in Iraq, elections were fixed, and he made himself the sole candidate running for the Presidency. On the 15th of October, 1995, Hussein achieved a 99.96% Yes vote and a 99.47% turnout, to determine whether or not he would stay in power for another 7 years. The Sunni Muslims—representing 20 percent of the nation—harnessed the power while Hussein remained the predominant figurehead in Iraq. The Shiites and the Kurds, together constituting the majority, were persecuted and expelled from state politics.

All of that has changed now that the people of Iraq have the right to choose who they want to be their leaders. The bulk of the Sunni population, who were underrepresented in the 2005 elections, chose not to participate, either out of fear of being branded as traitors by the insurgents—who are for the most part Sunni Muslims—and suffering the consequences or by boycotting the elections. To be sure, the most vocal and physically intimidating are those who have chosen violent means in order

to get their message across to the American troops in Iraq and those who endorse their presence. These insurgents brandish their weapons and threaten all voters with the loss of their limbs, along with their heads, if they show up to cast their ballots.

The real issue is whether or not the new constitution can reconcile the major ethnic and religious factions dividing the country between the Shiites in the south, the Sunni population in the middle, and the Kurds in the north. Potential problems reside in the Sunni-Shiite and the Kurd-Arab fault lines. The drafters of the constitution want to distribute a fair share of power to minority and majority groups alike. Even though the Sunnis participated in the elections in small numbers, they still want their fair share in running the country, and the Shiites are more than happy to concede. It seems likely that a federalist government will emerge, based on regional rights. Another concern that has been raised is whether or not the new government will be secular or if it will turn into something resembling the Islamic regime in Iran.

The Bush administration considers the election a vindication of its strategy in Iraq. The Democrats see it as an opportunity to remove U.S. troops, and end what the Iraqis regard more as an intrusive U.S. occupation than anything else.



Top left: An Iraqi woman casts her first ballot; above: long lines of Iraqis waited outside polling places

Bush Gets Sworn In: Some Party; Some Protest

By Fran Laniado

In 1945, with the country embroiled in World War II, Franklin D. Roosevelt opted for a low-key celebration to mark the beginning of his fourth term. He was the only wartime president to do so. Others, such as Lincoln, Eisenhower, and Nixon have celebrated their second terms with gala events despite the fact that the country was at war. On January 20, 2005, when George W. Bush was sworn into a second term as President of the United States, he continued their tradition. Having "Celebrating Freedom, Honoring Service" as a theme, Bush celebrated with a total of nine balls, a youth concert, fireworks, and a parade. Tickets for the "Black Tie and Boots Ball" earned top dollar on eBay, and the festivities cost a total of \$40 million.

Yet not everyone was in the mood for celebrating. Security at the first post-9/11 inauguration was unprecedented. The nation's capital was filled with rooftop snipers, missile batteries, bomb sniffing dogs, and miles of metal barricades. Man-hole covers were welded shut as a security precaution, more than 100 streets were closed and pedestrians were forced to search for holes in the steel barriers. The federal government and the District of Columbia spent about \$20 million to cover the cost of security.



Bush relishes his Divine Right

In his inaugural address, Bush emphasized the theme of "freedom," calling on "the force of human freedom" to "break the pretensions of tyrants." He only referred to the war in Iraq indirectly, saying that "We are led, by events and common sense to one conclusion: the survival of liberty in our land depends increasingly on the success of liberty in other lands. The best hope for peace in the world is the expansion of freedom in all the world." Therefore, he announced, "it is the policy of the United States, to seek and support the growth of democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world." The President also touched on domestic matters in his speech, urging Americans to "look after a neighbor and surround the lost with love." A small group began to heckle and shout at the President as he finished his speech.

Behind the President stood the first lady, Laura Bush, as well as Democratic Senator John Kerry, who lost the election to Bush. Vice President Dick Cheney took his oath of office from House Speaker Dennis Hastert. This was only the fourth time in U.S. history that the Speaker of the House has been called on to perform such a function.

Thousands of Americans from all over the country gathered to protest the festivities and the President's second term. In Washington, DC about 500 protesters gathered in a park several miles from where Bush was taking his oath. Some held cardboard boxes shaped as coffins to symbolize the death of American troops in Iraq. Others held signs declaring that Bush is "the worst President ever" and asking that "God HELP America." Elsewhere in DC, 300 CodePink protestors wore beauty pageant-style sashes with the word "Resist!" written on them.



Photo by: Henry Casey

The protests were not confined to the capital. Across the country thousands of people walked out of school and work in protest, speaking the names of those dead in Iraq and holding candlelight vigils.

In New Orleans 1,500 people attended the "Jazz Funeral for Democracy." At the event a coffin filled with copies of the U.S. Constitution and the Patriot Act was carried through the streets of the French Quarter, accompanied by trumpet and trombone music. In Austin, Texas 50 demonstrators had a "Kiss In" where they beat drums and held sign that declared "Make out, not war!" At the federal courthouse in Las Vegas, 30 peace activists spoke, emphasizing the need for love, environmental protection, and the Bill of Rights. In Louisville, Kentucky protesters staged a skit spoofing Bush and Karl Rove, after reading off the names of the dead in Iraq. These were some of the more colorful of the many protests across the nation. Many of the protesters claimed to be exercising their right as Americans to dissent.

Bush Says Privatization Is the Solution

By Louis Godfrey

America: Where Old People Are Punished for Living Longer

As many predicted, President Bush's first State of the Union address of his second term was highlighted by his calls to reform Social Security. The President reinforced his support of partially privatizing the system by creating optional personal investment accounts that would allow future retirees to invest a portion of their Social Security taxes. But as far as providing further details he stopped short, calling for an "open, candid review of options."

Although the President never used the word "crisis" to describe the state of Social Security, he left no doubt that he believes that it will come under an immense squeeze over the next fifty years. "A half century ago, about 16 workers paid into the system for each person drawing benefits... Right now it's only about three workers—and over the next few decades, that number will fall to just two workers per beneficiary," Bush said. Currently 45 million Americans receive Social Security benefits, making the federal pension fund the country's most comprehensive retirement income source.

"You and I share a responsibility," Bush said. "We must pass reforms that solve the financial problems of Social Security once and for all." Bush's call for bi-partisan support in his efforts was underscored by audible groans from House and Senate Democrats, who do not share the President's dire outlook on the future of the pension plan, and charge the President with wanting to play stock market roulette with the nation's retirement. "[The President's plan] is a guaranteed cut in benefits by up to 40 percent," said Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid of Nevada, echoing concerns that privatization would actually further jeopardize the future of Social Security due to the need for large-scale borrowing to initiate the change. The change

may cost between 2 and 4 trillion dollars.

Bush spoke in broad terms, listing numerous options that should be explored in reforming the system. Many attribute the President's lack of a concrete proposal to growing resistance within the Republican Party, and just a few weeks after Rep. Bill Thomas (R-CA), chair of the House Ways and Means Committee, called the President's plans "a dead horse." There is also large public opposition to the plan, due to Social Security's immense popularity among the general public.

President Bush cited 2018 as the year that Social Security will begin to pay out more in benefits than it takes in through the current 12.4 percent payroll tax, and paid benefits will begin to draw on the Social Security trust fund. Bush then cited 2042 as the year in which the trust fund would be rendered bankrupt, resulting in benefit cuts of up to 30 percent. The latter date is hotly contested, as it conflicts with the most recent projections from the Congressional Budget Office, which put the bankruptcy date at 2052 or beyond.

Bush floated a number of reform tactics: indexing benefits to prices rather than wages, limiting benefits for

wealthy retirees, increasing the retirement age, discouraging early collection of benefits, and changing the way benefits are calculated. One option that Bush outright dismissed was an increase in the payroll tax. "We must not jeopardize our economic strength by increasing payroll taxes. We must ensure that lower income Americans get the help they need to have dignity and peace of mind in their retirement," he said.

Bush cited longer life expectancy, raises in the cost and amount of benefits, and more and more people retiring as the key reasons for Social Security problems. In pushing for private accounts, what Bush said echoed his theme of the Ownership Society. "Your money will grow, over time, at a greater rate than anything the current system can deliver—and your account will provide money for retirement over and above the check you will receive from Social Security. In addition, you'll be able to pass along the money that accumulates in your personal account, if you wish, to your children or grandchildren. And best of all, the money in the account is yours, and the government can never take it away," the President said.



Bard Loses A Friend and Benefactor

By Sarah Martino

On December 16, the Bard Community lost one of its most appreciated and generous members with the death of Richard B. Fisher. He was 68 and had been suffering from prostate cancer. Fisher became a member of Bard's Board of Trustees in the mid-80s, where he served as both Treasurer and Chairman. Fisher's legacy will live on at Bard, not only through the memory of his colleagues and friends but through the Performing Arts Center for which he donated 25 million dollars out of his own pocket and which now bears his name. However, Fisher's patronage and generosity spread far beyond Bard, as did his dedication to the arts and education.

Richard Fisher grew up in Philadelphia where he was a student at the William Penn Charter School. He then attended Princeton University, where he enjoyed studying philosophy and graduated with a BA in history. He went on to receive an MBA from Harvard University. As Fisher told the Times-Herald Record in 2003, he was able to attend William Penn and Princeton because of full-scholarships and was the first member of his family to go to college. He said, of his own experience and desire to support education, "We didn't have a lot of money then. So I feel strongly about helping young people have that opportunity."

In 1962 Fisher joined the investment banking firm Morgan Stanley, and became President of the corporation twenty-two years later. In 1991 he became Chairman and retired in 2000 as Chairman emeritus. He was recognized by Morgan Stanley as playing a large role in increasing the firm's size and revenue, as well as helping to make them a "powerful presence in the world of global finance." He was also particularly known at Morgan Stanley for his role in negotiating the merger with Dean Witter, Discover & Co.

In addition to his great success in business, Fisher felt compelled to dedicate himself to public service. At the time of his death, Richard Fisher was not only a Chairman on the Bard Board of Trustees, but also Chairman at Rockefeller University, the Urban Institute, and the Endow-



ment Trust of the Brooklyn Academy of Music, as well as a Trustee for Classroom, Inc., and the American Fund for the Tate Gallery. He was a supporter of both the Manhattan

Theater Club and the Joyce Theater Foundation, and in 1993 Morgan Stanley started the Richard B. Fisher Scholars Program, a scholarship program for minority students.

Speaking of his philanthropy, Fisher said, "Some people won't give money away while they're alive... You have to respect their wishes, but I want to get some pleasure out of what I've supported while I'm here." His kindness and great desire to help others was noted by his friends and colleagues, who remembered him in The New York Times as having quiet strength, deep integrity, courage, and as being brilliant, funny, and extraordinary. Fellow Bard Board of Trustees Member Martin Sosnoff and his wife Toni confirmed his reputation of incredible generosity and personal integrity by saying, "Dick's generosity is well documented, but he gave so much more than money. He was the leader who led by example, intensity of purpose, compromise and intellectual commitment to seemingly unobtainable goals. He was a true Renaissance man whose scope embraced the financial world and the arts with equal brilliance. This is a terrible loss for all, because Dick Fisher had so much more to do."

Fisher lived in Manhattan with his wife Jeanne. He was passionate about abstract art, of which he had a small collection, and playing golf. Fisher is survived by Jeanne, his brother David, and his three children, Richard, Catherine, and Alexander. The sympathies of the Bard Community are with them.

In a completely unexpected collaboration, The Bard Observer and The Harvard Lampoon are now offering joint subscriptions.

One year. \$50.

One-year subscriptions to The Observer are also available, for \$30.

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Make all checks out to The Bard Observer

Questions? E-mail observer@bard.edu

Laura Bomyea

Breaking News! I have a column! Column! Oh column! This is my column. My dear, sweet new column. My column filled with Bard News and other random things. My column doesn't have a name yet. Maybe you can help me. I will bake you cookies. I'm serious. (Please send all column title candidates to lb792@bard.edu. If I pick your title, I will campus mail you some cookies. Scout's honor.)

Pony? Where's the Pony?

Remember that day last spring when Bob Sagat was on campus AND there was a pony in the quad? That was all thanks to the Bard Equestrian Club! Well, okay, maybe not the Bob Sagat part, but the pony was definitely all them.

Recently, I sat down with Susannah Bradley, cofounder of the Bard Equestrian Club. There was no pony, which was a little sad. What's even sadder is the fact that the Bard Equestrian Club can't seem to get any funding. The Athletic Department has refused to provide them with any sort of funding, although they are technically a "sports" team that competes in intercollegiate competitions against some of Bard's biggest rivals. The Equestrian Club also tried unsuccessfully to secure funding through the Planning Committee. Technically speaking, financing the club should fall under the Athletic Department's responsibilities, Susannah said, but other sports-related clubs (Cricket Club, Frisbee Club, etc.) have managed to get around this and have a budget through the convocation fund.

Riding is a prohibitively expensive sport for most students. The Equestrian Club has to come up with \$150 just to get Bard nominated to a competition in order to go anywhere and compete. Additionally, each student that is interested in riding has to cough up \$350 just to get started taking lessons, and the cost rises significantly if they decide to compete. Only a few students have the money to compete, even though they are representing Bard and representing it well—check out their competition successes on their website, it's rather impressive. The Club itself has about 50 members, but only 19 of them can take lessons. Surely the cost of lessons is a significant factor preventing Bardians from pursuing riding seriously. Hopefully the Bard Equestrians will fare better this semester—Budget Forum is approaching... Until then, check out their website—<http://student.bard.edu/clubs/equestrian>.

A Bad Week for Trees

A lot of trees have been cut down this past week. I think maybe B&G was mad at them.

Engineering Department Releases Shocking News

In a completely untraceable, highly confidential memo last week, the head of the Engineering Department announced that he was resigning over an argument he had in the Down the Road Café on Tuesday with a colleague. Apparently the two esteemed professors had been arguing about whether or not Tewksbury had sunk another few inches into the marshy field it was built on. Contrary to popular belief, the third floor of Tewksbury is actually the fourth floor—it was renamed the third floor years ago when the original first floor (now home to the Observer office and the laundry room) sunk far enough into the ground that it could no longer be considered a respectable above-ground floor. The only thing preventing the whole of Tewksbury from sinking into the volatile earth below is a complicated support mechanism hidden under RD Mike Ginsberg's kitchen table. This mechanism was invented by our top engineering professor and the head of the department was incensed that his colleague would doubt the ability of the mechanism to prevent the despair and loss of housing that would result from the sinking of Tewksbury. He was not available to comment.

Bard Art! An Unsolicited Public Service Announcement

When I was a kid, my mom used to hang my artwork and (more frequently) schoolwork on the fridge. I miss that—I miss being rewarded for gluing some macaroni to a paper plate—believe me, I was a talented macaroni gluer.

Now I go to Bard, an "artsy" school. As a lit major, I feel like I'm missing out on seeing work by my peers, all of whom are doubtlessly much more talented and serious at their art than I ever was. I don't spend much time around Fisher Arts or Woods Studio and when most of the seniors are having their art displayed, I'm usually drowning in exams. Kline is an ugly building. Please, anyone that paints, sculpts, draws, photographs or even someone who glues macaroni to paper plates, please let me look at your work while I'm eating my waffles rather than the hideous brick walls in the dining hall.

That portfolio you did for Intro to Photography is just sitting there in your room. Bring it to Kline, give it to Alan Wolfzahn (in the Chartwell's Office, he's the Assistant Director). E-mail him (wolfzahn@bard.edu). Phone him. He'll put it up. I won't have to stare at the same crooked, outdated movie posters. Kline will be less ugly because of it. You could even brag to your mom, if you wanted.

Next Issue(s):

So what's up with the Old Gym/Student Social Space?

Lunch with Security: Who's eating Gilbert's grapes?

Exclusive: In the Barn—an official tour of the new B&G storage barns.

Geothermal Energy Conference Comes to Bard

By Ali Feser and Kyle Jaster

Isn't it nice how some dorms have the heat and air conditioning controls right there and accessible to students? Having lived in a new Toaster, Tremblay, and now in the Village, this is a luxury I have happily taken for granted. While my Tewksbury friends complained of living spaces that were alternately either too hot or too cold, I stepped into the hallway and adjusted the heat while my roommate was too engrossed in *Ulysses* to notice the seven degree increase in temperature. It turns out that this essentially important distinction in living conditions goes much deeper than a desire to maintain a happier, more comfortable student population. Much, much deeper. A few hundred feet into the ground, actually. Last Tuesday, at a seminar held in the Fisher Center and sponsored by the Town of Red Hook, Bard College, the New York State



Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSER-DA) and Mid-Hudson Energy Smart Communities, I learned that these buildings are just a few of those on campus that are powered by geothermal energy systems. In other words, our comfort is the result of the pent up heat and energy below the earth's surface. The Energy Technology Seminar was attended by 275 guests, about 50% of whom were architects and the rest a mix of builders, developers, engineers, and municipal officers, with a few Bard students thrown in. Speakers covered such issues as lighting, geothermal energy, building envelope - the fancy shmancy term for good insulation, heating, venting and cooling, roofing, and photovoltaics - what most of us call solar power.

President Botstein introduced the events, setting a tone that would last throughout the day. While he conceded that he did not know much about environmentally sound building design, he left the audience the message that designing, funding, and constructing efficient buildings is not about liberal politics, but about practicality. We should associate "green" design with hippies even less than we associate tie dyed shirts from the Gap with hippies.

Architect Bob Fox, who followed Botstein, could rightfully attest to that. His talk, arguably the most exciting of the day, was about work on 1 Bryant Park, the new Bank of America headquarters in Manhattan. Owned by the Durst family, who claim employee retention and satisfaction as their greatest concerns, this structure will be the city's new second tallest building and its most efficient. He stressed that architects need to look at what can be obtained for free, things like sunlight, rain, snow, the ground, biology and wind, and use those elements to their greatest advantage. Fox gave the impression that none of these were ignored in the building's design. A complete glass exterior, with no inside walls to block the flow of natural light, certainly employs the sun, and, as Fox notes, has the known effect of increasing worker productivity by several percents. This statistic, with an eerie implication of surveillance and loss of privacy, is owed to workers having access to sunlight and to the exterior view that is usually taken up by the big shots in corner offices.

Perhaps more impressively, the building will be partially run on geothermal energy and will include rooftop gardens, an air filtering system that reduces particular matter by 95%, waterless urinals, and IceStone countertops made from recycled glass, rather than from evil polyester resins and petrochemicals. Rather than send food waste to a landfill, the staff at 1 Bryant Park will collect it from the two cafeterias and reuse it on site, creating compost and an additional energy source through anaerobic digestion, which turns decomposing

matter into biogas. Rather than holding the city responsible for rain water that collects in the structure's deep basement, the building will filter it and use it for toilets and heating and cooling purposes.

Regardless of your opinions on the Bank of America, Fox succeeded in convincing the audience that his goal of efficient, green design came from a true concern with the state of the world. He pointed out that CO2 has reached a level of 400 parts per million, far exceeding the range of 200 to 300 parts per million that has predominated for the past 400,000 years. In a moment of wistful worry, Fox reminisced about his Boy Scout childhood right in Red Hook. He had grown up with camping trips on a farm near route 199. That landscape has now been developed far past the point of allowing eight year old boys to tell ghost stories around the campfire without glaring light and the sound of traffic interrupting them. Though it will change the New York City skyline, his design for 1 Bryant Park is equal in square footage to 60 suburban college campuses and is part of his personal determination to eliminate sprawl.

Lest you worry that the Bank of America has suddenly out-greened us, the good folks at B&G have been doing their part to keep our ecologically conservative ideology up to date and ahead of everybody (even Vassar). Dick Griffiths, Director of the Physical Plant, has been hard at work for the last 20 years ensuring that every building built on this campus is as energy efficient as possible. Olin Language Center was the first of his endeavors, followed by the new Toasters, the Village dorms, Tremblay and Hirsh, New Henderson, the Fisher Center, and the just recently remodeled Blum and Avery. He's so committed to this stuff he just had a geothermal heating/cooling system put into his house.

Dick spoke about the advantages of geothermal heating/cooling systems and told some horror stories about fighting with the Gehry building engineers about the effectiveness of the geothermal systems. Apparently many architects, including some I spoke to during the breaks, are skeptical as to the effectiveness of geothermal temperature control. Geothermal heating and cooling is attained essentially by digging lots of 350-400 ft. holes in the ground and then using the constant temperature down there to variably heat or cool water, which is then pumped around the various geothermal equipped buildings on campus, heating our rooms so we have even better excuses to take our clothes off during the winter.

Responses to the event generally seemed positive. BERD director Laurie Husted was "very pleased with the attendance" and plans to "follow up on some of the ideas to see whether they are feasible at Bard." One audience member, a local architect, said that the event was "definitely worth the time," and that he "appreciated the information given out about state subsidies and grants." Comments from a Dutchess County building



Above left: A presentation; above: conference participants in The Fisher Center. Photos courtesy BERD

inspector expressed a different and slightly defeated sentiment. "It all sounds good," he said, "but regardless of the money that's out there to get these things done, people won't follow through with green design until it's mandated in building code." This statement is sadly accurate. Despite a cleaner conscience and financial savings in the long run, high initial costs deter the use of environmentally friendly design, especially in areas like the Hudson Valley where most development is in the form of private homes. In smaller structures, techniques such as those employed in 1 Bryant Park may not be as feasible or as effective. Nonetheless, the event provided people in the development field a chance to gather information and resources and to learn about the possibilities of building green.

Four Square is for Lovers

Created for Children; Loved by Bard Students

By Wolcott Katzenbach

I had always heard from friends that four square was for dorks. It was supposedly a place where female Bard students could emasculate their un-athletic male peers in a sport designed for uncoordinated and spastic grade-schoolers. Last night I learned how amazingly wrong my presuppositions were.

I arrived at the Multi Purpose Room a few minutes early, ostensibly because I take my journalism very seriously. In reality my roommate had fallen asleep while watching Seven Years in Tibet and I couldn't stand to hear Brad Pitt fake an Austrian accent any longer. Upon my arrival I watched the four square faithful lovingly pace out the boundaries for the court, and carefully lay down masking tape. One by one players trickled into the MPR and began running about, kicking and tossing around their beloved red balls. Without so much as a word, the first four arrivals casually eased their way onto the four square court and began warming up, occasionally acknowledging a particularly stylish or devastating maneuver.

The rules for four square are simple, bearing in mind its humble origins. The "A" square is the service square, and the point of the game is to rotate up to the service square, counter clockwise. A game begins when a player in the "A" square serves by bouncing the ball once in his or her own square, and then into an opponent's square. Each player is allowed one bounce inside his or her square, and must then bounce the ball into another square. Failing to do so results in a player relinquishing his or her position and moving to the back of the line. These are the basic rules of the game, but I soon found out that Bard plays four square a little differently than many of us may have in second grade.

"Bard plays kind of street style," said Senior Tavit Geudelekian. "Whatever makes you look delicious while saving your ass is ok. If it's a naughty shot but still makes it look really nice, you still have that cold face on, then it's dope. Whatever makes the crowd Ooh and Ah."

Indeed, in the games I witnessed style seemed to be as important as defeating your opponents. Like peacocks, the successful four square players distracted potential predators with a blinding flutter of their terrifying plumage.

In a further effort to determine what skills were necessary for four square, I spoke with the self-proclaimed best player, Senior Andrew Lyman-Clarke. Clarke was quick to offer up advice to four square players of all levels.

"Use deception and study the basic four styles of uh, four square, them being: the earth style, the water style, the wind style and the fire style," said Clarke.

I didn't really know what the fuck he was

talking about, but an inquiry into the use of performance enhancing drugs helped shed light on Clarke's puzzling responses.

"I find that certain performance enhancing drugs, such as cannabis, can put me into a state in which I can feel the flow of the game more," said Clarke.



Photo By: Christine Nielsen

In addition to just the game of four square, the club also provides other entertainment, such as music and occasional DJ battles, offering an alternative to those who feel disappointed by the party scene at Bard.

"This is how I get my party fix," said Freshman Aidan Levy, "because I think the parties here really suck."

The future looks bright for the four square club, with talk of a tournament in the near future, though details are sketchy at the moment. For those who have never been, or are now vaguely interested in attending, the club is uniformly positive about attracting new players.

"Come try it," urges Levy. "It's not at all what you would expect."

Interview with the Founder

- 1. What's your name?** Tavit Geudelekian, Senior.
- 2. How did you, or who did, come up the idea for a four square club and why?** I think the story behind it, that four square was a game we had all played as kids, although I actually hadn't played it as a kid, I played elimination as a kid. But then some other kids, such as Ben Popik, started the club the year before I came to Bard. I got to Bard, heard about it, went to the Wednesday night game and just fell in love with it, and only missed one week of it once in the past three years. I was just hooked and so eventually I had started some other clubs and so then Ben handed four square off to me. We both still work on it but I do the bullshit clerical work like signing up for things. And that is essentially it. The year before I got here they were playing it in the parking lot, and siphoning power off the light outlets, or playing music out of their cars. It grew from there. The glory days of four square were in the old gym, we had a really well broken in hardwood floor, an obviously athletic floor. People would lay out for shots and sacrifice their body and shit and that was really good. It was hard-wood but you could roll off of it so easily. It was really nice. After the old gym, we were juggling locations, we went back to the old parking lot for awhile, and the area outside the campus center, and then we settled on the MPR and have a good thing going on now.
- 3. How long have you been putting this on for?** 5 years.
- 4. What kind of effort goes into the flyers you put up? Who thinks up the ad campaign?** Ben did most of it most of the time. Ben has a fantastic eye for graphic design so he just rocked out. He is actually a really funny guy which most people don't know since he is really quiet. So he did most of the posters, I've helped out, but Ben has been behind most of the bomb shit.
- 5. What are the exact rules you use when playing four square?** "A" square is the service square and the point of the game is to rotate up the service square, counter clockwise. "A" square serves by bouncing the ball in the same square, into an opponent's square. Each square has one bounce inside their square, and must bounce into another square. Bard plays kind of street style, whatever makes you look delicious while saving your ass is ok. If it is a naughty shot but still make it look really nice, but still have that cold face on then it's dope. Whatever makes the crowd Ooh and Ah.
- 6. Is four square given a budget? If so, how much do you receive?** Yes, a shitload of money. Actually not quite enough anymore. Now it's gotten to the point where four square has grown as a club a lot, so now we receive 400-600 bucks and we rock out with that.
- 7. What is the money primarily spent on?** Tape and balls man, and ambience. Definitely lots of ambience. We have high-powered attitude going on and that shit don't come for cheap. We have to pick up the act. But not enough anymore because a lot of people are showing up. So we need more ambience. We need to fabricate the ambience.
- 8. I understand that lots of people drink at four square, do you ever think that the use of potentially performance enhancing drugs compromises the integrity of the sport?** Hm, well have you ever seen Drunken Master? It's this dope kung-fu movie and in it there's this warrior who partakes in some alcoholic beverages. And he can achieve these amazing feats of flexibility and grace, an almost accidental grace. He would almost jerk-fall from enemy to enemy, clobbering them. It was amazing. And I'm not saying that it's necessary, because by no means in fact do a majority of our players drink or smoke or whatever these crazy kids are into these days. But uh, for some it can be, yes, a performance enhancer. I don't think it un-levels the playing field necessarily because the people who are trained without the use of their chosen venoms they're fucking well trained on their own. They have their own style. I've seen people levitate and shit. One kid, he would just put his hand forward and the ball would stop in mid air and burst into flames. And he didn't drink at all.
- 9. Since four square is co-ed, would you say that it is a good event for single and looking students to attend? Do you know of any four square romances?** I mean YES. Four square is for lovers. Four square is passion. Four square is like tango in a lot of ways. People are dancing. People are given a space to work, and there are people who dabble over everyone else's square. It's a wonderful place to meet people, who share your, I don't know, fucking, your love.
- 10. In the event of a potential romance between two or more four square players, do you think that the relationship off-the-court could affect a relationship on-the-court?** How would you deal with such an occurrence if the situation were to arise? Technically, each four square player is meant to stand on their own two feet. There are no alliances allowed on the court. If you happen to meet someone, and have that four square crush. He or she could be an amazing and captivating player. It's a rock star moment. But it should never enter the square. A lover's touch should never enter the square. We have delineated barriers where this battle is to take place. The only winner or loser can be yourself. Woah, woah...woah.
- 11. I noticed that there is going to be a tournament, what exactly does that entail, and who is eligible to enter?** We have no idea, we don't even know what the fuck the deal is with that shit yet. What the fuck...shit. I got to get on that.
- 12. Will there be prizes for the winners?** Fuck, we hope so. Because we are going to take that shit. We are putting together the all stars. If anybody remembers there were the all-star games last year. We had an all star league of 10 players, who just were savages on the fucking square. Just amazing players. And we are going to get together essentially the best of the best we've seen this and last semester because there have been some amazing freshman prospects. We've destroyed Marist. We fucking rocked. Vassar: double rocked them. They can't hold a candle to us. We play a superior sport. If West Point showed up we'd rock them. In four square we'd destroy them. It's absurd the amount of skill that goes on in that room.

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Republic of Fear?

By Rebecca Giusti

Charges of Anti-Semitism Sweep Columbia's Campus

The controversy surrounding supposed anti-Semitism at Columbia University, which has been brewing since this past fall, exploded onto the geopolitical stage recently when Israeli Ambassador Daniel Ayalon refused to attend a conference at the school. The controversy centers on the claims of several students that members of the faculty routinely engage in anti-Semitic behavior. Such students contend that the campus is a "republic of fear" which institutionalizes anti-Semitism.

During a formal investigation into the charges against a number of professors during December 2004, students argued that they were "being bullied because of their identities, ideologies, religions, and national origins," and that "professorial power [was] being abused." Out of concern, Ayalon cancelled his appearance at a January 27 forum on the conflict in the Middle East. A source at the Israeli Embassy said the ambassador has notified Columbia that he chose to pull out of the event "in view of complaints by Jewish students of intimidation by faculty members."

The withdrawal of the ambassador marks yet another frustrating incident for the President of Columbia, Lee Bollinger, who has been working since October to assure Jewish leaders, students, faculty, parents, and other members of Columbia's community that the university is seriously considering student allegations of anti-Semitism, and that the administration in no way tolerates intimidation of students. Ayalon's decision indicates the widespread dissatisfaction among the Jewish community with the way in which Columbia dealt with the situation.

According to the New York Sun, a source inside the embassy stated, "Academic freedom is a central pillar of Israeli democracy, and we welcome pluralistic debate. However, every effort must be made to ensure academic freedom is not held hostage to intimidation. We eagerly await the completion of the university's investigation into this matter and trust it will address these concerns."

Hours after Ayalon withdrew from the conference, former Senator George Mitchell, the chief organizer of the conference, announced its postponement. He did not identify the Ambassador's action as the main cause. Rather, he stated, "Several government officials—Israelis, Palestinian and American—who had agreed to participate have informed me that they will be unable to attend because they must remain in or travel to the Middle East this week. As a result, I decided that the conference should be postponed and advised university officials." A new date for the conference has yet to be set, although Mitchell indicated it would most likely be sometime in September 2005.

In addition to claims that professors were propagating extremist pro-Palestinian sentiment in the classroom, a number of other supposed "anti-Israeli" events have taken place on Columbia's campus recently. Last week, conductor and pianist Daniel Barenboim lectured at Columbia, causing substantial controversy. His lecture was the first in honor of the late Edward Said, who used to teach at the institution, and with whom Barenboim was good friends.

Barenboim, an Israeli, has frequently defended Palestinian rights. He stirred debate by playing Wagner's music in Israel, upsetting Israelis because of Wagner's notorious anti-Semitism and adoption as a symbol by the Nazis. Barenboim blamed the Israelis' reaction to Wagner on "a lingering sense of minority status and victimhood." "It is this fear, this conviction of being yet again the victim, that does not allow the Israeli public to accept Wagner's anti-Semitism," he said. "It is the same cell in the collective brain that does not allow them to make progress in their understanding of the needs of the Palestinian people."

Last year, a petition signed by 106 faculty members called for Columbia to sell its holdings in all firms that conduct business with Israel's military, in an action that compared the situation in Israel to that of South Africa during Apartheid. President Bollinger deemed the act "grotesque and offensive" and refused to honor it.

What drew the attention of the international community, however, were direct allegations of anti-Semitism in the classroom. In the fall of 2004 several complaints were filed by students, primarily against faculty members in the Middle Eastern and Asian Languages and Cultures Department (MEALAC), who were accused of harassing students who were Jewish or who sympathized with the plight of Israel. As more reports were filed, the matter gained attention from members of the media, politicians and members of the Jewish community, all of whom acted with outrage.

In October, Representative Anthony Weiner (D-Brooklyn, Queens) wrote a letter to President Bollinger, urging him to hold faculty members to the highest standards when reviewing the claims. The letter read, "By simply casting aside these claims and not holding its faculty

accountable, Columbia enhances the public perception that it condones anti-Semitism. [...] Simply because you are a professor at a college doesn't give you carte blanche to spew hate. And dressing it up as intellectual freedom doesn't change it from what it is."

In October, "The David Project," a group that works nationally to "counter the hostile environment for many students and faculty who challenge the dominant paradigm about the Middle East conflict," produced an underground video documenting the incidents on Columbia's campus. On its website, the David Project explains "Our recent documentary 'Columbia Unbecoming' raises significant questions about the misuse of academic freedom, insufficient academic integrity in teaching about the Middle East, student intimidation, and how professors use the classroom as a political platform." The site also states, "We are puzzled that some Columbia students who pride themselves in supporting the less powerful join professors to dismiss the students' testimony as propaganda. We are also struck by the handful of students who are eager to proclaim 'I'm Jewish and I oppose the state of Israel'—as if that grants them moral superiority. The lure of universalism and rejection of particularism as a way of dealing with Jewishness is not new: universalism—whether Marxist or the newer 'citizen of the world' variety—is a classic escape route from the difficulties of being Jewish; their hostility to fellow Jews who don't agree with them is inexcusable. This debate should be about the facts and the need for diverse views in the classroom. It is not about moral posturing or some knee-jerk response to anyone who questions critics of Israel: being a critic of Israel does not immunize anyone from criticism."

In November, New York's The Daily News published the names of the accused Columbia faculty members who have the "strongest anti-Israel views." Nicholas Genova, professor of Anthropology and Latino Studies, was named the "most hated professor in America" in the Chronicle of Higher Education. He reportedly told students that "The heritage of the victims of the Holocaust belongs to the Palestinian people. Israel has no claim to the heritage of the Holocaust."

Hamid Dabashi, MEALAC Department Chair,

Lila Abu-Lughod, who teaches in the Anthropology department, allegedly romanticized Birzeit University in the West Bank when discussing it in class. Birzeit is infamously known as a place where Hamas leaders openly recruit suicide bombers, stone throwers, and gunmen. Abu-Lughod referred to the University as a "liberal arts college dedicated to teaching and research in the same spirit as US colleges."

George Saliba, professor of Arabic and Islamic Science, is notorious for his extremist views. His classroom rants against the West are legendary among students who say that "Islam and Western Science should be called 'Why the West is Evil' and 'Intro to Islamic Civilization' is a forum to rail against America." Saliba also reportedly told a Jewish student "you have no claim to the land of Israel. You have no voice in this debate. You have green eyes. You are not a Semite. I have brown eyes. I am a Semite."

Rashid Khalidi is Edward Said professor of Asian studies. His chair is funded by United Arab Emirates, which denies the Holocaust on its national television channels. When Palestinians in Ramallah lynched two Israeli reservists in 2000, proudly displaying blood-stained hands, Khalidi complained of "inflammatory headlines" in the Chicago Times, the paper that first published the story. He also labeled the owner of the paper at the time, Conrad Black, who also owned the Jerusalem Post, as "The most extreme Zionist in public life."

The professor who has created the most controversy at Columbia, however, is Joseph Massad, who teaches Arab Politics. A number of students called for the termination of Massad, as did Representative Weiner in his letter to President Bollinger. Massad is notorious for harassing students who "dare to challenge the idea that Israel has no right to exist as a Jewish nation," said Dan Miron, professor of Hebrew Literature. Massad accused the state of Israel of being anti-Semitic in not legitimately representing the Jews. He is also reported to have told students "The Jews are not a nation. The Jewish state is a racist state that does not have a right to exist," and "Ariel Sharon can be likened to [Nazi minister of propaganda] Joseph Goebbels." When a veteran of the Israeli military who currently attends Columbia attended a Massad lecture, the Professor allegedly asked the attendee "How many Palestinians have you killed?" and refused to further acknowledge him. Massad argues that he is a victim of a "witch hunt" by "pro-Israel groups" and their "propaganda machine," and that he does not hold anti-Semitic views. In an article he wrote concerning anti-Semitism, Massad wrote, "Indeed the claim advanced by Israel and its apologists that criticism of Israel is 'anti-Semitic' is the most anti-Semitic claim of all, rendering all Jews around the world represented by this one state and claiming that they all approve of its atrocities and crimes against humanity."

Susan Brown, Columbia's spokesperson, stated that this was an "issue everyone needs to be concerned about." In November President Bollinger established a panel to conduct an investigation of the behavior of the faculty members charged with harassing students. The panel concluded that there was no evidence of "systematic bias," a claim that was supported by the University's faculty handbook, which states that all faculty are "entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing their subject" and "freedom in research and the publication of its results." Professors "may not be penalized by the University for expression of opinion or associations in their private or civic capacity; but they should bear in mind the special obligations arising from their position in the academic community."

However, due to further allegations of anti-Semitism within the Columbia community, students, Jewish leaders, groups such as the Anti-Defamation League, and the Trustees of the University have pressured President Bollinger to conduct a more extensive inquiry into the accusations. He responded by establishing a second committee, which consists of five faculty members who will hear testimony from students and then decide whether to take action against specific professors. The committee is scheduled to complete its investigation before spring break, which begins March 14.



Embattled Columbia Professor Joseph Massad.

Saliba...reputedly told a Jewish student "you have no claim to the land of Israel. You have no voice in this debate. You have green eyes. You are not a Semite. I have brown eyes. I am a Semite."

called supporters of Israel "warmongers" and "Gestapoap-paratchiks." He argues that Israel is "nothing more than a military base for the rising predatory empire of the United States," that it is a "capital of thuggery" and a "ghastly state of racism and apartheid," that it "must be dismantled." Dabashi, a native of Iran, reportedly doubts the existence of Al Qaeda and questions the role of Osama bin Laden in the September 11 attacks. He also argues that CNN should be held accountable for "war crimes" due to its "one-sided coverage" of the World Trade Center attacks. In an article he wrote for the Egyptian newspaper Al-Ahram, Dabashi wrote, "What they call Israel is no mere military state. A subsumed militarism, a systematic mendacity with an ingrained violence constitutional to the very fusion of its fabric, has penetrated the deepest corners of what these people have to call their soul."

Bruce Robbins, a professor of English and Comparative Literature, said in a speech backing divestment that the "Israeli government has no right to the sufferings of the Holocaust."

Bard's Financial State is Secure, But Future Will Depend on Alumni, Says Botstein

By Christine Nielsen

Bard is, as President Leon Botstein phrased it in a recent interview with *The Observer* concerning the financial state of the college, "unique." The college, like its students, demonstrates its uniqueness in a plethora of ways. In particular, President Botstein was referring to Bard's relatively singular history in relation to the other colleges of its rank. Most of Bard's peers were independent entities long before Bard split with Columbia in 1944, and as a result, most have also been financially well-to-do for quite some time. Bard, on the other hand, still lacks a significant endowment and is still largely living paycheck to paycheck. That has not prevented Bard from living large, however, due to the care and dedication of Bard's last two presidents, Reamer Kline (1960-1975) and Botstein himself. Bard's campus, programs, and general quality have steadily increased over the past decades, but only as a result of constant fundraising. The school must raise \$12 million each year in order to stay afloat, and over the past ten years it has raised a little over \$360 million. As Botstein remarked, "The health of the college is really measured by enrolment, and by the extent to which it recruits very good students and faculty. On both accounts we're very pleased." However, one of Bard's biggest supporters, Richard B. Fisher, recently passed on. He was a great friend of the college, a personal friend of Botstein's, and a very generous person. His donations to the college in life and death approached \$100 million. What does the passing of such an important benefactor mean to the college? Who are the other main constituents of our donor base? Why are alumni not as big a part of that donor base as they are at other schools? How does the process of donation work? These were some of the questions *The Observer* had for President Botstein.

To begin with, two satellite programs of Bard have recently received two \$1 million dollar grants. The first was awarded by The Carroll and Milton Petrie Foundation for the Bard College Masters Program in Teaching earlier this year. The second was from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to support Bard High School Early College in New York City and the creation of a summer seminar program for early college teachers, to be held at Simon's Rock College of Bard. When asked how the money given to satellite operations of Bard affects the college itself, Botstein was quick to dispel a few of the misconceptions some people may have about how fundraising works. "The Foundation money—they give not to institutions, but to programs. There's a big misunderstanding about philanthropy. The college doesn't ask for money, and it doesn't set the priorities for where money is given. It receives money and it tries to get money where it knows that money is available because the donors set the priorities; the college doesn't. That's the big difference with not having a general alumni support. There are very few donors who say, 'Well, I'll support anything Bard wants. You want a new dormitory? Well, we'll pay for a new dormitory. You want more classrooms? We'll pay for more classrooms. You want a larger student center? We'll pay for a larger student center.' It doesn't quite work that way. Donors, individual and particularly foundations, set their own priorities.

They're not interested in what we need, they're interested in what they want to further in the world. So Gates has a program in trying to help secondary education—it doesn't get to colleges...The Petrie foundation is interested in improving teaching, so it gave to the MAT program. If we didn't have an MAT program, we wouldn't get money from Petrie." Also, "Many of the satellite programs provide some overhead support for the college. Every one of the satellite programs brings something back financially to the main campus. The only exception would be the prison program and the Bard High School. The other programs all provide something back here that's financial, beyond their other benefits."

If alumni are more likely than foundations to give money free of restrictions, though, then clearly they are desirable benefactors. Why has Bard not managed to generate as much money from its former students as comparable colleges have? "There are very few alumni," said Botstein. "The college had an average enrollment of under 300 students for the first almost 105 years of its life...The alumni have traditionally, since the fifties, since the Second World War, gone into professions which are not particularly lucrative. They haven't chosen to enter into the professions of, say, investment banking or industry. This college is not a business school, and business was never an undergrad major—economics was never a large undergrad major until ten years ago. Most of the alumni have

"There will be a time when the college and the long-term future of the college rests with its alumni."

gone into the arts or education or academic life. And the alumni are supportive and helpful and generous, but between the size of the alumni body and the type of the career they've chosen, we don't have a profile of very very wealthy alumni. In addition, the college didn't have a tradition of many students coming from wealthy backgrounds...And last but not least, the college never cultivated a kind of 'ra-ra' club mentality. So the ethos of the place was never designed to sort of hammer in the sense of an exclusive club that you had an obligation to support. That was never part of the ethos, it isn't even today, of the life of the campus. It's much more about the individual, the individual's work. That has its both positive and negative aspects."

Alumni, however, are not the only individuals who give to Bard. There are philanthropists like George Soros who give out of an interest in the work of the college, and then there is the crucial constituency of Bard trustees. "The trustees, by and large, are the largest group of individuals who are interested in the college in a whole. But they too

have their priorities. So certain trustees are interested in say, supporting international students. Other trustees are interested in scholarships. Other trustees are interested in science. Other trustees are interested in the arts. Each trustee, each individual who has accumulated wealth and has a loyalty to Bard, has his or her priorities as well. The task is both to try to meet common ground between the needs of the college and the needs of the donor.

"You have to put yourself in the position of the donor. You're a wealthy person, you want to help—you have ideas, you choose the causes. And it's our task to convince you that this is a good cause...We approach the donors. We're constantly actively in search of donors. You have to engage the donor, but you have to respect the donor's wishes and inclinations. The campus center is named for Heinz Bertelsmann, a former faculty member who retired, and he and his wife, they thought the college needed a campus center. We also thought the college needed a campus center. Charles Stephenson, now the Chairman of the board, in the eighties thought the college needed a gymnasium. It was his idea—I didn't ask him for a gym, I wanted him to support an extension to the library. He eventually helped that, too."

Currently there are several large construction projects on their way, but again, it's doubtful they will meet everyone's idea of what should be top priority for the college. "The college is about to construct a new dormitory which was approved by the board, which will be between Manor and Robbins. The college is about to build a science building. That doesn't mean, by the way, that there's money for everything. The state, the federal government is cutting back on several programs. There are economies that have to be made and that's just prudent fiscal management. Colleges need to respond to economic changes in the general environment. In the past two years energy costs have gone way up. There are things that change, and as the economy changes, colleges have to adjust." Botstein later elaborated with, "What will strike students and some faculty as odd is the asymmetry of resources. The college has money for some things and not for others. It's not that the college wants not to have money for some things, but there are differences in the opportunities for philanthropy, and the college's relative weakness in its unrestricted endowment. Its relative weakness makes for greater discipline."

So what about the fiscal future of Bard? On the one hand, as Botstein frankly stated, "People have a lot to worry about, but the financial security and health of the institution is not something they need to worry about." On the other, current students may want to store these last words in long-term memory: "There will be a time when the college and the long-term future of the college rests with its alumni. At some point, primarily the alumni of the past twenty and thirty years, when they reach the prime of their careers, they will form the nucleus of the leadership of the college in the years ahead. The long-term future will be decided precisely on the resources and the commitment of the people who have the most sense of obligation to the college, having received their education at it."

Post-Election Protest Update: The Legal Maze and The Local Debate

By Emine Gozde Sevim

Eleven of the twelve students arrested in Red Hook for disorderly conduct following the November 2nd, 2004 election now find themselves trapped in the often-frustrating maze known as the American legal system. Although one student had the charges against him dropped due to a technicality, the futures of the others remain uncertain.

To recap: The protest, made up of approximately seventy-five students, consisted of a sit down in the middle of Red Hook, and then a march back to campus. Everything went well until the group encountered a large group of police officers at the intersection of 9G. The police ordered the students to remain off of the road. One student subsequently walked onto the road, and two police officers arrested the student. The student's friends aggressively tried to prevent the police officers from detaining the student; by the end, a total of twelve had been arrested. Afterwards, President Botstein graciously offered to pay for the students' legal fees, and because the responsible officer in one arrest could not be found, one set of charges against one student was dropped.

The remaining eleven students are being represented by both the lawyers they have chosen, as well as a group of volunteer attorneys who work to protect individual rights. The students have made two court appearances since the incident. In the first appearance, students were only required to present themselves before the judge. The presiding judge in the case has decided to punish the students by ordering that they complete twenty five hours of community service and write four apology letters, addressed to the town of Red Hook, to the police, to the police Marshal and to the fire fighters. Students have agreed to do community service without much complaint,

but the same is not true for the apology letters. One of the students who got arrested, Anubhav Tibrewal, expressed his opinion on the letter-writing part of the punishment, asking "Why am I apologizing to people who harassed me for no reason?"

Anubhav Tibrewal, a biology major at the college, explains that he was quite scared after being arrested. Tibrewal was born in India and is not a US citizen; he knew that, according to the Patriot Act, he could be deported from this country without any concrete charges against him, even though he has lived in the United States since the age of two. Although he does not claim that his non-citizen status resulted in different treatment, he also urgently wants this matter to be expunged from his record.

Following their disagreement with the judge's decision, students are planning to ask for a change of authority in their case. In other words, they will ask for a different judge. However, the same judge with whom they now disagree will decide whether or not to assign their cases to another judge. If the judge rejects the students' request, he will continue to preside over their case. If the students choose not to write the letters, the legal process is expected to drag on for some time. The students are scheduled to appear next in court on March 24th.

At right is a letter Professor Richard Gordon wrote in response to a particularly nasty column concerning the protest that appeared in a local paper.

In his column on the election-day protest demonstration by Bard students, Jim Langan has reached a new low in his weekly right-wing diatribes. As I'm sure Langan must know, the right to public protest is one of our most fundamental freedoms. The students' demonstration, while perhaps briefly inconveniencing a few, was generally well tolerated by the village of Red Hook, including the local police. As would be expected, it drew a mixture of opposition and support from passersbys. On making their way back to the college campus, after the demonstration was over, the students were aggressively and provocatively accosted, and some arrested, by a different troop of officers, complete with police dogs. Police dogs? Is this Red Hook in 2004 or Birmingham in 1963? But Langan is clearly not interested in the facts. Instead, he uses the occasion to cast the students in terms of Fox News-style stereotypes of liberals, hippies and leftists. This is a contemporary version of classic red-baiting. Langan admits reluctantly that he was treated respectfully when he spoke on a panel at Bard, but he complains that "eyes rolled" when he expressed his views. I would imagine that many more eyes rolled among readers of his column. He speculates that very few of what he calls "crybabies" voted. He is wrong. To top things off, he makes the ridiculous insinuation that Bard students' views are somehow shaped by fealty to George Soros, because of Soros' contributions to the college. He badly underestimates the independence of these young people and effectively trashes their impassioned opposition. What a shame.

-Richard Gordon

Arcade Fire: Hotter than Your Mom

By Omer Shah

February 1st 2005 – Webster Hall, New York City

Arcade Fire was late to their sold-out show at the mildly-classy Webster Hall in New York City. The Montreal group was taping a performance on the Conan O' Brien Show which resulted in their tardiness. My recently drealocked friend Annie and I watched all eight of them roll up in a swanky black van and unload their equipment. I had seen the group at the Bowery Ballroom this past November and they did not have a swanky black van. I recall seeing the group peering out of this baby blue number which just wasn't swanky. Point being, thanks to the internet and glowing reviews in just about every piece of press, the group has been on its way up. At their last appearance in New York, the VIP sections consisted of the likes of David Bowie, Davie Byrne, Eric Clapton, Melissa Ethridge, and John Cameron Mitchell. Basically, Arcade Fire is hot shit. And since my opinion matters, they fucking deserve it.

So like I said, the group was late, and doors opened an hour later than they were supposed to open.

There were a lot of cold hipsters lining 11th street, many of whom were ticket-less and hoping that some miracle would get them in. Eventually, they permitted us into the swank that is Webster Hall. After a really long wait inside the venue, the first group, Man Man, took the stage. The group was one of the most interesting bands I've seen in a long time. They aren't the kind of thing I would ever listen to independently, but they put on an entertaining performance. However, I found myself really irked by the lead singer. He donned a mean indie rock moustache and was a bit too Andrew WK for my tastes. This may have had something to do with the fact that they were all wearing white. I really enjoyed watching the drummer though, he was a big pile of sass and he was making absurd faces at the audience the whole time. Musically the group comes off as an indie rock Blue Man Group of sorts. They played a really fast set, with hardly any breaks between songs. I wasn't bored, so I guess I can't really complain about the set. Towards the close of their set a number of people booed them.

Arcade Fire took an absurd amount of time setting up, but before them was another opening act. Final Fantasy played about four songs before Arcade Fire came out. Final Fantasy was pretty much amazing. They consisted of a violinist and an overhead projectionist who put up all these cutouts and what-not. Not enough musicians have projectionists.

Arcade Fire took the stage around 11:30. Win Butler mumbled something about this being a rock show and then they opened with "Wake Up," which might be one of the most necessary Arcade Fire songs to see live. The group cutely lined up and belted out this harmony in

these bright white lights. All the hipsters bopped around and smiled big. The group then went into "Neighborhoods # 2 (Laika)." During this song, we saw the group having the time of their lives. Ritchie Parry, the one who all too often gets Napoleon Dynamite comparisons, put on a helmet, and ran around head butting Régine Chas-sange, who was playing the accordion. He then wrestled with Will Butler, Win's younger brother. However slapstick this may sound, the band still managed to floor you with the absolute passion they put into this song, and all of their songs.

The songs kept getting better and better. By the time their set was done the entire band had switched instruments at least twice and an accordion was broken. Also before the set was done someone shouted, "I love you Bowie!" This leads me to believe that Mr. Bowie was in the house again tonight. Before "Neighborhoods #3 (Power Out)" Win told us we had been really polite tonight and it was time to stop that. The guitars wailed and the glockenspiel rang out the beat to this dance number. People danced, but for the most part were reserved. "Power Out" then segued into "Rebellion (Lies)," which has everyone shouting out the response of "LIES! LIES!" For an encore, the group played "Neighborhoods #1 (Tunnels)" and "In The Backseat," the opening and closing songs of Funeral. Régine sang "In The Backseat" ever-so-sweetly and also managed these really guttural howls towards the end. The song closed with the most passionate moment



of the set. The music had stopped and it was only the vocals harmonizing. In this moment Arcade Fire were triumphant. Webster Hall was wrapped around their fingers. From the bloggers who wished they were cool enough to hate them, to David Bowie, to the asshole that paid 120 bucks to get inside. Arcade Fire is just that perfect.

A Movie and a Show

By Emily Sauter

Tuesday nights are only really great for one thing, and that is four-dollar bargain night at the Lyceum in Red Hook. It is so refreshing paying four dollars for a movie when at home over intercession I had shelled out \$9.25 to see *Phantom of the Opera* (shameful).

I'll admit, I didn't want to see *Finding Neverland* at all, just because it looked like one of those "use your imagination" movies that's supposed to leave you weeping. And I really detest movies like that. All during intercession, my mom begged me to see it with her but I refused. It was one of those movies, just so you know. I only saw it because it got so many damn Oscar nominations.

Finding Neverland is the story of J.M. Barrie (Johnny Depp, the ultimate metrosexual), a failing playwright who befriends a family in the park while writing a new play. He takes a liking to the boys (Peter especially...now you see where this is going) and a liking to their mom, played by the curvy (not fat) Kate Winslet. He writes *Peter Pan* based on the adventures he has with the boys and everyone loves it and it becomes a classic. Okay, I just told you the ending but you knew it—it's like going to see *Titanic* and not knowing the boat is going to sink.

Of course, Kate Winslet is dying in it; it wouldn't be a movie without her coughing fits.

What made this movie truly great was not the movie itself but what transpired in the theatre during a tender moment between Depp and Winslet.

Apparently, a few rows back, a guy had just caught another man on a date with his girlfriend.

"GET YOUR HANDS OFF MY FUCKING GIRL!" he shouted, topping the noise of the movie.

My best friend and I leaned over our chairs to watch as one of them kicked the crap out of the supposed cheater. Punches flew, kicks were delivered. My best



friend and I were too paralyzed to stop it, considering we were the only other people in the theatre. We wanted to say something, because we had gotten into the movie and were really enjoying it, but we were afraid of getting our asses kicked by these guys. Oh Red Hook, you never cease to amaze me.

The fighting ceased and there they stood, sizing each other up, probably with bloody noses and sore fingers. And while they stood there yelling at each other, my

best friend and I started to giggle. And when they left the theatre, we burst into laughter. We had to ask ourselves, why were these guys going to see *Finding Neverland*? They must have heard it was a good place to cheat on one's girl.

So, I recommend this movie because you might see a fight.

Moderate This

By Michael Benhabib

Editor's Note:

For the sake of objectivity, when it came to review *The Moderator*, *The Observer* has contacted an independent writer.

In the absence of drag race, the release of *The Moderator* has been the single most anticipated event on campus. After Henderson told me to stop using bit torrent – cutting off my supply of adult MPEGs – I was feverishly anticipating Bard's first erotic lifestyle magazine. Yet when I finally got my hands on a copy I was utterly disappointed and, I admit, a little angry.

Sure its shiny color cover puts all other Bard publications to shame. Nonetheless, I could not get over last semester's sinisterly false advertising campaign where students stripped butt naked at budget forum in a successful last-ditch effort to secure extra funds – trick-



ing the forum into coughing up additional money. *The Moderator* also hung up intelligent, humorous posters in Kline with taglines like "have you moderated yet" to give us all a taste of what was supposed to come and encourage students to model.

Unfortunately the magazine's actual photos don't live up to anyone's expectations. All they do is show the extent of the editors false promises. In its mission statement, on the magazine's inner flap, the editors write that they hope to "remove some of the taboos in our community surrounding the expression of sexuality." Now these photos don't cover any new ground or push any boundaries. Don't get me wrong, I'm not saying there needs to be full frontal, but at a school where photo



students regularly push the envelope—think of the Phallusy show about erect and flaccid penises two years ago—*The Moderator* is disappointing at best. Does *The Moderator* really believe that by printing, as it did in its "In Whose Bedroom?" piece, the posed embrace of two hot young men or two topless young women they're "breaking taboos?" This? At the school of the drag race! At best, the photos just maintain Bard's status quo. What's worse, there's absolutely no humor as there was in the Kline adverts. Even the pictures taken atop Emma McGowen's Corvair in the cleverly titled "Hot Rods Aren't Just for Boys" fail in an attempt to be humorous and, more pitifully, lack any eroticism whatsoever.

The articles suffer a similar fate. Except for the interview with McGowen about her pink corvair and Tom Mattos' "Earlobes Suck," most of the writing is intentionally humorless. Much of it is overzealously pretentious. Take Emily Diaz's article about swinging. After observing swingers up close at a Manhattan club she had the opportunity to write a fascinating piece. Yet her article deteriorates into one girl's longwinded clichés about sexuality.

Left: Andrew Lyman-Clark
Above: Who knows?
Right: Your Average
JUNK-MAG.COM model

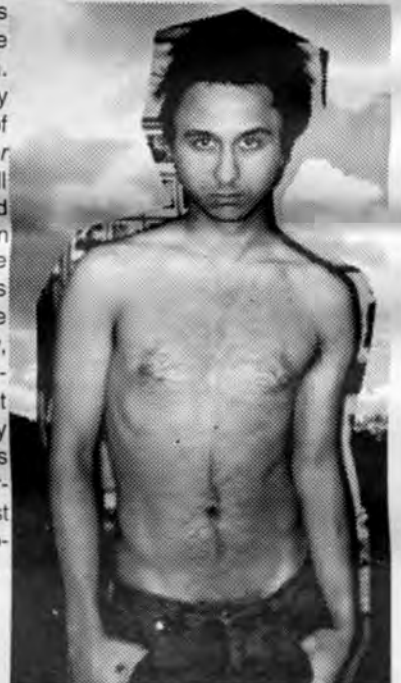
Gus Feldman's article "Eroticism and Revolution," ponders how our capitalistic, exploitative society can reconcile eroticism with its own intrinsically oppressive agenda. Do we really need a multi-page article about a predictable Bard-like topic that comes to an unadventurous conclusion? Feldman is no Michel Foucault and his verbose pretension could be tempered a bit.

I was, though, impressed with Bonnie Ruberg's article about her engagement to her boyfriend Scott. Engagement is none too common here at Bard, hence Bonnie's story may, ironically, break the most "taboos" of all the articles. Still, it's more than a little crass to choose *The Moderator*, Bard's first graphic erotic lifestyles magazine, to announce her engagement to the world.

Mattos' article about ear sucking is just too outlandish to have been anything but a joke. It's a creative piece and it's obvious that Mattos intended to poke at the extreme and amateurish pretension of writers like Feldman and Diaz. Still, if he really wanted to show up the other writers he might have actually contributed something that wasn't just funny but also thoughtful and provocative. I admire his imaginative wit but the fact is that he squandered a golden opportunity.

The Moderator reminds me that I go to a school where it is already okay for people to write about sex, for two men to embrace on film, and for women to pose topless without shame. At best it might just hold back the preppy onslaught of mainstreamism that constantly challenges our beloved, mythical old Bard. In spite of this I can't help but wonder if *The Moderator* would better realize its mission at a less progressive school, say SUNY Albany 40 miles North. Only two people got the last laugh in this mess. One is Tom Mattos, with his intentional joke of an article, and the other is that guy who exposed his penis

in Kline at the budget forum. Now if only they were in charge of *The Moderator* we might have full frontal photos and better writing. In the meantime we can all be envious of Oberlin's online all-male review, www.junk-mag.com. It might not have any women and its format isn't perfect but at least it's worthy of a liberal arts college.



At Least The Game Believes His Own Hype

By Noah Weston

Listen, The Game is not as bad as you say he is, even if you're from the West Coast, but nor is he that good. The fact that he sounds more like a New Yorker doesn't mean that he can't represent California; it just means that he's influenced by other mc's. I'm not about to rant about a rap scene that's on its own genitals to the point of numbness, though. I'd prefer to talk about the delusions of grandeur from which The Game undoubtedly suffers.

Rappers mythologize themselves, granted, and that isn't going to change any time soon, at least not before the art undergoes a ridiculous transformation. *The Documentary* unfortunately shows the ugly extremity of this truth, with The Game hailing himself as the hottest new mc in hip-hop, and, more aggravating to a lot of listeners, the "return of the West Coast." Again, I don't take issue so much with the latter claim because it's inoffensively stupid. You could be the most loc'd up loc in loctown, but that shouldn't get you artistic props as generic West Coast rapper #3423453, just as the Dipset doesn't deserve any acclaim (to be regionally fair) at all, ever.

Over eighteen tracks from The Game, I hear not only ambition, but also far more self-satisfaction. If he were just boasting on some Big L shit, this would be a different article about a different, better album, but he isn't. His album is a "VH1: Driven" special in rap form, in which he compliments all the famous people who have

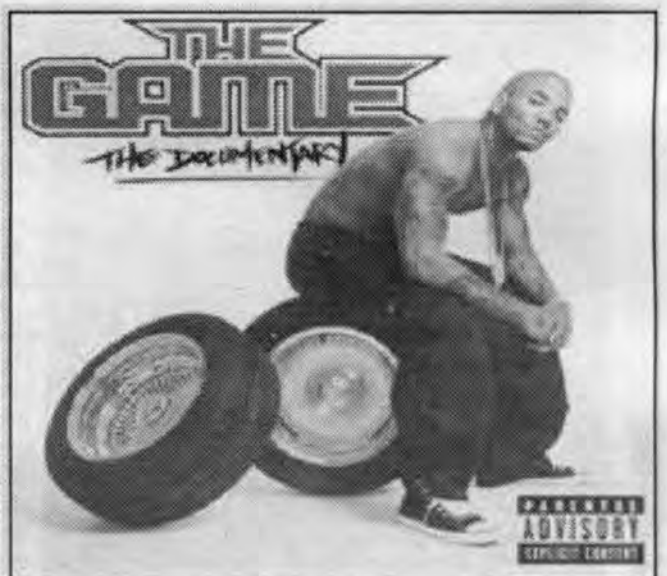
helped or inspired him and talks up his success, all before he's really had any.

This is symptomatic of a deeper sickness looming in rap. Cats dickride themselves into orbit, propelled by a false sense of achievement. How many rappers, regardless of region, ramble about their dynasties, sagas, and epics? You just want to grab one of these ridiculous bitches and remind him that a month ago he was working at Blimpie's.

Now, I don't know if The Game ever made sandwiches for a living, but based on his record, I could only conclude that he was born, and a little over two decades later, he was the shit. Oh, and his life was filled with struggle and pain. Sure, I'm exaggerating a bit. Yet, the fact that I can do so unapologetically is a testament to how faint of an impression this masturbatory product of the Shady/Aftermath commercial empire has left on me.

No matter how discerning any of us are, though, this record will explode as anything from the G-Unit does. People will fawn over Dr. Dre's impotent production, women will moisten at the thought of The Game's physique, and The Game will get to make another album about how, but of course not why he's the herald of a West Coast renaissance.

At least Ras Kass is free, right?



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My Winter Vacation

Len reviews *The Plot Against America*, *Blood Meridian* and *Travesty*

By Len Gutkin

Philip Roth's *The Plot Against America* is one hell of a terrifying story. What if, Roth asks, the Nazi-sympathizing aviator Charles Lindbergh defeated Roosevelt's third-term bid for presidency and installed a pro-fascist government in the United States? Told from the perspective of a young Philip Roth, the novel chronicles the lives of Newark, New Jersey's Jewish community under a Jew-hating administration. Roth blends real historical documentation—including actual Lindbergh speeches—and autobiographical family history with flights of apocalyptic fancy, thus rendering the plight of the Roth family eerily plausible.

In spite of its significant strengths, however,

The Plot Against America lacks the narrative sparkle that characterizes Roth's best writing. One gets the sense that Roth, in deference to the seriousness of his subject, has suppressed the provocative rascal who comes out in so much of his fiction. At its worst, *The Plot Against America* tends towards a sanctimonious exercise in nostalgia, a flaw that is compounded by the cloying saintliness of Bess Roth, the narrator's mother, whose perfect sweetness may be an attempt at counterbalancing the classic Rothian mother of, say, Portnoy's Complaint. Ultimately, Bess Roth is utterly unconvincing; her thorough blandness makes her more of an absence in the text than a character at all.

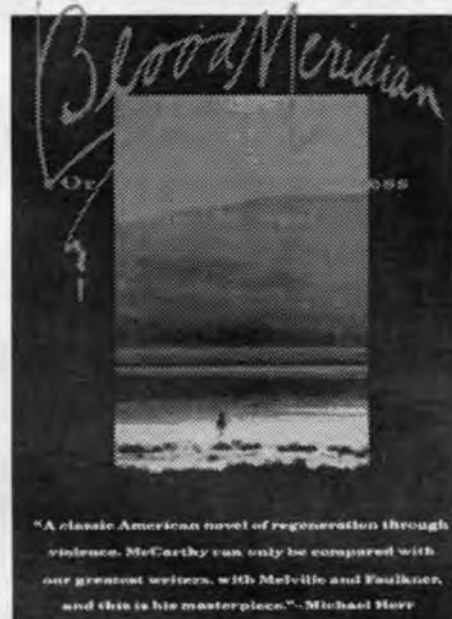
Nevertheless, *The Plot Against America* gets a lot right. At its best, it provides an opportunity for Roth to channel his trademark rage with the stakes raised—the Rothian rant, as it were, is amplified to the scale of history itself. In that sense, this is Roth's most ambitious work to date: Roth's anger has grown so huge that only the greatest disaster of the twentieth-century can accommodate it.

Reading Cormac McCarthy's *Blood Meridian* is like swallowing a very high quality razor blade: it's well made and sharp as hell, but it will leave you coughing up blood. For over three hundred pages, McCarthy details, one perfect sentence after another, the merciless exploits of a group of Indian-killing bandits making their way across the Texas-Mexican border and collecting Apache scalps in exchange for blood-money from the Mexican government. The bandits are led by a Satanesque figure named the Judge, who, when he is not directing killing sprees, dispenses his faux-Nietzschean philosophies of war and cruelty in a series of chilling proclamations, such as: "It makes no difference what men think of war.... War endures. As well ask men what they think of stone. War was always here. Before man was, war waited for him. The ultimate trade awaiting its ultimate practitioner."

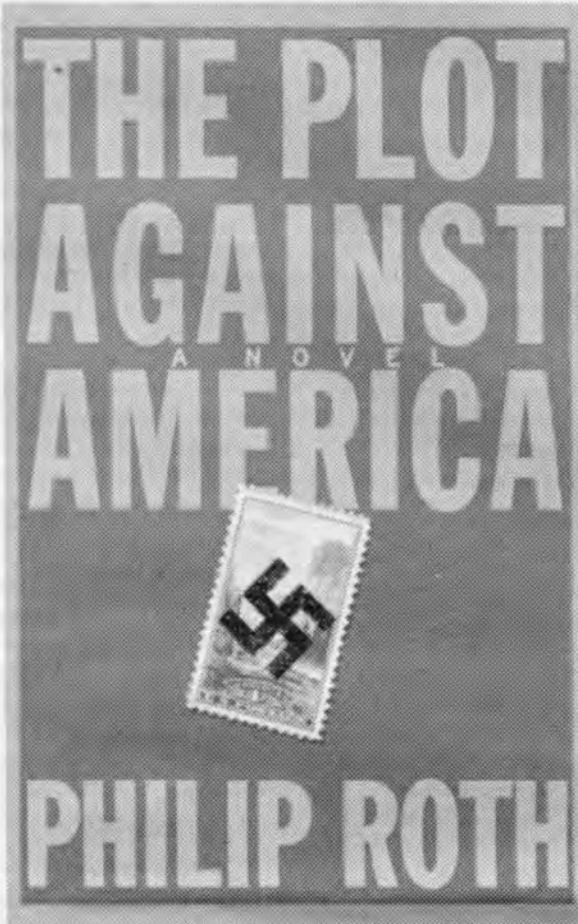
McCarthy's descriptive powers, his brilliant sense of rhythm and line, the concise poetics of his narration and dialogue, all serve to make this almost unbearable bloodbath as convincing as a nightmare. *Blood Meridian* is, at heart, a work of absolute pessimism—a sick howl with no promise of hope or redemption. It is the great American carnage novel.

It's hard to understand how John Hawkes'

CORMAC MCCARTHY



Travesty could have gone out of print. It reads like the literary version of an episode of the Jerry Springer show: a man goes nuts over, among other things, the affair his wife has been having with his son-in-law. Actually, scratch the Jerry Springer comparison—*Travesty* takes place right after the show ends, when the mad father piles into a car with his daughter and her unfaithful husband and speeds away on a country road intending no less than a double-murder-suicide by car accident. Funny, right? Actually, yes. In eloquent, lush, and surprisingly hilarious prose, the aforementioned peeved papa delivers a monologue that meditates on death, sex, family, and why it just makes sense to kill his daughter and son-in-law. His amazing voice is the whole book, and the presence of the other characters is indicated only by his rhetorical responses. Verdict: a chilling, sidesplitting, somewhat sickening indictment of control in all its destructive mania. Lucky for readers, it's back in print with two other Hawkes novels, *The Lime Twig* and *Second Skin*, in a Penguin Contemporary Classics edition.



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Noah Weston: Snake Eater

By Noah Weston

Every Monday at 9 pm, people congregate in the Tewksbury Common Room to huddle around the television in order to watch the Fox empire's other blight upon the world, the gaudy Tom Clancy wetdream called 24. It reinforces the myths about the intelligence and law enforcement worlds that keep people numb to government abuses of power in the name of security. Why question the torture of prisoners in our POW camps, when the federal superheroes do it to avert certain doom on 24? Call it sensational, but I find it disquieting to see this kind of shit polluting the greatest medium since the granite tablet. It is enough to make me turn to a less nauseating, more engaging, and more imaginative format, the video game, on a consistent basis for electronic

entertainment.

One such video game, *Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater*, indulges in its own brand of conspiratorial government mythology, but with more flair and in a way that leaves anyone hard-pressed to mistake it for a reflection of the real world. It puts you in the role of an impossibly skilled one-man army named "Snake," who must prevent a renegade Soviet colonel from constructing and using a nuclear tank to trigger an eruption of hostilities between the US and USSR. As this is a Metal Gear game, it is more than just a Rambo crusade. Though surfeit with violence, militarism, and all the other things that I can never endorse in real life, the game is also a vehicle for messages against war and nuclear proliferation. It also features ridiculous characters that you'll never see topped on any episode of 24.

In reaching Snake's objective, you have to tread through a dangerous Russian jungle filled with Soviet soldiers and well-hidden traps. While you can negotiate the traps with ease, the soldiers pose a bit of a problem. If you have never played a Metal Gear game, this is an especially hard one to try because the soldiers are acutely sensitive to their surroundings and will hound you to the end unless you slip beneath their notice. You achieve this by use of the dense scenery, in concert with a litany of camouflages and face paints appropriate to your environs. When this fails, you have to incapacitate the enemy in any way that you see fit. I tend to punch them in the balls.

This game isn't all ball-punching and dress-up, though. Throughout the game, you encounter outlandish bosses who comprise the Cobra Unit, a cadre of super-powered soldiers. As you will find, the only thing weirder



than dueling with a man who controls hornets with his mind is fighting an invisible, frog-tongued spider-man—until you get to the photosynthetic sniper or the flame-thrower wielding, flying deranged astronaut. *Metal Gear 3* likes to trump itself many times over, usually with great success.

More divulgements would spoil a game that I think you need to explore yourself, much like its contemporary *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas*. Like that other recent epic, *Metal Gear 3* never feels less than fully immersive, engrossing you in every sight and sound of the experience. That's a shitload more than I can say about 24, and it won't profit Rupert Murdoch either. So, PS2 owners, buy *Metal Gear 3: Snake Eater* for the betterment of popular culture and leisure, and perhaps even yourself.



observer

A Plea To The Entertainment Committee

By Noah Weston

When I talk to my friends at other schools about events on each other's campuses, the conversation inevitably drifts to the realm of music. Soon, I come to face the shitty fact that I go to a school that is not really in tune with the sort of performers whom I would like to see do shows here. Some evenings, I can sit placidly, listen to singer songwriters strum their placid guitars, and sing placid songs that evoke placidity. Other nights, I can see arrhythmic youth spasm to electronic noise, or rather I could before the Old Gym's closing, but I don't miss that much. However, I cannot hear new rap music outside of my computer.

"But remember that time J-Live and Wordsworth came?" you ask. "Yes," I reply. In fact, I recall it vividly and happily, even a year after it took place. Since that one rap show, however, Bard has only held one hip-hop concert of note, and by Bard, I mean Caleb Bark. As much fun as the absurdly small crowd had at that show (Supastition was off the chain), we cannot just depend on the good will and determination of Caleb, or whenever Akie Bermiss decides to rap at a Foundations show. Clubs, mine included, need to demand more money in the future for bringing hip-hop artists to Bard.

One could argue, though, that people do not really like rap that much at Bard, but I find that notion ludicrous. You hear hip-hop booming all over campus, be it in the dingy corridors of Tewksbury or the stately walls of Manor. Even though sometimes it's strictly for camp value, Bard students generally appreciate and listen to rap. Of course, one wouldn't come to that con-

clusion judging by the performers who come to the school. Instead, one would think that Bard students only perceive rap as a marginal fad, something cute to listen to at parties, or to make light of their own whiteness.

In spite of this, let's give Bard the benefit of the doubt and believe that it acknowledges rap as legitimate music, abundant with great, good, and awful practitioners as any other art. Bard's recent concert history still fails to reflect the extent to which rap appeals to students. As the Entertainment Committee seems to desire student input as to whom we should bring to Bard, I offer this list of assorted prospects, all of whom would put on a fantastic show:

1. The Perceptionists
2. Little Brother
3. Typical Cats
4. Apathy
5. Edan
6. Emanon
7. Juggaknots
8. Pharoahe Monch
9. Ugly Duckling
10. Elzhi



Some choices may be less realistic, and more expensive, than others but all will be worth every penny put toward drawing them to our sleepy little section of the Hudson Valley. I urge the Entertainment Committee, and anyone else reading this, to work in favor of doing rap listeners at Bard justice. Hell, if it's still open to change, we ought to add a rap act to the Spring Fling bill. That might compensate (read: might) for the incidental stylings of Thurston Moore that drew the anger of hundreds who all simultaneously mourned the waste of \$1000. But before I belabor that bitter subject any further, I'll cut this short. More rap, please. Thanks.



The Phantom Haunts Again

By Fran Laniado

The critical and commercial success of *Moulin Rouge!* and *Chicago* proved that the movie musical is back. But adapting Andrew Lloyd Webber's hit for the big screen presented the genre with fresh challenges. While it's not an opera, almost all the dialogue in the show is sung, and Richard Gere and Catherine Zeta-Jones could not have pulled off some of these songs. Yet Director Joel Schumacher and Andrew Lloyd Webber somehow rose to the challenge admirably, creating a film that is every bit as entrancing as the original stage production.

Most people know the bare bones of the plot: a deformed musical genius resides in the catacombs beneath the Opera Populaire in Paris. Wearing a mask to hide his deformity, the Phantom amuses himself by "haunting" the opera house and tormenting the lead soprano Carlotta (Minnie Driver). When a young chorus girl, Christine Daae (Emmy Rossum), attracts the Phantom's notice, he decides to take her under his wing and become her musical teacher. His teaching is successful and Christine becomes the new hit of the Opera Populaire, but she also attracts the eye of the theater's patron, Raoul (Patrick Wilson), who happens to be Christine's childhood sweetheart. Jealousy causes the Phantom's genius to turn to madness, and eventually the entire theater comes to fear his murderous rage.

All three leads are excellent in their respective roles, but as Christine, Emmy Rossum steals the show with her soft beauty and her strong but sweet singing voice. Patrick Wilson's Raoul is a dashing Prince Charming, and a strong supporting cast helps to carry the film. Minnie Driver provides some wonderful comic relief as Carlotta.

Of course no review of *The Phantom of the Opera* could be complete without a few words about the Phantom himself. While previous film and stage adaptations of Gaston Leroux's novel have depicted the Phantom as a villain, this film creates a far more sympathetic character. Actor Gerald Butler allows us to see that although his character is a sewer-dwelling murderer, he suffers deeply from society's rejection, and his unrequited love for Christine. Though different from Michael Crawford's seductive tenor (what most fans



who own the soundtrack are used to), his voice has a harsh, raw quality to it. Each frame of this film seems like a lush painting come to life. Each scene evokes the atmosphere of epic romance. The opera house becomes a character unto itself, and under Schumacher's direction, the music often works in sync with the cinematography. The beauty of some of the visual elements makes it all the more unfortunate that the Phantom's lair resembles a cross between the Disneyland rides "The Pirates of the Caribbean" and

"It's A Small World After All," with a little of Batman's Batcave thrown in. Yet even this can be forgiven due to some clever visual referencing of Jean Cocteau's *Beauty and the Beast*, and the emotional impact of some of the scenes that take place there.

But if there is one reason to see this movie, it is the music. At times creepy, at times sweet, and at times haunting, these songs will stay with you long after you've left the theater.

Cheadle Runs Hotel Rwanda

By Henry Casey

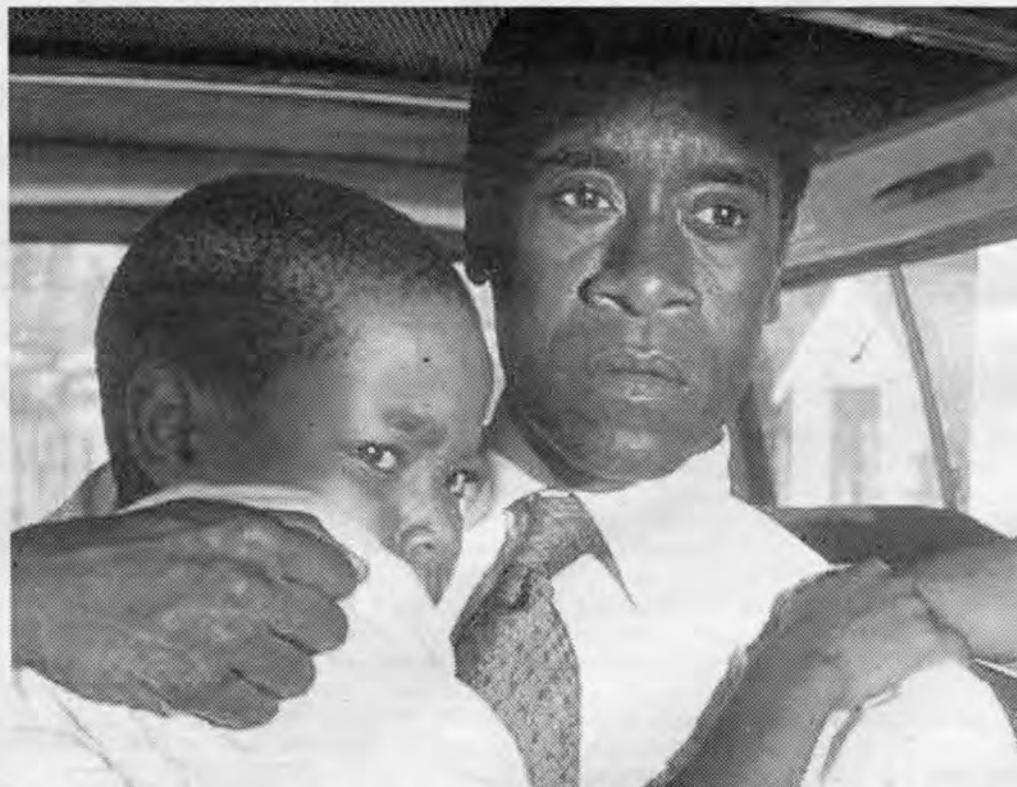
The more nervous you are about seeing *Hotel Rwanda*, the new powerhouse drama starring Don Cheadle, the more you ought to see it. The movie has a PG-13 rating, so you won't see anything worse than what you saw in the news reports. But the point of this movie is not to shock you, but rather to educate you about what happened, and to give a damn good analysis of how Americans view foreign "tragedies."

Don Cheadle has been one of the most consistently fine actors of the past decade, with quality roles in *Boogie Nights*, *Bulworth*, *Out of Sight*, and *Traffic*. Additionally, with movies like *Ocean's Twelve*, *Rush Hour 2*, and the dreadful *The Assassination of Richard Nixon*, he's turned the art of stealing scenes into a process of adding some soul to the emptiest of projects. And now with *Hotel Rwanda*, he's been given the starring role of one of the most compelling movies of the year.

Cheadle portrays real life hero Paul Rusesabagina, a manager of the Hotel Milles Collines, in Rwanda during the 1990s genocide between the Hutus and the Tutsis. The conflict is based around the rebellion of the Hutu extremists who slaughtered their Tutsi neighbors along with any Hutus who did not aid the slaughter.

In portraying a hero, a real life one who did amazing good, there's a risk of Rusesabagina being made to look superhuman in character. But this does not happen; we see Rusesabagina as a very simple man, thrown into a horrible situation and making the most humanistic decision anyone could. He saved over 1200 people, and risked everything he had, including his family, in order to do all that he could. Every movement Cheadle makes is believable; he did not come to his conclusions with lightning fast speed: it took him time and you can hear a desperation for an answer in his voice.

Joaquin Phoenix's Jack, an American cameraman, is the only thing that keeps this from being labeled as anti-American as *Dogville* was. His disgust with the lack of foreign response from the west is a clenched fist at the apathy of American families, and also a marker of the fact that all of us didn't just ignore this genocide. He understands the repugnancy of the apathy, and explains it to Cheadle. After Phoenix captures graphic footage, which we barely see, he tells Cheadle that it's sad, because most people are going to watch the footage, say, "Oh, that's tragic," and then go back to eating their



dinner.

The cast is also filled up with a number of talented actors that don't have name recognition. Two of them are the strongest female characters: Sophie Okonedo, who plays Rusesabagina's wife Tatiana, and Cara Seymour, who plays Pat Archer, a dedicated Red Cross worker. I had not seen Okonedo before, and I only remembered Seymour from her small role in Spike Jonze's *Adaptation*. They both stuck with me after I left the theater, especially Okonedo's anger with her husband after he temporarily leaves his family to help more people. Seymour has this grace to her fragility; her character spends all of her time outside so she's seen more tragedy than Rusesabagina. When she says that Paul must take 12 children off her hands and to safety, you feel the weight of the situation. She loves people so much that if these children were to die, she would feel it

as if they were her own.

On a final and related note, pardon me for not giving them the benefit of the doubt, but I don't think the deserving talents will win at this year's Academy Awards show. The major motion picture companies have funneled so much money into movies like *The Aviator* and *Ray* that actors like Don Cheadle will probably be passed over in favor of Leonardo DiCaprio and Jamie Foxx. And that's really depressing if you put as much stake and merit into these Oscars as the rest of Hollywood does.

Upstate Films, in Rhinebeck, is the only place where you'll be able to see *Hotel Rwanda* up in these boondocks. Their website only lists times until this next Thursday, and who knows how long they'll keep it in there. You probably have one friend with a car: make them take you to the movie, it's worth it.

Capcom Finally Perfects Evil

By SCOTT SIEGEL

12

Capcom wants you to believe it's their fourth outing with the *Resident Evil* franchise, but it's really not. There are actually twelve other unique games bearing the infamous name. So truth be told, fourth time's hardly a charm; apparently it's thirteen that's the lucky number. And after enough tries, Capcom has seemingly perfected not only the survival horror genre, but the entire action-adventure genre as well.

Resident Evil 4 takes place in an unidentified region in Europe. Leon Scott Kennedy, the Aryan posterboy / rookie cop from the sequel of the series, is back and hotter than ever. Tight faded blue-jeans and a long-sleeve undershirt, topped off by a fitted suede jacket with a woolly collar, is as sexy as it gets when fighting evil.

And oh boy, the evil. It seems some bizarre cult group has kidnapped the daughter of the American President. Leon, now a secret agent working for the U.S. Government, is in charge of rescuing her. He begins the game by arriving at a village inhabited by Spanish-speaking natives, the first of which takes a swing at him with an axe. Things just go downhill from there.

If you've heard anything about this game, you know that the zombies are a thing of the past, and in their place are eccentric villagers who desperately want Leon sin una cabeza. Capcom's decision to switch from undead enemies to not-dead ones makes for a new and surprising challenge. Zombies didn't run. These villagers run; they dodge bullets; they use pitchforks, torches, dynamite; and they have a dirty little secret that's just too freaky for me to let you in on. But trust me when I say it's juicy. Very juicy.

Non-zombies are just the beginning of the new fun. Capcom's ditched the static, pre-rendered backgrounds of the previous franchise installments, and they're hardly missed. Now the entire world is being rendered in real-time 3D, and it is gorgeous. Fully rendered environments also mean the end of awkward, fixed camera angles. Now, a close over-the-shoulder camera position accompanies Leon on his adventures. And using a handy laser sight, Leon can now aim with full analog control. Shoot a certain body part on an enemy and they'll react accordingly. You can go for headshots every time (which becomes increasingly less advisable), or you can shoot their legs out, and save bullets by running while they're down.

Also new to the series is an RPG-style shop system. A leper-like merchant has the uncanny ability to appear conveniently close to most typewriters (typewriters which, by the way, no longer require ink ribbons to



save). Instead of trying to eat your face or halve you with farming equipment, the merchant would rather buy interesting treasures off of you, and in turn you can use the local currency to buy weapons and upgrades, like handguns, shotguns, sniper rifles, and a bunch of other goodies I'd rather not spoil. Being able to snipe a bad-die from a distance is immensely satisfying. And their heads make a delightful sound reminiscent of overripe fruit when they explode.

All of Leon's items are managed in a suitcase system reminiscent of *Diablo 2*, where each item takes up a certain number of square blocks of space. Every item can be rotated, flipped and moved around; if you can fit it, you can keep it. No more green herbs taking up as much space as a rocket launcher.

All of these wonderful new additions wouldn't be worth much if you could beat the game in a single sitting. Thankfully, Capcom has created a substantially long title, which most sources have clocked at about twenty hours of playtime, minimum. And *RE4* is chock-full of unique and intriguing game-play elements, which

are rarely repetitive and always worthy of an encore if Leon bites the bullet.

Currently only available for the Nintendo Gamecube, Capcom has promised a PS2 version by the end of the year. Purchasing either will guarantee you an amazing and revolutionary game experience, as already *Resident Evil 4* is being hailed as the most visually impressive console title, as well as one of the most engrossing in terms of gameplay. I can't say I disagree, and let me add that my finding the main character of the game to be sexually attractive is purely coincidental and has no effect on my objective opinion whatsoever. With that said, I happily give this game five out of five Leo...stars.

I meant stars.

Scott Siegel is the head of Bard X/Y
Additional video game reviews can
be found online at
<http://student.bard.edu/xy>

The Flyest Whips In Red Hook

By Monroe Ellenbogen, Genevieve Lynch & Jesse Myerson

Perhaps you want reviews of a 2004 Nissan Maxima, a 1990 Chevrolet Celebrity and a 1997 Mazda Protégé. Here they are.

The 2004 Nissan Maxima

Mark your calendars. March 2003. As the Nissan Maxima's highly anticipated release date approaches, the Japanese automobile manufacturer Nissan is preparing for a record-breaking first week of sales. And well they should prepare. Sure, noted Bill Kirrane (Vice President of Nissan Division), "The Maxima has always had the power and performance that has earned it a reputation as a true four-door sports car." But, "now it also looks the part." The completely redesigned exterior, sure to draw thousands of car-buyers to the market in March, features a "muscular shape" and a high rear deck. This translates into what? That's right: easy trunk access; just to make sure those expansive 15.5 cubic feet of posterior storage space don't go to waste.

A brief history of a car's lineage often produces a clearer understanding of the vehicle's evolution. Nissan's favorite mid-line sedan first came to the US in 1981 under the guise of the Datsun 810 Maxima. It has since prevailed in a variety of markets - functioning both as a sports car and as a family mover. But the only thing worse than when a family sedan gets too sexy on your daughter is when your wheels lose their sporty edge to filiality out on the drag. Thus what started out as the Maxima's late-80s "confused identity" developed into a full-blown crisis by the late nineties. The chaos came to a head in 2003 and finally someone like Bill Kirrane seized control of the matter and figured that there was no other way out; the nightmare of redesigning the Maxima became a reality.

According to Warren Brown of the Washington Post, the Maxima was, in recent years, "a mid-income family cruiser that sometimes masqueraded as a 'luxury sports sedan.'" He deemed the situation "very confusing." Perhaps in response to an instinctual proclivity toward progress, perhaps to Brown's below the buckle whammy, folks at Nissan bucked up. There is no more dainty opacity surrounding the image of the Maxima - the 2004 is balls-out, indeed, almost pugnacious as it saunters around town bearing its new set of V-6 sneakers. The secret? Chief Product Specialist John Yukawa betrayed a key new ingredient in Nissan's frying pan. Not only is the new Maxima an unequivocal sports car, but it is "enhanced with the soul of the Z." Next time, don't let the cat simply wander out of the sack, Yukawa.

In conclusion of this review of the 2004 Nissan Maxima, I'd just like to say: although, "noisy" and "choppy" at high speeds, the Maxima is "a top-notch highway cruiser" (Jim Flammang said that). // Sources: cars.com (Jim Flammang; May 30, 2003), Washington Post (Warren Brown; Feb 9, 2003)

The 2004 Nissan Maxima
Two Editions: 3.5 SE (Performance), 3.5 SL (Luxury)
MSRP: \$27-30K
Current Blue Book: \$24-27K

A Look at the Stats; a Breakdown of the Facts:
"stronger" 3.5 liter, VQ dual-overhead-cam, 265 hp, V-6 Engine
255 foot-pounds of torque
automatic or manual transmission

power windows
rear view mirror
optional four passenger (rear bucket seat) version
new Sky view roof now built in US
ABS
side-impact airbags
optional traction control
front wheel drive
320 watt Bose Stereo (in SL edition)
optional DVD-based Navigational System
15.5 cubic feet trunk space
111.2" wheel-base



1990 Chevrolet Celebrity

JD Power ratings for this number include "Among the Best" in the field of Mechanical Quality, "Better than Most" as far as Feature & Accessory Quality, Mechanical Reliability and Feature & Accessory Dependability go and "Does Not really Stand Out" for its Body & Interior Quality, Body & Interior Reliability, Feature & Accessory Reliability, Mechanical Dependability and Body & Interior Dependability.

Its Kelley Blue Book retail value lies in the range of \$1,625-\$1,875. Its 3.1 V6 Automatic coupled with its optional Air-conditioning, AMFM Radio, Bench-seat, Cassette, Power Driver Seat, Power Passenger Seat, Power Steering, Roof-rack, Tilt-steering make this a fairly run-of-the mill car, whose main appeal is sentimental.

If your prerogative revolves around owning rare discontinued cars that never made a significant mark on the automotive industry, this may be the one for you. For instance, very little about this car is published on the internet and, accordingly, this review is substantially shorter than the others.

1997 Mazda Protégé LX

George Moore, cars.com contributor, was onto something when he suggested that the 1997 Mazda Protégé is the "fresh new face of small car motoring." Indeed, this zippy little budget four-door sedan is fresh, exciting, unexpected...revolutionary even. It's affordable; it has four doors; it is a sedan; it goes fast, and it makes an exciting new kind of car-going-fast noise. Brown suggests that this noise sounds like "Wheeezaahhh Wheeeezah," rather than the traditional "Vrooooooom." This is due, in part, to the revolutionary qualities of the Mazda Protégé's 1.5-liter, 16-valve, double-overhead cam, inline four-cylinder engine rated 92 horsepower at 5,500 rpm with torque rated 96 pound-feet at 4,000 rpm. It is also quite ugly.

Pro: Price and speed

Con: This car is homely. Homely is different from ugly. Ugly can be dealt with.

Ugly has character. In fact, there is some ugly so ugly that there is no ugly like it, which makes it beautiful. Alas, there's no such luck with the front-wheel-drive Protégé, which is so common in face and body, so totally bereft of personality, it makes boring interesting.

1997 Mazda Protégé LX

\$4,350-5,375

Available interior colors:

Gray or Beige

Available exterior colors:

Vivid blue mica

Sunset red mica

Sparkle green mica

White

Sandalwood metallic

Sand mica

Brilliant black

Everglades mica

EPA Fuel Economy:

City: 23-30 MPG

Highway: 30-37 MPG

Available options:

Air conditioning

Floor mats (Standard issue)

Center Armrest with storage console*

Moon roof (power)

*storage includes cassette box and enlarged rear cup holder.

Airbags not included.

Sound system:

Four-speaker

AM/FM stereo radio

Automatic-reverse cassette deck

These have been reviews of a 2004 Nissan Maxima, a 1990 Chevrolet Celebrity and a 1997 Mazda Protégé. Winner: 1997 Mazda Protégé. 1 3



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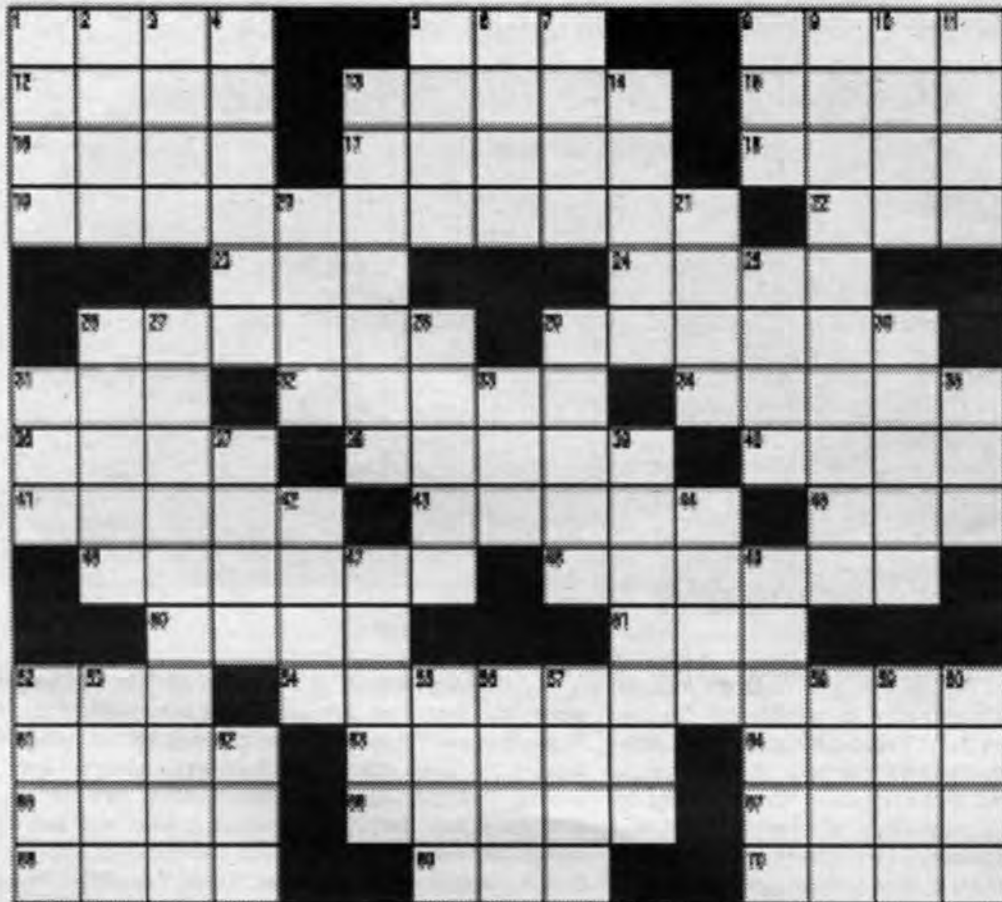
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By Jeremy Low

Answers published in the next issue



February's Horoscopes By Claire Connection

Aries (March 22-April 20)

As a metaphor for you this month I would like to suggest the figure of Sisyphus as portrayed by Albert Camus. You have become the absurd hero—having scorned death and most everything else, you being now accomplishes nothing, and being aware that this is the case increases your torment. But, as Camus points out, the realization of this absurdity can actually be the key to your victory. In other words Aries, it is time to find belief beyond belief. I give you Camus' solution: "I leave Sisyphus at the foot of the mountain! One always finds one's burden again. But Sisyphus teaches the higher fidelity...he too concludes that all is well...The struggle itself towards the heights is enough to fill a man's heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy."

Taurus (April 21-May 21)

The holiday season, traditionally one of overindulgence, has long passed. But you, Taurus, don't seem to have realized this, and continue to prioritize pleasure over work and to overindulge yourself in every way you can. While this is all well and good, let me warn you that this sort of excess causes harm to the world around you. For example: on Christmas day, the British consumed about 33,100 tons of turkey, necessitating the death of about 10 million birds. Wrapping paper accounted for the loss of about 40,000 trees in the United Kingdom, and Christmas cards for 20,000. So be careful. While you are indulging yourself, the rest of the world may suffer (as Isaac Newton said, for ever action there is an equal and opposite reaction!).

Gemini (May 22-June 21)

For you Gemini, this month is about negotiation. You are going to have to do something radical in order to make the most out of what you have, to get out of sticky situations with something to show for it. I want you to take Samuel L. Jackson for your role model, not only because he was in a movie called *The Negotiator*, but also because he's the kind of intellectual badass you need to be in order to make it away from a showdown of this magnitude. Don't be afraid to get extreme Gemini, eXtreeeme (like the new interlibrary loan system). "Which brings me to pit bulls. The dog of dogs. The pet of pets. There's the right man's best friend and the wrong man's worst enemy. You gonna give me a dog for a pet, then give me a pit bull. Give me 'Raoul,' Am I right, Omar? Give me Raoul... (a moment passes) Omar?"

Cancer (June 22-July 23)

Last June Mark Whittle, an astronomer at the University of Virginia, turned his observations of cosmic microwave background unleashed when the universe was 380,000 years old, into a sound clip that represents the universe's "primal scream" from the first million years after the Big Bang. Whittle expressed relief that the sound was neither "wimpy" nor "inhumanly, fatally loud" (it sounds a little like a low flying jet going past). My advice is

that you take this scream as your own, Cancer. Scream and expand from this compact, claustrophobic state in which, like the early universe, you now find yourself.

Leo (July 24-August 23)

"We can think of Will and Desire as competitors in a really long marathon, one that goes on for years. All the bets are on Desire. He has been training for many years, so he is in the best shape... For most of us, however, the will is still in bed... [Then,] a new desire comes: the desire to master our desires. That is the signal that the race is about to begin. But first we have to wake the will... Finally we have to shake Will a little. Probably he will try to hit us. At that time there are those who say, 'Who wants to be hit? Why not let sleeping wills lie?' ... But the person with determination... goes to the kitchen, gets a pitcher of cold water, and pours it on Willie's head. Will gets up fast, shaking off the cobwebs. We give him some black coffee." (*Yoga Journal*, March 24) Your Will is a marshmallow, Leo, but it's time to go against your desires. This month, you just might win.

Virgo (August 24-Sept. 23)

Maybe you woke up naked this morning. Maybe you looked out your window, sniffed the air, ran your hand over the soft cotton of your bed sheets, and shivered. This month, Virgo, is about sensual thrills. New tastes, sounds, smells, and sights to tantalize and titillate you. It's as if every sensory organ you possess has suddenly become enlarged and super-sensitized, and the world comes seeping in, much more pungently and exotically than before. My advice is, embrace it. These new eccentric sensations could teach you a fresh way of living your life and a greater appreciation for it.

Libra (Sept. 24-Oct. 23)

Up to now Libra, your life has resembled a waltz, a dance that has been called the "direct expression of sensuality." In its apogee, the waltz was responsible for marriages and love affairs; the whirling ("waltz" means "to turn") would often lead to "indecencies." I'd like to suggest that you consider trying a different dance, say, a samba. Although often considered the S. American version of the waltz, the Samba has its roots in the Saturnalia and Bacchanals of ancient days. The word "samba" means "to pray." This shift from sensual propriety to spiritual madness will help you to maximize the explosion of creative energy I foresee for you this month.

Scorpio (Oct. 24-Nov. 22)

This month you are having what I like to call a "messiah complex," as in, you seem to be the hero and savior of everyone around you. The problem with being a messiah is that you tend to lose connection with the people in your life: you can't really have personal relationships with your "flock." And so you're lonely. I would like to direct you toward one of the first New Age manuals of the 1970's, Richard Bach's *Messiah's Handbook*:

Down:

- Singular Jesus?
- Middle East state
- New Zealand soprano
- Rebecca on Dr. Quinn
- Tuban-like hat
- Like those SAC kids
- Atkins or beer...
- Heat measurements
- Most tapestries
- Buzz's partner
- Fields of snow
- Cravings
- Site of the Minoans
- Tints and tones
- An artist's past tense
- Beginning of a lament
- West Wing writer
- Water's work?
- Puke, upchuck, purge...you get the idea
- Ethan Porter
- Wild ones

Across

- Often starts with "A priest, a rabbi..."
- Alfred E. Neuman's rag
- With Charles, French theorist
- German Expressionist, Nolde
- Gin's partner
- Smoke 'em in Belize
- South seas attire
- Playa?
- American version of "Fac"
- Perhaps the result of 22 Across
- See 19 Across
- Plural possessive
- Like a train only with an "am"
- Again, perhaps with "go at it"
- Disrobed for an orange
- What might be measured after 19 Across
- Only two things ever came outta Texas...(no, we're not that politically incorrect)
- Got smaller, as the moon
- The urge to write a dirty clue for this is overwhelming

- Good, to a Frog
- Singer Cassidy
- Subject of one of Reagan's films
- Garter belts, perhaps
- 10-4s?
- A problem for the proles
- Ascension, as in for a ruler
- A polar pole
- Turkey Day action
- Immersed
- 61 Across' almost-homonym
- Urinal acid
- Hawaiian's pastime
- End of "As cold as a witch's..."
- See 28 Down
- With European, an early language
- Bog
- American stones?

- Enjoy
- Found in a wall or a bar
- The object of more than one of Deleuze's tirades
- From virile, meaning a whale's vagina (no, not really)
- With "one" "three" or "five," most often
- With "Council," held at Nicaea
- You could eat it, but it ain't necessarily good
- Moses memorial site
- US Services provider
- Like, jibe, or rout?
- An institution might be under it
- An offending simulacra
- Verisimilitude, only more similar
- You could carry it, well, probably not you, but, like, one could
- Jeremy Low
- And theres?
- A planet where death is an exile (fuck if I know...)
- Poet Gallagher
- Posterior on a ship
- It can be played or filled

Reminders for the Advanced Soul. "Every person, all events in your life, are there because you have drawn them there. What you do with them is up to you." In other words Scorpio, you are the goddamn messiah—you can do whatever the fuck you want, and if that means connecting with people, well do it.

Sagittarius (Nov. 23-Dec 22)

Recently someone I know, remarking that there seem to be more left-handed people in France than elsewhere, was vehemently accused by her sister of being an unbearable snob. I hate to say it Sag, but it's true—you have been acting rather superior lately. You are both an intellectual and a material snob. The good news is that this aloofness, by separating you from other people's dramas, will allow you to continue to blissfully continue in the unusually long (for you) period of happiness and content that you've been enjoying. Let other people make their mistakes, and don't get involved. You could benefit from some time alone anyway.

Capricorn (Dec. 23-Jan. 21)

Success! I know you love to be organized, and this month you really have succeeded. Your liquor stash is organized alphabetically, the names of your classes rhyme, you have a weekly schedule that resembles a Mondrian painting, and all your financial schemes have finally begun to pay off. But don't let it get out of control. Once you start abstracting things, removing all their arbitrary qualities, you are actually chasing after the eternal. And in

doing so, you miss out on all the beauty in the ambiguous and transient.

Aquarius (Jan. 22-Feb. 19)

I want you Aquarius to examine this month just what it is that makes a revolution successful. Is it product or perception? After all, Che Guevara failed in the Congo and Bolivia, but still has become a popular icon. And what about the Irish? What I'm trying to tell you is that the revolution being waged by your new rebellious instincts is being lost to your old established self. What you need to decide is what the legacy of this "lost" conflict will be—will you see it as an anomaly, a sort of black spot, or will it actually cause a shift in "the way things are" and be an event that someday could be worthy of a monument?

Pisces (Feb. 20-March 20)

Consistency is a laughable concept to you this month. You prefer the roller coaster to the living room, am I right? But there is something holding you back I think; you aren't quite willing to let loose and go wild. Like maybe you are on the roller coaster and would love to get off and go to the bumper cars, but can't because you have the safety bar down. And maybe, as Martha says, that's a good thing. After all, you can become addicted to change just like anything else, and it could become just change for the sake of change. Since you are on the roller coaster for now, just try to enjoy it while you can instead of needing to be somewhere else all the time.

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Boy, are we glad to be back at Bard. Home sucks, but gee-willikers does the Bard campus look beautiful after the tedious psychosexual dramas of our oppressive, crushing, maniacal family lives. No more anxiety over Mom and Dad's divorce; no more nauseating surprises involving our younger siblings and their sleazy dropout lovers; no more of Grandma's senile nostalgic babble and nasty latkes. No more getting caught smoking on the porch; no more stumbling onto dirty pictures of our deranged aunts and uncles on the internet; no more forbidden homosexual incestuous twinges at the sight of our (hot, hot) cousins. Doggonit, now we're back at Bard, where purity, decency, and morality reign supreme. So pass the forty and send us helter-skelter into one more smoky dorm room full of people we've had sex with and people we'd like to.

Oh, yeah, and classes and stuff.

So gosh golly gee, get out your books, sharpen your pencils, put on your thinking caps, and get down to some serious intellectualizing. Let's see who can write the most computer code in the least amount of time. You got what? A B+? Lame, dude. Lame-o. You'll never sleep with that professor with *your* GPA. Just give up now and work in retail. Here's to our bright, bright futures.



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This issue of The Observer marks the revival of an old tradition. We will now be publishing poetry and fiction in every issue. Please send any submissions to lg458@bard.edu.

Seven Day Notebook By Jenny Hendrix

First day:

Ships that pass in the night are gone for a world without these things we live by—the teapots, roses—where forgiveness for the existence of pearl means accepting pain and living within this engulfing.

Second day:

Reality takes place between two portions of blue: upward, the pressure of gravity takes the place of the artist—interaction, and dust settles in a different wave. Below (around) a darker exclamation is engaged in sequences: it follows from teeming, the light fed on by larger shapes that disturb the hills at night.

Third day:

What is meant by life occupies the interstice; at dawn a tree enters to the tune required. That capacities should be forgiven for what is offered them is deemed orthodox only by those bending toward the unseen (the shore). As the letter is innocent of what it stood for.

Fourth day:

Lifting the rug, the objects are discovered to have meant something else all along, whether because the previous dawn had reconciled, say, the leaf and the cormorant, or because they too are found to occur simultaneously.

Fifth day:

To each other we appear as points in a line: as drawn in pencil we begin to exist the moment we are seen. Without the witness, we continue like wind at night, without that with which to wound or intercept its path.

Sixth day:

When it has been resolved that the sea will not, indeed, burst into yellow flame, a star is created when one light shines through another. One wonders, carving the world as out of dough, making believe until a bell sounds, whether god exists only in conjunction.

Last day:

Unlike the shipyard, we know this for certain: Whether the rock will ever bloom again, or rain cast gold onto an upturned arm, these things never last too long to find, in fact, they can.

the drab report

by Tom Mattos

My dog Boo-Boo was given to my brother and me on Christmas when I was in seventh grade. Originally his name was going to be Rupert, but we decided on Boo-Boo, because he was white like a ghost. He ran around in circles a lot, and peed on me out of excitement a number of times. He was, next to my brother (who probably doesn't know it), my best friend.

This is not to say that I didn't have other best friends throughout my childhood—they always seem to be in flux. You're friends with person A until person B tells you what person A said about you last Saturday night, and then you're friends with person B until person C tells you the real story. Then you want to drop person B for person A, but person A doesn't want to speak to you again, so you end up hanging out with person C, who introduces you to person D who becomes your new best friend. There is always a constant flux, yes, but I will say that, aside from my brother, Boo-Boo was my most consistent best friend.

I have a thing with dogs. We communicate very easily, and most of our habits are the same. Most people don't believe it until they see it in action, but there is not a single dog in this world that I cannot calm and talk to if I put in a little effort. The trick is to squat down (you need to be on the same level), put your palm up, stare directly into his eyes, and creep forward slowly but evenly. When you first pet him rub the top of his head and behind his ears, taking care to keep away from his eyes so he can see you clear. If he's a big dog and he wants to nip at you and push you around, wrestle him back. If tries to bite your arm, bite his.

When I was a freshman here at Bard, my mother (perhaps out of boredom) purchased a brother for my beloved Boo-Boo. Can you guess what she named him? Yogi. Boo-Boo was fascinated by Yogi, until the little fucker grew big and started pushing him around. Then Boo-Boo started to hate him, until finally Yogi backed off and now they're cool but they sort of ignore one another. Yogi's still only three years old so he still wants to run around the yard and play games and the like, but Boo-Boo would rather just lay in the grass and stick his nose in the breeze. Yet the most important part of the relationship between the two dogs is through my family, who, as they let Boo-Boo, don't mind Yogi begging at the table.

This is where things get metaphorical: Yogi obviously learned from Boo-Boo that begging was officially sanctioned by my family and rewarded with bits of food. So Yogi started doing it as well. They'd more or less receive the same amount of food from the table, which for Boo-Boo was no big deal. Yogi, on the other hand, quickly grew fat and aggressive, and, as he was a good deal taller than Boo-Boo, he could get up and thrust his dirty paws on the table. Now Boo-Boo no longer begs; he lays down in the corner and closes his eyes. Now, as a result, Yogi perhaps eats a little more food than Boo-Boo, or, even if they get the same amount, Yogi gets it first.

When I come home from school Yogi gets excited and crazy just because he wants to be like his older brother. My dog Boo is old now and he doesn't run much but when I get home he is like that little puny white puffball again who pees in my lap out of pure excitement. No doubt that he is excited not simply due to my return, but also the return of his status as Dog Number One. When I feed the two of them, I either push Yogi out of the way and stuff the treat into Boo-Boo's mouth, making sure that Yogi can't steal from him, or, I break a little piece off and toss it far across the room. Yogi runs after it; and I give Boo-Boo the good piece that I've been saving.

I love dogs because they are simple, loyal and loving. For these reasons I count my brother—a man on the surface much different than myself, a future cadet at West Point—as my all-time best friend. Boo-Boo comes in at a close second. Yet this simplicity, this loyalty—this love—in a dog can be completely overshadowed by greed, viciousness and stupidity. Anyone who does not understand will wonder why the table clears to empty while they suck the marrow from a stripped chicken bone. Anyone who does not understand will dirty the table with his paws and turn the rest of the family sick. Anyone who does not realize the beauty of loyalty will find himself tricked into chasing a dummy treat, with the main prize going into the mouth of him who does.

You missed the point, my friends.
You missed the god-damn point.

A Confirmation of Torture

By Jesse Myserson

When you have to clarify that the nominee for the highest legal office in America does *not*, in fact, condone torture, he may not be the best man for the job.

There is an unbelievable amount of arrogance necessary for the president to nominate for his second-term cabinet positions people symbolic of and instrumental to the most shameful parts of his first term. Despite that, the Senate confirmed Alberto Gonzales for Attorney General of the United States by a margin of 60-36—all 36 were Democrats, except Independent Jim Jeffords of Vermont. Among the Democrats who voted for Gonzales were Joseph Lieberman of Connecticut, Ken Salazar of Colorado, Mary Landrieu of Louisiana, Bill Nelson of Florida, Ben Nelson of Nebraska, and Mark Pryor of Arkansas.

Gonzales is arguably the least qualified nominee ever for the position, in that he has never had any success outside of pandering to the current president. Even Bobby Kennedy was more intellectually independent of the president (his brother) when he had the position; in fact, he had a significant amount of sway. Not Gonzales.

Check out the track record:

Regarding the death penalty, as Chief Legal Council in Texas, he, according to the July/August 2003 issue of *Atlantic Monthly*, "repeatedly failed to apprise the governor of crucial issues in the cases at hand: ineffective counsel, conflict of interest, mitigating evidence, even actual evidence of innocence." Consequently, Bush frequently approved executions based on "only the most cursory briefings on the issues in dispute."

Around the same time, and in the same capacity, reported *Slate* in its June 15th, 2004 edition, Gonzales wrote a memo for Bush to justify non-compliance with the Vienna Convention, which was "designed to ensure that foreign nationals accused of a crime are given access to legal counsel by a representative from their home country." Gonzales argued that the treaty didn't apply to the State of Texas, as Texas was not a signatory to the Vienna Convention. Texas eventually executed Mexican citizen Irineo Tristan Montoya, after violating his rights under the Vienna Convention by failing to inform the Mexican consulate at the time of his arrest.

The *New York Daily News* reported on February 2nd, 2002 that as an elected member of the Texas Supreme Court, "Enron and Enron's law firm were Gonzales's biggest contributors," giving him \$35,450 in 2000. In return, in May 2000, "Gonzales was author of a state Supreme Court opinion that handed the energy industry one of its biggest Texas legal victories in recent history."

How can we trust a man to be the highest legal mind in the country when he will clearly support Bush and toe the party line no matter what prevailing jurisprudence holds? The problem is that Gonzales' worst attribute is not that he manipulated the Texas death row (combined with Florida, the Bush brothers preside over more capital executions than in the rest of the world combined). His worst attribute is not his utter disregard for the law. His worst attribute is not even that his corporate ties will impair his ability to fairly prosecute white collar criminals.

No, Gonzales' worst attribute is that he supported and legitimized torture, plain and simple. To hear Gonzales' Justice Department memo tell it, laws prohibiting torture do "not apply to the President's detention and interrogation of enemy combatants." Also, the pain caused by an interrogation must include "injury such as death, organ failure, or serious impairment of body functions—in order to constitute torture."

A 1/25/02 memo he wrote said "the war against terrorism is a new kind of war" and "this new paradigm renders obsolete Geneva's strict limitations on questioning of enemy prisoners and renders quaint some of its provisions." Al Qaeda and Taliban detainees, according to the memo, ought to be exempt from the Geneva Conventions' provisions on the proper, legal treatment of prisoners, as those groups are not signatories to said Conventions.

For a moment, set aside the fact that America is already detested for setting up permanent military bases on sacred land (the very reason Al Qaeda was formed), monetarily supporting Israel's military occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and bringing war and puppet governments to Afghanistan and Iraq. The image, however, of an Islamic man, nude, on a leash held by an American woman GI just may overshadow all of that. With the friendliest of Administrations, it would take 50 years to repair those ties. With this one and its plan to invade Iran (a story broken by Seymour Hersh, the same journalist who broke the Abu Ghraib story), we may never live it down.

Disproving the Administration's initial "few bad eggs" explanation of the Abu Ghraib prison scandal are the AFP's report that "One of four Britons freed last week from US detention in Guantanamo Bay, described being tortured, witnessing the killing of fellow detainees by US interrogators and receiving threats to his family." This torture has been widespread, part of protocol, and commissioned by the highest offices. And it was all designed by Alberto Gonzales.

Thursday in the Senate, where Republicans will dip their fingers in ink in solidarity with the Iraq vote but not send their sons and daughters to help the operation that brought that vote, Republican Senate Judiciary Committee chairman Arlen Specter praised Gonzales as "a man of intellectual achievement" whose astounding life story and impressive professional achievements recommended him highly for the post.

Then, Ted Kennedy reminded the Honorable Chairman that "Our vote today is not a vote on whether he is a good person or whether we admire and respect his life story. It is a vote on whether his performance in the highest reaches of our government has shown that he should be entrusted with the Department of Justice." This would seem to be common sense.

Unfortunately, as we all know, even in the face of common sense Republicans have a winning tactic: they lie. Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist said that Gonzales has demonstrated "an unwavering respect for the law...These are the facts, straight and simple: Judge Gonzales has acted with total professionalism and high regard for the law...Suggestions to the contrary are baseless and a slur against an honorable man."

Shame, contrarily, on Senators Lieberman, Salazar, Landrieu, Nelson, Nelson and Pryor for *not* making such suggestions.

the new emporia

by Matt Rozsa

Many of the liberals I have spoken to at Bard College commented to me that they refused to watch President Bush's Inaugural Address. Some claimed that they had too much work to do, others professed that they refused to expose themselves to a neoconservative agenda on philosophical grounds, and still others didn't believe the speech was of enough historic importance to be worth listening to. The first group's predicament is of course understandable, although I fail to see the logic behind the second explanation, and the third argument is flat-out wrong. If nothing else can be said for George W. Bush, the Inaugural Address he delivered on January 20, 2005 followed the precedent set by previous Second Inaugurals in laying out a clear vision of what the administration aims to accomplish in its second term. The program described within Bush's rhetoric was among the most ambitious and far-reaching in recent American history. With goals set as high as that, he will either be remembered as one of the major movers and shakers of American and world history (far outweighing in larger consequence his more acclaimed right-wing predecessor, Ronald Reagan), or as an abject failure whose agenda was so pie-in-the-sky ridiculous that he was doomed from the start.

Regardless of what many of us believe to be the immorality of some of his doctrine, the fact remains that to a large extent American presidents are judged not just by the content of their plans for the country and world, but in how effective they are in carrying them out. The loftier the goals, it goes to reason, the greater the stakes in nearly every imaginable regard, and the more difficult their attainment. That doesn't mean that every President who casts out with a great vision is doomed to falter on this front; Franklin D. Roosevelt is a great example of a man with vision who succeeded in nearly every major policy endeavor he attempted to pioneer. Even the much-maligned Lyndon Johnson left America with a wonderful legacy, at least on domestic and social issues. However, history is wrought with examples of Presidents who either failed because their aspirations shot too high, such as Woodrow Wilson, or who went down precisely because they lacked "the vision thing," such as the first George Bush. This President Bush seems to be coasting perilously close to the line toed by President Wilson, in that his program is far too ambitious to be plausible, even if one were for a moment to agree with the thrust of his ideas.

One of the first statements made by the now two-term president in his Second Inaugural was that "the survival of liberty in our land increasingly depends on the success of liberty in other lands. The best hope for peace in our world is the expansion of freedom in all the world." Such Wilsonian rhetoric was soon followed up by similar statements:

"So it is the policy of the United States to seek and support the growth of democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world."

"The great objective of ending tyranny is the concentrated work of generations."

"Eventually, the call of freedom comes to every mind and every soul."

"The rulers of outlaw regimes can know that we still believe as Abraham Lincoln did: Those who deny freedom to others deserve it not for themselves; and, under the rule of a just God, cannot long retain it."

"Renewed in our strength - tested, but not weary - we are ready for the greatest achievements in the history of freedom."

Such statements, though pleasing to the ear, make abundantly clear that Bush desires to continue pursuing a neo-imperialist agenda throughout the world - that wars with Iran, and more likely than not the rest of the Axis of Evil, are imminent in his campaign to democratize the world. The ultimate end of this goal is to spread freedom and liberty throughout the world. This would be laudable if it were attainable. Given the enormous difficulties that the President has faced in successfully executing one war, however, the odds of him meeting any success in execution of at least two others are slim at best.

Given that Bush spent the majority of his speech discussing international goals, one can fairly say he is tossing his historic hat in the ring as a foreign policy president. However, he did allude to a far-reaching economic program which he referred to as "building an ownership society," and which would "widen the ownership of homes and businesses, retirement savings and health insurance." While sounding desirable on the surface, such regressions to laissez-faire policies are hardly what this country needs right now. Nor are President Bush's endless declarations of religious faith - he makes a point of citing Christian, Jewish, and Muslim sources throughout his speech - likely to have the effect he desires, since they will either throw a bone to groups which already support him or alienate those which do not.

Those historians who have already begun to draw parallels between George W. Bush and other American presidents tend to contrast him with Ronald Reagan, who is accurately perceived as the founding father of neoconservatism. I, however, have found many comparisons between Bush and Woodrow Wilson, who also entered the White House with the expectation of dominating his administration with domestic issues and who wound up serving during one of the crucial international conflicts in American history. Like Woodrow Wilson before him, this devoutly religious man has a distinct vision for what he would like to see happen throughout the world, and clearly knows what he thinks America's role should be in it. The problem that Bush will likely encounter is likewise the same dilemma Wilson faced - making an unrealistic and utopian vision compatible with reality. Unlike Wilson, Bush is not armed with a fine intellect, a strong domestic and social agenda, or enormous popularity among other nations of the world to help him achieve these ends. All he has on his side are loyal associates and the firmness of his own convictions, which might help him sleep at night, but will not help him implement his ideas. Thus Bush might wind up suffering a second term fate even worse than that of President Wilson, and all the other two-term disasters as well.

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A Theory of Post-Election Everything

By Nathan Bush

Liberals are elitists. Let's face it, the charge is fair, and we at Bard have first hand experience with this phenomenon. "Hijacked" seemed to be the vogue word around campus on November 3rd, as it became clear that George W. Bush had, by an uncomfortably large margin, been re-elected to a second term as President of the United States. The sense that there was a new reactionary majority was fueled by the early consensus in the post-election analysis that the proposed gay marriage amendments in eleven states had mobilized socially conservative voters, supposedly swinging many close states for Bush. This explanation turned out to be wrong when one actually looked at the data, as was the exaggerated emphasis on the role of "values." In fact, far fewer voters cited "moral values" as their top concern than in the previous two elections. Yet as people quickly lost interest and moved on, satisfied with this first wave of explanations, the early post-election analysis seemed to have hardened into the predominant view, perhaps exaggerating a cultural divide that is not so prevalent after all.

Shortly after the election, Andrew Sullivan, one of my favorite political bloggers, and one of the most dependably spot-on in his criticism of the entire ideological spectrum, excerpted a passage of an online editorial which argued in defense of liberal elitism:

...if militant Christianist Republicans from inland backwaters believe that secular liberal Democrats from the big coastal cities look upon them with disdain, there's a reason. We do, and all the more so after this election. ... By any objective standard, you had to be spectacularly stupid to support Bush... So our guy lost the election. Why shouldn't those of us on the coasts feel superior? We eat better, travel more, dress better, watch cooler movies, earn better salaries, meet more interesting people, listen to better music and know more about what's going on in the world.

I realized I was nodding my head. But then Sullivan followed this excerpt with: "Ted Rall, one small reason Kerry lost."

Following the link to the article provided by Sullivan, I was further struck by how similar my sentiments were to those of Rall (whose argument was more cogent than might be implied in the just-quoted passage). Immediately following the election, I too felt very strongly that the ugly side of majority rule was in evidence, as conservatives, whether values voters or not, had indeed "hijacked" America. The knowledge that all the friends I forwarded the Rall piece to would find it similarly spot-on, made me worry that we were indeed out of touch with the rest of America and that, in my ensuing comfort with this disconnect, perhaps I, too, was part of the problem with the Democratic Party.

But as Tom Tomorrow, creator of the comic strip *This Modern World*, quipped in one column, is it necessarily bad to be "completely out of touch with Americans who believe that abortion should be criminalized and that homosexuality is a sin against God?" Or as Pulitzer Prize-winning investigative reporter Seymour Hersh said before the election, responding to a question about why Kerry wasn't enjoying a comfortable lead: "I think one thing you have to face up to is the fact there are roughly 70 million people in America who do not believe in evolution—and those are Bush supporters." This is not to characterize all Republicans as reactionary and ignorant. I correspond with a former high school teacher of mine who leans right and positively humbles me with his reasonable insights. It is very important to recognize all rational Republicans and respect all conservatives that express well-constructed and fact-supported arguments. And God knows how many blindly left-leaning ideologues we have walking in our midst. The problem is that the Republicans count

the politically irrational voter demographic as its base, and this base is growing. The question for me is not whether liberal elitism is justified, but whether the Democrats can survive being associated with it.

If organizing a backlash against liberal elitism has been a consistent theme among message-producing Republican thinkers and strategists for decades, heeding their advice and acting on this seems to have finally paid enormous dividends. With the surprisingly resounding endorsement of the radical right wing agenda implemented in the previous four years, it seemed clear that the new Democratic talking point must likewise address this apparent weakness. The left frantically asked in unison, "How can we convince our constituents to stop looking down on their conservative counterparts?" Simultaneously, right-wing columnists frantically and gleefully transcribed this soul-searching of the left for their own bemused readers, a break from their daily ranting that seemed symptomatic of a prevailing mood wafting through the political air. Victory had been tasted, and it almost seemed that, if only for a moment, there was no liberal establishment left to bemoan.

As the recent election moves further away and the discourse moves with it, strangely to speculation on 2008 presidential contenders, the consensus nevertheless remains that *something* must be done. This is a start. Party strategists will decide how best to proceed, or whether this is even an issue that a party can address. The best long-term plan (though it may smack of the deadly Kerryesque nuance) may involve a number of possibilities working in conjunction.

Seeking new demographics is one such method. One of the most stirring arguments I have encountered in support of rallying a new base is "The Urban Archipelago" (Google it). It is an argument responding to the most useful red-blue map of them all, the one weighted by population density. It immediately becomes clear looking at the blue towers emanating from most mid-sized and all great American cities, that the Democratic base is not located by region or by state but by the urban/exurban divide. If a state happens to have many of its residents in cities, then it is likely a "blue state," and even "ultra-liberal" California is actually decidedly red save for the blue islands of its cities. In its most positive potential reading, the Democrats may have a solid, obvious demographic base to rival the Christian right: urban dwellers (and self-described cosmopolitans elsewhere).

If eighty-four percent of New Yorkers voted against Bush, then the urban population can be rallied by appealing to issues New Yorkers care about: "urban issues" (and there are many). In its most dynamic interpretation, this would take the form of a whole new investment in urbanity in general. America, for all its wealth, has second-tier cities (forget San Francisco, New York, and Chicago), and to me this counts chief among the reasons for its relative conservatism among the other first world countries. Luckily, anti-urbanism in America, though it has a rich tradition here, is not irreversible. The "great white flight" that followed the second World War was not (contrary to popular belief) the result of free-market capitalism at work.

Cities are the most practical and efficient way for humans to organize, and produce the most sophisticated economic activity. So why have American cities been in a perpetual state of decay for the last fifty years? Well, it's a long story, but a remarkably consistent one, allowing a simple summary. Essentially, since the invention of the automobile and especially following WWII, a series of major and minor government incentives have resulted in a heavily subsidized suburban lifestyle. It became economically more attractive for the middle class to abandon cities for the suburbs. This trend, by grossly increasing automobile dependency has, by extension, required

Combating the Liberal Foreign Policy Deficit

By Lou Godfrey

After months of speculation about what exactly it was that cost John Kerry the White House, after the President pledged to spread liberty around the globe in his inaugural address, and after Iraq held its first free elections in that country's history, it is time for the American left to take a long, hard look in the mirror and examine what it really stands for in the world. With all the hullabaloo about this being the "Moral Values Election," if one takes into account the percentages of all the primary voter concerns that fall under the umbrella of national security and foreign policy, they are almost double those who cited moral values as their decisive factor in choosing a candidate. So in reality, it is more than fair to say that the Democratic Party, liberals, and the American left have a credibility deficit when it comes to foreign policy and international relations. It is not a matter of lack of engagement or articulation, but of lack of coherence and resolve.

This is really nothing new. For decades, the domestic agenda of the Democratic party—with an emphasis on preserving social security, better paying jobs, inner-city programs, and a degree of universal health care—has been wildly popular. But when it comes to matters abroad, the country sees the left as indecisive, appeasing, and bumfuzzled. In Peter Beinart's much publicized *New Republic* article, "A Fighting Faith: An Argument for a New Liberalism," he compares today's situation to that of a half century ago, when the American left was sharply divided over the Cold War. Eventually "hard" liberals carried the day over "soft" liberals by shifting the wing to a firmly anti-communist position, and saving its political viability. Beinart argues that the new left needs to take similar steps in the war on terror, and reframe its negative arguments about combating a radical, fascist form of Islam.

The most informative part of Beinart's argument is the emphasis on how modern liberals present their foreign policy in a contrary manner. The knee-jerk reactions to every neo-conservative move abroad have dominated the conversation; the rhetoric is almost never in the "pro" but always in the "anti-Bush." The almost exclusive focus on the misdeeds of the Administration in the world (and there are many) has prevented the left from constructing any sort of productive counter argument. So blinding is the (warranted) rage at Bush over the Iraq war, that it has stalled any attempts to develop a plausible alternative course for America in the world.

This negativity has also led to some rather absurd contradictions in the left's rhetoric. Cries to cut back on military installations and troop levels in foreign countries are often shouted by those who

call for greater intervention in acts of genocide, like those ongoing in the Sudan. These are two fundamentally opposing points—in order to help fight atrocities, we need to be able to deploy troops from neighboring areas, and thus we need to have bases in friendly (and yes, sometimes very unsavory) countries around the world.

All of this is not to say that liberals must become hawkish and war-mongering, but quite the opposite. Opposition to the misbegotten war in Iraq has been strong, and must be even stronger, but in some ways it has lost sight of some important pieces to the puzzle. Saddam Hussein was a brutal dictator, and the world is far better off without him, and anyone who watched the video of Iraqis lining up at the polls, and displaying their ink-stained fingers with pride, cannot deny that there is at least a glimmer of hope for the country. Of course, much of the invasion and occupation has been a disaster—we have virtually no key allies, the Pentagon has no actual plan for reconstruction, and thousands of American soldiers (and exponentially more Iraqi civilians) have died to find non-existent weapons of mass destruction. But all we hear from the left is a steady echo of "War is wrong, and Bush is a criminal." Why are we not chomping at the bit to propose new plans for reconstruction? We are in Iraq now, and no matter how much we hate how we got there, we do have a stake in the country becoming a viable liberal democracy.

The left needs to take back the language of liberty, democracy and freedom from the right, and help give them back their meaning. We must stand for tolerance, anti-authoritarianism, and freedom of expression everywhere in the world. Otherwise, how can we stand for them at home? This is not saying that we must impose ourselves on the rest of the world, but to stand with it, and lead by example. We need a new foreign policy—one with an emphasis on *foreign aid* to poor nations, freer and fairer trade to help developing economies give their citizens a suitable quality of life, and, yes, intervention when it becomes a moral imperative. We need to stop this indignation at every word that comes from the Bush Administration's collective mouth, we need to stop rallying against the mostly phantasmal fears of the WTO, and we need to stop contradicting ourselves on matters of grave importance. Democrats, liberals, and the left need to come together to develop a coherent and plausible foreign policy framework that we can hold our actions and rhetoric to. Otherwise we are doomed to fail in the face of a neo-conservative movement that can at least be trusted to shoot first and ask questions later.

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dependency on Middle East oil, an issue directly linked with our current involvement in the Middle East. So merely by stripping subsidies actively promoting the suburban lifestyle, a natural migration would be allowed to take place, and this would have a two-fold effect. The first, quite logically, is an addition to the urban base.

Another major need that is rightly getting mainstream attention is the idea of "reframing" issues. The Republicans mastered this technique years ago, and the Democrats must quickly play catch up. This would involve carefully choosing our language and framing issues in moral terms. The hope is that this new approach and new vocabulary might gradually trickle down to the general populace and change the perception of the Democratic Party. For example, a possible issue to address would be reframing taxes so they are seen more as something like membership fees to an exclusive club (in this case, America), rather than as a burden (implied by such language as "tax relief," a phrase Bush endlessly repeats). This general feeling towards taxes was constructed and fostered over time by the Republicans, and the Democrats must reconstruct the frame through which people view these ideological points of contention.

Yet the most ambitious (and to me the most promising) proposal I've encountered to reverse the Democratic Party's long decline lies in adopting a fundamentally different outlook in the war of ideas. While wealthy Democrats have historically looked to the Democratic Party to take the lead in defining the "vision" element regarding the future of progressive ideas, they have now started taking their money elsewhere, investing more generally in progressivism with an entrepreneurial model.

In today's culture of lighting-speed communication and internet-spread memes, the old model, dependent on a centralized purveyor of a message, is outdated. The proposed model recommends a scattered investment in a variety of liberal think tanks and startups with the idea that for every 100 investments, a handful will succeed and advance liberal ideas, not just Democratic Party interests. The intended end result is the long-term promotion of progressive ideas in general, rather than the two-year foresight that involves duking it out from election to election. If there is no long-term investment in liberal ideas, the inexorable slide of liberalism will continue.

One additional point seems so self-evident that it strikes me almost not worth mentioning, were it not that it is so consistently overlooked in practice. This is, that Democrats need to stand for something that is not merely a negation of the radical conservative agenda we currently face. With the fiscal conservatism of the Clinton administration setting a new precedent for Democrats, less and less really separates the Democrats from their conservative counterparts. The remaining issues, "national security" and "moral values," seem to be temporarily ceded to the Republicans. While Kerry

made a valiant, if sometimes misguided, effort to Democratize (note the capital D) these issues, they are currently Republican strongholds and should not be the first targets of attack. I don't pretend to know exactly what form the new Democratic vision should take, but it should be obviously distinguishable from the Republican line (in the name of democracy, if nothing else) and more importantly dynamic and immediately identifiable. When you hear the word "Democrat," some very basic but very clear ideas must come to mind. For too long the Republicans have been allowed to shape mainstream opinion regarding the Democratic Party. It's come to the point where even the word "liberal" is facing abandonment in favor of "progressive," after years of being pushed to the beginning of a list of ugly adjectives mouthed by conservative pundits and politicians.

The Democratic Party is licking its wounds, but this can be viewed merely as a wake up call, an exciting opportunity to re-orient a confused left. We must seek out something like the Christian base Republicans enjoy. For my money, think urban. We must acknowledge that Democrats cannot win elections in the long term while losing the idea war, and this requires reframing the issues the Republicans have long defined in the public thought. We need an optimistic, expansive, and yes, even realistic vision that stands as a clear refutation of the innumerable policy failings of the Bush Administration and the Republicans in power and we need morally loaded framing to sell it. Bush voters, whatever this implies about their motives as members of a democracy, chose simplicity over nuance. They perceived a positive program and vision for the future that was, honestly, not dynamically countered by Kerry. Unfortunately elections are not won by nuanced debate and rightness of ideas. The Republicans started winning when they realized that shaping people's perceptions, not the quality of ideas, was the real point of contestation. How else can we explain the way they have convinced the majority of their constituents to vote against their logical interests? It seems that Americans need to believe they are investing in a feeling rather than an actual system of ideas. If we believe our ideas are right, we must be pragmatic about this fact, and sacrifice the squeamishness toward advertising-style manipulation.

Oh, and maybe we could get a couple decent candidates next time.

(For more information on framing, go to www.rockridgeinstitute.org)

Nathan Bush is a Junior at Bard. He keeps a blog at <http://nathanbush.blogspot.com>.

Hunting Social Security

By Noah Weston

I can only liken watching a Bush State of the Union Address to attending a public prostate exam. Each seems to hold at least meager promise at first, but soon loses that hope in a sort of rectal muck once things really get in gear. The President plunged in with both hands this year, until he was up to his forearms in patriotic bluster and blatant falsehoods. One of these distortions could not pass muster, however, and that was his claim that the Social Security trust fund is bound for bankruptcy. A number of folks in attendance booed and shouted "no" at this notion, along with the remedy he has suggested to the phantom crisis: "voluntary personal retirement accounts."

"Voluntary personal retirement accounts." Well doesn't that just sound like candy rainbows and kisses from grandma? You aren't alone if that name arouses skepticism instead of reassurance. The Bush administration has apparently crafted it not only to fool the American people into overlooking the plan's crippling drawbacks, but also to subvert the original intentions of Social Security itself. Like its other key domestic reforms, the Bush Social Security fix will benefit everyone except for those who actually need support in this country, which is problematic since "support" is the essence of Social Security.

Despite the administration's insistence on the "individual" nature of its program, it actually hinges on cooperation. Simply put, current workers pay for the retirement of today's senior citizens. Since the era of the New Deal, this design has gone far in keeping the elderly from having to work out of necessity until their death. Of course, this strikes G-Dub and the White House as unacceptable, like the rest of the federal interventions in American life that the New Deal yielded. In order to dismantle Social Security, the most enduring and popular of these interventions, the administration has to lure the American public in with its religion of "personal ownership" over "federal entitlements." This creed has gained plenty of adherents and enough momentum to warrant the concern of every person concerned with the future of Social Security, and for that matter, the future of America as a society that provides for its own.

Every religion has its founding myths and the Bush administration's Social Security reformist faith is no exception. An apocalyptic prophecy animates the Bush rhetoric and obliges the President to reform. Around the country, he foretells a sort of fiscal rapture, where Social Security's trust fund takes in less than is needed to pay for the benefits of its current recipients, becoming insolvent, leaving the old destitute and eating cat food, while the wheeled ghost of Franklin Delano Roosevelt taunts the suffering elderly laborers with his withered, Socialist fingers. That's some scary shit courtesy of the same fear masters who brought you Iraqi Weapons of Mass Destruction and Family-Destroying Gay Marriages, other grand lies intended to bamboozle perfectly intelligent people.

In fact, Social Security has a longer lifespan than Bush claims. An "impending crisis" in this case means one that will not occur for at least fifty years. The General Accounting Office asserts that senior citizens will collect full benefits under Social Security until 2052, after which the system will only be able to pay 74 percent of its benefits. If you ask me, that is hardly a disaster on the horizon, but the President has a plan to placate stubborn people who do not smell the looming fires as clearly as he seems to. It requires

a trust in—wait for it—the private market and—get this—the principles of private ownership, which ironically did not seem to do much to forestall the economic depression that necessitated Social Security in the first place.

However, neither hindsight nor foresight has much of a place in the President's plan. If enacted, it will give current workers the option of taking a portion of the money they pay into Social Security now, money that finances the retirement of seniors, and placing it into private accounts for themselves. They can then invest that money in stocks and funds in order to provide for their golden years, reaping even more than they could with Social Security, or at least this is what the Bush administration alleges. Without getting into the eye-straining, mind-numbing calculations involved in assessing the veracity of this claim, just believe me when I say, "Don't believe the hype."

As I already mentioned, Social Security does not face an imminent collapse, but rather gradually increasing pressures to pay out full benefits for retirees. If the President truly worries about this outcome, he would not push a plan that takes money out of the Social Security trust fund and the imagined collapse of Social Security. But he does not worry about it since he wants to do away with Social Security as America has known it and benefited from it for years. Right now, it is a benevolent redistribution of income from the able-bodied, the youthful, the working, to the less able, less youthful sector of our population that has, frankly, worked enough. That offends the sense of fairness of a conservative like Bush.

In the President's mind, had those seniors been smart, seized upon every opportunity, they would not have to rely on the government's most successful pyramid scheme. They do not fit in with the ideal world of perfect competition that allows for the smartest and hardest working men and women (ok, just men) to dominate American commerce. These captains of industry constitute the second entity in Bush's plan, the stock market in which the current workers could invest their newly gained payroll tax money. Here, the Bush proposal surrenders all historical perspective and rationality. Social Security's desperate origins began with a market crash. Yet, the President asks Americans to ignore this and to ignore that Social Security's architects never envisioned "risk" as an active component of the system. This sounds to me, as it should to you, ignorant.

We need to stand by Social Security as it is, even if it does not stoke the kind of fire in us that other progressive causes do. In this case, the seemingly bland issue of Social Security represents a vital debate, one that each of us needs to join. It is between supporting those who sustain the nation, or casting aside the selfsame in the name of a privileged, misplaced notion of what's "fair." The latter stance made Social Security necessary in the first place, but it will mean the end of the program if President Bush has his way.

Homosexuality, Thy Name Is SpongeBob

By Regina Teltser

SpongeBob Squarepants, homosexual? Who knew? Dr. James Dobson, head of the right-wing Christian group Focus on the Family, apparently. At a dinner celebrating Bush's inauguration Dr. Dobson declared that a video featuring the children's cartoon character was gay propaganda, designed to encourage tolerance of same-sex lifestyles and families. Dr. Dobson and Focus on the Family later explained that they never bashed the animated invertebrate, but they "...see the video as an insidious means by which the organization [We Are Family] is manipulating and potentially brainwashing kids" (Paul Batura, a member of Focus).

There are a lot of characters far more "flamboyant" (if flamboyancy you are dead set on finding) than our absorbent pal, yet none of them was chosen. Bob the Builder? Not famous enough. Big Bird? Too old. Barney? Too despised. Spongebob? Perfect! A current beloved superstar who, thanks to a *Wall Street Journal* article some years back, is considered to be an emblem of the gay community. So there is a reason Spongebob was singled out.

However, there are problems with that reasoning. For one thing, the *Journal* is well-known for its right-wing agenda; for another, both the actor AND creator of

Spongebob said there was never meant to be anything homosexual about the cartoon. The *Journal* said the cartoon had a large gay following. The cartoon has an enormous child and adult following period; would it not mathematically make sense that a considerable portion of those followers are gay? Also, Spongebob is considered to be gay because he sometimes holds hands with his best friend, Patrick. Friends hold hands, little kids hold hands, why not sponges and starfish? Because a guy shows sensitivity or an emotional bond with another guy, he is gay. WHAT!? I guess that makes Jesus gay because he was compassionate, got kissed by Judas, and promoted loving thy fellow man.

Spongebob is not gay; if anything, he has a crush on feminist character Sandy Cheeks. And if he is, does it matter? Spongebob Squarepants is an excellent role-model for kids: he is kind, hardworking, talented, funny, upbeat, smart, does a job he loves, and is zany enough to not be disgustingly perfect. Don't we want a kid's role model who is compassionate and sensitive?

I See Great Things In Baseball

By Jim Chambers

I see great things in baseball. It's our game—the American game. It will take our people out-of-doors, fill them with oxygen, give them a larger physical stoicism. Tend to relieve us from being a nervous, dyspeptic set. Repair these losses, and be a blessing to us. —Walt Whitman

The day is April 8th, 1974. The Atlanta Braves open their season at home against the Los Angeles Dodgers. The Braves come up to bat in the bottom of the fourth, trailing 3-1. Darrell Evans reaches on an error, and the slender, 6-foot tall Henry (Hank) Aaron steps up to the plate for his second at bat. Al Downing delivers Aaron a 1-0 pitch, and Braves play-by-play man Milo Hamilton makes the call: "That ball is gonna be...outta here! It's Gone! It's 715! There's a new home run champion of all time! And it's Henry Aaron!" The Braves go on to win 7-4.

Going into the upcoming 2005 season, the San Francisco Giants' star Barry Bonds has hit 703 career home runs, 11 short of Babe Ruth, and 52 short of Hammerin' Hank. This year he will undoubtedly pass Ruth, and Aaron's record will follow should he have a great year, or play in 2006.

Bonds' race with history has been fouled, however, by endless allegations of steroid use. Anyone who is at all aware of the sports world has certainly heard much concerning the BALCO investigation, and the illegal designer drug THG. Bonds has been implicated in the investigation, and in the wake of the most recent leaks, he admitted to "unknowingly" using THG. Gary Sheffield and Jason Giambi of the Yankees effectively admitted the same, although Giambi conceded that he knew what he was doing.

Many have rushed to Bonds' defense, claiming that there is to date no patent proof of his guilt. After all, he only "unknowingly" used the substance, right? And beyond that, he claims only to have used THG a few times, which could yield no great results.

There are also those who would say that no drug could produce such numbers as have been posted by Bonds, that no cream hits home runs, that no needle could sharpen a batter's eye. Only talent generates the kind of stats that Bonds has had; that is the great contention of his allies.

But if this is so, where has the production come from? Bonds was always an All-Star, certainly a hall-of-famer, but something changed at a point. From 1986, his rookie year with the Pittsburgh Pirates, to 1999, he posted a total batting average of .305, with 445 home runs in 6,976 at bats (1 home run per 15.7 at bats). In his rookie year he was 21, and in 1999 he turned 34. Since 2000, his stats exploded. Spanning from the 2000 season to last year, he batted .341, and hit 258 home runs in 2,122 at bats (1 home run per 8.2 at bats, almost double his average from 86-99). Never in the history of American sport has any individual done so much at such an age. In 2001, at the age of 36, he annihilated the single-season home-run record, hitting 73. Prior to 2000 (when he hit 49), his highest home run total was 46, and that was in 1993. At the outset of his career, he was much feared as a base-stealer, and well recognized as a small man with a spindly frame. Today, at age 39, he resembles some kind of giant (no pun intended). He has the shoulders of an NFL linebacker, arms like cannons, and a dubious fiery yellow in his eyes.

Initially, I approached this issue from an objective standpoint. (I have no opinions on the National League; they don't really play the Red Sox). But amidst all the allegations, the steadily coughed-up admissions (each one a little worse than the last), and the ballooning numbers, I could not help, as a conscious human being, and an avid baseball fan at that, but come to the conclusion that Bonds is guilty as charged. And I would not call it presumptuous to assert that a majority of those interested in this issue would agree. One of the most damning statements against Bonds came from the man whose record he seeks to break, Hank Aaron, who initially supported Bonds wholeheartedly: "Drugs won't help you hit the ball. But can they make you recuperate consistently enough to hit the kind of home runs that these guys are hitting? Let me say this. Any way you look at it, it's wrong." So where is Barry's place in history? Where does it deserve to be?

Major League baseball has had its share of great criminals. It has its list of shamed, blacklisted men. Names like Rose and Strawberry come to mind, and of course, the "eight men out" of the 1919 Chicago White Sox. Although the scandal is not as freshly recalled in our day as Pete Rose's bad habit is, it certainly stands as the single greatest black mark on baseball's history.

The star of that White Sox team, or as they are now not-so-affectionately called the "Black Sox," was Joseph Jefferson Jackson, or "Shoeless Joe," from a minor-league game that he finished without shoes because his new spikes hurt his feet. Jackson could have been the darling of all baseball enthusiasts. He could have been the best who ever played. Babe Ruth once said, "I copied Jackson's style because I thought he was the greatest hitter I had ever seen." Walter Johnson, who belongs only with such names as Young, Mathewson, Gibson, etc., also spoke of Jackson's greatness: "Jackson didn't seem to have a weakness.... He gave me more trouble than anyone else." But Jackson is not mentioned by most with Cobb, Hornsby, Ruth, Williams or DiMaggio, although his lifetime batting average of .356 was outshined only by Cobb and Hornsby, neither of whom had Jackson's power. He hit .408 in his rookie year. But he took the cash. When certain White Sox players were approached about throwing the 1919 World Series, Jackson, a poor farmboy from Pickens County, SC, was offered \$20,000, more than triple his annual salary. This was in the era of the reserve clause, which kept salaries low, and players could not choose to play elsewhere if their owner didn't pay. Jackson took the offer, only ever saw \$5,000, and hit a series-leading .375, with 12 base hits, no defensive errors, and the series' only home run. It is doubtful, therefore, that he threw anything. He was also, by all accounts, a good, honest man, something Rose or Bonds could never claim for themselves. Nonetheless, his name was among those who had been in on the scam, and he was banned forever from the Majors and the Hall of Fame. He is said to have spent the remainder of his life in shame, always trying to get back, and eventually dying of a heart attack as the owner of a liquor store back in South Carolina. Some time long after the scandal, Ty Cobb is said to have gone into his store, and after receiving no

special greeting from Jackson, asked him if he didn't recognize him. In response, Jackson was said to have apologized, and said that he just thought Cobb wouldn't recognize him. Ted Williams and Hall of Fame pitcher Bob Feller petitioned Bud Selig to have Jackson reinstated post mortem, as did 3 U.S. Senators, from both parties. Selig has done nothing.

At the end of his interview concerning Bonds and the steroids allegations, Aaron posed the question, "Is this thing involving Barry Bonds in the same category as the guy who gambled on baseball?" Is it? Does Bonds belong in the Hall of Fame, where he now seems most definitely headed, while men like Jackson, whose only error, essentially, was being poor, are not? I would answer that with a great, big, drug-free, emphatic, NO. Bonds cheated. He may still be cheating. Jackson, or most anyone who is in the hall with a clear name, performed purely and undeniably on talent alone. Pete Rose, as a player, performed on talent alone. Whether or not Bonds has done that is seemingly unanswerable, mostly due to Bud Selig's inadequacy and the stubbornness of the Players' Association. And at best, his purity is so doubted that nothing could restore it.

Some claim that he is being denied the acknowledgement he deserves because he is disliked. I will concede that he is not a popular fellow, almost entirely due to his own rash behavior, but no one ever took anything away for that. Ty Cobb hated everyone, by most accounts, and vice versa, and he was among the first class of inductees into the Hall. Cobb even attacked a crippled fan, and stabbed a man off the field. *But he didn't cheat.* Aaron had perhaps the most adversity of anyone in his pursuit of Ruth's record. Let us remember that Aaron played in a day when racism was still rampant in sports. Here is an example of a letter he received in 1973:

"Dear Nigger Henry,
You are (not) going to break this record established by the great Babe Ruth if I can help it. ... Whites are far more superior than jungle bunnies.

My gun is watching your every black move.
Nothing Bonds has done or does can be excused because people don't like him. Any public figure receives great scrutiny, and in Bonds' case it's his own fault. Bonds has no place in the Hall, nor does he deserve to take Aaron's record. I say ban Bonds now, and let greater men reign in the annals of baseball history.



Why I'm Never Stealing From Anywhere Again, Except the Campus Center

By Gogo Lidz

Posh: It's always the same. I never know what to wear.
Sporty: It must be so hard for you, Victoria. I mean, having to decide whether to wear the little Gucci dress, the little Gucci dress, or... the little Gucci dress!
Posh: Exactly.
Baby: I know, why don't you wear the little Gucci dress?
Posh: Good idea. Thanks, Em. -Spiceworld

Over break, I decided to try my hand at shoplifting. I was freezing in Soho with lots of time to spend but no cash. My strategy: Walk into store, try on ideal scarf/pair of gloves/hat, browse around the racks so everyone gets used to seeing it on me, discreetly rip off censor tag, browse some more, walk out. It worked brilliantly. Soon I was toasting than Giselle Bundchen in a frying pan full of mink coats. Walking down West Broadway, gleaming in my new booty, I passed by a high-end lingerie store famous for its \$700+ lace bras. I couldn't resist. After a German sales woman in head-to-toe pink helped me find at least 27 matching embroidered bra and thong sets, I proceeded to the dressing room and decided to take a pretty raspberry-colored one. As I strutted out the door, my new undies

over my old, the German in pink shrieked "Excuse me!" Stunned, I turned around and started to shake. More shrieking: "There ist one set mizzing! Where ist it?" Still shaking, I managed a meek stuttered "Wh-what?" Even more shrieking: "Where ist ze mizzing bra unt panties?" "Uhm, maybe, uhm, I fo-forgot to take it off...le-let me go check." I made my way back to the dressing rooms and began to disrobe when suddenly the heavily brocaded curtains flung open to reveal Pink, very angry German Pink. "You tried to zteal from us! Who do you zink you are? Mein Gott!" She pointed at my undergarments "Give to me!" I shook some more. She hissed at me, screeching: "Now!" I gave them to her. She snatched my bags and emptied them onto the floor. She took my driver's license out of my wallet, "I am go-ving to call ze police!" That's when I snapped. "No you're not!" I cried, yanking my license out of her hands. I grabbed all of my stuff, including my boots which I had taken off to undress. Barefoot and holding my dress up with my hands I ran out of the store and back down West Broadway. "Ze Thief! Ze Thief!" she screamed after me. Thank God for jaded New Yorkers; no one paid any attention to her. I got away unscathed, but it scared my underpants off. And that's why I'll never steal from anywhere else again, except the Campus Center.

Saints Just Know

Time to log on again. The queers of Queen Anne Hill are hiding in little holes behind the bushes and viney fences and backroom doors, and you will find them there. You must find the hiding holes of the queers of Queen Anne. You must stop them from going in there, coming out later. Rest not until every hiding hole is uncovered, penetrated, and made known to the righteous.

o
no, daniel. i'm not interested in coffee sometime. sorry. if you do not want to fuck me in my ass, then you cannot satisfy me, and i don't want to hear from you anymore. when your balls start to shrivel and you just can't take the celibacy anymore, send me a message.

o
Call Vincent.

o
Vinny, hey. Yeah, I'm fine, just fine. Doing God's work, Vinny, as usual. You? Good, good, I'm glad to hear she's feeling a little better. Take care of her, Vinny. You're good to your woman. No, you really are. No, I'm serious. But anyway, I'm calling about business. Yes, business, Vinny. It's going very well, thanks. A few of them are getting close, I just know it. Yes, it's about the pictures, Vinny. Is Marcie in bed? No, I trust you. Yeah, maybe you should move to the other room. OK, good. See, the older pics were great. No, they were. Don't get me wrong, Vin. They're working well. Very well. But a few of my leads are asking for more. I'm glad you understand. Yeah. If I deny them, it might be the end. You understand, right? No, it's best to push forward. To keep doing the things that have worked so far. Can you come over tonight, Vinny? Yeah, I know it's late notice. I know. I have to deliver. The fags are getting antsy. It's the way they are. Hungry. And they want more. And, well, they want to see... they want to see skin this time, Vinny. I know I know I know I'm sorry. I didn't see this coming either. It's for Jesus, Vinny. For God. You're a good man, Vinny. I knew I could count on you. Can you be here by 11, Vinny? Leave her with a cup a tea. She won't question it. No, she's loyal to you, Vincent. Great. I'll see you then. You're a saint. Yep. Naw, I mean it. See you tonight.

o
those pics you sent me are really really hot. i want it. are you hungry, timothy? oh you know i'm hungry. real hungry. and i don't know how much longer i can wait. i'll send you some new pictures tonight. and then after that, timmy, i want to meet.

o
You are aware of holy things. If it's got God in it, sometimes you can see it on the outside. It shows like an uneven golden glow around the edges. It spills out from the left and right, like paint outside the lines of everything in the world that is good. Maybe certain other people, somewhere in the vast world, can see it. Like, maybe. But most people in the world are probably not close enough to God to see his favor in lights.

And so sometimes, just by looking, you know what people to trust and what people to suspect of evil. You know the goodness of many inanimate things, as well. You learn more about them all the time. Someday, you may know the precise goodness or evilness of every speck of dust on this earth. If He wills it. You know, so far, about the goodness of bread, and things forged in copper, and your vagina. You've never seen the glow on any other vagina. No, you've never seen another vagina at all. And you hope you never do. You've seen a penis or two, yes. But never a penis with a halo.

o
Hello, Vincent. Right on time, thank you. Here's an extra fifty. God loves punctuality. Come in please. Oh my, it's gotten so cold outside. And to think that those faggots are still fucking out there, right now, bare. Cold right down to the cores of their souls they are. Their flesh, Vincent. It hangs by the strings of Satan. Hangs right over the vast pits of hell, just waiting to be released to tumble between the lips of Hell. You're doing the right thing. Here, Vinny, right in here. We'll do it just like last time. I'll just give you my camera, and you can take your time. Yeah, that button right there, and if you push it half-way, it'll autofocus. And of course, Vinny, you can trust that I won't look at them. You have my word. Oh, it's no problem, Vincent. It's not difficult for me to do the things that I know God wishes for me to do. How much do you feel comfortable taking off? Oh, I see. Well, that might be a problem. No. You have no reason to be ashamed, Vinny. No, because you see, it doesn't matter what those sinners on the website think. Only what God thinks matters, you know that. God knows that by alluring those faggots, you walk in the steps of Jesus. Yes, I'm sure. I've never been surer of anything. If we want to know their secret places, we have to keep their dirty mouths watering, ever watering.

o
i'm so ready for you. are you ready for me timmy? tell me where you want to meet me. someplace secret you'd like to go.

o
Some of them ask right away for pictures, and when they do you say of course. You let them see Vincent. Sometimes they are satisfied. Sometimes they say no i wanted to check out the goods first if you know what i mean sorry to be picky but with a body like mine i'm entitled if you know what i mean. And in such cases, you send

them Vinny's good work, Vinny's skin. Vinny's member for them to debase themselves thinking about.

You knew Vinny would come through. Always knew. Poor Marcie. If only she realized her man is showing his dick to the queers of Queen Anne. What would she think then, poor girl. You wonder if he makes the same puppydog face, the one he makes for the boys. You wonder if he makes that face when he's trying to get her to let him put it in. He loves Jesus like he should. His devotion to the project shows you that. And you love him for loving Jesus. But you're only human. You can't help but smile at him, 400 x 650 pixels, getting it up for Jesus. The image glows, lined with gold. You wonder: why only like this? Vinny himself doesn't glow in real life.

o
yeah, al, i am circumcised. do you like it that way? which way are you?

o
How many you've got now. Eight have complimented the pictures of Vincent. Seven have sent you their own disgusting pictures back. Now you are waiting.

How close you are to finding them in their holes. You want so badly to pull them out by the greasy hairs on their heads. To hold their faces to the bright light, so the world will know them for what they are. Where is it they hide? Where is it where is it?

Marcie is sick still, and you don't care. You do not care because God has granted you a new ability. The ability to see with ultimate clarity not only when things are definitely full of goodness, but also when they are full of evil. It started last night, when you were in the bathroom. You were preparing your body for slumber, washing your face with white soap, flossing. And then the miracle came when you reached for your toothbrush. The bristles were as black as the pits of hell, so black they looked like emptiness. At once you were sure of the meaning of the blackness, and you screamed because you are a god-fearing woman, and at such a close proximity to evil, it was the righteous thing to do. You threw your toothbrush to the ground and ran from the room.

Kneeling on your bed, you began to pray. The beauty of God made you weep then. And because they were tears for God, you thought it only right for these tears to run freely. Better yet, the holy tears had to touch your skin. Not good enough to run down your face and hit your collar and there absorb. (God wants you to see.) So you slowly unbuttoned your blouse for God. (That's why he has chosen you to find the queers of Queen Anne.) How close you were to God, how hard you wept. With care you unzipped your jeans and delicately pulled them from your blessed flesh. (To see the glowing bread and eat of it.) And then your bra you loosened and took from your breasts. Looking down, you saw your nipples glowing gold. And you let the tears of God run so wet and bountiful that they streamed down your neck, trickled across your collar, welled there a little, overflowed and wet your heaving chest. Your chest. God is touching your chest.

o
no, i think nathan is a cute name. not as cute as your cock. when can i see it in person?

o
Hi. Vinny. How are you hanging in there? I'm really sorry about Marcie. I know, I know. It's horrible. But I'm sure she's in good hands there. They'll take good care of her, Vinny. Vinny. I need to talk to you. Listen, I know this is a really difficult time for you. But this is God's way of saving you. I trust you, Vincent. You're working for Jesus. I can see that. No, Vincent, I can really see that. With my eyes. I know I know, but trust me. Do you trust me? No, I'm going to ask you again, and I want you to search deep deep down inside of you and tell me truth. Do you trust me, Vincent? Thank you, Vincent. I'm going to tell you, right now, something very important. God knows we are doing his work. No. He has told me, Vinny. I'm serious. Vincent. You told me you trusted me. Do you or don't you? I'm not going to ask again. Good. You wouldn't want to displease God. He's on our side. Now I have to tell you something else, Vinny. This is going to be hard for you to hear. But try to be strong. God is lighting the way. It's about your wife. God has marked her in my sight, Vincent. It's bad. It's very bad. I see black where her eyes should be.

o
Closer, closer you come, and thanks to timothy. Night has fallen, but your body is glowing with the light of God. The faggots let their hunger get the best of them. timothy has a penis full of maggots. He is a monster. He wants to put the evil inside of you. No, he thinks you are Vincent. timothy wants spray the maggots inside of your Vinny. And the maggots will eat up inside of him. They will gnaw through the intestines of Vinny until all there is is emptiness inside. But they will not stop until they've crawled up his esophagus and through his sinuses to burrow in his brain and devour his optic nerves and then they will eat out his retinas and pour out pour out there. They will fall black onto his cheeks, they will stream down over his entire violated naked body.

No but timothy can be stopped, you know. He thinks he wants you. He thinks he has given directions to his secret dirty place for a fuck. There is a park, he tells you. Listen listen listen. A park where at the back of the lot, a hole is cut in the wire of the fence. And ravenous

monsters have peeled those wires back and pushed themselves through to the other side. At first a wall of leaves, but you must use your golden glow to show what lies behind. You must push aside the branches and enter the place, even though the hole is dirty and black, because Jesus lights the way.

o
oh god oh god oh please take marcie. take marcie, i said! take her now before i make you do it. you are on my side, remember? i pray and pray against her, and sometimes i think you're listening to me and doing my will and killing her as must be done. but you're hesitating, i can feel it. and hesitation is black. black as soot as assholes as. and when i say fuck me when i say hard i mean it and you will and if you dont god i dont care who you think you are. i will kill you.

o
Vinny, hello. I'm sorry to show up so unexpectedly. Yes, it is late. It's the only way. May I come in? Thanks. I know, I'm just scared Vinny, I'm so scared. No, I'll tell you in a minute. I just—oh god I can barely breathe—no I just—can I have some water Vinny? Oh you're a saint. God bless you. Vinny. Vincent. God wants you to come with me. No, not for very long. I thought you trusted me Vincent. God wants us to go right now. Just to the park. No, please Vinny, there has never been anything more important. Your glow. Your glow is flickering and if it goes out you know what that means Vinny. Come on. Do God's bidding. Yes, the park. I know the way. I made the faggot tell me Vinny. He's ready to meet us now. He told me how to get there and where the hole is and how to just push through to the other side Vincent. The faggot is Satan's puppet, Vinny—NO I will not calm down no oh god not now when I am touched by God. Satan's puppets all of them, and their flesh dangles by his strings. Come with me. Come now. I'm not going to ask you again Vinny. This? This is a syringe Vin. Shhh no shhhh don't be scared. God's will Vinny. Just come here. Dammit Vincent, I don't want to do it. It's God. His big design is shining bright. No no no no it's not going to hurt. Just come here. Look, I'll put it on the table. Look. OK look, it's not in my hands there's nothing in my hands. No, nothing. Just please let me touch you. Let me share the light with you Vinny. Your arm is so soft Vinny. Your skin. And look you just have the tiniest little hairs on it. I think you're beautiful Vinny and God does too. Here, that's better. Everything's fine. Just let me hold you like this for a while. You're OK. I promise. Everything is going to be fine if we just follow the light God has set for us. Are you ready to do God's will, Vincent? OK. Good. Now I'm just going to go pick up the needle again. OK? Can I do that? OK. You're fine shhhh you're fine. You have nothing to worry about Vinny because God has shown me the exact right place to put the needle in. It's right there, see the vein? It's not going to hurt you. Of course not. You're going to relax. You're just going to rest a little while. You're just going to follow the light.

o
You are looking at Vinny. Vinny's still resting. You have hurt him. No, don't feel bad. No, it was God who did it. And timothy shouldn't have struggled so. You knew what he wanted to do. He led you through the fence and the bushes so he could put the evil in Vinny. You wanted to catch him. You have to shine the light on them now so the righteous can see the dirt and the black of the queers. Your hands are covered in the red tears of God. But you must let them cover your skin. Your light shining through His tears will blind them all, and then they will know. timothy should have just done what you said, what he wanted to do anyway so why didn't he just do it. Then you wouldn't have had to force it like that. You said you just wanted to watch the righteous have to watch and see and know just how black. But he didn't want to listen to God, and you couldn't just let him disobey like that.

You hear the branches creaking under their weight. But the strings of Satan are strong and they will hold. Long enough for the day to come and for the world to see how awful. It was just because timothy was scared of the truth being found out. He said he couldn't do it when you watched and you said no faggot that's the point we all have to see now. Do the black thing, you screamed at him. You screamed it again and again and you pointed God's blade at his cock and you said put it in the dirty hole like you want. And timothy began to cry and his lips were bubbling with spit and he said i can't look at him anymore what the fuck did you do to him. You asked him if he really meant what he was saying. You asked him if he really didn't want to see anymore and he said no please no and so God made his eyes into black into nothing. Only the righteous are allowed to see you whispered as he screamed and then as he screamed like the hideous monster he is God put timothy's shaking red hands onto Vinny's skin and then soon it was too late and Vinny had God's tears running down the inside of his leg and God's tears ran down Vinny's swaying dangling legs dripped off his toes. And so God made Vinny's eyes black too.

But they are quiet now. Quiet finally after all of that evil. You were too late to save Vinny. You are sorry. You watch them swing from the strings of Satan in the wind and you will watch and the light will crawl up Queen Anne Hill and then everyone they all will see.

When the Sperm Meets the Egg

Hi Observer Sexpert.

So, I have bumps all around the base and underside of my penis. I have never had sexual intercourse or contact of any kind.

My crotch is sometimes itchy, but I don't know if it is unusually so. The bumps don't ooze puss, hurt, or anything else, they're just unsightly, noticeable to the eye and to the touch. So, what could they be; should I get checked for STDs? I read somewhere about "foyce spots", is this what they could be? Thanks!

Spots on the penis are very common and most do not have a serious cause. However, if you are in a state of discomfort, it is important to see a doctor about your problem. If you are sure it is not an STD, here are some possibilities for what the bumps might be caused by:

Behçet's disease: an inflammatory disorder affecting the skin, joints, nerves, eyes and other body systems. Symptoms may include large, deep and painful ulcers on the penis and scrotum, but is always accompanied by mouth ulcers. It is a potentially serious condition and prompt diagnosis and treatment is essential. It is not infectious.

Reiter's syndrome: an inflammatory condition that occurs with generalised arthritis. About a quarter of affected men have small, ulcerated plaques around the glans and foreskin. It can also affect muscles, the eyes and nails. It is caused by an abnormal immune response to a gut or genital infection. It may follow a prolonged, relapsing course, but can be treated. Reiter's syndrome is not itself infectious, but the germs that might cause it are. Some of them can be sexually transmitted.

Molluscum contagiosum: a common, benign, infectious viral disease affecting the skin and mucous membranes. It is a common skin condition in childhood when it is transmitted through ordinary peer contact. In adults it may be sexually transmitted and this is probably the commonest cause of penile molluscum in adult men. It appears as multiple, small, dome-shaped papules, often with a central depression or plug. A curd-like discharge can be squeezed from them. It may disappear without treatment, but freezing or cautery will usually get rid of it. Molluscum contagiosum is a marker for 'unsafe' sexual practices in adulthood and those affected should be screened for HIV

Hair follicles and sebaceous (sweat) glands: these are a normal part of the skin's anatomy and are commonly found on the penile shaft, particularly on the ventral surface (underside). They may be visible as small nodules or might only be felt as small lumps in the skin. They will have a hair arising from them that reveals their true nature. They are quite normal.

Pearly penile papules: multiple, small (about 1-3mm) papules running around the circumference of the crown of the glans penis. They typically develop in men aged 20 to 40, and around 10 per cent of all men are affected. They may be mistaken for warts, are not infectious and require no treatment.

Fordyce spots: small (1-5mm) bright red or purple papules that can appear on the glans, shaft or scrotum and usually affect younger men. They may occur as a solitary lesion, but frequently appear in crops of 50 to 100. They are painless and not itchy, but may cause embarrassment because of their appearance, or a fear that they might be sexually transmitted. They are abnormally dilated blood vessels, covered by thickened skin. They may bleed if injured or even during intercourse. They are not infectious and their cause is unknown. Although a number of approaches have

been tried, there is no simple, reliable treatment to remove them. Troublesome bleeding spots can be sealed with a device that uses a small electric current (electrocautery).

Psoriasis: most commonly affects other parts of the body, particularly the knees, elbows and scalp, but occasionally first appears on the penis, usually on the glans or inner surface of the foreskin. Psoriasis appears as thickened red papules or plaques with a well-defined edge. In uncircumcised men, and at other sites, it has a scaly surface. It rarely causes irritation. It is caused by an abnormality of skin production and can be inherited. It is unsightly, but rarely serious. There are a number of effective treatments available, such as steroid creams and calcipotriol cream.

Erythroplasia of Queyrat: appears as a sharply demarcated bright red plaque with a velvety surface. It is usually painless, and not itchy. It is an early manifestation of penile cancer and needs prompt diagnosis and treatment. Excision of the affected area is usually curative. It is not infectious.

Zoon's plasma cell balanitis: Zoon's balanitis appears as a bright red, shiny-surfaced plaque on the glans or inner surface of the foreskin. It is usually painless but may be accompanied by itching. The cause is unknown. It may respond to application of steroid cream, but frequently recurs. Circumcision is curative, but not essential. It is a harmless condition but can be confused with the much more serious condition of Erythroplasia of Queyrat. It is not infectious.

Eczema: most commonly affects other parts of the body, but occasionally it may first appear on the penis. In such cases, it may be a skin reaction to an irritant that is better described as dermatitis. Eczema appears as diffuse red plaques with a poorly defined edge and finely scaled surface. It frequently causes quite severe irritation. It can be caused by infection or local reaction to skin injury from chemicals or radiation. There are a number of effective treatments available, such as steroid creams. It is not infectious.

You've got lots to choose from. Good luck!

Dearest Bard advice column,

I'm not especially small, and my girlfriend is. Obviously lube is one answer. Any other possible solutions? Also, when applying lube, is it best to apply to my penis or inside her? Thanks!

If having sex is causing your girlfriend pain, you should make sure that she is aroused before intercourse. This may seem obvious, but it hurts any girl if her vaginal muscles are tight, not relaxed, and the natural lubrication is not there. If the girl is properly aroused, most anything should be able to fit... So my suggestions are foreplay and trying new positions that may provide a better angle for insertion. Use water based lube. It doesn't make a difference where you apply it, either to you or inside her. Good luck.

send your
FUCKING
questions to
gw876@bard.edu

this is not intended to
replace professional
medical advice.

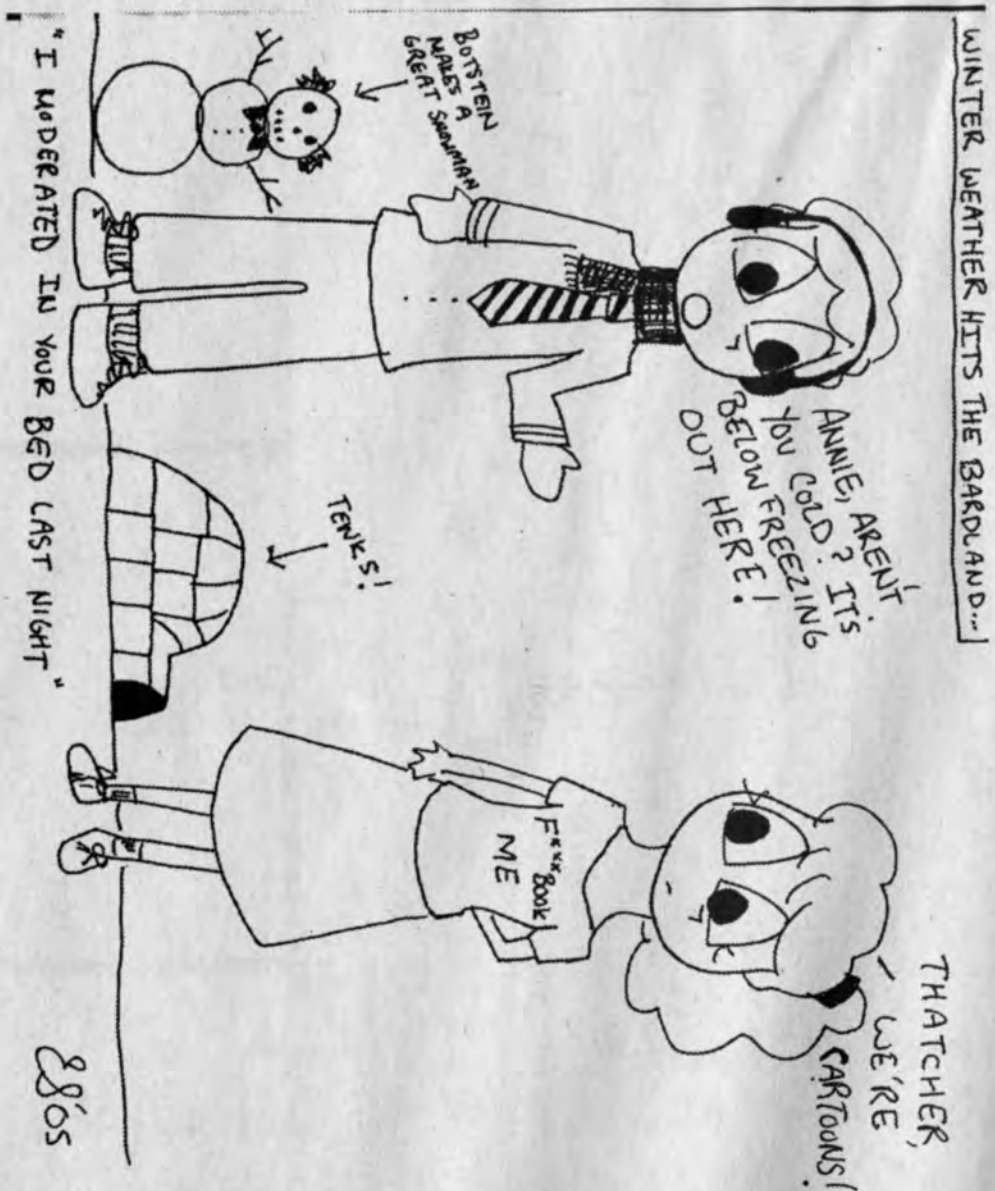
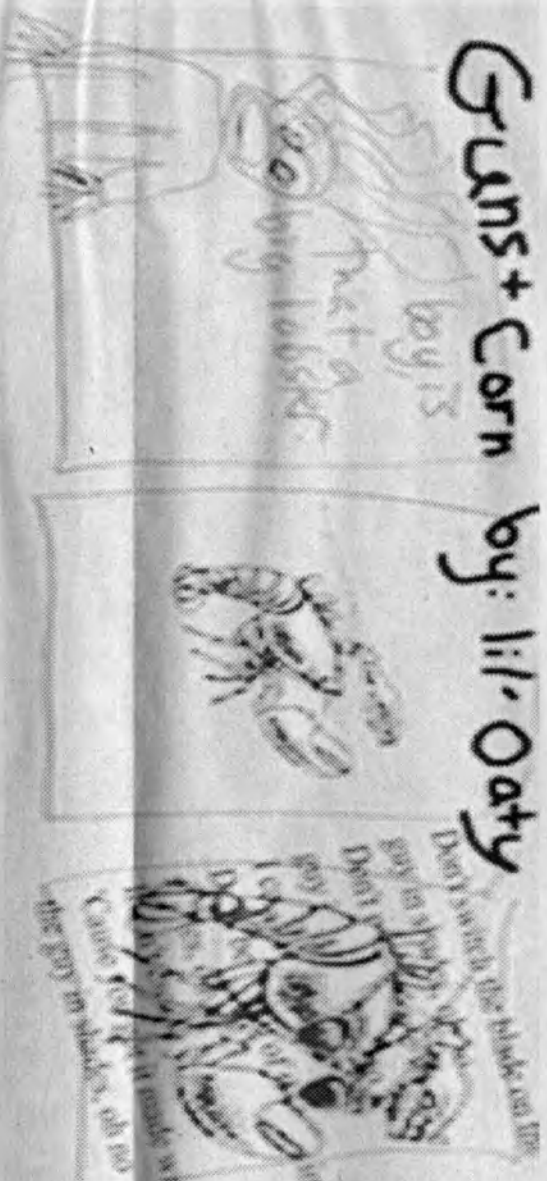
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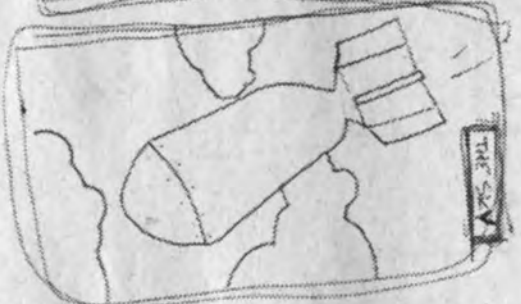
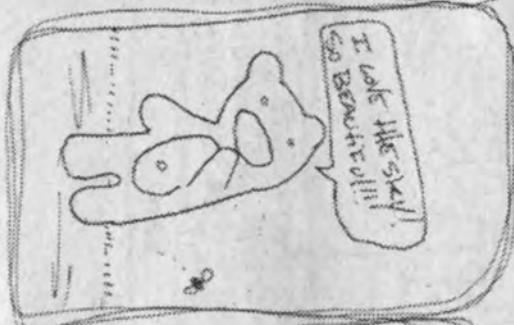


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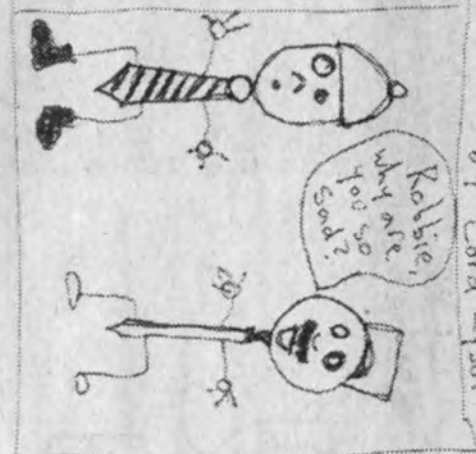
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MURKINHERNANDEZ



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by Lord Lysol



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By Titanamen Tanks

