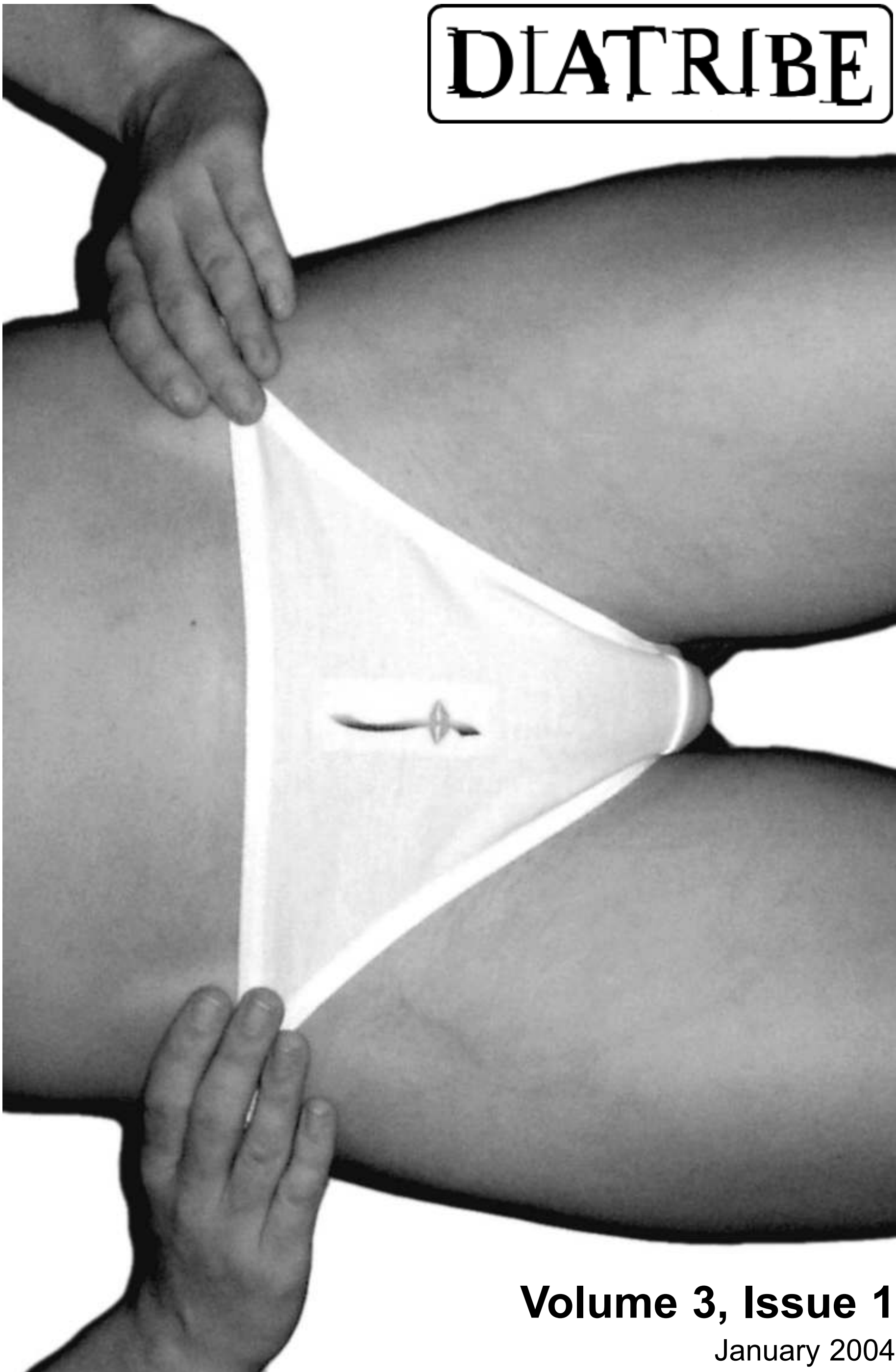


# DIATRIBE



**Volume 3, Issue 1**  
January 2004

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## DIATRIBE

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*Diatribes is printed by  
1000 Islands Publishers,  
Gananoque, Ontario*

*Diatribes Magazine  
c/o Alma Mater Society  
Queen's University  
Kingston, Ontario  
K7L 3N6*

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M. Hills  
Kingston  
January 2004*

## DIATRIBE

diatribes.ca

Volume 3 . Issue 1

January, 2004

*Marmoream relinquo, quam latericium accepi*

AUGUSTUS

A Few Words to  
Our Readers

Some days, dear reader, I would rather not edit this publication. Days like this, I search for solace afforded me by predecessors - some days, one imagines, Julius Caesar did not want to superate the Roman Empire, and Friedrich Nietzsche did not want to redefine Western philosophy. Some days, similarly, I do not want to edit Diatribes Magazine.

Let me obscure that for you, fair reader, with euphemism: I can and do imagine better ways to spend my quotidian life. More prosaic ways, like behind the bench of a Steinway, pouring arpeggios deftly into the keyboard, drowning out the champagne glass clinking twitter of soirée-seeking socialites. Or more touching ways, like standing barefoot and pregnant, gravidas six, before my estranged artist-husband, while his Aristotelian soul enacts an aesthetic epiphany that compels him to dive headfirst into the ocean for the "long slender bare legs" of some crane, some "pure, strange, seabird touched with the wonder of mortal beauty."

Perhaps, mortal reader, I'd rather ponder the great mysteries of objective reality. Like why, for example, we haven't found aquantized description of time or a geometry of prime numbers, why formal systems lack simultaneous consistency and completeness, why the cosmological constant fails our best-reasoned cosmographies, why Bertrand Russel ever won the Nobel Prize for literature, or why you, dear reader, persist in reading these lines of turgid prose.

I ponder many perplexing things, as I imagine you too must. Why, for instance, do I continue to edit this "bum," plebeian, excuse for an issue of a campus periodical? Because, dear reader, I must confess, I would rather suffer the nauseating agony of each questionable page than allow your vulgar hands to touch it.

*Difficile est satiram non scribere.*

J.M. Van Order  
Editor-in-Chief, Diatribes Magazine

# POLITICS

## ORIENTALISM

### ■■■ In Memoriam: Edward Said, 1935-2003

**I**t poses a difficult task to describe Edward Said's *Orientalism* in a few words, to capture succinctly a work that decries "compression and reduction." Nevertheless, the task is a necessary exercise; renewed interest in the Middle East has made it an essential book. Furthermore, it provides a starting point for the reflection of our thoughts and deeds in an increasingly globalized world. Finally, there is the pervasiveness of the work and its notoriety. Some praise it; others condemn it; all have heard of it. But how many have read it? And of those who have, how many have grasped its fullness, its illuminicity, and its flaws?

There can be no definitive interpretation of the work. Though thin by academic standards, it(???) masks the depth and complexity of the work. Said himself was multilingual and displayed his erudition in his sources. The main thrust of the book, however, is neatly summed up in the first paragraph: "The Orient was almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences."

The rest of the book chronicles the development of Orientalism (the discourse used to produce conceptions and atti-

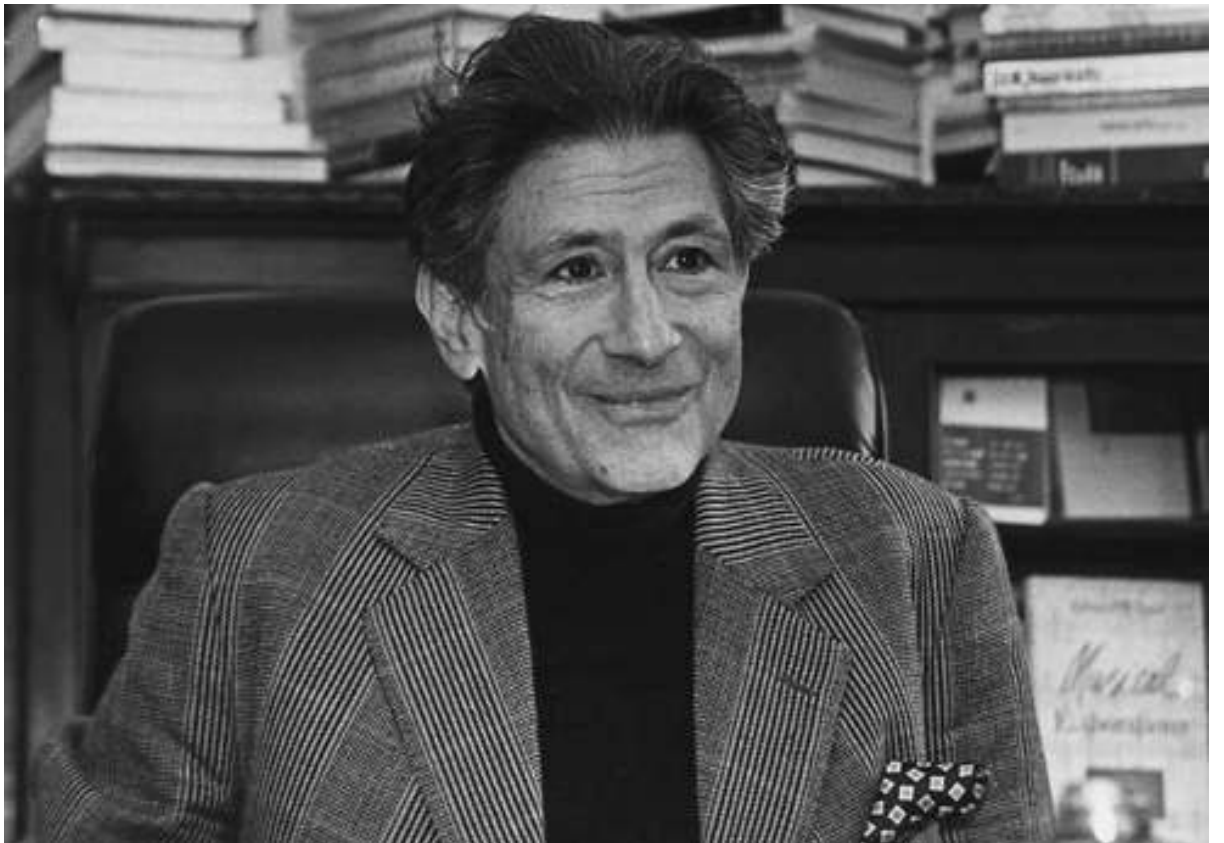


Photo by Joe Pineiro

**EDWARD SAID:** *The Professor during an interview in his office in Philosophy Hall at Columbia University. He spent most of his adult life there and was one of the leading voice at the university.*

tudes about the Orient) in the West. The book can be roughly divided into three periods: pre-imperial, colonial, and post-colonial.

The narrative begins with the ancient Greeks' characterization of the Orient as the "other." While the Asiatic was praised for its grandeur, there was also an effort to contain it, to separate it from the European rational mind which felt threat-

ened by the excess of Asia. Christian writers later adopted this attitude toward the ascendancy of Islam. Fear spread of this new Asiatic threat to Christian Europe. To allay those fears, Church and lay writers portrayed Islam as a lesser, derivative copy of Christianity. As Said described it, "Islam [was] judged to be a fraudulent new version of some previous experience, in this case Christianity." In this way, the European mind rested more easily; Islam was but a misguided Christianity.

Time passed and Europe took on empires. Orientalism was transformed from coping mechanism to means to control in the newly subjugated colonies. Writings of this time about the Orient and the Oriental can be divided roughly into two folds: (1) that it is of the lower order, abnormal, dwelling in darkness, or (2) that it is the place for European glory or the fertile soil that will allow for the revitalization of the European mind. The list of the guilty includes (but does not limit itself to): Sacy, Renan, and Lane, Carlye, Flaubert, and Chateaubriand, Marx, Balfour, and T.E. Lawrence.

The influence of these writer is manifested in the current modern period. The void left by England and France after WWII shifted the residence of Orientalism from Europe to America. The Orient changed from a literary to an administration concern. But the old, stubborn structure remained. Words like "Arab" are reified to be things-in-themselves that could be studied with qualities that can be identified, to be spoke of in a freestanding, ahistorical manner. The old attitudes remained as well. In popular or scholarly works, the "Arab" is caricatured to be something lacking in thought or conduct. Again, the Oriental is seen in the passive or as a threat to civilization or simply a thing that requires a helping hand up even if by their nature, they can never succeed in getting anywhere.

A quick run-through of the book, of course, equally brushes past both its genius and its flaws. Orientalism is a work much lauded and much criticized. Said himself wrote in an afterword that, "Orientalism is a partisan book, not a theoretical machine." This might be true, but it is still a book for those interested in such issues.

- S.C.U. Lao

#### **The Terms of Orientalism**

**The Orient** signifies a system of representations framed by political forces that brought the Orient into Western learning, Western consciousness, and Western empire. The Orient exists for the West, and is constructed by and in relation to the West. It is a mirror image of what is inferior and alien ("Other") to the West.

**Orientalism** is "a manner of regularized (or Orientalized) writing, vision, and study, dominated by imperatives, perspectives, and ideological biases ostensibly suited to the Orient." It is the image of the 'Orient' expressed as an entire system of thought and scholarship.

**The Oriental** is the person represented by such thinking. The man is depicted as feminine, weak, yet strangely dangerous because poses a threat to white, Western women. The woman is both eager to be dominated and strikingly exotic. The Oriental is a single image, a sweeping generalization, a stereotype that crosses countless cultural and national boundaries.

**Latent Orientalism** is the unconscious, untouchable certainty about what the Orient is. Its basic content is static and unanimous. The Orient is seen as separate, eccentric, backward, silently different, sensual, and passive. It has a tendency towards despotism and away from progress. It displays feminine penetrability and supine malleability. Its progress and value are judged in terms of, and in comparison to, the West, so it is always the Other, the conquerable, and the inferior.

**Manifest Orientalism** is what is spoken and acted upon. It includes information and changes in knowledge about the Orient as well as policy decisions founded in Orientalist thinking. It is the expression in words and actions of Latent Orientalism.

- from <http://www.emory.edu/ENGLISH/Bahri/Orientalism.html>

## HOLLYWOOD POLITICS

### ■ ■ ■ Dave on Arnie

After weeks of anticipation, the results of Tuesday's recall election came as little surprise. A late night phone call from current California State Governor Gray Davis confirmed the inevitable as the Democratic veteran officially conceded the election to Hollywood action hero Arnold Schwarzenegger. Boasting an impressive resume that is marked with success at every post from his days as a decorated military Captain to his rise to the top of state politics, Gray Davis had decisively won every major election in which he participated. However, over the past months, Davis's latest challenge grew far bigger than the Republican driven recall election, greater than a slew of seasoned political opponents vying for his job, and threatened to all but elimi-

nate any individual platforms which may have at one point been held relevant in electoral politics. The Governor was struggling against an emerging American political phenomenon that provides a bridge for celebrities to cross over from Hollywood fame to public office. While Schwarzenegger is the latest individual to boast this feat, he joins a growing list which dates back to Ronald Regan's tenure as President and includes such notable examples as former Carmel mayor Clint Eastwood, the past Governor of Minnesota Jesse Ventura, and the late Sonny Bono who served in Washington as a member of the House of Representatives. While their political experience varied, one fact remained consistent: each individual's reputation stemmed from their public persona as a

celebrity, not from a long career of dedicated public service. The familiarity of a strong household name provides a level of comfort during elections, a strategy which the Republican Party has successfully used on a number of occasions.

Davis's defeat cannot be solely attributed to Arnold's celebrity status just as it cannot be attributed to the action hero's political experience or leadership qualities. Since being initially elected in 1998, Davis's popularity and support has declined, largely plagued by the enormous state deficit and the recent energy crisis. Over the past few years many Californians began to view Davis as the only alternative to an even more unappealing Republican option. Despite a strong Democratic tradition, Schwarzenegger's entrance into politics came at a time when Californians desire change and Arnold was the man to bring it.

While America's fascination with celebrities is prevalent in so many aspects of society, the nation's ability to associate a name and a face with a char-

acter or catch phrase of fictional context may very well have been Arnold's single greatest qualification for the job. After all, Arnold made his name, one that most wouldn't attempt to pronounce, through his ability as an actor. His career is dependent on his ability to adapt to a role, personality, or character. Clearly, this does not give Schwarzenegger the aptitude to balance a budget or solve the energy crisis, but, it does place him in a position to surround himself with top political advisors the same way a lead actor depends on the supporting cast to strengthen his or her performance.

Schwarzenegger's career has been based on his ability to play the hero, defeating evil in film after film. Since September 11th, the United States has needed and created heroes. California is a state within a nation, vulnerable and susceptible to fear, which desires the safety and comfort that only a recognizable real life fictional action hero could provide.

## THE WAR AGAINST MUMIA ABU JAMAL

### ■ ■ ■ Dave on Mumia

In 1999 Arnold Beverly signed an affidavit which vividly described the events of December 9th, 1981, the night Police Officer Daniel Faulkner was murdered in a Philadelphia neighbourhood. Despite his confession, Beverly remains uncharged of the crime.

A year after the incident journalist, advocate, and former Black Panther Mumia Abu Jamil was convicted by a jury and sentenced to death by the Pennsylvania State Courts. Since then, despite numerous pleas, Abu Jamal has remained on death row as his story has grown into perhaps the best known appeal against the horror of the death penalty and the unjust persecution and treatment of a political prisoner today.

Abu Jamal's gradual rise into the public eye began at the age of 15, when his membership in the local chapter of the Philadelphia Black Panthers handed him the position of Minister of Information. This began Abu Jamal's career as a journalist, a field in which he excelled. He was highly regarded and awarded for his work in print and on radio which dealt with such issues as racial inequality and police brutality in America. Most of all Mumia was an activist whose political views were often seen as extreme. Despite this Mumia would not be silenced, a fact that has not changed even after his life did.

After being convicted in 1982, the prosecution in the case demanded the death sentence claiming that Abu Jamal's political beliefs were revolutionary and dangerous in nature. This has raised the

question that many have since asked, was Mumia convicted for the murder of a police officer or his radical political views? While the actual events in question remain unclear, a significant degree of reasonable doubt has been uncovered since the original trial. So much so, that Amnesty International found the proceedings of the case to violate numerous international human rights standards. Still, Mumia remains incarcerated in SCI Greene located in Waynesburg, about 45 miles outside of Pittsburgh. The activists that has adopted Mumia's case has reasons to remain optimistic: Abu Jamal's execution has been deferred on three separate occasions between 1995 and 2001. Regardless of these small victories, the Death Penalty continues to kill at an increasing pace across the United States in an unjust discriminatory fashion.

Mumia's home state of Pennsylvania ranks fourth in the nation for number of inmates who reside on death row, only behind California, Texas, and Florida. Of the 241 individuals who await imminent death, 167 are minorities. Within Pennsylvania, Philadelphia's death rows houses the highest percentage of African Americans in the nation. At a staggering rate of 83.2%, many has drawn comparisons to statistics from South Africa during the reign of apartheid. It has become so apparent that the state's application of the death penalty is influenced by race, that the Supreme Court recently appointed a Committee on Racial and Gender Bias in the Justice System to further explore the

issue. The extensive report called for current Republican Gov. Ed Rendell and the State Courts to order a moratorium until further research can be completed. Regardless, the Governor still claims that he had not yet seen sufficient, "compelling evidence" to warrant such actions. Perhaps Rendell does not wish to break with the tradition set by his predecessor. Former Republican Governor Tom Ridge signed an unprecedented 215 death warrants while in office, seven times more than all former Governors over the past 30 years combined.

Not only does Pennsylvania's application of capital punishment seem to be racially motivated and excessive, it also appears fixated on class. Of the 241 individuals who currently await execution, 90% could not afford legal council in their defence, and were forced to rely on the State to provide support. Unfortunately these individuals could only rely on the State to provide the bare minimum. Pennsylvania does not provide any funds for post-conviction legal defence. Thus these inmates do not have the effective ability to appeal their death sentence.

Without the ability of appeal individuals are stripped of any remaining hope, and while many who support the death penalty may believe that the punishment fits the crime, they must remember the justice system is imperfect. Nicholas Yarris spent the past 21 years on a Pennsylvania death row after being convicted of a 1981 rape and murder charge. He was recently exonerated after DNA results indicated his innocence. This was the fifth case in which new evidence pointed towards an individual's innocence while he awaited imminent death, but only the first to do so on the

basis of DNA evidence. In fact, DNA evidence is only available in approximately 15% of homicide cases, leaving 85% unverified by science. Those in favour of capital punishment may claim that the Yarris case is an example of the justice system's ability to correct its mistakes; however, between 1973 and 1999, 84 defendants sentenced to death were later found to be innocent, many after already spending a life-time in prison.

Despite the conditions, the Government's war against Mumia Abu Jamal is failing. Notwithstanding their attempts to silence the imprisoned journalist, Mumia's words can be found in a



number of published books, spoken word albums, across the internet, and formerly on Democracy Now's radio program "All Things Censored", which was recently cancelled by the Prison Radio Project after broadcasts of Mumia's voice had been banned by the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections. For every day Abu Jamal spends in prison, his cause grows into a truly international affair. Protests in support of Mumia have reached virtually every continent on the earth. Still the activist remains imprisoned by a system which he has spent his life condemning. Whether this system will turn Abu Jamal into a martyr or a victim may only be an issue of perception, one which will continue to exist within an inherently flawed concept of justice.

# OPINIONS

## INCLEMENT WEATHER

■■■ Canada's Only National Identity.  
An analysis by **C.A. Bellemare-Davis**

**O**urs is an awkward, unwieldy nation of too many languages, too many time zones, too many square miles, and too few people. Our multiculturalism stretches the definition of "nation" to a technicality. We look to caricatured beavers and beer commercial philosopher-kings to remind us of our national identity; grumpy threats of separatism tug perpetually at provincial seams. Yet, Canada lives in spite of it all, and like a family of squabbling children, we still congregate at the same dinner table. Some will attempt to explain this phenomenon in all manners of starry-eyed, patriotic drivel. Some will point to the beaver, or the beer, or the statues of Sir John A., but not I. I will tell you that our greatest strength lies in a good shovel.

Heed me well, for I am wise in the ways politick.

In this vast land of different peoples, it's easy to become detached from one another. When we have quiet, we become insular. We become isolated in our local news, in our own languages and cultures, and become self-absorbed. In northern Alberta or Acadian New Brunswick, people grow bored with that bizarre, central power called Ottawa, and ask themselves, "Why do I pay for that [expletive] circus?" Then they begin finding reasons to resent their federal government, which, large or small, will continue to feel supremely important. They develop a gut feeling that they have no need for this leviathan entity of Canada, and they begin to consider secession.

As Canadians, we depend on disaster to keep us together. When people have little else in common, a good emergency performs excellently as an ice-breaker. It encourages consensus and focused thought, and it gives the group purpose. Upon consideration, one finds that, contrary to popular logic, "peace and quiet" forms the most damaging political environment. In the political world, idle tongues are the Devil's workshop. Peace merely invites shit-disturbers out of the woodwork, championing petty issues out of proportion. Scandalous, backbencher revolts in Parliament almost never occur when matters of importance are at hand, only when there is little else to do. When Stockwell Day lost control of the Canadian Alliance, he lost it to a host of rather vague complaints from a splinter group of renegade MPs (as "renegade," one supposes, as a biker gang). Every morning paper featured an analysis of

lurid and scandalously divisive internal party politics. It struck me that the power struggle itself incited more interest than the issues, which, at heart, amounted to little more than some public slip-ups by Day. He voiced a few gaffes, and held an unorthodox press conference in a wetsuit - all golden in comparison to past slips by Mel Lastman, Jean Chretien, and George Bush (none of whom were ousted.) No, as any good gossip will tell you, it is the act of politicking that drives politics; the fun and fire of the scandal perpetuates itself. Consequently, we need some real problems to occupy our attentions. We need an emergency, one that really isn't anyone's fault, to keep us from each other's throats. We need a disaster somewhere, like an ice storm or a hurricane, a flood or a forest fire, or just a massive power failure. We need one that distracts us from our petty woes, and gives us healthier worries.

On the surface, Canadians love unity in the same way that misery loves company. This is not to say we are miserable people; more accurately, it is that we share a taste of that sort of jealous, smug sarcasm toward each other's pains. It's the attitude that snickers quietly when the slacker town of Vancouver awakes buried alive in holiday snow, or when aloof but powerless Ontario sits in the dark, looking across at the gaudy lights of Quebec's Casino de Hull. We're not cruel neighbours, really, but some folks become significantly more tolerable when they receive a pie in the face once in awhile. Few of us can resist the poetic irony and timeless satisfaction of seeing bullish siblings brought down a peg. After all, it would be unfair if nothing but good things charmed one province. No, sharing a nation means sharing some weakness from time to time. No province is an island, dammit . . . figuratively speaking.

On the receiving end of disaster, Canadian weather is like a good, honest slap in the face, often with admirable wit and timing. The flamboyant separatism of egocentric Quebec quieted down some after a healthy dump of snow and ice. Perhaps a good disaster reminds us that we all need a little help from our friends. Growing up in Quebec, I could sense the ever-present separatist tension, and I recall the feverish peak it reached come the 1995 referendum. Quebec had preoccupied itself unhappily with its differences from the rest of Canada.

I also remember the Ice Storm of '98, and how the province's power grid fell to its knees. For those who don't know, the island of Montreal came within a hair's breadth of losing power altogether; massive evacuation plans were being drafted for just such an event. No one wasted time worrying about respect or political distinction then, I assure you. The Canadian army, well trained in the art of fighting inclement weather, drove in with shovels and generators to help lift the province out of its darkness. Five years later, Quebec now has its first Liberal, federalist government in ages, and secession concerns have taken a back seat. Of course, you could make a socioeconomic analysis for this change of heart, but that would be typical. A thorough mess like the Ice Storm was long overdue, and it reminded us that being Canadian means being able to rely on your neighbours for help.

Canada has a long history of catastrophic lessons learned. Fittingly, every province has (or has had) its central resource, and each one can gripe about related troubles. The decline of the Atlantic fisheries has married Newfoundland to Canada; coal, similarly, has made a mistress of Nova Scotia. Quebec was hit where it hurts-- its prize hydroelectric grid, and Manitoba's farming flatlands let the Red River flood spread unabated. Sure enough, a tremendous forest fire ripped through B.C.'s central natural resource just this summer, and a good chunk of Ontario suffered the inconvenience of a widespread outage, which fittingly rewarded an overdeveloped sense of independence with federal help.

At the heart of our collective patience with each other lies this understanding that sooner or later, we'll each land ourselves in a bind. At any given time, somebody, somewhere, threatens to strike off on his own and make try his fortune in the global economy. But the rest of the country can smile and nod, knowing, that one day soon, they will enjoy picking him up out of the debris. That's the gruff sort of friendship we have forged for ourselves; sharing thick and thin, strength and weakness, and the knowledge that our Canadian army will fight off snowstorms and hurricanes for us. If we leave Canadians at peace, they have nothing left in common. Let us have disaster. Bring on the bad weather, and watch the flag blow outside.

## talking

R E D S

*What do you think of the newly merged P.C. Party?*



"As we say in Bulgaria: 'Създаването на правилна партийна линия и нейното единодушното одобрение от членовете на партията е най-важния факт и фактор.' "

Georgi Dimitrov



"Just like your imperialist, Bush-mongering neighbours."

Nikita Khrushchev



"First unite the Left, then unite the Right, then rise, Proletariat, rise!"

Vladimir Lenin



"Kill 'em all! ...Did someone record that?"

Josef Stalin



"It's like chasing both parties to Mexico before bludgeoning them to death with an alpenstock"

Leon Trotsky

# EAT YOUR SMARTIES AND DRINK YOUR COKE TOO!

■■■ A Realistic Look at Corporate Sponsorship on Campus,  
by **C.T. Shea**

**G**o to the library – get some free Smarties – what’s wrong with that? While you’re there, why not find out about how to use QCAT or do research – when your paper is due in less than a day and you have yet to start, you’ll be thankful you took the time now to learn the system (never mind the free Smarties!) On your way out of the library, why not pick up an ice cold Coca-Cola before you head off to study in the Chubb Insurance Room in Goodes Hall. Once you’re there, pull out your Deloitte & Touche folder and KPMG pen to get to work on your case study of IBM. Sound ridiculous? Not necessarily.

Corporate presence is felt everywhere on campus. But before people pull out their bells and whistles to complain, try to imagine life as you know it without all of the resources that major corporations provide to the university. If you have a problem with the lack of beverage choices on campus due to the Coke exclusivity contract, start thinking about the lack of course choices due to a shortage of qualified faculty members or decent lecture halls that would ensue if Coca-Cola did not support Queen’s financially. Imagine no conferences, no competitions, no clubs, and no design teams. Major corporations are key supporters of student activities and education, which all aid in distinguishing Queen’s students as exceptional.

However, the buck does not stop there. New facilities such as Goodes Hall and Beamish-Munroe Hall (the ILC) rely on corporate support for edification. Dupont Canada funds “the most important staff position associated with the

integrated learning initiative in the Faculty of Applied Science...” Many research initiatives throughout campus find funding from companies such as the Bank for Montreal, Falconbridge,

too thin; therefore, a creative solution is necessary. Then in comes corporate sponsorship and all that it entails. Not only are logos plastered everywhere, but an ethical question arises.



## ONTARIO POWER GENERATION

*photo by J.M. Van Order*

**THE QUEEN’S UNIVERSITY SOLAR CAR:** *Some text goes here to describe the pic.*

and Placer Dome, to name just a few. And these campus facilities, faculty members, and leading-edge research projects distinguish Queen’s University as a great learning institution.

If you take all the corporate support away, what’s left? A financially sketchy institution whose resources will be spread

Isn’t it ironic that Ontario Power Generation supports the Queen’s University Solar Vehicle Team, the largest “environmental initiative” on campus? Of course not! It makes Ontario’s largest polluter look environment-friendly, and because of that funding, Queen’s can boast a world-class student project. Isn’t it also ironic that

Nestle helps teach students here at Queen’s how to use the library when the literacy rates in some communities where they operate are extremely low? This creates an ethical question: should the money still be taken? Yes.

Why so? Let’s look at the benefits of \$1 given to the Queen’s University versus keeping that \$1 in the corporation. Keeping the \$1 in the corporation to solve its own problems will feed into high, executive salaries and high-volume marketing campaigns. The benefits of using the \$1 in Queen’s far exceed the first solution to an immeasurable point. This \$1 will be used to enhance the education of a student who might one day develop a viable environmental solution or act as an ambassador or promote business ethics. The benefits derived from this student under top faculty tutelage in state-of-the-art facilities finds direct correlation to future success and achievements. This one student might also find fortune enough to later have the means to donate back to the university in an attempt to eliminate campus corporate presence if he or she so chooses.

If corporate sponsorship on campus still bothers you, let’s think of some ways to get around that problem. First, all corporate sponsorship could be eliminated, thus wiping out the accomplishments needed to distinguish Queen’s students and Queen’s as a learning institution. Secondly, politicians more friendly toward public service could be elected to government, all taxes could be raised exponentially for public services, then business would flee Ontario to avoid taxes, and then we land back at square-one. Thirdly, and most effectively, an “Opt-Out of the Coke Sponsorship, Opt-Into More Tuition” option could be developed for concerned students who feel strongly enough to put their money where their mouths are. Any takers for option #3, I’d love to hear from you! So, the next time you walk into the library, take some free Smarties and shut up.

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# ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

## FRED EAGLESMITH

■■■ Straight from *Cocamo Nightclub*,  
09/26/03  
by **S. Henderson**

Steve Earle has argued that “Townes Van Zandt is the greatest songwriter on earth, and I’ll stand on Bob Dylan’s coffee table in my cowboy boots and say so.” Recently I had an argument with a colleague of mine who firmly believes the same is true of Southern

Ontario’s Fred Eaglesmith. This he insisted, even as I presented him with what I saw as incontrovertible evidence that he was

wrong: “Neil Young”, I told him. But he wasn’t kidding- his resolve didn’t shrink. And he looked at me with a wry grin and pledged his allegiance: “Fred J. Eaglesmith is the greatest songwriter on earth, and I’ll drive onto Neil Young’s ranch in my tractor and say so.”

A pretty good endorsement. And so, last Friday night I relished the opportunity to see (for the first time- I had held off of buying a record in lieu of catching a live show) if Mr. Eaglesmith did indeed live up to such praise. Frankly, he doesn’t- for my money Young still has the breadth of styles, moods and attitudes that sets him apart from the pack- but he’s pretty darn good. Very good, in fact.

In the unlikeliest of venues, Eaglesmith plowed through a short set dominated by songs of his farmland home, peopled by everyman losers and nobodies living simple, sometimes tragic

lives. There was a freight train, a tractor, more than a few horses, and at least one song about diesel gas (the aching, gorgeous *Water in my Fuel*).

What was so striking about this material lay not in its originality- for it

was almost always straightforward in both musical and lyrical composition- but rather in its enviable success at reflecting the complexity of the mun-

dane. His are “story songs in which very little happens, in which action is far less significant than inaction. As a result, they are the kind of story songs that conjure up real live fleshy images and emotions.

Backed by a reliable four-piece country band (which, to my delight, included semi-legendary Peterborough multi-instrumentalist Willie P. Bennett), Eaglesmith’s rough and tumble vocals scratched through the music like a rake through fallen leaves. There was humour, poetry, and every indication that behind these 20 or so numbers were another 100, 500, who knows how many more. No, Eaglesmith isn’t yet to be counted among the all-time best out there, but apart from Gillian Welch, Dan Bern, Victoria Williams and Jay Farrar, I can’t think of any songwriter I have heard this year who affected me so deeply.



## THE WEAKERTHANS

■■■ *Reconstruction Site* (Epitaph, 2003)  
reviewed by **S. Henderson**

Rarely has a record this good (this well written, performed, produced, realised) been released by a Canadian rock’n’roll band of any description. Put plainly, Winnipeg’s Weakerthans have put together a truly remarkable piece of art.



There is a special, enviable wittiness here, and an infectious irony colouring even the less successful tracks. It’s music you will listen to with a smile, whether for the feel-good vibe pervading the guitar-bass-drum interplay, for the goofy (almost awkward) vocal performance, or for the audacious, sometimes stunningly clever lyrics. Songs with subjects as diverse (and unexpected) as philosopher Michel Foucault’s dinner conversation with an unnamed explorer, a plea from a frustrated housecat, an inside look into an Elk’s Lodge, or a reconsideration of Martin Amis’ experimental holocaust novel *Time’s Arrow* (in which all action takes place in reverse, from death to birth) almost never feel too smart or too precious. Which is quite a feat, really.

Ultimately, it is the lyrics that make the record so compelling. Frontman John Samson’s voice (a virtual dead ringer for Clem Snide’s Eef Barzelay) is

exceptionally well suited to their delivery. His dry, nervous performance utterly sells his complex, difficult images. From cool resignation (“Beauty’s just another word I’m never certain how to spell”) to absurdist fantasy (“Yes, a Penguin taught me French back in Antarctica”), and from evocative landscapes (“Stare at the smudge on a newspaper sky, and ask it to rain a new name for everything”) to unlikely, unforgettable images (“How the past chews on your shoes, and these memories lick my ear”), rarely does rock’n’roll feel this much like poetry, and this little like I’ve heard it all before.

And that would be true if I hadn’t been following New York alt-pop trio Clem Snide for six years. Improbably, Eef Barzelay (Clem Snide’s lyricist and vocalist) writes lyrics that I would describe in much the same way as I have Samson’s above. Further, Clem Snide’s sound is not too far removed from the Weakerthans, if a bit less energetic. In other words, for fans of Clem Snide, the Weakerthans are somewhat of a tough sell- while they are no doubt an immensely talented group, at times they sound almost identical to their American doppelganger. I don’t immediately know how to clear this up. It’s an embarrassed, bizarre situation. How can two apparently vastly original pop groups manage to sound virtually indistinguishable from one another?

Still, as awkward as it is, two wonderfully gifted and expressive groups fronted by intelligent, graceful and daring songwriters is better than none.

### Whiskers Of Celestial Dust

*I wax and wane and wax again  
my whiskers of celestial dust  
Oh for a depillatory divine  
to remove my upper-crust  
of frothy hair, of curly locks  
that writhe o’er pillowy lip (or hair-lip)  
But here my meter slips*

*I cannot tell, no words cannot  
express how in this wicked cage I’m caught  
I try to fly just like a lark  
(as bravely he did singing fly)  
But here again my rhyme’s lost spark.  
O! here a hair, there a hair  
Hair is sprouting everywhere*

E.Y. Bennett

## “ Provocation to Put Pen to Page, Oh Pompous Peon ”

*Diatribes* announces a \$50-prize, worst verse competition.  
Please send submissions to [diatribe@ams.queensu.ca](mailto:diatribe@ams.queensu.ca)

## ET CETERA

BAY STREET HOPEFUL  
ANGRILY DENOUNCES

■■■ JDUC Food Court is “Capitalist whorehouse”.  
Events transcribed by **S. Henderson**

**T**hird-year law student Susan Amoretto, who will begin articling for high-powered Toronto law firm Stikeman and Elliott this summer, is unhappy with the “deeply capitalist atmosphere” of the food court in the JDUC. Standing up in the middle of another greasy meal in the sunlit enclosure, Ms. Amoretto began to spout her invective. “This place reeks of money. The food is substandard, but they know we can’t go anywhere else for it. What are we going to do— run all the way to ‘the hub’ and back just so we can get a decent meal away from this faceless corporate empire? It’s practically a goddamn monopoly!”

Ms. Amoretto is not alone in her views. During her tirade a number of other students, many of them from other left-leaning departments such as Commerce and Women’s Studies, came to her side in support of her argument. “Right on, man”, called out one of her cohorts. “Yeah, f--- tha police”, offered another. “This place is fundamentally about violence against the common man”, explained second-year Biomedical Computing major Trinh Petermano, before throwing his uneaten Ruben sandwich at an unfortunate nearby cafeteria worker.

As calls for revolution began to drown out the calls for order, and violence became the order of the day, Ms. Amoretto quietly slipped out the back door and onto the street. “Wow— that was just so cool”, she explained. “It just goes to show what one woman can do when she puts her mind to it! Like, last year I

started a boycott of this one Tax Law textbook at school because it clearly legitimized capitalist ideologies while implying that all other political systems were inferior.

“Frankly, I think that the lawyers at Stikeman’s were really impressed by my unflagging support for the common man. In my interviews with them, they seemed very moved by my attitude toward money and the capitalist process in general. And when I’m defending their corporate clients for tax fraud, or facilitating their takeovers of smaller corporations, I’m sure that my experience with revolutionary politics will come in real handy.

“But,” she adds, “who’s kidding who? I’ll definitely have to shift my principles a bit to fit in [at Stikeman and Elliott]. It’s a tough world out there, and if you want to be successful, you have to be realistic. It’s one thing being a socialist in university, but it’s basically irresponsible to be one when you’re a grown up. Like, the common man is so put upon by capitalist process, you have to do everything in your power to avoid becoming one of them. Think about it: one day I’ll have a family to take care of. I can’t still be making 80 grand a year (plus bonuses) and expect to provide for them.”

There were few injuries and no fatalities in the ensuing riot at the JDUC, although a number of students were arrested and/or expelled for their part in the destruction of property. Ms. Amoretto escaped unharmed.

SOME THOUGHTS ON  
CELL PHONES

■■■ An essay by **B.S. Schwartz**

**I**t is of note this century’s media has become a cauldron of anxiety-inducing nomenclature.

I cite the television play *Thunder on Sycamore Street* by Reginald Rose as a prime example of a legitimately concerned family protecting themselves by seeking out information on others, and knowing enough of them to act on, therefore judge, whether or not they are a safe contribution to the community, or a dangerous one.

Freedom for a person can end when you are perceived as a threat. Like anti-bodies in the human biology, when a threat is identified it must be neutralized or removed.

The patterns of various non-curable ailments – cancer, autoimmune deficiency syndrome – are identical to these problems the government adjudges are threats to the nation: drug trafficking, sex offenders, terrorists, to name a few. This is not to say that the government is wrong – should anyone hurt my family I would be inclined to agree with the Law; and I abide by it.

My vision is that these problems do grow more and more, like the cancer cells, and the only way to ‘prevent’ them is more and more surveillance, which is to say ‘chemotherapy.’ The job of The Law is to make a veritable sieve with smaller and smaller drain holes, so less and less criminal offenders ‘slip through the cracks’ and I add you can’t make peace with cancer.

The temptation to use the cell phone, or, I should say, to make misuse of it, is great.

I’ve been wanting, for a while now, to buy a cell phone to give to my girlfriend because I want to know where she is so that, if, and Heaven Forbid It, she was being sexually assaulted, beaten, made uncomfortable – in effect, in need of help, she could call me, and tell me where she is.

If anything, the police could track down the location of her cell phone through the use of computers.

My penchant to make use of our technology has me feeling like an over-seer, what George Orwell so appropriately dubbed *The Big Brother* in his novel 1984, and I don’t like it.

As legitimate as my anxious concerns are for my girlfriends’ well-being the wish for a cell phone is an attempt to neutralize feelings of helplessness.

Should any harm come to my girlfriend, or, to stretch the conceit, future daughters and sons – of those

whom we love and wish to protect – there is nothing I can do.

The worst of it is the person who you would buy the cell phone for feels that their freedom is threatened, and that the cell phone invades the privacy of that person, and they interpret that action with the idea that you don’t trust them.

If you’ve ever experienced this, you have probably asked yourself, “Don’t they know that it is the world -- the men, the women, our fate, our destiny, it is God – who I don’t trust . . . his Omnipotence has hurt me before, he will not shy to do it again!”

A drunken driver nearly killed my girlfriend and I one evening at the reputedly busy intersection of Sir John A. MacDonald Boulevard and Bath Road in Kingston. As I jumped one way I expected my girlfriend to follow me, but she did not – she panicked and ran the wrong way.

I reached out, and yelled at the top of my lungs – but I was too far to grab her. As I watched in horror the car drove straight for the *Love Of My Life*, and by miracle of God, or however it is the transpiring of events works itself out, my girlfriend sidestepped from the path of the car, and was missed by mere inches. The bag she was holding was hit by the vehicle. It flew several yards, and was then run over and torn to shreds by the car’s mercilessly spinning tires.

The bag could’ve easily been one, or both, of us. One moment laughter; the next we were facing death in the headlights of a white Honda Accord.

If we have no faith in religion, if we are told we have no faith in the ones we love, if they can’t believe that we mean well, where, in this world, does this leave us?

My father once put it, “When it’s your time to go, it’s your time to go.”

And while the world does go its merry way, I will try not to spend my life in worry for the safety of my family and friends in these sad and troubled times.

There is nothing that you, me, or Uncle Sam can, or should, do to mitigate our anxieties of separation and loss, except pray, cultivate a harmony with life by accepting it’s conditions, and, finally, endeavoring to appreciate every minute we get to live and share with the ones we love.

The cell phone, obtained for the wrong purpose, is a symbol of insecurity in the face of a fear we all, without exception, must live with.



Riot Squad, Joy Garnett 2002

# HORACESCOPES

**E**ditorial note: We would like to apologize to our gentle-sexed readers for the persistent use of male pronouns in these predictions, which we have preserved in the interest of authenticity. Both authors neglected 'her' and promoted 'him': in Nietzsche's case, it is because he thought women were birds and cows. In de Beauvoir's, we can only assume a certain degree of schizophrenia with regard to her own agency. We encourage you to make the requisite adjustments in your mind.

**T**his episode of Horacescopes is unorthodox in drawing on not one, but two guest psychics. First we have the indomitable Friedrich Nietzsche, who has made communication in order to promote his unpublished writings (in German, the Nachlass). He would have you warned though that the medium speaks no German. Our second psychic is Simone de Beauvoir, who is poised to make an astounding come-back on the philosophical scene (we predicted it here first). In her spare time she moonlights in fashion design and has a club for the appreciation of Sartre's body—of work.



**Aries**  
(March 21- April 20)

The passionate man inspires a certain admiration. He also inspires a kind of horror at the same time. Virtue is an outmoded word. One only has to think of your secondary school teachers.



**Taurus**  
(April 21- May 21)

Is fame actually nothing but the tastiest morsel of our self-love? I am thinking of Diogenes' first night—no sterile resignation.



**Gemini**  
(May 22- June 21)

In the face of an obstacle which it is impossible to overcome, stubbornness is stupid. When every tree can suddenly speak as a nymph, all of nature swarms around man as if it were nothing but a masquerade of the gods.



**Cancer**  
(June 22- July 23)

What must be done, practically? Which action is good? Which is bad? To ask such a question is also to fall into a naïve abstraction. It seems that the Hegelian notion of "displacement" which we relied on a little while ago is now turning against us.



**Leo**  
(July 24-August 23)

In knowledge mankind possesses a beautiful means of decline. There is no more obnoxious way to punish a man than to force him to perform acts which make no sense to him.



**Virgo**  
(August 24-September 23)

What right does one have to want something for others? Indeed there is nothing more arbitrary than intervening as a stranger in a destiny which is not ours. Yet, with all this sordid resignation, there were children who played and laughed.



**Libra**  
(September 24-October 23)

If one admits that the life of a man may change the course of events, it is that one adheres to the conception which grants a preponderant role to Cleopatra's nose and Cromwell's wart.



**Scorpio**  
(October 24-November 22)

If the fusion of the Commissar and the Yogi were realized, there would be a self-criticism in the man of action which would expose him the ambiguity of his will. Don Juan was unaffected by Elvira's tears.



**Sagittarius**  
(November 23-December 21)

Imagine yourself a wandering philosopher who chanced upon the Greeks. Logical thinking was employed very little by the Ionians. This mystification of useless effort is more intolerable than fatigue.



**Capricorn**  
(December 22-January 20)

Love and kisses to the entire world! Salizar has had brand-new castles built, at great expense, on all the hills where there were ruins standing. Oh, to be able to hold fast to the sublime!



**Aquarius**  
(January 21-February 19)

(Assorted servants of truth) First, optimistic surprise: how many investigators of truth there are! Pessimistic astonishment: not one of these is an investigator of truth! The whole world is moist.



**Pisces**  
(February 20-March 20)

The saving of time and the conquest of leisure have no meaning. It is all over with us if the working classes ever discover that they now can easily surpass us.

## ASK POSTSTRUCTURAL THEORIST



### JACQUES DERRIDA

• • • •

#### Dear Jacques:

My Prof hosts occasional after-hours get-togethers with his students. I have always found them to be fun, informal chances to get to know the other students. However, a recent conversation with one of the young women bothered me. She told me that our Prof sometimes will put his arm around her shoulder while he talks to her, and has even intimated that he finds her attractive. Is this inappropriate behaviour? Am I deconstructing this too much?

Sincerely,  
A Bit Concerned

#### Dear A Bit Concerned:

I would say that deconstruction is affirmation rather than questioning, in a sense which is not positive: I would distinguish between the positive, or positions, and affirmations. I think that deconstruction is affirmative rather than questioning: this affirmation goes through some radical questioning, but it is not questioning in the field of analysis.

• • • •

#### Dear Jacques:

I have a rash where my bathing suit covers. But I have this date tonight with a really hot guy, and I don't know what to do about it because he'll be real suspicious if I don't go all the way with him. Like, we've been dating for almost two weeks and he still hasn't got in. My

reputation is at stake here- I don't want people to think I'm a prude! But, what if he inherits the rash from me?

Signed,  
Itchy

#### Dear Itchy:

Inheritance is never a given, it is always a task... there is no backward looking fervour in this reminder, no traditionalist flavour. Reaction, reactionary or reactive are but interpretations of the structure of inheritance. That we are heirs does not mean that we have or that we receive this or that... the being of what we are is first of all inheritance, whether we like it or know it or not.

• • • •

#### Dear Jacques:

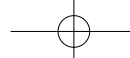
This summer I have been backpacking around Europe. A little while ago I had a brief, but profound, sexual encounter with a Danish girl. The thing is, I have a girlfriend back home that I've been dating for almost two years. I think that I should write to her the truth about my little affair, but all my friends say I shouldn't because she will break up with me. I've been deliberating this for almost a month and the guilt is killing me. I want to be honest with my girlfriend, but I really love her; it'll break my heart if she leaves me. Should I write to her or not?

Sincerely,  
Guilty Conscience  
in Prague

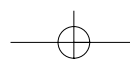
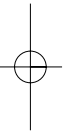
#### Dear Guilty Conscience:

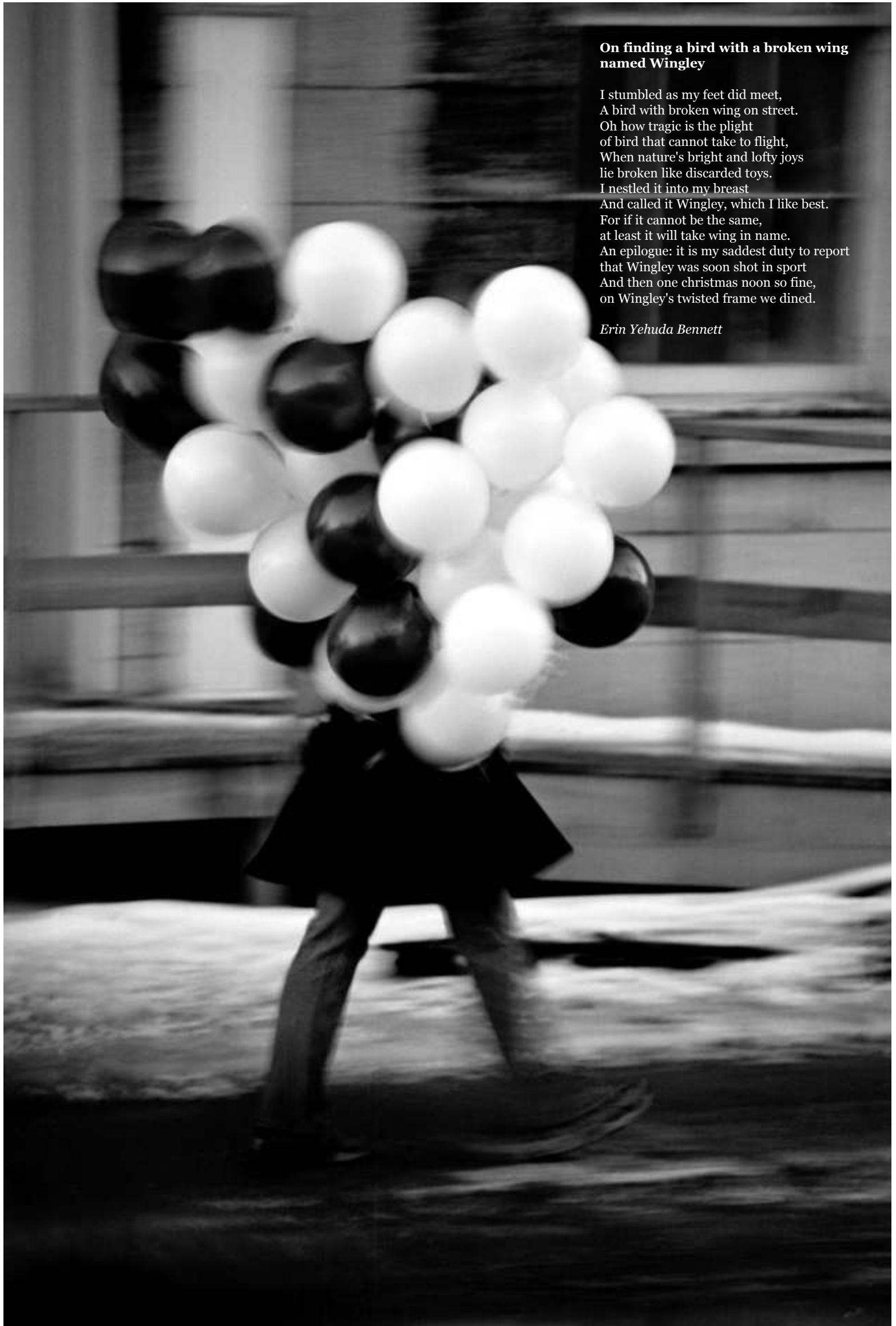
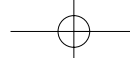
Now from the moment that one considers the totality of determined signs, spoken, and *a fortiori* written, as unmotivated institutions, one must exclude any relationship of natural subordination, any natural hierarchy among signifiers or orders of signifiers. If "writing" signifies inscription and especially the durable institution of a sign (and that is the only irreducible kernel of the concept of writing), writing in general covers the entire field of linguistic signs.

- S. Henderson



*Photo by M. Hills*





**On finding a bird with a broken wing  
named Wingley**

I stumbled as my feet did meet,  
A bird with broken wing on street.  
Oh how tragic is the plight  
of bird that cannot take to flight,  
When nature's bright and lofty joys  
lie broken like discarded toys.  
I nestled it into my breast  
And called it Wingley, which I like best.  
For if it cannot be the same,  
at least it will take wing in name.  
An epilogue: it is my saddest duty to report  
that Wingley was soon shot in sport  
And then one christmas noon so fine,  
on Wingley's twisted frame we dined.

*Erin Yehuda Bennett*

*Photo by Charlie Croskery*

