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Beast Illustrated

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Sizzling Conflict
of Interest

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of the IMF

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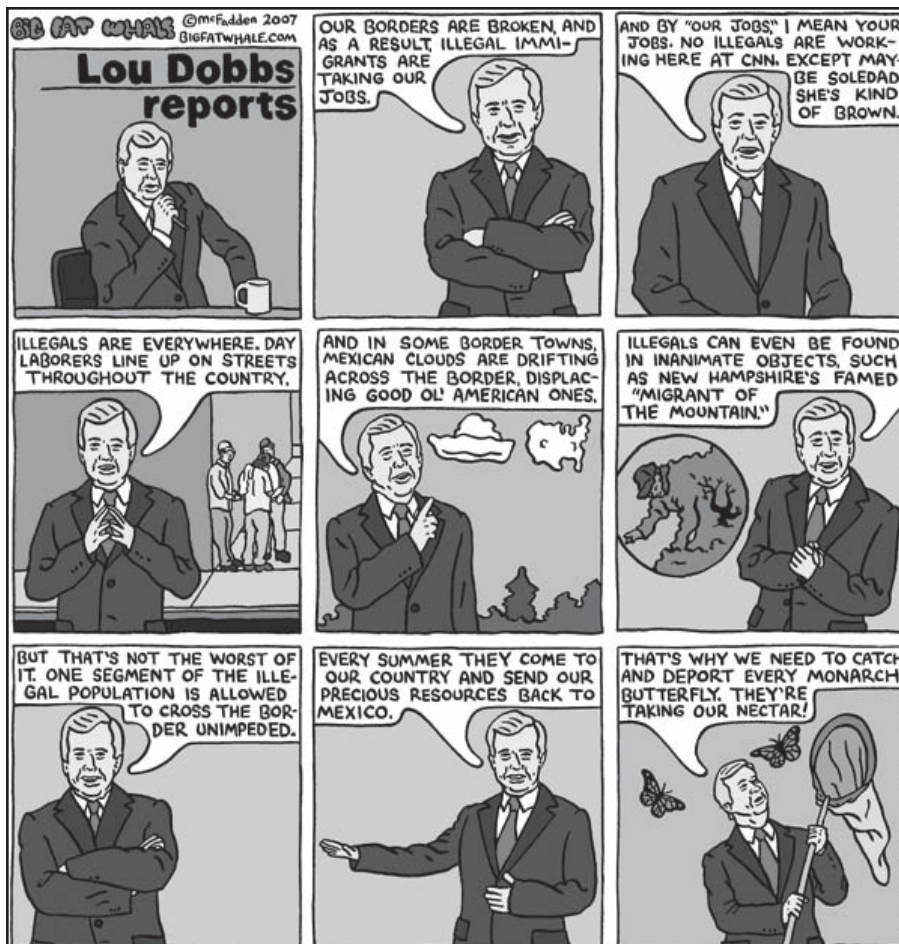
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THIS ISSUE'S INEBRIATED HASSELHOFF:



"KIT! Oxygen!"

THE BEAST PAGE 3

Retarded Presidential Candidates



Names: Sam Brownback, Mike Huckabee, and Tom Tancredo

Turn-ons: Being stupid, thinking stupid thoughts, saying stupid things, naked Caucasian boys.

Turn-offs: Books, learning, thinking about reality, honesty, decency, tolerance, integrity.

How we got to be The BEAST Page 3

Retarded Presidential Candidates: At our first presidential debate, when asked if any of the candidates didn't believe in evolution, we all raised our hands, as the nation buried its head in shame. By declaring ourselves to be total idiots of the most idiotic persuasion, we have made major inroads to the idiot community, which is essential to winning the Republican nomination.

Future Plans: It's going to go pretty much the same way until the primaries shake out. Mike will continue to identify himself as a completely stupid imbecile who is authentically conservative, while Sam will be stupidly answering any complicated question by repeating the word "values" as often as possible, while maintaining his brain-dead cosmology. Tom will do his best to stir up stupid Southern racism in the currently acceptable form of hating Hispanics, albeit in the stupidest, most idiot-like possible way.

How we'd like to be remembered: As backwards, imbecilic, moronic, primitive, low-functioning, stupefied, dumb, throwback, Neanderthal, dim, thick, thoughtless, ignorant, blind, irrational, oblivious, brainless Vice Presidents.

ONE PLAUSIBLE EXPLANATION

McCain's Iraq perception gap explained

By Allan Uthman

I had an armed escort because, because that's what General Petraeus thought we ought to have. I was glad to go outside of Baghdad and have over an hour opportunity to talk to the people that I talked to. Now, they are very different from the people that, that you are quoting here and others. They said, "I'm glad to see you. Things are better here. We have, we have seen improvement." ... I didn't call for the kind of, quote, "protection" that was around me. But I am not afraid, and I'm glad to go any place that I can to talk to the people of Iraq and tell them of my commitment to see that they have a free, democratic government where they don't have to face the bombs going off and the suicide bombers and the--and can start leading normal lives... And I'll be glad to go back to that market with or without military protection and, and humvees, et cetera.

-John McCain on "Meet the Press," May 13

April Fool's day, Baghdad:

Translator: Greetings, Senator McCain. I'm Sergeant Mosley and I'll be your personal translator for this trip.

Senator John McCain: Wonderful! How are you today, Sergeant?

Translator: Just fine sir. Ready to take a walk?

McCain: Sure! It's a great day. Hot, but no humidity. This bulletproof vest is a little stuffy though.

Translator: Yes, sir. Now, we're going to be reaching the market shortly, and I'll introduce you to some vendors.

McCain: Excuse me? I can't hear you over the damn chopppers! Private!

Soldier: Yes sir, Senator!

McCain: Tell those birdies to wave off a bit, will you? It's too damn loud; the microphones won't be able to pick up

anything!

Soldier: Right away sir! *(The soldier barks into a walkie talkie. The noise level drops gradually.)*

McCain: That's better. Let's go shopping, gentlemen.

The group nears and enters an outdoor market, the vicinity of which has been thoroughly scanned for possible threats. Soldiers fan out throughout the area. Smiling, McCain approaches a rug seller.

McCain: Hiya partner, I'm John McCain from the United States of America. How's business?

Translator: *(in Arabic)* This guy is an American senator. Smile and shake his hand or you'll be killed.

Shopkeeper #1: *(in Arabic)* Wonderful. Can we make this quick? I'm trying to sell some rugs here, because your stupid war has made the money I had saved completely worthless, and I lost my job as an engineer. Generally. My life has gone to hell.

Translator: He says it's an honor to meet you, sir.

McCain: Oh no, no, the honor is mine! So, would you say things here have improved since the recent upsurge in US troop strength?

Translator: *(in Arabic)* He wants to know if things have gotten better

Shopkeeper #1: *(in Arabic)* Haha! Oh, yes, everything's just hunky dory! Thanks to you imperialist swine, I may survive long enough to die from radiation poisoning after you nuke Iran!

McCain: What's that about Iran?

Translator: *(in Arabic)* He says things are getting better everyday, sir, but he's concerned about Iranian interference in Iraq's democratic development.

McCain: Ah, yes. Well, that's a very serious concern, one I and the American people share with you. But my message to you is that we won't give up, we'll stand with you against the Iranians, so you needn't worry.

Translator: *(in Arabic)* All right, that's it. Just shake his hand again and say goodbye.

Shopkeeper #1: *(in Arabic)* Goodbye you dumb son of a bitch. May you die horribly.

Translator: *(in Arabic)* He says again what an honor it is to meet you.

McCain: Thank you. Gee, what a nice fellow!

Translator: Yes, sir. Let's move on. This man is selling electronic appliances. *(in Arabic)* This man is an American senator. Smile and shake his hand or you'll be killed.

McCain: Hi, I'm John McCain. How are things here?

Translator: *(in Arabic)* He wants to know how things are.

Shopkeeper #2: *(in Arabic)* Well, aside from the fact that my country and society have been destroyed, and two of my children have been killed, not so bad.

Translator: He says the security situation is improving steadily.

McCain: Wonderful! I'm so pleased to hear that.

Translator: *(in Arabic)* He says can the attitude or you'll be detained indefinitely

Shopkeeper #2: *(in Arabic)* I speak English, asshole. Ask Senator McCain how much torture I have to endure before they make me a presidential candidate.

Translator: He says he hopes to run for office someday

McCain: Excellent! See, in America people think you guys aren't ready for democracy. I'm already learning that's not true.

Shopkeeper #2: That's not what I said.

McCain: Oh, you speak English!

Translator: (*in Arabic*) Be cool and we'll give you ten dollars. Insult him and die.

Shopkeeper #2: (*in Arabic*) Whatever. (*in English*) Good luck in the primaries. I hope your cancer doesn't come back.

McCain: Thanks so much. Gosh, everyone's so nice!

Translator: Sir, we have to keep moving.

A visibly enraged shopkeeper approaches.

Shopkeeper #3: (*in Arabic*) There he is! The war hero! Are you happy now, asshole? They killed my brother yesterday! Oh, thanks so much for saving us, you bastard! I love the remodeling you've done to my house! Rubble is so fashionable this year! By tomorrow, I will likely be murdered because you decided to come here. Thanks a bunch, shithead!

McCain: Well, this man seems very animated.

Translator: Yes, sir. He is upset about al Qaeda operatives stirring trouble in his country. He says they must be stopped.

McCain: I agree wholeheartedly with you, sir. And when I am president, I will redouble our efforts to defeat al Qaeda.

Translator: (*in Arabic*) Smile and shake his hand or you'll be killed.

Shopkeeper #3: (*in Arabic*) So what? Today, tomorrow—what do I care?

Translator: (*in Arabic*) We'll give you ten dollars.

Shopkeeper #3: (*in Arabic*) Fine. Whatever. You scum will burn for eternity.

Translator: He says thank you for standing with the Iraqi people.

McCain: Wow, this is a real eye-opener. All of my suspicions about this war are being confirmed. The media is presenting a much worse picture of the security situation than I see here.

Translator: Definitely, sir. Good news doesn't sell papers.

McCain: Seems kind of silly to bring this entire company of marines with us, don't you think? Maybe we should send them back.

Translator: Oh no, sir! They're uh... they're really excited to be on this detail. They're so happy to be in your presence. It's the highlight of their stay here. You're an inspiration to them.

McCain: Wow. That just makes me swell with pride.

Indiana Representative Mike Pence: Hey McCain, man, you need to check out these bargains! These rugs are a friggin' dollar a piece! And that guy's got counterfeit DVDs for, like, 75 cents a pop! You oughta get in on this action, man! It reminds me of an

Indiana open air market, except for the snipers and garbage.

McCain: Noshit! Do they have *Grindhouse*? I'm dying to see that. We should come back here sometime by ourselves and do some real bargain-hunting!

Pence: Haha, yeah—wait. Are you serious?

McCain: Sure, why not?

Pence: What are you, McCain, soft in the head? We'd be kidnapped or dead in five minutes!

McCain: Pence, you're obviously not listening to the people on the ground. That's why we're here. Take some time and talk to the people. You'll see. Here, why don't you borrow my translator for a while? ~~RECAP~~

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----- MORE – THAT'S GOOD! -----

Why is Sam Harris a Best-Selling Monkey?



By A. Monkey

There are at least 450 atheists who are so pissed off about all the religious belief in the world that they've sat down to write one or more very decent books on how there is no God. You really have to wonder then, why so many American readers would choose to put Sam Harris on best-seller lists across the country. It's not like he's a good writer or anything.

Sample Harris sentence: "One of the greatest challenges facing civilization in the 21st century is for human beings to learn to speak about their deepest personal concerns--about ethics, spiritual experience and the inevitability of human suffering--in ways that are not flagrantly irrational."

Never mind the cheap use of a new (Christ-based) century to lever urgency into his argument; Harris can't make any kind of clear point. He uses the term "deepest personal concerns" to mean "principal issues that atheists and believers have jostled over for centuries." The real "deepest personal concerns" for human beings -- physical appearance, social status, material wealth -- are also "flagrantly irrational" with regard to the kind of "reason" an atheist wields to fight religious belief.

Compare Harris with a truly gifted atheist, whose prose is so gorgeous and lucid that it survives translation and 120 years. Nietzsche: "The last Christian died on a cross."

Now, I've committed a sin against the reader, because while I did pick out the Harris citation to show what a shit writer he is, I simply wanted to share my favorite Nietzsche quote. So, sorry. Back to my question: Harris, a cloudy amateur writer, sells hundreds of thousands of copies against all those other choices available on Amazon. Why do the readers go for Harris?

Here's the tricky part: It's not because of his atheism. It's because, buried in his books like Easter eggs, Harris makes the word and sensibility of atheism safe for two very unstable, deeply "irrational" sets of audiences.

1. Making torture of muslims safe for atheists. The first group is the huge number of superficially secular and humanist Americans who have the good sense not to believe in the religious system of the white tribe, but still share the rest of its tribal mindsets, aka most atheists. These include a fairly unconscious general loathing of Arabs and Muslim culture, a scarcely legitimate belief that they represent an existential threat, and a simple vengeful, spiteful mood akin to the alarmingly calm expressions that white people make when they are exposed to the facts and stats about the rate of black incarceration in America.

A person might point out that Harris' two books, "The End of Faith" and "Letter to a Christian Nation" don't have the words Muslim or torture in them. They don't need to, and in fact if they did, they probably wouldn't have sold as well. That's because speaking on behalf of torture is the kind of thing our polite society conducts in whispers. You bury it in your book. People who need to have their repressed desires justified get the same comfort out of discovering the buried textual defenses they crave as they do receiving their porn videos mailed to them in unmarked boxes. And that's what Harris did: "In one section of the book (pp. 192-199), I briefly discuss the ethics of torture and collateral damage in times of war... [T]here are certain extreme circumstances in which I believe that torture may not only be ethically justifiable, but ethically necessary. I am not alone in this. Liberal Senator Charles Schumer has publicly stated that most U.S. senators would support torture to find out the location of a ticking time bomb."

Readers of the *Beast* are deeply aware about what kind of a liberal Chuck Schumer is, whose explanation for his vote for invading Iraq was "I believe you had to fight a strong war on terror, and that's what that vote symbolized to me." What's truly stunning is Harris' use of the utterly discredited "ticking time bomb" scenario to make his zombie case for Muslim/Arab torture -- a method of argument that the most venal liars and thieves apply against the stupidest audiences. It's been discredited on the macro level -- Bush and Condi's use of it to justify attacking Iraq, the popularity of 24 -- and in the micro sense: we've gotten jack shit out of the thousands of people we've tortured from Gitmo to Abu Ghraib. Truly, nothing. If we had gotten even a shred of valuable intel out of all that torture, Lindsay Graham and John McCain wouldn't have fake-banned it -- they would have proposed it as a constitutional amendment. Also, it practically goes without saying that there isn't a single theoretical instance of torture that Harris invokes that doesn't involve Muslims in a post-9/11 context.

2. Making eastern spiritually and crazy beliefs safe for "atheists." Harris' other strange property is that he's no atheist at all. What he is, really, is someone willing to go out and slay the Judeo-Christian texts and customs for the reason that they are outdated and don't jibe with the modern world. There are a lot of people who want to believe in something, like their Jewish and Christian parents did, but the stupid Orthodoxers and Catholics refuse to update God, and the more adaptive Protestant/progressive blend hasn't done it fast or well enough. In the way that Judeo-Christian belief still dominates among the white tribe, "atheism" for most of its practitioners is a rejection of it, not other faiths. So Harris

Continues on page 17



It's all about the beans.



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We Neocolonialists

Pelosi & Reid poised to pillage Iraq's oil

By Matt Taibbi

There is a growing number of people out there who believe the Reid-Pelosi Iraq war supplemental is a gigantic crock of shit, and who think the Democratic Party leadership should now officially be labeled conspirators in the war effort. I've even seen it suggested that Reid and Pelosi should now be sent official "certificates of war ownership," to formally put them in a club with Bush, Cheney, Richard Perle and the rest of the actual war authors.

The growing tension between the real antiwar movement and the Democratic Party was reflected in a long article over the weekend in the *New York Times*. "Antiwar Groups Use New Clout to Influence Democrats." The piece that described how an umbrella group of antiwar activists called Americans Against the Escalation in Iraq was ready to drop the public relations hammer on the Dems, should they cave too easily in their negotiations with the president.

The thinking goes something like this: the Democrats, who are mostly the same people who voted for the war in the first place, don't really want to end it. They do, however, want to take political advantage of antiwar sentiment. So they will appear to be against the conflict but set things up in such a way that their "efforts" to end the war will fall just slightly short, like a fourth-quarter pass thrown by a point-shaving quarterback.

I was squarely in that camp until recently, when it occurred to me to wonder; if Harry Reid and Nancy Pelosi were to wake up one morning with innocent, uncorrupted brains and decide, really decide, to end the war in Iraq, how exactly would they do it? And the answer, I think we all have to admit, is: they would do it exactly the



way they're doing it now.

Neither of these Democratic leaders, after all, are Huey Newton, or even Benjamin Spock. They are not going to get up on a table, shake a shoe in the direction of the White House, shout "Fuck you, pig!" and just turn off the money, consequences be damned. No, these are career bureaucrats, political herd animals who survive year after year by clinging for dear life to the concept of safety in numbers. They will watch the bushes with great big eyes to see what is rustling back there, and when exactly two-thirds of the herd decides to bolt, they all will -- not just the Democrats, but the Boehners and McConnells too, leaping over logs, tearing off big chunks of fur against the bark of trees, etc.

I can certainly see a scenario in which people like Reid and Pelosi would make a secret deal to compromise now and give

Bush his money, in exchange for another bite at the apple later this year -- by which time a veto-overriding coalition of Democrats and "moderate" Republicans will have magically coalesced. The Republicans crossing the picket line later this summer will inevitably claim to have done so with heavy heart, out of principle and "concern for the safety of the troops," and yet at the same time there will mysteriously appear a new raft of appropriations calling for expensive dam and highway projects in certain districts. That tends to be the blueprint for how 67% of congress will catch up to 67% of the population on major issues like these.

So maybe Reid and Pelosi really are working the phones on this one, who knows. What I do know is this; there are elements of the Democratic-crafted Iraq supplemental that are not only

severely regressive but would actually tend to encourage the continuation of the insurgency. Anyone who wants an example of why the areas in which the Democrats and Republicans are in agreement are more significant than the ones in which they differ need only look at the two parties nearly unanimous endorsement of the "Benchmarks" the Iraqi government must meet, according to the supplemental. The key passage reads as follows:

(2) whether the Government of Iraq is making substantial progress in meeting its commitment to pursue reconciliation initiatives, including a hydro-carbon law...

It is notable that the hydrocarbon law comes in first place in this clause, ahead of "legislation necessary for the conduct of provincial and local elections," reform of de-Baathification laws, amendments to the constitution and allocation of revenues for reconstruction projects. For whether or not it really was "all about oil" at the beginning of the war, the fate of the occupation really does hinge almost entirely upon oil initiatives now, as the continued presence of U.S. troops in the region may depend on whether or not the Iraqi government bites the bullet and decides to eat the proposed hydrocarbon law in question.

The law, endorsed here by the Democrats, is an unusually vicious piece of legislation, an open blueprint for colonial robbery of the Iraqi nation. It is worth pointing out that if you go back far enough in the history of this business, the law actually makes the U.S. an accomplice in the repression of Saddam Hussein, the very

thing we claim to be rescuing the country from.

This has all been described at length by better reporters than myself, people like Michael Schwartz and Tom Engelhardt, but the genesis of the proposed law goes something like this:

During the Saddam years, the Iraqi government racked up massive debts as Hussein stole outright much of the country's oil revenues and built himself elaborate palaces packed with gold leafing and Balinese whores and whatever else assholes of that ilk use to furnish their garish pink mansions. Upon occupying the country, the United States agreed to forgive some of that debt in exchange for its acceptance of a "standard International Monetary Fund program," which among other things included an end to consumer price controls on food and fuel -- a move that, whatever one's feelings about government price controls may be, inarguably made it more difficult for a newly-impooverished, war-torn population to afford to eat.

Another condition was the liberalization of the economy, and the opening up of the oil industry to foreign interests. To recap: Saddam Hussein rips off Iraqi people, America "liberates" said people from Saddam, then bludgeons them with Saddam's debts until they hand over the keys to the oil industry. Nice deal, yes?

The proposed Hydrocarbon Law is a result of pressure from the American government on the Iraqis to draft an oil policy that would adhere to the IMF guidelines. It allows foreign companies to take advantage of Iraqi oil fields by

allowing regions to pair up with foreigners using what are known as "production-sharing agreements" or PSAs, which guarantee investing companies large shares of the profits for decades into the future. The law also makes it impossible for the Iraqi state to regulate levels of oil production (seriously undermining OPEC), allows oil companies to repatriate profits, and would also allow companies to hire foreign workers to man facilities. Add all the measures up and the Hydrocarbon law not only takes control of the oil industry away from the Iraqi state, but virtually guarantees that the state will profit very little from future oil exploitation.

Now, I live in America and have been known to drive a car occasionally and I also understand something else -- when mighty industrial countries need oil or anything else, they're going to take it. They're also unlikely to acquiesce forever to the whims of an organization like OPEC out of mere morality and decency, when military power can change the equation. Anyone who's going to be shocked, shocked by this kind of shit had better be prepared to live in a tent and eat twigs and berries instead of African cocoa or Central American sugar or any of the millions of other products we basically steal from hungry, dark-skinned people around the world on a daily basis.

But I'll tell you what I can do without. I can do without having to listen to American journalists, as well as politicians on both sides of the aisle, bitch and moan about how the Iraqi government better start "shaping up" and "taking responsibility" and "showing progress" if they want the continued blessing of American military

Separated at birth?



Map of Iraqi oil concentration...

...and map of planned US bases?



power. Virtually every major newspaper in the country and every hack in Washington has lumped all the “benchmarks” together, painting them as concrete signs that, if met, would mean the Iraqi government is showing “progress” or “good faith.”

“President Bush will not support a war spending bill that punishes the Iraqi government for failing to meet benchmarks for progress,” was how the AP put it.

“Among the mile markers that should be used to measure Iraqi progress is a finalized revenue-sharing agreement on current and future oil reserves,” was the formulation of the *Savannah Daily News*.

Still other papers, like the *Baltimore Sun*, cast the supplemental as a means of exercising “tough love” with the lazy and ungrateful Iraqis, who to date have failed to show interest in governing their own country. “The talk around Congress,” wrote the *Sun*, “was of putting

together a bill with (probably nonbinding) benchmarks, designed to hold the feet of the Iraqi government to the fire -- or at least near the fire.”

The title of the *Sun* editorial, humorously, was “Small steps” -- as if such a radical decision about what may turn out to be a fourth of the world’s oil reserves is a “small step.”

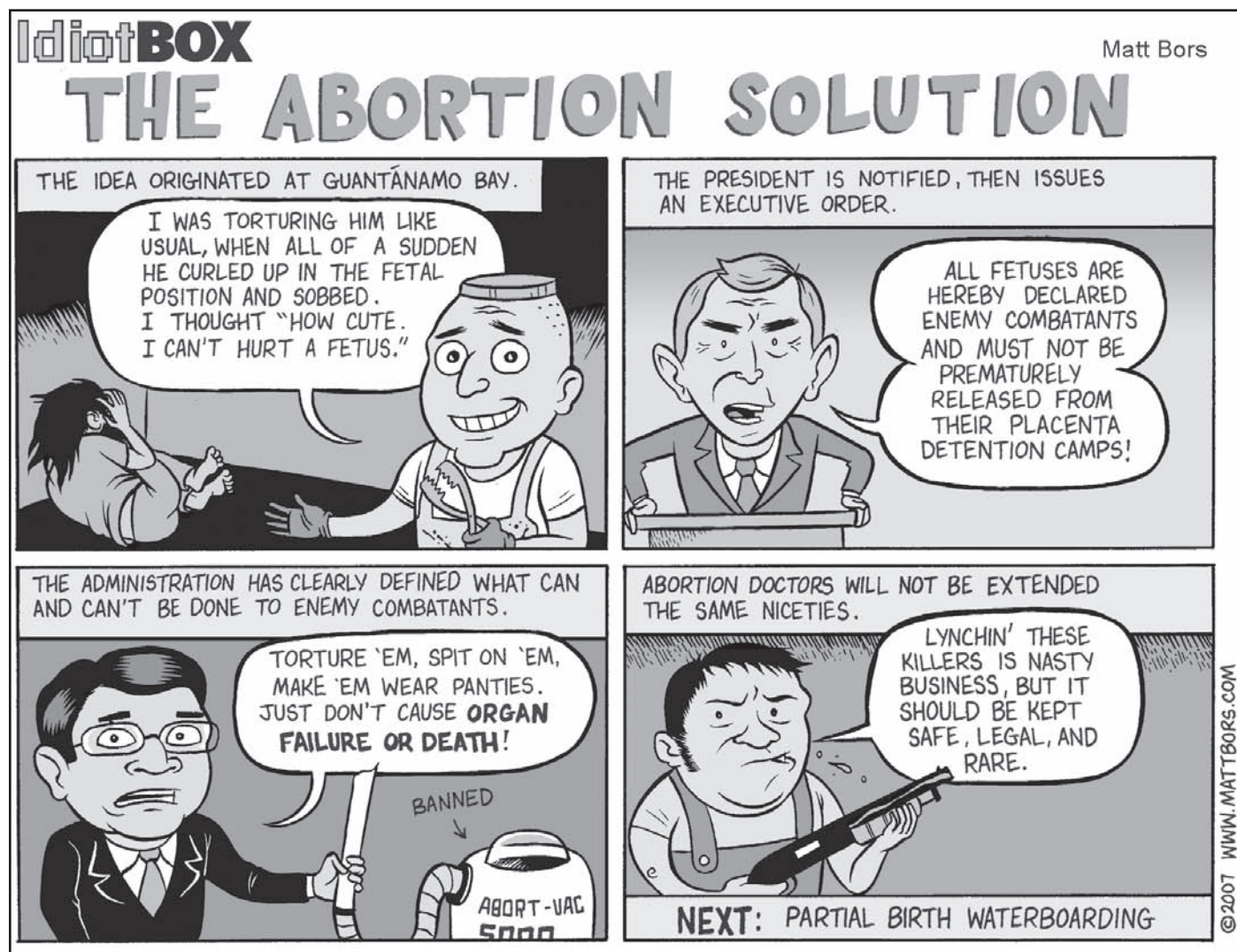
Of course, among politicians, it was the same bullshit. “And we now have to see... a good-faith effort on the part of the Iraqi government,” said Maine’s Olympia Snowe, “that they’re prepared to do what it’s going to require to achieve a political consensus.” The recently “antiwar” Chuck Hagel concurred: “We’re seen the Iraqi government miss benchmark after benchmark,” he said. “You have to connect consequences to those in some way.”

Nancy Pelosi, meanwhile, described the benchmarks as a means to “hold the Iraqi government accountable.” As if their

failure to pass the Oil law would make them “not accountable.”

Moreover, let’s just say this about the Democratic Party. They can wash their hands of this war as much as they want publicly, but their endorsement of this crude neocolonial exploitation plan makes them accomplices in the occupation, and further legitimizes the insurgency. It is hard to argue with the logic of armed resistance to U.S. forces in Iraq when *both* American parties, representing the vast majority of the American voting public, endorse the same draconian plan to rob the country’s riches. This isn’t a situation in which there’s going to be a better deal down the road, after Bush gets thrown out of office. Looking at it from that point of view, peaceful cooperation with the Americans is therefore probably impossible for any patriotic Iraqi; the economic consequences are too severe.

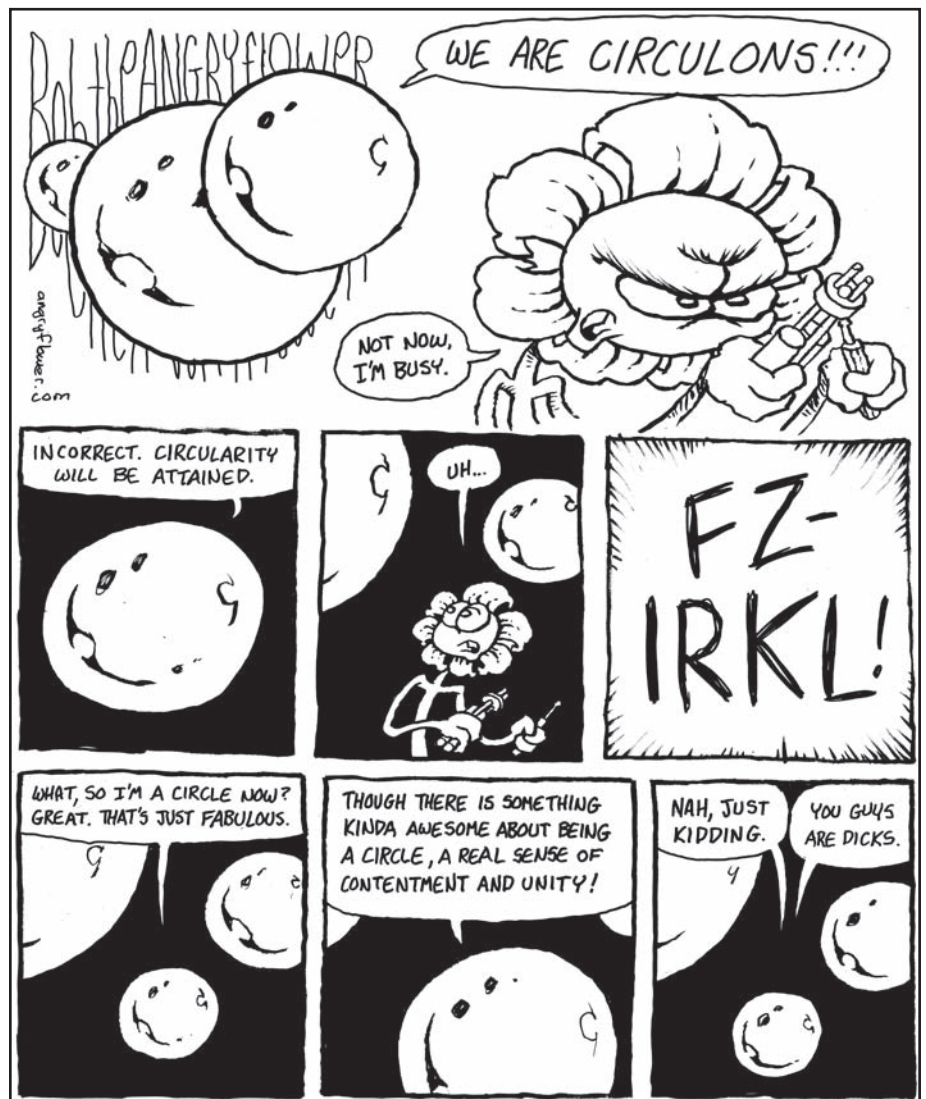
(A side note: there’s also an argument to be made that the smart play for the



Iraqis is to cooperate now, and then tear up any agreement made with the Americans once they get their troops out. The instant our army leaves, any "laws" passed now under American pressure will be meaningless anyway. Yeah, sure, take all the oil you want... hey, do you want these bath towels, too? Oh, wait, you're leaving? You sure you can't stay? Etc.)

Moreover, this endorsement of these neoliberal "benchmarks" by the Democrats makes me believe a lot less in their "gradualist" approach to ending the war. If they viewed the war as much of the world did, as a murderous and profoundly immoral criminal enterprise, they would understand that morally, they really have no choice now but to refuse to send Bush even a dime more for this war. After all, it's impossible to justify on any level voting to give George Bush more money for more troops "in the short run" if you believe that the occupation is fundamentally evil and exploitative. But the Democrats clearly do not believe it is wrong. They don't even mind having a big hand in it. They just don't think it's going very well, and understand that in the long run, it's a non-starter politically.

And that, in the end, is about the best thing you can say about Democrats - they are just barely smart enough to step out of a burning house. Well, maybe they are. Tune in next fall, for the next supplemental... **BEAST**



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NOTORIOUS C.H.O.



The Creative Aftermath of the Virginia Tech Massacre

By Eric Bryant

Seung-Hui Cho was referred to psychiatric counseling in late 2005, shortly after being accused of stalking and harassing two female students. After an evaluation in which psychiatrist Roy Crouse stated that his mood was “depressed” but that his “insight and judgment were normal,” Judge Paul Barnett ruled that Cho “presents an imminent danger to himself as a result of mental illness” but did not go so far as to rule him as “an imminent danger to others.” In light of this diagnosis, Cho was ordered to undergo outpatient treatment rather than an involuntary hospitalization that would have made him ineligible to purchase firearms.

Perhaps this diagnosis was professional and reasonable for the standards that existed at the time. Even so, it is exceedingly difficult not to wonder whether the Virginia Tech massacre might have been prevented. The students, staff, and legal authorities who were involved with Cho Seung-Hui are asking questions that are reasonable and important. Might we have known that he was ready to act? Might further action have been taken? Was Cho really beyond our help? These questions are mixed in with the feelings of guilt and

impotence common among people who have had close dealings with those who go on to commit terrible atrocities.

In hindsight, it is trivially obvious to observe that Cho Seung-Hui was a dangerous and mentally diseased individual. The murders themselves provide more than enough evidence to prove that simple fact. But while diagnosis in reverse is a simple exercise, prediction is far more difficult.

With this in mind, how are we to determine the significance of the creative output that Cho produced while enrolled as an English student at Virginia Tech? It is tempting to pass a clear verdict on Cho’s recently publicized short plays “Richard McBeef” and “Mr. Brownstone,” to point out the truism that Cho wrote “violent” and “disturbed” plays and then turned out to be violent and disturbed in reality as well. There has been a great deal of speculation in the media and elsewhere that these works could or should have been used to identify mental illness in the author, or even to predict his future violent behavior. Cho’s writing has been referred to as a “warning sign,” or as having “sent out alarms” that a violent action was imminent.

If this is true, then there is a large yet

unknown number of American students who are sending out the same warning signals. The vast majority of the writing teachers that I have spoken to since the Virginia Tech massacre report having received numerous submissions that are far more harrowing than the veiled exploitation and juvenile anger that forms the narrow palette of “Richard McBeef” and “Mr. Brownstone.” And the controversial authors who do not go on to become mass murderers? Well, they rarely make the news. This form of selection bias is insidious. Simply by focusing intense scrutiny on the content of Cho’s writings, the media is asking us to implicitly conclude that the ability or desire to write about disturbing or controversial topics is indicative of poor mental hygiene.

The assumption that creative writing in particular can be used as a predictive tool appears to be held in the extreme by Rob Jones, a senior vice president and lawyer for claims management and risk research at United Educators, a large educational insurance company:

“Traditionally, [instructors] have thought of themselves as nurturing academic or creative faculties. They don’t think of themselves as counselor or being

warning systems for spotting mental health problems. We'd like them to think of whether they could be gatekeepers for identifying students at risk."

After all, if every student who expresses ideas, events, or viewpoints that might be considered disconcerting is referred for psychiatric services, then every one of those students will have the chance to receive "help."

This argument seems logical, even wise. However, it completely ignores the fact that the possibility of "identification" or "referral" or "analysis" is, in the eyes of many students, a serious threat. Policies that destroy trust between teacher and student are a highly efficient form of institutional censorship, and particularly loathsome in that they target young adults and even children. It is clear that the policies that protect schools from lawsuits are not necessarily the same policies that are beneficial to students.

What is less clear is that the students who will be most affected are not those students who are writing pure fiction, simply in order to be shocking or controversial. The students most affected will be those whose writings are thinly veiled expositions of

their own lives. As these more sensitive students choose to self-censor in the face of the institutional threat, teachers and administrators will become *less* able to identify students who are truly in need of help. This is the form of irony and contradiction that censorship invokes; the "safe" path of censorship is never really safe, regardless of its appearance.



Seung-Hui has overtaken Margaret as the least funny Cho in America, say experts

If a policy of subtle censorship becomes the norm, those students who truly need help or intervention will remain silent. The problems of those students will not disappear; rather it will become clear that we choose not to acknowledge them.

There is no doubt that Cho needed psychiatric treatment. However, any intervention that might have prevented the fateful events of April 16 should have been made on the basis of Cho's *actions*, not his writing. While it is possible to analyze fiction in terms of talent, it is impossible to analyze it in terms of

the probability of future violent actions. As such, the over-analysis of Cho's writings cannot possibly result in a healing process, and might in fact lead to forms of overdiagnosis and censorship that will be highly detrimental to the environment of the American classroom: an environment that deserves protection from becoming yet another victim of Cho's barbaric rampage.

--

If Cho's creative writing was "[sending] out alarms" that he was going to become a mass murderer, then it must have been pretty bad. What exactly is contained within

these works that might have allowed us to predict Cho's behavior?

The two plays that have been publicized

Continues on page 16





THE BEAST

TOTALLY IRRESPONSIBLE GUIDE TO CAMPUS MASSACRES

THE LAST STRAW

Maybe you've been a lifelong target for bullies, you feel oppressed by a backward capitalist society which values conformity and wealth above all, or maybe you're just a total dick with little regard for human life. For whatever reason, your weak, embattled mind has finally snapped and the only way to exert control over your crushing self-loathing is through wholesale death and destruction. Before you run out the door all willy-nilly, choking and biting the first person you see, follow this easy guide to maximize the traumatic impact you'll have on the national psyche. Have fun!

1

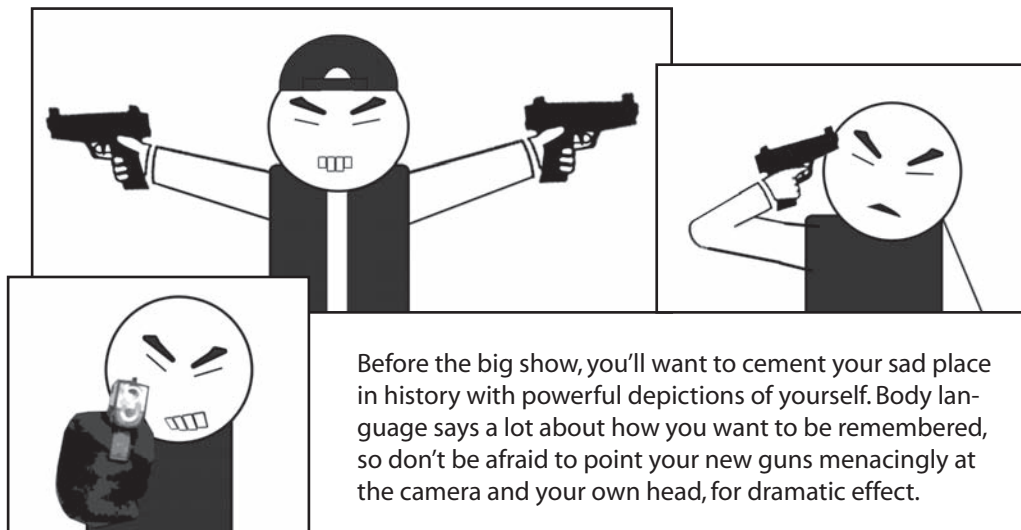
Shop Around

The first thing you'll need, besides your tormented mind, is a proper weapon and some hollow point bullets. If you're not an Alabamian and don't have access to a family arsenal, you can buy both online - no questions asked. Be sure to choose several semi-automatic pistols that fit your disgruntled and multifaceted personality. And while you're at it, don't forget to accessorize! Obviously, you'll want to keep your outfit in the neighborhood of gun-wielding-maniac. A simple ammo vest and leather gloves will pull the whole look together and bring terrified awe to the weeping eyes of your victims!



2

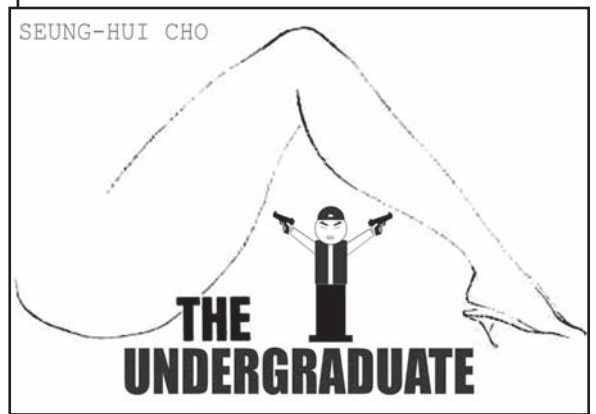
The photo essay manifesto



Before the big show, you'll want to cement your sad place in history with powerful depictions of yourself. Body language says a lot about how you want to be remembered, so don't be afraid to point your new guns menacingly at the camera and your own head, for dramatic effect.



Try emulating the poster for your favorite film. It would be best if it were a revenge fantasy, but this is your 15 minutes, so have a little fun with it.



3 Craft inarticulate airing of grievances and/or delusional rant



Whether you grab a video camera or a legal pad and a pen, now is your time to shine! Your going to want to keep this thing strictly stream of consciousness, while maintaining that repressive nature which led to your psychotic break. Blame early and often, but keep it vague! Debauchery, rich kids, charlatans or any other symbol of our shallow, corporate culture will do. Indict society in the second person plural for best results. Use mumbled tones (think Napoleon Dynamite). Compare yourself to Jesus – and you're done!



Go Postal: This is the only murderous rampage/suicide you've got – make it count! Send your photos, videos or incoherent notes to the media outlet of your choice. Your sensationalist manifesto will surely dominate news coverage. Don't worry, just because twice as many people die in Iraq every day, doesn't mean the war will give context to your brutal acts or steal your thunder. American lives are worth more. Make sure you have enough stamps!

Clever things to shout while pumping innocent students and faculty full of lead:



"Class Dismissed!"

"Don't panic, I'll be killing you on a curve!"

"I'm the president of Phi Busta Kappa. Let the hazing begin!"

"My actions are morally indefensible!"

"Git'er done!"

4

Blaze of gory




While raining justice and bullets upon the infidels, cover the exits and show no mercy toward the odd holocaust survivor who may get in your way. The detachment from reality you've been cultivating will come in handy here. Strive for quantity!



5

Final act of cowardice



Congratulations! Your mission is almost complete. As the bodies pile up around you, the terrible ethical implications of your actions may begin to dawn on you. You'll want to avoid mental anguish and incarceration at all costs. Sure, you could have blown the back of your head off first and saved us a lot of grief, but what kind of meaningless vengeance would that have been? Don't chicken out now. Good luck! 

Next Issue: Candlelight vigils!

thus far, "Richard McBeef" and "Mr. Brownstone," were authored by Cho in one of his Virginia Tech writing classes. In "Richard McBeef," the young hero John confronts McBeef the stepfather, accusing him of killing his real father in a "boating accident" in order to "get into my mom's pants," and of trying to "touch my privates." Sue (the mother) comes to believe John's claims and chases McBeef out of the house with a chainsaw. McBeef takes refuge in the car outside, until John comes out to taunt him with a long monologue about his primarily janitorial work history, which has culminated in a permanent stint at McDonald's. In the final climax, John tries to choke McBeef by thrusting a cereal bar down his throat. McBeef responds violently in return, when "out of sheer desecrated hurt and anger [he] lifts his large arms and swings a deadly blow at the thirteen year old boy."

The coherent outrage that Cho might have managed to express, in response to the sexually violent world that he saw within and outside of himself, is generally defeated by the horror schlock aesthetic of the chainsaw, not to mention the clumsy and stilted dialogue. Admittedly, this dialogue can be somewhat graphic. While throwing darts at a picture of McBeef, John says:

*I hate him. Must kill Dick.
Must kill Dick. Dick must die.
Kill Dick. Richard McBeef...
You don't think I can kill you,
Dick?...Got one eye...Got the*

other eye...

This seems serious enough, though Cho is generally little more than an oblivious master of slapstick:

I will not be molested by an aging balding overweight pedophilic stepdad named Dick! ... Damn you, you Catholic priest. Just stop it, Michael Jackson. Let me guess, you have a pet named Dick in Neverland Ranch and you want me to go with you to pet him, right?

And as for you banging my mom, looks like that lasted as long as your pathetic career, you prematurely ejaculating piece of dickshit.

These lines can almost be considered humorous, though not for the reason that Cho would have liked. The teenager titters at forms of anger and swearing that might be slightly above the creative level that he or she normally expresses. The literary dilettante smirks at the amateurish adventurism of the whole enterprise. And the law enforcement officer? Well, I have a feeling that he or she has not yet guessed that the author is necessarily capable of committing a mass murder.

The content of Cho's writing can be described using many words: pedestrian, bizarre, idiosyncratic, disturbing, violent, or even prophetic. Personally, the first word that comes to my mind is *irrelevant*. It is imperative that we deny Cho because he murdered 32 innocent people, not because he wrote an amateur play.

--

If one wanted to write a first-person story about a serial killer, one would need to describe bizarre and violent fantasies, to plumb the depths of exploitation, fear, and aggression. The reader of such first-person fiction separates the author and the disturbed killer without thinking; the process is second nature. When that same reader concentrates on equating the author with a first-person character, as in the form of a memoir or true crime account, the effect is a trifle shocking. A form of distance is immediately eliminated, and the author no longer mediates between the world and the reader. The author is part of the world; he or she is speaking directly to the reader in tones that cannot be ignored.

An author might describe an insatiable urge to kidnap young children, cut off their fingers, and eat them on top of a heaping plate of spaghetti. The reality of such a desire would be visceral and terrifying. However, as a story the concept is rather stale. The idea of eating body parts has been cliché since Hannibal Lecter and Jeffrey Dahmer, if not since Hansel and Gretel. It is important to remember that it requires no creativity or artistry whatsoever, let alone actual intent, to describe the desire to eat the body parts of children.

What are we to do concerning the writer of a hackneyed short story about an escaped lunatic who leaves a bloody hook hanging from the rearview mirror of a Buick on lover's lane? Should we refer the student writer for psychiatric treatment, just in case the student ever plans on playing out their "fantasy" in real life? Nobody suspects that Stephen King is going to perform any of the gruesome actions that take place in his novels. Should students really be held to a different standard?

The vast majority of writers are perfectly capable of separating fiction from reality. Similarly, a perfectly normal and healthy individual is capable of writing a fictional account that includes highly disturbing elements.

I cannot place myself in a position where there are no exceptions to the general rule of free expression. But outside of the realm of specific and actionable threats or plans to commit a real crime against real people (including oneself), and without any other behavioral indicators indicating mental illness (which Cho showed in strength), students should be allowed to speak in any way they see fit, to express any opinion or interpretation they consider valid or interesting, concerning any topic under the sun, without fear of retribution. The territories a student wishes to explore may be outlandish or bizarre or even deranged. Even so, we must not censor them simply because we would prefer not to experience that same geography.

This principle is bound to become less popular in the wake of Cho's senseless massacre. However, his senseless actions do not imply that we must respond senselessly. Writing is uniquely suited to allowing students to explore their problems, to express their thoughts and feelings, to find other people who might feel the same way. Writing should never be used as a perverse form of psychiatric

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analysis, in the same way that “Group Psychological Examination” should never be considered for the title of a creative writing course.

--

I used to work as a high school mathematics teacher, and even in that position I came into contact with students who wanted to share what they were feeling. One student, who was involved in a Mock Trial program, showed me a piece of his writing that concerned the case of a police officer who had gunned down an unarmed man. I remember quite clearly the way that the student expressed his anger and frustration: “I felt like killing every cop everywhere, of watching them squirm as they lie there helpless and I shoot them again, and again, and again...”

The student expressed a thought that, while graphic, is well within the normal range of human emotion. Students should be allowed to be outraged, to engage in hyperbole, to express feelings they have had or even that they consider possible. This student was expressing a profound rage; he was not actually threatening a police officer.

Should I have been more cautious? What if that student had left school that day, got his hands on a gun, and shot a cop? If it were revealed that I had seen his writing, I would have been dismissed at the least; quite possibly I would have been sued or even prosecuted.


Nonetheless, I don't consider that such an act should be considered courageous. In discussing the student's feelings and offering some words of advice, I provided the bare minimum that the student deserved. But that's exactly it. In all but the most extreme cases, I could not possibly justify the act of turning in a student who had placed himself in a position of vulnerability; it would have been a stunning abuse of trust and authority. Students need teachers who will listen to them, not teachers who wash their hands at the precise moment when that student becomes a potential liability.

In thinking about this student now, the way he approached me, the way he talked, and the way he left to continue with his life, I have no choice but to conclude that self-expression and violence are *negatively* correlated. Had this student not allowed himself (or not been allowed) to express his thoughts, he would have

remained angry and confused; he may well have been *more* willing to act out violent thoughts in reality. It is repression, not expression, that allows violent thoughts to blossom into violent actions.

The combined spectacle of the lawsuit and the media frenzy is beginning to worm its way into formerly privileged arenas: education, writing, and free expression. Will it cause us to lose sight of the communicative, healing, even cathartic possibilities that writing contains? Will it cause us to forget the value of writing in both educational and emotional terms? There will be many calls in the coming days, weeks, months, and years, that we must err on the side of “caution,” understood to mean cautious censorship. Censors cannot understand the divine paradox of erring on the side of free expression. In nurturing the creative faculties of students and allowing them to work out their thoughts

and feelings without fear of retribution, we are choosing the most cautious path: a path that is simultaneously a vindication of the principles of human liberty and the surest way to avoid alienation, misunderstanding, and the violence that follows.


Judging by the anecdotes we have all read about Cho Seung-Hui's inability to make friends or express himself adequately, the problem is clearly not that Cho tried to express himself through his violent writings. The problem is that he did not express himself *enough*, or nearly well enough. If he had continued on the path of self-expression, perhaps he would have discovered the human miracles of empathy and forgiveness. He might have found a connection even to the anonymous strangers that he must have seen and yet ignored, as he gunned them down without reason or remorse. 

Monkey, continued from page 6

does a smart thing — smart that is, if you want to sell books. He goes through the motions of rejecting the Christian, Jewish and especially the Muslim faith, while making some very, very weak disclaimers against phenomena like xenoglossy (the sudden ability to speak in languages you've never learned), reincarnation, and the mundane Eastern products like Buddhism and meditation — as opposed to that Judeo-Christian waste of time, prayer.

Here's Harris: “If some experimental psychologists want to spend their days studying telepathy, or the effects of prayer, I will be interested to know what they find out. And if it is true that toddlers occasionally start speaking in ancient languages (as Ian Stevenson alleges), I would like to know about it. However, I have not spent any time attempting to authenticate the data put forward in books like Dean Radin's *The Conscious Universe* or Ian Stevenson's *20 Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation*. The fact that I have not spent any time on this should suggest how worthy of my time I think such a project would be. Still, I found these books interesting, and I cannot categorically dismiss their contents in the way that I can dismiss the claims of religious dogmatists. ... There are several neuroscience labs

now studying the effects of meditation on the brain. While I am not personally engaged in this research, I know many of the scientists who are. This is now a fertile area of sober inquiry, purposed toward understanding the possibilities of human well-being better than we do at present. While I consider Buddhism almost unique among the world's religions as a repository of contemplative wisdom, I do not consider myself a Buddhist.”

If you did, Harris, you'd worship the god Buddha. But if you read Buddhist tracts for their “wisdom” and believed what you did in contemplative, meditative privacy, that would be fine. You'd have to be extremely well-versed in obscure frauds to know who Dean Radin or Ian Stevenson are, but let me put it this way: This is not like a deacon speaking out against *Playboy* centerfold shots as fonts of immorality. This is the deacon decrying ass-to-mouth or chocolate cream pie videos. It's worth noting at this point that the two quotes are Harris writing on defense. He had been attacked as pro-torture and pro-Eastern religion in an article, and this is Harris ostensibly disavowing those two allegations. 

(You can read more of Harris's “defenses” here: http://www.samharris.org/site/full_text/response-to-controversy2)

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Trail of Tiers

Disgrace for The White House!

By Matt Taibbi

The strangest thing about the premature reappearance of the presidential debates is the palpable, seething contempt they inspired in commentators everywhere, liberal and conservative. One after another, columnists lined up to shit on the candidates, calling them names like *phony* and *desperate* and *grasping* and *clown*, and rightly so -- for there was something obviously perverse and obnoxious about these terminal ambition cases hogging the airwaves already, pushing us to get on board with their insane power-fantasies a full fifteen months before most of us should even start thinking about the next election.

An American Enterprise Institute analyst graded the candidates on their "creepiness" factor. The *Houston Chronicle* compared the debates to a stock car race, where everybody is really watching in hopes of seeing a crash. The *Cleveland Plain Dealer* said the debate was like a "political beauty pageant in which the mission of the contestants was to hop, skip and swerve without falling on their faces," the result "more dizzying than edifying." And so on and so on... more than one reporter cracked that it was a far cry from Lincoln-Douglas, etc.

They were right, of course, and in that sense there was nothing strange about the names the media honchos threw at the candidates. What was strange was the context. Here you have a mainstream power ritual mocked openly by the mainstream media. The brutal humiliation of the candidates as people has become part of the process in our democratic transfer-of-power ritual; even the candidates who are "taken seriously" by the major press organs and said to "have a real chance" are savagely abused at times like this by the campaign scribes, who go out of their way to depict the presidential hopefuls as shameless, greedy buffoons who will do or say anything for a chance at the throne. Particularly now, where their mere

participation in such silly early debates is openly ridiculed.

By the time a candidate wins the nomination, of course, the winning candidate will have been made to jump through ten thousand grossly humiliating hoops, forced to wear closetfuls of stupid hats, posed with footballs and hockey sticks, asked to play the saxophone and the clarinet, grilled about his teeth and his haircut and the fat girl he banged in high school, and basically been made to perform like the lowest, scraggiest, street-hungriest organ grinder's monkey the world has ever seen. Anyone who can still respect the candidate as a human being by the time he's reached this stage has a serious defect of perception -- he's just not paying attention. Because stripping the candidate of the last shreds of his self-respect is clearly an important part of the ritual, especially early on.

There must be something to it -- it must be beneficial to the American power apparatus somehow to demean the individuals who seek to occupy its highest offices. Maybe it's because while dignified human beings are unpredictable, an old turned-out whore can be counted on to do anything for forty bucks -- and these are the kinds of people we need in the White House. Who knows what it is. Whatever the reason, they're starting the seal show earlier and earlier each cycle. And this year, the first round of the freak parade took place in Orangeburg, South Carolina, where the Democratic party unveiled its '08 team of craven auto-flagellants.

I watched the debate. Here are three things one can deduce about the race from this first performance:

1) In the '08 campaign, the media has replaced the word "electable" with a "tier" system.

I must have missed the memo on this one, and if anyone out there knows the source of the phenomenon, please don't

hesitate to let me know. But virtually every single post-event write-up of the debate included a self-conscious breakdown of the candidates into "tiers," with a number of papers using lines like "Among the so-called 'top tier' candidates, Hillary Clinton performed best..." The tier thing was so universal and ubiquitous that I found it frightening -- it was very difficult to find a post-mortem that lacked it. Some examples:

"Indeed, [Dodd] could be bitter that the **so-called top tier** of candidates, his Senate colleagues Hillary Rodham Clinton and Barack Obama, and his former colleague John Edwards have a combined tenure in the chamber barely half Mr. Dodd's 26 years." -- Mark Leibovich, *New York Times*

"And among the **top-tier candidates**, it was done in ways that only gently challenged one another." -- Scot Shepard, *Cox News*

"Watch for a breakout performance by one of the **'lower-tier' candidates**. New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson, probably the best-credentialed guy in the race, wants a chance to sport his resume." -- Candy Crowley, in between doughnuts, *CNN*

"The **lower-tier candidates** can't be hitting singles. They have to hit the long ball." -- Dave "Mudcat" Saunders, senior strategist for Edwards, as quoted in the *Chicago Sun-Times*

"Biden was by far the best of the **so-called 'second tier'** candidates." -- Zach Epstein, the *Daily Colonial*

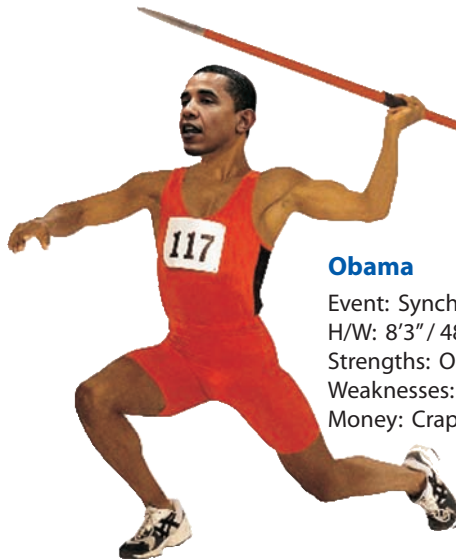
"Other **Democrats considered to be in the top tier** of their party's nomination race -- Sen. Barack Obama of Illinois and former Sen. John Edwards of North Carolina -- initially did not even allude to a military response." -- Craig Crawford, *Congressional Quarterly*

Continues on page 22



Edwards

Event: 400m Haircut
 H/W: 7'6" / 355 lbs
 Strengths: White male
 Weaknesses: Effete Southern drawl
 Money: Poop loads



Obama

Event: Synchronized Smiling
 H/W: 8'3" / 485 lbs
 Strengths: Oprah-approved
 Weaknesses: Chocolatey hue
 Money: Crap loads



Clinton

Event: Panderchase
 H/W: 7'4" / 340 lbs
 Strengths: Warmonger
 Weaknesses: Vagina
 Money: Shit loads



Dodd

Event: Triangulating Jump
 H/W: 6'1" / 210 lbs
 Strengths: Corporate Shill
 Weaknesses: Corporate Shill
 Money: Yes please



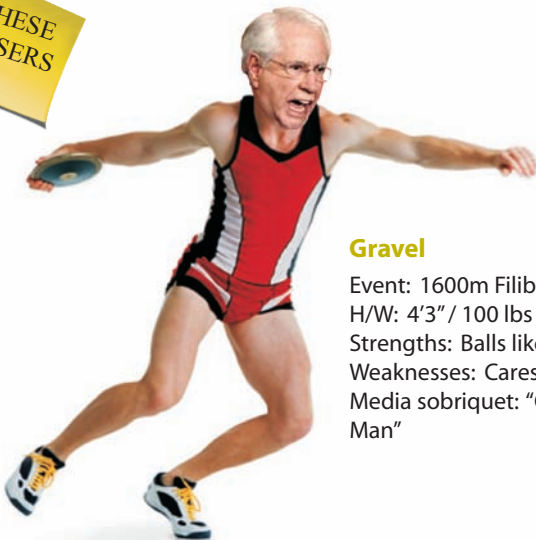
Biden

Event: Poll Vault
 H/W: 6'4" / 195 lbs
 Strengths: Life-like grimace
 Weaknesses: Averages 3 racial gaffes per week
 Special talent: Eyebrow wrestling



Richardson

Event: Long Distance Standing
 H/W: 6'3" / 240 lbs
 Strengths: Enjoys Tacos
 Weaknesses: Can't win
 Special Talent: Wetback dodging



Gravel

Event: 1600m Filibuster
 H/W: 4'3" / 100 lbs
 Strengths: Balls like a moose
 Weaknesses: Cares about stuff
 Media sobriquet: "Crazy Old Man"



Kucinich

Event: Midget Toss
 H/W: 2'7" / 25 lbs
 Strengths: Easy to mock
 Weaknesses: Populist views
 Secret Service Codename: "Who?"

"Richardson came into the debate as the candidate most likely to eventually join Edwards, Clinton and Obama in the **top tier**. Maybe. But his performance didn't get him any closer to that goal." -- Chris Cillizza, *Washington Post*

Note how many of these passages had the phrase "top-tier" in quotes or alongside the words "so-called" -- as though the writers were self-consciously referring to a current buzzword, something that was in the air. The breakdown was pretty obvious and more or less universally agreed-upon: Hillary, Obama and Edwards in the "top" tier, Bill Richardson, Chris Dodd and Joe Biden with a "chance to move up" to the "top," and Dennis Kucinich and Mike Gravel firmly in the "bottom tier." It goes without saying that this is just another take on the age-old press habit of deciding for the voters who is a real candidate and who isn't, a phenomenon already much analyzed and discussed to death by whining press critics like myself. What's weird about this is how quickly *everybody* got the memo to switch word choices. Mysteriously disappeared are old catch-phrases like "serious," "viable" and "electable," and all of the sudden, out of thin fucking air, we get this tier thing. Where does it come from? It's bizarre.

2) The "campaign as screenplay" form of political journalism is here to stay.

We've all seen these movies -- you know, the ones written by those hacks who go to five-step screenplay-writing schools. Every character has to have an "arc," and the arc moves from idyllic if uneasy stasis in the beginning of the film to chaos and an upset equilibrium in the middle to triumph and a satisfying resolution in the end. Cop made gunshy after losing his partner in a shootout flies a desk in the beginning of the film; he is plunged into a scary hostage crisis in the middle, his daughter's life hanging in the balance; in the end, he overcomes his fears and shoots the bad guy, saving the day. You know -- the *Die Hard* model. Similarly, the networks, always anxious to find a way to sell the campaign to casual viewers, have become expert at turning the race into a movie in which each of the candidates is forced to heroically overcome a flaw. The Orangeburg moderator Brian Williams put it this way, at the beginning of the debate:

Williams: We enter now the second phase of tonight's conversation. The in-house title for these questions was, *Elephants in*

the Room, according to our political staff -- what may be uncomfortable questions about issues or beliefs attached, for whatever reason, to all of you -- perception issues, for lack of a better word.

And then Williams went down the list. He asked Edwards about his penchant for fancy haircuts; he asked Kucinich why no one takes him seriously even though his views on the war are popular; he asked Biden about his habit of putting his foot in his mouth; he asked Dodd about the perception that he is too close to special interests; he asked Hillary about her high negatives, and so on.

Now, if you're making a reality show about ten people stranded on Campaign Island who are each trying to win a series of contests to determine who becomes president, then obviously this shit has to be in there. Can Barack learn to get along with Hillary? Can chilly Hillary make the others like her? Will Johnny learn to stop worrying about this hair and get with the program (our judges will secretly give him ten points if he can pass a mirror without looking in it!)? Can Joe learn to shut the fuck up? Tune in next week as our ten Survivors tackle the ten deadly *Elephants in the Room*!

But obviously none of this stuff has anything to do with anything meaningful. It's just theater, and cheap formulaic theater at that. But things are set up now so that the campaign basically becomes about how the candidates respond to these artificial challenges -- not what the candidate stands for. Canny observers of the first debate will have noted that Bill Richardson got the best reviews, mainly because he did the best job of throwing off his personal media albatross -- namely, his reputation for being a little too much of a jokester. Here's how the *Washington Post* put it:

"We've noted previously...that Richardson's occasional tendency to appear more like a stand-up comic than a candidate for president complicates his chances of being taken seriously in the primary process. And, to his credit last night, Richardson was serious..."

The *Daily Show* parodied this phenomenon by pegging Obama's problem as being the littleness of his ears -- and suggesting that he can improve his electability by the later stages in the race by having them enlarged. They then showed a computer-enhanced photo of what the "improved" Obama might potentially look like -- a grinning goon with huge ears. Of course,

the problem with the *Daily Show* lately is that it's not quite far enough from reality to really be comedy. Not when John Edwards responds to charges of being too much of a rich pretty boy by dragging his Dad out in the middle of the debate -- literally pointing him out in the audience -- and telling a story about how said poor loser Dad used to be too broke to buy his kids breakfast after church.

3) The Democrats keep failing the Dukakis test.

The key moment of the debate, as far as I was concerned, came toward the end, when Williams hit Hillary with this question:

Senator Clinton, Rudolph Giuliani, a friend of yours from back home, said this past week, quote: "The Democrats do not understand the full nature and scope of the terrorist war against us." Another quote: "America will be safer with a Republican president." How do you think, Senator, it happened that that notion of Republicans as protectors in a post-9/11 world has taken on so?

Translated into human speech, that question read something like this:

Senator Clinton, a Republican presidential candidate recently said Americans feel more safe under Republicans. How do you think the notion that Americans are more safe under Republicans came about?

I mean, seriously, folks, this is not a tough question to answer. All Hillary had to say was, "Rudy Giuliani says Americans are safer with Republicans, and suddenly you think it's true? How did you ever get a job in journalism?" and that would have been that. But the Democrats never balk at the inane questions that get thrown their way. For instance, no one ever accuses a Republican candidate of being "too conservative." But every Democrat politely and nervously answers charges of being "too liberal" every election. It is the Democrats' cowering, craven responses to these questions that validate their otherwise fallacious premises.


When media figures hound them with the same list of witch-hunting talking points each season -- Dems are incapable of protecting the country, middle America won't tolerate a "liberal," voters won't elect an "intellectual," etc. -- the Democrats unfailingly become accomplices in the conspiracy by dignifying the questions with serious responses. We first saw this back in the famous Bush I-Dukakis debate, when CNN's Bernard Shaw asked Mike Dukakis if he would advocate the death penalty if

Kitty Dukakis were raped and murdered. Instead of angrily telling Shaw to fuck off, Dukakis calmly answered the question in a professorial tone, solidifying his reputation as a spineless wuss in the eyes of the whole country.

In this case, a string of Democrats again swallowed the Giuliani premise whole. Hillary began her answer by saying, "Well, Brian, I think that, as a senator from New York, it is something that I've worked on very hard ever since 9/11 to try to convince the administration to do those things that would actually work to make us safer..." Blah blah blah. Dodd was even worse. His answer began with the line, "Well, that's a great question, Brian..."

That's a great question, Brian? Is Dodd fucking kidding? He might as well have said, "Thank you sir, may I have another?" And the thing is... While I have to believe Dukakis really was blindsided by the Shaw ploy, and also genuinely a turd when it came these matters of spine and toughness, these modern Democrats have had plenty of time to prepare for and study these questions. And yet they refuse to take their media inquisitors on, making sure at all times to play by the rules and keep in sniveling, wusslike character. As a result the debates smell suspiciously like a rigged game. I don't want to say the Democrats are throwing the races, but what stands out to me is that rather than simply show some balls before the Brian Williamses of the world, the Democratic Party's response to its "toughness problem" is always to try frantically to match Republican defense spending, and to vote for wars it plays at not really believing in -- as if that's the only way to look "tough."

That is a suspiciously convenient solution to a "toughness problem" that suspiciously never goes away, no matter how many wars the Democrats vote for or how many hundreds of billions they spend on defense. Seriously, think about it -- the Democrats in this congress, who include debaters Obama and Clinton and Biden and Dodd, just decided, on their own, to spend nearly seven hundred billion dollars on defense this year, smashing the old record. And yet they were still very fast to concede in this debate that the "notion" that they are not tough persists. So... gosh, we'll just have to spend more on the F-18 next year! Quel dommage! Is no one struck by how absurd this all is?

Of course, this is just the beginning. They have 18 months to make this process even more disgusting... 

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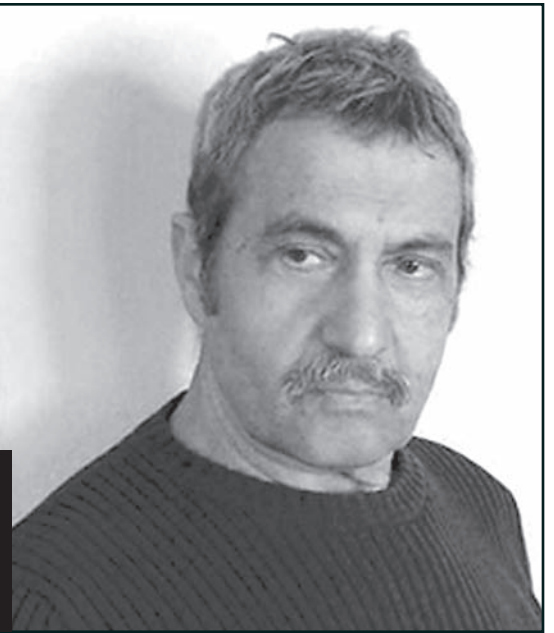


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Last week the Democratic Party presidential candidates held their first debate and some states are moving the dates of their primaries earlier. What's the motivation for extending the US presidential campaign process?

It's just an attempt by some states to gain some additional leverage by being the first in the primary. It gets pretty silly because what, in effect, we have is that the entire year before the election, 10 months before the election, is now taken up by campaigns before the actual primaries and the whole year before that as well. So we now have a two year campaign period; whereas European countries have a three or four week campaign period because they have a much saner system. The parties have identifiable positions, they have proportional representation, and the use of money is very seriously limited.

That's the way to really get money out of the campaign – not by repressive measures for bidding or spending limits, because they continually find loopholes of one sort or another – but by removing the need for so much money. And the direction we're going in is just increasing the need.

Remember, we have three primaries in this country. We have the voting primary. We have the money primary, in which the candidates actually parade how much money they've been able to gather as a demonstration that they are serious and mainstream and top contenders. And the third primary that we have is the media primary. The media anoints and appoints

certain people as front-runners.

Early polls showed that John Edwards was the one Democrat who could beat any Republican candidate. After Obama and Hillary Clinton announced, the media simply dropped Edwards and ignored him, not that they ever gave him much publicity anyway. And they focused on Obama and Clinton, both of whom have serious problems as far as winning the election. Obama is incredibly inexperienced, with only 16 months in public life at the federal level, and Clinton because she's Hillary Clinton, even a lot of Democrats don't particularly like her. And Obama is of mixed race and that might evoke certain things. But since the focus has been only on Obama and Clinton, Edwards has dropped and slumped in the polls. So they create, by the exposure that they give, that Edwards is losing the media primary.

Dennis Kucinich is losing neither the media primary nor the money primary because he was never even in them, not as a serious candidate. So they don't take him seriously. He is a very serious candidate, but not coming up with many millions of dollars and not winning the corporate media's attention and being frozen out, he in effect is not even in the primary.

The extension of the primary period simply increases the extension of the horse-race. These candidates don't discuss in any meaningful way the issues, and what's happening or not happening. They sell themselves as someone would sell a product. That may entail some

association with issues or a patting-on-the-back, saying, "I did this," or "I'm for that," or something, but there's no real education that goes on, at least not that I know, except for candidates like Kucinich and maybe to a lesser degree, Edwards.

A lot of us remember from the Cold War the Berlin Wall being seen as this very obvious symbol of repression. But nowadays, this very same structure, a wall through a city hasn't provoked the same kind of domestic outrage when it appears in Palestine or Iraq or even on our own southern border. Could you comment on the inherent amnesia that is necessary to come up with that perception?

I think you explained it yourself, that there is a double standard of evaluation here. It is a little different. The wall in front of East Germany was put up by the East Germans and the Soviets to stop the brain-drain and the stampede due to the conditions in East Germany being a lot tougher than West Germany, which got enormous amounts of aid and was developing in prosperity. The professionals especially went stampeding over to West Germany and so they put this wall up to say that they had to work to re-build their own society. It was a very coercive thing, of course, with guards and everything else.

The wall in Palestine is really to maximize the existing oppression of the Palestinian people, to keep them in there. On a day-to-day basis, the people of Palestine don't have much. They have problems with just

food and water and basic housing. The conditions imposed on them are so severe that it really amounts to a kind of ethnic cleansing.

The wall in Iraq was put up to prevent attacks, supposedly to protect sectarian communities from each other, or from people in one who would attack the people in another. But it's really a kind of security containment and under the guise of protecting the Sunni community, they really are trying to contain the Sunni insurgency, "they" meaning the United States. So these are all repressive kinds of things. Whenever you see a wall, you know it's the powerful trying to wall in or to wall out the powerless, those in want.

When the US empire collapses, do you think it will be from within or from without?

The within/without dichotomy might not be that crucial or that realistic because the empire feeds off the republic. So the way you can get a \$685 billion military budget – it's \$487 billion, but then you have another \$25 billion for Iraq and Afghanistan, and you have several billion more for homeland security and the Department of Energy, and if you really want to add the portion which is the interest on the national debt that you have to pay out every year, that's another \$100 billion. So we're talking about an enormous sum of money, easily \$700 billion depending on how you want to say it.

And you can see the effects. That's the empire feeding off the republic. We have the largest military budget in the world, bigger than all the other military budgets in the world put together. The consequences are quite visible in the republic. You see libraries cutting back their hours. You see public hospitals closing down. Just in the last couple of months, federal programs to help disabled and diseased children have been cut back. Money for forest service has been cut back, and money for ecology and conservation. They can't even build a decent levee to protect one of the most wonderful cities in North America.

It's even made worse by the fact that the people who occupy the White House today do not even really believe in the efficacy of government. They believe in the power of the state. They want strong police forces and internal security forces and all these armies and bases all over the

world, but they don't want governance and to demonstrate that the government can rescue people, help people, put out services that are cheaper than the private market, produce medicines that are cheaper, educate people at state universities for less money than private universities, and so forth. They don't want any of that demonstrated. They don't want it demonstrated that the railroads, such as in Europe, that are government-owned, run much better at less cost than the ones that are run by private investors, by the way supported by heavy government funding. They want government funding for corporate America for research and development, for export subsidies, even for moving or investing abroad. They're actually paying money to corporate America to get them to export the jobs of American workers to cheaper labor markets.

Equity subsidies, especially in the defense industry, are just amazing. It's amazing that McDonnell Aircraft can get millions and millions of dollars. They get the land, they get the factory, they get everything, even the equipment and machinery sometimes. And that's a story that's not told too often. Probably another \$100 billion a year is spent that way.

So the republic is being bled for the empire and for the interests of the ruling stratum whose main concern is not a safe America, a clean America, a healthy America. Their... not main concern, but their only concern is the maximization of profits. And all empires are dedicated to that – to the enrichment of their ruling classes. That's what empires do. They do imperialism. And the reason they do it is not for the glory of dominion, it's not power for power's sake, they pursue that power because it brings wealth to certain very influential people.

The Belgians went into the Congo not to bring them the white man's burden, not to uplift the Congolese, not to teach and "civilize" them, but to plunder their countryside and enslave their labor and to get rich off that labor. That's what King Leopold did, that's what the French did in their colonies, that's what the Americans have done in various places.

So what the empire does is it impoverishes the people at home and the people of other countries. It collapses finally... and there's no iron law that it's going to collapse. This empire might not collapse, or as it starts

going down it might bring the whole global ecology down with it before it can be done away with and its habits rectified.

In some of your talks you quoted Gramsci as saying that one must have a "pessimism of the mind and an optimism of the will." Our staff and readers have plenty of the former but we lack in the latter. Where can we get some of this "optimism of the will" stuff?

Well, by recognizing certain things. First that you're not alone. There are millions of us who understand that something is going terribly wrong. There are millions of us who know what alternative policies we can put in and how government could operate in a more effective, humane way, creating a stronger and more secure society. There are millions of us who know that bayonets do not bring security, but a decent standard of living does and treating other people fairly does.

People are speaking up. There are even people in corporate America calling for something to be done about the environment and are afraid of what's happening. The Republican Party itself is showing itself to be more divided than I ever remember it being because it's ultra-reactionary wing is really going off the deep end. And you have people in that party in the 2004 election, ex-generals, former policy-makers, from former Republican administrations saying that this administration has taken a wrong turn and so on.

Consciousness about global warming has increased a thousandfold. I remember some years ago when you'd get a little article in the back pages once every two months or so, and now global warming is a constant issue. People are realizing that what we have to do is stop the idiots who give you all this information about global warming and then say, "And unless we act by the end of this century, there may be a crisis," or "I guess we can't think of eons anymore, we have to think in terms of centuries." We don't have centuries. The crisis is right now and it's moving with a horrible feedback effect. So I guess that's what I would tell people. Develop critical judgment, don't believe most of what is said to you, and work with those who really are developing an alternative. 🌱

Interview conducted by Josh Bunting

AND GOD CURSED US WITH BOREDOM

The diary of an internet-addicted infidel

By Ian Murphy

Wednesday: Internet down! Panic ripped through me. Left with no choice, I had to bravely stand up and do something. After deciding on and executing a brief nap, I rummaged through an old chest I keep filled with religious texts and classic pornography. I like to think they have some pretty wild times in there when I'm not looking. The milky white pages of the Bahgavad Gita intermingling with the supple spine of the leather bound Buddhist Kyoden, Traci Lords riding the Tibetan Book of the Dead like a jackrabbit in heat, John Holmes doing lines off the Virgin Mary's pristine ass, etc. Of course, I have no proof of any of this, but I have faith, and that's all that you need, apparently. Partially hidden under a stack of vintage Hustlers, my never-opened, non-divine English translation of the Koran was calling to me. It seemed to be saying "Mmmph! Mmmph! Get this bitch's ass off my face!" Allah's will be done. I began reading. Everything was going great, until I reached the second paragraph:

As for the unbelievers, it is the same whether or not you forewarn them; they will not have faith. God has set a seal upon their hearts and ears; their sight is dimmed and grievous punishment awaits them.

So basically, I don't believe in Allah, because Allah won't let me? For an omniscient being to purposefully obscure people's faith and then promise hell to unbelievers—it strikes me as sadistic and counterproductive. I couldn't in good conscience read any further without first consulting an Imam. Without my virtual

lifeline or even a phone book, I knew there'd be one mosque local citizens could point me to: "The Home of the Lackawanna 6 Terror Cell!" The folks there don't much care for when you call it that, I would later find.

Heading south in my car, I stopped at the first building I saw with that squiggly writing the Muslims are so fond of. Damn! It was closed. Walked into the diner next door to use the can and get some directions. Rooster's would have been a great location for an eatery, if the abandoned factories and coke ovens littering the desolate post-industrial wasteland still brought a massive lunch crowd. The proprietor's face lit up at the sight of a potential customer. He seemed less excited when I exited the bathroom. "So, um where's the mosque?" "Next door," he said. "Is that, you know, the, um, notorious one?" I asked, giving him a sly terrorist wink. His eyes shot to my backpack with suspicion. He and the dishwasher collectively recalled the route. "Why do you want to know?" he asked. I explained I was bored and had whitespace to fill. "You should write about Roosters!" he said hopefully, pointing to a wooden sign hanging over the lunch counter that read, "It's Roosterific!"

The Masjid Alhuda Guidance Mosque, too, was empty and locked. Guidance denied; boredom prevailed.

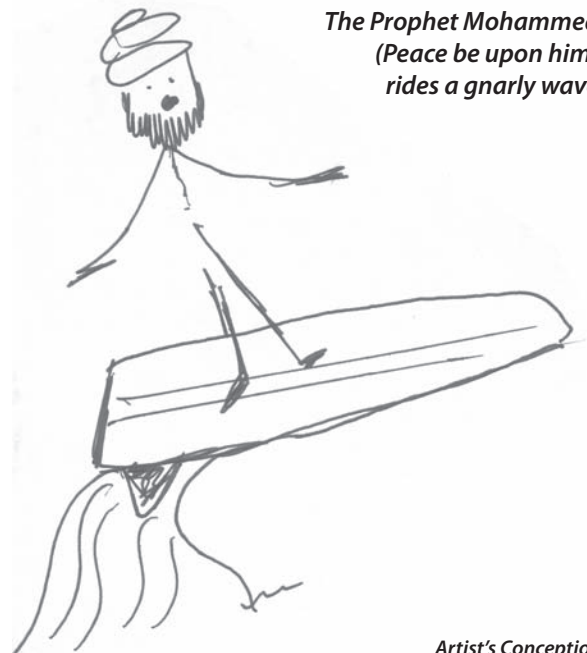
Thursday: "Google.com cannot be found." Went back to Masjid Alhuda. A praying man sprung up from the carpet to meet me at the door. There was but he and another, the Imam wasn't in. Spent rest of day drawing crude stick figures of Mohammed (see sample at right). Fell asleep demanding Allah remove the seals and show himself.

Friday: Day three without access to the web; my boredom was at new heights. Signs of life lifted my mood, however, as I parked in the same spot I had the two previous evenings. I opened the glass doors and was enveloped by small brown children and a cloud of cheap cologne. The kids took immediately to playing hockey in the parking lot. After retreating to the curb, I kept my eye out for the grayest, bearded guy in the

bunch. He would no doubt be in charge. I pretended to take notes while all the men filtered out, each in turn giving me the once over. Back inside the vestibule, I was met by a young Yemeni named Rathwan who informed there was no Imam. We talked a little about terrorism, but neither of us was really into it. A spindle-legged old man with a cane gummed "terrorist center!" I wasn't sure why he said it. Rathwan was just as reluctant to discuss theology as terrorism and sent me in the direction of local Koran scholar Ibrahim Memon.

Back on the road, burning refined Middle Eastern oil and failing to decipher my own chicken scratch, I was lost. An enormous white complex caught my attention, because of its sheer size. The building swallowed the whole block with its heavily fortified brick walls and barbed wire. Curious, I swung around the block for an inspection. As fate would have it, it too was a mosque, just not the one I was looking for. It turns out the place is an old detention center. I took off my shoes and made my way through the cavernous labyrinth of dim hallways. The air was thick with the same cologne I'd encountered at the Lackawanna mosque. I was hoping it would cover the odor rising from my damp socks. After interrupting the prayers of about a hundred guys with my dumb smile, I was, appropriately enough, told to drive east to find Ibrahim.

Arrive at Masjid-e-Zakariya. The nearly empty lot was discouraging, but a monkey-



*The Prophet Mohammed
(Peace be upon him)
rides a gnarly wave*

Artist's Conception


faced man with thin white hair and a dress loitered in front of the main entrance. The mosque itself is a former Catholic church; the Islamic meme had moved into the religious shell like a hermit crab. A suspiciously patriotic fire wrecked the place in October of 2001, I would later learn. After a minute or so, the doors were opened for evening prayers and the calls of "Allahuwoowowowoo..." commenced. I inquired about Ibrahim while I removed my shoes and was told to sit tight. After some deliberation in a language I couldn't understand, it was determined a man name Fazal would keep me company while I sat on the floor. Fazal, a Pakistani-born banker, was the most Western-dressed man present. He left for a moment to go wash his feet. Sitting alone, men walked past me, saying something about salami. I nodded. "Yes, salami," I thought.

Fazal went to the prayer room to do some leisurely calisthenics and returned after a few minutes to tell me Ibrahim wasn't

there. While he was gone I noticed several stray cologne bottles nestled on a ledge. Fazal made some calls but the Koran scholar couldn't be located. Fortunately, when prayers ended I was greeted by a talking beard named Asim, pronounced something like "awesome," which was his high school nickname. Sitting cross-legged on the carpet, we had a lengthy conversation about Islam. He was very pleasant and exuded a penetrating calm. "As an unbeliever, how am I ever to become a believer if Allah has placed this seal over my heart?" I asked, pointing to my Koran. "If he's this all powerful being, it seems like he's holding all the cards. If he wants me to believe, isn't it Allah's responsibility to remove the seal?"

"Just seems like kind of a jerk thing to do," I said. Asim distilled the problem over the course of the next half hour into two words: "fear" and "submission." I must first fear Allah, then submit to his will, to have the seals lifted. I pointed to the

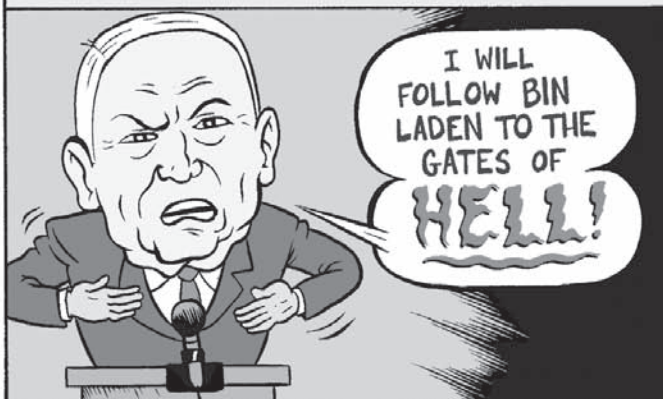
Koran verse in question and asked him how I could ever believe if I submitted to Allah's will of making me an unbeliever. Asim blamed the Islamic catch-22 on the translation I was quoting, and stressed the importance of footnotes and historical context. He repeatedly brought up the aforementioned cornerstones of Islam, fear and submission. He was scared of eternal punishment, for deviating from a submissive relationship with God. He wanted to go to heaven. "For the chicks?" I asked quietly. A subtle nod followed. "Eternity's a long time and some people think eventually you'll get bored," he mused, "but what you have to remember is that boredom is a creation of Allah; in heaven he'll take all the boredom away."

Great. All I needed to do was live an entire life of devout submission and fear, and after that I'd never be bored again. That seems worth it. Either that or get a more reliable internet provider. 

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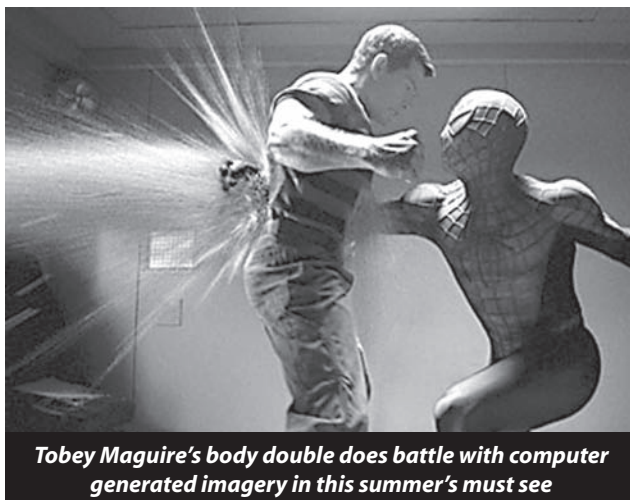
Spider-Man 3



I sit here in front of the keyboard fighting the urge to simply clack out the words “it’s gonna kick ass” or “just go see it” to describe *Spider-Man 3*, because if hype and expectation were beer and hard liquor, *Spider-Man 3* would be Peter O’Toole.

And rightfully so. After all, the second *Spider-Man* wasn’t even in theaters before talk of *Spider-Man 3* started. They took a year to write it and brought in the black suit, three villains (Sandman, New Goblin and Venom.) As the kids are saying, it looks pretty sick. We’ve got the guy who made the *Evil Dead* movies making the most expensive Hollywood movie ever made, with a price tag of \$250 million. The geeks now officially rule the world.

I don’t see how it can miss. *Spider-Man 3* takes all of the elements that proved frighteningly successful for its predecessors and bumps the whole thing



Tobey Maguire’s body double does battle with computer generated imagery in this summer’s must see

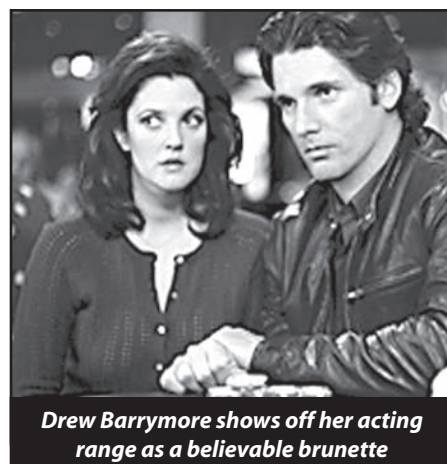
up to Clydesdale mode. In any given trailer for this movie, everything looks good for Peter Parker/Spider-Man. He’s finally got the girl, he’s going to ask her to marry him and the city loves him. All of a sudden it turns out his uncle’s killer is at large, some prick at work is trying to get his job, his best friend comes gunning for revenge and some kind of black slime makes his Spidey costume black and his temperament mean. It gets kind of fuzzy from there on in as the scenes jump from the black to the red and blue costume,

but it all looks damn good.

An added bonus is Bryce Dallas-Howard as Gwen Stacy, offering the comic book geeks an extremely pleasant and well-deserved break from Kirsten Dunst’s Mary-Jane, not to mention some history from the comic books. All this and I get to look at Howard without sitting through an M. Night Shyamalan movie. Everybody wins!

I also just saw the *Venom* TV spot and if I get to see even five more minutes of that I promise I’ll say *Spider-Man 3* can wipe its ass with the first two movies. It’s gonna kick ass and you should just go see it because it looks pretty sick. Blerg!

Lucky You



Drew Barrymore shows off her acting range as a believable brunette

If I was still reviewing actual movie movies this summer something *truly* evil would have taken place. I don’t know. You get a good look at a summer movie lineup and you either get a nice whiff of Cheerios near the waterfront or you’re going to get that constipated Kate Hudson smiling look on your face down near the coke ovens in Sunny LA, if you know what I’m saying.

And watching the trailer for *Lucky You* makes me think I’m about to get on the skyway heading downtown. And it’s a really hot day. Texas hold’em has officially been a fad for two or three years now, and finally we’ve got the first of what will surely be a wave of throwaway movies exploiting it—like breakdancing in the ‘80s. We’ve got the ancient cliché Father and Son Bullshit coagulated with a little bit of Vegas... class(?) as well as a contrived

romance between a professional gambler and a wannabe lounge singer. I'm sure everyone's going to learn a thing or two about themselves. And it includes such godawful cliché noir lines as:

"You know what I think? I think everybody's just trying not to be lonely." (straight-faced!)

"Is he related to you? Your eyes went all quiet." (again, straight-faced!)

"If anyone can turn nothing into something it's you. Trouble is you always throw it away." (yet again, straight faced, but Debra Messing almost looked like she was going to lose it.)

Then there's another part where Eric Bana (the gambler) starts talking to the singer (Drew Barrymore) and uses poker as a metaphor for life and love. *They do it through the whole trailer.* Then you're supposed to be happy as shit when Robert Duvall plays the guy's jolly old-guy father. It might make your head hurt. Expect to see a lot of couples who wear black leather jackets and jeans when they go out in public together at the theater. I'll just go with Dog the Bounty Hunter instead. Yeah, he's good. I like him a lot. And speaking of who they like a lot, they miss Sanjaya. At least that's how a lot of middle-aged people I know talk. The end is near. I can feel it. I can smell it and I can taste it.

28 Weeks Later



"Excuse me, do you have a moment to discuss our lord Jesus Christ?"

The last time I had the apparently rare fortune of being scared at the movies was when I saw *28 Days Later* four years ago. It was a method-out zombie reinvention that was way better than it took credit for. It was genuinely frightening and surprisingly good—all while going in directions you weren't quite expecting.

So the rage virus is contained and people are beginning to move back into London. Oh wait, the contagion isn't under control and for the sake of making a sequel more interesting the virus has mutated and is now stronger! *28 Weeks Later* has none of the original cast

and more importantly, it doesn't have the same director, Danny Boyle. Naturally this is all very nice if you're trying not to merely ape the original, but that seems to be what we're looking at here.

28 Weeks Later looks a lot cooler than any horror movie that's come out since the remake of *Dawn of the Dead*, but something's not right. Part of the charm of *28 Days Later* was that you saw the very, very beginning, the aftermath and nothing else. It seems that *28 Weeks Later* is almost trying to fill in the holes. Let's say you're looking at a picture of Cary Grant—he's smooth, classy, well-dressed—kind of like a James Bond you don't have to worry about being sent to kill you. We'll say this is *28 Days Later*. But wait! We've got another smooth operator named George Clooney! He's got many of the same qualities as Grant only not as many. But—*what the hell am I talking about?* This looks great!

They build up this whole unity thing with American soldiers helping re-establish England after the rage virus has been stomped out. Families are reunited and everything's going to be okay. No! All shit's going to break loose and it's going to be sweet. Hell, maybe I'll even give ol' George Clooney a call and see if he wants to go with me. He and Maccio will really hit it off, I think.

The Flock



[We at *The BEAST* refuse to print a picture of Shetty-mauling infidel Richard Gere. -Ed]

Bite the pillow, 'cause it's going in dry. Finding the trailer for *The Flock* was a chore, to the point that I had to wonder if the producers were actually ashamed of it. I did find some minor bullshit, the best of which being that Avril Lavigne is in this movie as a girl abducted by a registered sex offender. That was followed up by a lively debate as to whether or not Avril was punk or pop.

There's not much to this movie about Richard Gere as a chiseled old FBI agent going after Avril with Claire Danes as his green-around-the-gills protégé. Training day, son! I couldn't find a trailer either.

I read it's got no release date and isn't coming out. So I can stop pretending to give a shit. We can all stop pretending to give a shit.

KINO KLEE-SHAY LEGEND



Anglophilia



Mind Fuck



Noble Retard



Evil Genius



Super Models Grapple with Moral Ambiguities



Ordinary Person Pushed too Far



Impossible Science



Glorification of Law Enforcement Bodies



Chick Flick



Special Effects Circle Jerk



Washed up Hero gets Second Chance at Glory



Stockholm Syndrome Romance



Wisecracking Cartoon Animal



Gratuitous Christ Imagery



Betrayed By Those Who Trained Him



Simplistic Epiphany



Dramatic Embellishment



Likable Thug

Georgia Rule



It's rumored Lohan put on so much weight for the role, she's menstruating again

At the time that I write this I have been working for about 18 hours straight and therefore take no responsibility for what I may say from this point forward. But when you watch the trailer for an estrogen version of *Fail-Safe* like *Georgia Rule*, you've got to keep your wits about you.

The trailer for *Georgia Rule* left me somewhat confused. I saw Lindsay Lohan (I guess) acting like what I'm guessing is herself and Jane Fonda seemed to be acting appropriately. Felicity Huffman kind of just faded into the background and I was just trying to figure out if they were acting or if this is real life and I didn't like it. Every time Lohan acts like a spoiled bitch, Fonda yells something like "No champagne colonics!" or "No butt sex with migrant workers!" Then she ends it with the words "Georgia rule!" I zoned in and out but I'm guessing Fonda's name is Georgia or they're in Georgia. Looked more like Idaho to me. Speaking of looking like Idaho, the entire cast looks like they were assaulted with toasted tin foil and dogshit sandwiches. Fonda looks like she was given an STD by Keith Richards, Huffman looks like a cross between a wax statue and a corpse that was laid out by the Three Blind Mice, and Lohan—she looks like she was just treated to a blanket party by the heads of some kind of fake tanner cartel.

With three generations of women and their wacky man problems and/or hot flash jokes, they're all sure to understand each other a little better in the end. I couldn't care less. Fonda's bringing too little too late, Lohan looks like a train wreck who ate too many carrots, and who cares about the rest of them? Who cares about *any* of them?

This is what your summer looks like, people. This is what you're going to have to put yourselves through in order to avoid vile amounts of summer humidity in tandem with its unforgiving heat in the dark. The only upside is that it's rated R, which I'm guessing means more adult-geared potty talk and swearing. And who knows? Maybe even a glimpse of Lohan's freckled and weather-beaten carcass. I just threw up in my mouth and I'm getting heartburn because it's on its way back down.

Delta Farce



Larry The Cable Guy serves up the Southern-fried retardation

There are so many things wrong here and I have no idea where to begin. A movie starring Larry the Cable Guy, Bill Engvall and that creepy *New Guy* motherfucker as army reservists who accidentally get sent to Iraq, but are unwittingly dropped in Mexico. The poster is a blatant rip-off (or, as I'm sure, an *homage*) to the poster for *Full Metal Jacket*. This trailer was like watching a paraplegic have sex with a grizzly bear. You can give yourself a bleach lobotomy and no one would blame you after witnessing a spectacle like that.

I debated doing irreparable damage to myself as I fought through the pain of

existence and attempted to rationalize continuing to live in a world where this movie exists. I could have given up entirely and started watching NASCAR. But in a rare move (as I usually go with the giving up entirely option), I decided to try and figure out how and why something like this could happen.

Then it hit me: Every regrettable joke, every horrible line of dialogue and every haggard, hackneyed moment is an opposite reaction to a moment in *No Direction Home*, the documentary that Martin Scorsese made about Bob Dylan a couple years ago. Early '60s era Bob Dylan, no less. I knew I'd have to someday pay for the joy that 3 ½ hour chronicle of sheer genius in its prime offered. That day has come. But it could be worse. Knowing that this movie is out there and that people are actually seeing it, and not doing anything to stop it, is a crime against humanity in itself. But at least I don't have to see it.

Shrek the Third



This fucking thing

Admittedly, the first two *Shrek* movies were pretty entertaining. They also made a shitload of money. And when the M-word is involved it's only a matter of time before you see another one.

Shrek the Third looks a little weak, going by the trailer. The King is dying and Shrek, Donkey and Puss in Boots have to find Arthur (as in *King Arthur*) to rule Far, Far Away. Then Prince Charming is trying to get a coup going with the help of all the villains in the land of Far, Far Away. You take kids to get hypnotized for the better part of two hours and you laugh

at the pop culture references they splice in for adults. You recognize some of the voices and you laugh a little.

I'm sure this one will have a lively moment of commentary regarding the treatment of Don Imus. After all, the second *Shrek* wagged its finger and shook its head regarding the Iraq War. So why not get socially conscious here and now? I'm sure it'll allude that firing the (Shrek's words here...) "weather-beaten old redneck" for what he said is like grounding your kid for bad grades when he crashed your car the week before. Donkey will say that Imus has always been a jackass and he should've offered reparations in the form of a considerable charitable donation chosen by the ladies basketball team. I don't know what Puss in Boots is going to say, but I know he's going to give that *cute little cat* look then he's going to give somebody a Dirty Sanchez. And Cameron Diaz still looks like a troll. Yippee. If a kid you know wants to see it, go with them. If you don't know any kids, count your blessings and wait for cable.

The Ex




NBC's *Scrubs* has been hitting the skids for a while now. If it's not deliberately

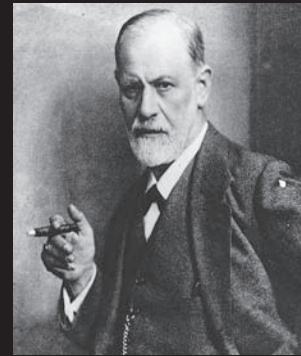
trying to depress you with some left field storyline, it's trying to lull you into numbing complacency with Zach Braff's jovial narration and the occasional cutaway to some random, often disturbing but sometimes funny scene. But Braff's Braff-Braff-Braffiness is the big culprit here, and at this point *Scrubs* is a sinking ship that's sailed.

Well, it appears that Braff is aware of the end coming for *Scrubs* and over the past few years has been working his way from the small to the big screen with such movies as 2004's surprisingly decent *Garden State* and last year's self-indulgent *The Last Kiss*. They were kind of relieving in the sense that we didn't have to endure echoey and uninspired narration or redundant digressions, but we still haven't shaken those Braff-Braff-Braffy performances.

And with Braff's new movie, *The Ex*, there's still no relief in sight on that front. He plays a new dad whose wife (Amanda Peet in an unremarkable role) decides to quit her lucrative lawyer job, become a stay at home mom and send Braff's lazy ass back to work with her father in what I want to say is an ad agency. But working there is Peet's obsessive ex, played by Jason Bateman (no, you're thinking of Jerry O'Connell—Bateman is the guy from *Arrested Development*) in what looks like is going to be his most memorable role since *Teen Wolf, Too*. Oh, and Bateman is in a wheelchair and is an evil and manipulative sociopath, too. So expect some misfiring physical humor on top of all that Braff-Braff-Braffiness. The more I think about it, the more I think it could work as a serious drama.

What just may be the saving graces are the return of Charles Grodin as Braff's father-in-law and Amy Poehler and Fred Armisen from *Saturday Night Live*. Oh, and another perk is that it doesn't sound like Braff handpicked the soundtrack. Cause you know that's another part of the Braff-Braff-Braffiness—he makes great mix CDs. No CD for you. So no Iron and Wine, no Coldplay, no Joshua Radin and no Snow Patrol. Hipsters begone! 

Guten Tag, Bitches!



A brief message from the father of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud.

Vhas is up, mine peeps? I know vhat you must be zinkingk: "Zis Freud, vhere az'e been?" No calls, no nahsingk! Vell, vhat can I say? Vis all of ve piles of cocaine lyingk around and ze vanten frauleins interruptingk mine shtudies vis ze ol' "shtrudle-munchin," if you know vhat I mean, a man zimply loses track of zhese zhingks. Are ve cool again, dudes? Das is gut! Now, ve move on to ze topic I vant to be discussink: ze vagina! I know, I know—vas else is new?

Did you know, for inshtanze, zhat I invented ze vagina? Eet iz vone of mine proudest momentz. Before zhat ze voman vas incapable of zexual arousal und played vis er knees to reach ein climax. You're velcome, ladies. Zadly, zomethingk called "une man in ze boat" as shtolen mine glory! I am ze preeminent genius of ze 20th century; mine vork is ezzential to ze fields of public relations, advertizingk, psychiatry und even fascism! Und who is zis "boat man?" Because of'im, ze old notionz of female frigidity und inadequacy ave fallen by ze vaizide. Vhat a shame. Und vas as'e ever done? Vhere as'e been published? Ze nerve of zis guy! Vhat? Vas is you laughingk?

It is dangerous for ze voman to ignore her limitations und listen to ze vork of zis untrained fisherman. Zis line of zinkingk is ein shlippery shlope. Vhat is you laughingk again?! Ze next zhing you know, vimmen vill be runningk amuck, und zhere is ein shtrong likelihood girlz vill be goingk vild on late night television. Ze teachings of zhis madman pose ein grave threat to ze very fabric of socziety, und must be shtopped! Okay, I have zaid mine pieze, now back to fantasizingk about mine mozzer. She az ein vagina, und she knows how to use it!



Wigging out



Git yer Mel Kiper Jr. wigs out; it's time again for the NFL draft — America's premier non-sporting sporting event, the modern-day, Cap Cities/Disney version of a mass slave auction. In short, the best two-day sports spectacle of the year.

This is a weak year in terms of draft-eligible criminals, but it's not like the cupboard is bare. Moreover, in the wake of the Pacman Jones/Cincinnati Bengals scandals, PR-conscious teams are likely to punish those with criminal records more severely than in the recent past. With that in mind, here's a brief list of targets with "character issues," their crimes, and predictions for how much their charges will end up costing them.

1) Eric Wright, cornerback, UNLV. Wright is the "character" litmus test of this draft. A couple of years ago, then-Southern Cal CB Wright — on talent alone probably the first- or second-best defensive back in the country — was arrested on rape charges after a woman accused him of plying her with ecstasy and assaulting her. Police found 136 X

-pills exactly where the victim said they would be.

Following a long USC tradition of not suspending star players — ex-Pats coach Pete Carroll likewise failed to punish future NFL players Manny Wright, LenDale White, Winston Justice, Matt Leinart, and even our own Matt Cassell — the school let Eric Wright off the hook. No charges were filed and he was allowed to transfer to UNLV. Without the rape rap he goes in the top 15; it says here he goes no later than Dallas at pick 53.

2) Marshawn Lynch, running back, California. How's this for strange? Lynch, rated the second-best back after Adrian Peterson, was accused of beating and choking his girlfriend in a December 13 incident in Oakland, and was slapped with a restraining order. But he was never formally charged. Neither was Eric Wright, but Wright is going to slip a whole round, while Lynch will go no lower than 16 to Green Bay. I don't get it, but that's the deal.

3) Tarell Brown, cornerback, Texas. Previously featured in this space as the winner of this year's Justin Miller award for the year's outstanding bonehead pre-draft arrest, Brown was twice busted for driving around with weed. In his earlier arrest, cops discovered him asleep in the back seat of a car holding a loaded handgun in his lap. He also sucks, so gauging his draft stock is tough, but he's

going to lose at least two full rounds. Let's say he goes in the fifth round, again to Dallas.

4) Demarcus "Tank" Tyler, defensive tackle, North Carolina State. Tyler's incidents include an arrest for assaulting a cop and the Pacman-meets-Albert-Haynesworth on-field crime of spitting on an opposing player. In the Brian Bosworth era, that crap got you movie deals. Post-Pacman, it costs one round in the draft. DTs are hard to find, though, and Tyler is pretty good, so I'm guessing he goes in the second to Carolina or Green Bay.

5) Nate Harris, inside linebacker, Louisville. Harris and a friend used a gun to rob a man of a bracelet, a ring, and a necklace while the man was playing checkers in Miami Beach. The armed-robbery rap cost him a scholarship at Miami (which at the time was busy recruiting crime-superstar linebacker Willie Williams for that same position) and left him the only entrant in this draft with prison/boot camp experience. He's a fourth without the rap, a seventh at best right now.

6) Ramonce Taylor, running back, Texas. Taylor is this year's "supernaturally large quantity of marijuana" entrant. Last May he was caught by police with live .40-caliber ammo in his car and a backpack containing more than five pounds of marijuana, a

second-degree felony punishable by 2–20 years in prison. Apparently he was on his way to settle a dispute. He looks like a seventh right now; the weed bust probably cost him a round.

7) Marvin Mitchell, inside linebacker, Tennessee. Mitchell got a disorderly conduct arrest last May after he threatened to “knock out” another customer at a campus-area Rocky Top market in the middle of the night. Minus the arrest, the Pats might have been looking at him, but not now.

8) Ryan Moore, wide receiver, Miami (Fla). Moore is your basic girl-choking wideout. Last August, he grabbed a woman by the neck, threw her to the ground, grabbed another woman and assaulted her, then kicked in the door of the car belonging to one of them. He also sucks. Look for him to end up an undrafted free agent for the Fish.

9) Justin Medlock, placekicker, UCLA. A kicker who gets a DUI arrest is unacceptable. He goes undrafted. Interestingly, and oddly, another draft-worthy kicker — Darren McCaleb of Southern Mississippi — was also arrested for hitting his girlfriend in 2005. I doubt any draft in history has ever featured two kickers with arrest records.

10) Juwan Simpson, linebacker, Alabama. Simpson was pulled over last year and caught with the usual: baggie of weed, stolen handgun. The arresting officer had a narc dog. He got hit with possession, receiving stolen property, and carrying. Look for him to go in the sixth round. Pats fans take note: he might go to us.

11) Bo Smith, defensive back, Weber State. This draft’s bar-fight champion, Smith was bashed in the head with a baseball bat. Like Oklahoma linebacker Rufus Alexander, who was arrested for his part in a fight he didn’t start, teams appear to have absolved Smith for the bar fracas. Syracuse’s Tanard Jackson is a third fight survivor, having been stabbed in the chest in 2004.

12) Tony Franklin, defensive back, Virginia. Franklin has been frequently linked to the Patriots in draft rumors, but uncharacteristically for players who have aroused the attention of Belichick and Co., he has a weed bust in his past. He’ll go in the fifth and don’t be surprised if he ends up in Foxboro.

There are others with spotty pasts — Duane Coleman of Clemson, Brandon Meriweather of Miami, and K-State’s Thomas Clayton come to mind — but the list actually isn’t as long as it has been in the past. Plus, there are no top-10 picks with serious flags. Tune in next week to see who paid the most for his crimes.


two terrible crime tales.

The first story began either late on April 3 or early on April 4, when running back E.J. Jones, cornerback Keith Massey, and defensive end Alex Daniels hosted a party at which a young woman (a non-student) became extremely intoxicated. The woman later reported that she was carried into a bedroom and raped by three men. Upon awakening, she went through the room and found cell phones belonging to the assailants. She then claims to have entered her number in each of the phones and called herself to leave evidence in the suspects’ friends’ lists. She subsequently began receiving calls and text hits from the three men.

The players were arrested, but were not brought up on charges and were released three days later. Authorities say that the case remains under investigation and that the men remain suspects. According to various local press reports, items like condoms, mattress pads, cell phones, and couch-cushion covers were seized from the players’ homes.

The school’s response was of the what-an-awful-tragedy, let’s-let-the-system-of-due-process-take-its-course genus. Meanwhile, the three players were suspended but allowed to remain on campus.

Ironically, the men shared an apartment with Robert McField, a red-shirt freshman defensive end with the Gophers who was also suspended for violations of the school’s student-conduct code. Last year, McField was a highly touted defensive recruit whom school officials were pleased to have signed away from the University of Missouri. That is, until it turned up that the St. Louis native had two pending armed-robbery cases. When the university found out, it kicked McField off the team. Yet the school still faces charges for failing to investigate recruits. It did run a \$75 criminal-background check, but the check turned up nothing. The incident has spurred a number of sportswriters to opine that all schools should conduct extensive background checks.

Police have not suggested that McField was involved in the alleged rape case. As for Jones, Massey, and Daniels, they land on this year’s list with 90 points for this utterly unfunny forcible-rape case. 

Minnesota blues



Several big-time D-1 sports schools have found themselves enmeshed in complex multi-arrest imbroglios this week. First among these is Laurence Maroney and Kevin McHale’s alma mater, the University of Minnesota, whose Golden Gophers football team was whacked with

Sports Blotter Legend



Exotic Dancer/
Hooker



X-treme DUI



Performance
enhancing
“vitamins”



Open container
of alcohol



Cloying/
Agent-drafted
public apology



“Disagreement”
in parking lot



Subdued
via taser



Rape/Sexual
assault



Unregistered
handgun



Those drugs
belong to my
brother/cousin/
someguy



Frantic spousal
911 call



Stats cheerily
recited after
AP report



Big-ass SUV



Incident involving
“baby momma”



Burglary/theft



No contest plea

TCHYA, RIGHT

i'd like the president to be impeached. i also believe that the beast staffers would like the president impeached. living in the city of buffalo we have brian higgins as our direct link to the govenment. although he has predominantly done nothing to actually help this district, if we had a majority of people in the district asking that he push impeachment, he'd have to do it right? how do we get a majority? well, even if enough people in our district wanted bush to be impeached, getting them off their asses to actually contact their congressman would probably be too much to ask. why not stick a a quarter size add in the beast that basically says something along the lines of 'i live in the district, brian higgins, i want my representative to represent me and publically push for the impeachment of bush etc etc' and then have a line for them to print and then sign their name. well, i guess this would be fairly costly though as you'd probably have to supply a stamped envelope or something as once more people would probably not do it if it required something greater than natural function. well, anyway, it's the start of an idea, probably too little too late, but hey, how much does a quarter page add cost because it's still worth a try. i'd spend my money on that.

knife

Dear Knife,
Sure. If a majority wants it, their representative does it. Just like universal health care. It'll definitely work. Buy the ad.

TOUGH ASSIGNMENT

Matt Taibbi needs to write everything I read. He's awesome.
Kevin M. Hagerman

Dear Kevin,
We'll get him started on your cereal box.

INTOLERANCE INTOLERANCE

The Florida congressman's behavior sums up what I think passes for conservatism in this country: my view is right, no one else's has any validity at all, and we should tear down any structures that might lend aid to my opposition! [Matt Taibbi, "The Whining Minority," issue 115]
Ugh, it's the anthem of the "culture wars" to violently oppose any and all differences of opinion or chances to have a real dialogue and exchange of ideas.
There are plenty of liberals doing the same thing, of course, particularly when asshats like the Gores support music censorship in the name of "cleaning things up."
When people are afraid to listen to ideas they disagree with, ***that*** is when democracy (such as we know it, such as we have it in this



country) begins to break down.
Zac Dettwyler

Dear Zac,
Right you are. The conservatives, along with all others who disagree with you, are terrible people who can't tolerate other views. They must not be tolerated.

HOPEFUL YET LIMP

We are not far off from scraping this whole 'grand experiment' & starting over. There really is no business in the world that could survive if it was run like our government (it has finally become so broken it will never be fixed). EVERYONE KNOWS it is all about the money and our 'elected' officials keep acting as if it isn't. Simply put... it's so sick we can't even see how truly bizarre it has become... Insane Madness. Ordinary citizens would be fired or locked up for behaving in the same ways as many of our 'leaders' do. On mass, we probably have one of the most politically uneducated electorates in the 'free' world operating within a system that has been all set up for, and run by, money. No Doubt. It's still a great country (by current world standards) but for how much longer? All of this 'self misuse and abuse' will come back to haunt us as a nation and we will certainly topple... and when that happens you can bet it's not going to be pretty.

When the vast majority of us have gotten over worshiping money and the false authorities that go along with it we can come back to supporting, respecting, loving and caring for one another with peace, fellowship and the joy of living a fulfilling and simple life. I believe it will come. I also believe the process of getting there is going to look and feel a lot like 'breaking apart'... which it probably will be.

Anyway, I enjoyed the article and, as you can see, it stirred me to respond... which is something I rarely do. Thank you.
Sherwood

Dear Sherwood,
Have you tried Levitra? That stuff'll get your football through the tire swing, if you know what we mean! Zabadoo!

ELECTOPHOBIA

I don't think it's insufficient zeal about porn that got them fired [Allan Uthman, "President Rubber vs. Speaker Glue," Issue 115], but insufficient zeal against pursuing voter fraud cases. (Most of those that have been pursued are cases of simple errors by voter registrants, but no matter.) Rove's long-term strategy is to make the poor and the black afraid to vote, and he needs the US Attorneys to push that agenda.
David Udin

Dear David,
What was wrong with the old strategy of making them too stupid to vote?

BUSTED

pure, unsubstantiated nonsense [Allan Uthman, "The Truth Spin" (web-only), issue 115]. get at least 2 confirmed sources. this wouldn't have passed even at the onion. it is too nice to believe and that's why i think it's fake.
John Smith

Dear John,
Fake, you say? You mean, you don't believe we received a classified document via the White House custodial department, which argues that the administration adopt a new PR policy of telling the public we're really in Iraq for the oil? Well, we are shocked! Shocked indeed. You certainly are a sharp and critical reader, John. Thanks for the lesson in journalism!

TWILIGHT OF THE PICKLES

Dear Allan,
Thank you for your article, which I came across through Buzzflash.

In the first few days of the official Menu Foods recall, I went online to PetConnection.com. I was shocked and saddened by the stories I read there.

The next day, I wrapped up both the 10 lb K/D Science Prescription Diet and the 17.5 lb Indoor Cat Science Diet and returned them to the vet and pet store respectively. I researched the Web for a better dry food for my cats, found Innova and where to buy it. When I got done with all that, I called Science Diet's customer service and told them I had lost all confidence with their product. I called Innova once this rice protein story broke, and demanded to know if any of their ingredients come from China, directly or indirectly. The rep assured me none of their stuff comes from China.

The truth is, I have very little confidence in any commercial food now, pet or human. It's very hard to find food without wheat gluten, wheat flour, corn gluten, rice protein, soy something-

or-other. It's probably all got melamine in it, and we've been eating it for years. It's just that this time, the amount was high enough to kill.

I've lost two male cats, one in December 2005, one in January 2007, to mysterious, sudden-onset acute renal disease. My vet can't explain why two 8 year olds were so unhealthy. I have a third male cat, born in 1998, who was diagnosed with, you guessed it, acute renal disease in January 2006. He's my baby, and he's hanging on. But every day I look at his slowly shrinking body (at one time he was the World's Biggest Cat), and I feel so guilty that I've fed him crap all these years.

These little guys deserved so much better.

About two weeks ago, I reported my two fatalities to the regional FDA office. The agent took my info down, but because I wasn't implicating any of the products currently on the recall list, I could tell he wasn't going to investigate. He had room on his form for only one food, he said. While I was talking to him, he was looking at his e-mail for updates, and he said, "Oh, look, here's a new one!" The new information he was just receiving was a week old. But, hey, "Heckuva job, Brownie."

You didn't mention your cat in the body of your piece, only in the artwork and title. I am so sorry that Mr. Pickles, just 3 years old, became an innocent victim of this outrageous government. We all deserve better. Marie

Mr. Uthman responds:
While I find it quite amusing, I feel I must inform you all that, despite my misleading title, I do not have a dead cat named "Mr. Pickles." That illustration was a joke. My cats have real, serious names: Fluffy and Princess. "Mr. Pickles." How silly!

WE'LL DO IT TOMORROW

When do we move forward with impeachments of this gang in Washington? Or, as with the pet food scandal, do we wait until it's too late????
patricia maddern

Dear Patricia,
We're going with "wait until it's too late."
We've got 75 bucks on us right now, care to wager on it?

CAT-ASTROPHE

Cat-killers (FRIST) and Dog-killers (MRS. Rudy G.) abound in the thuglican party. So now Ray-gun and Chimpy are responsible for thousands of pet deaths.
Zee

Dear Zee,
Yeah, some human deaths too, incidentally.

FALLOONY

The unapologetic honesty of Paul Falloon's article should be in every newspaper in the United States. It was THAT good.

Article alluded to how most "mildly intelligent Americans" believe the bullshit that "Newsweek" and "Time" present as the "true America."

It really seems that we're all concentrating on the petty things, like demon-bitch calling Edwards a "faggot" and who will be the next President that will "save" America while we all miss the painful truth: That the high and mighty morals we BELIEVE we should live by are an illusory ideal that so many "patriots" buy into.

Falloon's article is a much-needed "kick-in-the-teeth."

Regardless of the article's truth about both sides (Dems and Rep) being full of it, Ann Coulter, Lindbaugh, O'Reilly and Bauerle (among many others) should be ground into dog food.
Scott D. Snitzer

Dear Scott,
Unfortunately, new FDA regulations prohibit the sale of dog food containing more than trace amounts of asinine conservative pundits.

ISLAMORMON

Hi Beasties,
So I go through periods of high news awareness to periphery acknowledgment. I was paying attention when the prosecutor firings-story first came out. Why is the media still using headlines akin to Gonzales claims fuzzy memory? Didn't he say that weeks ago?

Sorry, in my most disheartened moments I ask rhetorical questions as such. We've all been through this one.....

How long will we be agape with incredulity at the manipulation and subsequent perversion of the media? For how long will Americans let their minds be shaped by the corporate media consciousness? I am finally catching up with the details of the Virginia Tech incident, reading through the victim profiles on Yahoo, and I find myself extremely saddened. Of course it is a terrible thing to have happened; excepting that these people will forever be memorialized as kind, wonderful, and never



offensive human beings, senseless violence is mind-numbing in its horror and completely without point.

So let's talk (again) about the senseless, American-lead violence going on in Iraq. My real disgust and horror comes from the tiny (by comparison) lead story about 100+ people dying in Iraq. Again. On average there are 3000+ Iraqi casualties per month. At this point it is easy to be desensitized to the numbers....oh, no wait a minute, no it's not. AN EQUIVALENT TO THE WORLD TRADE CENTER ATTACK PER MONTH, FOR THE LAST FOUR YEARS.

Shouldn't we all be horrified, everyday? Who's eulogizing all the dead Iraqis? Can anyone even keep up? What the fuck can we do about?

And if you say we all need to march on the capitol I will come back to Buffalo and beat the beer-addled snot out of your chicken-wing greasy head. Really, trust me. I'm in no mood. Kate in Kingston

*Dearest Kate,
We cope through a comprehensive two-pronged program of bitching and mockery. If the Iraqis want to be eulogized, they're going to have to find a way to get rich. But don't fear; they will all eventually be posthumously baptized by the Mormons.*

POOR FASHION CHOICE

I would like to add to the list of the 50 Most Loathsome each and every person who has referred to the Va Tech massacre as "a senseless act of violence."

What is more sensible than a mentally ill, suicidal individual who has led a miserable, solitary existence finally ending it all by getting attention using the one thing Americans

absolutely love to watch: VIOLENCE? Meanwhile, our Simpleton in Chief refers to Cho as "evil."

Judging by the amount of maroon and orange I have seen this week, the Virginia Tech victims and their families are receiving more "support" than they can possibly absorb. I myself have been wearing red, green, black, and white this week - the colors of Iraq's flag - in solidarity with the thousands of innocent Iraqis who must endure this sort of violence DAILY, in large part due to the actions of my government. The Virginia Tech community has agreed it's time to start the healing process. How long does it take a nation to heal from years of bloodshed?
Gillian Durham

*Dear Gillian,
Forty-two years.*

RUSH THE MAGIC HONKIE

I wonder which unskilled mexican immigrant is going to get Rush's job. His job takes no skill.
W.D.Russell

*Dear W.D.,
Come on—you don't think shitting though your mouth takes skill?*

FISH IN A BARREL

Dear Mr. Murphy:
My name is Tom Wanchick and I'm a Christian with an the intellectual defense of the Christian faith.

I'm a good writer and I've written for some much respected publications in this area (e.g., *Think* a well-regarded British philosophy

journal and *Christian Research Journal* a very popular Christian magazine) and was wondering if I could contribute to The Beast.

In fact, I wanted to know if you would be interested in engaging in a brief debate on the pages of The Beast. The debate could cover an issue like "Does God exist?" or "Is Evolution True?" or "Did Jesus rise from the dead?" or anything of that sort.

I know you have some strong opinions about these topics, just like I do. You guys at The Beast are big proponents of free speech and showing people the truth. Maybe it would be fun for readers to see both sides of the debate and think about it for themselves.

I can send you some PDF files of my writings if you want to see them. You can also find some of them at the Secular Web (www.infidels.org). You'll probably be quite interested in my recent, lengthy debate with atheist author Richard Carrier at infidels.org/library/modern/richard_carrier/carrier-wanchick/.

If you're interested in this please let me know. I look forward to a healthy discussion!

Thanks,
Tom Wanchick

Murphy responds:

The thing is, Tom, everyone is already familiar with your side of the "debate." And it's retarded. Why don't you grow the fuck up and stop believing in fairy tales? I read your stuff and you're clearly well versed in the philosophical traditions of bullshitting. You can quote Leibniz and jump through as many mental hoops as you desire, but that doesn't change the reality of the situation: Mighty Thor, Scandinavian lord of the wrathful hammer and pointy hats, is the one true god. Accept the truth, Tom, or burn in Viking hell.



BEAST-O-SCOPES

As divined by Andrew Gullerstein

Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Taurus, the definition of insanity is writing the same definition of insanity over and over again, and expecting to remain interesting.

Gemini (May 21 –June 20)

Actually, Gemini, the reason your cat is always following you around is because it knows you're going to die soon, and it's fantasized about eating you for some time now.

Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Cancer, your barbershop will be saved from financial ruin when you jokingly introduce the special \$400 "John Edwards" cut, and are deluged with very stupid customers.

Leo (July 23-Aug. 22)

If you're going to put together a press kit to go along with your killing spree, Leo, try not to sound like such an idiot. Be a little more specific than "you forced me to do this." Who forced you, how did they force you, why didn't you just shoot yourself, and so on. Again—seriously consider killing yourself first.

Virgo (Aug 23-Sept 22)

Your lawsuit against the makers of Axe body spray is unlikely to pay off, Virgo, considering that most people of median intellect can see the claims implied by their advertising department are clearly farcical. However, if you're looking for a product to inspire sexual debauchery in attractive women, try Large Bags of Cocaine.

Libra (Sept 23 –Oct 22)

Being a Mormon does not make you a bad person, Libra. It just makes you ridiculous.

Scorpio (Oct 23-Nov 21)

With the advent of the "cheese" epidemic, Scorpio, one thing has become terribly clear: We are all out of good names for illegal drugs.



Sagittarius (Nov 22 – Dec 21)

I admire your gay-friendly attitudes, Sagittarius, but you really shouldn't let your roommate cornhole you just because he called you a bigot.

Capricorn (Dec 22 – Jan 19)

Your kid doesn't have "oppositional defiant disorder," Capricorn; he's just a fucking asshole.

Aquarius (Jan 20-Feb 18)

Aquarius, your nightly visions of a Hummer – vs. – Prius demolition derby will prove surprisingly prophetic when the American Enterprise Institute finally buys the federal government..

Pisces (Feb 19-March 20)

Did you ever wonder why the bad guys can never hit Jack Bauer, no matter how many shots they fire, Pisces? It's because freedom improves your aim. Think about that the next time you urinate, seat-wiper.

Aries (March 21-April 19)

By my calculations, Aries, the most demeaning job in the developed world used to be spooge-mopper at the Lusty Lady in San Francisco. Now it's backup singer for Avril Lavigne. Not punk, just punked.

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