

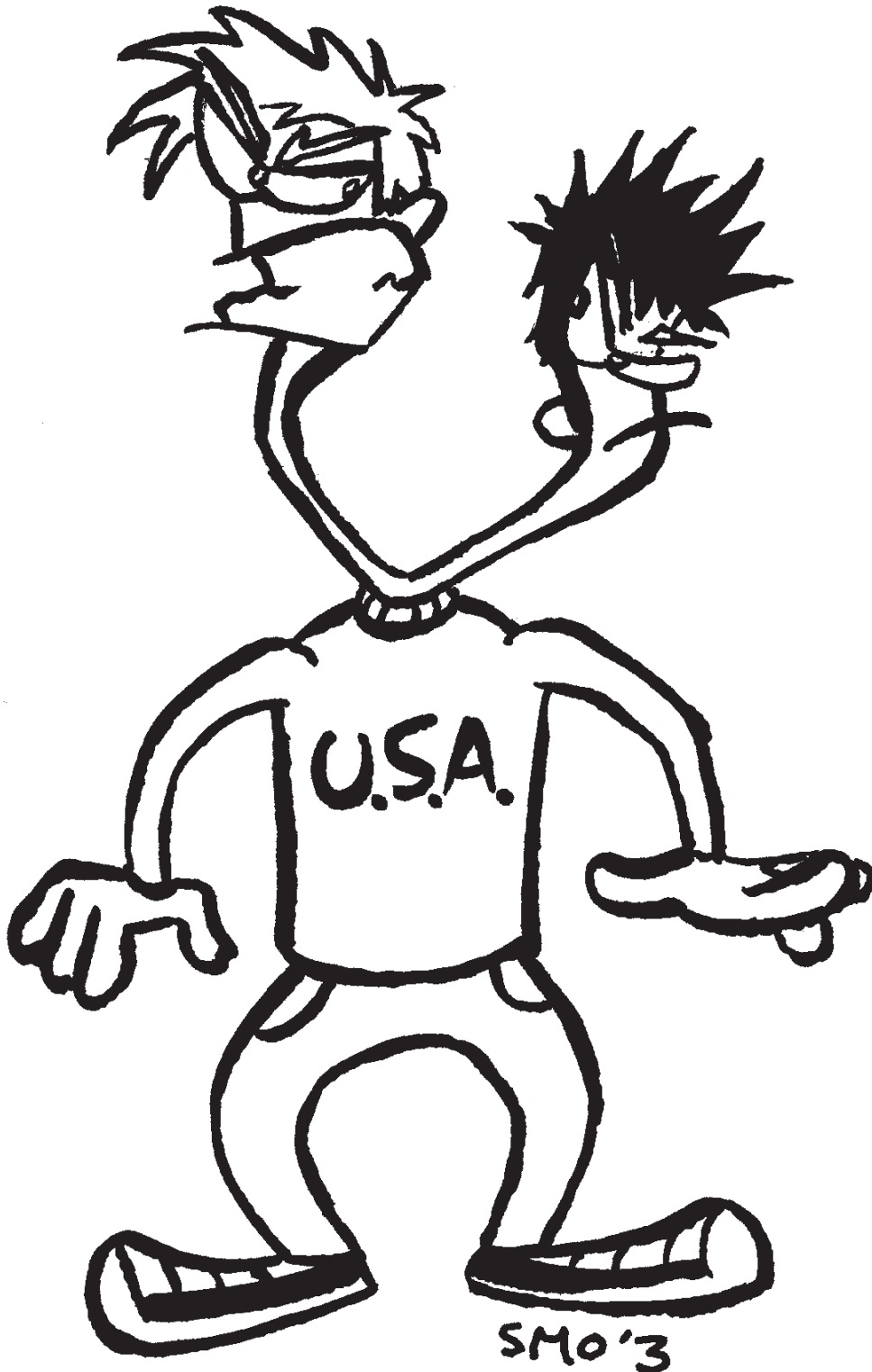


Gracies Dinnertime Theatre

Volume 25, Issue 6, *Right Wing Idiots*
www.hellskitchen.org/gdt



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War

By matthew denker

I didn't really want to write about the war. With the exception of the co-write I did with Mr. Lazarski, I have had little to say about it personally. Nevertheless, a certain set of occurrences this weekend has led me to have something to say, and I need to say it.

This war is ridiculous. It is not ridiculous because of who we are fighting; Iraq is a threat. It is not ridiculous because we might be fighting for oil; oil is useful. It is not even ridiculous for the fact that it seems to be George W.'s personal crusade; who cares?

The war is ridiculous because it has taken a horrible tragedy that brought the greatest nation in the world, The United States of America, and thrown the resulting unity to the wind for complete polarity. We might as well be having a civil war at the same time the way our citizens are pro- and anti-war.

These very same citizens have been brilliantly coordinated, too. The pro-war group is actually the support-our-troops group, as if sending our troops into combat was a safer way to support them. This means that if the anti-war group is juxtaposed against them, they clearly wish for the swift death of our troops. I think this is also preposterous. Nobody wants anyone to die. I don't want a bus full of Iraqi soldiers with guns to be blown up any more than I want an F-16 with one of our troops in it to be destroyed. Sure, if the bus was coming right towards me I would feel differently. But if the plane was coming right at me with malicious intent,

well, it better get blown up, too. Nevertheless, if I am not in front of a missile, I don't need to worry about destroying it.

I don't want to apologize for anything I or *Gracies Dinnertime Theatre* have ever said for or against the war. While you can claim things we've said are distasteful, and we can claim that we are protected by the first amendment, there is no point to either. Speaking out for or against the war in public forum is fine if it is personalized. Too many times, an article is associated with the point of view of an entire magazine. Let's not follow Ralph Nader and put warning with every message. Look who writes what has been written. *GDT* is an Op-Ed magazine; we are not the faceless drivel that is *Reporter*. We get paid very little money to say very big things. *Reporter* writers get paid very much to say such small things.

Here's my disclaimer. Everything in this article is care of my head. I wrote the words on this page, and *GDT* did not. It is published in this magazine, because this is my forum; this is where I can speak out. You can, too, by submitting; it's that easy. In fact, I invite you to submit. I beg you to submit. The first person who writes something meaningful about the whole situation that is not rabidly for or against either war or *GDT* or is a member of *GDT* has themselves a free meal from the Commons, care of me. I guarantee. I care so much, submit entries to me personally at mjd6761@rit.edu.

Ad Maioram Gracies Dinnertime Theatre Gloriam

SUBMIT

gdt@hellskitchen.org

Spring Break in Iraq



This is nothing compared to *Girls Gone Wild: Spring Break Iraq*

Now that coalition forces¹ have liberated Iraq there have been mass riots throughout Baghdad. The citizens have taken to the streets, proclaiming “We have long been so oppressed, we now want to party down!” This has come at the same time when college students, overtired from watching FOX News² for weeks without a break, finally get it through their heads that those “historic” grainy images are showing sand. Beaches are made of sand, and the syllogism is completed by the statement that Iraq is one giant beach.

Sure, students have long known that the Middle East is prime party location – miles and miles of sand, prime tanning climate and of course the foxy Bedouin chicks – but the threat of totalitarian dictators using mustard gas in the middle of their bonfire has pretty much been a deterrent to most would-be-travelers. But

now that Saddam has been ousted³ and there is no longer a threat of chemical weapons cramping their style, Americans and Iraqis alike have been celebrating.

“Believe you me, women are really feeling the effects of ‘liberation,’” says soldier Optimus Prime⁴. “All I’m gonna say is, ‘under the burka’ they’re all wearing thongs.”

The grim death tolls on the web sites of the major news sites have been replaced with more optimistic figures, such as a three-dimensional representation of a keg.

“People are no longer getting shelled; they are now getting bombed!” says Geraldo Rivera while in the field. Rivera then revealed the location of top

¹ All two of them

² Unbiased and unrivaled; it’s a sad day when you realize FOX News is more reliable than CNN.

³ Am I getting ahead of myself? Shove it you Un-American bastard!

⁴ http://www.wkyc.com/news/news_fullstory.asp?id=3828



Freedom balls.

secret frat parties and was subsequently kicked out of the brotherhood.

Geraldo is not the only American correspondent to receive criticism because of his actions. Worldwide, American reporters are being referred to as “cowards” and “pussies” for their interviews done from afar while networks such as Al Jazeera are getting right into the mix doing keg stands.

Turkey has done their part in the post-war effort by sending thousands of dervishes to aid the cause. They are reported to be very helpful as well as a whirl at the parties. Great Britain has sent humanitarian aid in the form of beach balls and funnels.

Festivities have included smashing a Saddam piñata by throwing shoes at it and, for the more risqué women, receiving Ramadan beads in exchange for lifting their burka to expose their naked ankles. Protesters have had to take the red Sharpie to their signs, replacing “No war for oil!” with “No war for oil wrestling!”

President Bush is apparently happy with the events, stating in a press conference that, “Maybe next year spring break will be in Syria, too! You can bet [Donald] Rummy [Rumsfeld] and I will totally rock

the casbah in Damascus come next March.” One Iraqi man was happier than most to see the coalition troops. “Now we too will know the safety that Americans when partying! Back when Saddam was here, we had to party while soldiers watched us with guns and tanks, and we were scared. Nobody was looting or throwing mattresses out of windows. But now that the Americans are here to watch us with guns and tanks, we can really cut loose. Thousands of soldiers in Baghdad, and I just stole a TV!”

Skeptics have put forth the opinion that perhaps the Iraqi citizens were only happy because they were standing in front of troops from the most powerful nation in the world who were wielding “giant fucking guns.” One student was overheard saying, “Yeah, with a few machine guns pointed at me after I was ‘liberated,’ you can be sure I’ll be right with everyone else yelling, ‘Woo hoo! Thank you! Thank you for not shooting me!’” He was then reminded that if he lived in Iraq under Hussein that he would be shot for such comments, whereas now, everyone’s doing body shots.

The Authoritative RIT Student's Guide to Satire

By Gary Hoffmann

This guide has been long in coming. I can't tell you how many letters we have received over the years commending our genius delvings into the depths of irony. Why, if we were to print every such letter we received, we would quickly do so. "Gracie's Dinner Time Theater," such a letter might say when we get one, at which point we would quickly notice the spelling mistakes, "Truly you are masters of satire. I humbly beseech you to teach unto me how to write such amazingly sarcastic, yet insightful, works." Other letters take a subtler approach, pointing out our many witticisms with a satiric naivete of their own, saying, "You sickened and disgusted me when you said such and so forth."

After so many letters urging us, in one form or another, to impart our wisdom, how could we decline (I suppose a simple "no" might suffice)? Thus, here we present to you, the average reader, a guide to writing satire.

Step One: Pick a topic.

The selection of a proper topic is crucial. It's difficult in the extreme to write good satire about a non-controversial topic, such as, "Bunnies are cute." Topics such as these are best discussed in short works of fiction, like *Watership Down*. It's far easier to write satire about a topic that will offend a large portion of your audience (especially Al Simone). After all, people don't think about anything until they're confronted forcibly with the cold truth. Since we live in America, sex is always a good choice of topic. Everybody likes to think about sex, but nobody likes to admit it, so our Puritanical roots will ensure a plentiful supply of angry letters once your article is finished.

Politics and religion, always topics to avoid in polite conversation if you want to keep your friends, make wonderful topics for satire. Mark Twain and Anatole France were noted for their discussions of Christianity, while Rudyard Kipling and Rush Limbaugh dug their satirical fingers into the political realms. The reason these are such good topics, like most good subjects of satire, is that few people think about their beliefs or political opinions. Indeed, most folks will go to great lengths to avoid thinking about the nature of God or the nature of Government. And

with politics and religion so often more intertwined than the arms and legs of a cheap prostitute and her client, discussing religion or politics in the guise of the other can make for some truly remarkable satire. This is why President Bush is such a master of the art.

Another excellent selection is death. For instance, you could choose to discuss the humorous modalities of that ancient embodiment of entropy and nothingness. That is, "Death is funny." To quote the great Mel Brooks, "I cut my finger. That's tragedy. A man walks into an open sewer and dies. That's comedy." Nobody likes to think about death, either. Generally, people like to think about death even less than they like to think about meeting God only to find out She's black. The trick here is to remember that no sane person actually laughs at a corpse. Few people accuse writers of being sane.

Other suggested topics for your upcoming jaunt into the realm of irony: television, journalism, famine, plague, lawyers, slippers, feminism, racism, epilepsy, the media, satire, cancer, obesity, satire, fanaticism, poverty, homosexuality, heterosexuality (especially closet heterosexuality), buggery, happiness, dead twentieth century German existentialists, Ayn Rand, comfy chairs, satire, Hollywood, Karl Marx and the other Marx Brothers, Republicans, Democrats, Liberals, Conservatives, Communists, Capitalists, Socialists, pollution, Truth, Beauty, poetry, satire, irony, fraternal orders, IT students, hippies, yuppies, love, society, satire, Life, Death, Heaven, Hell, Purgatory, Nirvana, reincarnation, satire, and cute bunnies.

Step Two: Say exactly what you mean.

The best satire is straight forward, clearly presenting your views in a concise, logical manner. Your readers will not think about what you write if you're indirect. And if you are indirect, make sure you provide a detailed explanation as to how you're being indirect, comical, or ironic. Never write the opposite of the message you're actually trying to get across. Your goal as a satirist is to get people to agree with a particular viewpoint, not to disagree with a viewpoint, and thus to agree with the opposite viewpoint.

For example, suppose you chose to write about how bunnies are cute. You could write, “Bunnies are ugly, disgusting little creatures with no cuteness in them whatsoever. I hate them and cannot understand how other people find them so agreeable. The only good bunny is one that’s been turned into stew.” The only reaction you’ll get from this, however, is a mass of people writing in lambasting you with vehement assertions that bunnies are, in fact, cute, even if they do make for a good stew. In order to avoid this, be direct and write, “Bunnies are cute,” or explain your indirection by saying, “Bunnies are ugly (actually, I’m being ironic here; in truth, I find bunnies to be adorable).” *Reporter* is good at this second method.



We can look to Jonathan Swift for another example. He’s well known as a satirist, of course, especially for “A Modest Proposal,” in which he puts forth the suggestion that the English aristocracy eat Irish babies, simultaneously solving the Irish overpopulation problem as well as the Irish famine (with fewer mouths to feed). The humor is apparent immediately, since of course everyone wants a nice, fresh Irish baby at their dinner table.

Step Three: Be Outrageous.

Subtlety is always lost. Americans being overstimulated and incapable of independent thought, everything must be spelled out clearly and without room for ambiguity. Subtlety merely inhibits critical thought, since it requires connections to be made between the work of satire and the rest of the world. If you think someone is actually going to bother to make those connections, you’re sadly mistaken, and then they’re left with an essay that bears no relation to existence, and thought cannot continue. Allegory is unheard of in satire, as are symbolism, metaphor, and

all those other words you learned about in fifth grade English, with the sole exception of hyperbole.

Hyperbole can be viewed in two ways. The first way is as exaggeration to the point of absurdity. The purpose of hyperbole, then, would be to illustrate the absurdity of a particular idea, situation, etc. This view of hyperbole, however, is useless for satire. When writing satire, it is better to view hyperbole as a method of data compression. The goal is to concentrate an argument into as concise a mode as possible by disregarding moderate cases and focusing only on the extremes.

Satire, then, should include of clear, extreme examples from everyday life. By way of illustration, we’ll look at one of the most famous pieces of satire, the Bible. Many scholars have suggested that the Book of the Apocalypse is couched in symbolism that the Israelites at the time would have quickly recognized and understood. Naturally, this is a ludicrous assertion, since John was well known for his ironic wit. As such, we can realize Apocalypse is a work of satire, and thus no symbolism would have been used. He would have spelled out, word for word, that he was really talking about the Roman oppression of Israel. Otherwise, he would have received hundreds of letters saying, “You don’t actually expect me to think about how this relates to society and the rest of my life, do you?”

Step Four: Pick a Title.

This is by far the most important step. You want your title to capture the attention of your audience, summarize what you will be satirizing, and convey exactly how you’ll be doing so. “A Modest Proposal” was an awful title, because it did none of these things, and one actually had to read the damned thing to figure

out what it was about. That's inefficient, and contradicts steps two and three.

What are some good titles, then? Well, a few that have worked in the past are given here:

"Hitler: Genocidal Maniac or Clever Social Commentator?"

"Bunnies are Really Quite Affectionate and Loveable."

"My Name is Dan Conley and I'm Not Circumcised."

"The Operation: Iraqi Freedom Drinking Game."

"RIT Schedule of Courses."

"The Epistle of Saint Paul to the Corinthians."

"The Mayan Codices."

"Unaussprechlichen Kulten."

"The Authoritative RIT Student's Guide to Satire."

"The 2003 State of the Union Address."

"RIT Student Rights and Responsibilities."

"An Open Letter to *Gracies Dinnertime Theatre*."

Step Five: Sit Back and Watch People Get Angry.

Now that you've written a piece of satire, it's time to enjoy the fruits of your labor. Provide people

Iraq War Mourning Game

Mourn one day if:

- a soldier is killed by hostile fire.
- an irregular is killed in action.

Mourn two days if:

- a soldier is killed by accident.
- a civilian is killed in a non-combat zone.

Mourn three days if:

- a soldier is killed by friendly fire.
- a civilian is killed in a combat zone.

Mourn four days if:

- a journalist is killed.
- a war protester is killed.

with an email address they can send anonymous rants to, and you're all set. These rants – and even those sent with a legitimate name attached in the valediction – always come from those who have thought the most about a work. These are the ones who will have understood any subtext and irony.

By this point you should be ready to write your very own satirical essay about almost any topic you desire. There are a few additional points you should keep in mind before we conclude, however. First, never recognize anyone else's satire. This is important. This gives you the freedom to form a purely emotional response to another piece while castigating everyone who doesn't understand your own work for its intellectual content.

Second, be prepared for people to comprehend your meaning. This is rare, but it does happen. It's easy to prepare yourself for the hoards that misunderstand you – it's expected. But every now and then someone like John Smith will indicate satire is not completely dead yet, nor was it completely lost on your audience. Don't let this take you by surprise, although it probably will the first few times.

Lastly, laugh a little. It sure beats crying, and many people prefer it to tricking your mind into ignoring anything unpleasant (good ol' Double-Think). If you can't laugh at yourself, you'll miss out on a lot of jokes.

By Andrew A. Gill

Mourn five days if:

- a medic/Red Cross/Rescue worker is killed.
- a POW is killed.

For seven days, sit on low chairs, abstain from work, shaving, leather shoes, cosmetics, sex, bathing, changing clothes, studying the Torah, or any joy. Cover all mirrors in your house, and for 23 more days do not shave, party, or listen to music if:

- a relative is killed.

For one year, abstain from parties and concerts and recite the Kaddish daily if:

- your child is killed.

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have you
got what it takes?

RITGSI@hotmail.com

An Empty Room
By Alexander Brazie

The room is quiet
 Everyone has left

Driving and playing
 The friday night dance

Singing and drinking
 Bowling and eating

Enjoying the fruits of work
 Five days ended, two more come

Again they will return
 When the evening does end

To laugh or to cry
 To play or to sleep

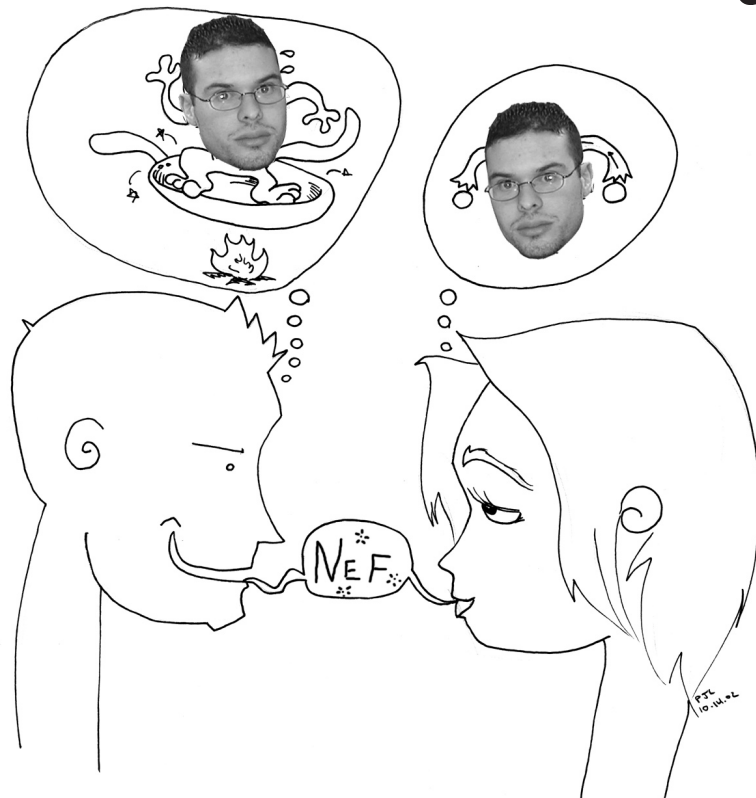
Or to talk online
 Everyone comes back by dawn

Messiah
By Jai Ramachandran

We look up
 From dust clouds
 Covering mountains
 And valleys
 We look up from
 Masters whips cracking
 Scratching the surface
 Crying for mercy
 We look up from
 Concrete road burden
 And asphalt alters
 Waiting to be driven
 We look up
 From rodeos
 And carnivals
 And shopping mall parking lots
 We look up
 At machines
 And crossbeams
 And unseen heroes

We look down
 Face red
 With inspiration
 And sweat
 We look down
 Shovel in hand
 Like a weapon
 Chipping away
 We look down
 Upon dust cloud valleys
 And build condos
 And shopping malls
 We look down
 On deserts
 And oasis
 And crisis
 We look down
 At our hands clenched
 Blood red knuckles
 Burnt with desire

P o e t r y .



Magazine Subscription

By Jai Ramachandran

I want a magazine subscription
With no strings attached
I don't want a thermos
A sweatshirt
Or a coffee mug with my favorite team's logo on it
I don't want people calling me at
6 AM saying
 *"Sorry to bother you,
 but we understand that you subscribe to
 <insert a magazine name here>
 and we think you would be interested in
 <insert a competing magazine name here>"*
I don't want my phone number
And address
And soul sold to another company
Just because I give you the good fortune of taking my money
For words you write down on paper
My time is not worth your words
I want a magazine subscription from god
I want a magazine subscription that makes me think
Good thoughts
When I read the pages
That fills my mailbox
I want a magazine subscription
That is not filled with ads from athletic supporters
And beer ads
I want the swimsuit issue to come out 52 weeks a year
And I want it to say Sports Illustrated on the top
So I can just say
 "I'm reading the articles honey."
I want to have a magazine subscription
Where I can find enough things I want to read in one issue
That I can shit for an entire week reading it
I want a magazine subscription that tucks me in at night
I want a magazine subscription that gives me blowjobs when I'm horny
I want a magazine subscription that kills fascist dictatorships
In vacant third world countries
And then comes home and brags about it
I want a magazine subscription that will help me
Take over the world
In 5 easy steps

Come Again

By Alexander Brazie

As the cool breeze blows across my skin
My mind turns to spring again

Of warmer days
Of moonlight nights

An isolated place
Away from the city lights

To hold close those I love and endear
To meet old friends to shake and cheer

Instead the foreign land calls
Its voice whispering through the walls

For duty, for fun, for the chance
For learning, for work, for a dance

The sea beckons
The wind howls

Drawing away from home
A new earth is there to roam

P o e t r y .

LETTERS

Editor's Note: Letters received by *Gracies Dinnertime Theatre* are unedited for spelling, grammar, content, length, clarity, cohesiveness, punctuation, or vulgarity. Sometimes we'll edit for rhyme and meter, if we feel like it. We will not print any letter written in doggerel.

Date: Sat, 11 Apr 2003 20:07:23 -0700
 From: Sarah Lagoon
 Subject: Criticism on Cynicism or Campbell is hotter than Cope

My mother always told me that if I had nothing nice to say, to not say anything at all. I do not completely agree with this statement, however I would like to modify it to: "If you don't have anything nice to say, at least sign your name." I understand that GDT is a publication of satire, cynicism, and sarcasm, but that should not give anyone the right to stomp on the hard work and dedication of others, no matter how many articles he or she may have written previously. I am commenting on the A Capella Criticism written by one of the more frequent writers of GDT. Perhaps the unnamed person has a stick up his or her rear, or perhaps that person is really a mean hearted person beneath it all. I would hope that is not the case. As for the points, they are just the surface of what was, after all disadvantages were weighed, an outstanding performance by The Brick City Singers and their guest groups. Going sharp a quarter of a step is a sin many professional singers have committed, and one should not be judged on that alone, the choreography was a bit much, but certainly did

not appear unconfident. Through the difficulties, of which only the missing movie was in any form their fault, they were able to persevere and put together an entertaining show, that no one save the unnamed author seemed to have any issues.

Signed Proudly - Sarah Lagoon

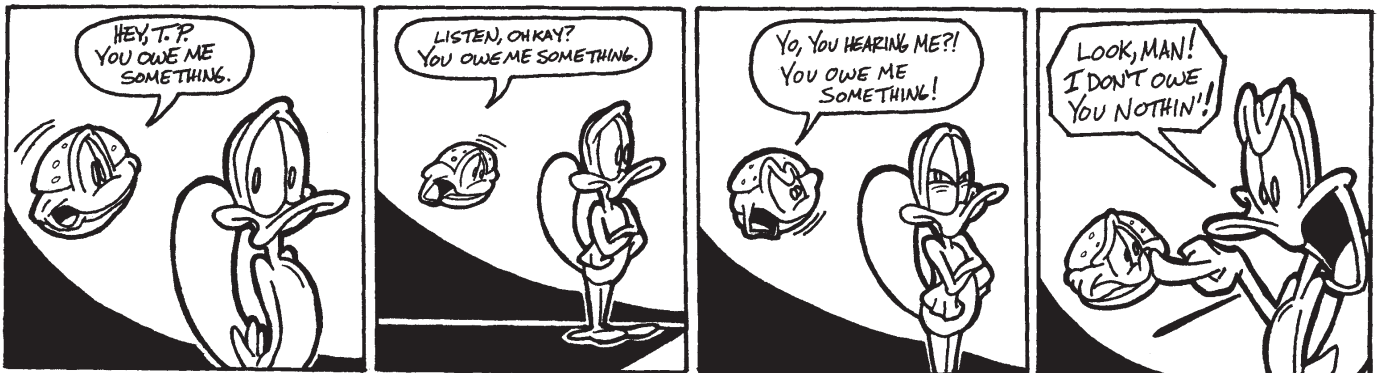
Date: Sun, 13 Apr 2003 22:37:43 -0700
 From: David Fetzer
 Subject: Cynical A Cappella Criticism

To The GDT Staff:

I want to start by saying what this letter is NOT. This is not a disagreement with the facts. I agree the review of the Brick City Singer's Third Annual Night of A Cappella was honest. The article's negative facts, quickly consolidated from the hour-and-a-half show, were, for the most part, true. This is not a complaint on behalf of the Brick City Singers as a group. This is neither someone whining about the hurtful things said nor is it a riled individual counter-attacking disapproving comments. This letter is simply a list of questions from a member of the Brick City Singers, for our nameless author.

What were you trying to accomplish? I didn't think GDT purposely went out of their way to sling mud, especially at something as innocent as an a cappella concert. When something socially or morally significant is evident, then yes. But what ethical or

The Traveling Platypus Bob Rutan, Guild of Sequential Illustrators



political stances did you happen to see us take up on stage?

Did you realize you were going to hurt friends? Fans? Readers? From what I see, your harsh words only saddened acquaintances and wounded spirits. There was nothing on those pages to make us think. Only to make us stop celebrating.

Were you trying to pick a fight? I see no wrongdoing or negative intentions to point out. I see no constitution to pick apart. No moral dilemmas to disagree with. I see a singing group trying to have some fun.

Did you feel it your responsibility to only pick apart what was bad and not publish any of what was good in a show that, from what everyone else I have talked to has said, was an otherwise exciting evening? (There were "good" comments published, though only those that were swimming in sarcasm) It was my thought that a critique points out both the enjoyable moments and the flawed occasions. Maybe I'm wrong.

Did you purposely only gather information as an audience member? Did you even interview members of the audience (since you seem to speak for all of them)? I remember a fine review of the Vagina Monologues in which information was gathered both from the seats facing that stage as well the events occurring behind it. *The Reporter* gathered information from members on both sides of the stage. Just thought I'd point that out.

How long did it take you to write the article? I know that the GDT submission deadline is Saturday afternoons and if you were up late partying the night before, as you say you were, that leaves you with, what? Twelve hours at most to interview, gather facts, consolidate thoughts, and write a fair review?

Is there a reason that your review was written in a tone of a bitter and cynical critique, sitting on a throne of bogus knowledge and forged intelligence? This almost sounds like a review by Gary Hoffmann, a man who, with his pen of cynicism and ink of sarcasm, could convey meaning with merely the space between the lines. He can be ruthless and contemptuous with that power, but even he would step out of that persona to celebrate

the one night on campus where vocalists come together simply to sing and entertain and help the people of RIT have some fun, many of which really, really need it.

Oh, and one last question, Gary. Did you purposely leave your name off your article or was it just a Freudian case of forgetfulness? It's my understanding that you submit anonymously when you do not want to be identified with the words that you have written.

David Fetzer, v.p.o.

Date: Sun, 13 Apr 2003 23:13:17 -0400
From: Joe Kardamis
Subject: GDT letter

Gracies Dinnertime Theatre,

I just read your review of the Brick City Singers' Third Annual Night of A Cappella, and I'd like to give my own rendition of what I saw:

Frankly, the event started off rather slowly. It took quite a while to even get to the beginning of the show, and then the performances delivered were weak at best. Things began to pick up upon moving to the good points of the groups, but they sank again into a tired, cynical, and rather uninteresting rant. Many of the ideas were logically twisted; I've seen much better. The experience was disappointing, but that's only a minor detail¹. Enough of the review, however, on to the concert itself.

Before I proceed, I want to establish my belief that the reviewer's opinions did not, in fact, represent those of the entire audience, as was suggested. I feel that the Brick City Singers, along with Savior Faire and the Dynamics gave a very good show. The new material was refreshing and entertaining, as well as their overall stage presence. Musically, I think they did very well, especially with "In the Air Tonight." Given the host of problems out of their control (technical issues, weather, etc), the show was very well done. The other groups also gave quality performances. I, for one, liked the switching of the soloists for the Savior Faire song, "Beautiful." I feel it provided an interesting change of voice which added a depth to the experience. The Boston College

Dynamics gave a very good show, especially on "Goodbye Earl" and "It's Rainin' Men." In general, the three groups, if not flawless, were certainly entertaining.

Yet, I'm interested in the argument that BCS should not have continued on to perform two encores. Firstly, why would they need to perform even one encore if the show was as poorly done as said?² They left the audience with "a poor last impression"? Hmm... most of the people I talked to were quite entertained and happy. I'd call that a "good" impression personally. But that's just me... and nearly the rest of the audience.

I really don't feel that blame needs to be placed anywhere for the concert. If anything, the Brick City Singers should be blamed. How dare they work incredibly hard, only to succeed in giving an entertaining performance? What were they thinking?

Yours truly,
-Joe Kardamis
(Notice that I signed my submission)

¹ Speaking of details, no legitimate reviewer would go into the minutia of every single song to find out which person in particular went either flat or sharp. It makes it appear that the reviewer delved into such a deep level of detail with the sole purpose of finding something negative to say.

²Oh wait... they had a standing ovation... I remember.

This little tirade was in response to "Cynical A Cappella Criticism: Third Annual Night of A Cappella," which appeared in *Gracies Dinnertime Theatre*, Vol. 25, Iss. 5. Due to a technical error that was, unfortunately, not caught before publication, the author's name did not appear with the piece (damn those technical errors, eh?). The article was written by Gary Hoffmann, and it does not necessarily reflect the views of *Gracies Dinnertime Theatre*. If we wanted to pick a fight, we'd at least have some style.

-Ed.

The following letter was received Friday, April 4th, and was printed in *Reporter* on Friday, April 11th. However, with the large number of recipients (Dave also sent it to Rush Limbaugh, Democrat and Chronicle

website feedback, a couple other right-wing windbags, and every person he's met in the last 8 years) and the large attachments (Dave scanned in the issue instead of just pulling the PDF's from our website), the letter was initially filtered out as spam and ignored.

Date: Fri, 04 Apr 2003 09:25:23 -0500
From: David Roberts
Subject: Concerning the: Iraqi freedom drinking game

Open Letter to Gracies Dinnertime Theatre

To the staff of Gracie's Dinnertime Theatre:

I recently opened up your newest Gracie's Dinnertime Theatre booklet and was sickened. I was reading the drinking game that the GDT staff has put together. At first, as I was reading, it was humorous. But then I read a few lines that made me quite upset, and even sick.

Under the "Take one Drink if" category you have "we lose five soldiers to friendly fire," and under the "Take two drinks if" category you have "we lose one soldier due to enemy fire."

You are trivializing the lives of our fighting men and women who are over there doing their job. All of the men and women who are over there are someone's son, daughter, brother, sister, boyfriend, girlfriend, father, mother, or just friend, and for each one who dies there is a whole family who is now mourning their death, and grieving for their relative or friend who has given the ultimate sacrifice.

I find it disturbing that you can take so lightly the feelings of other people. I have friends who are currently in Iraq, and if they fall in the line of duty I would be very saddened at their loss. I would be proud to have known someone who was willing to give their lives for the freedom of oppressed people. I would also become enraged if I knew anyone who was taking lightly of their passing, even to go as far as to joke about it.

After reading the game I was under the assumption that you were all rooting for the Iraqis to win, and for as many of our brave men and women to die as possible just so you

can get a cheap thrill. It seems as though none of you know people, or have relatives who are now over there putting their lives on the line or else you would not make such cheap humor about the whole ordeal.

I am not saying that you need to necessarily support the war, no one wished for war, but now that it is upon us you need to have respect for the men and women who are putting their lives on the line. These are the same men and women who protect your freedom to write articles such as this every day. And on that note, if you lived in Iraq and wrote such a thing about your troops, you would have been shot, and your papers destroyed.

-David E. Roberts Jr.

Dear sir,

Please be aware that you can find PDF versions of each issue on the web at <http://www.hellskitchen.org/gdt/pdf>

Hopefully, this will save you the hassle of scanning pages next time you wish to send out copies of GDT articles to your friends. For example, to send a copy of the article in which we advocate using starving Ethiopian children as flypaper, you could send your pals a link to <http://www.hellskitchen.org/gdt/pdf/Volume01/01.Ethopian-flypaper.pdf>

Or, to send a link to the issue in which Pulitzer Prize winning editor Adam Fletcher says “Bill O’Reilly, Rush Limbaugh and George W. Bush are about as useful to this country as AIDS,” you would use <http://www.hellskitchen.org/gdt/pdf/Volume25/06.RightWingIdiots.pdf>

Thanks, and we appreciate your feedback,

Adam Fletcher

Dear David,

GDT does not aim to trivialize the lives of the soldiers who are serving to protect the country, nor do we forget that every death in the war causes pain.

However, the notion that American soldiers’ deaths were given for the freedom of oppressed people or that the nation is so altruistic is a stretch. There is no shortage of oppression or death in the world. What makes Iraq deserve the treatment? Uncountable deaths (estimated to be 3.3 million¹; *The Economist* says that the estimates are +/- 1M) have happened in the Congo’s civil war since 1998; the International Rescue Committee believes this to be the deadliest war since World War II. If the US is really The Humanitarian Nation™, then it has more business being in the Congo than it has being in Iraq.

Ethics of our participation aside, the rules of the drinking game that you cited reflect disgust with war. At the time when the rules were discussed, there were many more Coalition casualties caused by friendly fire or accidents than by Iraqis. Ideally, casualties will be avoided by diplomacy, but when President Bush claimed that the time for diplomacy had passed, so had the hope for low deaths. Friendly fire caused 24% of the American deaths in the first Gulf War. To this point, 40 Coalition friendly-fire deaths² have happened out of 140 total³. This is 29%, which is unacceptably high. While accidents happen, measures should be taken to safeguard against this. To wit, Coalition forces shot down a British jet with a Patriot missile. In 2001, a program designed to outfit all military vehicles with electronic devices that could distinguish friend from foe was canceled for budgetary purposes⁴. Perhaps better trained and better paid soldiers would be more able to avoid such accidents. Currently, American soldiers (private-level) are paid barely more than minimum wage—and make far less than a Burger King employee⁵.

Furthermore, you accuse the *GDT* staff of “rooting for the Iraqis to win” so that we could achieve cheap thrills. Your application of the sports analogy causes wonder about who is taking the war seriously. My

¹ <http://www.theage.com.au/articles/2003/04/09/1049567737776.html>

² <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2003/04/10/48hours/main548724.shtml>

³ <http://www.heraldtribune.com/apps/pbcs.dll/le?Date=20030412&Category=APA&ArtNo=304120819&Ref=AR>

⁴ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/Iraq/Story/0,2763,931992,00.html>

⁵ http://story.news.yahoo.com/news?tmpl=story&u=/ucru/20030410/cm_ucru/we_re_looking_for_a_few_poor_men

hope is that we can exit the conflict as soon as possible with as few casualties (for both sides) as possible. The drinking game was completely designed for humor; in a situation like this, unless laughter is possible, the only alternative is to cry. But that's no fun.

Mike Fisher

Dear Dave,

Whatever we trivialize, we do it on purpose. It's nice to see people actually disagree about it, but people need to realize satire's face is rarely honest. We could have gone on a long, boring LiveJournal-style rant about it, or we could have invoked patriotism and made some corny statement, but both those paths have been

beaten to death. The statements are cynical, in that friendly fire is becoming a greater threat to our soldiers than anything the enemy can muster. We hear about it enough that one could practically start a drinking game over it, no?

Adam Preble

All in all, though, that's your opinion, Dave. You're absolutely right that we trivialized the deaths of our soldiers, and whether it was meant to point out the same trivialization being perpetrated by the media or not does not change the fact. It wasn't our aim, but it was an effect. That you were sickened and disgusted clearly demonstrates you're still human. Thanks for writing in.

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What is this magazine?

This is Gracies Dinnertime Theatre, a magazine of satire, literature, poetry and art. We publish out of Rochester, NY but we have readers around the globe. We exist as a medium for your expression and invite you to contribute.

Anyone is welcome to submit.

gdt@hellskitchen.org



**Gracies
Dinnertime
Theatre™**
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Musical Inspiration:

The sweet, sweet music of apathy

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