North Avenue Review

NORTH AVENUE REVIEW
“...To provide an open forum for a genuine exchange of ideas from every intellectual field.”

STRUCTURE
The North Avenue Review is produced from a collection of ideas, stories, essays, and art by Georgia Tech students, faculty, staff, and friends who have given freely of their time and dignity for this publication.

The views expressed herein are solely those of the individual contributors and are not intended to express the sentiments of the entire Georgia Tech community.

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All letters are welcome. You may request that your name be withheld, so long as the NAR knows who you are.

CONTRIBUTIONS
We welcome all original contributions from the Georgia Tech community, including but not limited to: articles, essays, clip-art, graphic materials, fiction, dramas, reviews, dissertations, disses, shout-outs, mix battles, photographs, phonographs, pornos, sex, lies, videotape,manifestos, declarations, sheet music, tablatures, tha funk, recipes, Furbies, Pokemon, Pet Rocks, mood rings, prophesies (psychic and earthly), doodles, class notes, CS homework (source code only, please), psychoanalyses, microbrews, razor blades (can’t have enough), orange juice URL information, warez, and anything else adaptable to the printed page with the definite exception of poetry.

Students, faculty, staff, and alumni are invited to share opinions, expressions, and illusions.

PROCEDURE
At NAR meetings throughout the semester, all works are presented to the group for peer review. The editors read all submissions, and offer constructive criticism and advice. If an editor feels a piece to be unnecessarily inflammatory, he or she or it may bring this to the attention of the group for discussion. A 3/4 vote is needed to exclude a piece from publication. This provision is to prevent publishing items that may jeopardize NAR’s existence, but the NAR has never censored a final submission to date. Attendance and participation by contributors is extremely important to allow feedback and comments — hopefully improving everybody’s work.

Please submit texts either by email or by 3.5” disk. We cannot type your piece for you. Quote sources accurately. The spell checker is your friend. We will try to correct any gross grammatical / spelling errors, but we aren’t exactly Lit. Majors, so send it to us in a state that wouldn’t embarrass you.

GETTING INVOLVED
The NAR needs your help! Everyone is welcome, regardless of literary or ideological persuasion. Meetings are currently on Thursday at 7:00 pm, in the Student Services building, but that is known to change compulsively.

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Welcome to the 50th issue of the North Avenue Review. The staff is pleased to present an entire issue dealing with evil. Besides essays on the nature of evil and its relation to our day-to-day lives, we also have several short stories that touch on other aspects of evil. Basically, you hold in your hands a veritable nugget of evil. A black, vortex of evil, if you will. In any case, we at NAR sincerely hope that you enjoy our magazine. If you don’t (or even if you do), let us know why. You can e-mail letters to the editor at nar@gatech.edu.

Get Published: Email nar@gatech.edu to get your articles in print
“If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood
Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs,
Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud
Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues,—
My friend, you would not tell with such high zest
To children ardent for some desperate glory,
The old Lie: Dulce et decorum est
Pro patria mori.”

- Wilfred Owen, “Dulce Et Decorum Est”

I’m not sure if I’m comfortable with my new status as “agent of terror,” but if that is the case then, I shall have to bear that burden. It seems that, in this country, as we meditate on the nature of evil (because, truly, with the very world around us driven to the brink of sanity and beyond, is humor even a capable method of coping anymore?), I think we should not be so quick to cast the first stone in deciding who is and isn’t evil. Never one to declare that Saddam Hussein is a nice, innocent man, I would like to clarify what some apparently missed in my last column: I don’t like Saddam Hussein. I believe the media when they speak of the horrors he has witnessed upon this earth. However, if past and present atrocities are our only claim to invading another nation, then perhaps we should make sure our own past is as virginal as the fresh blown snow.

A nation with as bloody a past as ours should not be able to appoint itself as the final arbiter in the court of determining just and unjust governmental actions. As our own brutal oppression and slaughter of the Native Americans in the 19th century illustrates, there is blood on our hands that, like so many others, can never be washed away. I say, we cannot remove the splinter in our brother’s eye, whilst a plank remains in our own. I say, let the nation that is blameless fire the first shot in the war on Terror.

Our nation has supported and encouraged global terror since its very inception. Were it not for several brilliant and committed terrorists, our nation would not be in existence today. If you think about it, our founding fathers could be called terrorists. Not to say that I think there was something wrong with what they did; standing up for freedom and justice is always a great thing, I’m just trying to make the case that we are not blameless in the realm of World Terror. The French Revolution, for instance, was partly inspired by the one that birthed our great nation, and it was extremely violent and lead to a decade of world war.

In the 1980s and early 90s, for example, our government sponsored a group of Nicaraguan expatriates in an effort to regain their homeland from Communists who had seized power after a long civil war. These expatriates had looted the national treasury before they departed and had spent their 40 years in power setting up a police state that brutally repressed personal freedom and
liberty in their land. With US funding, these expatriates began blowing up hospitals, school, and other government offices throughout Nicaragua. When that didn’t faze the revolutionaries, the CIA began using US warplanes to bomb Managua. The act that finally broke the entire travesty to the American public was US warships mining the harbor of Managua; the capital of a nation we were not at war with, the capital of a nation in which we had spent the better part of the 1980s sponsoring a domestic terrorist organization. Many of the people who were in power during those dark days for freedom and democracy are members of our current government.

The thrust of my argument here is that, before we can seek to right the wrongs of our world, we should look to solving our own. As we prepare for a war against a nation that I still assert has in no way wronged us, except in that it continues to exist, we should acknowledge several things: our economy is collapsing, we are faced with business corruption on an enormous scale, and the environment, globally, is failing. How can an imperfect nation hope to solve problems of others? The role of the US government is to provide for the health, safety, and well-being of the citizens that long to shed blood in defense of it. It’s part of the social contract signed between our elected leaders and Americans everywhere. With our own world in tatters, how can we hope to rebuild by causing more chaos, loss, and pain. It seems to me that the energy of death-horny young Americans could be better spent seeking a solution to the wrongs of the world instead of trying to throw down their lives for a cause as besieged as our own liberty. We need to take a hard, long look at the actions of our government since September 11th and stop being blinded by the patriotic haze.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation can now get anyone’s library lending record without a search warrant and the law expressly forbids the librarian from informing the lendee that they are being investigated. Take a second and think back on the books that, while not bad, you have checked out in your life that you may not wish anyone to know you’ve read. I’ve got mine. Besides the obvious invasion of privacy, how is this not the Thought Police that George Orwell described? It’s not a much greater step to expand into a system by which people are wiretapped and surveilled for merely having read the Koran.

I am sick and tired of people being too stupid to realize that questioning a government’s decision is not being unpatriotic. They have a word for people who blindly do what other people say: automatons. Patriotism, according to Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, is defined as “love for or devotion to one’s country.” I love America. I would not want to live anywhere else than in a nation that at least tries to treat all of its citizens as equals. The freedom and opportunity offered on these shores is unprecedented. A nation like ours will probably never grace this Earth again. With that said, I categorically refuse to buy into the notion that I must lay down my life when some talking head on television says that I should. If this conflict truly affected the freedom and safety of the world, so be it. It doesn’t. If you think it does, that’s fine; it’s your time to fall on your sword. Those of us who are committed to fulfilling the promises laid forth by our terrorists, so many years ago, are going to stay behind and live our lives and do something about our beliefs; something other than just bleed.
Drastic Recourse

To “The Editor,” or whoever wrote the article entitled “Information Overload” in issue 49 of NAR:

No college student is going to be killed in the upcoming “war” against Iraq. Sorry to disappoint you, but I think you’re sorely mistaken about the scope of this “war.” There will be no draft, and this will be no Vietnam. I would like to know on what basis you claim that “every one of us...may be called upon to die”? Is it the fact that Bush has publicly stated that Saddam Hussein is “the guy that tried to kill my Dad,” and he would therefore institute the draft to achieve his vengeance? Or perhaps it’s the fact that “Iraq could have nuclear weapon in a year”? Oh perhaps then it’s high time for us to invade North Korea, Pakistan, and India, while we’re at it. This will not be another “Pearl Harbor” either, unless you’re talking about a love story with a nurse. Iraq is not exactly unaware of America’s intent.

Before you start retorting with some remark about my jingoistic response to your article, I will be the first to say that America should not attack Iraq, as it has not done anything against America. I am fully aware of the fact that it is the United States which is responsible for installing Saddam Hussein in Iraq. America does indeed wield a lot of power and thus feels justified in taking action against whomsoever it pleases, but it is not so foolhardy as to commit millions of young men to war just to carry out a vendetta. It is also not so near-sighted as to alienate its allies in Europe, Asia, and even in the mid east, for instance Saudi Arabia. That country, the strictest and most Muslim country in the entire Islamic world, is America’s staunchest ally in the region, but the incredible amount of instability caused by a change of regime in Iraq will not help the Saudi royal family, which is already plagued by threats of instability.

In addition, our military, while significantly reduced in size from previous years, is still capable of launching a “war,” at least of the type which will be needed in Iraq. If the weapons facilities of Iraq are the main concern, bombers and other such low-risk approaches are available. If the assassination of Saddam Hussein is the issue, then commandoes are the only viable option. While I would definitely condemn the latter option, I feel 100% confident that Bush would not revive the draft for the operation.

And yes, President Bush might be a moron, but he is neither delusional nor power-mad; the fact that he has chosen a fairly competent group of advisors and listens to them too (on occasion) ensures that he will not be prone to making stupid decisions without at least some amount of opposition. As regards to his love of power, it is no greater, I think, than any other leader of the Most Powerful Country in the Free World has been. America is the big man on campus, and therefore it is natural for it to go after its own issues, however selfish it might seem. Any other country in its place would do the same.

I don’t want or even condone a war in Iraq anymore than you do, but it is one thing to feel it is unjustified and quite another to inflate it into a crisis of Vietnam proportions. Oh, and by the way,
what exactly is the “very freedom upon which this nation was founded,” that is being violated with this war against Iraq?

A response would be greatly appreciated, especially since the writer of the article attends this fine institution of “higher learning” and is thus highly learned.

Neeraj Kumar

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I am one of the svelte seventeen percent of your readers as published in the pie graph on the back cover of your summer, 2002 'review'. As a relatively recent facilities hire (HVAC Techie), I had never stumbled upon one of your mags and was instantly captivated by the eye-catching minimalist approach. Usually all we drones - er, workers get delivered to our shops is , yes, 'technique'; as staff I am enjoying library privileges and so happened come to your pile. I promise to distribute some copies of 'nar' to the mechanical rooms where facilities types toil ceaselessly to insure the safety and comfort of all on campus.

THAT BEING SAID, I would like to comment on 'The Home Game' by Grey Eagle, since I am both a viet nam and a desert storm vet, having flown into 'nam in '71 and saudi in '91 ( the first tour as an infantryman, the second as an artilleryman). I am also a refugee from the sixties, having been an undergrad in chicago from '68-70. I saw and experienced first hand the campus life and the conflicts there. I can almost take you to the spots where I saw the tv images from Kent State University, where I saw and felt Janis Joplin live, where I almost shot to death a villager while burning her hooch, where sandbags I filled line a chapel in southern Iraq. I am also the happy father of three sons, ages 22, 20 and 18....happy because they love their mother; happy because they work jobs they like; happy they are licensed hunters: excellent shots who own their own firearms; happy because they are volunteer fire-and-rescuemen in the Georgia county where they were raised; happy because they were homeschooled; happy because they never remotely desired campus OR military life; in short: happy because they are turning out largely as I wished . . . I am proud of them because they are registered for the draft and the vote but participate in neither . . . Grey Eagle: there are few natural leaders in ANY generation. Most of us want to be left alone in peace to pursue our dreams. That some elect to lead and to defend the rest of us is commendable. Your "idea of encouraging greater interest and involvement in the political process" is just that: an idea. Ideas are a nickel a gross. I wished the 'best' for my sons as I understand 'best'. My wishes came true because of followthrough. I trained for character and prayed that they would be prepared to face an evil world.

SO, to you, Grey Eagle and to anyone reading this I say: There is no reason your beer should be warm if you want it cold! You're BRIGHT! Figure it out!

Signed,
Grundy
The True Source of Evil
by Thomas (gtg216i)

In these times of uneasiness and fear, it is common to question the future. There have been a few articles already in the NAR trying to answer questions concerning America’s war, but I assure you, the answers are not as simple as my fellow commentators would have you believe. It is an integral part of life that is best learned while still young, the hard truth is always more difficult to accept than the comfortable fiction.

You may have heard the voices of fellow students declare that the true enemy, our true source of evil, is our own government. They declare that a war will result in the drafting and killing of an uncountable many. These voices state America is the aggressor, Iraq is innocent, and that possibly Saudi Arabia is the true source of evil. Beware righteous citizens, for these voices are declaring an erroneous truth, but only because they are unaware of facts or simply afraid of the truth. The facts will prove the truth, and the truth shall set us free.

Their truth states that we are fighting an “unjust war,” a war in which we simply invade and conquer a country at will. An otherwise extremely intelligent contributor to this magazine affirmed that America’s new war is simply the fabrication of “a delusional, power-mad, moron,” a comment I dismiss as a result of stress and pent-up emotions¹. If one was to point fingers at a “power-mad” President, at least do so at the person who has sent “more troops overseas than any other president since 1945”², Bill Clinton. Our President recently declared, “We do not use our strength to press for unilateral advantage…We seek instead to create a balance of power that favors human freedom.” Or if you really want to get nit picky, we can get into some really hardcore facts on a true power-crazed dictator.

Honestly, how much do you really know about Iraq? I bet you’ve seen CNN and FNC enough to know that the US seems really interested in it, but why start a war? Through confused reason, many have stated that there is no need for this upcoming war, that it has no basis and is simply a bully tactic. Dear readers, you must agree that having an opinion without intelligently forming the facts does not give one authority to declare an “unjust” war. Well, let us all look at the truth: Saddam Hussein invaded and pillaged the sovereign nation of Kuwait, personally ordered the removal of “10,000 luxury vehicles…3,216 bars of gold” and “63 tons of gold coins” from Kuwait, tested chemical weapons on POWs from the Iran-Iraq war, killed an estimated 200,000 Kurds living in his country, and amassed an estimated personal fortune of 4 billion dollars and spent 2.2 billion rebuilding his 74 palaces while his government declares 1.5 million babies have died due to sanctions (Pelton, 578). Yes, this man deserves to stay in power for the simple reason that his enemies (i.e. the American people) believe him to be innocent to their own government’s accusations.

Is Saudi Arabia the real enemy? Maybe, but it is less of a threat at this moment than Iraq, North Korea, and the terrorists lurking in the Sudan, Yemen, Iran, Libya, and a host of other nations. Remember my fellow
citizens, this is the “War on Terror”, not just Iraq. We have no way of knowing who will be dealt with next. Terrorism will be stopped only through direct confrontation; both abroad, with the ending of terror governments; and at home, when we stop buying terrorist products (i.e. Chechen and Colombian drugs, Angolan diamonds, Syrian oil, etc).

Now, let us discuss your questions about this war. I understand if you draw correlations between Vietnam and this new war. That is simply because it is what you have been conditioned to think of when “war” is mentioned. You have been trained by the media to believe that any war will resemble Vietnam and that many will die. This popular reaction is a result of Vietnam’s unpopularity at home and our failure to successfully resolve the situation. Future military actions can not be forever decided by the results of a single, past war. You can not give up the fight for fear of failure, can you? Vietnam was a unique war, one that now conjures up scary feelings because of its unpopular draft, the fact that our objectives were not met, and the persistence today of movies and books depicting the enemy as insuperable. Unlike the wars that came before and after Vietnam, the military was not able to use every possible tactic to obliterate its adversary. The armed forces did its job to the best of their ability, and despite the terrible press they received, lost less than 15% of the casualties of World War II. Our forces did this without the support their fathers received in their fight against oppression. Was World War II a great war simply because we won? The public should allow our soldiers to take our fight to the enemy. What I am saying is that it is a risk they are willing to take if the public would just let them. Our military has learned much from its past experience, but it seems that a few of our citizens still think a war would translate into an immediate draft and hundreds of thousands killed.

I hate to break it to you, but in war, soldiers die. In your lifetime, only a handful of our soldiers have died in police actions and in the first Iraq conflict. This is how you think “war” should be, but I should remind you that over a million soldiers perished in the single Battle of the Somme during World War I. Or how about the 400,000 Americans killed in World War II? I fear that today’s America would have never risked its precious soldiers in those wars, and how would the world be today if that had happened? How will history judge us if we choose to pacify Saddam? Can anyone honestly say he will stop his killing of the innocent and procuring of weapons of mass destruction? True, his missiles can not yet reach us, but are you willing to sacrifice the lives of untold thousands tomorrow for your life today? We should all be willing to risk our lives today so that the future will be safe.

Has the idea of armed conflict always frightened you? I am willing to bet that you were all flag-waving troopers at the time before these whispers of war. My fellow citizens, my little sunshine patriots, though some of you dislike the idea of serving your country directly for fear of death; it does not necessarily allow you to dismiss the need for war. There are thousands of your fellow citizens who are willing to fight in this great struggle. We have all been attacked, in our homeland, and we are now all soldiers in an epic war. While you may not wish to participate in this Battle with Iraq, let me assure you, there is no declared safety zone in the War on Terror. I feel that you have no basis for your anxiety of the draft. Let me assuage your fears, there are plenty of men
and women who would gladly stand up for freedom, would gladly stand against tyranny, would gladly give their lives for the freedom of the oppressed, and would gladly give their lives to defend you; though you stay in the homeland and are unwilling to fight. Do not worry dear citizens; our country has produced the best trained and equipped military history has ever known. Besides, before the call for a draft is even given, there will be many, your dear writer included, prepared to join the ranks of this fighting force if the need should arise.

Fear not, my beloved citizens and darling readers of NAR. This fight will be long and arduous, and its path beset with hardship; yet our country shall lead the world into a time of peace by our absolute determination. Those of us who are the determined shall drag you, kicking and protesting in your fright and ignorance, to this future, and in the end you shall thank us. You shall then thank those that quietly protect you though we know not who you are, and that shall fight in the protection of others who also wish to share in the freedoms you take for granted. I know many of you will support, either directly or indirectly, this noble struggle to its conclusion. I only ask that those who oppose and criticize this war first look at their reasons for doing so. I hope that you may then come to realize what your ignorant declarations are doing to this country. I ask you, those that are unknowingly the true source of evil and agents of terror, to realize your wrongs, and join the ranks of the new army. This new citizen army will do its part in the defense of the homeland, and the protection of each other for the preservation of peace.

Notes


Write For NAR

“To see with one’s own eyes, to feel and judge without succumbing to the suggestive power of the fashion of the day, to be able to express what one has seen and in a trim sentence or even in a cunning wrought word - is that not glorious?”

Albert Einstein wrote these words in 1934, yet today, just as in every day since then, they incite action, and ignite our eyes to see with hidden clarity. Every one of us has been gifted with a unique vision. Though all may see the sun rise, no two have yet to stand on the same beach. It is time to speak freely, to reveal just one piece of what you have seen, what you have learned, or how you have felt. Many of us have been locked in books or are forever pecking at our computers. The human mind is not an organic calculator; your right brain is screaming to be set free. You have a voice and here is your microphone. What will you sing?

Email Submissions to nar@gatech.edu
Stuart Headley Was My Arch Nemesis
by
Ed Gein

Stuart Headley stood for the all the things I hated. He was rich. He was spoiled. He was ignorant. He was my roommate. Stuart Headley even had an electric toothbrush, baby blue, and a pajama suit to match. I wore wife beaters with cooking stains soaked into the paper-thin material skin and flip-flops that looked chewed by a dog – it all suited me just fine. He once said I looked like a mechanic. I said he was an ass. He just laughed with his million dollar, fifty-cent smile. I figured he had bought himself out of a lot of situations with that smile of his. Hated him, hated his smile, hated what he was a symbol of, couldn’t have hated him more if he was a walking talking Mercedes-Benz emblem, one with a high pitched voice – this was the first week.

I wanted to turn my back on him, needed to. But I couldn’t. It’s easy to ignore someone when you see them sitting across from you in class drinking the current coffee of fashionable tastes and checking their messages on whatever high tech walkie-talkie they are flaunting or when their pep-filled step catches your attention on the walk from Skiles. But this was different, this was in the same room, with the same air, the same cold pressing walls with that low prison ceiling and the same damn cashmere carpet you had to take your shoes off to walk on it. I never wanted to hurt anyone until I met him.

Worst of all, he was happy. All the damn time. He was oblivious to the outside world. The pool back home was algae free, the show-paper pets were all spaded and neutered and the cars got a wash and wax twice a week. Every thing in his world was okay, great, super. He was never tortured, never torn, and if he had smiled anymore, I swear the bastard’s face would have popped like an overstretched rubber band. Which is exactly what I wished would have happened, but no, it never did. He always seemed to have some good luck charm in his back pocket that only his kind could afford. I wanted that thing, whatever it was, and I was determined that by the end of the year I would have it. I wanted to grace the cover of Fortune 500 while this guy read it from the communal toilet of a truck stop (he would have it with him because I would make sure to mail him a copy). By then I could assert the right to be an ass. To the winner go the spoils – a saying I had always hated but if I were the winner, who knows you know, maybe it would all sound a hell of a lot better. I wanted to be able to smile like him, wanted a reason too.

That’s how it all began. Only a couple weeks into the first semester and I had an enemy, a damn arch nemesis like in the comic books. Of course, I only grew to dislike him more, day after day. First off, he gets into the frat his dad had been a member of, accepted the first day. Then I turn around and he’s the most popular guy on the hall, boys and girls in and out of the room every day. They sit on my bed and when I come back from wherever I’ve been, every head turns at me, all giving me that slack jawed look before amusement takes over. Not only do I share a room with him, but I have to put up with his constantly raised hand in Calculus. Yes, that’s right, we have the same damn math class, the exact same one. Of course, I grin and take it. It’s
all I can do, I mean, what can I do? Scratch up his car?

That idea came to me one night, lying in bed trying not to listen to him whisper to his girlfriend as the two rustled the sheets on the opposite side of the room. I could have just as easily given his computer a virus one day while he was gone to class, rubbed dog crap onto the insides of his collars, anything – but his car was the first victim. Don’t ask me why but it was so, it just hit me like daylight, it was oh so simple.

He had a parking space, too, by the way. I have no clue how, no one did. They all asked him how he got it and he’d just grin, grin, grin, leaving everyone thinking he was some type of James Bond. I mean, who wouldn’t want to take this Chesire Cat down a notch or two? I knew that I couldn’t be the only one; I had even reached the point to where I was afraid that if I didn’t move fast enough, someone else would strike before me, maybe even break off his side view mirror or take a piss in his hubcaps. All of this I thought, despite the fact that more and more people were piling into my room to talk to him, to be belittled. Like I said, they were all ignorant, I hadn’t found one un-ignorant person yet. But that was okay, I had my plans, and what plans they were.

One weekend he goes to a party, hell, half the hall went and the rest of them were off doing something else, leaving just me, an empty dormitory, and that vacant moonscape of a parking lot right outside my window, with that cute, little, silver angel of a Volvo all alone and unprotected. I wished he’d had some kind of sports car, some BMW with rocket boosters and gold-plated whatever-the-hells. He probably wanted to fit in, to seem normal. Well, he wasn’t fooling me and I’d prove it, with a long jagged scare, make the damn thing look like a pirate, some causality of war.

It was like a racing stripe. You looked at the thing and you could almost hear the key digging into the side; I laughed for an hour after I did it. It was the funniest damn thing ever - I kid you not. It all turned out better than I could have expected. I just waited, crouched, ever listening, this shit was air, it was what I breathed, and I fed on it. All I could do was wait and go about my daily doings for the next day or two. And that is exactly what I did, until that one day when he came back from getting groceries - well, came back from going to the parking lot and spying what had happened to his baby. He had asked me if I needed anything, but of course, I couldn’t have gone. Seeing that thing would have been like running naked through a feather factory, and laughing in his face would have definitely pointed him in the direction of the culprit. But when he came upstairs, I was detached, I was cool and I was calm. I was mother fucking James Bond. I was just another Tech student worried about his grades but playing video games instead.

He didn’t cry - but he came close. His groupies surrounded him and talked about how much a shit the person who did it was. There were even theories as to who it was. It made me happy to actually have validation, to know that others would have motives to do such a low down horrible thing – to a car. Of course, most of the people said they couldn’t believe somebody would do that and whoever did it probably was drunk and didn’t know Stuart’s car from Adam. It was just an accident, a drunken prank. I picked him up a box of Kleenex’s from West Side Market and he seemed touched. I just wanted to see him cry and thought maybe the gesture would
nudge him in that direction. Well, it didn’t, but that was okay, I was happy for the moment.

And then the sky opened up and Judgement rained down - as they say. Actually, I don’t think it was as much Divine Judgement as it was the fact that I didn’t work like I should have. I found myself at the end of the semester stealing Stuart’s Calculus notebooks (yes, he had notebooks full of homework, bonus problems, notes, and a few phone numbers for some attractive females in the class, ones that I conveniently changed 3’s to 8’s, 7’s to 9’s and so forth) and photocopying the pages and pages of legible perfect notes, the type of notes you pay good money for – except, I was getting them for free. I’d gather up the bundle of hot copies and look at them with … I don’t exactly know what it was. That bright blue printer light would go back and forth and I can only remember myself standing there. Pain was what I felt. That’s all I gather from my memories, but I know that was there, a hell of a lot of it. I realize now that that’s when I stopped smiling all together, I gave up trying to keep up the façade, the playful bashful exterior. Little, old, humble me. It had gotten too hard a role to play.

The truth of the matter was that I didn’t pay attention during class, at least not to the Professor – and I knew it. It was all my fuck-up, all of it was my mistake. When the whistle blew I’d wake out of some trance-like state and realize that I’d just spent 50 minutes staring at Stuart, analyzing him, trying with all I could muster to find some weak point, any weak point at all, even if it was just a tiny crack in the fortress wall. That’s at least all I could figure it was. Fifty minutes is a long time when you never had much time in the first place. And I didn’t learn any of his incriminating psychological fissures and I sure as hell didn’t learn anything about Calculus. But can you blame me? If you met him, I swear, you would have done the exact same thing. Then finally one night, the chance of a lifetime was just dropped in my lap, flat ass fucking drunk.

He stumbles in around three one Saturday night, giggling under his breath, face hot and red with swimming eyes, and trips while trying to take off his shoes, collapses right at my feet. I just look down at him, actually awe struck that he’s put himself in this condition. I didn’t expect that. And I almost laugh but I hear his stomach roaring like a freight train, up his throat, into his mouth and all of a sudden he’s a blowfish with his puffed cheeks and I know what’s coming. Those shoes no longer exist, at least not to me. There are just some things you cannot wash or wipe out and I made a value judgment after they started humming one bad odor. Shoes, though, couldn’t have been any further away in my mind at that time. I had him cornered, finally. He wouldn’t remember this – I mean, look at him, he pulls that head of his with the $35 styling out of his puddle of pink stomach goo and smiles, actually fucking smiles at me with that same Chesire grin. I knew that he would not be remembering this night, he was the baby he looked like, and now, here was my chance to play Big Bad Wolf to his Little Red Riding Hood. It all worked out in those few brief shining moments.

We had a time getting down the stairs but for some reason, maybe it was the fact that he was half draped over my shoulders, his good luck was actually rubbing off on me. I was loving it. We never ran into anyone, no
one what so ever. It was like a scene out of “The Omega Man” or something; it was all simply brilliant. At the bottom of the stairs when I accessed the situation, he had only banged his head up against the railing once or twice and I had only slipped once, falling on my hand. And his banging his head on the rail wasn’t entirely on accident.

His head was rested up against the passenger side front tire, it sounded like a softball getting hit by an aluminum bat when I let it drop. Not dead though, just a little dinged up. I stood there for a second surveying the scene, hands in my pockets and little thoughts in my head.

“Do you know what the fuck you’re about to do? You do? Really? Cause I sure as hell don’t.” Screw morality. Screw logical thought. This was miracle material. This was Faust and the Devil, Madonna in the bedroom. Some people can afford to pass up temptation, me, I never had anything this easy and I wasn’t going to let it slip out of my hands. I couldn’t.

I dropped down like a catcher and started fishing through his pockets. It came to me more than once that if by some miracle, if he woke up just then, he’d think me a fag. I guess I could live with it. He probably wouldn’t have told anyone but I’m sure that one day I’d come back from class and look through his stuff for something to eat when I’d come across a copy of “How To Deal With Your Fag Roommate.” That’d be okay though. But I was in the car, strapping him in with a seat belt, snug and secure. I knew that was a stupid thing to do, a funny thing too and I had to stop from laughing a couple of times, I mean, shit, this was serious, but whatever, safety isn’t something to be taken lightly.

All this, until this point at least, it had all seemed like a joke, a prank. I was about to put the dickhead in the middle of a highway. That’s not a joke. That’s not the type of punch line you mess up on and go back for a redo.

“Asshole. Wake up.”

“mffffffmmmmmm…” With that I slapped that doughy face of his (it wasn’t usually this way but he didn’t seem to have any control over his facial muscles and it all just hung there like flab on a suburbanite) and after I realized how good it felt, I did it again. I pictured him with a broken smile, like in the cartoons when a character’s teeth turn to piano keys and they play a tune. I wanted to play a tune on that face so bad and I was just holding myself back, hoping that he’d say something quick.

“mffffffmmmmmm…”

“Anyone see you walk back here? You get a ride, genius?”

And there was clarity. “No.” For me that was the green light, that moment where the strings were pulled and he looked at me serious as ever, eyes wide awake. Of course, he fell down into a heap of stinky rich boy right afterwards but that was the way it was supposed to be.

The drive around was pleasant and that Volvo drove like a dream, even with its battle wound. I wondered if his parents would will it to me, I mean, I was a nice guy and didn’t have a car at school. Hell, I might even
get the parking space. And a room of my own. This plan was sounding so good by now, that even if the morality of it had of slapped me across the face, hell, it was too good to turn down.

I wished I had a cigarette to smoke, not because I was all that nervous but because I thought if I was about to throw somebody onto a dark roadway where they’d inevitably met their end, I should at least look fairly bad ass. I was Dirty Harry and this guy just made my day. Nothing in the glove compartment, he probably wouldn’t allow smoking in his car anyway so I just sat there, waiting for the spot to clear out.

Yep, there was a spot. Two street lamps were out and you couldn’t see anything worth seeing. A car coming around the corner would hit him. I was going to put him so far off to the side that the first two or three might miss him.

Apparently, I really was in the zone. It was all just cars, the occasional car, zooming past me fast as can be. I was back in that math classes, back there huddled over those notes, notes I could have never written, classes I never could have aced. And you know what, unbelievable as it seems, I had no idea there was a cop pulled up beside me. I have no clue how long he was there and I couldn’t even begin to question what he was thinking. I’m sure he had the same thought about me. Apparently he was curious because he knocked on the window, rapped on it with the end of the nightstick. I’m sure Stuart had one hell of a stain to clean up after that. Me, I couldn’t tell you what happened cause I passed through it like in a dream during the early morning. I remember no police station, no questioning, no call to alarmed parents. And then, I woke up …

… and I was a hero. After one of my nightly walks, I’d just come upon the poor little rich boy passed out in the shadows next to the stairs between the Psych building and the Arch building. I had tried to carry him home but it was just too hard. I really appreciated Stuart and his family not minding me borrowing the car. Sure, Stuart had gotten in trouble but eventually all was forgotten, well, except for me. I got to go to all the parties, hang out in the rooms of the coolest kids. I even did that weird awe struck stare thing a couple of times to those roommates sitting in the corner of the room playing Quake on a Saturday night. Life was good.

It’s funny how I really thought myself a hero. I’d get shy and embarrassed when someone would comment about the event, get all red in the face. One day Stuart was deep into studying (we were study partners now and my grades had really improved) and he just turned to me and goes, “You’re an amazing guy.” And he went right on working. I was exercising and even had a date once in a while. They wrote an article about me in the Technique but didn’t run it because it wasn’t well written enough. A couple others tried to write stories about the incident but found the work load too heavy, they all apologized. I told them that it was well enough left alone, it was just something that happened and I didn’t want Stuart being embarrassed too much. Anyway, he had dropped out of the frat, tried to clean his life up.

Amazing how quick it all ends. And I mean, real fucking quick.

That was the night my arms and legs went on autopilot and punched him, well, tried to at least. All had been fine, the room was
jumping, some Doors music in the background and we were all laughing and having fun. Then I just jumped up from my bed, crossed the distance from my bed to his desk in a few steps and stuck out what I thought was a mighty iron fist in a boxing jab. Instead, I stumbled into my own book bag and as I fell, my fist connected with his shoulder like a passing insect and I busted two of my front teeth.

The room cleared out pretty fast, silently, and I had to find the hall advisor so I could get a ride to the emergency room, I didn’t have the money for a cab. I’ve got fake ones now and they give me a bit of an overbite and every time I look in the mirror, I just have to ask myself, what the fuck? I mean, really, why? I still don’t know. The situation was forgotten pretty much and nobody talked about it. All my extra scholarship money went for getting the dental surgery and all and I couldn’t do anything much but play Quake. Didn’t feel like doing much else.

One morning I went to brush the falsies (you have to brush these things about five times a day and once in the middle of the night so the plaque buildup doesn’t ruin them) and saw Stuart staring in the mirror. He was bare chested and his spine was out of shape, humped over, an old man looking into those truck stop style mirrors in the early morning, the hall dead outside. He looked hurt – and broken. Then I remembered that look. Ever since, the incident, the second one at least, the one without the aborted Technique write-up, he’d looked at his computer screen in the exact same fashion. Questioning?

I think he thought it was all his fault. If I wanted to punch him in the face, it must be his fault. I had saved his life once and now I hated him enough to lash out in public? That wasn’t like me.

It was like living in a haunted house during the rest of the second semester. We forgot all our plans about getting an apartment together; he had even said that he’d cover the extra costs that I couldn’t cover. It was all forgotten and we moved on, both graduating. For some reason I think I remember hearing that his grades fell quite a bit. The next time I heard from him was in a letter, years after we both graduated. It had an embossed gold cross on the envelope right next to the little square where you’re supposed to place the stamp. He told me how he had found God and Jesus. He said They gave him a reason to smile. He hoped maybe I had too, found religion, and if not, maybe at least forgiveness. He said he prayed every night to be forgiven for being such a bad person that I had wanted to hit him; he never felt forgiven, he needed to ask me. He felt God would not let him off that easy. He felt that he needed my permission. He had even enclosed a return letter and envelope but I felt I needed something better. I bought a “Long Time No See” card at the local dollar store and sent it in a plain white envelope and I forgave him in that card and told him all was forgotten. The stamp had the State Bird on it. I said that we should stay in touch. He believed me, I guess. I told him what he wanted to hear, what he needed to hear.

In the end, the only smile I broke was my own. Like I said, Stuart Headley was my arch nemesis.
The Truth About Mr. Nice Guy

by

m.e.

I met Evil almost two years ago. Had I known then what I know now, I would’ve stayed away from him. Like everyone else, though, I was oblivious. Then again, at the time, I didn’t realize I was having a conversation with one of Satan’s minions.

At first, when I could be in his presence without feeling nauseated, I could see something in him that I thought was genuine. I was part of the naïve flock who insisted that he was a nice guy.

I know better now. I’m onto him. I know that everything he does is all part of the façade. He hides himself behind a mask of friendliness and fake smiles. He plays people; he plays the system. He plays everything to get what he wants. His world revolves around manipulation and greed.

His masterful quality is his ability to conceal this life of deceit and selfishness. I don’t know how he does it. His life is like a horribly twisted version of the Clark Kent/Superman syndrome. He keeps each life completely separate from the other. Everything always works out for him. He lies, cheats, and steals, but he is careful to avoid getting caught. He is meticulous about preventing the two lives from crossing into one another. So far he has been successful. His reputation remains unblemished.

What really irritates me is that if you ask anyone about him, they’ll say the same thing- “oh, he’s a really nice guy.” Even the people who have experienced his evil first-hand will tell you that he is a nice guy. They’ll be in so much pain because of him that you’ll want to drop a brick on your bare foot just to distract yourself from the overwhelming sympathy that you feel for them. Then, when you’re done nursing your foot, they’ll still tell you that he is a nice guy.

I don’t know why the people he hurts can continue to be so close to him. Sometimes, I wish I were his prey. At least then he wouldn’t be preying on my sweet, innocent friends. He makes a habit of finding the people I care about and destroying them. He puts them through enough mental and emotional anguish that they forget how people should treat one another in a decent manner.

He only lets a few people see his true evil self, and those chosen few become forever tainted by his lies and manipulation. He degrades them enough so that they accept his evil and overlook it because, somewhere, in their minds, he must be a nice guy because everyone else says he is a nice guy. Surely everyone can’t be wrong.

I never realized that Evil could take the guise of a charming college student, until I met him. Be forewarned. I’m not saying you should accuse all the super achievers of leading double lives of manipulation and greed. Just look out for your friends. You don’t want to nurse your foot as much as I have to.
Wolf in Forest
by
Jason A. Stevens

A lone wolf treads slowly and carefully into a snow-covered clearing in the middle of a forest, gray fur moving slightly in the light breeze. The sheet of white that is the ground hides the fallen and decaying leaves of the trees surrounding the clearing. Brittle shells of bark are the temporary remains of once green trees. The wind picks up as the wolf continues to walk across the clearing, causing the trees to creak slightly.

The wolf notices a rabbit dash across the clearing and begins to run after it, a hunger burning deep in its stomach. It reenters the forest from which it came and runs around trees, leaping over dead, brittle bushes, all the while remaining in close pursuit of its intended prey. After a jump over a somewhat tall bush, the wolf stumbles on an area of still loose snow and falls, losing its prey.

The wolf picks itself up and lets out a howl of despair as a light snow begins to fall and the wind increases again. Egged on by its extreme hunger, the wolf plods through the snow and stops to sniff at a pile of recent excrement. It looks up and around the area, noting hoof prints leading off to the side. With renewed vigor and spirit, the wolf silently creeps in the direction of the tracks. As it continues, the wolf sees spaced apart tracks coming towards the tracks it is following. These tracks then veer suddenly to the side, as if their maker had tried to escape an attack. The attempt had apparently failed, however, because the tracks now swerved from left to right and the snow was red from a wound caused by the attack. Nevertheless, the wolf trudges ahead, through the steadily increasing snow and wind, hoping that the attacker has left its prey.

Upon reaching the site where the creature has collapsed, the wolf is met with the visage of another guarding the carcass of the animal. It lets out a growl and the hungry wolf growls in return. The guardian wolf snaps at the other and it backs down, knowing that even the power of despair would not be enough to defeat true strength from health.

The wolf slinks away, its hunger intense. It begins to stumble to find food as the snow becomes like a sheet of white paper, blocking all possible sight. The wolf panics and begins to run, hoping to find a way out of the chaos. However, Nature has different plans for the wolf, and in its blind wanderings, it collides with a tree and slumps to the ground.

Dazed but realizing there is no escape from the blizzard, the wolf continues to lay on the ground, huddling close to the tree in an attempt to retain some body warmth. Unable to stand the hunger, the wolf begins to bite its paw and draws blood, which it sucks, ignoring the pain. The blood loss eventually causes the hunger to subside a little and a shell of lethargy overtakes the wolf. It falls asleep, falsely thinking that it will wake up to find the storm passed and prey everywhere. As it slumbers, its muscles relax and eventually go limp. When the ice thaws, scavengers feed on its body and time goes on, Nature as unrelenting as ever.
An Empirical Understanding of Evil

by

David Changeau | www.changeau.us

After 9-11, I was shocked to hear the continued preponderance of the use of the term “evil”. I had always seen the word “evil” in religious contexts, and perhaps due to that past experience, I thought the term to be archaic in everyday usage... this past experience of mine was clearly not in line with the rhetoric that is being spouted on Foxnews, CNN, and any other station portraying 20-second sound bytes of people decrying Iraq, North Korea, or any other member of the so-called “Axis of Evil”. This atmosphere of the barrage of instances, in which the word evil has been applied, has led me to ask what evil is, not in a flippant/knee-jerk reactionary usage, but rather in an understanding that challenges “greater honesty and authenticity.”[1]

If we are to be honest about what evil is, then we must remove the term from the air of righteousness that it is usually put forth in and place it into a context in which it may be evaluated “in a Socratic mode.”[2] I see the best way of going about doing this is to determine what the empirical conditions of evil are. When I present the term “empirical,” I don’t want this evaluation to be branded with the label “scientific” because that label and tradition has baggage associated with it that I do not want to project and a marginalization in its applicability to other contexts[3]. Rather, my call for an empirical understanding of evil is simply to note those observable conditions in which the term evil is applied. This is in no way just “scientific” and cannot suggest that those who follow other traditions not labeled scientific (e.g. religious) do not employ methods of observation as well, they do.

Empirical Evil - a suggested definition:

So when I view the instances in which evil is applied, I observe the following: people are harming other individuals or groups conscientiously and continuing this harm despite their awareness of it.

So when historical US government documents cite the Soviet Union as “supreme evil”[4] it is to say that the Soviet Union conscientiously, and despite awareness, continually engaged in the harming of individuals and groups of people. And when more recent government leaders use the term “evil,” whether Ronald Reagan’s “evil empire” or G.W. Bush’s “axis of evil”, they are explicitly pointing out other governments which are conscientiously continuing their harm of certain individuals and groups of people. This I have no problem with... although speaking of “supreme evils” today does seem somewhat comical.

What I do have a problem with, however, is the inability to apply this empirical understanding of evil to our own government. It is a “logical impossibility”[5] that the US could be spoken of in a context which employs the word evil to itself. Observed cases are ignored and attention is diverted when these observed cases are then questioned by people in order to gain greater honesty and authenticity in our evaluation of our own (American) practices and policies. What are these cases? Are there no
observations we (Americans) have which warrant usage of the term evil? The cases (historical) of “indigenous people, descendents of enslaved Africans”[6] and the marginalization of women, with the more recent cases (foreign) from detaining Afghans in “kangaroo courts”[7] in Guantanamo Bay, to US-backed military government suppression of elections in Haiti [8], to the priority of protecting corporate patent rights over the lives of hundreds of thousands of Africans who cannot afford the high costs of drugs [9], to contradictory patent policies employed when two Americans die of Anthrax[10], and from (internal) declining race relations in cities such as Cincinnati, LA, and others, to the growing “industrial prison complex”[11] with disproportionate numbers of non-white groups, all of these cases are observed instances of continuous conscientious application of harm to certain individuals and groups and meet the empirical measure of evil originally put forth.

Meeting the challenge of gaining greater honesty and authenticity in our pursuits as a nation not only requires us (the people of the US) to challenge evil elsewhere (both in cases of convenience and inconvenience) in an engaged dialogue with other governments, but it also calls for a self-reflective admittance that the categorization of “evil” is not one from which the US can claim to be exempt[12]. This empirical understanding of evil will help us better see where evil exists, to what extent, and with no exemption to self-critique.

Notes

1 - Farid Esack, in a speech made to a Baptist audience, in the 2002 Drexler Lecture, presents his call for an “Interfaith Ethos of Challenge”. The premise is that people of all faiths must critically challenge each other in order to “challenge evil and undermine the institutions that perpetuate and breeds it.” Audio link to lecture at www.changeau.us

2 - Cornel West speaks to the concept of “being progressive” and “keeping the focus on folks who are suffering... unjustified harm and unmerited pain” in the Mario Savio Memorial Lecture at UC Berkeley. Audio link to this lecture is also available at www.changeau.us

3 - I’m attesting to the debates Paul Feyerabend and others (Ayer and Popper) were a part of in assessing what is “scientific”. Link details at http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/feyerabend/ (10.18.02)

4 - See the NSA’s archive at http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/ (10.18.02)

5 - Noam Chomsky attests to the “logical impossibility” in his work entitled “Necessary Illusions” when he states: “...it is a logical impossibility that one should oppose U.S. aggression, that’s a category that cannot exist.” Text link available at: http://www.zmag.org/chomsky/ni/ni-c03-s02.html (10.18.02) and an audio link available at www.changeau.us

6 - Cornel West; Mario Savio Memorial Lecture

7 - Ibid.

8 - Noam Chomsky; Necessary Illusions

9 - Farid Esack; 2002 Drexler Lecture

10 - Ibid

11 - Cornel West; Mario Savio Memorial Lecture

12 - Ibid.
Evil and International Affairs

by

Joseph Irwin

What is Evil? I know Evil; I have seen its face, smelled its stinking dead-fish smell, and heard its awful name pronounced in my dreams. That name is Cthulhu. Ia, Shub-Niggurath! Cthulhu fhtagn!

But seriously though, it’s a tough question. Even though I was just trying to be funny, the Cthulhu reference is germane; if there’s one word any sane person would use to describe Cthulhu, it would be Evil. The word “evil” usually brings to mind some supernatural agency: the Devil, Shai’tan, Melkior, Sauron, devils and demons of various underworlds, etc. Evil is defined in opposition to Good: God, Allah, the Vanir, and usually a good portion of the human race at least. Note that I’m talking about mythology -religious and cultural- here. So, like I said, in a mythological/religous context, it’s usually the Good Guys versus the Bad Guys, usually involving supernatural powers, etc.

Recently, the word has gotten a lot of airplay in the political rhetoric of this country. I believe Afghanistan, Iraq, and North Korea have been referred to as the “Axis of Evil.” It may be just me, but I think this evidences too general and vague an application of the word for my comfort. Why exactly are they “evil”? You will of course slap me for living under a rock for more than a year. No, I am aware of the awful events of September 11, 2001. However, does this justify calling an entire country - no, three countries - evil? Does Pres. Bush mean to imply that everyone in Afghanistan is evil? Perhaps he is simply referring to the actual land, in which case he should not be employed as a janitor, let alone our head Executive. (I could make that case anyway, but never mind) Also, where did the N. Korea reference come from? Is he randomly picking names of countries we don’t like out of a hat?

I believe the “official” reason for this reference is that these countries have sponsored terrorism. I humbly beg your pardon, but what country hasn’t sponsored terrorism at one time or another? Do not tell me “the U.S.” You would be wrong. What were the South American rebels to whom the U.S. government supplied guns in the 80’s but terrorists? Is there a difference between terrorists we support and those that are supported by countries we don’t like?

I submit that the 9/11 attacks are the reason for the recent use of the word “evil,” but with a different emphasis. Bush calls the Taliban “evil” because they had the utter gall to attack Americans on U.S. soil. How dare they? Why don’t they just kill each other, and leave us to our exploitative corporate practices? Now, I’m not saying the 9/11 incidents were not evil; if anything humans do could be evil, they would be. However, what about Rwonda, where thousands of Hutus and Tutsis massacred each other, and the international response was underwhelming, to say the least. Wasn’t that also evil? Not only were the massacres evil, but I think that the indifference the world showed was evil as well.

This is what I define as evil: bringing pain and suffering on someone else, exploiting someone else for one’s own gain, and ignoring
the suffering of others. Ignorance is the root of all evil, not money. Ignorance breeds intolerance; intolerance breeds hatred and violence. By this definition, everyone is guilty of evil to some degree. I have ignored others’ pain; I have been guilty of intolerance. I will be again. All is not lost, however. I believe that if we recognize our own faults, we become able to transcend them. So, instead of occupying ourselves by calling everyone who doesn’t like us “evil”, we should concentrate on becoming better ourselves, and maybe, if we set a better example to the world than we have been doing, tragedies like Sept. 11 will never happen again.

Inconsideration

by

Henry Adams

Something is wrong with our society. You may have noticed it as well. There is evidence of it in our grocery stores, at the student center cafeteria, and especially on our roads. We are suffering from a severe lack of consideration. Some people seem to think that they are the only ones who matter. Things need to happen their way, or no way. There is nothing that makes me angrier than inconsiderate people.

I don’t care how lazy you are, you can take the extra minute to put your shopping cart in one of the cart return places. When you leave it next to your car, you make it difficult for others to park and increase the likelihood of a car/buggy accident. It’s just stupid. If you have ever committed this horrible act, you should be ashamed of yourself.

I understand you like to have your money arranged in a certain way in your wallet. That doesn’t mean you need to do it at the cash register in the student center cafeteria. I’m standing there, waiting for your slow-ass to leave so I can put down my tray (if the jerk in front of me leaves enough room for me to do so), take out my money, pay and get the hell out of the next person’s way.

People wonder why the lines take so freakin’ long. You go to Georgia Tech, so you have to have some sort of intelligence. Don’t you understand that you’re being an ass? Sure, it’s only a few seconds, but then it only takes a few seconds for me to pay, unless you’re still there fiddling with your money!

Writing this makes me remember how people can be assholes and do such stupid things and not even notice. It makes me very angry. I decided not to get into inconsiderate drivers because then I might hurt someone. I will say this, you aren’t the only person on the road. We all have places to be, and if you’re an ass, you’ll make sure none of us make it there on time, if ever. Since only 10 people will ever see this with only 5 being literate, I implore you to spread my message of consideration. A slight inconvenience to yourself can be a great help to others. Just remember, if I ever see you doing something blatantly inconsiderate, I won’t confront you or yell at you. I’ll simply give you an evil glare and silently contemplate the most painful murder imaginable. If you are one of the people that perpetrate the inconsiderations I mentioned, I hate you, and I hope you die cold and alone in the most horrible way imaginable.
The Mysterious Language of the Female Race
by
Schmittty Shah

The following is a series of quotes/phrases that most men have probably heard from at least one woman in their lifetime. After each quote/phrase is the real meaning in the minds of the female race....

-I’m confused. = I really don’t like you.

-Yeah sure that’s fine with me, don’t worry about it. = No fucking way.

-I don’t think we should do that anymore = I’m bumpin’ your best friend and I’m too tired.

-I mean I think he’s nice = If he was any uglier I’d have to stare at my feces not to throw up...plus he is boring.

-Eeeww, that girl is such a slut. = God she’s got the nicest ass I’ve ever seen. I wish I had it. I’m so jealous.

-I think I need some time alone to think. = I need to find someone to replace you.

-I think we should see other people = Basically you can’t make whoopie right and you’re boring. Plus, over spring break I met this one guy who was a lot hotter than you. Peace.

-God I’m so fat. = Please look at my ass cuz I know I’m so hot. I just want attention, is that so bad? C’mon you want me, don’t you?

-Do you think she is pretty? = You better say that broad is uglier than me.

-I think I just wanna hang out with the girls tonight. = I wanna go get with some other guy cuz I’m bored with you.

-Do you mind if we don’t hang out with your friends tonight? = I enjoy your friends about as much as a guy enjoys picking up soap in a prison shower, plus it hurts my brain to be in their presence.

-Can I call you back? I’m on the other line with a friend. = I’m on the other line with my real boyfriend, therefore I’m not going to call you...ever!

-(After broken up) No, I’m not going out with him. He’s just a good friend. = I was slobbin’ on his nob for the last few weeks we went out, and we’re planning on getting married because he’s better than you.
-Sorry, I can’t talk to you tonight. I have so much homework = My caller ID isn’t working, and I’m sorry I even answered your call.

-My parents won’t let me go out this weekend...again. = My new guy wants his soldier serviced.

-Maybe we should go on a break. We’ll get back together real soon. = I found a pot head loser who is better than you.

-Where do you think we are right now in our relationship? = I want out.

-Sorry if I’m being bitchy. I’ve had a real rough day/week/month/year/life = I need attention. Ask me what’s wrong, then console me when I tell you

-(While hooking up) I really like it, I just need to go home. = I’d rather bump a castrated elephant!

-I really, really, really like you. I just can’t handle a relationship right now. = Either A) I’m a slut. B) I don’t like you. In a week I’ll be going out with some pot head/flame who gets with guys as well/guy who wears a cowboy hat to school cause he’s retarded/ a friend of yours.

-I like you. = Once he says I like you back, I can run and brag about it to my friends and then never speak to the guy again cause I’ve accomplished my goals.

-Yes (when responding to a guy asking her out or to a dance) = Oh my god! Why did you have to ask me? Two more days and the captain of the football team would have asked and I would have had his kids. Now, I’m stuck with you all because my entire female race is too incompetent to say ‘no’.

Questions? Comments? counterfeitking@yahoo.com

**Ed. Note:** Yes, we, the staff of NAR, did actually proofread this article and considered editing the grammatical errors. After much consideration, we came to the conclusion that Mr. Shah’s point about the imbecility of the female “race” [sic] is contrasted well by his improper grammar. We are sorry for any inconvenience this may have caused you.
TV Is Bad
by
Anonymous

Everyone has seen the bumper stickers that read, “Kill your Television”. Everyone has heard statistics that say “On average Americans watch over 4 hours of television a day”. The comedian Bill Hicks repeatedly correlated complacency and stupidity with television viewing. The inventor of television Philo Farnsworth stated that television was sometimes painful, and as its first critic would not allow his son Kent to have it as “part of his intellectual diet”. (From Time magazine’s 100 scientists of the century.) People constantly complain that they have so many channels and there is nothing on – and yet everybody watches it. From the Sourcebook for Teaching Science by Norman Herr (http://www.csun.edu/~vceed002/health/docs/tv&health.html):

Millions of Americans are so hooked on television that they fit the criteria for substance abuse as defined in the official psychiatric manual, according to Rutgers University psychologist and TV-Free America board member Robert Kubey. Heavy TV viewers exhibit five dependency symptoms—two more than necessary to arrive at a clinical diagnosis of substance abuse. These include: 1) using TV as a sedative; 2) indiscriminate viewing; 3) feeling loss of control while viewing; 4) feeling angry with oneself for watching too much; 5) inability to stop watching; and 6) feeling miserable when kept from watching.

The boob tube has become such a part of American life that several restaurants can support a weekly Simpson’s trivia and trekkies regularly fill an entire hotel for a weekend convention. The idea that one can go a length of time without television is so foreign that some parents from my elementary school bet their daughter a considerable sum of money to go an entire year without television. The bet made the front page of the local paper. So what, exactly, is this thing, and why is it bad?

Not many people spend too much time thinking about television. I asked several people, and none, out of my admittedly small sample, had anything other than sarcasm or apathy as a response – Television is bad.

Okay, so let’s first go over what television is. Television is a one-to-many form of communication with a high entrance cost. This means that a few people choose the programming that masses watch and that the cost of producing a television clip is prohibitively high for most viewers.

It is also stationary. This means several things. It means that most of the time a viewer is fixed to a single place while watching; they cannot ride the subway, walk, or take the bus while viewing. It also means that they are usually fixed to a given time slot, they cannot pause to ponder a thought, answer the phone, skip back or forward. VCRs help this a little, but they require preparation and cannot be used for indiscriminate viewing.
Television is passive and inactive entertainment. A viewer can be completely stolid and unmoving, zoned-out if you will, while being inundated by messages and ideas that do not get processed, only collected by the sub-conscious.

The high entrance cost of producing a clip helps ensure that only large organizations have the ability to produce. This severely limits the diversity that is shown because every investment is a substantial one and requires a return, which means that much of the programming is going to be sponsor friendly. This also means that much of the programming has to be accessible to everybody – usually the benchmark of a seventh grader is used. A few can control every message that is sent to the mass audience, and it is hard for an alternative voice to be heard. Some of this is changing, slowly. The cost of video recording equipment is coming down, and perhaps soon it will be possible for an average consumer to record high-quality video. Also as home computers get more and more powerful, it is becoming possible to get good video editing software for a home user. It is now also possible for anyone to distribute material on the Internet. It will be exciting to see how this new form of distribution will compete with conventional television.

The second problem is that television is stationary. Unlike most other mediums it requires that a viewer not be active and not be paying attention to anything else. According to Herr a survey released during October 1995 stated that 11% of viewers between the ages of 6-17 were severely overweight, nearly twice that of the 1960’s. The main causes were inactivity and a high-calorie diet. From the same source:

According to William H. Deitz, pediatrician and prominent obesity expert at Tufts University School of Medicine, “The easiest way to reduce inactivity is to turn off the TV set. Almost anything else uses more energy than watching TV.”

Also:

A 1991 study showed that there were an average of 200 junk food ads in four hours of children’s Saturday morning cartoons.

It is difficult for most people to do anything else when they are watching television. Unlike reading or listening to the radio they cannot tune in while jogging, riding, or sitting in a waiting room. They cannot easily pause the current show to get back to it after – say the phone rings.

Television is fully passive. It does not need input from the viewer, it does not respond, it does not even give the viewer time to think about anything for more than a second. The screen needs to constantly be filled. This kind of non-interactivity leads to the kind of complacency that Bill Hicks was talking about. The long time viewer expects something else to entertain them, something else to calm them. It doesn’t even allow the kind of escapism that movies afford because each show is relatively short and is being interrupted by commercials. It is possible to watch television in a more interactive fashion, simply by actively choosing what one is going to watch. Many people, however,
watch television to fill in time and do not care what exactly it is they are being exposed to. This attitude takes away from the idea that one can actively do things to entertain themselves. It is hard to feel any sense of accomplishment from watching television. Active people can do things to change their mood, to improve their lives, or to learn something.

Many of the problems and related issues listed above are only a function of how television is used. That kind of thing can be changed and hopefully will be. Nothing listed above relates directly to content, mostly because it is such a hard topic to think about. There is a lot of information out there about the effects of television content. As a starting point for reading about the effects of commercials, I would recommend the book “You Can’t Buy My Love” by Jean Kilbourne. Searching on the Internet for information usually brings up lots of not-to-useful statistics and some good studies – search around a little bit. There are a couple of university professors that have started viewing certain television series as art (Buffy, the Vampire Slayer mainly, I think). What an interesting idea, maybe this kind of thing will promote deeper, more artful television in the future.

The Current Paradigm of Evil
by Anonymous

"Evil" you might as well have said “everything,” except that now whenever that word is mentioned one thinks of September 11th. It has been over a year since the massacre and its impact is still felt. If one would believe the news media, the United States is moving closer to war. Many feel that this kind of "preemptive warfare" is just an excuse to go after oil in the Middle East. This seems like a good theory, considering that those who control the oil supply will soon control the world. Is the US the only one who cares?

It seems that the majority of the United Nations holds no desire to attack Iraq. The underdeveloped countries standing to benefit the most from lower oil prices, strangely, are not in support of this action. What are their motives? Much is not known.

The US needs to educate itself about world opinions and culture, and perhaps incorporate some new ideas. Focus on mediation as opposed to force, alternative energy instead of oil, recognize rather than ignore other countries, and practice humility in place of arrogance. Many countries consider these alternatives because the current US course of action has only evoked terrorism.

The US has kept itself ignorant of world politics for too long. The Second World War and now Bin Laden have brought the rest of the world into our political eyes. There are many historical examples to learn from and options to consider before making a decision. There are many ways to avoid armed conflict. Hopefully the tragedy of a year ago will help the US understand how to preserve peace and arbitrate disputes rather than incite more terrorism.
He knocked twice. I fell out of my chair and shattered the pencil in my fist.

I had been given a topic for a paper. "A Technological Hermeneutics of the Post-Industrial Conception of 'Evil' in a Post-Modern Deconstructionist Ideology." Or something like that. I had the assignment for a week and I've been fixed on only one thing. Evil. I hadn't a formal conception of an Evil in an everyday sense, let alone some Post-Post-Industrial-Modern-Decon-ology. I'm not sure how desperate I was to enlist the help of God, but I knelt and begged. Nothing.

Out of jest I half-heartedly suggest, "If God won't help me, maybe the Devil will." I had scarcely imagined an adequate Faustian ritual when the door knocked twice. I fell from my chair. The pencil had wedged three sharp splinters between my knuckles. While lifting myself toward the door I try to pull out the splinters; each one had broken just beneath the skin. "Who is it?"

From outside the door, "I am known by many..."

"Shit." I jumped backward onto the arm of my chair and fell out of it again. This must be some kind of joke. "Go away, I'm not interested."

I couldn't hear him. I was far away and backed against the air-conditioner. What if it was him? What should I do? "I've changed my mind. I'm okay. Don't need any help, thank you. You may leave." I worried whether anyone could see him outside the door. I haven't been listening to him. He's probably outside explaining who he is and asking why I need his help.

Ghost-style his head peaks into the room through the door. "May I come in?" "Yeah sure."

It's hard to explain how I felt in his presence. He didn't look like some stereotypical incarnation of the Devil. He was blonde, had blue-eyes, and seemed to glow without casting light or shadow in the room, which was poorly lit to begin with. He was a sharp contrast to the dimmed room, making him the absolute center of attention. I felt comfortable and slightly intoxicated.

Despite his demonstrated ability to pass through material objects, he chose to have me let him in like a corporeal guest.

"Thank You. How may I help you?" He patiently waited for my forthcoming response. I chose to wait before answering, hoping that he might tire and leave. But he didn't and I stuttered, "I...I...have some... questions."<I had mellowed and the rest melted from my mouth>...tions."

"Ask me."

"Well I have this paper, and I couldn't concentrate. I was desperate. I needed help. I was kidding when I..."

"Don't worry about it. Now that I'm here, what seems the matter with your paper?"
Not ten minutes ago I could scarcely have believed in God, but now the Devil's offered help. Sobering for a moment I begin to doubt his genuineness. How do I know if he's the Devil? Granted he passed, albeit partially, through my door. And if it was he, could I really trust him? Isn't he supposed to be deceive, and trick-damn my soul.

By degrees his blissful emanations had lowered my guard and his charm had won me over.

Smiling he suggests, "Let's go for a walk," holding the door for me. I follow.

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I had been lulled by the dark night. "There are more stars out than usual." "Isn't it wonderful?"

We walked for nearly an hour. He had just listened to my rambling, until we came upon a grassy hill. We laid on our backs and gazed into the sky.

He points to the northern hemisphere, "What do you suppose that one is?"

I thought he was kidding, and that he pointed to Dog Star. Interrupting my thought, "No not that one," shifting his finger, "that one."

"I don't know." Wait a minute. "Why don't you know? Aren't you omniscient or something?" He took a short pitiful sigh and didn't answer my question. I could sense the question bothered him.

We had for a short while discussed more earthly things, like the recent advances in physics. I was impressed, but his light-hearted simplicity suit him. He wasn't the Devil I had heard about. And if was the Deceiver, and that his kindness was cleverness, I had not detected it. His was manner was infinitely readable. I felt as if I had known him since childhood.

Then I remembered Todd, our neighborhood evangelist who had once claimed evolution and cosmology were the works of the devil. I could not agree, but I'd listen to his sermon anyway. He had never suspected that he, by his admonition, had led me into the sciences, mathematics, and philosophy with a idealist's passion, and now it seems, into the clutches of the devil.

With a childish innocence I ask, "Why is there evil?"

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Our reverie broke with my inquiry. He and I were now awake and the mood suddenly tense.

"What's that supposed to mean?"

"I implied nothing, I just want to know the truth."
Leaping from the grassy knoll, stomping into the wilderness, we vanished. "Come with me."

He brought me to witness the world's horror.

Their Hutu brothers butcher hundreds of marching Tutsi's. Their corpses stacked by the thousands.

A brutish man beats a tied woman. She screams through an uncovered mouth.

Child slaves, beaten by their masters to work harder and faster, and starved to near exhaustion.

Refugee masses, skeletonized by famine, and terrorized by their own country's abuse,
are ushered from the border of an overcrowded camp, into plains.

And he continued with hundreds of slaughterhouse vignettes, despite insisting that I did not want to see more. Covering my eyes was not enough. The horror seeped in from other senses. In one such episode I was spattered with warm blood, and could smell burning flesh.

He had dropped his antagonism and saw to easing my stress.
"What did you see?"
"Horrible things. Evil things."
He boldly rebuked my claim, "Human beings."
"Watch."

We returned to the scene of the bound and beaten woman.
"That man enjoys what he's doing. And in the end, he gets away with it."
"Stop him. Do something." The woman's head slides off.

"What did you do? I saved her from the sensation of burning from the inside out by stopping the blood and impulses to her brain."
"By lobbing it off!"
"Though she'll live a few seconds her head, starving for oxygen, will not experience what had begun to take effect. She may even feel euphoric a short while before death."

"That's it. That's how you save her."
"What else am I to do?"
"Stop the attacker."
"How? By killing him."
"Yes."

"You are evil, aren't you?"
"You don't understand. Evil is the fault of those that commit evil acts. Mankind has free will; I have no part in it. In your heart you accused me, but I am blameless."
"By not acting you share blame."
"For every act of mine, there are unintended consequences." I wanted reach back and kill the sadist myself, but I was ushered away and quietly resigned to his will.

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Out of a compulsive need to keep the dialog open, but still resentful over his dismissal I, out of spite, stabbed with, "How was your 'fall' from grace?"

This hurt him deeply. And he leered scornfully in my direction. My telephoto vision shut the world from my periphery. His eyes sunk deep into his skull behind the shadow of his brow. The air was cold and thin. To hide my shame turn away, to a find a blue and cloudless open sky. I had been vaulted impossibly high atop a mythic tower. I turned back, to see his old familiar countenance, and that warm smile.

"Luke, I am your father," he jokes like a friend passing clichés to lighten the mood. He was delightful and charming once more. He pushed, kept his charming smile, and watched my panicked face as I fell. Just inches from the asphalt I am thrust into a void and abandoned.

In the dark I cursed the man who pushed me. And when, after what must have been thousands of years, I finally spoke aloud, "I hate him." The only genuine emotion after years of desensitizing apathy was that of hate. And I was free. I was alive, but I come back to a dead world. One I could not love, but only tolerate. Here was a world of free will, but only the will to do nothing.
Disbelief, horror, these were some of the many feelings that passed through Americans—the world—as the twin towers of the World Trade Center pulverized themselves under their own crushing weight. With steely conviction president bush channeled the shock and grief of an entire nation into a declaration of war against nothing less than evil itself. There seemed little room in the days following September 11th for moral ambiguity in a white administration in which you are with us with or against. In drawing such stark lines, The White House administration has taken a very black and white understanding of good and evil, making them into black boxes, a term that scientist ascribe to an idea or innovation that is so complex that it is reduced to simply inputs and outputs. A=B Syllogisms are the rule, and there is little room for nuance.

However after the dust began to settle in Afghanistan, one thing became clear, the spilled blood of the current poster children of evil, Osama bin laden, Al Queda and the Taliban, kept mixing with that of the innocent, and despite laughable media coverage as to true extent of civilian casualties one thing became clear: there would be no magical bullet in this fight.

So how does one begin to deal with such a conflict of seemingly biblical proportions? How do we begin to unpack the black box of evil, to excise the gray bits that kept eluding our duotone vision? We can start with the familiar: Atlanta, Georgia. Conveniently enough, at the time of this writing, there was vast convergence of all manner of evil at one of the greatest science fiction conventions in the South, Dragon*Con. From Star Wars fans to Trekkies to live action role players, the personifications of good versus evil were taken to the extreme, often to absurdity, as only possible at a science fiction convention. super heroes and super villains clashed in all forms of media, from novels, to video, to movies, to comics. “Small conventions have to have a focus,” remarked media relations director Star Roberts, “we are so big that we can offer a little bit of everything to everyone.” Talking further with her, we learned that this year there was everything from

“The Axis of Evil has nothing to do with Cobra... they have no customized equipment and vehicles and no cool logo.”
midget wrestling to robot wars. At Dragon*Con the real and the imagined bleed into each other with quite unsettling regularity.

Walking into the lobby of the Marriott Grand Marquis, one of the hotels in which Dragon*Con was held, it did not take long to run across some evil. Towering over the storm troopers surrounding him, Darth Vader stood in the lobby waiting for one of the many elevators to take him up to his room. Seizing the opportunity we decided on an impromptu interview and asked him what he thought it meant to be evil. “To go against what everyone else thinks for only my own ends,” responded the dark Jedi. When asked what he thought about the proclaimed Axis of Evil he answered, with some incredulity, “they’re not very evil, they have not tried to blow up an entire planet yet.”

Yes, this is a picture of midgets wrestling. Yes, our society has sunk to a new level of poor taste. Is this evil? Maybe not. Should we be ashamed of ourselves? Damn straight.
Further along the lobby we ran into Destro, The Baroness and a number of Cobra foot soldiers. Talking with one of the foot soldiers, about evil he equated evil with greatness and Cobra Commander. When asked about the presence of other forms of evil, such as the Axis of Evil, he dismissed them out of hand: “The Axis of Evil has nothing to do with Cobra… they have no customized equipment and vehicles and no cool logo.” Just then Cobra Commander himself showed up. Posing the same questions to him we received a markedly different response: “Evil is the American Government and their illusion of power… I will free the people by making decisions for them.”

Stepping out into the atrium, Xena, warrior princess and her Klingon compatriot had their own thoughts on the nature of evil: “There is a lot of good and evil here at Dragon Con,” noted Xena, ” you have a lot of vampires, a lot of gothics, the evil dead, good
Klingons, bad Klingons, a couple good Xenas and bad Xenas, and, basically, if any evil comes my way I handle, it’s simple as that.” The Klingon to her right had this to say:

“Like Xena was saying there is plenty of good and evil on both sides here, me being a Klingon I’m particularly interested in Ferengi…. I saw a Romulan earlier. I don’t think you can make evil a concept, can not rout out evil.”

“It became obvious rather quickly that many of those interviewed gave responses with tongue firmly in cheek, but at the same time, it was difficult to not flinch when the rhetoric of John Ashcroft and Cobra Commander intersected; for after all, to justify the use of force to instigate a regime change in Iraq to give democracy to the people does sound an awful lot like “I will free the people by making decisions for them.” Of course that is taking a wild comparison and running naked through the east campus quad with it, one needs perspective. However, ironically, or maybe just fittingly, it seems perspective is something that the men and women that attend such conventions have: at least in terms of good and evil.

At one particular panel, actor Lani tupi was talking about the journey that his character, Baltar Caris, in the popular science fiction television show Farscape, had taken through the course of three seasons. Playing an obsessed military commander intent on hunting down the shows hero, John Crichton and his motley crew of friends, Tupi’s Crais exhibited rather typical villain characteristics throughout the first season: ruthlessness, fanaticism, revenge schemes, and calculated murder to name a few. However, as the show progressed, his character was given to growth and eventual redemption… a redemption that was as much a product of environment circumstances and whimsical fate as such classic redemptive science fiction moments such as Darth Vaders’ When asked what [Lord Vader] thought about the proclaimed Axis of Evil he answered, with some incredulity, ‘they’re not very evil, they have not tried to blow up an entire planet yet.’”
repudiation of the Dark Side. Modern science fiction, and the fans that stoke its fire, seem to have a tacit understanding that the complexities of the human (and alien) character cannot be easily categorized or pigeonholed. Nor can evil or even good for that matter be personified in a single character or action. It simply is more complex than that. Except maybe the Jar-Jar Binks Storm Trooper with a pink Boa that I ran into in the lobby of the hotel. That is just wrong, ‘nuf said.

One thing became very clear: here the black box of evil has been quite thoroughly unpacked and that there is very little that is left simply black and white here, except for some Stromtroopers. Within evil there can be redemption and that interaction between good and evil can be incredibly complex. Evil is everywhere. Moreover, its ugliest form is banal ordinary and beyond the reproach of acceptability. How should we approach the idea of an Axis of Evil after attending Dragon*Con? At the end of the day, a stormtrooper from the 501st legion, “Vader’s Fist,” said it best: “Axis of Evil? I don’t believe there is an Axis of Evil, it’s all rebel propaganda.”

Photos & Text by Viktor Hill

on assignment with:
Julie and Mike

(Editor’s Note: Evil of featured people cannot be determined)
“Secretary” Dominates the World of Romance

by Andrew Pilsch

Looking at the poster for “Secretary,” Steven Shainberg’s new film, you are greeted with the visage of a woman bent over, holding her calves with the words “Assume the Position” typed next to the apex of her rear. With this as the advertisement, one might conclude that “Secretary” is a sexually exploitative piece similar to some of Roger Corman’s women’s prison films; it isn’t.

“Secretary” opens with Lee Holloway (Maggie Gyllenhaal) being checked out of a mental institute. As she readjusts to home life, we learn that she was institutionalized because she mutilates herself during periods of stress. She burns herself when her alcoholic father is fighting with her mother and cuts herself during her sister’s wedding. To get out of the house, Lee decides to get a job. This quest leads her to the law office of E. Edward Grey, which has a “Secretary Wanted” sign out front that lights on and off like a “Vacancy” sign at a motel.

As Lee interviews for the position of secretary, the previous one is seen leaving in tears, and it becomes clear that Grey is not quite normal (his first question to Lee is “Are you pregnant?” “Do you plan on getting pregnant?” is the second). He hires Lee, promising her “very dull work.” Things quickly get interesting, however.

After a few weeks, Grey pulls out his red pens and begins to call Lee into his office whenever she makes a typo. She is made to read the letter aloud while he spanks her. Lee doesn’t mind, though. In fact, she finds she enjoys it. As their attraction grows, Lee becomes more poised and lovely, just as she begins to deliver letters to Grey’s office on all fours and serve coffee while handcuffed.

While this may seem horribly exploitative and sexist, Shainberg doesn’t treat it as such. Grey’s spanking and humiliation of Lee are stand-ins for whatever clever sparring can be dreamed up in any generic romantic comedy you may see. This is the case because that is what “Secretary” is: a romantic comedy. Now, let it be said that it is not your traditional romance. In fact, don’t even think about taking a date to this movie. It’s not that kind of film. “Secretary” is a romantic comedy for people who don’t believe in romance.

Beyond Shainberg’s masterly subtle script, the two leads make this movie. Gyllenhaal is pitch-perfect as a young woman discovering herself, sexually. Her arch from gawky, ugly duckling to swan is a masterpiece of understated acting. Surprisingly, Spader is even better. In other hands, Grey could be a monster, but Spader draws out the various shades present in his character. He reveals the pain and confusion just below Grey’s confident, sadistic veneer. Spader shows that Grey is merely a man attempting to come to terms with who he really is, as, in a way, we all are.

In the end, “Secretary” is a masterpiece on many levels. The direction is understated yet powerful. The film is quite funny. The acting and script are top notch. The sets are fabulous and intricate (so much so that the film warrants a second viewing, just to see what you missed the first time). Cutting through the kink, “Secretary” is just
a simple love story at its core. However, like “Mulholland Drive” was to thrillers, it dares to ask for things from its audience and never compromises its intelligence, wit, and atmosphere. In an age of watered-down blockbusters that treat emotions as hurdles to be jumped on the way to the next explosion, “Secretary” proves that there are still great films being made for people who demand more than just adrenaline from a day at the movies.
Next Issue:

Why Are Tech Students So Damn _______?

In the next issue of the North Avenue Review, we ask you to fill in the blank. That's right, just like in elementary school. Pick an adjective and go crazy (in written or drawn form, of course). Send your submissions to nar@gatech.edu or drop them in our submission box, which is located next to the stamp vending machine in the Post Office.