

chicago weekly

March 4, 2004

Top book lover dies

Despite never earning a PhD, Daniel J. Boorstin was a history professor at the UofC for 25 years, before moving on to Washington to become the director of today's American History Museum as well as becoming the Librarian of Congress until 1987. He is most widely known, however, as a popular historian and winner of the 1973 Pulitzer Prize in history. He is quoted in his NY Times obituary as prizing books, our "single greatest technical advance," as the basis for preservation of culture. "For each of us," he said, "reading remains a private, uniquely qualitative nook of our life... With a book, we are at home with ourselves."

Everybody loves Obama

UofC law professor and state senator Barack Obama received a major boost to his campaign with the endorsement of both the Sun-Times and the Tribune, the two largest newspapers in Illinois. The Sun-Times said that Obama "seems best poised to overtake Hull [the leader in polls]. Obama's background and experience can trump Hull's money." The Tribune qualified its endorsement of Obama as "one of the strongest Democratic candidates Illinois has seen in some time," noting that there are specific areas of disagreement between the editorial board and Obama such as his opposition to NAFTA and the invasion of Iraq. Notwithstanding, the Tribune states "Obama has a proven record of spirited, principled and effective leadership in the legislature, and he is the *only* Democrat in this race who can make this claim." Obama's biggest challenger for the democratic nomination is Blair Hull, the frontrunner, according to the Tribune, "by virtue of the nearly \$24 million of his own money he has poured into this race."

A lawyer's legacy

UofC Professor of Law and Criminology and former Dean of the Law School Norval Morris died February 21. While on the Law School faculty, he received international recognition for his work on criminal justice and prison reform, as well as notoriety as one of the most prolific and knowledgeable writers on criminal law. In addition to his academic legacy, Morris is also remembered and celebrated as having been a remarkable human being. Said Saul Levmore, Dean of the Law School and the William B. Graham Professor of Law, "Norval was our good friend, our colleague and an extraordinary human being, and we are all the better to have had him in our lives."

WEEKEND FORECAST



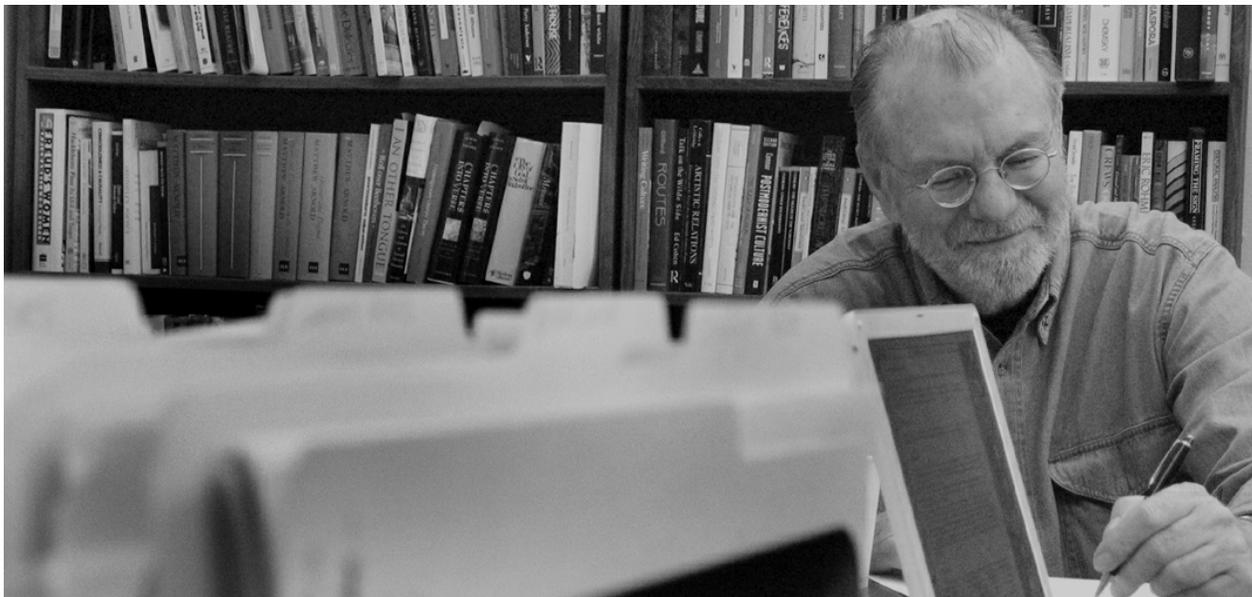
FRI 44/32



SAT 42/32



SUN 41/35



Kristine Khouri

The message

From newspapers to Arnold with the CSMT

By Crystal Moy

The "media" is often referred to as if it were some omnipresent personality. It is everywhere, surrounding us, eerily lurking in the background of our daily lives...

Even this copy of Chicago Weekly represents a media-type. The funny, metallic smell of newsprint, the flimsy and cheap quality of the paper and how it so easily creases at your touch, the ink smearing and rubbing off on your fingers—all influence your subconscious experience of this CW edition. Reader, you are not simply absorbing the words in this article.

Sensory devices are operating on you, whether you realize it or not. Perhaps you, too, savor the sensual moment of cracking open a brand new newspaper, still hard in its pristine form. The "media" affects you in perhaps more subtle ways than you know.

Probing the media and its rather fluid definition is precisely what Professor W. J. T. Mitchell's "Theories of Media" course and the Chicago School of Media Theory (CSMT) seek to do. The CSMT is a student organization that grew out of Professor Mitchell's winter of 2003 class. Students had been so intellectually provoked by the course material and wanted to continue the discussion that they, along with Professor Mitchell and course assistants Eduardo de Almeida and Rebecca Reynolds, founded the CSMT working group.

Members of the CMST research collective include a group of undergraduate students—Mal Ahern, Ben Buckley, Dan Clinton, Roberto Kutcher, and Nick Oberly—some grad students, faculty at the UofC from a variety of disciplines, as well as distinguished faculty from other universities including Hans Belting, who currently teaches at Northwestern, and James Elkins from the Art Institute of Chicago.

Members of the Chicago School of Media Theory give presentations and meet with Professor Mitchell on a weekly basis in a formal seminar format to discuss topics of interest and research projects. The members have been involved in creating their own reading lists, taxonomy models, and a keywords glossary that aims to define such elusive, abstract terms as "mediation" and "representation."

"The keywords glossary is now an online referenced resource for media studies programs all over the world," said

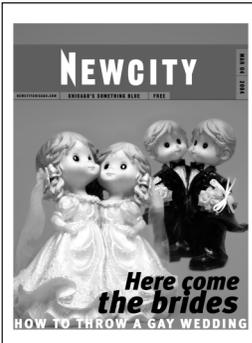
Professor Mitchell, indicating how the CSMT is gaining public notoriety and influence.

One of the most ambitious projects currently underway for the CSMT is the Hypercube media taxonomy model, which is now applying for a grant to fund its implementation. The new taxonomy model seeks to bring consciousness to the characteristics, aspects and effects of different media types, serving as a tool "for discovering things, for noticing things that weren't so evident until you begin to put them together," said Professor Mitchell. The model is "a conceptual space for making tacit knowledge explicit." The model was inspired by CMST member and former student Mal Ahern's version of Professor Mitchell's spreadsheet, which listed different media types and their characteristics. Ahern proposed an alteration: a three-dimensional conceptual structure as opposed to the two-dimensional spreadsheet.

Another dedicated pursuit of investigation within the media-theory working group is the topic of the role of the body in the media process. Said Mitchell, "Some of the members in the collective were interested in pursuing the role of the body in relation to these sources because they felt that particular sort of mode of media has been under-theorized and under-acknowledged. So one way, for example, to start think-

continues on page 3

inside



Here come the brides

How to throw a gay wedding

- Modern immaturity in Fresh Hell

Pearl of Wisdom

with Lila Pearl



Dear Lila Pearl,

I totally have a crush on this girl. She's way cute. What do I do?

—Milosz

Dear M,

Call her up, tell her you're coming over, ring her doorbell, say nothing, then, when she's not paying attention, fuck her brains out. On the flip side of that equation you could ask her out for a date and spend an entire meal insulting her and/or spilling (acting?) out your deepest and most horrifying neurosis. Either way ought to be a pretty good time and Lila Pearl wishes you best of luck.

If you only knew how many questions of exactly this nature she received you'd feel... well, less alone.

—Frankly, Lila Pearl

Dear Lila Pearl,

My boyfriend and I have been considering inviting a certain "third party" into our love nest; you know—just a onetime thing. Problem: this young thing is, um, "coupled," as it were. As far as inviting his girlfriend is concerned—well, let's just say, not an option I'd be eager to consider (to put it kindly). Is there any way we can make our dreams come true without including said significant other?

—Yours, Ménage-a-quatre(?)

Dear Ménage,

Lila Pearl thinks—this is a bit of a tricky situation, and it could easily prove impossible to work out, depending on the type of arrangement your "young thing" has with his significant other. Probably the most effective method of attaining your potential third wheel sans partner would be to tell him outright that you (and boyfriend) would be interested in sleeping with him (and only him). If he seems interested in the proposal but won-

ders why you don't want to add one more to the party, you could explain your reasoning (but run the risk of the young one becoming offended and calling the whole thing off). Conversely, you could create a quick diversion for the undesirable lady and run off into the sunset—though Lila Pearl wonders...

—Wanderingly, Lila Pearl

Dear Lady Pearl,

Like most men, I find girls to be darn swell and damn near irreplaceable. In fact, as you probably know, most of our accomplishments up to this point have been not to replace women but to find a more consistent way to attract them. The latter works well for some, less so for others, but I feel that technology has opened up new avenues in the former. Consider this: A company based in California will use state-of-the-art George Lucas-quality special effects to build for you a startlingly realistic partner for no small fee (about \$5,000), capable of all the sexual functions of a bona fide breathing gal. Now, I understand women have more to offer than just their sexual abilities, but in doing some comparative statistics in the long run, the dummy might just more than pay for itself. Is this the future of sexual interac-

tions? And if this is our destiny should I just pony up and buy the doll now? If so, how would I explain it to my roommates?

—Hopelessly, Frustrated

Dear Hopeless,

Lila Pearl can see the advantages of your robot-lover: you won't need to feed her, you won't need to pleasure her (sexually or otherwise) and you certainly won't need to involve yourself in any sticky emotional yuckiness (i.e. romance, PMS, relationship talks, love, The Real, whathaveyou). Here's something to consider: upon publishing Madame Bovary, Flaubert received hundreds of letters from women all over France claiming that he had stolen their story—how did he know them so well? To these Flaubert only shook his head sadly, "Non- Madame Bovary c'est moi!" And this: Morrissey sings "Girlfriend in a coma I know, I know—it's really serious... But there were times when I could have 'murdered' her." Between Madame Bovary's yearning for bourgeois fantasy love and Morrissey's longing for a comatose lover we find the absent presence of your question.

—Vitaly, Lila Pearl

Gotta question you're dying to have answered? E-mail Lila at lila@uchicago.edu.

Mediating sensations

continued from page 1

ing about the role of the body in media is in relation to the human senses and how things like touch and sight are sort of affected by technology as well as by all sorts of theories of media."

Some of the provocative ideas proposed that more deeply examine this question of the role of the body in experiencing media include Ahern's research on how fashion is a technology of the body and how it uses the body as a site for mediation, affecting and altering one's sense experience. Another is Roberto Kutcher's proposal on how imaging techniques, such as sonograms, holograms, and x-rays serve as a kind of media, altering our traditional conceptions of the body.

The CMST also seeks to explore questions such as: Can the body recode certain signs in a virtual environment? How is the body manifested online? How are markers of race, of gender, of sexuality constituted in online environments?

Although media studies are gaining popularity throughout the world, the Chicago School reflects a characteristic UofC style of inquiry, which is "deeply rooted in Chicago's humanities tradition," said Professor Mitchell. "We look at things historically, critically. We're not like some places that are much more technically driven. They're more involved with what you might call the 'gadgets' of new media."

One of the benefits of the Chicago method of studying media is that though "it basically tries to include everything that goes by the name of media... you get better precision about specific forms if you have an overall view of the field from which it is taken. So since the orientation is historical, we go back to Plato and Aristotle," said Mitchell. This comprehensive philosophical-historical focus in the study of the function of media allows room for the inclusion of some not-so-obvious potential media-types

like the postal system, the electric light, the telephone and the highway system.

According to Professor Mitchell, media theory also helps us to better discern the causes of political phenomenon, such as Arnold Schwarzenegger's entry into the office of governor of California. All too often, debates and popular analyses of such uncanny developments such as Schwarzenegger's office are vaguely attributed to "the media" without going into further detail about what this precisely means.

"You have to think of different relations of different media types. Politics, communications, image," said Professor Mitchell. Relating how media theory can help us understand why Schwarzenegger was elected, Mitchell said, "Think about Schwarzenegger's body as a medium he established over a thirty-year period. His body is the expression of invulnerability, omnipotence" that fulfilled a perhaps psychological need that was not being met for the Californian populace by Gov. Gray Davis."

From the perspective of those who rant that the media degrades our cultural values, the wide influence of the media and the seemingly uncontrollable extent of its power might make it seem like an evil, colossal, while abstract entity. Nonetheless, Professor Mitchell intellectually slices through this half-baked misconception, acknowledging that though "the media are very powerful..." they are extensions of ourselves." And "we need to understand them so that we can use them productively, but also resist them when we need to." And in order to resist, one "must have a reflective critique... a mere prejudice or negative view is not enough."

To learn more about the Chicago School of Media Theory and Professor Mitchell's Theories of Media course, visit <http://www.chicagoschoolmediatheory.net>.

Crime & Punishment



● Criminal Damage ▲ Battery/Assault △ Burglary □ Motor Vehicle Theft
■ Theft ○ Robbery ▼ Criminal Trespass

SOURCE: CHICAGO POLICE DEPARTMENT. DATA REFLECT INITIAL POLICE REPORTS