



DSAAS Newsletter

Issue 03, July-August, 2009

Table of Contents

- 1: Editorial
 - 1: Upcoming Events
 - 2: Past Events
 - 3: Column: Behind the Teaching by Thomas Ærvold Bjerre
 - 5 : Delights of Danger: The Coney Island Experience
 - 7 : Executive Order No. 9981
 - 9 : A Racist Feminist on the Bench?: Sonia Sotomayor
 - 10 : Book Reviews
 - 11: Eulogy: Michael Jackson
 - 12: Information about DSAAS
-

Editorial

Dear DSSAS member,

Once again I am proud to present you with a great issue of our newsletter. This issue covers the fascination of Coney Island, racism in the US Army and the newly nominated Supreme Court Justice as well as book reviews on the duality of the South and a Brit's impression of the States. We also have a domestic contribution by the DSAAS faculty representative, Thomas Ærvold Bjerre, who describes the fascinating world behind the teaching.

In order to get more people to read our newsletter we have decided to print a number of black and white issues to hand out to American Studies students. We hope that this

will boost interest in the newsletter. We are especially hoping for even more interesting contributions. Remember the only criteria we have is that the contribution is USA related. Other than that there are virtually no restrictions. In relation to creating interest in sharing with other DSAAS members I once again remind you that anyone can sign up for our mailinglist and anyone who is signed up can post to it by sending an email to dsaas@mls.sdu.dk. It is up to you to decide whether it is relevant or not. The mailing list is not moderated in any way.

In September a new batch of Americanists *in spe* will be enrolled in the American Studies program at SDU. We hope that those of our members who remain in Denmark for the next semester will take good care of them and hopefully encourage them to join DSAAS. We need all the enthusiasm we can get as most of the board will not be here for the next semester. So spread the word! And finally, have a fantastic summer holiday everyone and thank you all for supporting our events in the spring term.

Mads Jensen, editor

madsj01@student.sdu.dk

Upcoming Events

August 24: DSAAS Intro Day

Stay updated on upcoming events at
www.DSAAS.org

Past Events

Americanists at the American Embassy

On May 22nd, the American Studies students and DSAAS were invited to visit the American Embassy in Copenhagen for a meet n' greet with three diplomats. The visit was combined with a shopping spree, a dinner and a trip to DR Byen to watch a live taping of Clement Kjersgaard's talkshow Fredag til Fredag.

It was a little after one when a group of people met up at Østerport Train Station. Destination: The American Embassy only a block away. 16 people including the DSAAS board were invited to visit the American Embassy.

The visit started out with a thorough security check. Then we were met by Deb MacLean the Public Diplomacy Officer at the embassy. She took us into a conference room, where we were welcomed and introduced to Julia Fendrick from the political office and Melissa Ford, the head of Public Diplomacy.

Melissa Ford began the meeting with an introduction to the embassy, the kind of work they do there, the different offices and some of the daily tasks carried out at the embassy. After her, Julia Fendrick spoke about the work done in the political office and last but not least, Deb MacLean stepped in and talked about the work done in the consular as well as the public diplomacy office. All three of them spoke openly about the work they do and the challenges they face.

After their introductions it was time for a Q&A session, which proved very popular among the American Studies students. Questions centered around foreign political issues, public diplomacy, the embassy's work with Greenland, consular issues, how to find work at the embassy and how the three liked

their lives in Denmark. The answers were very useful, interesting and candid.

After the embassy meeting, it was time to head downtown for a couple of hours of shopping, a trip to Nyhavn, a beer or a shake at Joe & the Juice before it was time for dinner. We had dinner at O's diner, an American diner in Copenhagen, where we enjoyed everything from the original O's burger to the Southern Chicken Gumbo with cornbread. The conversation during dinner was relaxed and touched upon everything from George W Bush's work in Africa to the newest YouTube make-up and Britney Spears videos. All in all, it was a very enjoyable meal, where a little over half of the original 16 participated.

When we were full from dinner, it was time to head to DR Byen, where we were invited as part of a live audience for Clement Kjersgaard's talkshow *Fredag til Fredag*. When we arrived there was still time before the shoot began, so we had time to hang out and enjoy a soda, a beer or a glass of wine. The live taping was a lot of fun - although the closest we got to something American was a young singer, who had just signed an international record deal, which would bring her to the US to compose and record music.

From DSAAS' s point of view, the day was very successful since it managed to combine both academic and America-related issues together with social, relaxed time together.

Hopefully, the visit to the embassy will become an annual event. At least, the embassy has already agreed to a future visit from American Studies at SDU. DSAAS would like to thank all the participants for a wonderful day!

Mira Borggreen

The 2009 NAAS Conference

On May 28-31 the Nordic Association for American Studies held its biannual conference at the University of Copenhagen. The main topic of the conference was "Cosmopolitan America? The United States in Transition". Needless to say, the issues of cosmopolitanism, internationalism and multiculturalism seem more urgent than ever with the election of President Obama and his recent nomination of Hispanic Sonia Sotomayor to the Supreme Court. The increased interest in cosmopolitanism in literature, politics, etc. has led to questions of the nature of cosmopolitanism and whether this might influence America's position as "exceptional". The conference presented a wide range of topics in which cosmopolitanism can be discussed. The discussions at the conference included disciplines and topics such as literature, film studies, foreign policy, ethnic studies, etc.

The University of Southern Denmark was represented by the faculty from the Center for American Studies. Members of the faculty were present and presented papers on topics such as Ha Jin, ethnocentrism and masculinity and 9/11. The Scandinavian American Studies community dominated the conference, but there was also a strong attendance from the States and scholars visiting from Germany, Albania, Greece, Ireland and Kyrgyzstan. The plenary speakers at the conference included lecturers from the four Scandinavian countries (CBS' Eddie Ashbee represented Denmark) and the conference ended with a lecture from Columbia University's Brent Edwards. SDU had reason for celebration as American Studies' PhD student Rune Reimer Christensen won the Orm Øverland Prize for best student paper for his paper on Chinese immigration.

Anne Mørk

Behind the Teaching: The Sensational and Scandalous Life of an Academic

As the new faculty representative in DSAAS, I was asked to write a column for the Newsletter. And since the function of a fac-rep is to act as the link between the students and faculty, I thought I would write a few words about what the academic life is like from our side of the table, if you will. VH1 has a great show called "Behind the Music." This, then is "Behind the Teaching." You've all seen us teach. But what the hell do we do once class is over? Apart from lounging in our offices, drinking coffee, writing recommendations for students... and status updates on Facebook. I can only speak for myself, of course, so in the following, I will try to sum up my academic activities since teaching stopped in May and up until today.

After my course finished, I immediately started preparing for the biannual conference of the Nordic Association for American Studies (NAAS), this time held at the University of Copenhagen. NAAS has been a recurrent event for me since I first presented a paper at the 2001 Conference which was held at Copenhagen Business School. Since then I have presented papers at NAAS conferences in Norway, Sweden, and Finland, and now, once again, in Denmark. The 20-minute presentation equals about 8-9 pages, so I spent about a week writing and polishing my paper. Conferences are long days of sometimes seemingly non-stop presentations and keynote addresses. There are occasional great papers that actually change your perception on issues. But most importantly, the conferences offer the chance to meet and talk to colleagues from all over the world who work within the same field as you do. And sometimes you get to meet the people who've written the books you have been using. The

networking part is not just important; it is also a lot of fun, especially once the official conference program is done, and the bars open.

This time around, the NAAS Conference gathered about 100 academics from universities and colleges spread over twenty countries. The three days offered an opportunity to sample the vast buffet that is American Studies. The talks ranged from American Exceptionalism, Obama, and climate change over various literary topics and writers to vampires, zombies, and torture in American war films. Oh, and an excellent paper on Masculinities in Post-9/11 American literature. A few American Studies students from SDU participated in the conference, but I wish that more had taken the time (in the midst of paper writing, I know, I know, but still). It will be 8-10 years before an American Studies conference this size hits Denmark again. In two years NAAS will be held in Norway. If you can't wait, you can always go to the even larger EAAS (European Association for American Studies), which will be held in Dublin in March 2010. You might as well start writing a paper now. The deadline for abstracts is September 1, 2009.

Back from the conference I had about a week before the student papers arrived on my desk, so I started working on the pile of various projects that most of us have at any given time. In my case, two books projects and three articles for various journals, all of which needed to be finished, ranging from the final editing process of a book in Danish about the American Western (co-written with Torben Huus Larsen and due out in September) and a book version of my dissertation to various smaller articles that I will send to different journals in the hope that they will publish them. Because that's really what this job is all about, apart from teaching: Conveying our research to the world. And this can be in broad terms, such as the Danish book which is aimed at a broad, nonacademic audience, or in

more narrow terms, such as articles published in literature/history/etc. journals. And this is not mere philanthropy. We are measured on our publications, how many we publish, and, just as importantly, where we publish them—this is the so-called bibliometrics system, which is on the verge of being implemented in Denmark—a ratings system that ranks journals, publishing houses, etc. Very soon, the amount of money our Department receives will depend on the number of publications and the places we have published them.

Anyways, I finished editing my dissertation and mailed it to a US University Press. They will then send it to one or two readers, and based on their feedback I will have to change, edit, etc. In 12-14 weeks I will know what they think of it. After reading and grading papers (about 500 pages in total, this semester was a light load), I once again returned to my articles. I finished one yesterday and e-mailed it to *The Southern Quarterly*. It might take a couple of months before I know what they think. Only two more left. One is the paper I presented at NAAS, which I am currently expanding to about 25 pages. I will then try to send it to a relevant journal, possibly *Journal of American Studies*. The final article in the pile is one that I've actually been asked to write for the newly launched *Literature Compass*, an online peer-reviewed journal from Wiley-Blackwell Publishing. The deadline is not until November, but once August comes around, preparation for classes take up a lot of time, and once the semester starts, teaching and not least preparing for classes tend to take up a surprisingly great amount of time.

So there. I just realized that my story lacks the inevitable downfall/scandal/fall from grace of VH1's show. And the cathartic comeback. I'm sorry, that's usually the best part. That may be down the line for me. But for now, all of us, teachers and students, are on the midst of

vacation. So have a good one all y'all, you deserve it, and so do we.

Thomas Ærvold Bjerre is assistant professor at the University of Southern Denmark at Odense.

Delights of Danger: The Coney Island Experience

Ann Christine Brandt looks into the history and fascination of Coney Island

In the late 19th and early 20th century, the resort area and amusement parks of Coney Island in the southern part of Brooklyn, New York, offered a chance for tourists to visit such far-away places like the moon and Liliputa (Midget Land), built and occupied by 300 dwarves, or witness the life-and-death struggle of premature babies in incubators. One could also see staged fire spectacles, where buildings engulfed by flames would be put out by more than a thousand performers, including actual firemen. One could even visit Hell. Coney Island also offered Americans a chance to witness natural disasters through reenactments and staged shows. Two of the most extensive natural disasters in American history that could be witnessed at Coney Island were the Galveston Hurricane of 1900, which killed between 6,000 and 8,000 people and caused approximately \$30 million of property damage, and the 1889 Johnstown flood. 2,209 people were killed in the disaster and bodies were found as far away as Cincinnati and as late as 1911, while property damages reached \$17 million. But why would Americans willingly pay to experience danger and to witness death and destruction? Why the fascination with both real and staged disasters? As Ted Steinberg explains the curious combination of thrills and safety of Coney Island presented a means for Americans, "to experience their darkest fears about calamity in a controlled environment" and "served as an emotional safety valve in a

world where outward expressions of disaster anxiety were no longer tolerated."¹



Disaster and destruction was the foundation of Coney Island. Not only did the amusement center offer spectacular staged disasters and thrill rides, but was itself plagued by storms and continual fires. Yet, even when the park itself was struck by disaster, the event was transformed into a consumer experience. For example, the day after a fire had broken out on July 28, 1907, at Steeplechase Park and burned it to the ground, the manager of the park put up a sign at the former entrance with the words: "To inquiring friends: I have troubles today that I did not have yesterday. I had troubles yesterday that I have not today. On this site will be erected shortly a better, bigger, greater Steeplechase Park. Admission to the burning ruins: 10 cents."² Real and staged calamities then both offered consumer experiences.

Coney Island, with its thrill rides and fake disasters, offered a chance for the population to momentarily express fears about an uncontrollable world. Additionally, the amusement park offered a chance to enjoy a brief experience of control and excitement. The spectacles at Coney Island were strictly bound by time and only lasted a few minutes. In those minutes, visitors could experience excitement, as well as safety and control, by being located at a safe distance, but also by knowing that what was presented was merely representation. The knowledge of the spectacles being unreal further contributed to

visitors giving in to emotions of fear and excitement. As Kevin Rosario explains, the interest in disasters is ultimately an expression of existential anxiety, "an entirely natural response to the prospect of personal and collective obliteration."³



While Coney Island presented disasters, it also introduced Americans to modern technology and science and turned these into a consumer experience. The example of Thomas Edison electrocuting Topsy the Elephant clearly illustrates this. Topsy, who had helped build Luna Park, was one of many elephants that could be seen in the park. However, managers decided to put her down, as she had a bad temper and had killed three men in three years, one of whom had fed her a lit cigarette.⁴ The death of Topsy presented "a chance for publicity" for her owners, who announced she would be hanged.⁵ However, because the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals protested, it was decided that Topsy would instead first be fed carrots with potassium cyanide and then electrocuted by Thomas Edison and a team of his men.⁶ On January 5, 1903, 1,500 "exited and sympathetic spectators" witnessed the electrocution of the "wicked elephant that became a man slayer."⁷ Edison himself captured the event on film. The death of Topsy demonstrates how Coney Island visitors were introduced to new technology, as Edison used the elephant's execution as means to promote his arguments for alternating current.

Coney Island eventually declined in popularity, especially in the post-war years, as Americans could now chose from a wider range of leisure experiences, such as

Disneyland. However, the amusement park still exists and continues to offer thrill rides, such as the "Waterboard Thrill Ride", created by Steve Powers in August, 2008.⁸ The front of the "Waterboard Thrill Ride" is a simple concrete grey, with a picture of SpongeBob SquarePants saying, "It Don't Gitmo Better!" Visitors, who look through the ride's small window with bars, will see a scene that resembles a Guantanamo Bay interrogation. Inside are two life-size figures. One is wearing an orange jumpsuit and is tied to a tilted board, with a towel covering its face. The other is wearing dark clothes, with a hood drawn over the face, and is leaning over the other. Both stand completely still. However, when one deposits a dollar into the slot below the window outside, the scene springs to life and the figure with black clothes pours water on the figure in the orange jumpsuit, who "convulses against his restraints for 15 seconds."⁹ Initially, Powers intended for the ride to include real people, who would try real waterboarding. He decided, however, on "robot waterboarding", which "became a way of exploring the issue without doing any harm."¹⁰



The new Waterboard Thrill Ride clearly follows the tradition of the early Coney Island rides, as it allows visitors to experience danger from a safe distance. The emotional experience of the ride, however, differs between visitors. As the New York Times article demonstrates, some visitors like the

ride, while others do not. One visitor even finds his belief in the interrogation technique confirmed, while another is exited about the ride and finds it "hilarious".¹¹ As the latest addition to Coney Island, the Waterboarding Thrill Ride demonstrates the endurance of the former amusement center. While not a representation of a natural disaster, the ride nevertheless underlines the continued commodification of thrill experiences and how these are turned into consumer products.

Ann Christine Brandt

1 Steinberg, Ted, *Acts of God: The Unnatural History of Natural Disaster in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 3.

2 "Enhanced Transcript", [Online].
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/coney/filmmore/transcript/index.html>.

3 Rosario, Kevin, *The Culture of Calamity: Disaster and the Making of Modern America* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2007), p. 2.

4 "Program Description", [Online].
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/coney/filmmore/description.html>

5 Ibid.

6 "An Elephant Electrocutted for Murder", the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 25, 1903.

7 Ibid.

8 Kaminer, Ariel, "Coney Island Sideshow Has Guantánamo Theme", *The New York Times*, 6 August, 2008. [Online].

http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/06/arts/design/06water.html?_r=1&scp=6&sq=coney%20island&st=cse

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.

Executive Order No. 9981

Lene Elfride Madsen provides an overview of the first important steps on the road to ridding the US Army of racism

In an episode of the celebrated TV-show MASH-4077, a wounded soldier asked the surgeons if he was *getting the right blood*. Hawkeye and Trapper played a prank on the soldier and colored his skin dark, giving the

soldier a firsthand experience in the prejudice that met the enlisted men of African descent in the 1950's. The moral of the story is clear, but the portrayal of the integrated army with the memory of Jim Crow is interesting.



President Harry Truman signed Executive Order no. 9981 on July 26, 1948 to end segregation in the armed forces, which then became the first

major American institution to achieve racial integration. This process began in 1940 and by 1956 the army was fully integrated. Three external events caused the shift; the Selective Service and Training Act of 1940, Executive Order no. 9981, and a changing attitude in the American society. Internally, the army had become disestablished at the end of WWII and many of the 12 million veterans had been overseas for several years. The formation of NATO and growing concern of communist expansion, made it necessary to build the armed forces back up. The expenditure of maintaining two separate personnel systems and manpower shortages during the Korean War likewise forced units to integrate.

It is not clear what personal motives Truman might have had for signing the order. He was born in Missouri where his family prior to the Civil War had depended on slave labor. He had a traditionalist view of the constitution and was chosen as Roosevelt's running mate in 1944 over the progressive Henry Wallace who would alienate Southern voters and James Byrne who took a conservative stand on the issue of race and would lose votes from Northern Democrats. In spite of a massive African American migration away from the Democratic Party, because of opposition to desegregation by Southern democrats, the changed socioeconomic status of many African Americans who had moved out of the

South demanded federal intervention as racial violence increased¹. Roosevelt's four freedoms and the Double Victory campaign during WWII and its effect on the black community is also a potential factor.



When Truman became President he was eager not to undermine his leadership of the Democratic Party and thus avoided civil rights issues, until the Monroe killings in 1946. Berman writes, that the "*act of vigilante violence...aroused the American liberal consciousness*"². The arguments for Truman's position on civil rights are varied and inconclusive, the government was, nevertheless, under pressure for action and created the Civil Rights Committee to investigate racial violence. Truman became the first President to speak to the NAACP in Harlem after which he took the same address to Congress on February 2, 1948 and announced it time for the United States to act on its ideals. A few months later Truman signed the executive order and Charles Fahy led a committee organized to ensure the implementation of racial integration in the armed forces. The final report of the committee, "Freedom to serve" was issued two years later on May 20, 1950. It stated that it was the first step to end institutionalized racism, which was apparent in the North just as in the South³. The order was met with

harsh criticism, especially among the military leadership. The Army Chief of Staff criticized the government for using the military as a "*tool for social justice*" and claimed it would harm military effectiveness⁴. Though, it could seem like the order was merely a political move to ensure the black vote, it was still a political victory for minority groups and may have served as a unifying aspect in the growing struggle for civil rights. Desegregation varied in different branches of the military forces. The Air Force had already begun integrating the units in 1947, a year before the executive order; so had the Navy even though they had a longer history of racial exclusion. The Marine Corps was segregated until 1949-1950, but it slowly implemented the order over the next couple of years. The Korean War was the last string of segregation in the army. Combat soldiers were needed in the field, which in many cases led to *ad hoc* segregation. Like in the Ardennes during World War II, black soldiers in previous all-white units performed well in combat. In 1948 African Americans made up 8.8 percent of all army personnel, in 1964 they made up 12.3 percent⁵.

The desegregation of the armed services poses as an example of how a major institution, within a short period of time, underwent a far reaching transformation. Racial incidents did occur long after the executive order was signed, but the sanctions imposed by the military, due to its hierarchical power structure, reduced clashes at least on military bases⁶. Also, it gave way to profound structural change and demonstrated how changes in one segment of society could spark repercussions in society at large and alter the racial landscape.

Lene Elfride Madsen

1 Berman, William C. *The Politics of Civil Rights in the Truman Administration*, Ohio State University Press 1970, pp. 38-40.

2 Ibid. p. 47

3 Gardner, Michael R., *Harry Truman and Civil Rights: Moral Courage and Political Risks*, Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 2002, p. 118

4 Stillman, Richard J, *Integration of the Negro in the Armed Forces*, New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers, 1968, p. 43

5 Moskos, Charles C. Jr., "Racial Integration in the Armed Forces", *The American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 72 (Sep., 1966) Northwestern University, p. 142

6 Ibid., p.135

A Racist Feminist on the Bench?: Sonia Sotomayor

Anne Mørk investigates the surprising controversy of nominating a Hispanic woman for the Supreme Court

In May President Obama nominated Sonia Sotomayor to be the first Hispanic and third female Supreme Court Justice. Sotomayor seems a rather obvious choice to the Obama administration - America is getting two for



one - a woman *and* an ethnic minority. The Obama administration has tried to sell her personal story, including a poor childhood in the Bronx, to the media in order to gain support for her confirmation. But the

confirmation process has proved more troubled than perhaps initially expected.

The nomination has caused a great debate concerning her loyalties as both a woman and as a member of the Hispanic community. Conservatives want proof that Sotomayor will be able to "ignore" her gender and ethnicity when ruling. Previously other female justices have claimed that men and women would reach the same conclusion - a statement Sotomayor has rebelled against. She has publicly stated that her background has indeed influenced her rulings. In the midst of increasingly ethnic diversity of the Obama administration, Sotomayor embraces what makes her different from the rest of the bench, rather than the similarities. Particularly controversial is a ruling that defended the rejection of a test among firefighters because no ethnic minorities were among those who got top results. Conservatives fear that she will judge according to ethnic or gender convictions (Rush Limbaugh called her a "reverse racist") - a debate that has revealed the continued racism/sexism of the public debate. Would they ever ask a white male judge if he was able to ignore his gender and ethnicity when ruling? In the last couple of days Sotomayor has attracted the wrath of the right on another issue: gun control. Apparently she does not believe that the Second Amendment represents a fundamental right.

But what do we know about Sonia Sotomayor as a judge? A Yale Law graduate, she was first appointed as by President George H.W. Bush in the early 1990s due to her moderate political views and Bush fulfilling a promise to appoint a Hispanic. She rose to fame in 1995 when ruling to end an eight month strike in the major league baseball. Some conservatives categorize her as a liberal, but she is generally considered a centrist. She has in fact proven to be fairly conservative in terms of not overriding decisions by elected branches. Interestingly enough she has not

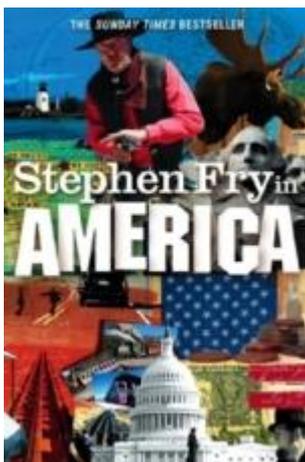
had major rulings on such issues as abortion and gay rights. On many constitutional issues she is fairly unpredictable. She might become a liability to the president that appointed her as some justices have done earlier. In fact she has become famous for her rather colorful, temperamental courtroom behavior. With a major Democratic majority in the Senate, Sotomayor will probably be confirmed. Confirmed or not Sotomayor certainly has contributed to debates on ethnicity, gender, gun control, judicial objectivity, just to mention a few things. Like her or not, Sotomayor's nomination has created a Supreme Court debate that, for once, is about something different than *Roe v. Wade*...

Anne Mørk

Book Reviews

Stephen Fry: *Stephen Fry in America*

"I could have been American; after all I was nearly born there. So I wanted to find out what it is that makes the United States of America so unique, so diverse, so very *American*" -Stephen Fry.



In this book, British comedian, Stephen Fry, unearths the United States from the inside as he travels through the 50 states in his black taxicab. Fry has always loved America and now, his fascination for the country and its people makes him embark on a journey across the country. Starting out on the east coast in the New England area, Fry drives across the country, talking to the people, visiting landmarks and landscapes and exploring small-town life up close.

What is remarkable about this book is that he visits both world famous stars and completely unknown Americans alike. He stops by to see Steven Spielberg, visits George Bush on his ranch in Texas, Bill Gates in Washington and Arnold Schwarzenegger in California. However, the number of unknown citizens makes the core of the book and the reader gets a glimpse of how everyday life is in each distinct state. Along the way, Fry discovers that each state has its bizarre and quaint local laws, for instance that it is illegal to push a moose out of an aircraft in Alaska...

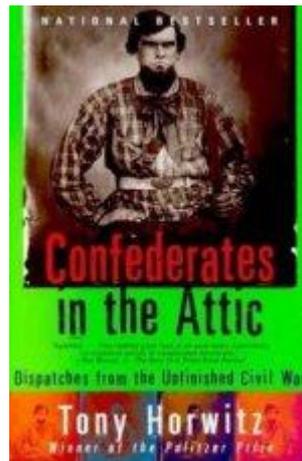
Stephen Fry in America celebrates America as an extraordinary country and is well worth reading.

Majken Rasmussen Havn

Stephen Fry: *Stephen Fry In America*, Harpercollins Publishers, 2009

Tony Horwitz: *Confederates in the Attic: Dispatches from the Unfinished Civil War*

After having covered the world's hot spots for years as a foreign correspondent journalist and Pulitzer Prize winner Tony Horwitz returns home to the States. His childhood fascination with the Civil War is sparked again when he can see that the Civil War is still being debated as a contemporary issue in Virginia where he lives. He decides to take a year out of his calendar to travel the South and find out how and why the Civil War is still an issue in the South 130 years after its conclusion.



The journey he embarks on is truly fascinating. As he travels along, the line

between past and present becomes ever more blurred. He describes the battles in a way that makes your skin crawl. For instance there is the soldier whose last diary entry was "June 3. Cold Harbor. I was killed" and there are the descriptions of the prisoner camps where people drank their own urine in order to speed up their dying. While describing these battles he talks to people he meets along the way such as the KKK, The United Daughters of the Confederacy and a black woman giving a tour of the Alabama Capitol where both Jefferson Davies and George Wallace were inaugurated. The line between past and present is further blurred by his new friendship with a hardcore re-enacter who persuades Horwitz to join him in several re-enactments.

What the book does then is explore the lines between North and South, past and present, black and white, Civil War and Civil Rights. In the South, it seems, there is no simple answer to anything and that is exactly the appeal of both the South and this book.

Confederates in the Attic is highly recommended and very easy to read while at the same time being packed with information.

Mads Jensen

Tony Horwitz: *Confederates in the Attic: Dispatches from the Unfinished Civil War*, Vintage Books, 1998

Eulogy: Michael Jackson

Right before publication of this issue a truly horrible story broke: Michael Jackson has died. Only perhaps Elvis Presley seems to compare in sheer magnitude of pop icon status. Michael Jackson's *Thriller* is the only album to ever sell more than 100 million copies and in these download times that number will probably never be surpassed. He is among the top selling artists of all time (only Elvis Presley, The Beatles and Bing

Crosby compare). And yet he was not just a great pop icon, he was the King of Pop. He was an amazing performer who revolutionized music videos with special effects and incredible dance moves. He was already a star as a little boy performing with his brothers in the Jackson 5 and later the Jacksons. He was a philanthropist, a naïve man with a child's belief that we could all live in peace with each other.



It is not any of these facts that make Michael Jackson one of the most beloved stars ever though. What makes him live on forever despite not physically being among us anymore is his music. It is a fair assessment to claim that pop music would not be what it is today if it was not for Michael Jackson. His best records still stand as high water marks of pop music, indeed high water marks of music, period. If he had only released *Bad* or *Thriller* he would still have been larger than life. To have made ten fantastic pop albums is a superhuman achievement.

I urge you to listen to his records and remember a star the likes of which we will never see again.

His star may have burned out but his music lives on. Rest in peace, Michael Jackson.

Mads Jensen

About DSAAS

DSAAS was founded by students studying for their M.A. in American Studies at University of Southern Denmark in the fall of 2007.

DSAAS' primary goal is to promote American Studies on a graduate level work both within the academy, the private and public sectors through organizing seminars, conferences, social events and job fairs.

DSAAS will be an independent yet integral part of the Centre for American Studies at University of Southern Denmark, and other American Studies centers in Denmark .

DSAAS aims to be a centripetal force in bringing students from various universities and institutions in Denmark and elsewhere together in the study of the United States and to further the exchange of new ideas and perspectives between students, scholars, and professionals.

Contact DSAAS

DSAAS - Danish Student Association of American Studies
Att: American Studies
Campusvej 55
5000 Odense
Denmark

mibor04@journet.sdu.dk or
madsj01@student.sdu.dk

Website and Mailing List

www.DSAAS.org
mls.sdu.dk/mailman/listinfo/dsaas

How to Join

You can join DSAAS now and it is easy. All you have to do is transfer 100 DKK to this account:

Registration number: 1551

Account number: 3719187854

Remember to write your full name on the transaction and send an email to our cashier at anmoe08@student.sdu.dk with your name, phone number and student number.

100 DKK is for a year's membership
(September to September)

The Board

President: Mira Borggreen
Vice President: Majken Havn
Secretary: Ann Christine Brandt
Cashier: Anne Mørk
Webmaster and newsletter editor: Mads Jensen
Board member: Helle Lolck
Board member: Anne Morthorst
Deputy member: Dhushyanthini Gunaratnam
Faculty Representative: Thomas Ærvold Bjerre
