

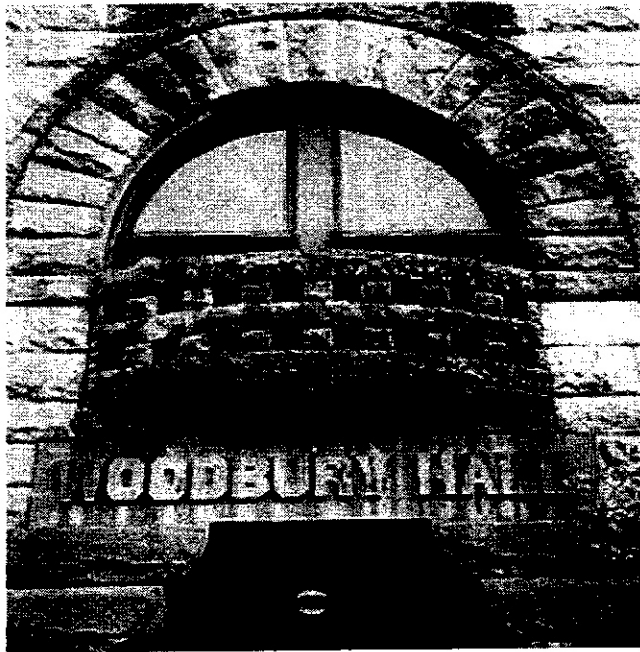


RELIGIOUS STUDIES NEWS

Volume 3

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**ENTER HERE THE
TIMELESS FELLOWSHIP
OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT**



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The Strip

TheStrip is an on-line journal of religion and culture created mostly by our M.A. students, in collaboration with Sam Gill. The URL is: <http://www.colorado.edu/ReligiousStudies/TheStrip>. It is also accessible through the RLST departmental home page, which is at <http://www.colorado.edu/ReligiousStudies>. We asked two of TheStrippers "What has TheStrip meant to you?" :

If we are all just telling interesting stories about what we have heard, seen, or studied, then why not relate our stories in a medium mirroring our experience? Since birth, my experience, along with the world around me, has become increasingly digitalized. Everything is revealed as composed of bytes. Computer technology, if nothing else, will confirm this fact. These bytes can be removed, recombined, reused and endlessly redefined.

Does the Internet really envision a new way of thinking and interacting, or has the digital technology simply made transparent the natural hypertextual manner by which we order our experience? Has technology simply caught up with the speed of the human brain to reference, order, and reorder reality? A thought spawns, or references, other thought, which conjures a visual memory, which is connected to a smell, a taste, a feel? How is any of this to be realized on the printed page?

By the time you read this I have

thought a million thoughts and forgotten a million more. I may have no idea what you are talking about when you mention "digitalized experience" to me next week, month, year. Perhaps because I am a product of a society that fetishizes the fleeting, I fully accept that I am writing in the sand (silicon).

TheStrip has forced me to confront how thoroughly constructed I am by my increasingly digitalized experience. I am a collection, both physically and mentally, of random bytes. TheStrip allows me to write as I think, write like I think. While the Internet is no academic panacea, it allows academic conversation (storytelling) to proceed more like a conversation.

Michael Fox

You know, I am not sure how to answer this question. For me TheStrip has been frustrating, intriguing, and provocative, but it does not mean "one" thing to me. TheStrip has allowed me to see the "guts", the inner-workings, of what some people struggle with as they go through religious studies. Seeing and participating in that process is difficult but well worth the energy, for it has forced me to challenge myself and my motives of why I am a religious studies major. And TheStrip is just a great place to see people do something that they care about, and that is indeed something special.

These are students that are putting in their own time, not to get a grade but because they feel this is



important work that just has to be done. I wonder daily about the theory and the workings of TheStrip --I just don't know what I think about all of this. But it seems that is the whole point --I am not supposed to know until I play and struggle with this gunk. And my feelings are that we should never let an opportunity pass that lets our hands get messy with gunk.

Well there it is, "el opus de Noah."
Noah Youngelson



I asked M.A. student Caleb Olin for a review of "The Apostle." This is what he gave me:

The Apostle

Hallelujah Brothahs and Sistahs! At layust the par and glory of that old-timey religion has hit the silver screen. Can I get an "Amen?" (All: "Amen!") Brother Bob Duvall's *The Apostle* testifahs to the life of a travelin Southern preacher-man, exiled from his home and hearth. Brother Duvall's preachin stahl brangs me back to my Mamma's little one room church up the holler.

[Editor's note: a group of students, accompanied by professor (and famed adult cartoonist) Eric Reinders, went to view *The Apostle*. The preceding

paragraph was composed shortly afterward.]

Dang! *The Apostle* perpetrated a cascade of interwoven imagery, masterfully portrayed by Duvall's embrocation of vision and research. Synthetic yet accurate, the film's *forte* resides in its near-Aristotelian display of Duvall's years of study and his impregnable resistance of virtual sesquipedalianism. Fiction follows fact, form follows function, tit follows tat. Dude.

[Editor's note: a group of students, accompanied by professor (and 1997 National Calf-Roping Championship Runner-Up) Eric Reinders, had a few (teensy) drinks after the movie. The preceding paragraph was composed shortly afterward.]

I'm going to throw up.

[Editor's note: a group of students, accompanied by professor (and member of the Harley-Davidson Brewery's Hall of Foam) Eric Reinders, took the Beaujo's Pizza Challenge after the movie. The preceding paragraph was composed shortly afterward.]

A Message from the editor, concerning the previous item by the editor (the real one)

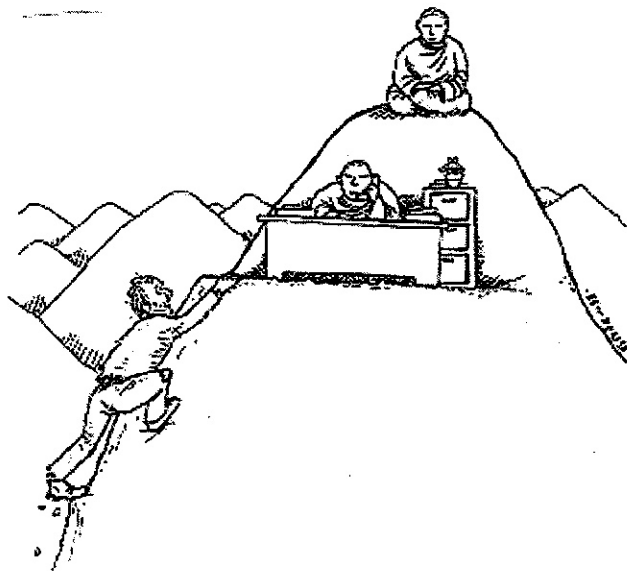
First of all, I admit, the calf-roping was



a big mistake. I want to say no university funds were used in the purchase of alcoholic beverages, nor is the mention of the consumption of same be construed as contrary to the University of Colorado's official policy on irresponsible drinking. And as for the thing about being in some brewery Hall of Foam, it's a lie! I'm just trying to enter here the timeless fellowship of the human spirit, dude.

signed, your old-fashioned,
hierarchical, dictatorial, insensitive

Editor



A Cyborg Humanist's Vision for Teaching/Learning Technology

(A Chip from the Cyborg Workshop,
by Sam Gill)

It is usually called "IT" or Information Technology and about the only thing I like about this term is a certain affinity with the protagonist in a Stephen King novel. IT is all about access, delivery, transfer, reach, and storage. IT reduces teaching and learning to the access to information, the transfer of information, and the storage of information. Classrooms equipped with IT are called SMART. IT extends the university's traditional reach by delivering classes to remote locations. New teaching paradigms are described in terms of IT's reach.

IT, to me, is a perfect character in a horror novel, because IT maims and destroys what I understand as the most fundamental objectives and processes of human teaching/learning. IT reduces teaching/learning to the transfer of information, humans to information processors. IT assumes a conduit teaching/learning metaphor, that is, that those who know, who are (like the classrooms) smart, are the ones who have information, use information in their research, and deliver information in classrooms equipped with IT. Those who are



learners are, well, they are empty, informationless. IT supports an image of the university as an industry that delivers the certified transfer of information to empty units (students). Since computers are almost infinitely better at IT than are humans, the goal of education under these assumptions, it would seem, is to become a computing and information storage machine.

As a model for who we are I think the cyborg beats the processing machine. We think of cyborgs as characters in science fiction, Data in Star Trek. We think of them in the future. But we are already cyborgs (cybernetic organisms) and have been for some time because of the indispensable use of eye-glasses, wrist watches, automobiles, telephones, computers, pacemakers, and countless other cybernetic and mechanical supplements on which our bodies depend. My objection to IT is not that it conjoins us with machines, but rather that IT is bent upon eliminating the "org" from us, on reducing us to mere machines: self referential, high-speed, information processors, trapped in hyperreality (mere simulacra).

The strategies, as I have observed them, for attempting to develop a vision for IT never even acknowledge, much less question, these assumptions. Thus the conversation turns entirely on the basic issues of access, connectivity, delivery, speed. We do

not ask how this technology offers the potential to completely rethink ourselves as scholars, and teachers; we do not imagine how we might reinvent higher education. We assume that, at least in the general ways of tools and operations and objectives, what we are doing is what we should continue to do and that how we are doing what we do is how we should continue to do it. IT may serve us by making these tools and operations more efficient, faster, and more far-reaching. The bottom line is information.

Every horror novel needs clever and courageous souls to seek and destroy the monster. I call upon the artists and humanists to do just that. We must demand that the orientational metaphor that steals our voices be replaced. We must demand that more does not necessarily mean better. We must demand that teaching/learning be understood as something quite different from mere information processing. We must insist that teaching/learning has to do with human development, thought, expression of the minded-bodies, values, inquiry. We must show that teaching/learning has much more to do with engaging people and cultures and histories and the arts than with the accumulation, possession, and recall of information. We must be convincing that teaching/learning enhances our humanity (the "org" of cyborg) through its conjunction with the machine and



consequently information.

As cyborg humanists and artists, as human beings in the modern/postmodern world, we must see that the technology itself provides enormous potential to inspire shifting paradigms in research and teaching, shifts that occur outside the fire walls built by the puppets of IT. We must recognize, for example, the potential of the term "network" for creating paradigm shifts when understood as a metaphor for the interrelationships between researcher and research subject, between artists and their creations and those who encounter their creations, between colleagues in research, between students and teachers. Given the chance to develop, these new paradigms, in contrast to those advanced by IT, will most certainly be characterized as more broadly collegial and interactive, more humane and sensitive to other humans (cyborgs), more directed to valuing process rather than product, more self-reflective and self-aware, more conscious of the fuzziness of boundary. Teaching and learning, as the roots of these words suggest, involves a process of showing, presenting and examining examples, rather than the smart spewing bits of information through a conduit to the paying recipients. Teaching/learning in the world of the cyborg may continue to cultivate humanity in engaging and exciting ways.



TAK!

This year, Noah Youngelson, Caryn Strange, Greg Foraker, Kathy Kelly, John C. Seitz, Ian Smith, Brenna Moore, Shannon Lindner, Jonathon Daniel, Deborah Durkee, Marl Elmore, Michale Fox, Tony Pringle, Denice Walker, Pierrette Maillet, Kate Romanoff, Dadi Darmadi, Eric Jette, Jeremy Heflin join Theta Alpha Kappa (National Honor Society for Religious Studies/Theology) members in residence at CU, Kelvin Choi, Lisa Pasquale, Jason Gilbreath, Andrea Komlyn, Clinton Moreland and faculty advisor Fred Denny in an induction ceremony, on May 5th. It also involved organic free range chocolate chip cookies, and some hand-shaking. And speaking of Fred Denny....

"Focus on the Faculty:"

Fred Denny

Fred has begun conducting research in a new area for him. Last fall, Fred presented a paper on "Islam and the West on Human Rights: Conflicts and Commonalities" before the regular meeting of the Committee on Human Rights of the National Academy of Sciences, the National Academy of Engineers, and the Institute of Medicine at the NAS offices in Washington D.C. He was also to have