

CONTENTS

NEWS	
2	PARIS RIOTS: we didn't start the fire
3	WEEK IN REVIEW: week in statistics and drugs
4	MEDIA REFORM: the transition to digital television
OPINIONS	
5	VISCERAL ART: a viewer engages
6	NUCLEAR POWER is looking like our energy future
FEATURES	
7	DELAWARE: too good to be true
8	NEIL YOUNG: a fallen idol
9	SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS: witnessing the protests firsthand
LITERARY	
12	N+1 deconstructs the way we live
13	WAR AND PEACE: a book report
ARTS	
14	ART THERAPY: complicating the unconscious
15	NEW ZEALAND: the indie music scene down there
16	MANATEES: big star returns
SPORTS	
10	ANIMAL DANCE: gibbons and penguins cavort
17	BEAT BACK BUSH: a political aerobics video
LIST	
19	BIBLIOGRAPHIC VALIDATION

STAFF

MANAGING EDITORS

Ben Carlson, Claire H.O.
Alexander Zevin

NEWS

Dana Goldstein, Vanessa Huang
Cristi Laquer

OPINIONS

Thalia Julmé, Josh Lerner

FEATURES

Alexis Almeida
Rebecca Ryder Neipris
Matt Sledge

LITERARY

Sarah Gordon, Sarah LaBrie

ARTS

Shane Brennan, Nathan Lovejoy
Chloe Malle

SPORTS

Ben Ewing, David Noriega

LIST

Chris Hu

DESIGN

Michael Garten, Rolando Peñate
Alice Shay, Alexis Smagula

ILLUSTRATION

Hilary Falb
Sarah Hotchkiss, Alyssa Xu

BUSINESS

Kate Herts

WEBSITE

Kate Herts, Jason Ng

SENIOR EDITOR

Chris Hu

COVER

Hilary Falb,
Sarah Hotchkiss, Alyssa Xu

MVP

The Staff

A Different Kind of Pirate

What is it with pirates? At a liberal university, one where most everything is, or should be, “problematized,” pirates exist in a blissful alternate reality of uncomplicated general acceptance. In fact, they are adored. Has anyone stopped to ask what is behind all this fuss about pirates that goes on with the college-age set, all this show of adopting pirate rhetoric and dress, of forming pirate-oriented groups, of gleefully mimicking pirate song and dance? I think it's time we considered the strange mix of attributes that make pirates so inexplicably compelling to us.

There's no better time to reflect on this matter, poised as we are a week (and half a world away geographically, thank God!) from the most recent pirate attack, one that happened in the real world—in the Indian Ocean off the coast of Somalia. The victimized ship was a US cruise liner called the *Seaborn Spirit*, piloted by a man named Sven. Sven, according to one of the ship's passengers (as quoted by the BBC), “did his best to run down the pirates,” but was unable to prevent an attack that consisted of more than an hour of bombardment, including *machine gun fire*. When you think pirates, do you think: machine guns? This pirate attack, as well as the 22 others that have occurred since March 15 in the dangerous waters off the Somali coast, defy our cutely commodified notion of how pirates acted in history. I say “in history” because the contemporary pirate fetish is one predicated on the

nonexistence of pirates in the present. Just as the massive slaughter of Mao's regime in China must be ignored in order to wear the red-starred cap or sport the pocket red book, so must the reality of the violent present day pirates be overlooked in favor of a hazy, Pippi Longstocking-esque fantasy of pirates' place in history.

The fact is, pirates killed people in the past, and they continue to kill people today. Like the Mafia, however, we insist on valorizing and domesticating them in a way that's taken for granted. The way we talk about pirates, with a consistent detached jokiness, reflects our insistence that these figures are safely within our control. Even the above cited passenger of the cruise liner, undoubtedly shaken as she must

have been, managed to inject a note of irony into her post-attack statement. She's clearly conscious of the way the syntax of “run down the pirates” is going to sound to contemporary Western ears. If even a near-victim is unable to take pirates seriously it doesn't bode well for the rest of us.

To ask why pirates have achieved comfortably trendy kitsch status among middle class young adults is to get at something crucial about how we live in this world of fictional histories and cleaned-up textbooks, of terrorists and lying Presidents. Pirates embody freedom from the constraints of society; they can move about nomadically, they can treat others and themselves as they please (even rape, in this context, is relatively unproblematic).

In their hyper-masculinity there is also, paradoxically, an odd capacity for gender play. As Johnny Depp has demonstrated, effeminate pirates are great. Women pirates are great. Beyond this delightful ridiculousness of the stereotypical pirate, our unquestioning adoration speaks to our need, in a time of war, to identify people who can be violent without actually being frightening. We need to be clear-eyed mediators, brushing aside the residue of what everyone else thinks to see pirates for who they are.

—CHO

As if you care...

While awaiting his Coquilles St. Jacques *Chez Maxims*, Craig S. Smith *New York Times* correspondent had ample time to excogitate on the peculiarities of the Gallic character. “What makes someone French?” he dared to ask in a front page Nov. 11 article. Have the holy trinity of the beret, the baguette, and the striped shirt fallen into disuse? Or are there questions at stake? So bold, so breathless, so hard-hitting. Smith's former professor at the Sorbonne, now residing in the Berkshires, wrote to congratulate him on an intrepid *reportage*. A worthy rival to his feverish scrawlings on Baudelaire written on the back of leaflets exhorting “*sous la pave la plage*.” The ones he tells his friends he wrote in June of 1968 from a café on *Rue Monsieur Le-Prince*. Incidentally, the very pieces that landed him the coveted correspondent slot in Paris. For

once, the help at *Maxim's* has saved their unction, allowing Mr. Smith the piece of mind to reach an unqualified state of grace these past two weeks, in which he has churned out an article a day. In fact, he's even had time to hobnob with French politico insiders and bring his insights to *Times* readers with “The French Riots: A Political Scorecard” on November 13th. Or was the article ghost-written by a copy boy at *Le Monde* and then sent over to Mr. Smith with his *pichet au vin*? Absent as ever was the voice of the radical Trotskyite Left that won over three million votes in the last presidential elections and was instrumental in mobilizing the no vote on the EU constitution. But they don't fit into the boilerplate *bildungsroman* of the French nation that Mr. Smith spoon feeds his readers like so much cod-liver oil. Which, by the way you can put on the expense account.

Layout by Rolando Peñate

Letters to the editor are welcome

Send correspondence to:

the college hill independent
po box 1930
brown university
providence, ri 02912
(401) 863-2008
indy@brown.edu