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April 7, 2000

Review & Outlook Taste

Georgetown Exorcised

When Robert Swope, a senior at Georgetown, devoted his column in the university newspaper to a recent on-campus performance of "The Vagina Monologues," not only was his story spiked but he himself was given the sack. The editors say that Mr. Swope showed "disrespect for both the people and the institution of The Hoya," that his criticism was not "constructive," that he devoted too much space to women's issues, that the copy he turned in was too long, etc.

Mr. Swope, who you might guess is somewhat more conservative than his Hoya colleagues, says he was canned because of his views.

Clearly the editors of a paper have the right to choose their columnists. But we can't help feeling that if, say, a feminist student from the women's studies program had lost her column there would at least be more public protest and calls for explanations.

At first the column editor, Laurie Mingolelli, tells Mr. Swope that there is a "slight problem" that has "nothing to do with the quality of its writing"; publishing the piece would mean back-to-back columns on "women's issues." This, however, was not quite true, Mr. Swope responds, outlining his previous columns and suggesting censorship. Ms. Mingolelli fires back, saying that talk of censorship made her "livid" and indicating that maybe there should be no column.



The same editor then forwards an e-mail from David Wong, editor-in-chief, describing Mr. Swope's columns as, "once again, spiteful more than critical, angry more than constructive" and confirming his firing. E-mails between the two students continue to flow. When we called Mr. Wong, he said that he could understand the confusion, but Mr. Swope was let go in good part because he continually disregarded editorial policy by submitting articles "twice as long" as the required 800 words. Our word count of the contested column yields 967 words.

At least one person of prominence did take note of all this. In his own letter to the Hoya editors, William Peter Blatty, Class of '50, wrote that "with all that the

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demon says and does in my novel and film 'The Exorcist,' never until I read of the HOYA's and [President] Leo O'Donovan's support of 'The Vagina Monologues,' and their suppression of Robert Swope's article, have I truly appreciated the meaning of the word 'obscenity.'" Mr. Wong told us he was not certain whether the Hoya will publish the Blatty letter in today's issue -- or whether it would ever appear, given the Hoya's policy of not publishing letters unless they address something that's appeared in the paper.

The university, whose president had previously defended Larry Flynt's right to a platform at Georgetown when the Hustler publisher was invited by a student group, says it is trying to get the students together to sort out the facts and the reasoning behind the events.

Let's hope so. Sounds as though the young editors at the Hoya haven't yet agreed on them, either. And Georgetown could use a little diversity.

Tony & Tacky

An Offer They Can't Refuse, excerpted, verbatim, from the Los Angeles Times: Forget those one-liners about toxic landfills and the Turnpike to Nowhere. In the Sopranos' gritty world of North Jersey diners, trash dumps, expressways and malls, the ugly has become iconic, and creator David Chase, a native son, suggests it may be the first time that a state is the real star of a television series.

"This is the greatest thing to hit New Jersey since the movie 'Atlantic City,'" says Joseph Friedman, director of the state's television and motion picture commission. "Not a week goes by that I don't get a call from some New Jersey refugee in L.A. who will ask a question like: 'Wasn't that my old diner on Route 3 that I saw on the show last night?'"

The Philadelphia Story: When the Philadelphia Daily News published a special anniversary edition featuring "75 Reasons Why We Love Philadelphia" -- selected "by a group of Daily News editors and reporters" -- something was missing. Letter writer Linda Morrisson noted that nowhere was mentioned Philadelphia's "most profound contribution to mankind, the Declaration of Independence, the United States Constitution, and that shrine of individual liberty where it all happened: Independence Hall." The Liberty Bell was mentioned, but in the same tourist-curiosity category as the statues of a giant clothespin and the word "Love" near City Hall. Life, liberty and the pursuit of cheesesteak?



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