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Bard College  
*Bard College*

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# The Bard Observer

Faithful to the truth

VOL. 21 NO. 2

BARD COLLEGE, ANNANDALE-ON-HUDSON

FALL 2023



ELISA LITTIN EGAÑA

## Selling off the Farm to Pay for the Groceries

### Bard College Constructs New Dorms at the Expense of Natural Beauty

BENICIO TAGGART

Behind Robbins and Manor dorms, students have always enjoyed the vast rolling field with an idyllic view of the Catskills. When I lived in Robbins during my sophomore year, I experienced warm days with a light breeze; the grass bending while Bard Farm volunteers tended to the crops, as students looked on from the patios. It was calm, beautiful, and quiet. By 2025, roughly half of the field will be replaced by new dorms and a performing arts building.

To the college's credit, there is a need for new dorms. Coleen Murphy Alexander, the vice president of administration commented for *The Observer* on August 23 over the phone, "We've needed additional dorms for over a decade." Existing dorms are in need of maintenance, such as re-roofing, which prohibits students from living in them. Due to a lack of dormitories, much of this maintenance has been deferred for years. The college has never been able to house more than three-quarters of its students. Students who were present in Fall 2022 will remember that due to a shortage of housing, roughly 20 students were provisionally housed in The Best Western Hotel across the Hudson River in Kingston. Several administrators, including Ms. Alexander, as well as the Taun Toay, Chief Financial Officer (CFO) of Bard, cite rising rents in the local area as

the impetus for new construction of dormitories. Local rents are indeed very high, ranging overall from \$1,000-\$2,500 a month, and usually on the higher end of this range. The average has been going up over the last few years with the increase in urban migration to this beautiful valley. On-campus living is by no means cheaper, with room and board coming out to roughly \$2,225 a month.

The dorms will provide 300 new beds for students, and a new student center. According to Mackie Siebens, the Director of Admissions at Bard, the administration has been making efforts to bring enrollment back to pre-pandemic levels: roughly 500 students per year with 100 deferrals. Since the pandemic, the school's enrollment has never reached these numbers. The new dorms will help bring in more students. Bard's interest in creating sufficient housing for students on campus is aligned with the financial interest of increasing enrollment.

However, the construction has substantial implications for the Bard Farm. According to Rebecca Yoshino, head of the Bard Farm, the meadows provide forage for pollinators and beneficial insects, as well as birds. The bees, the birds, and predatory insects hunt harmful pests that otherwise eat the crop.

The construction will also result in the removal of the Bard Farm barn. It is logistically

necessary for Ms. Yoshino and her volunteers/employees to actually farm, and they also run many events out of the barn. She describes the loss as "a massive blow."

The Performing Arts Lab, designed by Maya Lin (a well-renowned earth artist, who famously designed the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC), will take a slightly different approach to development. Construction began on October 21st. The new performing arts building will be built into the landscape with a grass roof that spirals upward. Gideon Lester, director of the Performing Arts Department, commented on August 28th that the space is much needed. The Maya Lin Performing Arts Lab "will effectively complete the programmatic plan for the Fisher Center," which initially included "another wing for studios and teaching spaces."

Both of these buildings are purported not to cost the students more in tuition, room, and board. Mr. Toay told *The Observer* that to pay for the new dorms, the college is borrowing tax-exempt bonds through the Dutchess County Local Development Office. By increasing student housing (and thus accruing more room and board), Mr. Toay claims that the increased revenue will be sufficient to slowly pay off the cost of the bonds. Additionally, both Mr. Toay and Professor Lester claim that the Maya Lin building is entirely

paid for by philanthropic donations, and that the college plans to fundraise to cover the cost of the building's maintenance. Much work has gone into the use of green energy to power these new buildings. According to Daniel Smith, the Bard Energy Manager, "all of the buildings will be all-electric and will not use any fossil fuels." This includes the use of geothermal energy from ground source heat pumps, as well as rooftop solar photovoltaic systems.

But dollars, cents, and energy will not be the only cost of these projects. A clear view will be substantially altered. With roughly half the field gone, there will still be meadows, but they will be greatly reduced. The wildlife will be forcibly removed, and a quiet place of beauty will become another place of traffic.

By prioritizing the field's economic value, the college is treating it as a resource instead of a gift. This is a microcosm of a broader tendency to view land as existing at the will of administrative convenience, rather than as an end in itself. But when we discuss "sustainability," we should ask what exactly we are sustaining. We who live and work on this campus have been given the extraordinary gifts of natural beauty to enrich our lives while we are here. Such gifts should not be used up piece by piece. We can't sell the farm to pay for the groceries.

## Lunch Foregone for Workers' Rights

Student Labor Dialogue Rally

BENICIO TAGGART  
PETER BARRIE

On September 27th, the Student Labor Dialogue, workers from Buildings & Grounds, Environmental Services, and representatives from various local unions and left-wing organizations gathered together with over 100 students at the steps of Ludlow to protest the administration's contract offerings. Call-and-response chants like, "What do we want? A fair contract!" rang out across the Kline hill and along Stone Row for half an hour—the length of the workers' lunch break.

In previous years, the college has covered the health insurance of all B&G and ES workers. But during this year's negotiations, they have instead proposed that workers contribute toward their own insurance—\$50 per month for B&G workers, and \$30 per month for ES workers in years 2 and 3 of the contract. Year 1 would still be free for ES workers, and dental and vision insurance would remain free for all workers. Workers and students alike are concerned that the college is taking an essential human right for granted. Glen Whitney, a B&G Union representative and electrician at Bard for 23 years, commented at the rally that, "Healthcare cannot be a weapon. Healthcare should not be used as a weapon. We work and do physical jobs for a living; we need our healthcare."

Mr. Whitney spoke on how the offers made by the college to

increase wages will not mitigate the harm done by such increases in cost to the worker. Bard's offer would pay ES workers better than other colleges in the area, increasing the starting ES pay rate to \$18.50 per hour, and the average rate to \$22 per hour. Employees of 20+ years will receive \$25 per hour or more. B&G workers, who tend to be paid more on a salary basis, would receive between 2-3 percent yearly increases to their wages. The Union does not feel the promised raises to be sufficient to cover the cost of living in Dutchess County, which is up 18.3% from the U.S. national average.

Mr. Whitney also claimed that, historically, the college has cited its lack of an endowment as justification for not paying better wages. "That is not an excuse anymore," he said, in reference to the recent influx of donations, both promised and fulfilled, "so now they're trying to find new excuses."

When asked what those excuses are, Mr. Whitney made clear that he is not at the negotiating table this year, though he has been in the past. He implied that the school has the available funds, but is simply unwilling to invest those funds in the ES and B&G workers. "They can pay a lawyer to come to the table, but they don't want to pay us a higher wage. Priorities are out of whack."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



JULIETA LITTIN

Attendees at the rally cheer and laugh.

## Luxury Feminism, Sponsored by Mattel

Greta Gerwig's *Barbie* (2023)

SOPHIE FOLEY

A hard thing to review. *Barbie* (2023) is wearing many and then some, which tend to clash wildly. A feature-length advertisement; a cultural phenomenon that has dressed the world in pink; *Barbie* appeared on the scene as indie darling Greta Gerwig's cinematic reckoning with sexism and gender norms. Filled with clever jabs at the infamous doll, *Barbie* levels the gun, but never shoots.

With a \$145 million budget, we are hit with the film's meticulous, extravagant recreation of the doll's iconic wardrobes and Dreamhouses from over the years. On the narrative level, however, not much of interest is going on. Sponsored by Mattel, the toy company behind the reviled and venerated Barbie doll, the film is, at its core, product placement; a corporate rebranding and money-making venture (and not just for the doll

itself; other brands like Chanel and Chevrolet were prominently featured in Barbieland's lavish trimmings). *Barbie* conducts only a cautious takedown of its subject's historical perpetuation of feminine beauty ideals and one-dimensional portrayal of womanhood. Instead of envisioning a new definition of womanhood, however—one, perhaps, that is not contingent on the status of men—the movie opts for a bland espousal of liberal feminist ideals that will satisfy both lovers and haters of the titular doll, as promised in Warner Brothers' \$150 million marketing campaign.

Haters are paid mind to only briefly, in a short, fiery, anti-Barbie monologue delivered by a new archetype: the socially conscious mean girl, whose biting tone renders her political views jaded, and her personality insecure. Margot Robbie,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

## Mediapart

Combat pour une presse libre

STELLA SCANLON

This summer, I met Edwy Plenel at the Paris office of *Mediapart*, one of France's largest independent newspapers. While sitting in on the journal's daily morning meeting, it was easy to mistake Plenel, former editor-in-chief of France's *Le Monde*, for just another in the ranks of journalists. Plenel, a soft spoken, now slightly elderly, slightly-built man with a Cuban-style mustache hovered on the fringes of the meeting. The fact that Plenel's authoritative position was practically invisible in *Mediapart*'s meeting (and therefore creative process) was

perhaps a testament to the insistent egalitarianism at the heart of the independent newspaper's project.

Plenel told me his theory—put into practice in the organization

of *Mediapart*—that newspapers' editorial hierarchy should be built "horizontally." Rather than adhere to a traditional, "vertical," and highly codified journalistic hierarchy where the headlines are eternally dominated by a class of journalistic elite, *Mediapart* relies on the potency of the story itself—rather than the prestige of the journalist's name. *Mediapart*'s ruthless fidelity to the "truth of the facts" rather

than political delicatessen has often given them the reputation as the *bête noir* of journalism in France.

*Mediapart*'s daily meeting felt truly horizontal: a rapid-fire discussion between the journalists on article ideas, leads, shoot-down critiques, jokes, and historical connections. (One of the few occasions that Plenel added his voice to the meeting was to quietly exclaim after a statement on President Macron's second election, "And don't we remember Napoleon III!" insinuating France's continuing taste for monarchism.) The chaos of these fiery, puffy-eyed journalists' cross-current polemics was finely orchestrated by an elegant boss-woman with an air half-auctioneer, half-ringleader.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

Mediapart's ruthless fidelity to the "truth of the facts" rather than political-social delicatessen has often given them the reputation as the *bête noir* of journalism in France.

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

SOPHIE FOLEY

PAGE 2

MAGNUS CARLSEN

DAVID TAYLOR-DEMETER

PAGE 3

SUMMER TRAVELOGUES

S. KAPLAN, L. SCHULTZ, B. TAGGART

PAGE 3

VLADIMIR SOROKIN'S TELLURIA

REVIEWED BY DAVID TAYLOR-DEMETER

PAGE 6

CHRISTOPHER NOLAN'S OPPENHEIMER

REVIEWED BY MARTIAL JUNCEAU

PAGE 7

MISS LONELY HEARTS

YOUR BURNING QUESTIONS ANSWERED

PAGE 8



# Lunch Foregone for Workers' Rights

Student Labor Dialogue Rally



JULIETA LITTIN

BENICIO TAGGART, PETER BARRIE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Many speakers during the rally cited the 14-million-dollar purchase of the Unification Theological Seminary adjacent to the college, enlarging the grounds by 25 percent. Also cited was the Performing Arts addition, designed by Maya Lin. Sean Collins, a representative from the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), commented through the megaphone, "We are not going to settle a contract which does not make a historic investment in our ES workers... I don't know who they expect to clean and maintain that property if they don't pay our members... Our contract expires at 11:59 [p.m.] on October 3rd. That is a deadline. We are going to have a contract at that point or we're going to have problems. We're going to show what happens when our members aren't working at full speed!"

That said, the money for these expansions has nothing to do, financially, with Bard's operating budget, out of which the college employees are paid. Taun Toay, Bard's CFO, told The Observer that, "what sounds like having a reference to a 14-million-dollar purchase, that's money that was coming specifically for that purpose to buy that property which is adjacent here. The Performing Arts building was also funded by a philanthropic donation, for the specific purpose of its construction."

New York State Assembly member Sarahana Shrestha, whose district includes Annandale-on-Hudson, also spoke at the rally, to the Bard administration's consternation. The administration maintains that an elected official's presence at such an event is both unprecedented and unwarranted. Shrestha sees it differently: "As a legislator who represents all of the institutions in my district as well as all the constituents, I have to look out for everybody's needs on a base level, right? But at the same time, I am also particularly a legislator who ran for office and who is in office to stand up for workers," she told The Observer after the rally. "I think for a legislator to come out to something like this is considered aggressive, or maybe risky, but I also feel like if I'm not going to come out here, then why am I even in office?"

On the morning of the rally, Colleen Murphy Alexander, Vice President of Administration, and Mr. Toay, sent a campus-wide email "in support of our students' advocacy on behalf of our ES and B&G workers, and of the union members' right to advocate for themselves." In that email was attached a fact sheet regarding the College's offers to the workers, which maintained that "Bard College is committed to the collective bargaining process and negotiating in good faith and provides its Union employees competitive wages and generous benefit packages." This

sentiment of solidarity with the Union, and reservation on specific demands, is echoed across the Administration. However, there is an inherent tension between espousing progressive ideals and sitting on the opposite side of the negotiating table with a union.

When asked about the statement of support from Alexander and Toay, Shrestha said, "When they see the threat coming from this campus movement, they're going to try being nice, they're going to try being angry—they're going to try everything. When you go up against power, all of these responses come your way. You shouldn't get distracted. You should stay focused on the challenge you're trying to overcome."

That said, on Wednesday, October 11th, Bard reached an agreement with the bargaining unit for ES. Among other victories, the starting wage for workers will be \$19/hour, and employees will not be obligated to contribute to their health insurance. The B&G Union, however, gave the go-ahead for a strike prior to October 23rd. At the time of writing (October 22), this strike will be narrowly avoided. After 7 hours of negotiation, a tentative deal stands: healthcare premiums will not go up and pay will increase. This will be confirmed on October 23.

# Bard Does Have A Student Government

Can It Be Effective?

SOPHIE FOLEY

The idea of a student government might seem a little silly in college, associated more so with trite grade school competition (1999's *Election*, starring Reese Witherspoon, might be to blame for this), rather than the important protection of democracy. At Bard, it would seem that most of us fall into the former category of association. On Wednesday, September 27th, at 6:30 p.m., the Bard Student Government (BSG) held its second General Assembly of the semester to discuss concerns regarding fiscal mismanagement. The evening was characterized by a general air of confusion, disorganization, and also mirth. "[B]efore I was informed that this meeting would be happening, I did not know of the existence of the student government," a student confessed to the full-throated RKC 103, where attendees were lined up against the walls or sitting on the floor for lack of seating. His admission was one of genuine confoundment, and perhaps shame, at this lack of knowledge. "Do you not read your email?" someone from the back called out incredulously. Laughter spread through the room. Rules of decorum had been loosely established at the beginning of the meeting, but promptly disregarded. There was clapping and booing, as at a sports game or some other dramatic performance.

Comedy aside, the student government is meant to fill an arguably very important role on campus, representing student needs, and, if successful, serving as a link between the student body and the greater administration of the college. For many present at the General Assembly, the necessity of having a well-organized governing body to do this was thrown into relief at the previous week's Budget Forum on September 20th, where the atmosphere was similarly chaotic. The Bard Student Government delivered across-the-board budget cuts to the 165 clubs on campus. While it is not usual for clubs to get the entire sum they request, funding was denied in surprising amounts this semester. The SCALE Project, an organization that provides much-needed financial support for the extra costs of books and classroom materials, among other important equity services, requested \$29,100, and received \$10,000. CodeRed, which keeps the bathrooms of Bard facilities stocked with free menstrual products, relieving another financial pressure for many students, also

received a significantly reduced budget. On the more absurd side of things, an accounting error regarding two registrations of the Model UN club had a full MPR's-worth of club heads chanting "Money back! Money back!" Two words: sloppy management.

Finances, however, got largely sidelined at the Wednesday meeting, where seven resolutions were introduced to address problems in the leadership of the BSG's Central Assembly, the group of ten committee chairs of the BSG. Four resolutions passed. Most prominently, a resolution introduced by Brody, club head of the Student Labor Dialogue, ensures that, in the case that only one candidate is nominated in an election for Speaker of the Student Body—who oversees the constitutionality of BSG operations and coordinates the Central Assembly—an email must be sent out to the Student Body to elect this candidate via a simple majority vote. Our current Speaker, Matloob Naweeb, ran for the position uncontested last semester, and so his election was publicized, but not voted on. The new confirmation resolution only gained the necessary two-thirds majority by one vote. Another resolution from Sarah Seager, club head of the SCALE Project, means that it is now possible to hold more than just one emergency election per semester in the case that multiple seats on the Central Assembly are vacant. This was the case at the beginning of the semester, when the Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer seats were still not filled.

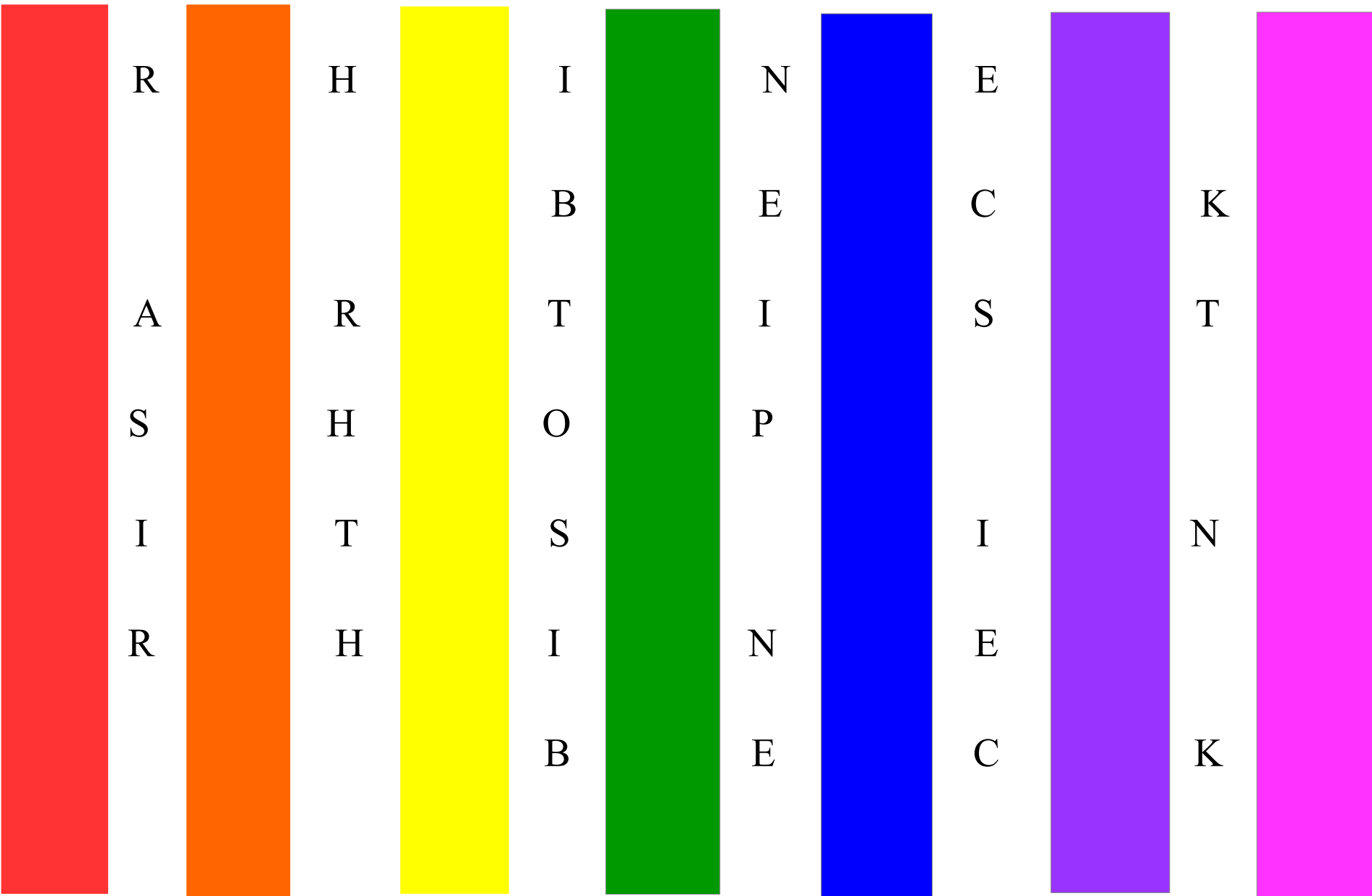
Of the three resolutions that didn't pass, one introduced by Henry Mielarczyk attempted to make it a necessity that all members of the Central Assembly be students actively enrolled at Bard's Annandale campus, where they would be more closely related to those issues of the Student Body they were seeking to amend. Currently serving and being paid for his work as the Chair of the Peer Review Board is Aleksandar Vitanov, who, following the General Assembly, ostensibly returned to New York City, where he is studying away at the Bard Globalization and International Affairs (BGIA) program in Manhattan.

Another resolution proposed by Aleksandar Demetriades sought to remove the current prerequisites needed to run for Speaker, so as to potentially open up the position to candidates who have not previously served on the BSG for one full term or academic school year. "[T]hink about

the SCALE Project, or Election@Bard. Those leaders have worked in relation to the institution, and with students, our constituency," Demetriades pointed out. "They have experience that could help direct and lead the student government. It [the position of Speaker] shouldn't just be kept in a little box for people who are on the committees." The resolution ultimately did not pass, with the majority of people agreeing that the rule of "working your way up" was the best way to ensure the election of a competent Speaker. But when the Budget Forum was brought up as an example of the present incompetency of the Central Assembly and its Speaker, there was a call for sympathy. "[W]ith the exception of myself and Aleks [Vitanov], everyone here on the Central Assembly is new to their position. It's still a learning curve—people are still adjusting to how to run Student Government. I don't think what happens today is necessarily going to happen at a General Assembly in the Spring semester," said Vivian Hoyden, Educational Policies Chair.

Feelings were mixed post-Assembly. A friend I spoke to found it a waste of time and energy, referencing what they considered to be the needless tension in the room. Another student expressed a feeling of helplessness at the state of communication in the General Assembly, with its constant interruptions and raised voices. Others found it uplifting, a point of inspiration: "I think that it's great to see the Student Body so engaged—there was a really big turnout, which we haven't had before," Hoyden told me. "I think there was room for discussion, and for multiple perspectives to be heard, and I think that's everything a General Assembly should be."

It goes without saying that having informed, engaged representatives for student needs is necessary for those of us who board, dine, live, and learn at Bard. Mold in the dorms, rampant inaccessibility in the campus's infrastructure, and the elimination of late-night meal swaps are just some of the issues that beg for advocacy to the greater Bard administration. Investment and participation in the Bard Student Government and a critical understanding of its shortcomings and successes would be well worth our while, once we get over the shock that it exists.





# World Champion Wins, Again!

*Magnus Carlsen in Baku*

DAVID TAYLOR-DEMETER

This past summer, apropos the 2023 Chess World Cup held in Baku, Azerbaijan, from July 30th to August 24th, I developed a crazy itch for the 600-year-old board game. If you are like me, you could never have imagined how pushing wood across 64 squares might add up to as much drama as it does. And yet, as I've learned, the intellectual satisfaction you can get from watching stone-faced grandmasters think with their palms against their heads as if trying to hold in the immense amounts of information they retain, watching as they make moves, blunder, suffer the consequences, or, by a sudden turn of events get the upper hand—really, in the end, watching them annihilate each other by sheer brainpower—is an unequalled experience.

I have been following the championship games' recaps for about a month now, and the players—206 in the beginning—have dropped to sixteen, the best sixteen in the world. Among them is Magnus Carlsen of Norway, who has been number one in the world since 2011, and is widely regarded as the best chess player in history, surpassing the likes of Bobby Fischer and Garry Kasparov. It is hard not to like Magnus. Known for his slack and patience, he wins his games with a ridiculous time

difference, as if they could never have turned out otherwise, once having won after arriving two and a half minutes late to a 3-minute Blitz game in 2022. Magnus is so consistent in his play that he holds the world record for the longest unbeaten streak, having played 125 consecutive matches at high-profile tournaments without losing a single one. We are talking about a 5-time World Chess Champion who has expressed boredom over having to defend his title again. He is truly one of those rare geniuses like Haaland, LeBron, or Federer who have all pushed their respective sport to new extremes.

Despite his seemingly eternal domination over the chess world, however, the beauty of the game, as they say, is that even Magnus can get into serious trouble. His game against German Grandmaster Vincent Keymer—who is, by the way, 18 years old (yes, you read that right) and ranked no. 34 in the world—wasn't exactly smooth sailing. On August 9th, Keymer wins against Magnus with the white pieces. If Magnus doesn't win their next game, he would have to leave Baku without the only title he had never claimed before.

On August 10th, Magnus, after a begrudging sixty moves, manages to exert a win, which leaves the two grandmasters having to face each other in two 25-minute

rapid games to break their 1-1 tie. The first rapid game on August 11th seems all too easy for Magnus: 17 minutes up the clock with two outside-passing pawns—very hard to defend. Knowing that he is the best end-game player of all time, Magnus will surely win, yet he makes a hairsplitting move and the game turns out to be a draw. In the second game, Magnus finds himself in a similar situation, with ten minutes up the clock and three passing pawns. However, Keymer defends miraculously, and the Grandmasters end in a draw, again. After playing 3.6 hours of chess, they now have to break their tie with ten-minute rounds. Whoever wins gets into the round of sixteen. In their final game, Magnus and Keymer manage an equal position under one minute on the clock. Based on the position, it's as if the winner will be decided by a coin flip. In the end, however, one all too passive Queen-move from Keymer enables Magnus to take advantage and win the whole struggle. A sigh of relief passes through the chess world. Was it ever in doubt that Magnus was going to win?

Of course, Magnus went on to win not only against Keymer but against every opponent he played, winning the entire Chess World Cup. Even Rameshbabu Pragganandhaa, or "Pragg" for short, his final opponent, the

18-year-old Indian Grandmaster, who, during the tournament, had beaten both the world number two and three, Fabiano Caruana and Hikaru Nakamura respectively, could not stop him. During the finals, even Magnus' apparent sickness from food poisoning could not spoil his chances.

So, when you're at the top of the world, what's next? In a post-match interview, Magnus hinted at his retirement from classical chess: "Progressing in the World Cup is one thing but honestly, almost since day one, I've been wondering—what am I doing here? Why am I spending all this time playing classical chess, which I just find stressful and boring?" Another reason why everyone loves Magnus is his honesty—he is not scared to denounce the principal format of the game if it has grown painful and monotonous for him; if, instead of intuitive moves, it seems to cultivate painstakingly long deliberation; if, instead of creativity, what increasingly matters is a machine-like memory for lines and variations. Magnus is thankfully the kind of genius whom we will not see going mad over something we wouldn't understand anyway; something which, to most of us, is really nothing else but pushing wood across 64 squares.

# Travelogue

The summer is a time notorious for lighter-hearted misadventure than we might have the chance to get up to in the school year. As we slouch through autumn towards the unforgiving frost of the Hudson Valley winter, we bring you stories of our hijinks from the warmer months, domestic and international, facilitated by train, plane, or automobile.

## Martha's Vineyard Memory

SEBASTIAN KAPLAN

I wanted to spend my summer on the East Coast. I wasn't picky. My girlfriend knew of a dairy farm on Martha's Vineyard that could offer us 30 hours of work a week and an old potato chip truck in a nearby field to sleep in.

We arrived at midnight at the start of June. Our boss, Marianne, drank whiskey mixed in a can of blueberry extract, as we set up our new home. She asked if I considered myself "femme" and offered to drive me to the dump the next day to look for work-pants. I felt as square as ever, unsure of what I had gotten myself into.

The first job was at 9 the next morning. My girlfriend and I were asked to organize a barn attic packed with auto-parts, engines, beer-cans, bags of fertilizer, children's books, and fishing rods. An old couch, half rotted, was just a springboard on wood pews. I called Marianne.

"Do you want us to throw it out?"

"Throw it out? No, that's the couch my brother and I were disciplined on as children... We keep it. I have to keep it—isn't there any love in your family?" She laughed. Eager to shock us,

I never felt I could catch onto her script. She seemed to get off on our bewilderment.

I saw her digging through the dumpster while I cleaned the dairy pasteurization room. She found some skirts and tossed them at me: "Here! Here! This will look good!"

One day, hunched over in the sun, planting rows of tomatoes, she shut her eyes and talked about the psychological concept of mirroring. "Freud wrote about it," she said, "the emotional work a mother does with their babies.... A mom must mirror the baby's emotions, so they don't turn out to be psychopaths, you know?"

She was gruff, tick-covered, and tobacco-stained, in a worn-out flannel and oversized cowboy boots. Honest and blunt, I was sort of falling in love with her view of things.

"I'm too much of a show-dog. And a fixer," she confessed to me one day as I carried a crate of yogurt from the pasteurization room to the freezers. "Those are two corners of the womanly sphere."

Lugging cinder blocks out of ditches, milking cows, and mulching soil, her voice always stood out. Our relationship—friend to friend—had a vaudevilian frame, in which I played the straight role and she the eccentric comedienne.



## Driver's Test Soliloquy

LYDIA SCHULTZ

I don't have my driver's license. Cut me a break, OK?—I'm a city kid. But this summer, I decided, would be the summer I'd finally take my road test. So I practiced my driving a lot, meandering jerkily along quiet-ish Riverside Drive, my mom in the passenger seat. To be fair, she was doing her best, but, god, I hate driving. Dear Bard, I hate driving so much. I just wasn't built for it. I'm a fantastic pedestrian: I can weave in and out of crowds like nobody's business. I'm not afraid to stare down a car at a crosswalk or shoot a glare at the jerk loitering outside the subway station (I mean, seriously—check your Facebook literally anywhere else). But being a confident, adept driver does not seem to be in the cards for me.

I took my road test in Yonkers. There are some things about driving which I enjoy and am good (OK) at: recognizing different kinds of stop signs is my forte, for instance, as is checking (multiple times) in both blind spots before doing practically anything. Despite these skills, I still failed my road test, because it turns out that if you hit the curb, cross over into the wrong lane, turn wide, forget to signal before pulling out, and almost hit a pedestrian, it doesn't matter if you've been practicing all summer with your mom in her Toyota Camry—it's going to be a big, fat Fail, and you will cry a little bit on the drive home despite all your best attempts not to, and then after all that, you still have to take the test again, because the only thing worse than being 20 and unable to drive is being older than that and still having to beg your friends for a ride to Walmart.

# Mediapart

STELLA SCANLON

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

At the end of the meeting in a last call for story pitches (leads for potential upcoming articles), a clearly junior journalist in her twenties cleared her throat and pitched a coverage of a recent attack at a high school in one of the *banlieues* (suburbs) of Paris. Everyone was clearly surprised to hear this, and hear it from her, but she was immediately granted permission to run the piece.

Plenel's prose-poem-like manifesto, *Combate pour une presse libre* (Fight For A Free Press), written in 2009 during the creation of *Mediapart*, is a call-to-arms for independent journalism with an aim to free information from the oligarchic partisanship of corporate-run newspapers. Plenel states that the looming threat to free information is also a threat to today's democracy—democracy, which is sacrificed in favor of the political and economic interests of the very rich. This tendency of privately funded newspapers (the majority of mainstream newspapers and media both in France and the U.S.) weaken the press' purported duty to freely uncover the truth. "Une presse fragile est une

presse faible [A fragile press is a weak press]." Plenel insists that corruptions through economic and political influence necessarily lead to moral corruption in journalism. In this way, the goal of *Mediapart* in avoiding private corporate funding and political partisanship is to protect the moral, democratic integrity of the Fourth Estate. This is why *Mediapart* publishes nothing but investigative reportage.

The newspaper is organized into two main departments: investigative journalism and dossiers, the latter, folders collecting articles surrounding one topic. In addition, their online presence provides alternative modes of interaction with the public. The journal holds frequent public polls, actively responds to the Black Box, an anonymous response box for questions, critiques and errors all of which are public, and has an open-forum blog for subscribers of *Le Club de Mediapart*.

Plenel described the growing strength of the newspaper and the potentiality that online publication affords contemporary journalism. The newspaper sur-

vives financially off what Plenel calls "La Revolution numérique," through their abundance of online, multimedia content which can accrue millions of views in online traffic by virtue of free-access and public funds from the French Government. To Plenel, the online platform opens new, hopeful frontiers for independent journalism. "[On] Radonne du courage d'une indépendance radicale aux journaux. C'est possible d'être totalement transparent avec les chiffres." (This encourages a radical independence in journalism. It is now possible to be completely transparent about the numbers.)

Epitomized in the horizontal organization of *Mediapart*'s daily meetings, the journal takes a pluralistic and independent approach to journalism down to its foundation. Though there is a hierarchy of editorial staff in the paper, internally there is no top-down authoritative concentration of power. In addition, even in its success, Plenel insists on the journal sustaining a capped price of subscription. He seemed especially proud of this characteristic, stating that "those

who subscribe to the newspaper are mainly students and workers. Because of the low price, until they are promoted and can afford more expensive subscriptions to *Le Figaro*, *Le Monde*, or *Le Parisien*, they read *Mediapart*." Here, Plenel's socialist pedigree shows through.

In the end, Plenel described *Mediapart* as an old school journal using modern means for independence. *Mediapart*, a French newspaper completely unique to France and her political history, has a radically independent structure that could and should be put to use abroad.

Sitting in on *Mediapart*'s meeting, I asked myself, how can we do this at *The Observer*? Plenel's call to spread financially and intellectually independent journalism to the United States only increased my desire to revitalize the efforts of Bard's newspaper that, until last spring, was abandoned for over 10 years. Now more than ever is the time for independent grassroots journalism.

Nov. 17th

TOWNHALL

DISCUSSION  
WITH

MATT  
TAIBBI

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ALUM, MATT TAIBBI IN A  
TOWNHALL DISCUSSION ON  
CENSORSHIP AND BIG-TECH.

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## Impressions of Rome

BENICIO TAGGART

This past July, I visited Rome for the first time. It was the most poetically built city I have ever seen. Houses, hotels, shops, and restaurants all stand between and in the shadows of crumbling ruins that have been crumbling for more than a thousand years. The memory of the Romans is everywhere, even in the neoclassical buildings made long after the Italians stopped repurposing Roman stones. I saw the remnants of ancient Roman glory: the Colosseum, the Capitoline Hill, Nero's imperial palace, the place where the decadent emperor's gigantic statue of bronze (The Colossus) once stood.

But the other tourists were somewhat of a distraction from the magnificent things around me. They conquered space with their cameras in the Colosseum's narrow walkways. Whole crowds were brought to a standstill when someone decided to take a photo. The people brought to mind

a quote from Virgil's *Aeneid*. "This will be your task, Roman, and do not forget it. To govern the peoples of the world in your empire. These will be your arts, and to impose a settled pattern on peace: to pardon the defeated, and war down the proud." But the Roman Peace never reached the East. The irony is that only after the Empire fell would all the peoples of the world gather to gawk in the shadow of the Roman ruins. It was beautiful, very hot, and all the peoples of the world at once were exhausting.

When I looked at the Italian locals, it was strange to think that these modern people came from the first empire of the West which defined the poetics, politics, and philosophy that are still studied in college.

But now, Rome is not the classical ideal I read about in Virgil. On the steps of St. Peter's Basilica, I saw a small, bird-like woman wearing black robes and a head covering holding a woven basket. Seeing her poverty so close to the holy place, I felt like I had to give her whatever I had. She handed me back a small picture of Christ.









# The Bard Observer

Vol. 21. No. 2

*Photo by Forest Simon*



# New Moons and Its Uncompleted Cycle

*New Moons by Erika Verzutti, The Hessel Museum*

Elisa Littin Egaña

New Moons by Erika Verzutti, the first major survey of the Brazilian artist's oeuvre in the US, is a collection of her work spanning fifteen years displayed in 69 wall and sculpture pieces. The curated gallery is a call to the multiphase and volatile nature of Verzutti's work up to the present. Verzutti's exhibition earns its name not as a hope for rebirth, but as an ensemble of works that flirts with obscurity.

The gallery opens with the first wall work, *Crisis of Sculpture* (2023). This large polystyrene and papier-mâché purple panel with brass and oil paint symbols is a reference to the titular lunar imagery. With a rugged surface and crater-like indentations, this piece appears as a mode of communication with the cosmos, much like the earthworks Indigenous peoples erected thousands of years ago. This, unfortunately, is eclipsed by the now outdated and odd piece that is the second wall work, *The Dress* (2015) references the viral 2015 online image of a dress that viewers disagreed over the color of: either as blue and black, or white and gold. Verzutti's piece is composed of two rock-like slabs painted with horizontal acrylic strokes and three-fingered scratches indicating the seams and contours of the dress in the original picture. The work seems to attempt to remind us that, like the dress' color, there is no universal way of seeing an image. Despite this grand message, the work ends up embodying a meme: a cheap image that even if it tries to be deep, it just isn't.

Verzutti draws on the concept of genealogy throughout her pieces, carefully placing her artworks in "families" that contain recurrent symbols and aesthetics, often reproducing shapes resembling eggs, tropical fruits, and animals. At the center of the first gallery is a sculpture from Tarsilas, the artist's most celebrated "family," *Tarsila com Koons* (Tarsila with Koons) (2015). Honoring the Brazilian Modernist painter Tarsila do Amaral, Verzutti's sculpture is a curved bronze figure poised in the same way as the phallic shape in Amaral's painting *Setting Sun* (1929). Verzutti juxtaposes this invocation of Brazilian modernism with an orange-like sphere, painted over with a glittery shade of blue reminiscent of Jeff Koons's famous *Gazing Ball* paintings. The Koonsesque orb is overshadowed—in the literal sense—by the drooping Amaral vertical figure. *Tarsila com Koons* is an attack on the male artist's ego that doesn't fall into an all-too-blatant reliance on cultural context.

The next set of works displayed are in the Brasília "family." A set of jackfruit sculptures is horizontally laid out, cast in bronze and carved with sharp-edged cuts painted white. The collective name of the pieces alludes to Brazil's capital, a modernist planned metropolis meticulously designed by the architect Oscar Niemeyer in the late 1950s. Verzutti's fruits carry both the elegance and violence of Brazilian modernism, dismembering nature's uneven skin with a clean slash of urbanism.

And then, there's *Churros*



Erika Verzutti, *Tarsila com Koons*, 2015. Photo: Eduardo Ortega. Courtesy of the artist, Fortes D'Aloia & Gabriel, Andrew Kreps Gallery and Alison Jacques.

*com Vento/Churros with Wind* (2022). And *Churros Turbulence* (2022). The two big wall works resemble blocks of concrete with orbital splashes of white paint and churro figures cast in bronze. These peculiar churros (representing a completely different "family") sit in awkward juxtaposition to the rest of the space overcrowded with art-world contextual pieces.

The third and last gallery space is also overcrowded, in a literal sense. Placed in the middle is a "run-way" of 34 sculptures laid closely together, making it hard for the eye to appreciate the singularity of any given piece—especially when many of these pieces are composed of numerous objects in conver-

sation. Verzutti's most monumental works are mixed into this big blob, the first of these being *Cemitério com Franja/Cemetery with Fringe* (2014). Made out of 632 bronze, concrete, clay, porcelain, and stone objects, this work presents an array of studio relics seemingly brought back from the dead, in what appears to be an archeological assemblage. On the same "run-way" is a group of large bronze sculptures that resemble the ancient Venus of Willendorf, but upside down, populating Verzutti's Venus "family." These replications of the sculpture play with the texture of jackfruit rim, a texture that reappears throughout different "families," exposing a tactile, porous exterior.

What is visible in this cluttered display is how all Verzutti's pieces carry traces of her art-making process. Her own finger indentations, markings of tools, and many studio accidents become incorporated into the body of work, reminding us of the symbiotic relationship between artist and medium.

What is not so visible is the bold claim written on the wall text one reads before entering the exhibition, presenting Verzutti's work as "a novel way of perceiving interrelations—through a perspective that orbits outside set systems of being." While her works confuse existing ways of interacting with contemporary culture, it's hard to see how flying churros, pointed commentary on Brazilian modernism, and viral pop-culture references might smoothly cohere. *New Moons* shows us that sometimes, less meaning means more.



Installation image from Erika Verzutti: *New Moons*, June 24 – October 15, 2023. Hessel Museum of Art, Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, NY. Photo: Olympia Shannon, 2023.

## Political, All Too Political

*Vladimir Sorokin's Telluria*

DAVID TAYLOR-DEMETER

*NYRB Classics, translated by Max Lawton, 2022.*

Sorokin as author is a special case. As a Russian author—especially today, given Russia's war in Ukraine—he has no choice but to be political. A short look at his bio gives readers enough reason to endlessly want to interpret him in a given political framework. And we are right to do so, to some extent. The infamous scene in *Blue Lard* (1999) about the clones of Stalin and Khrushchev having sex is hard to interpret otherwise. However, as I would like to suggest, trying to think of Sorokin's *Telluria* as a political allegory—despite the fact that it presents us with a dystopian future, and despite the fact that it tries to give a holistic coverage of social strata—is not only forced but also unfruitful.

*Telluria* introduces us to a neo-feudal, yet technologically advanced future where China, Russia, and the European Union have collapsed, peoples have unrecognizably merged, and where a holy war between Christianity and Islam is ravaging the European continent. If this sounds confusing or outright crazy to you, well, that's the point. The book is divided into fifty chapters, all narrated in different styles (dialogue, epos, propaganda, etc.), by different, unrelated individuals (princes, vagabonds, commoners, etc.), which is supposed to be a formal way of saying, "Don't look for overarching narrative threads! There are none." Yet, what saves the novel from appearing like a long string of short stories is the fact that every voice, every chapter at least alludes to the existence of a substance called tellurium (surprisingly not made up but located in the periodic table, under 52) which, according to one description, has been banned by the UN and declared to be a "hard drug." There is a

lot of debate about whether this classification is accurate or not, after all, tellurium is also said to be able to vanquish time and grant people's deepest desires—quite the opposite of what drugs are known to do.

There is significant plot about the method of administering tellurium, too. Tellurium is manufactured into special nails that are then hammered into the brain to take effect. With Sorokin-style brutality, one has to go through a violent procedure to attain bliss: if the nail bends, or is hit slightly askew, you have a pretty high chance of dying. Finding professionals—so-called "carpenters"—to wedge it in is quite troublesome. And even then, there is no guarantee for anything. Yet regardless of the risk, people do it anyway. In fact, reading the book, this is the only thing that starts making sense amidst its disorienting eclecticism: people across continents and cultures share a hidden desire for the same commodity that can't stop popping up everywhere.

**"Don't look for overarching narrative threads! There are none."**

Now, having considered the global effect tellurium has, I could commend the book for how nicely it shapes up to be a satire of late-stage capitalism where consumers' desires are manufactured by transnational corporations' PR and marketing division. However, this would be a limited reading by all means. For then how do we account for the sudden need for a new Knights Templar in Chapter 21, a rebirth of faith, or the camouflaged folktale adventures of princesses and peasant girls scattered throughout the book?

Insoluble discrepancies like this lead one to say that the novel evades all sorts of categorizations. The ease with which Sorokin shifts between styles and registers is impressive; more so the amount and variety of themes he manages to pack into *Telluria* without making it seem forced or pointlessly complex. Although at times one questions to what end all the novelty, the obscure geographical markers like "Rhenish-Westphalian," the five-six languages incorporated into the text, or the bizarre violence, are deployed. Surely the book contains ample material for comp. lit. academics to write scathing theses on radical hypersubjectivity and political opacity, but how does this serve the reader?

*Telluria*, in the end, carries its most valuable meaning in its form: the freedom of literary imagination achieved through ceaseless stylistic experimentation, rejecting all political interpretation as a novel political stance, and resisting all types of lopsided ideological ensnarement. It is exactly to such works that persistently dabble in experimentation that John Barth—eerily aware of his own irony as one such experimentalist—put the question: "For whom is the funhouse fun?" In other words, who enjoys constant headlessness? Or as David Foster Wallace pushed Barth's question even further:

"Is the Funhouse a house? Who lives there when push comes to shove?"

# Tivoli Bread and Baking

**THURSDAY 7a-noon**

**FRIDAY 7a-noon**

**SATURDAY 7a-3p**

**SUNDAY 7a-3p**





# Luxury Feminism Sponsored by Mattel

## Greta Gerwig's Barbie (2023)

SOPHIE FOLEY

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

as so-called "Stereotypical Barbie," ventures out into the real world, and is immediately accused of fascism, glorification of consumerism, and projection of fantastical beauty standards. The prosecutor is Sasha, a bully whose reign is so feared that a nervous sentry stands guard by her lunch table to warn newcomers against poking the bear. The tirade is hopeful—perhaps there will be some interrogation of Barbie's "sexualized capitalism" after all? But no, it appears that this woman-to-woman critique has the life-span of a laugh. The movie ultimately falls back on the age-old feminist revenge trope wherein women dramatically overpower the misogynist men in their lives, as was so entertaining to watch in *9 to 5*; but then, that was 1980.

Most viewers, however, will not have these clichés on their minds when watching *Barbie*. When I was working at my sleepaway camp job in the wilds of the Catskills, my sister told me over the phone that she cried when she saw the movie in theaters. "Really?" I asked, incredulous, and she said, "no, not really, but kind of." I understood where she was coming from when I saw Barbie a month later and felt a lump rise in my throat witnessing Margot Robbie as "Stereotypical Barbie" tearfully rejoicing in an older woman's awareness of her own, wrinkled beauty, out in the human world where everyone has cellulite. The film deals in extreme reactions: heartstring-tugging at the universal plight of women; raucous laughter at the artificiality of Barbieland; rage at the blatant stupidity of the patriarchy. There is little time built into the movie for the viewer to reflect on its actual message, as we are presented with one thrilling scene after another over a more subtle development of conflict and theme.

Such flashiness is the standard for blockbuster films, one might say, and yet *Barbie* was directed by Greta Gerwig, who is best known for her production of and involvement in mumblecore films—a subgenre of independent cinema that is intentionally mundane, with a heavy focus on the intricacies of emotional dynamics. I remember feeling sick to my stomach after watching Frances Ha, where Gerwig stars as a twenty-something-year-old dancer suspended in a liminal space between jobs, housing arrangements, and close friendships. Ambiguities remain unresolved throughout, leaving the viewer to tie things up for themselves or to realize that not everything can be so neatly made into a bow.

In *Barbie*, Gerwig has no aversion to bows. She retains the quirky, artsy-girl credit she earned in the indie scene, but the complex social relations she so lovingly crafted earlier in her career have been reduced to mere glitter, sprinkled over the movie's generic, "fight-the-patriarchy" narrative. A momentary standout is Kate McKinnon's performance as "Weird Barbie," a victim of the human phenomenon of playing "too hard," who has been relegated to a wonky, asymmetrical house on the outskirts of Barbieland for crimes like wearing clashing colors, having short hair, and constantly walking in the splits. I was intrigued, recalling the fervent desire to cut my Barbie dolls' hair into strange, awkward shapes when I was younger. Why does this happen? What is behind the desperate need to chop at and contort our dolls?

*Barbie* leaves such questions unanswered, with "Weird Barbie" providing only comedic and nostalgic relief. There is no discussion of how the character originates from the intentional destruction of a "Stereotypical Barbie," and what this could imply about queerness or the subversion of hyperfemininity. It's certainly ambiguous, but swept under the rug rather than laid out in the open for viewers to ponder, intentionally, after the fact.

Rather, "Weird Barbie" exists to make one of the most obvious claims about Barbieland, that it is not, in fact, a feminist utopia, or, if it is, it rests on incredibly shaky ground. Sure, women take up all seats on the Supreme Court, independently own opulent houses, and are not

*The tirade is hopeful—perhaps there will be some interrogation of Barbie's "sexualized capitalism" after all? But no, it appears that this woman-to-woman critique has the life-span of a laugh.*

obligated to marry or have children. Still, they scream at the sight of dimpled skin and have literally marginalized the one doll that does not conform to standard conventions of feminine behavior and beauty.

For some audiences, this has been an important contradiction to emphasize. A friend's dad, for instance, reportedly found *Barbie* quite eye-opening; it did, in fact, make him stop and consider the various expectations loaded onto women. But *Barbie*'s message seems to be a novelty only for older generations. The catharsis of the film that Greta Gerwig described in a *New York Times* article following the premiere, seems geared towards a similar age group. The not-so-subtle mockery of Barbie dolls and Barbieland flies in the face of the original constraints these products so powerfully placed on girlhood when they were first produced. But that was over 50 years ago. Barbie has changed, and so has our understanding of her problems. It was strange, for example, that there was simply no discussion of intersectional feminism, how racism intensifies and complicates misogyny, and how the first Black Barbie was released in 1980, after Mattel had been churning out its iconic blonde bombshells for over two decades.

Many critics have addressed the one-dimensionality of *Barbie*, but ultimately concluded that complaints about the film not being subversive enough, or intersectional enough, are asking too much of Gerwig: she doesn't have enough time to address everything; that wasn't even the point in the first place. One *Vogue* op-ed implored readers to give up the idea that pop culture can or should be used to solve oppression. It is true that blockbuster, IP-driven films like *Barbie* are usually the last ones to take any radical stance on systems of power and



prejudice. And if they do, the approach is heavily sanitized, teased as a ploy to stay relevant, and make money. The particular failure of *Barbie* and films like it has made questionable the likelihood that mass media will commit to novel portrayals of complex histories. But the cynicism that has been expressed, and the consequent lowering of standards, ultimately negates the critical influence of movies on our thinking. The things we consume have an indefatigable impact on how we view the world, and ourselves—the Barbie doll itself being a prime example.

In my pre-review discussion of the movie with my mother, she asked me, "Why can't *Barbie* just be fun?" She glowed about the phenomenon of people dressing up in pink to go with their friends to see the film—how this built community, how it gave people something "to do" this summer. And yes: *Barbie* is fun, and that's great, and I'm not here to disturb your fun, or deny the fact that I, too, spent the time combing through my closet to find all the pink clothes I owned before I went to the movie theater. *Barbie* sparkles with evanescent brilliance, and I was entranced by the live-action plasticity, and Gerwig's pithy one-liners. But at the end of the day, a trance is a trance, and the movie's overwhelming sense of "fun" obscures certain, arguably very important aspects of the doll's impact.

# Consciousness at a Crossroads

## Christopher Nolan's Oppenheimer (2023)

MARTIAL JUNCEAU

Christopher Nolan's *Oppenheimer* (2023) opens on the image of chaotic, frame-encompassing fire, as words detailing the fate of Prometheus, set in hard font, fade into view. At once, Nolan establishes the infernal, mythological nature of Oppenheimer, which is ostensibly a biopic of the tormented physicist behind the Atom Bomb, J. Robert Oppenheimer. It is not blind chance or prophecy that Nolan has released a film in 2023 dealing with the inception of the Cold War, while the threat of nuclear war in Ukraine looms. Throughout his career, Nolan has incisively framed the perennial questions of the present through the medium of the historical epic—2017's *Dunkirk* being a recent example.

*Oppenheimer* is a Faust story: a brilliant thinker whose striving to use and control powerful, destructive forces leads to predictable ruin. Nolan's fascinating approach is to capture the desolate spiritual landscape in the wake of the Bomb, rather than the actual material ruins of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. *Oppenheimer* is not just a portrait of the titular protagonist, but of modern man at large, his spirit broken to pieces by his own unrestrained ingenuity.

Our expectations for an average Hollywood biopic are upset from the film's beginning, by the scope of Nolan's cinematic references. *Mirror* (1975), Andrei Tarkovsky's impressionistic spiritual autobiography, is evoked in the abstract yet intimate subjectivity Nolan sketches for his protagonist in the opening minutes of *Oppenheimer*. Dappling rain is intercut with rays of light at the prestigious universities of Oppenheimer's youth; glimpses of Oppenheimer smashing glasses in

the corner of his bare lodgings and generally engaging in wordless, tormented self-dialogues, are also in the mix. The elemental notes here are all Tarkovsky's, but the interspersed frames of racing atoms and shooting cosmic light (the subjects of Oppenheimer's personal theory-world) also evoke the non-narrative experimental work of another auteur director, Stan Brakhage.

*Oppenheimer*'s shattered consciousness is reflected in Nolan's editing techniques, which suggest that the strain of Oppenheimer's work is slowly confusing his sense of reality. At one point, Nolan's use of cross-cutting expresses Oppenheimer's personal doubt as to whether his mistress killed herself, as he has been told, or whether she was assassinated due to her association with him. Showing Oppenheimer's starved, ascetic face, Nolan cross-cuts to two imagined scenarios: 1. her lonely pre-suicide moments before a full bathtub, and 2. the black-gloved hands of some shadowy operative forcing her head into the tub instead. Nolan doesn't decide for us which option is true or which is false. He leaves us, along with his protagonist, in unbearable doubt.

At another point, *Oppenheimer* reluctantly plays a jingoistic tune at a rally celebrating Japan's surrender in the wake of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. During Oppenheimer's speech, Nolan throws sounds out of place and shows Oppenheimer and the flag-waving audience with their skin eerily peeling, as if from the A-Bomb's blast. This vision of destruction vividly reveals Oppenheimer's misgivings about the moral validity of the victory being celebrated. Herein lies one of the most provocative and politically radical aspects of Nolan's film: its depiction of the Second World War and the Cold War as tragedies

with no victors, only losers. In defeating our enemies, Nolan implies that we may have made a deal with the devil. The *Oppenheimer* of Nolan's film subsists in fragmented form, tenuously suspended in doubt, facing the consequences of his dangerous quest to unlock the secrets of nature and make war by their utilization. Even if we can convince ourselves that it was the enemy who was eviscerated and not us, Nolan's *Oppenheimer* surely cannot do the same.

In the film's closing moments, Oppenheimer stands at the edge of a pond, telling Einstein that their worst calculations have come to pass. The A-Bomb did indeed set off the feared chain reaction that results in the end of the world. Oppenheimer oddly contends. Nolan's protagonist is of course speaking metaphorically, otherwise how could he still be standing there, stuck in the same doomed theoretical cycle? Nolan intercuts what are presumably images of the future with his last close-up of Oppenheimer's guilt-wracked face. Missile streaks fill the heavens above the clouds, signifying that the work of our very own hands is on the way to destroy all organic life. The fire shown at the beginning of the film now sweeps the entire earth, as Oppenheimer closes his eyes as if to end his envisioning of the dreaded scenario.

Our ruthless ingenuity and ideology of technological domination has made us "barbarians in our own empire," as the social critic Russell Kirk wrote to a friend in reaction to the A-Bomb's horrible unveiling in Japan. Nolan invites spiritual and political reckoning with this barbarism through *Oppenheimer*. Nolan's depiction of the hell where nuclear technology is leading us and his questioning of the Faustian drives animating modern society, credit him with an uncommon filmic courage.

SCHEDULE FALL							FROM YOUR FRIENDS AT		*WXBC*	
2023		MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY		
6-8 AM	BEST OF BRIT with DJ FRANKIE	DAWN CHORUS with DJ GIGI			6-8 AM KM IN THE AM with DJ KM					
9-11 AM	VOTE4ANA	PROBIOTIC SOUNDS with DJ BOOCH GURL	BEFORE BREAKFAST with DJ SOFIMO		9-11 AM MOOOODY GROOOOVES with DJ CLAIRE	GIRLS' GENERATION with DJ PHU and DJ MAY	JACK STRAW JUBILEE SHOW with DJ JACK STRAW	FLYOVER COUNTRY 2 with DJ TREEHORN		
12-2 PM	UNDERSTOCK with DJ RUE	the show with lala	with DJ AUSTIN POSSUM AND CRISTOFAL		12-2 PM QUANTUM HEALING SOUNDS with DJ MAY	SPIN CLASS WITH DJ OSHI	INFINITE GUEST with DJ VEGGIESAMOSA and DJ IPADBABY	HELLO...AGAIN?! with DJ A VOWW, DJ COOKIE, DJ T. SITUATION		
3-5 PM	LA HORA LOCA with DJ VERO	SPECIAL PROGRAMMING	CHEAT DAY with DJ HEAVY PLEASURE		3-5 PM THE DOUBLE PIPE CLASSIC with DJ GLEZZUP and DJ SLIZZUP	SCANTILY GLAD with DJ FIACHRA	TOOLS OF DISOBEDIENCE with DJ MAURO	RADRICK DAVIS AND THE HOLLER with DJ DISMAED		
6-8 PM	LIMINAL WAVES with DJ CHAZ	ARMED TO THE TEAT with DJ CAPTANO	BEFORE AND AFTER 7 with ETHAN		6-8 PM PEARL DIVING with DJ CLAM	with DJ KAIZEPLE, DJ LIVIE, and DJ LI	COLTRANE JAZZ with DJ ROBERT	SPECIAL PROGRAMMING		
9-11 PM	NIGHTLIFE with JAY SIEGAL	THE RUSH LIMBAUGH SHOW with DJ HATS	SNOT PACKET with KIVI MADDOG		9-11 PM COSMOSBUTS with DJ CLAUPE and DJ MATHS	TEENAGE KICKS with DJ RAY	LOT LIZARDS with DJ IGGY SLEAZE	FM RADIO with DJ KAY FM		
12-2 AM			MIDNIGHT MARAUDERS with DJ YANTO		12-2 AM NERVE METER with DJ AND	automatic stop.	AIR RAED with DJ ADA RAE	THE GROUPO with DJ OHMOE		



## Across

1. Cole \_\_\_\_  
5. Couple  
8. Coming up  
13. Dakota's dwelling  
14. What one might do from an unlabeled water bottle at a Manor party  
15. "Unhand me!"  
16. Word said just before opening the eyes  
17. Many AFABs are on it  
18. Void  
19. Rebecca Yoshino's domain  
22. Nat 1  
23. Anger  
24. Horrify  
25. Cigarette  
29. Deliver a tirade  
33. Facetious  
34. Mayhem  
36. Tankie's favorite  
37. Bard College  
40. She \_\_\_\_ in slang  
41. Nag, or a small mammal  
42. "Farewell, mon ami"  
44. \_\_\_\_ Verde National Park  
46. Sum (up)  
47. Les pains  
48. Hit the slopes  
50. \_\_\_\_ cuck

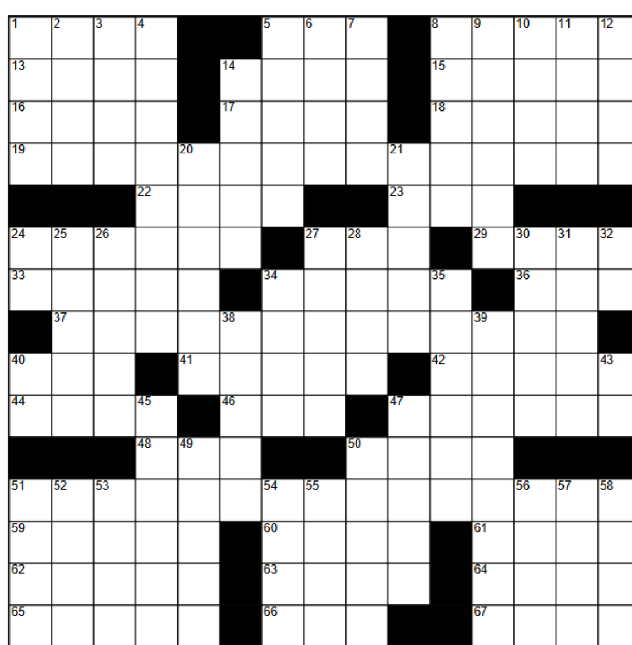
51. 5 year program cause  
59. Frenchman's accessory  
60. Cousin of a bassoon  
61. Hip bones  
62. Musical repetition mark  
63. Ranch newborn  
64. Cop sound  
65. Treads heavily  
66. L\_T  
67. Holiday egg drinks

## Down

1. Bayonet  
2. Andes capital  
3. Little, e.g.  
4. Source of sudden wealth  
5. Diagonally-ribbed fabric  
6. There is a way  
7. Eye rakishly  
8. Birch relative  
9. Callless cow  
10. Europe's highest volcano  
11. Gelatin substitute  
12. We have a lottery for these  
14. Go bad  
20. "La Divina" soprano  
21. 1962 Gleason film  
24. Times square is plastered with them

25. Jabber  
26. John, Paul and John Paul  
27. Predetermined  
28. Affirm  
30. Yolk sacs  
31. Exposed  
32. Toward  
34. Rancher's concern  
35. Magna \_\_\_\_  
38. F-boy adornment  
39. Speculation  
40. Be verb  
43. We  
45. Move up the ladder  
47. Cut at an angle  
49. Japanese stringed instruments  
50. Vast  
51. Cookbook abbr.  
52. Replaceable shoe part  
53. Descartes's "therefore"  
54. Couch  
55. Black, in poetry  
56. Hodgepodge  
57. Cabal  
58. Gabs

by Claire Charton



## Cigaretiquette

JONAH ROSARIO

During my three years on Bard campus, I've witnessed my fair share of ill-mannered and discourteous behavior surrounding the practice of smoking cigarettes. While I admit that I have unknowingly engaged in many of the regrettable acts I am about to describe (and suggest remedy for) my few years of experience smoking socially have clued me into a number of unspoken rules which you may find handy, whether you are a fledgling puffer or a chain-smoking deplorable. While the following rules of Cigaretiquette are somewhat arbitrary, I've managed to distill a few essential principles. Here's a short guide on how to bum without being one.

### SECTION 1: PUFFING WITH PEERS

1. If you are to ask an acquaintance or stranger for a drag of their cigarette, you are admitted 2-3 very short puffs or one full-throated drag. Any more, and you risk insulting the dragee's generosity. Any less, and you've implied that you didn't really need it, and the dragee may feel they would have been better off keeping the cigarette to themselves.
2. In a group of people sharing one cigarette, have confidence that it will return to you. Horking down a cigarette like some starved animal is sure to establish a hostile relationship between you and your smoking partners.
3. When it is agreed that you and another person are to share a cigarette, and it is yours to light, light it, take a small puff, and immediately pass it to the person with whom you are sharing. This is a devastatingly charming move that is sure to leave your smoking partner impressed.
4. On the last pass of a cigarette, always leave at least enough tobacco for a full drag without the taste of filter. Otherwise, you have essentially given your smoking partner a small piece of garbage which they must now dispose of.

### SECTION 2: BUMMING FROM BARDIANS

1. In a community like Bard, bumming a cigarette is an eternal process of mutual aid, and so to reject the bum request of someone you have bummed off in the past is out of the question. You may think yourself unobliged to do so if you have only one cigarette left, but had you not bummed from the person now in need, you would already be out.
2. When you successfully bum a cigarette off someone, it is courteous to begin smoking it immediately and, social setting permitting, exchange a few light words with them. Bumming a cigarette, especially from a stranger, is essentially an act of desperation. To smoke the cigarette immediately acknowledges this desperation and elevates the bumee to a justified level of momentary saintliness.
3. Know how to roll. If you would like to bum a cigarette from a stranger with loose tobacco, expecting them to roll it for you is absolutely ridiculous. I will never forget one particularly dreadful moment two years ago when, upon making this exact request to an upperclassman, she replied: "Do you want me to smoke it for you too?" Save yourself the embarrassment.



## Miss Lonelyhearts

All your burning questions answered

Dear Miss Lonelyhearts,

My ex-girlfriend won't stop sending me erotica that she's written. What should I do?

Sincerely,  
LoveBombed

Dear LoveBombed,

While members of our generation tend towards avoidance and shy away from confrontation at all costs, I am perhaps a relic of tradition in believing that candor is best, especially in situations dealing with an 'ex-factor.' Be direct: tell her exactly what does and doesn't work in her erotica, do not dance around its weaknesses, trying to preserve her feelings. The art and its aroused readers will inevitably suffer. If her sensual scenes are beyond reproach, however, send them to a publishing agent, your old flame just might be the new Anaïs Nin.

MLH

Dear Miss Lonelyhearts,

I am a miserable flirt. All my attempts at daring chivalry fall flat and my coquetry is a joke. What are your go-to pick up lines and flirting moves?

Sincerely,  
InvoluntarilyCelibate

Dear InvoluntarilyCelibate,

In attempting to digitize chemistry, dating apps have forgone the thrill of the romantic chase for the immediacy of sexual conquest. You must avoid this same mistake at all costs. Flirtation is not an act of the mind and warm and fuzzy feelings are quickly suffocated by pick-up lines and pre-planned moves or expectations. A true coquette knows that the act of flirting is even more sensual than the end in mind. You are most likely not a miserable flirt, you are just trying to find the 'the right thing to say' and that will differ from person to person and moment to moment. You must agree to this dance. You will fail and fail miserably, but is that not the point? Put simply, sincerity is the most potent aphrodisiac, though regular showers and well-fitting clothes help too.

MLH



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## Letter From The Editor(s)

Last spring, *The Bard Observer* released its first issue after a decade of journalistic silence. That issue took an entire semester to put together, and went to print in the very last weeks of school. For this, our second issue, we have pulled together material in half that time, which is an exponential improvement. Though, as you see, many pieces originate from this past summer, we have tried to integrate the timely with the timeless in Fall Issue No.1.

Now, we are proud to give this issue up to the public's hands (do with it what you will!), with the promise that you will see more *Observer* content this semester—in Fall Issue No.2!

We, the editorial table at the *Observer*, would like to extend a warm thanks to all the writers who have added to this issue, to our new members of the editorial team, to our tender professorial advisor, Wyatt Mason, to ourselves: grammarians and defenders of common usage. But most of all, dear reader, we would like to thank you, whom we cannot do without, and whom we make this paper for. Thank you!

### MASTHEAD

**Managing Editors** Stella Scanlon, Sage Rudolf  
**Senior Editors** Sophie Foley, David Taylor-Demeter  
**Photo** Elisa Littin Egaña  
**Design** Esmé Sacks, David Taylor-Demeter, Sage Rudolf  
**Public Outreach** Benicio Taggart

## Obituaries

### Aili Lin

Aili, a student at Bard, passed away while visiting Beijing this past summer. Aili grew up in China and moved to California when she was 12 years old. Her interests at Bard ranged across disciplines such as studio arts and psychology, art and science, practice and theory, having moderated into psychology in May. Her advisers, Justin Hulbert and Lisa Sanditz have praised her natural talents and inspirational character.

Aili leaves behind her parents and an older brother.