

Of Archives and Ghosts:

Temporal spaces of home for Bard students now and then, their connections with each other and how we process memories, ghosts and subcultural lore.

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Field Site

The field site in which the research will be conducted is Bard College campus and Tivoli, NY, one of the surrounding towns that have semi-official "off student housing"; it even says so on the real estate website of the town. Bard campus has multiple dorms and "common" rooms in each of these dorms. In the first two years of college, you are not permitted to live "off" campus in the residing towns. The two towns are Tivoli, the smaller town, and "Red Hook", which is the bigger of the two towns, with 9,953 people in 2020 ("Red Hook, NY: Official Website", n.d). These towns have a symbiotic and inter-changing history with Bard College and Bard College student populations. Another critical factor in considering the "field site" of Bard is to think about the land that these towns and Bard College campus itself are on, the Hudson Valley.

People who had lived and existed on the land where Bard College is built, the indigenous tribes of the Muhheaconneok and Munsee, have a long history on this land. On the Hudson Valley official website, David Levine tells a bit of their story, saying, "A great people traveled from the north and west. For many, many years, they moved across the land, leaving settlements in rich river valleys as others moved on. Reaching the country's eastern edge, some of these people settled on the River later renamed the Delaware. Others moved north and settled in a river valley where the waters were never still like those in their original homeland. They named this River Mahicannituck

and called themselves the much-he-con-neok, the people of the waters that are never still "(Levine, 2020). The river in question in this quote is the Hudson River. Bard College as a campus faces the Hudson River at several spots, like at Blithewood, the former haunted dorm on the southernmost edge of the campus. Tivoli also has a connection with the Hudson River itself, having the train tracks that used to be important in the town of Tivoli's history right next to the River.

The archeology department has found evidence of ancient Indigenous burial sites on Bard campus, near the River. "Over 30 years ago, archaeology found evidence of ancient Indigenous occupation near the River, likely dating back 6,000 years, at a site called 'The Pumpkin Patch' "(Lindner, 2022). Many of my interlocutors, especially those talking about spirituality or ghost stories, alluded to older histories at Bard- one of them being the existence of Indigenous burial grounds around Bard College. However, the presence of an Indigenous site is a fact and should not stay in people's minds as a misremembered "story". But instead, it is best to continue with the honor and respect of remembrance as much as possible by engaging with the existing communities of the Stockbridge Munsee communities and descendants and respecting their wishes to keep their site's sacred histories secret. Bard College's campus exists on the land of the Munsee and Muhheaconneok people and their accounts but does not contain them. It is just a "blip" compared to this history. In my thesis, I will primarily handle the period of the 1960s-2022 at Bard College and students' experiences on their campus.

Introduction

To introduce this text about Bard's students' connections with temporal space, lore, and memory, I must first examine the recent past. "Bard is thicker than water" (Preiss, Winter 2018, p.18). This was a sentence I read in an article in the Bardian Winter Issue of 2018. Jeff Preiss, the author of this text, writes about his friend Jamie Livingston's life. His friend took a polaroid picture everyday, starting from his time at Bard until his death at 41. These photos and the stories behind them encapsulate the feelings I wanted to capture in my project: of connecting memory of everyday mundane moments, of times fast and far between in Bard culture and beyond, to achieve a feeling of magic in mundane moments, a sense of connection and kinship, and the beautiful tightrope in-between fact and fiction/memory and forgetting. Even if the alumni in the picture do not remember the exact stories behind the picture, they are able to grasp the ephemerality and specialness of their time at Bard with just a snapshot. In this text, I want to discern precisely these facts, the uniqueness of Bard life where dinner parties continued over the span of 40 years even after the fact that everybody had graduated (Preiss, Winter 2018, p.18). The tales and lore people tell, remembering these moments when the faces of people seem unfamiliar or something is so far away but so close. It's almost out of memory. However, they keep remembering because of the stories, accurate or not, they tell, and the ephemerality of these pictures able to exist all at once, in one infinite moment and in the present

moment all at once. As Preiss says, "Even those of us who had happened to be in the exact place in the exact time when the shutter button was pushed often have to build new tales to accommodate the incontrovertible fact that we were there, at this moment, with those people" (Preiss, Winter 2018, p.18). I will survey Bard students' analysis of what home means to them in connection with Bard. Also, I will consider kinship with subcultural aspects of life, the stories and tales we tell, and the ghosts of Bard through events captured in photographs that are now long gone, or actual specters and living ghosts reminding us of the transient but fixed nature of living.

My own very first and only experience with "ghosts" was an experience that involves intimacy, nature, and the experience of the ephemeral. My best friend, "S", and I from first year, were hanging out in the big open parking lot next to the cafeteria/study spot, Sawkill. S and I were friends not just because we are both Germans but also because our dorms were close. We also had intense and opinionated discussions late into the night whenever we felt no one else understood us. I vividly remember that I used to throw pebbles at her window to get her to smoke cigarettes with me, as she often had her phone on silent, and also I loved the romance and nostalgia of throwing pebbles at someone's window. When we were sitting in this parking lot, about to see the ghost, we had one of these long discussions. We were talking about leaving Bard to go back to Germany. We had both left previously for winter break, but now our first big journey back to Germany in the summer would come. We, lived a few blocks from each other in Berlin, as we did in this strange American college. Coming back to Germany was always a feeling of whiplash, of

culture shock. It would rip us from reality. The reality of pretending that Bard College's strange everyday life, studying, sitting only with other young people in cafeterias, isolation, and abundant nature was normal. That these verandas were "home," would be gone from one moment to the next. Now that I live in the surrounding town of Tivoli and have an actual screen door, a so/so relationship with the locals, and a working kitchen and bathroom, I feel the genuine feeling of home. In those days, I didn't have these types of connections yet. It felt like "Bard" was pretend adulthood for us, in good and bad ways. Pretending that this temporary/abstract and strange life of dorms was normal, and also with this "pretension," feeling so free, as if the whole campus belonged to us, and as if there were no real consequences as the whole place seemed unreal.

Consequences socially, yes, but no consequences roaming around, no consequences for stealing bikes (which I now feel bad for). Everything seemed so cyclical like nothing could get truly lost at Bard, and like this place would stand in a freezing position until we returned. In the moment in the parking lot, when we saw the apparition, there was a summer storm. A storm that people around us warned us not to seek out, but as we were, not wanting to take in the consequences, we ran into the big open field near the northern most dorm on campus. There we ran around, shrieking and yelling at the lightning and thunder; it was like a theatre play just for us, when we heard and felt a big shadow whooshing over us, we saw this apparition, through play through imagination, maybe through our subconscious but we both saw the same thing, a thunderbird demon swooping down on us. It was a magical moment (albeit a

bit scary too): The lighting flying across the sky, the theatrics of nature, combined with seeing an actual or imaginary magical being. This moment of nature had something in it that made it extraordinary. It wasn't just beautiful; it was magical. It wasn't just "looking" at a storm. It was ephemerally experiencing the storm, feeling the loss of consequence, letting your imagination take over rationality, and feeling like the only two people in the world experiencing this. I will always remember this moment of connection between her and me, precisely because of this magical moment of beauty. Life is filled with these moments that seem to stretch forever, small moments that seem to be stuck in an infinite loop in your head. Maybe moments are all that remains after growing up, after settling into a "new" home, after years of experience.

In this text, I will introduce a few concepts and thinkers; one of the theories I will introduce is the idea of a politics of sight by Timothy Pachirat in the context of the home. The idea of what is seen or not seen depends on what truths people want to hide from. But also ideas of wanting to control certain subcultural ideas and themes, and how institutions can make it seem like something is a private space, like your living room, actually has regimented attitudes. The institution in question here is Bard. I also want to go into the idea of that concluding from Pachirat's idea of the politics of sight, of pulling subcultural claims of space, trying to connect to a home space as a young student, is aided by being made visible. Or instead, clouding certain tales in mystery and ambiguity helps these tales and folklore survive. I will also bring in Victor Turner's ideas of liminality, and some theories behind folklore, for my chapter about subcultural lore at Bard. I also will bring in Dick Hebdige's ideas of how subculture functions as

something that is changing, contextual, and always in dispute with mainstream culture, to further develop my analysis of Bard folklore. I will also bring Ben Amos's definitions of "folklore" and I also redefine what "folk" can mean, recontextualize it onto a group of people that usually would not consider themselves as a community with known traditions: Bard Students. Furthermore, I will discuss an important piece of lore, ghost stories, and I will argue that subcultural ways of disseminating information are a way to escape regulated systems and processes of remembering. So much of my analysis of my chapter about ghosts, the ultimate form and element of unarchivable knowledge and ephemeral experience, is based on Avery Gordon's ideas in her text, *Ghostly Matters, Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*. She describes many qualities that characterize haunting and being haunted, including seeing ghosts as a remembrance and a way of thinking outside standardized knowledge systems.

In Chapter 1, I will discuss how Home is defined by Bard students and the connections they foster with their campus. Students connect to Bard through exploring it physically, emotionally, and through their imagination. Home can be defined by one's subjective opinion and by creating and imagining small pockets of home. Or simply because you feel like it is "home", with no more significant claims, connections, or "roots" that tie you to it. In this chapter, I explore the transitory nature of defining a place like home and how Bard's temporal nature aids or hinders the ability to describe it as "home". Chapter 2 will discuss how "Folklore" operates for Bard Students past and present, and how intergenerational traditions and knowledge of certain practices, places, and mysteries can be passed down from one person to another. I also define

subculture in the context of Bard students and describe how different sets of information can be passed down and open up certain experiences. Chapter 3, will explore a type of "lore" that exists at Bard: Ghost stories. Ghosts are continuous/infinite, and they can become something of a material element that connects generations of Bard students. However, I go into ideas of how ghost stories at Bard function as the ultimate example of unarchivability, existing and deviating from current systems, and ephemerality. Ghost stories can operate as a part of communal storytelling and be an experience. However, ghost stories do more than even lore does; they exist to be "unarchivable," and they make up an ephemeral experience.

Ephemeral experience is a concept that I have analyzed and observed when researching "ghost stories." It means experiencing something, like a mundane moment of intimacy, a sensuous experience of seeing a ghost, or having a ghost haunt you, and in particular it means experiencing that moment to be transient, temporary and uncatchable. Those small moments with friends that you can close your eyes for and experience again, over and over again, the moments my interlocutors explain as seeing a ghost, that is an ephemeral experience. But, of course, remembering small moments with friends can be the "hint" or precursor to an ephemeral experience. The ephemerality of a ghost experience means it is, at the same time, internal/fleeting.

Methodology

This project is a joint project between the Division of the Film Department of Bard and the Anthropological Department. In this vein, some of my research has been multi-disciplinary. I added many perspectives and research on the history of Bard in this project. Although I added mostly knowledge that is not written down or archived knowledge, like oral history and artifacts that alumni and others who worked or lived at Bard helped me find. In this way, I added some historical analysis to my text. Some of this research came from the library, where I found some examples of accidentally or randomly archiving subcultural or alternative media, for example, the “Sketch Books”, which were books detailing the graduating class from 1994-1995 at Bard. I used these for my film project but not my written project. However, I only knew about these books by getting tips to look at them from alumni, or older pieces of archives like radio interviews, or older books on Bard. Much of my research was born out of this, half preserved or alluded-to artifacts and pieces of media or history that, as the catalog of what is in the Bard library is so vast and only holds a fraction of the research I was interested in, would have been impossible to find if I had not used other avenues.

I also had official alumni interlocutors but was also unprompted and sporadically contacted by other alumni, staff, etc that shared stories, media, and research with me. And I also found out a lot about different stories through participant observation and

fieldwork around the Bard campus. The participant observation was continuous until around the middle of April, as I kept filming and jotting down ghost stories.

I had initially started by only interviewing interlocutors from current-day Bard. Not all interviews made it into this text, as in total, I had 16 interviews. The pieces of information I used that were intended for my film that made it into this final product and vice versa, the pieces intended for my anthropology research that ended in my film, were manifold. I also found avenues of research, physical pieces of information, etc., on sites dedicated to restoring memory. I also found many artifacts and personal histories from the personal collections of alumni and inside subcultural “sites,” like Root Cellar. For example, The “Feitler” House yearbooks, which I reference in Chapter 2, were kept by the club head of the Root Cellar in the Root Cellar storage. However, this “storage” is not official but more so an open closet. The actual conversations I had and interviews were mostly focused on my friends at Bard and a couple of strangers. When talking in the interview, I mainly focused on three thematic questions: “How is Bard home to you?”, “Why is Bard magical/unique?” and finally, “Do you have any ghost stories to tell?” When talking to my alumni interlocutors I asked the same questions, although mostly focusing on ghost stories and what made Bard magical or “unique,” and their responses were mostly in a written format.

My interviews tended to go very long, around one hour to an hour and a half, and we would break the interview into different parts, with breaks, gossip, and also “tangents”. Much of this informed my research. Especially small mundane moments of intimacy my interlocutors talked about were important for my research. I decided to

use pseudonyms for everyone talked about in this paper, even those instances someone talked to me during participant observation, as some of the intimate and vulnerable moments shared are to be protected from being directly identified. My fieldwork and notes I jotted down were mostly made while interacting with Bard students in social situations at parties and during the more informal parts of filming my experimental documentary.

The way I wrote this text has poetic and playful characteristics, as although I want to analyze the different quotes, sections, and ethnographic observations I made, I also try to stay away from analyzing matter of fact experiences. In fact, also, the way I introduce my interlocutors and tell the story of how I was first introduced to ghosts tries to capture this moment of “ephemeral” experience for me, even if it is really hard to capture in a mainly written textual format, with a clear structure of beginning/middle/end and in the context of an academic thesis that follows certain markers. I cannot tell these experiences in a cyclical, momentous manner, but I try to portray them through poetic language and playing around with definitions. In my film project, because it has a more nonlinear structure, becoming cyclical and “sensuous” to some extent was easier, especially playing with the idea of installation and infinite loops. Loops of experiences of folklore, of ghost stories, of moments of feeling at home and “love”, my friends, myself, and strangers felt regarding Bard, or even regarding their own perceptions of the world. However, even infinite loops in installations have an end; technical resources like electricity, projectors, and loopers running out of energy and the material basis of art, are something easily overlooked but also a fact of artistic

endeavors. In this way, capturing the truly ephemeral experience, for example, is only possible when you do so yourself, as the viewer, as the reader. The temporal nature of even my installation, as it is only up for a certain amount of days, and the experience of writing this thesis, helped me gain an understanding of also the material and time-based structures that bind us to the physical world while at the same time, the magic and liminal elements of experience are happening at the same time.

I used a mix of primary and secondary research, finding primary sources like the sketchbooks, the Feitler House yearbook, etc., and secondary research about the history of the Hudson Valley and theory to contextualize these thoughts. I also use the tools of auto-ethnography when I engage with the ways that oral storytelling and folklore interact with my interlocutors and my research, as I was mostly told these stories and was the “main channel” which the information and media were passed through. I was privy to so much personal, banal, and creatively experimental work that I consider myself extremely lucky that all these different people were able to share these magical moments and projects with me, a total stranger for the most part. In this way, this text makes an interesting research project mixed with ideas, stories, thoughts of complete strangers, and in the context of the interlocutors I cited the most in this project, friends who are very close to me. The private and the public, the known and the unknown, have boundaries that may be clearly marked in official anthropology proposals, but in this project these distinctions became blended and intermixed.

I need to also introduce a few of my main interlocutors for contextual purposes. Here is a quick overview of interlocutors' backgrounds. The first interlocutor who shared ideas of home with me but also a ghost story is A.L. I had made new friends with him during the strange time before school started our senior year when we both lived in Tivoli. He had shared his ghost story with me, the night we met again, after two years of covid/remote school, etc., and he inspired me for much of my thesis to see ghosts not just as scary things but also as a way of believing in things outside of our jurisdiction. The first interlocutor who only shows up in the first chapter is P.B, an international student from China and a very extroverted and kind person. Another interlocutor is Y, another international student and a close friend of mine since my first year. G is another important interlocutor, someone who stayed on campus in our senior year and stayed on campus during the summer of quarantine. He is also an international student, but with roots tying him to the U.S. He is well known around Bard (at least in our year and the year below him) because he has eccentric political views and does non-machine tattoos. Another important interlocutor is K, a proposed social science major and active in Bard's political life. Another important interlocutor is R; she and I, in differing years, held similar positions at Root Cellar, and when we started talking, she mentioned also being interested in zines, punk, and subculture at Bard. X, another interlocutor, is an international student who had many spiritual experiences in her life, and she shares some of them with me. There is one more listed, M, who is also an international student from many different cultures. I myself conducting these interviews am an international student (German) and part of the LGBT community. I see Bard as my home,

tangentially, so like my own connections to Bard as home were also complicated by the fact that I am not from the U.S.

I also asked a few alumni about their experiences at Bard on the basis of ghost stories, party stories, and subcultures. One person who responded to me was S.L, a queer alumni; she helped me find ghost stories and also cleared up rumors and myths that were only half true. Another interlocutor that was important was another one of my older-generation interlocutors. He shared with me “secret knowledge.” He was a young adolescent when he worked late-night shifts at Bard in the sixties. There are countless others, like L, the security guard, who talked to me in passing and some whose stories were “retold” to me. Walking around, hearing stories, participant observation, and fieldwork is where most of my archival research came from. When I opened up my ear, I attuned myself and listened.

Chapter 1: Home

In this chapter, I will explore what "Home" means for a specific group of people, Bard students- past and present. To do this, I must first define what home is and what home means, and which qualities are most applicable in the context of Bard College. In this vein, I will introduce firstly the sociologist Shelley Mallet, whose definitions of home were very helpful for me to expand it to a wider concept. Mallet asks: "Is home, ...(a) place(s), (a) space(s), feeling(s), practices, and/or an active state of being in the world" (Mallet, 2004, p. 63)?

For my analysis, I would propose the theory that "home" can either mean the physical house, structure in which one resides, or a geographical place, within a state or nation boundaries or without: "In traditional definitions of home, from a European and Anglican standpoint, the home is ...introduced as a physical space and one that is dependent on certain characteristics, of a house"(Mallet, 2004, p. 63). But it can also mean all the things that Mallet introduces. Home can also be defined as a more complex system of social interactions. And furthermore, home can also be defined by one's own subjective opinion by creating, imaging, and laying claim to a space that encompasses more than its physical reality. As Mallet writes, "...an active state of being in the world"(Mallet, 2004, p. 63). I want to explore how people make Bard their home, not just because they simply live in it or have an emotional stake in the people surrounding them in the place, but because definitions of the home interact with us.

Keith Basso is another theorist who defines home, but even goes further than that to define more concretely the attachments we create to a place, and then later call it home, and sites of attachments in general. This he does in his text, "Wisdom Sits in Places." He introduces the idea of home being a place that you act in while it acts upon you, "Places, we realize, are as much a part of us as we are part of them, and senses of place—yours, mine, and everyone else's—partake complexly of both" (Basso, 1996, p. 19).

In the context of this chapter and Bard College students at large, home is an abstract principle of being the place you feel most comfortable in and where your social connections and support systems lie, as Mallet says, a bit later, about the idea of home as the place where relationships are formed. For example, "[Home]... symbolizes the family relationships and life courses enacted within those spaces" (Mallet, 2004, p. 63). She also says a bit further in the text that family and relationship ties can make a place home in times of crisis and change. (Mallet, 2004, p. 63). This will be the case at Bard if your first interaction with a place without a family is Bard.

I asked my interlocutors the same question, Is Bard home to you, and then delved deeper into their answers. I tried to interview a range of people with different families, nationalities, and backgrounds. A.L, one of my interlocutors, said about the subject of home, "Yes, I think Bard is my home...Especially spending the breaks here, due to Covid, I have spent more of my adult life here than in New York City; this is more my home than NYC."

This quote demonstrates that he could connect more deeply to Bard through times of upheaval and change. For him, adult life, this transitory period between being a teenager and making your own space in the world, having been spent at Bard, was the telling element of his transition of accepting Bard as his home. During the long summer interval, I met A.L. when there were no classes. He also started my interest in trying to ask Bard students about claiming home in their college. This interest was piqued, for example, when I talked to him in casual conversation and he mentioned that New York was not his home anymore as much. I had always imagined NYC as glamorous and that if my friends and family just lived closer than the 8-hour flight to Germany, my connections to Bard would be much less intense. However, hearing someone whose life was spent in close proximity to Bard and who also feels like Bard was his home made me think that home is so much more than the country and city you are from, or your background. Bard can be home, although it is not a real town or city. His perspective showed me that having your own private space, especially spending most of your adult life in a place, can make you feel connected to it. Another one of my interlocutors, who I will call P.B, also talked about their connection to Bard at a time of upheaval. P.B, who is an art major, extroverted, and with a great sense of style, said, "Me and T, as you know, really behaved like a married couple in the pandemic, with me cooking for him and he bringing home the bacon."

That sense of domesticity, for them, made Bard feel more like home to them than before. Being in this weird semi-kinship relationship with another Bard student and having this experience at a time of loss and grief in the pandemic made them feel

connected to Bard, even if not all their happiest memories were spent there. A few interlocutors also talked about how they felt like the physical space of Bard (or Tivoli) was home to them, either in the way of an absence of having no other place to call home or also in seeing Bard as Home, conclusively.

This fact of Bard becoming your home if you have no other place that is so is also talked about by G, an interlocutor who is also an international student. G grew up in Tokyo but has American family ties. However, just as much as my other international friends, he is heavily affected by the plane ticket prices and inaccessibility of long-distance flights. When talking about home, he said: "In a way, when I go back to Tokyo, which is home, I feel anxious to turn back, and when I'm here, I'm anxious to go to Tokyo. And when I'm in the city, I want to fucking go back, and when I'm home (here) and can't go to Tokyo, I want to go back to the city." This quote demonstrates exactly this point, of firstly being able to call multiple places home as G calls Toyko and Bard home, in the same breath. And also the concept of Bard being home even when he misses other places. I would argue that this yearning and feeling of a place that you want to escape from while you're there but also miss when you are gone from it is quintessentially what makes a place home. In German, this yearning and feeling of grief are built into the word "homesickness," "Heimweh," the multiplicity of feeling like you miss home and are nostalgic when you are somewhere else. On a website that I found, the author, who is bilingual, explains it like this, "wehe, an ache or sickness. It's an ache many of us have felt, but hitherto we didn't have a word to describe it" (Farley, 2020).

Further complicating perceptions of Bard as Home, there also were interlocutors who did not feel comfortable fully exploring Bard or who saw Bard as an entity as something they could not connect to. They had problems with feeling fully comfortable in the flawed institutional framework that cloaks Bard as a place and an academic institution. If it is racist incidents, incidents of classism, or sexism, there are many ways the Bard community and the campus itself can feel unsafe, or make Bard feel like it is not a place one cannot connect to as a communal space.

In this paragraph, I will focus mostly on issues of classism. K, a first-year student at Bard, talked to me about their problems with Bard as an institution. They talked to me about their perceptions of Bard as an institution and political agent. K talked about systems of community engagement in Bard, led by the students, and how Bard as an entity does not do anything to amend basic necessities or help disadvantaged students. They said, "The community helps each other, but Bard as an entity does not do that." Many of my other interlocutors, when I asked them about criticisms at Bard, mentioned the times basic necessities were not provided for them or how they had to fight to make every little change heard. There is also a problem with these community actions having a performativity aspect. K talked about the food bank, a place that is supposed to help students that do not have money to buy their own groceries, being unstocked for weeks on end. The most pertinent example of the result

of Bard not taking care of basic necessities was something K mentioned later in a conversation: "There was a student who was looking through the dumpster for discarded food. And people called campus security on them. And I was like no, don't do that. Just because it doesn't 'look' good for you, just because you're of a more privileged status, it does not mean it's wrong." People of many different backgrounds come to Bard, but the college, and even people in its community, sometimes do not act in very protective or communal aspects toward others.

K also noted that the Bard administration's continuously changing policies make life harder for students with less money to spare: "I wished Bard's administration would come and see how their policies (like raising tuition, food swaps in the cafeteria, changing prices, etc.) affected the people living with it every day." These aspects of othering and cruelty in handling socio-economic disadvantaged communities also can make it hard to want to explore Bard or feel like the space is entirely comfortable and communal, especially when seeing it in the context of a larger community. And this situation challenges notions of what kind of community you can feel comfortable in when the fact of lived precarious experiences is pertinent in an institution. Can Bard broaden a sense of community and make itself less top down and exclusive? This emotional detachment of Bard, alongside the lived reality of homogenous culture, and cruelty from students and administration towards disadvantaged students, made the building of community harder, although not unachievable. As K also says, "This does not mean that I do not want to stop believing something could change this."

Every break, when I stay longer at Bard, other students leave. I notice new secret doors opening, things standing open that were not before, etc. Maybe the key to deeply discovering Bard is to spend the time here when no one else is here. G, for example, the interlocutor who calls "Bard" definitely "home," had spent the whole summer of quarantine on the abandoned campus of Bard College. He also spent time at Bard in every break and interim between academic sessions. In a way, different from what Mallet talks about that, home does not just have to do with community and kinship bonding, but one can form a bond through an individual approach to home, as a physical place you connect with, by exploring for yourself even though that might also be a social process when you start sharing your notions of belonging with the nature, buildings, and environment you spend time in.

Being alone, with a space, and spending time with it by yourself, can make you be able to bond deeply with it. G also knew about all the secrets of Bard that I was privy to, having wandered and roamed the halls during breaks and quarantine. Nonetheless, in a different conversation I had with him, he mentioned Bard being the stoner/weirdo school. Being a "nerd", especially a stoner/weirdo nerd, is something that usually alludes to people spending much time inside in front of a computer/tv. However, I saw people exploring, roaming, and going outside. People were going outside who had expected to be isolated and hiding from the world. Maybe Bard gives one a space to explore outside of a more judgemental environment.

Bard as home, in my research, was not just illustrated through describing social and emotional connections but also conceptually. Bard students feel like they have the

freedom to create and dream of making a home in the spaces they inhabit at Bard. Outside of the bounds of Bard as an academic institution, I want to explore this dreaming up of space. Instead, I wish to consider the subjective claiming of space in your own dorm room or spaces you mark for yourself at Bard. Bard students often need to balance a tightrope of being allowed to change their surroundings: telling administration about their parties, etc., and the more illicit actions of just settling into areas for themselves. Home can be created by making a place home or by re-imagining the intent and purposes of a place. These ideas circle back to Keith Basso's idea of shaping and being shaped by the place that you live in. My interlocutor M talks about this in the context of his dorm room. He redefines every new place he moves to, as a new temporary home, through the things he takes with him; "I make it [my dorm room] home because I decorate it with my affairs, my books, things that are comforting to me." This quote also demonstrates that at least M has many different places he calls home. For him, every new room he occupies, wherever it may be in the world, becomes home to him. Through his answer, I can connect him and G, who has multiple homes, Tokyo and Bard.

The Bard campus can make you feel and dip you into a certain kind of different consciousness because of its vastness of space in tandem with the constrictions of not having everything available/ready at your door. And in this way, vastness also helps one see Bard as home "conceptually." Y, a fellow international student I talked to, also mentions this in the context of these restrictions making her able to feel more. And that these properties of Bard spur on imagination. She said, "Love, I think, is different at

Bard; it is so much stronger at Bard because all you have is forest, and your imagination takes you away." In this way, the conceptual pursuit of dreaming up space as a home is also easier, in some aspects, than "imagining" the space in an urban environment, as there is more ability for imagination. R interlocutor, who I talked to at the very beginning of the second semester, a fellow zine and Root Cellar fanatic, also, in her conversation with me, revealed the imaginative qualities of living and studying at Bard College. She says: "I saw this tent, and I thought, what if you just lived there, without anyone noticing, pretending to go back home to Cruger or Resnick, but you lived in the woods. [Cruger and Resnick are dorms]." In this one sentence, R reveals many things. First off, how Bard can be a magical place because of the freedom of space it gives. But also about how she could imagine freely and creatively imagined repurposing of certain aspects of Bard campus as alternative housing situations. Talking to R, I learned a lot about how Bard functions as a special place. A place that she can imagine being uniquely hers and shared by everyone at the same time. She preferred patches of certain woods as her favorite places but also did not seem to be taken aback or daunted by others rejoicing in loving and using the same spaces.

Bard can exist as a place that straddles this dichotomy of being both intimately one's own and openly shared. This idea of community and making private spaces public is another way of making a place home for yourself. I myself also had instances of using public space as private a few times at Bard. The first time I went to a big party as a first-year, a friend and I snuck off to the waste disposal site, off of the biggest musical organization space at Bard, Smog. We had a lot of fun, dancing around just the

two of us, in this space, at the waste disposal site, a little bit illicit, definitely not ours, or at our disposal, but also no one would notice, as because of Bard's hugeness, claiming these small public spaces for oneself or as part of one's community is also a way of making a place "home."

Bard itself also is a place that is squarely in the line between strict rules and regulations and avenues of openness as it changes and moves consistently during breaks, during night-time, when social atmospheres open. When I had lived on campus, I saw with my own eyes this switch after the faculty and administration left with my own eyes. The only outside eyes allowed to see into these inner secret workings of Bard College are the late-night food spot workers, security staff, and visiting friends. It really is like the story of the dolls coming alive at night in popular childhood fiction. Cinemas, used for lecturing, becoming places to socialize and watch movies, basements transform into speak-easies. They are reclaimed as sites of shared space or private space. At Bard, I have seen many self-organized, self-claimed spaces that flourished even though they operated under the nose of authorities, monopolizing structures of Bard administration, etc.

The shadows that lie over Bard at night, divorced from regulating and standardized procedures, immediately made me think of Timothy Pachirat's work. In which he describes the importance of visibly being confronted with ideas of what happens in the shadows. Timothy Pachirat is a political scientist who wrote an ethnography about working in a slaughterhouse called *Every 12 Seconds*. His idea of a politics of sight is to shine a light on the problems and cruelty instead of veiling them

or making them disappear into ambiguity. However, as Pachirat discovers, lighting up these areas and showing the misery can sometimes still lead to the distress continuing, even though people are watching now and seeing the misery (Pachirat, 2013, p. 247). As Pachirat says, "Paradoxically, an assumption of power through transparency also motivates those who fight to keep the slaughterhouse and related repugnant practices quarantined and sequestered from sight "(Pachirat, 2013, p. 247)... His theory of a politics of sight became interesting to me in the context of writing my own ethnography as I was inspired to think about what things you can or cannot see, about the going ons, at Bard College, and the lively subculture, and claiming of space, creatively that happens, under the nose of administration.

To further elaborate on home for this chapter, I want to bring in the concept of liminal space. Bard, as a living space, is inherently temporal and dispossessed. Dorms, even if you have a single or your own room in your dorm, distinctly are not students' property. Students need to leave their dorms for breaks and take all their things with them (or apply for winter housing). And every dorm entered has the same impersonal furniture and setup. The temporal nature of housing in Tivoli functions similarly. It almost creates a sort of liminal space after Victor Turner's conception of this. It creates a space where fully moving is never consummated. Where fully embracing one state to the next state is never completed. In fact, much of Bard's student life functions in this way, constant recycling and creating shadowy space, as Turner writes about liminal spaces. He also writes about the idea of liminality, meaning occupying both sides of a threshold. Turner sees this liminal state of being in the state between rituals- not being

integrated into society as a way of deconstructing the normative order. "Precisely, this existence in a sort of midway space is where the resisting group is situated when the ritual of initiation to one of the other worlds has not been achieved yet. The attributes of liminality or of liminal personae, 'threshold people, are necessarily ambiguous since this condition, and these persons slip through the network of classifications that normally locates states and positions in cultural space"(Turner, 1991, p. 95). Here Turner, in his text *The Ritual Process*, talks about the Ndembu of Zambia and explores liminality in the context of liminal personae, or individuals. But his analysis of this specific group could also be assigned to the way certain spaces function.

It is a known joke that many people at Bard like to talk about liminal spaces in all contexts. One can find many meme pages dedicated to Bard, talking about this iconoclastic joke or remark of liminal space. However, for example, when R talks about going to the forest and entering a special place, one that is campus but not really a campus, the ideas of liminal space become, although joked about, also very real. She says, "I once went to the forest before class, and it was so wet, I had to go back to class with muddy shoes, and I felt a little different from everybody else, a bit special. In the woods, you enter a different mind state. It's like you're on campus but not really on campus." In this way, R felt like she entered a liminal space shortly before class. A space where there are no real roots, rituals are not consummated, and open space is fostered, in one's own imagination, a space of creativity and change.

I explore what "home" can mean in many different ways in this chapter. One definition is the emotional bonds that one can form in a specific place, through

relationships. Another definition of home I explore here is the idea of home being a place that you miss, but at the same time want to escape from, a certain yearning for “home”, as in J’s example of how he defines home. Bard students make Bard their home, actively so through exploring the physical ideas of home by inhabiting and playfully engaging with the spaces Bard exists in by themselves or with others. They connect to it, on an emotional and community level, through the interchanging relationships and feeling of kinships, even if just between two friends claiming it as "home," even if just for one afternoon or just for one moment. Bard sometimes opens up new avenues for different spaces of bonding and intimacy to exist. The secrets, cloudy mysteries, and claiming of space that happens at Bard can be an almost better way of resisting institutional operations.. However, finding small pockets of home-making, and connecting to Bard, even just through a creative process and creative re-imagining of space, can be possible.

Chapter 2: Lore

A very important part of Bard student life and what defines a place as something they can bond to is its lore. In this chapter of my thesis, I will explore how lore appears in Bard society, from the most important signposts of alumni generations to small mundane pieces of lore and pieces of community building. The lore around Bard College also helps build up long-lasting intergenerational memory that cannot be enveloped, concealed by institutions such as Bard. Ben-Amos defines lore as follows: "Accordingly folklore is the learning of the people, the wisdom of the people, the people's knowledge, or more fully, the lore, erudition, knowledge or teaching of a folk" (Ben-Amos, 1971, p.4). The folk, in this context, would be Bard students, and the lore in this case study is the media and events circulating in the context of communal consciousness and knowledge that circulates outside of the mainstream patterns. I also take lore to mean all the stories retold and circulating amongst students and alumni. Although alumni usually only reconnect with Bard students directly through reunions, or phone calls, at admitted students day, the memories of generations of Bard students before us get passed down by the nearest generation of graduating Bard students one gets to know. And also surviving spaces of student engagement and DIY spaces. These spaces were built by students years before, not administration, and still hold the knowledge that is passed down.

An example of this is Root Cellar, the smaller punk music venue of Bard; knowledge of the sound system and how to book a space passed down from generation to generation of clubheads. This is the same for the Old Gym, the alternative theatre building that, although it is not anymore the space with music shows, other alternative parties happening there today, still hold the memories alive of these spaces. Much of the things that exist at Bard in subcultural traditions are not written down but passed down precariously through alumni internet forums with questionable sources, zines that are sometimes damaged, or people's memories of what other, older Bard students told them. This way of remembering, however, makes these memories much stronger. The act of wanting to pass down these memories, and representations of spaces, as they used to be, becomes an integral part of Bard society and makes these stories of lore folklore. Folklore transitions from tangentially connected stories and forms in-between different individual groups into a more community-based intentioned remembering. In this chapter, I will explore how this Bardian folklore is a subcultural transferral of memory and why this idea of the lore is important in building kinship systems in between generations.

Most of the Bardian folklore revolves around notions of the "subcultural." Hebdige, the main theorist I will be discussing in this context, evokes the sense of subculture as follows: "The word 'subculture' is loaded down with mystery. It suggests secrecy, masonic oaths, an Underworld. It also invokes the larger and no less difficult concept 'culture'" (Hebdige, 1979, p. 4). Bard subculture is one of the underworld, one of secret radio stations, mystery, and unspoken alliances.

However, I want to complicate these more mainstream ideas of subculture, meaning the underworld or the mysterious, in thinking it is also something outside mainstream ideas and functioning systems. Every culture of dissent, all the information that circulates in a way that is indecipherable and cannot be written down, is a subculture; As I am the interviewer, mundane memories and events, preserved or channeled through me, are subcultural. But only if it acts in larger systems of deviating from an institution, such as Bard. As Hebdige also says, subculture can mean so many different things, and it is mostly current in relation to whatever the “dominant” culture may be. Hedbidge says to this point, “The meaning of subculture, then, is always in dispute”(Hebdige, 1979, p. 4). Subculture means the culture that is in dispute or disagreement with the system and processes of things functioning in official parameters.

My whole foray into talking to alumni and not just current Bard students about myths, folklore, and connections to home, started when I could not find a radio interview that was mentioned to me by seniors who graduated before me. The radio file was corrupted as it was not properly preserved. And then the new clubheads overturned the old files by making a new website for a new generation of Bard students. The library was of great accommodation, finding written texts and older memoirs, but it lacked resources on subcultural or more underground student life. By interviewing alumni and finding alternative media of remembrance, I heard of occurrences that I probably would never have stumbled upon using normal library

research. I would have only found this out by researching these niche avenues, as many of the interesting objects of queer and subcultural history were not preserved officially.

In these liminal areas existing outside the dominant culture, sometimes the most interesting stories exist. Those that make us as Bard students able to connect to generations past. By exploring oral storytelling and listening to "stories," I found these memories of events past. Some of the indecipherability of memory has a quality that keeps stories alive more than before. I noticed that alumni were able to open up to me about stories that existed solely illegally or in the underground because either of time passing or because there were no real dates, or timestamps, on these things, and they were never recorded officially. The stories, myths, and legends that rank around Bard, the place itself, the lands and general lore about subcultural life that has popped up before, and research I was able to find, are a definite avenue of indecipherable and underground knowledge at Bard. These spaces and stories open up this liminal space that I mention in the first section of my thesis. A space rooted in one's mind helps build group identity against Bard administration and its rules. This is how Bard lore functions. As a liminal space, space and venue of hearsay, half-truths, and legends that make subcultural and whispered-about events like music concerts, DIY venues, etc., become much more powerful in one's imagination than if they existed on paper, in administration, or even social media to an extent. The lore of Bard, existing through passed down knowledge systems like me hearing alumni stories, also shows many of these subcultural events were organized in the shadows, if illegal or outside Bard's

jurisdiction. This will be demonstrated in my next paragraph in which I describe, spaces and sites of illegal activity.

Here are the words of one of my alumni interlocutors, S.L., who is an alumnus from the graduating year of 1993. "Thinking about campus lore - I remember stories about the (original) Ravines dorms on stilts. That they had been condemned, but we were living in them anyway." S.L.'s ideas about the Ravine dorms were later disproven. The "haunted" qualities of the Ravine dorms were just a subcultural idiom passed down by generations of Bard students. S.L. also claims that these dorms were designed as a senior project, a fact that many of the other alumni I interviewed echoed. However, this had more to do with the badly built structures of the dorms and the events that occurred in them, experimental poetry readings, and music events organized by students themselves. The lore that ranked around these dorms was later recreated to imply that there was something "condemned" or haunted when it was more true that they were places of illicit activities. I have noticed shadowy lines and mystical surroundings are often born out of illicit and underground activities. These rumors about certain places help to make them more "invisible", and also, in the long run, these rumors help keep these places alive in people's memory. In Bard circles, many people still have heard or know of the "Ravine Dorms." However, the rumors remain, although nothing very tangible and cohesive.

Another "site" of illegal activity was the underground radio station in the basement of Manor. A security guard, let's call him L, in the late 70s, said to me about a secret radio show happening there, saying, "One day I wandered in there, and I noticed there was a D104 microphone. I know this because we had one at home. As I picked up the microphone and was keying it... one of the students walked in. Male reddish-blond hair, he was tall. I remembered this because, man, did he get mad that I found their radio station. He swore me to secrecy, or he would beat my ass. If I told anybody about it, first time I'm letting that out. I think after 52 years, I'm safe." These two "stories" of folklore are two examples of Bard lore, and my interviews opened up pathways to intergenerational knowledge being passed down in an alternative manner. And that illicit sites of underground activities are kept from Bard as an institution by cloaking them in these mysteries.

Another example of intergenerational knowledge and kinship systems being passed down was the old Feitler House yearbooks I found. Feitler House was a vegan co-op since 1998 and got shut down recently. The co-op was shut down after Covid. However, the old yearbooks remain in the Root Cellar. Someone put pictures of protest in this DIY photo album, and even called this album a family photo album, which proves my point of generation of Bard students connecting and remembering not through official avenues but self-made DIY ones. A house dedicated to vegan living showed the ability of untraditional family and generational structures existing for a long time, as this "dorm" survived many Bard deans. In the Feitler House yearbook, there was a poem about being out all night in Tivoli, away from home, and coming home (meaning Feitler),

and seeing everyone sleeping. It's written by an un-named person, "A couple of weeks ago, I went to the bar in Tivoli. I got over there quick and took a walk, I was drunk and tired, and so I didn't get very far; I closed my eyes and said to myself, I could walk to my house and go to my room, and Piper will be in Bed, and A. will be in the yellow room. Feitler, you never let me sleep alone" ("Untitled," 1999).

This text really makes one think and reflect on one's own feelings of coming home from a long night and what community and family mean in an alternative context. This little text, 22 years old, almost as old as me, spoke to me like it was written yesterday. Her roommates and her house make her sleep at night; this is where she feels she has a family. As another resident wrote, "Feitler is my world." ("Untitled", 1999). These mundane aspects of everyday life, like the anonymous person writing a poem about what they feel after a long night out, showed the importance of saving things usually not archived. These small moments of intimacy, friendships, etc., can mean something to generations after. This poem provided me with the idea of mundane conversations and magic. Magic not in the way of the secret underground radio station, but mundane magic, of conversations, images, and situations I did not quite understand but could relate to anyways. Feitler's visions are not lost forever in the ether of badly archived or forgotten existence.

Feitler House painstakingly written recipes, and DIY artifices, of wanting to be remembered are not for nothing. Instead, they scream out, community.

After speaking to S.L., another piece of 'lore' about community was passed down to me. She had told me, that she felt part of a bigger story after she went on a march in Washington, just as I had felt part of a long history after simply hearing her stories of queer life at Bard. She told me about a queer community focused around watching mainstream television show. She said, "Queer student life: there was a group of us who gathered in that coffee shop next to Kline to watch Beverly hills 90210 every Wednesday, and we informally referred to ourselves as dykes for Dylan". Knowing about this group and asking more questions, I accumulated more and more information; for example, S.L opened up to tell me how it was like living as a lesbian at Bard in the 90s. When I had initially asked her to share this experience, she thought her experience was too singular to apply to me or be of interest to me. However, we both together experienced a feeling of community, and how our experiences were not singular, after thinking more deeply about how the community could mean, even such mundane things as watching a television show together. So the definition of folklore is coming into focus again, as these stories are more than only subjective stories told to another person but also a way of making community.

Remembering the other kinds of lore mentioned in this chapter, many of the examples I named do something similar. The stories told to me, although sometimes drifting into obscurity or "hidden" for a very long time, like the knowledge of the secret radio show the security guard told me about, also remind us of the community that once existed at Bard. The memories that are "non archivable", and exist through oral storytelling and channels outside of institutional systems and typical knowledge

systems, these memories become much stronger because they are not passed down in a categorized and preserved way. They can go on to continue, to live and breathe through other people's imagination. Much more might be lost, including the factual data. For example if Feitler House yearbooks were situated in the library they could be professionally preserved, scanned. However, The fleeting and temporal nature of this book, and the fact that it was easily accessible in literally an "open closet," meant I was much more enticed to read it and could feel like it was speaking directly to me. Sometimes memories that exist just in storytelling can become much stronger. "Lore" is so much more than telling stories; it is about the stories that circulate and become "folk" knowledge. In this way, lore becomes something more than a single person's experience when we keep remembering and connecting to moments of intimacy.

Chapter 3: Ghosts

Subcultural "lore", the stories that involve specific memories and individual groups to make up the consciousness of a community, are very important in the memory process. However, to enlighten another aspect of stories passed down, one needs to speak also about the most unarchivable and ephemeral of stories circulating at Bard campus: Ghost stories. The stories retold and maybe actual appearances that survived the longest and the most, at Bard, are people's sightings of ghosts. Ghosts survive; many of Bard's attempts to shut them down seem unsuccessful and they reappear repeatedly. Even Bard security, supposedly the logical and protective force of Bard, has been scared by ghosts, and security guards seem to be helpless against them. Ghosts are the ultimate unarchivable, as they are an experience of the ephemeral, even if the stories of ghosts are told as lore and passed on.

Because ghosts are the ultimate unarchivable, they open up the space for deviation from the norm. An important theorist, especially of the importance of building up magical belief and haunting, is Avery Gordon. Avery Gordon is a sociologist who also discusses ideas of haunting and hauntology as a way of not just building up stories of supernatural existence and making us believe in something more than ourselves. As Gordon says: "Haunting is a constituent element of modern social life. It is neither pre-modern superstition nor individual psychosis: it is a generalized social phenomenon of great import" (Gordon, 2001, p. 4). Gordon, in her book, describes

many of the aspects of myths, lore, and hauntings, which I will describe in this chapter of my thesis. Gordon writes about the ideas of hauntings, in the context of the disappeared, in Argentina. Of course, this research cannot encompass or be generalized to the topics of my thesis, but many of her findings on hauntology, in conjunction with alternative systems of knowledge-making, and theoretical ideas of what ghosts mean in their sociological reproduction of them, are very relevant to my studies. I think many of her ideas relate to ideas of ghosts, shadowy worlds, lingering and becoming more present, and how especially these memories of people long gone, things long gone (but not fully out of the imagination of a collective conscious) can be ways of resisting traditional ways of knowing or systems of strict rule enforcement. Her theories lend themselves really well to understand the force of specters haunting Bard. And avenues of resistance these specters breach. When I asked my interlocutors about ghosts, their faces lit up. Everyone had a ghost story to tell, either one that somebody told them or their own. Asking about ghosts opened up the ideas of things left unsaid, of the vagueness of not needing to adhere to the strict formula of the interview interlocutor format. It also helped them say and share things that were more abstract, intimate, and hidden.

To introduce "ghosts" at Bard, let me explore two ghost stories that I read by alumni at Bard, not current students. Ghosts seem to gather around similar places around Bard, although their stories might be different. An example of a ghost story being told from the 1950s is of the missing statue in Blithewood. Duncan Hannah, a painter who went to Bard in the 1950s, wrote about a statue of Blithewood in his book

Twentieth Century Boy. His writing, as it is literally excerpted from his teenage writings, is mostly convoluted and a bit chaotic. In this manner, I will paraphrase the story.

Hannah sees an apparition at "Blithewood", one of the former dorms at Bard, now a graduate study. This apparition is a female figure who, after his retelling, is the soul or spirit of a wealthy woman who killed herself. This woman's family apparently commissioned the building of the Blithewood estate, and when she came to visit the overseeing of the project, she fell in love with the architect called Zabriski. She was engaged to someone else, and when she returned from her wedding she realized her mistake of not marrying her true love and she was so devastated she killed herself (Hannah, 2019, p. 70).

Heidi Reischuck, a person who responded to my Facebook post on the 7th of February 2020, and fellow alumni, like Duncan Hannah from 1995, had a similar story about the ghost of Blithewood. But it was interpreted completely differently. Reischuck sent me a text called, *Strange Sights*; it is about ghosts at Bard and she or others have read it aloud at reunions. The story in this text is almost exactly the same story about an improper fiancée and her killing herself because of being heartbroken. But instead of the woman being a wealthy woman who commissioned the garden, she is the daughter of the architect. However, both Reischuck and Hannah agree that they saw a white figure at the same place in the garden. "One evening, while sitting in the parlor with friends, I swear I saw an alabaster female from outside the french doors that lead to the garden. The others saw it, too"(Reischuck, 2017). This fact is exactly what fascinates me about ghost stories, the ability of them to be so similar and yet have one key

difference, the ability to tell a "story" that survives generations after generations, not just with different details but also surviving differently as an ephemeral experience.

When I was asking my interlocutors about ghosts, they became much more vulnerable. Everyone had a ghost story to tell that somebody told them, and after telling the story, they were much more open to more intimate questions. Asking about ghosts opened up the ideas of things left unsaid, of not needing to adhere to the interview's strict formula, interlocutor format, and entrusting me to saying and sharing things with me that were more abstract, intimate, and hidden. Ghost stories were able to affect people in the long run. I, of course, in no way want to romanticize paranoia, hauntings that negatively affect people, etc. But the impacts of ghost stories at Bard added to the many other subcultural lores are astounding. These ghosts affect every section of Bard society. From security guards to cleaning crew to professors alike. These are all people, who I have heard ghost stories from. Once opened up, the possibilities of hearing ghost stories were endless. Even on my last day of research, a security guard, let's call him C, told me he had seen ghosts everywhere around campus: "From the Admissions building to Levy [Blithewood], I have heard of people seeing things, and hearing things, I myself have just seen some wispy stuff. Other security guards tell me these stories. I enjoy hearing them; I'm open to the idea of them [ghosts] existing." Ghosts seem to be continuous, never stopping, and at every corner of campus and Bard society if you care to look.

My friend A.L.'s ghost story shows many qualities of an "ephemeral experience." Ephemerality, as defined by the online dictionary, is "transience, transiency, transitoriness, An impermanence that suggests the inevitability of ending or dying" ("Ephemerality - definition, meaning & synonyms," n.d). A.L. had been visited by a ghost/or, more specifically, a demon during our first and second semester freshman year. He had slept on his friend's floor for a few months and showed his friend the ghost. He never saw an apparition, though, unlike the security guard who saw a physical change in his surroundings. But he had heard things, and others did too. He also told his ghost story really like an event, in different parts: Part 1, seeing the ghost, Part 2, showing the ghost and reacting to it, being scared and affected by it, Part 3, trying to get rid of it. Although very sensuously explained, his experience of the ghost is also a very ephemeral description of a ghost experience. As he cannot put into words, completely or succinctly, what the ghost made him feel, he uses many metaphors for it and tells a long story to describe one particular feeling, like when the ghost went through him. "I felt it go through my fingertips." His ghost story, although told with a storyline and facts strewn within, is very "transient". His experience when he feels the ghost is very impermanent and "of the moment". And although A.L. tries to weigh down his experience with facts, he is often overtaken in his retelling with the viscerality of the ghost experience. He is also scared of being ridiculed and not taken seriously enough, making these ghost stories viscerally being felt/seen so much more important and dramatic in his version. Many times in the interview, he says, "It definitely was not a prank; why would anyone do this." Although this text is not meant to prove if ghosts,

the lore of ghost stories is real or not, his imminent telling of the story, sentence by sentence what exactly happened to him, reminds of us Gordon's theory of ghost stories, anchoring one in the present and being ultimately ephemeral even if he tries to stay as factual as possible to not induce ridicule. He also tries to "catch" the ghost in recordings on audiotape and succeeds with this. But never can you completely transfer the experience and "knowledge" of a ghost experience to anyone else. "You wouldn't really understand ...if it didn't happen to you like it did to me."

When someone tells a ghost story, one goes into a different sphere of perception, making it more than a story. I even felt this as the researcher. There is also no way of anchoring down the ghost/trapping/catching them, at least in the stories told by Bard students for this fieldwork, making them the ultimate deviants, away from Bard's efforts to contain and conceal certain modes of thinking/ephemerality of subculture. They cannot even be caught by creativity or subculture but transcend those categories. For example, the alumni stories, the lore of times at Bard past, even though hard to follow back, or told in so many ways the details got confusing, were instances where archivable materials were present, but ghosts are exactly the things that cannot be archived or held in place. With the audio recordings, A.L. tries to catch his ghost experience but ultimately fails to prove that he had an objective and understandable experience.

Undefinable, unexplainable, always running from being pinned down, ghosts exist on these strange playing fields. X, another one of my interlocutors, talks about ghosts,

being able to catch mundane intimate moments, feelings and relaying those to her. "Their memories would come into my head like a USB port. Spirits are footsteps of memories." Ghosts, or spirits, can be the containers of these moments of mundane intimacy that I cherished so much, as endless moments of intimacy and connection, like in the example of the Feitler house poem. Ghosts are remnants from the past, reactivating nostalgia, making us remember, and reviewing and recirculating information. Moreover they also help open up the space for Bard students to see beyond their boring processes and obedience to academic structure, to open up subculture. As my other interlocutor, J, who I introduce in the home chapter, briefly says, " [Ghosts and supernatural appearance] add a crazy dichotomy to the boring rotting yellow walls of the dorms." The magical ways of thinking, the sheer experience of stepping out into nature, and experiencing magic, are something that can open you up to ways of thinking around these depressing walls, classes that seem repetitive or boring, or the claustrophobia of isolated nature.

Ghosts are a way for Bard students' imagination to run wild, for emotions and visceral feelings to be more than everyday, and reclaiming the space. Not just by remembering back to the past/and showing Bard's dark underbelly and archiving ephemeral lore, but also by making students able to think differently. For me, in different time zones and nonlinear times, after hearing all the ghost stories and imagining mundane moments of intimacy reoccurring and happening at every moment if we want. And for other interlocutors like J or A.L, ghosts are a way of thinking outside objective mind structures, and for X, to connect to ghosts and other consciousnesses.

A.L. was changed and affected by the ghost, living for some time after in paranoia and fear; for the next few years, he became extremely paranoid and afraid of the dark. After that, it made him paranoid for two years when he was alone at night. However, the way A.L. told the story too, although scary also for sure, it also seemed like it kept him curious about the world. As when I told him that Bard Security had turned a room into a broom closet after they suspected ghosts there and of another event where a secret door in Manor was bolted down. A. L was not spooked, the opposite in fact, "I know they might have thought it was weird, but I don't understand why they wouldn't have been curious." In this quote, A.L. shows how even the experience of "ghosts" did not hinder his mind from wandering off to curious play and developing new ideas. Although Bard, in this instance, might have changed the "ghost" room into a broom closet and tried to block the ghosts out of our subconsciousness, at least in individual people's memories, they keep reappearing and opening up new avenues of knowledge.

Ghosts are some of the oldest forms of folklore that I have been able to find and investigate at Bard. As a subcategory of "folklore", ghost stories are also subcultural ways of transferring memory as they open up avenues to knowledge "beyond" us. They are the true rebels of transferring memory, as they cannot be caught on tape by Bard and never "die". They remind us of our own impermanence and ephemerality of experience. Ghost stories also manage to capture the experience of an "ephemeral moment". They capture the moment of imagining a world and a space outside of the

everyday banality of drab and unimaginative dorm life and are the apex of the undecipherable and unarchivable.

Conclusion

In this project, I have shown different ways Bard students connect to definitions of “Home,” “Subcultural Lore, ” and “Ghost Stories.”

I listed how home can be defined by one's subjective opinion but also by creating and imagining small pockets of home. Or even simply just because you feel like it just is “home”, with no larger claims, connections, or “roots” that tie you to it. In this chapter, I explore the transitory nature of “homeyness,” of defining a place as home, and how its temporal nature does not make it lose validity. I also talk about how the “unarchivability” of lore and how its existence in domains and areas outside of the typical circulating system can make it much stronger and can build up better ways of memory storage and passing down lore without it becoming enveloped as a part of an institutional system. Even small mundane moments can become part of a bigger “story,” as shown with the idea of the organization Feitler House and its yearbooks.

I also explore ghost stories in the context of archivability, memory, and connections to a “place”, I explore how telling a ghost story, hearing a ghost story, “being a ghost”, is an experience that one lives and experiences “in the moment,” viscerally so. It is transient and cannot be captured, after or even during. However, going back to my other arguments, ghost stories also help us understand the way we make mundane moments of intimacy function, and connect us intergenerationally, like Bard does when we define it as home in every moment, like lore does when it connects us to stories,

knowledge, and practices before. Ghosts' "stories," these moments when you felt close to someone or "something" even, and help us see something "outside" our normal perception, see time as existing as nonlinear, and not built step by step but also all at the same time.

Collecting memories through shadowy avenues means building memories and bigger ties. Of small intimate one-second moments between friends and lovers across time, between ghosts and yourself, all existing in one continuous stream of consciousness, social memory, and haunting resurfacing and being enveloped again. I will end my thesis here with a quote from Duncan Hannah: "Back at Bard, the sky was so gray and foggy and misty that I realized I was alive! Walking down dirty black Annandale Road, breathing air, smelling the wet earth. ALIVE! I scream it at the fir trees...Alive! I wonder at the world. I am here. Now!" (Hannah, 2019, p. 70)

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Of Archives and Ghosts:
Of Memories and Storytelling

Senior Project Submitted to
The Division of Social Studies
and
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Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to the generations of Bard students past and present. Hopeful, disillusioned, and optimistic always.

This project contains two short multi-channel installations on both sides. The shorter multi-channel installation is a prelude to the other and combines ideas of mixing alumni footages of personal and domestic space, small moments of intimacy, and life. My installation is infused with dramatic moments, scary stories of ghosts that haunt us, don't let us go, like my friend Arlo's ghost story. Of stories that "change" people but also weave throughout them are small moments of dancing, joy, and ecstasy. In my view, the changing and ephemeral experiences of a ghost story are similar too and play in tandem with these small moments. These moments can also encapsulate and hold a lifetime in one breath, as I have often experienced. The plot of the second installation is the viewer, and the people within the scenes, entering a rabbit hole, a wormhole into another world, full of "ghosts.". The plot of the first shorter installation is one long moment of swinging on a rope, intermixed with other moments in the time and history of Bard.

The ambiance and "mood" of the installation room are to create an intimate and comforting space. I will lay out different materials and talk about them. I will also have the tapes and recordings of the many interviews and scenes I shot with a Mini DV Camera. (Those ones where the interviews were consented to be shown to the public).

This project is also very much connected to the written part of my project. The research I did for my thesis about "home," "ghosts," and "lore" inspired much of the stories and images in this installation. The layout itself was inspired by the spirit of "ghosts" I describe in the essay. Also, themes like "mundane moments of intimacy" and "ephemerality" I want to portray both in my written project and in my film. It is not a documentary of the research I have done but an allusion to its themes, and hopefully encompassing the "spirit" of my written project in a conceptual and emotional way.

The gathering of information, collecting of resources, and even having actors in this work was a feat of strength. And also meant me constantly communicating with people. Checking up on others, reminding them about when we should meet. Asked if I could use their material or which ones to use, again and again. I am not the most organized person myself, so to remind other people, this project taught me a lot about patience and what it means to work with a "community". I was also so scared to film many scenes, as I am not confident enough in my abilities to handle the camera, lighting, etc. I have shot some films in Berlin before and come in wholly unprepared as I am scared that my vision will not be good when I plan it out actually, or that people will not listen to my instructions. I would not say that all these feelings have gone away now, but I also understand that you have to learn to ask for help, that some people might not want to work with you, to accept when things will not work out and how to believe in my vision.

That my "visions" are just different, not worse, than what I usually see and that you can excite people with a concept, not just technical skill and that actors and director can each each other, how to work collaboratively.

I am also eternally grateful for anyone that helped me by holding a camera, not in a structured crew way but for me in a way that kept the joy of filming. I am eternally grateful for everyone who gave me their time, not guaranteeing their interview or thoughts would land in this impressionistic project. And for how many (mostly alumni) sent me their passion project, their books, their music that they wanted others to hear.

I built on other work I have made by having a sort of "trptych" structure of three different films at the same time. This at the same time alludes to religious imagery and brings in the spirit of ghosts. And also aids, a sort of non-linear way of storytelling. Learning about installation and structuring the installation in this sort of "trptych" way, I learned how much more I could do about non-linear plot and storyline, or how I could continue an idea without a storyline. And I hope this translates into this piece. Virginia Woolfs unusual plot structure in *The Waves* really inspired me, as we never know exactly who is speaking, and people are being recreated and created. As-well as Bataille's, *The Story of the Eye*

I did not want to go back to Bard, originally after taking a semester in Berlin and even taking a semester full of Bard Berlin classes, amazing philosophy and literature classes, in my hometown. However, I wanted to come back to Bard to be able to

combine my anthropological ideas and visions with film. To be surrounded by people who are open to strange new ideas. Creating something with your peer group, just for yourself, just for your friends, and following spontaneous whim with full fire and passion is something I have only seen at Bard. (Although I'm sure there is more out there). Researching alumni projects, I found this spirit of spontaneity and chaos, of radical ideas, buried and dancing from years, years before. And it's far from over.

I also hope that what I experienced when looking at old footages of Bard students, another future Bard students can look at and get an impression of a moment at Bard, and be inspired to do similarly weird projects.

As mentioned before, learning installation helped me envision this project wholly differently. The aspect of these films existing on a loop is also important for my wider concepts, as they themselves, in this way, become internal and much more cyclical than within a time frame like usual films do. However, of course, electricity and power from Bard will power these installations and also will go out of energy at some point. In this way, just like ghosts, my installations are supposed to remind one of the facts of life, like death, dying, like the power of Bard electricity giving up at some point. But also, the continuous and breathing nature of my video reminds us of the living and breathing qualities of "moments ."Installation always repeats. It almost gives independent life to my images. I also loved the irony of using relatively new technologies to showcase things shot on Mini DV, with which I filmed most of the

project. I wanted to breathe in modern life to these images. Archives done with new technologies, scenes of bard life shot with old technology, a full circle.

I also learned how to "let go" of memories in this project at the same time as capturing them. As a kid, I used to wander through cities and imagine all the lives people were leading in all the lit windows, how many different visions and perceptions would be there, and I was scared and fascinated by its sheer expansiveness. Of all these different thoughts existing at the same time. I have always been afraid of so many thoughts and feelings existing at the same time. I used to be afraid of shadows and people following me, of ghosts coming back up, or anything that would remind me that my experience was not one in itself but part of a bigger whole. I think I was also afraid of not being able to "catch" it all, of some of these people's lives ending or simmering into nothingness without me getting the chance to see them. I was deeply afraid, too, of things existing that I could not rationalize. However, through the process of this project, collecting ghost stories and collecting and letting go of memories, my own, alumni, and friends. I became less afraid, less afraid of not being able to grasp all memories at once, less afraid of not grasping something outside of my own knowledge existing, and less afraid to stop grasping so memories wouldn't be forgotten. I became less afraid of ghosts. And hopefully learned how to still, although letting go, also portray and capture certain moments that mean so much to me, to become part of a bigger process of remembering, and also capture the spirit of ephemeral moments to share with anyone who also has felt a deeply visceral moment of joy.

