

# OBSERVER

Vol. 7      No. 4      November 18, 1996

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# THE BARD observer

Ammandale-on-Hudson, NY, 12504 - November 18, 1996 - Issue 4, Volume 7



"Do or do not...  
there is no try."  
-Yoda

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Bill, Election '96

photo: Seze Devres

## Bard Students Rock the Vote

by Stephanie Schneider

"America has voted," Clinton said during his acceptance speech, which Bard students crowded into deKline to watch. All night Americans, Bard students included, witnessed the results of people across the nation casting their ballots for the 1996 Presidential elections.

When a Bard student votes, the question becomes not only which candidate to choose, but by which method to choose, whether it be to register in Dutchess County or to mail in an absentee ballot. That choice is not always so easy.

Bard student Bryan Higbie couldn't vote in this election due to confusion about where exactly he was registered. When he asked for an absentee ballot, his home-town election board told him he was registered in Dutchess County. He then proceeded to call Dutchess County,

who told him he wasn't registered there, either. "I think they make it difficult for people in general [to vote]." He said that making voting so much of a local issue is ineffectual because people are mobile and "boarders are so ill-defined these days."

This year did prove to be easier for most students who wished to register in Dutchess County, and it was also the first year voter registration was available at student registration day at the beginning of the year. Resident Director Allen Josey said this was made available to encourage more students to vote. About 230 students registered to vote at the beginning of the year, according to Josey. He said that he would like to see this registration drive continued next year and explained that for him, it is more important that students simply vote whether it be locally or by absentee ballot. He recalled that at registration, "We weren't pushing a particular issue. A lot of people chose not to register."

Bard student Julia Wolk was assisting voter registration that day and said, "We got a really good response." She estimates that many students voted this year, adding, "There's a real myth about the apathy of students at Bard." She described the political scene on campus as "pretty active." When Josey visited the polling place at St. John's

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## Election

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Episcopal Church in Barrytown, he was pleasantly surprised to see about 12 or 15 Bard students there. "People are actually going!"

The Dean of Students Office encouraged students to use the shuttle system which altered its route to include the polling sight. The daytime shuttle driver, Wes Nordfelt, said he drove approximately 26 students to the church and suggested that the evening shuttle probably had many students as well. "A lot of people have been driving. I saw one woman walking," Allen Josey commented.

Josey said that in the past, students have had to travel down to Poughkeepsie to plead for the right to vote in Dutchess County and said that since this year it became much easier, students should be aware of the struggles in the past and make "more of an effort" to vote. Past struggles have been mainly with students claiming residency. Previously, students have been asked to fill out a questionnaire which was designed to prevent college students from their civil right to vote, according to a letter sent out to the students October 31 by Dean of Students Shelley Morgan and Allen Josey.

Josey mentioned that some local politicians have shown resistance to student voting, and when it comes to local issues, a lot of students are not aware of what is happening. "That's where the rub comes." Josey also said that the fact that the majority of students do not pay property taxes causes some apprehension on the part of local residents. But he concluded that students "should have the right here."

Julia Wolk remarked that she sees it as very important that students get involved in local politics and register in Dutchess County. "It's really valuable even for people who aren't going to be here for very long." She cited the issue of privatizing Annandale Road as one local issue which directly affects Bard students.

Getting involved in local politics is what one Bard student, Anja Brogan, decided to do. She, along with a coalition made up of professors and students, organized the Catch-22 Challenge Solomon project. The project consisted of students traveling door-to-door administering a questionnaire to educate voters on just how well informed they were about their representative Jerry Solomon. "We weren't out to bash Solomon," Brogan said, but rather to "educate the people in the district."

The coalition traveled to both Hudson and Red Hook where the students and professors would ask questions concerning issues such as gun control, abortion, and budget spending, and then would check the answers against how Solomon stands on each issue. Brogan said that she recalls only one person agreeing 60 percent with Solomon while the rest averaged 20 to 30 percent. She said many were surprised about how little they knew about Solomon.

Professor David Kettler, a member of the campaign, said that the majority of the people strongly disagreed with Solomon. "Well over 80 percent [disagreed strongly], many of whom had thought of themselves as Solomon supporters."

Kettler said he thought the campaign was definitely a worthwhile experience, both in getting professors and students to work together and also in getting students involved in local issues. The campaign, as Brogan stated, was not necessarily expecting to defeat Solomon but was more out to educate. Kettler said that this was still a rewarding campaign and succeeded in involving students with the local contingency.

Along with this, Kettler sees it as more beneficial that students register locally. "There's something bizarre about people living in a place

## Notebook

by Meredith Yayanos

Nothing has happened recently. But we can pretend it did.

Congratulations to the new senior class officers: President Josh Diaz, Vice President Lisa Jarvis, Secretary Eve Stahlberger and Treasurer Justice Platt. When contacted by the *Observer*, President Diaz divulged some of his ideas for the tent party, foremost among them, the possibility of hiring Mexican Elvis impersonator El Vez for entertainment. He also acknowledged a brilliant pledge collection scheme devised by student Bryan Shelton to send letters to alumni asking them to become Keg Sponsors. Each keg donated will have be branded with their name and when tapped, Diaz himself will announce the name of its corresponding alumni over the loudspeaker.

The Student Film Committee bolstered its already stellar reputation with last Friday's screening of the cult classic, *Planet of the Apes*. Students hooted themselves hoarse as Charlton Heston delivered such golden phrases as "get your stinking paws off me, you damn dirty ape," "I'll kill you, you filthy babboon," and "damn you, damn you all to hell." An interesting tidbit: the leading female role of the ape doctor was actually performed by the mother of two Bard students: junior photography major Brooke Jacobs and her sister Sage, a '95 alumni.

"My mouth feels kind of tingly." Two students were rushed to Northern Dutchess Hospital last Tuesday after consuming what they had believed to be wild grapes from vines covering the walls of Albee. The fruits were actually a particularly pungent variety of berry with a strong, somewhat nauseating aftertaste. After eating a few of them, the students realized their error and called EMS. Luckily, the berries were not poisonous and the students were returned home in a matter of hours. One of them laughingly recounted the prescription given to her by the resident doctor regarding follow-up treatment, which stated simply, "do not eat any more berries."

Recently, a large human turd was found in one of the Seymour basement showers. Discovered early last Sunday morning by a resident, the nasty business was quickly disposed of, but there is no denying the trauma this incident has induced. As one resident remarked incredulously, "I can't believe someone could do something so premeditated." Another stated, "it's already bad enough having to shower in the basement...now I'm so loathe to go down there that I only bathe once or twice a week." Students were notified that the cleaning would cost the dorm up to a \$300 fine, but as they refuse to take any more crap, the matter has been dropped.

and having no human connection with the people they see going to Grand Union." He said that he feels there exists the myth of how Bard students see themselves as somewhat superior to the local people. "I find it peculiar that here we live and nobody has any idea about power structures in the immediate community."

Brogan said she was disappointed with the students' overall unwillingness to involve themselves in local politics and sees a good deal of disinterest. "It stems from the feeling that they don't feel they can make a difference. I did the little that I could. It's important that students get involved in local issues. If you're involved with your [home] community then be registered at home, but if you don't really know, it's easier to get informed and have an impact to be registered here."

Keeping in touch with hometown issues is just the reason why some students still choose to vote by absentee ballot. Bard student Maysoun Wazwaz said she voted by absentee ballot because she wants to still assist her hometown of Chicago while being at Bard. "I don't know as much about New York State. I know about the problems in Chicago. I think it's important to be involved, period. Politics go beyond the local region as well and it's important to not forget the broader picture."

## Security Beat

by Jordan Parkerton

On Halloween night a student was carried out of the Fisher Art Center on a stretcher after drinking varnish. In response to the rumor that the student had been given the substance to drink, Shelley Morgan mentioned that a friend of the student began the rumor.

The incident occurred at an Art Club sponsored event at Fisher. During the party the student had mistaken the varnish, because it was in a juice or soda bottle. It cannot be disclosed whether or not the student had been intoxicated. However, Lisa Sadowski has confirmed that prohibited substances, including alcohol, were there.

At the arrival of the Bard Emergency Medical Service, security, and an ambulance, the student had already collapsed. Due to the fact that EMS is strictly confidential, it can not be confirmed that the student was conscious at the time. After two days in intensive care at the Dutchess county hospital the student was released in good condition, and has returned to classes. "This is not something similar to what we've dealt with before, and hopefully will not have to again," stated Lisa Sadowski.

This event was only one of several tumultuous incidents which occurred between Oct. 25 and Nov. 5.

A car fire of unknown origin occurred Oct. 28. The car, a blue Toyota, was in the Kline parking lot at the time of the incident. Owned by a current student, the Toyota had been parked there for several months. The blazing fire was noticed by a student while driving past. The Dutchess County Fire Department arrived at the scene shortly. The car, which remains in the same spot, was severely damaged.

That same day, a large envelope on a student's door at Seymour was set on fire, scorching the door. The New York State Police are investigating.

A leaf fire occurred outside DeKline the following week.

A chimney fire occurred at a student's house, burned the phone lines, spread around the house, and began to burn the shingles and plastic underneath when first noticed. A Bard student and another resident put out the fire themselves.

Late Halloween night, a few students were involved in charging stolen fire extinguisher at the Old Gym. Lisa Sadowski warned that students who tamper with fire extinguishers and fire alarms will be charged with a \$100 fine and further disciplinary actions. The day following Halloween, a car across from Tewksbury got egged. It was a mess.

## Lock Your Doors

by Allen Josey, Resident Director

As many of you may or may not know, there has been a disturbing amount of theft taking place on campus this semester. The vast majority of these have been in and around residence halls, and would have been preventable if only residents had locked their doors. I know this can seem like a nuisance and something that is not really necessary, however it is clear that we have a problem and that the community needs to be made aware of it so that you can make educated choices on taking precaution to safeguard your belongings.

Since August 22nd, there have been 20 reported thefts that have occurred in and around the residence halls alone. Additionally, there have been 11 other thefts

and various acts of vandalism other places around campus. There is no way of knowing how many of these thefts were carried out by Bard students, nevertheless, it is happening and you should be made aware of these disturbing facts.

Items like bikes, TVs, stereos, money and especially laptop computers make up the bulk of the items stolen. The estimated total value of all the items stolen from residence halls this semester amounts to \$11,940!

For those of you in doubles or triples, remember that when you do not lock your door, you are putting your roommate at risk of being vandalized. If you have lost your keys and just have not gotten around to getting a new set, I urge you to go do it and protect yourself. The time and charge for getting new keys is less of a burden than coming home to find your \$2,000 computer missing.

Lock your door!!

### Stolen Items 8-1-96 to 11-13-96

Date	Location	Items Stolen	Value
8-22	Keen South	Bike	\$ 550.00
8-23	Oberholzer	Air Purifier	100.00
8-26	Honey House	Swiss Army Knife	100.00
8-27	Recording Studio	VCR	460.00
9-3	Gym	Speakers/Power Amp	300.00
9-4	Wolf Lounge	TV, VCR	UNKNOWN
9-6	Keen North	Discman, headphones	250.00
9-8	Bourne Lounge	Rug	100.00
9-8	Bourne Lounge	Stereo	250.00
9-8	Outside Bourne	Bike	2000.00
9-11	Security Parking Lot	Bike	UNKNOWN
9-16	Kline	Money	100.00
9-16	Student Center	Portable CD player	125.00
9-16	Roor Cellar	Record player	125.00
9-18	Kline Commons	Checkbook	UNKNOWN
9-22	B&G	Wisk Detergent	86.50
9-29	Outside Leonard	Bike and Lock	719.00
9-30	Gym	Wallet and keys	100.00
9-30	Tewks Storage	Misc Items	UNKNOWN
9-30	Outside Robbins	Bike	600.00
10-2	Seymour	Laptop computer	500.00
10-3	Tewks Storage	Misc Items	450.00
10-3	Outside Kline	Bike	640.00
10-10	Robbins Lounge	Drapes	600.00
10-20	Bourne	Laptop computer	1200.00
10-21	Kline	Bike	400.00
10-25	Robbins	Bike	500.00
10-25	Manor Gate House	Child's chair	UNKNOWN
10-31	Library	Cash	80.00
11-8	Samuel's Coffee Cart	Cash	48.00
11-10	Robbins	Cash	78.00
11-10	Bourne	Laptop Computer	2500.00

## A Look at Writing on the Wall

by Meeka Bhattacharya and Jeanne Swadosh

Does this look familiar? There have been ongoing incidences of BiGaLa signs being defaced on campus over the semester. Reaction has ranged from memos sent to all students from Dean of Students Shelley Morgan and President Botstein as well as a forum to address the issue.

Julia Wolk, a co-chair of BiGaLa and facilitator of the forum, felt that this kind of defacement was demoralizing to BiGaLa and the Bard community in general. She felt threatened by the implication of violence communicated in the defacement of these signs, referring to it as a "death threat."

"Bard is changing and becoming more conservative as the rest of the country does," Wolk said. She also said that in the Forum participants were "going around the issue" by addressing concerns about the right to freedom of speech.

Shelley Morgan, who also attended the forum agreed that it brought up discussion pertaining to freedom of speech. However, as a student pointed out, there are ways of expressing one's thoughts (through the *Observer* or

open dialogues during the forums) other than threatening fellow students. Morgan also indicated that the homophobic contingency is comprised of a very small number of students, maybe even one or two. Wolk pointed out that the handwriting on the signs was all the work of one person.

According to Wolk, there was a feeling of paranoia present at the Forum that somehow these signs indicated that BiGaLa "was going to get you," which she found incredible and hard to explain. "The idea was that if BiGaLa is going to put up signs, they are giving space to the death threats and to hate," Wolk said, "It's like blaming the victim."

The feeling that Bard is growing conservative is not shared by all. President Botstein cited that twenty years ago at Bard there were only formal dance parties whereas today the Drag Race is an accepted and popular event. He continued by saying that anonymous threats and defacement of signs and artwork have always been present at Bard. He does not see the situation escalating into physical attacks. Whatever anger the defacer possessed has been expressed in this "cowardly" manner. Nevertheless, additional security measures were taken during the Drag Race, according to Lisa Sadowski, Head of Safety and Security.

Botstein believes these homophobic incidents were the work of people either visiting

the campus or employed at Bard. Regardless of who the perpetrators are, Botstein takes a firm stand against such behavior and said it would not be tolerated.

"The least effective is searching out and punishing somebody," Botstein said in regards to what measures would be taken if the suspects were found. He asserted that "one has to look at the question of teaching and changing people's attitudes."

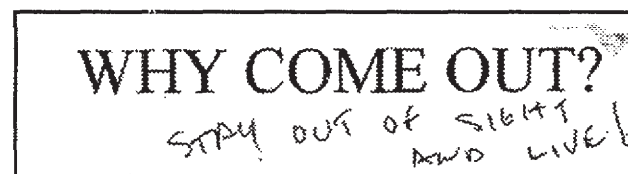
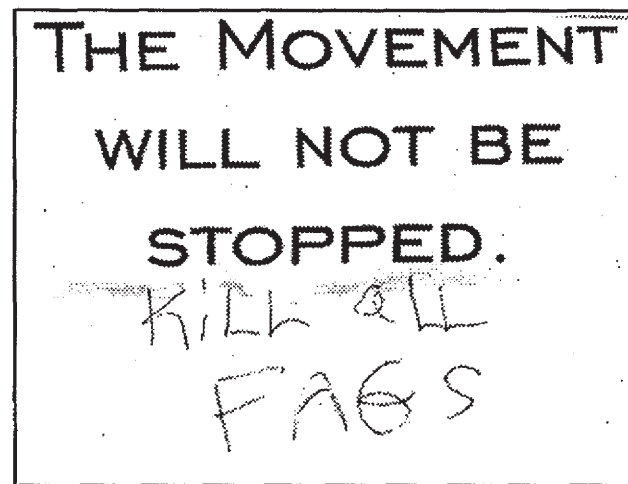
"This is a learning institution and one has to understand that part of learning is unlearning" explained Botstein. More disconcerting than the defacement, said Shelley Morgan, were the "people who are seeing this happening and not saying anything about it."

The overall feeling of the administration is that there are more civil and constructive means of voicing opinions and concerns over matters of sexual orientation. President Botstein said that people don't know anything about what they hate and that hate begins with insecurity.

"People should feel free to express their prejudices," he said, referring to the open forum in which students should have expressed their diverse views on sexual orientation without fear.

Still, there are lurking fears, as student Elizabeth Solis pointed out. "So far nothing has happened, but it can happen anytime."

### The Pros and Cons of Graffiti



In response to the recent appearance of violent vandalism (above) student Karen Sneider put up sheets of butcher paper in the stalls of the Old Gym women's lavatory (right). Sneider hopes the paper will provide a more positive outlet for student opinions on sexuality, or any other concerns they wish to air.

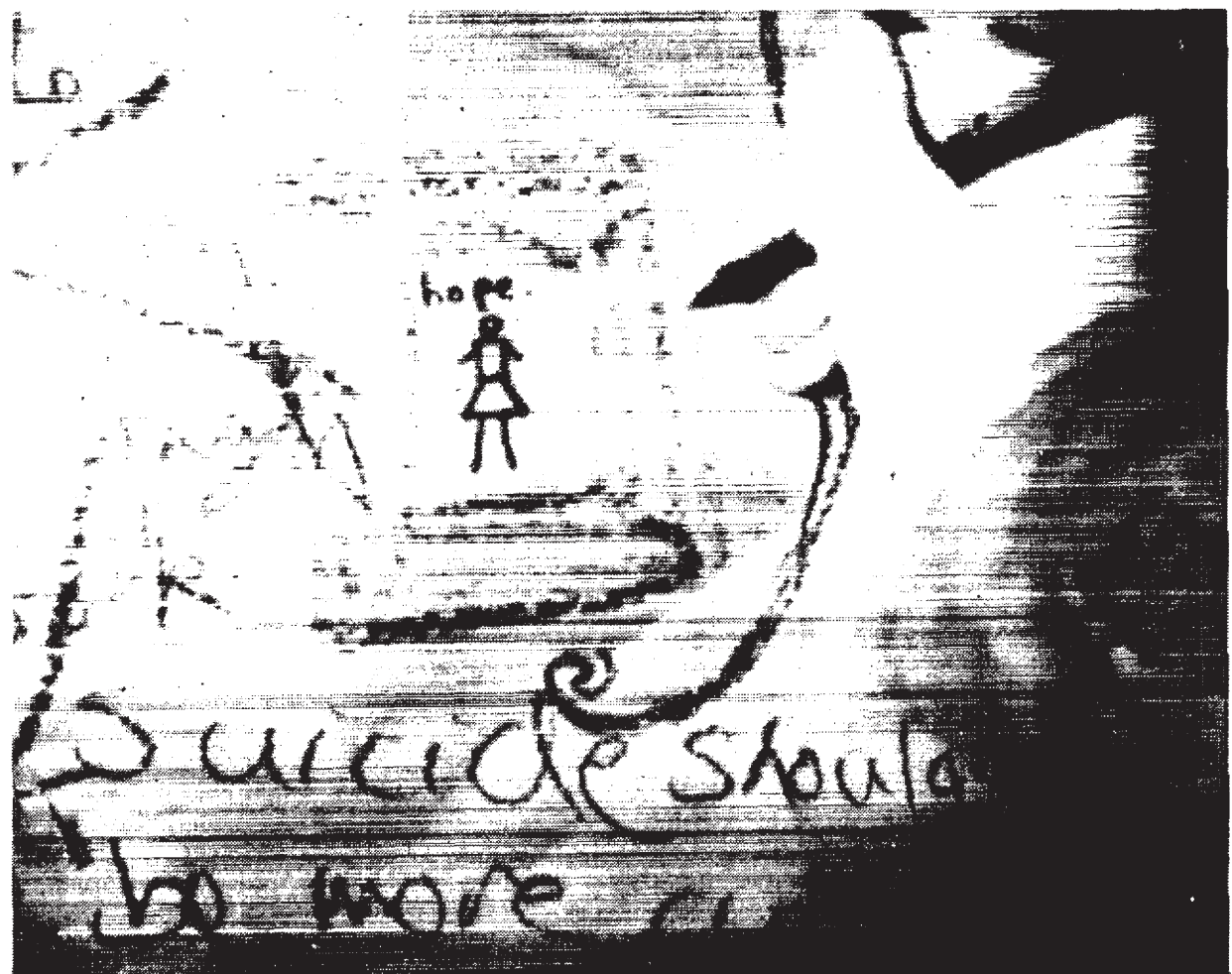


photo: I. P. Frellie

## Authors Speak at Bard:

Joanna Scott

by Meredith Yayanos

Author Joanna Scott is a literary case study if ever you saw one. Author of the highly acclaimed novel *Arrogance*, recipient of the MacArthur Prize at the tender age of 31 and more recently a finalist for the '95 PEN/Faulkner Award, Scott is a powerhouse. Her collection of short stories, *Various Antidotes*, dives undaunted into the dusty repositories of science and medicine, dredging monsters both real and imaginary from their volumes. They are extraordinary figures of palpable beauty and realism. After reading her unflinching tale of Dorothea Dix, samaritan of the criminally insane, or her account of a blind, brilliant 18th-century beekeeper, one might expect Scott to affect an unapproachable demeanor, or to be, as a critic described one of her novels, "cold as winter eelgrass." This turned out to be quite the contrary, though after our Paul West experience, I don't think anyone was sure what to expect. Certainly not a petite and cordial woman emitting guttural yowls and coos onstage as she read a recent work entitled, aptly, "YIP." But there she stood, yipping and yowling, and we adored her.

"Bard is a strange place," Scott said in the minutes prior to her reading, "and so are my stories." She is one in a seemingly endless train of contemporary writer-friends brought here by professor Bradford Morrow, who introduced Scott as "an expanding universe unto herself." Prior to the reading, she spoke at length to Morrow's contemporary fiction class about her intent to make scientific biography more accessible, and her predilection for case studies from historical annals.

"I am a little, no, a lot terrified of the contemporary world," she laughed. "So I go to history because it's a more malleable text...Once I throw objectivity out the window, everything seems to get solved, and my stories work." Skeptical of science's tendency to exude an unapproachable language or expertise, Scott believed one goal of *Various*

# Entertainment

*Antidotes* was to render more human, if not entirely accurate portraits of famed doctors and scientists.

"Medical language presumes an articulate logic that appears infallible...It locks you out. My ambition was to go after that presumption of 'we know and you don't,' and bowl it over." Which, if one looks at her stories, seems to have been a successful endeavor. There's a easy balance between her dialogues, an almost musical quality to their rhythm. Students remarked on the novelistic sweep and scope of the stories' action. Scott affirmed that some of the stories in the volume were "failed novels" that she salvaged by turning into short stories.

Scott expressed intense admiration and empathy for those she portrayed, aware as she was that many of them were fatally flawed in their logic or intentions: "What does it mean to have ambition and to fail in that ambition, or to crush people who get in its way? It means that ambition is going to fail."

"What I want to know and don't think I do is where the payoff comes in...whether the work in itself is satisfying, or if there's a final disappointment...there's a kind of madness that arises in us because we want to understand."

Scott's reading seemed to focus on that madness. She began with a story entitled "Americana: A Souvenir," which is separated into two distinct narratives: that of the character Merlinder, who is inaccurately believed by others to possess the mental faculties of a small child, and Justice Howe, caretaker of the subterranean Howe Caverns, which Merlinder visits and, believing it to be the location of her spirit before it came to be housed in her current body, causes a scene.

Her story "YIP" tells an account of a famous playwright who becomes transfixed by a young autistic boy who makes extraordinary sounds. The playwright becomes convinced that to stage a production starring the boy will be his crowning achievement. Hence, the aforementioned yowling. Both stories elicited quite a response from the audience: for days afterwards, the campus rang with enthusiastic yips.

## Jeffrey Eugenides

by Amy Kathryn Chesbro

He did not descend upon us like a bolt from the blue. No, Jeffrey Eugenides was honest. In his visit to Brad Morrow's class, Jeffrey Eugenides was faced with many theories about himself and his writing. Attendees attempted to pin him with "flagrant" gothicisms, much use of allusion, and of being influenced by authors he'd never read. Jeffrey Eugenides took all the theorizing with much patience and humor. He listed Nabokov and Marquez among his influences.

Of Eugenides' novel, *The Virgin Suicides*, much conversation was held about his persistent (and refreshing) evocation of the senses. Brad Morrow commented: "I think this is the smelliest book I've ever read." He meant, of course, that *The Virgin Suicides* was full of odors (no, there really is no very polite or poetic way to say that a novel reminds the reader of his/her sense of smell). In response to this, Jeffrey Eugenides promptly quipped, "The Limburger of Literature." In the small sampling of Eugenides' work I've read, he often writes of effluvia. In fact, he said in class, smiling: "For some reason, bodily fluid is my muse."

At the well-attended reading, Eugenides read his currently published "Air Mail," a semi-autobiographical story about an undergraduate on a trip around the world. The main character, Mitchell, is afflicted with amoebic dysentery while on a small island. He spends weeks fasting in an attempt to starve the amoebae, and while he does so, he seems to come a step closer to enlightenment. While ill, his mind is more brilliant from the fast (as digestion takes so much energy). Throughout sickness/enlightenment, Mitchell writes airmail home to his misunderstanding family and friends. In the conclusion of the piece, Mitchell casts off his old self at the same time knowing that his parents will never understand how he has changed...what he has become.

Eugenides' presence, and portions of the story he chose to read, made more clear his unique sense of humor. For example, other people afflicted by dysentery are also mentioned in "Air Mail." One man contracted dysentery, and as Eugenides put it, he was "laid low by a salad." This statement is at the same time hilarious and grim. The prospect of contracting amoebic dysentery has never been too funny. However, the thought that something as simple as a salad could make one deathly ill is the brand of humor in which Eugenides excels.

In Morrow's class, it was mentioned that Eugenides' work had a mythic quality. *The Virgin Suicides* is set in Eugenides' Michigan hometown. The novel details the suicides of five cloistered sisters, and the following reaction of the community. The experiences of puberty (discovering the opposite sex, feeling alienated, being misunderstood and tyrannized by one's parents) are skillfully evoked by Eugenides. In effect, Eugenides has created a myth of the post WWII American teen experience, and the American experience in general. I am not suggesting that he wallows in Americana. No, Eugenides goes beyond the white picket fence. The first girl to commit suicide leaps to her death, impaling herself upon that same fence. He is channelling the secret heart of America today, and poking fun at its every institution.

Jeffrey Eugenides made no attempt to conceal the semi-autobiographical nature of both *The Virgin Suicides* and "Air Mail." During Morrow's class, Eugenides stated, "I grew up with three brothers, so there was a sort of foreignness with a house of girls." So in *The Virgin Suicides*, also, the Lisbon girls are foreign and idealized. A seed for the plot of *The Virgin Suicides* was planted when his nephew's babysitter had told him that she and her sisters all tried to commit suicide.

Eugenides' work relies heavily upon his experience, which he focuses perceptively though the mind of the writer. It is difficult to describe the quality in Eugenides' writing which takes his plot structures out of the realm of the mundane. The suicides of five sisters are turned into prophetic events in *The Virgin Suicides*. In "Air Mail" an undergraduate comes closer to enlightenment while floating on his back with amoebic dysentery. Granted, the enlightenment bit at times was a little heavy handed and corny, but mostly the story had something for everyone. World travel, severe intestinal discomfort, and a spiritual awakening. The trend here is that Eugenides is able to endow ordinary circumstances with mythic properties.

Jeffrey Eugenides' visit was enjoyable. He seemed an author with whom one could chat. In other words, he did not give me the impression that he thought he himself put the "L" in Literature. I wonder if our children's children's children might not read *The Virgin Suicides* in high school, as it may be considered a sort-of document of the post WWII era. Not too sunshine-and-daisies, but not too bleak, either. Eugenides' character seemed to reaffirm his work both are not afraid of depth or of humor.

# THE BARD observer

## "Ill" Familia

by John Holowach and Chris Van Dyke

Some famous guy once told some less famous guy, "You can take my money, you can take my wife, you can take freedom, but you can't take my soul." This person obviously had not seen "Il Familia." I did. This play took my soul, did a little soft shoe routine on it, chewed it up, and spit it out. In other words, it was bad. Really bad. In fact, it was the worst play I have ever been unfortunate enough to see. It was worse, even, than the musical version of "Waterworld." I realized that no amount of cold showers would ever make me feel free of this utter mediocrity, nay, remove the pungent stench of this stinking theatrical suppository. So I decided to have a talk with myself, to try to probe my true feelings. The two split personalities I will dub, oh, Sachmo and Eggplant.

Sachmo: Hey, Eggplant, what did you think of "Il Familia" the other day?

Eggplant: I thought it sucked.

Sachmo: That's strange. I thought that this performance portrayed the conflicts housed within the human soul, the underlying message of emotions, struggling to escape from within a body unable to express itself. When Liam Neesson was crying at the end, saying, "I could have saved more..."

Eggplant: You're thinking of "Schindler's List."

Sachmo: Oh, "Il Familia." Yeah, I thought it sucked too.

Eggplant: And how about the way they mispronounced all those Italian names?

Sachmo: Don Corleone never would have put up with that in the old country!

Eggplant: If I could have got that director into a toll booth in New Jersey I'd have...

Sachmo: Yeah, Marlon Brando did redeem the play.

Eggplant: You're thinking of "The Godfather."

Sachmo: Oh, "Il Familia." Yeah, it sucked.

Eggplant: What did other audience members think?

Sachmo: Yes, in fact, I do. Ella\* turned to Orval\* halfway through the play and said, "I'm in pain." Orval gave her a reassuring hug and said, "I hurt too."

Eggplant: Do you know what I find ironic?

Sachmo: Yes I do, as a matter of fact, seeing as we are both occupying the same mind.

Eggplant: Oh, yeah, you're right. Anyway, it's ironic that the director admits that she wrote it.

Satchmo: Yes, but beside that, the director admits to the inferior quality of the play, flaunting it so by placing an awfully brutal rejection letter right there in the program.

Eggplant: I agree, yet it was even more pitiful that the play was advertised on posters as being "pointlessly pornographic." Perhaps the "-ly pornographic" should have been removed, thus accurately describing the play as "pointless."

Satchmo: Uh huh. In fact, the play is an example of PG pornography. All of the bad acting and writing without the benefit of bare nipples.

Eggplant: We did get to see Marchello's nipples due to the magic of velcro.

Satchmo: FEMALE nipples, you fool. We want FEMALE nipples.

Eggplant: By Zeus! I agree wholeheartedly. More female nipples would have improved the production greatly.

Satchmo: Perhaps by all this blanket criticism we are overlooking the few redeeming aspects of the play.

Eggplant: The male nipples?

Satchmo: No, we're past the nipples. I mean, not all of the acting was as bad as we have been implying. Take the character of Maria for example. I thought that January Morelli was the only actor to get human emotion out at all. She developed her character as much as possible with the shaky script, and her soliloquy with her diary was very good. I am being serious here: it was a good job. And her screams were so piercing.

Eggplant: I know. But Maria wasn't the only well portrayed character. The second 28-year-old Young Corleone was played very well by Wendy Hart, and Helena Grillo played the French Maid, Lucita nicely. These two also brought their characters to as much life as this insanely mediocre play allowed.

Satchmo: Yup.

Eggplant: Any last thoughts?

Satchmo: Yeah. Perhaps our readers would be interested in knowing that although the play only had seven characters, nine people had dropped out and had to be replaced before the final production.

Eggplant: They were nine very, very, very wise people. If only seven more would have dropped.

Satchmo: Yeah. But there was one line in the play which really stuck in my mind. Young Corleone is speaking to Cousin Luchianni, and he says, "I don't understand this insanity." I just wanted to leap up and say "Halleluia, brother, halleluia!"

Eggplant: Amen to that.

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# THE BARD observer

November 18, 1996

## American Myths

by Sean O'Neill

On November 2nd and 3rd, the American Mythologies Conference at the Levy Institute brought together some of the top names in American History and Political Studies. At the conference, myths from American History were dissected. First on the chopping block were Jefferson's maxims that, "the government is best that governs the least," and that "the government that is closer to the people is more responsive to the people." Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., noted that the poor and minorities often have benefited most by looking to a strong national government for protection from the majority's prejudices.

Jon Kahn noted that when the Federal Government abandons certain national tasks, local governments do not take them over, but powerful corporations instead dictate how those tasks should be handled. Mark Lytle noted that Jefferson's arguments about Americans being more pure than foreigners because they are closer to nature have always been untrue. He also evoked the irony that extremists on the right who ordinarily want to dismantle the federal government were the first to run to its defense when its most famous project, building the atomic bomb, was questioned in a Smithsonian exhibition.

John Diggins of CUNY said that if Republicans and Clinton Democrats are successful today in dismantling the federal government, more states like Texas and California will compete with the central government, and the country will split up into regions, like Canada is doing. This collapse of the welfare state is linked, Ethan Kaptstein claimed and Sean Wilentz agreed, to the collapse of the welfare state after the Cold War, since the one expenditure had been justified to middle-class taxpayers by the other.

Mark Danner said that another contributing factor to the current political scene is the success of Barry Goldwater in the 1960's and Ronald Reagan in the 1980's. Their use of rhetoric borrowed from Jefferson about the virtues of a smaller government had great affect on Americans who had been brought up on history textbooks erroneously stating such a maxim to be true, just because Jefferson had said it.

Why is it that the rhetoric of Hamilton and Jefferson is so often repeated in national conversations, even when Americans don't

realize who first said what they repeat? Schlesinger thought it was because Americans have never been ethnically homogeneous and thus have needed a secular faith in common texts to define themselves. Fareed Zakaria of Foreign Affairs argued that Americans have been frightened of foreign ideas, such as socialism, and feel they must prove how American they are by repeating cliches first uttered by the

us that Alexander Hamilton's arguments about building an industrial nation remain relevant to developing nations now.

What is American culture? Orlando Patterson's work was mentioned in the discussion. She has written that no minority has ever affected the mainstream culture of a society as much as black culture has affected this country's. Timothy Naftali of Yale suggested that

Americans are more paranoid about ideology than other people are. He reminded the scholars that in November 1961, groups of Americans and Britons were asked, "If you had a choice between fighting a nuclear war or living under Communism, which would you choose?" The Britons brushed the question off as ridiculous, while the Americans overwhelmingly said they would be better-off-dead-than-Red.

The group of scholars agreed that the American government had a lot of difficulty in converting a general anti-Communist consensus into specific policies that won Congressional support. The rhetoric that worked so well for President Truman to win aid to Greece and Turkey was a rhetoric of America's duty to help democratic governments flourish across the globe. This rhetoric inadvertently created a need for him and the Democratic party to explain why they weren't helping China and Indochina create democratic governments. By putting Truman and later Lyndon Johnson on the defensive, the situation was created where they had to display their competency in handling the Cold War.

Moreover, because the Russians were believed to be bent upon world conquest and unwilling to negotiate, many dangerous confrontations occurred.

What kind of nation is America? Just another great power? Just another greedy imperialist state? "Sophisticated revisionism" is the search for a more accurate record of American history, which is being written more and more by persons not born in the country, who share neither the pride nor the embarrassment of American historians. The end of the Cold War has as much as anything else eased the possibilities for foreign scholarship to be accepted into the American academy. The modern deTocquevilles at this conference revealed that change.

## Bard's Myth

by Sean O'Neill

The Levy Center seemed temporarily transformed into a men's locker room on November 2 at the American Mythologies Conference. I half-expected Anders Stephanson of Columbia to whip a towel at Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., the national dean of American History. The all-male-but-one crowd had been squaring off over several issues in U.S. history, and Stephanson led his testosterone-scented partisans in a push to debunk the myth of early America as a timid virgin, innocent of the intrigues of foreign predators.

Actually, nothing of the kind happened. The scholars were calm and cordial — but such a story makes better newspaper copy at Bard. Students everywhere secretly prefer to imagine their professors humbled every once in a while. Flawed like us, professors can also get emotionally worked up and clouded in their thinking!

Bardians especially have it out for male professors, though, and many would erroneously attribute to these men a habitual failure to exert their reason over their passions in the same way that men in the 1940's erroneously attributed to women a constitutional incapacity to exert their reason over their passions.

While the scholars at Levy were busy debunking myths, they ought to have looked at one from the Enlightenment that endures at Bard: namely, that "reason" and the "base passions" are separate elements at war in the human mind.

The automatic assumption with about 20 Bard students I have talked with over the course of four years is that men cannot debate any point without feeling their virility is at stake, and that this is a quality more common in men than women. A separation between reason and emotion does not exist, though, and passions, be they sexual or gastrointestinal in cause, develop into ideas, such as historical revisionism, that trigger passions of credential envy, and so forth, in both men and women equally.

Of course, with rules established by trial and error, systems of logic and language have been created where assertions can be judged as reasonable or unreasonable based on certain assumptions all participants make. No thought in itself, though, is logical or illogical, emotional or unemotional, as psychologists and historians have shown. Let's let each other off the hook, okay?

so-called Founding Fathers.

Benjamin Schwarz complained about how American organizations encourage foreign nations to imitate an American model of democracy that does not reflect American history or reality. The State Department recommends free trade to third world countries, for example, when the early United States had practiced protectionism to help its industries develop. Meredith Woo-Cummings reminded



# THE BARD observer

November 18, 1996

## The Happy Hour Review

by Jeremy Dillahunt and the Happy Hour Crew (John Rosenthal, Abby Rosenberg, Basil Bouris, and Josh Bottiger)

Same mission (gettin' drunk), new place: the Escape Club. If you like to immerse yourself in undiluted machismo, the Escape Club is for you.

The crew arrived at Escape to catch game four of the World Series. Whereas Josh, John, and Basil were veterans of the establishment, I was a virgin ready for corruption. I most directly felt like I had arrived in someone's basement for a game of "asshole." The fake wood siding peeled in places and the stucco ceiling would have grazed me a raspberry if I were six inches taller. There was a foos-ball table, a pool table, and a juke-box-all one needs for some down-home fun. As we sidled up to the bar I noticed only two other patrons, one wearing a massive crustacean of facial hair and a white-and-red mesh cap that sported a tractor with the clever slogan "Tractor" above it, and the other arched protectively over a warm-looking schooner of Budweiser. The game hadn't started yet so we stared quaffing mugs of Bud Light in an attempt to get drunk enough not to feel out of place. After three dollars and fifty cents worth of quaffing, I felt easy on the bar stool and almost local. A couple came in shortly and inquired about the wine list. The bartender, quite an amiable sort, pulled out four screwtop Sutter Home mini bottles: dark red, red, pink, and off-white candy apple. Nothing fancy here.

Someone from our crew wandered over to the juke, and shortly, Brooks and Dunn, Merle Haggard, Joan Jett, and Wayne Newton were caressing our ears. The bartender and the two originals hummed along word for word to each song. Familiar with the selections, I think.

The game came on and immediately the mood changed. Before, there had been three independent camps primarily focused on drinking and minding each other's business. As the Yankees' prospects dwindled, however, the more cohesive our separatist identities became. I think this was due mostly to the fact that, in drinking terms, we had been severely lapped by our fellow bar dwellers. Bottles of Sutter Home lay strewn over the bar, and where Tractor and Arch previously had only

one drink, they now had several at their disposal; seemingly wherever they reached a three-quarter-full, half-full, or three-quarter-empty mug lay. Even the bartender was drinking and screaming at the television. We had been united by drink and some ridiculous sports loyalty that dominated discussion.

Up until that point I thought of the Escape Club as a dungeon of doom for Bardiens. It seemed the last local bastion for townies and unspeakable horrors awaited the fool from school who dared to lay foot on that turf. The Camaros and Chevy work trucks parked outside seemed intimidating and hostile. But that was just me being a moron. The Escape Club is a bar and the particular skill that bars have carved out over centuries of evolution is that of getting people drunk; which, the last time I checked, was a condition savored by anyone who enjoys drinking.

So when the Yankees pulled out a miraculous comeback I did not find it at all odd to be high-fiving everyone in sight, aside from my friends, all five people in the bar. The conversation was not lacking, it even blossomed more readily than at most social events, although it seemed a little redundant: "The fucking Yankees kick ass"; "Fucking Yankees, yeah...raagh...whoowee, Yankees,"; "I love the fucking yankees." The night was almost complete. We were drunk, we were swearing and cheering for a sports event, but something was missing. We needed a bar fight. Lo and behold, we almost got one. It seems that some drunk besmirched the honor of a lady at the bar. Her chivalrous date, holding a glass of Sutter Home blush, set about to reclaim his lady's purity. There was lots of testosterone, lots of empty threats, lots of belly pushing and face to face "muthafucka you"-ing, but unfortunately, no actual grappling. The rascal left. The scene calmed. We started watching football.

For about ten bucks, I got hammered at the Escape Club. On Wednesdays, they have free chicken wings, so if you want, you can get hammered and fed cheaply. Escape is a rocking good hick bar and if you're feeling a bit adventurous for a taste of the non-bizarro, aka "normal life," I suggest it mightily. You will definitely get drunk, you will probably have fun, and you might even learn something: what happens when a player is penalized for a flagrant shanker foul? Ask Tractor.

## It's Bloody Damn Good!

by John Rosenthal

So, the Escape Club. A new bar with a new dilemma. What swinging cocktail shall I deem worthy of my exacting taste, one that fits my responsibility of providing a drink critique for the greater Bard community? Merle Haggard was cranking on the juke box, "I'm proud to be an Okie from Muskokie. Where even squares can have a ball." Then it hit me. At the opposite end of the bar sat a grizzly looking fellow sipping a tall, red concoction. The Bloody Mary! Yes! It was either that, or some samples from unsavory looking bottles with names like "T.Q. Hor" and, my favorite, "Par-T-Shatz." Yummy. Besides, I figured it was my civic duty to drink like the obvious grizzly regular. If they could be made to sense that Bard could hang, perhaps we could change their perception of us as blue-haired hermaphroditic communists. "Increasing the peace," as one of my friends remarked.

The Bloody Mary is an odd drink. There is something peculiar about the combination

of vodka, tomato juice, Worcestershire sauce, Tabasco sauce, horseradish, and ground pepper. I was informed by my friend that the Bloody Mary is considered to be a morning drink. That puzzled me, but then I figured that only a hardcore alcoholic could conceive of such a thing. "Hey Bob, I've got a great cure for those morning shakes. Vodka, tomato juice, and some spicy shit!"

Mmm...Bloody damn good. I ordered my multiple rounds "thick." Whatever that meant, the meaning was lost on me. All I can say is that I drank the spicy goodness and enjoyed the tingling of my sinuses as they were blasted clear. Bloody Mary's are fun. I would recommend them to vodka and spice-lovers alike. They have a high pukability factor, so I wouldn't advise drinking them to get sloshed, but be my guest if your stomach is strong and non-ulcerated.

Mmm...Bloody damn good. Remember: the cheaper the vodka, the cheaper the drink. Go with the cheapest stuff, say...Bukoff (Hey Bukoff, man! That's fun to say) or the Aristocrat labels. The price of the drink isn't cheap, but you feel cheap, and everyone loves to feel cheap.

8

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# American Pictures **Opinion** Confronted by Bardian Blindness

by Jean Smith

"I mean, it wasn't like a real exposé or anything. I've seen all this shit before on t.v. and everything. Maybe you wouldn't see it if you were from, like, Connecticut [laughs]."

This is what attacked my ears from a neighboring table as I sat down to brunch the day after the presentation of "American Pictures," the afternoon after the meeting with the show's maker, Jacob Holdt. Nine people attended that meeting, one African-American among us (and I was grateful she was there). Guess what? "American Pictures" was an expose for me, and I'm not from Connecticut. As I lifted my fork, I tried to deal with the picture of the Napalm baby (who perhaps symbolized the children of the racial war in this country) that I had seen twelve hours earlier, and be as grateful as humanly possible that I get more than one meal a day—that I even get one meal—that I don't have to eat dirt, that I have clothes on my back and heat and electricity in my bedroom....

The young man who uttered the words that would have hurt Jacob could not have, in full truth, "seen" in real-life the poverty, the black poverty, that was shown that night. If he knew it he probably lived it, and then he most likely wouldn't be in college. That's the point, I wanted to turn around and yell. He needed someone to explain not only how wrong, but how cruel he was to deny what he had seen. But I remembered Jacob's words from one hour before, his call to understand that someone's racism comes from their internal pain. He says that if we love them, we often can love their pain away and their racism right along with it. So I should love the student, right? No, I'm angry with him, and maybe we all should be. Childhood pain or not, to deny is to ignore, to ignore is to oppress, and to oppress specific people is to be racist toward those people.

Those people we stared at in the darkness, crippled and crying and wounded and dead and worked beyond words and hungry and naked and kissing and BLACK—they, he was saying to my sadness and astonishment, are shit. I hadn't denied the photographs. I had gone back to my room and half-slept until the alarm went off before the follow-up meeting, running them over and over again inside my head. I denied that the students who left after intermission would forget what they had witnessed. But I was wrong. Looking around the cafeteria, there was laugh-

ing and smiling everywhere I turned.

If only this young man and his friends, who laughed along with him, had come that morning. They would have heard again that we should love, and love everyone. He had said to his brunch companions that such healing ideas were like "lecturing" from Jacob. If he had just heard them one more time, maybe it would have healed him. And if others had awakened at such a reasonable hour

of the morning and come, perhaps they too could have been affected, even if they had shut down the night before.

Jacob wanted us, as viewers, to feel literally oppressed, like the blacks he had photographed. Of course, some viewers have to shut down and block out. But does the student from the cafeteria, do the people who abandoned Jacob's documentary art, know that what we as viewers felt was nowhere near the oppression felt by the people in the pictures themselves? They don't just feel guilt and numbness and unworthiness, but manipulateness and inattentiveness and rage and more, Jacob wrote on one of the final slides. If other students had come and seen those words, maybe it could have initiated some, any, love toward oppressed, very poor, black Americans. I'm trying very hard to love the people who never showed up for "American Pictures," who left halfway through, who didn't attend the meeting, the young man in the cafeteria, and myself. One of my grandmothers still calls blacks inferior and "colored" yet claims she is not a racist. She is what Jacob included in his first 1500 slides: Southern white racists, poor white trash among them. My grandfather on the other side is paying for much of my education at Bard. He is the conservative, wealthy businessman who lives in the white-flight suburbs of Chicago. He is like the Rockefeller of the last 1500 slides. He ignores (like the young man in the cafeteria) the people and issues of the Cabrini Green projects and the South Side. So I am in college because of figuratively racist money, right? I am stuck on both sides—my kind is racist more than I ever saw before, and there's no way for me to deny it.

I think I'll call my sister up—we got in an argument the other day—and say loving words to her. She is at the University of Southern California, which touches South Central Los Angeles. She has been warned not to walk off campus. Jacob trusts all Americans. So I'll tell her to go into South Central anyway. Its residents, black and brown and yellow and white, can trust her, because she is already what Jacob calls a "saving angel." She goes weekly to L.A. County Hospital and holds crack-addicted and AIDS babies. Still, those beautifully tragic creatures are not as poor as Jacob's photograph friends, and have more hope...

## R&J: Two Teens Make the Headlines, Again

by Shawnee Barnes

Do Romeo and Juliet exist? I guess I mean to say, "Does such love exist?" That question might sound naive, but really, would you kill yourself in honor of love? Love is a powerful thing, a powerful feeling, an emotion that can hurt while at the same time be blissfully divine. I recently saw the new movie *Romeo and Juliet*, starring Leonardo diCaprio and Claire Danes, and it was thought-provoking, never mind that it made me speak in "thee's and thou's" all night. I'm such a romantic at heart, but I wonder how I'd react if some guy climbed up to my window to confess his undying love having only seen me once. I'd probably think he was psycho and call Security! So much for my romantic side! Romance has become jaded over the centuries, we're taught to question motives and not take anything at face value: all the Romeos and Juliets of the world have gone extinct in the race for "survival of the fittest." I don't scoff at protecting oneself at all, it's just that "love at first sight" seems risky business.

When R. & J. first saw each other they knew in some pure, clairvoyant way that it was destiny and they were bound to one another. I've been attracted to people at first sight and sometimes there is more going on than meets the eye. Then I wonder if this is my R. Or J., but soon reality checks in and the person ends up being a fleeting affair. How can you know who the right person is and trust that what you're feeling is real? What is it that you are feeling or what is guiding you? My answer would be: your instincts, and as some would call it: following your heart. To me they are synonymous.

When Romeo saw Juliet, he knew he'd give up everything for her. Is that enviable love or sheer madness? As is well known to those who study love, love is madness. At age seventeen, R. & J. make such adult decisions, and are moved by a higher force. Where was I at seventeen? Oh yeah...working at a convenience store reading trashy novels where lust is a commodity and love is just another worn out pickup line. I was, however, questioning the force that drives people to each other and found myself believing in the word, "soulmates." I believe we all have souls and that we are all somehow intricately connected, be it from past lives or pure karmic luck. I also think we all have a soulmate out there. Some find it, for others it takes lifetimes. So, the word "soulmate" seemed appropriate and fitting, and it instilled hope in me that with patience, one day I too will find my soulmate.

When I asked my friends if they believe that you only have one match in a lifetime, one responded that it is a personal thing, meaning that some have many true loves in a lifetime, while others only have one. Another said that your soulmate is about kinship and compatibility, not necessarily romantic love. I asked another friend if she believes in love at first sight and she defiantly answered, "yes," and then after we talked about it for a bit she ended up changing her mind and posing the unanswerable: But what is love? I knew we couldn't go any further with that, so I left as confused as she was and returned to my article, realizing: I'm trying to understand something that is simply inexplicable, subjective, enigmatic, and in essence, rhetorical. So, when you go see this movie, don't ask questions—take it for what it is: two gorgeous teens acting out a script where, ironically, between enemies, love doth emergeth. To quote Will, "All the world's a stage." So follow your heart and act on what you feel. Trust your instincts, and play out your destined role, for thou knowest what is true for thee. Comment? Shawnee B.

## The Fate of the Fight of Catch-22

by Ian Greer

On Friday, November 1, a group of people from Bard, consisting of ten students and two professors, went door-to-door in Hudson, New York. Our goal: to challenge the power of Republican/Right to Life/Conservative Congressman Jerry Solomon by spreading word about his voting record. The Democratic Party and the Labor movement had allowed his power to go relatively unchecked: the Democratic Party by now fielding serious candidates, and the Labor movement for being satisfied with his votes against NAFTA and GATT and his abstentions on other labor legislation. Here, in the 22nd district, someone had to take up the slack, and we decided that it would be the Bard community.

The energy for this project initially came out of my own experience working for the Labor movement in Union Summer. I became interested in the new promises of the Labor movement to empower the working class individual by individual, not just in the workplace, but also at home and in the voting booth. Professor David Kettler suggested a campaign against Solomon when I told him about my experience in a similar project against Conservative Representative Randy Tate in Seattle.

Our task was not to campaign for Democrat Steve James, nor to smear Solomon's character, but rather to subvert the so-called Democratic process into doing what it had previously refused to do: focus on issues, not on personalities. We were going to do what the tactics of big money electioneering refuse to do: go into homes and let people decide for themselves how much they agreed with the politician. We hoped that we could sway public opinion by talking to individuals, and by the media coverage that would ensue if we were successful. Our group came to be named "Catch-22" because our efforts could only raise consciousness about issues, while an awareness of the candidates revealed that neither was much good.

A working group formed soon after school started in September: professors did research and invented a questionnaire whereby someone could instantly know whether or not they agreed with Solomon, and then read about what action Solomon took on those issues. They also contacted the media and researched past election returns so we would find the best place to canvass.

Students were in charge of organizing our peers to help out.

We heard as we carried out our work that Bard students were too apathetic to participate; they simply don't care. We heard that the district is conservative; people simply won't listen to us. The Student Labor Coalition, which formed at the same time as the working group, and contained many of the same people as the working group, made an early decision to treat us as a separate organization. We heard many of the reasons why real radicals don't do anything remotely related to electoral politics. And so we kept doing it.

After our first effort in Red Hook, we were excited. In our minds we had disproved the notion that the area is too conservative to listen to us. Eight of us in two neighborhoods each talked to many people who hadn't encountered the facts about Jerry Solomon. The average voter only agreed with him about twenty percent of the time on the ten issues which we selected, and the residents of the town were surprised to learn that they disagreed with him on abortion, gun control, subsidies to the tobacco industry, and so on. The optimism made us excited to send many Bard students into the community to do similar work. With the help of many more volunteers, we could see that this work could open many eyes in many communities.

The next effort was over two weeks later, in Hudson. In that time we learned how busy, how ideologically fussy, how diligent our friends at Bard were. In total we spent only about 50 human-hours canvassing. Gerald Solomon was saved the embarrassment of the residents of the 22nd district knowing his record by virtue of the difficulties of mobilizing Bard students. And now, we reap the real benefits of our labor—it is time for self-criticism.

## Red Hook Resident Recommends Religion

To Jen Schneider,

I sympathize with your outrage against the recent flyer using female genitals to advertise a Barn Party at Tivoli Bays. As a local resident of Red Hook, I sometimes glimpse Bard life through copies of the Observer I pick up, and through flyers I find tacked on various bulletin boards. I would therefore like to offer the following comment about your situation.

How can you condemn the publisher of the flyer, without also condemning the student culture at Bard which encourages him? The same issue of the Observer which ran your letter also ran on its cover the "Drag Race in Space," a story featuring male Bard students parading themselves in transvestite attire. Another inappropriate flyer I found last year advertised a "Sluts and Goddesses Video Workshop" on "how to be a sex goddess in 101 easy steps." The program promised "campy sexual empowerment" and was billed as an "S/M ACES presentation." What does S&M have to do with promoting respect for self or for others? Meanwhile, other Bard students have been passing out condoms to kids in Red Hook in an attempt to accommodate sexual license.

All of the students in these above examples are seriously confused, because a licentious culture leads to confusion, blindness, social misery and ultimately, destruction. Why? Sex practiced without love is a mindless, self-centered quest for gratification that will use whoever or whatever it can to fulfill its desires. The sex junkie's partners become disposable, as he or she moves on to more destructive thrills: multiple partners, bisexuality, homosexuality, pedophilia and sado-masochism. Notice that as the quest for sexual gratification becomes more exotic, the junkie's regard for his partners (children, "slaves," animals) diminishes. Violent rapists, incest, and ads using female genitals are the logical conclusion to the self-centered, promiscuous process. Thus the sexual revolution ends in anarchy and nihilism.

Sex and love are not the same thing. Love is a spiritual energy channeled through us when we live responsibly, even sacrificially for the sake of others. When our commitment has

developed (through the engagement process) to the degree that it becomes unshakable, it is formalized with marriage. Then we consummate our mutual love physically, and the desires unleashed through our sexual initiation will be balanced by our love and commitment to each other. To deviate from this formula is to use a dangerous drug without heeding the guidelines of the drug's creator. The guidelines are for our own happiness and well-being.

I applaud you for your stand against licentiousness, but suggest that you carry your accusation to its logical conclusion. To end sexploitation will require a wider critique of the student culture that encourages it. If you can't culturally detach, I would suggest investing in a good religion. Absolute love is worth the price of investment. Good luck to you.

Mark Snell  
Red Hook

## A Response from No Hood Productions

To the offended student,

The fact that my flyer offends you shows that Bard is not keeping its students busy enough or that you at least, have too much time on your hands to analyze my facile joke. I'm surprised it did manage to offend at "decadent" Bard. I guess I should relish in my success at offending. Anyway, it kept away those who I wanted and brought out the right people and I could care less about your snotty-ass standard of taste. You know, you would really have better spent your time writing a letter to a congressman about a pothole in the road or some shit. Your "championing" for some ideal is a ridiculous pose.

Lighten up, or you're gonna go through life with a lot more people telling you what I'm saying now: Fuck off.

Jon Wetterau  
No Hood Productions

## Earth Coalition

The energy level on campus is dwindling away. Students are dragging themselves to Kline and sometimes to class. The trees are bare, the weather is schizophrenic, and we all have the sniffles. Not to mention my room is plastered with diehard mildew, but that's another story altogether. Despite all of the lethargy, the Earth Coalition is still going strong.

On Sunday, October 27th, four brave Earth Coalition members set out on a mission to rid the banks of the Hudson River of trash. Not the entire river. Just where it borders Bard. Armed with gloves and trash-nabbing prongs, they ventured down Cruger Road in the crisp morning air. Cruger Road itself was so littered with vintage beer cans and abandoned tennis shoes that they never quite made it to the river itself. In two hours, four bulging bags were easily filled. Two of the bags contained recyclables such as tin cans and glass, while the other two were crammed with trash. Eight tires were hauled out of the woods. The reason as to why they were there in the first place is still a mystery. A muffler was also found. Perhaps if it had been in better condition, it could have been a collector's item. One of the many beer cans we found was still full. The contents were sacrificed to the earth. A fresh Kline napkin was found at the end of Cruger Road. Which one of you dropped it and didn't pick it up? The Earth Coalition covered one specific area. Unfortunately, there is still plenty of trash left in the campus vicinity to collect.

Waste prevention has not faded with the passing of Waste Prevention Day. As we prepare to flock to the bookstore to buy our new books for January, there are a couple of ideas we can keep in mind to reduce trash. First of all, I find myself very annoyed with the fliers the bookstore is always sticking in my plastic bags, urging me to purchase a *Rolling Stone* subscription for half-price or order a Mastercard with no annual fee. It's not their fault. They have to do it.

BUT...we  
can give  
them  
back. If  
we took

all the fliers out of our bags as soon as we got them, and gave them back to the cashier, they could be reused and given to the next poor dear who forks over her entire semester's earnings to buy their over-priced books. Just think, the same fliers could be used for the whole student body!

If your purchase won't fit in your backpack, you can avoid those crummy plastic bags by renting a canvas bag for a refundable \$1.50. You can bring back the bag in any condition at the end of the year, or whenever you choose, and get back your \$1.50. It might be wise if the bag was still in one piece so that it could be reused. Otherwise the original purpose would be defied. I still have the seven plastic bags (from when I bought my books in August) under my bed with everything else I have acquired since I arrived, student handbook included. Really, I just counted. If we all received about seven bags, that means seven thousand bags were given out for fall books alone. Yikes! Think of it as an investment. You spend more than \$1.50 on a single pack of cigarettes. The canvas bags are difficult to track down, but if you ask an employee, they ought to turn up.

I think Bard students are feeling a little overwhelmed by the recycling bins. Perhaps I can clarify the issue. Repeat after me: white paper goes in the blue one. White paper goes in the blue one. White paper goes in the blue one. Got it? I thought so.

As the weather gets nasty, keep your chin up. Think happy thoughts and turn off the lights in the bathroom when you leave. Energy doesn't appear out of thin air, ya know. Oh, and you can recycle your batteries at B&G. That is one less thing to throw away.

Andrea Davis

## A Letter From Leon

Dear Meredith and Lilian:

The best compliment to a newspaper is that it is read. In that spirit I would like to respond to two items in the last issue of the *Observer*.

In Charlotte Jackson's interesting piece on Bennington, she makes a reference to my "guarded admiration" for President Coleman. As far as I can recall, I have never expressed myself publicly on the matter of Bennington. Insofar as I have any admiration for President Coleman, it is as a result of my appreciation for the difficulty of the circumstances she faces. She inherited a college that had been poorly managed for over twenty years, abandoned by its alumni/ae, and obsessed with the difficulty of restoring public glory. The result was that Bennington found itself in severe financial distress, and President Coleman's strategy has more to do with finding a way to respond to desperate and near-fatal economic circumstances.

Here at Bard the circumstances are quite different. Over the last 20 years under this administration, 38 members of the faculty have received tenure and 19 have been denied tenure through a process of decision-making that includes faculty judgement and that of this office. So a denial of tenure on this campus in the past, present and future has nothing to do with Bennington. Neither do I "keep Bennington's experiment in mind" except as an object lesson of what to avoid.

I was pleased to see the interview with Peter Maguire. I am not sure whether he was correctly quoted, and I want to assure him (but I suspect he knows) that Bard has never been and never will be on a "headlong rush to emulate Wellesley or Vassar." I think this institution has always been pretty well unified in its desire to avoid such a misplaced imitation. I rather think they should try to emulate us.

Cordially,  
Leon Botstein

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### Editorial Policy

The *Observer* is Bard College's student-run newspaper. It is published at timely intervals during the semester. Everyone is welcome to write for it. The deadline for submissions, be they stories, cartoons, photographs, statistics, letters, classifieds or advertisements of any kind, is 3 p.m. on the Tuesday before publication. Send all submissions via campus mail to either Meredith Yayanos or Lilian Robinson. Submit all writings on a labelled disk (or else we claim them for ourselves) as a text file and in hardcopy form. Submit developed photographs if possible, preferably in the commercial 4x6 print size and shot in black-and-white. It is the responsibility of the writers to contact the editors before the Thursday after deadline to speak with them about their submissions. Otherwise their submissions will face editing pencils alone. The *Observer* reserves the right to edit for spelling, grammar, and length.

The *Observer* discourages anonymous submissions. If you must submit anonymously, you must reveal your identity to the editors.

#### EXTRA INCOME FOR '96

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# THE BARD observer

November 18, 1996



## You Must Submit

by Meredith Yayanos

Recent months have marked a watershed for the *Observer*. Bard's only student-run, bi-weekly rag is changing. This semester a tiny, hopeful handful of us have been inviting you: journalists, photographers, essayists, raging smarmballs, cartoonists and cretins alike, to submit your work. Then we take whatever we get and spend roughly thirty hours in front of a computer putting it all together, trying to concoct a credible publication. Though we've made remarkable progress, there's still a long way to go, because let's face it: the *Observer* spent a long and icky interim lining the bottom of that collegiate canary cage.

I'm worried.

As an editor and a flutterbudget, I feel the necessity to address this and to talk to you. First, just to say thanks for reading it, and then to squawk at you because you're much too talented not to get involved yourself. Now, I realize you're very busy. You've got that paper to write, that opening to prepare for, that trip to the city this weekend, that faltering confidence in your creative abilities to reckon with, that bowl to smoke, that enigmatic upperclassman to stalk, whatever. You've got a thousand things on your mind, which should come as no surprise, considering that this is Bard, A Place to Think, it says as much on the catalog, so go ahead, think away, think think think, and when you're done, pull your finger out of your nose and pick up a pen or a crayon or a camera and extrapolate. If the tangible finished product ain't half bad, consider calling me up or dropping Lilian a note. Do so with the knowledge that we will treat you with respect and dignity.

Which leads me to one other thing. Respect and dignity? Hello? In case you hadn't noticed, there's a lotta love lost 'round these here parts lately, and some of the submissions we get reflect that. We print them of course, because that's our policy, but it's pathetic to watch portions of the letter page descend into a terse exchange of juvenile expletives, not to mention worrisome, because whenever people are obviously reacting without thinking, nothing can improve. The *Observer* doesn't need that. Please consider this paper as your round table, and not a battlefield.

Bard really is a place to think. We strive for coherency, not effrontery. To achieve it, we quite literally have to see the writing on the walls, and respond. As for that violent minority of people who've yet to comprehend their cowardice, we all want to beg you to think about what you are doing. Think very hard, and *grow up!* Maybe then you'll consider thoughtful elocution in a public forum as an alternative to vandalism. Maybe you'll even figure out that it's not really about what you think, in the long run...but what you *do*, and you will do right. I really hope so.

In any case I'm going to sleep before somebody sticks me back in the canary cage.

See you in a couple of weeks.  
G'night.

