

OBSERVER

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- Page 1 Salman Rushdie Kicks Off National Book Tour at Bard
 Author shares passages from *The Ground Beneath her Feet*,
 discusses its creation, and responds to audience questions
 Ciprian Iancu
 Bard-Backed Charter School Proposed
 New York Charter School Act allows for development of community-run institution
 Ciprian Iancu
 New Smolny Blazes Path
 The college, modeled after Bard, champions progressive education
 Stephanie Schneider
- Page 2 Coffee Shop Opens
 New campus center café opens to limited enthusiasm
 News Briefs
 Doggy Takes Dive of Death From Embankment
 Adina Estreicher
- Page 3 Pemstein Ready to Rock
 Since December, new VP of development/alumni/ae affairs has
 brought big-city expertise to Bard's fundraising program
 Peter Malcolm
- Page 4 Norman Manea and the Triumph of the Artist
 The acclaimed writer and Bard Professor discusses personal
 victory in the battle between the artist and the regime
 Ciprian Iancu
- Page 6 CCS Spring Shows Present Diverse Works
 Graduate students bring year-long creative process to end
 Kerry Chance
 Art Review
 [Art Club Show in Fisher]
 Even Robertson
- Page 7 Stanley Kubrick is Not Dead, He's Downloaded
 D.C. Caudle

Page 8	Food Review [Buffet 2000 restaurant review] Stephanie Schneider Creating a New World With Universal Power A Troupe of performers takes on social issues with theatre Stephanie Schneider
Page 9	Film Review [Steve Holland Films] Anne Matusiewicz Two Bardians Explore Life in “Hell’s Kitchen” Siblings Samir and Marisa Vural produce drama in NY Andy Varyu
Page 10	Miss Lonelyhearts Searching for G-Spots and Good Men at Bard
Page 11	Perspectives in Music From Blur to XTC, Via Chicago Pop moves in new directions while post-rock gets promiscuous Scott Staton
Page 12	Rollerjam: Bastion of American Pride The legendary tale of a sport that has taken up permanent residence in the heart of the American experience Luke Cohen
Page 13	WXBC 540 Programming Schedule Spring 1999 A&E Brief Archeology and Egyptology, Economics and Art... Student Savors Pancakes at Local Eatery The Return of Alan Gampel Opera Excitement Brews! John Ashbery Poetry Series Continues [Earth Coalition Constructing Solar Oven] Alumnus Hume Premieres Recent Documentary [Phyllis Chesler to read from her 1972 novel, <i>Women and Madness</i>] Human Head Opens Eyes, Quotes Nietzsche Unknown Toxins, Pesticides, Irreversible Genetic Mistakes: A Call to Action Photography Lecture Series Winds Down Psychics Hold Conference at Bard American Symphony Chamber Orchestra
Page 14	Roving Photographer A Bit of Spring Fun with Paddles and Players
Page 15	Letters to the Editor Bard <i>Observer</i> Editorial Policy
Page 16	Bot-Man On the Ground, Beneath Her Feet Chris Van Dyke and John Holowach

BOT-MAN: On the Ground, Beneath her Feet

Bot-Man, Volume 3, Issue 6, 1999



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"News is whatever sells newspapers; *The Bard Observer* is free."



THE BARD

OBSERVER



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Salman Rushdie Kicks Off National Book Tour at Bard

*Author shares passages from *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, discusses its creation, and responds to audience questions*

By CIPRIAN IANCU

ACCLAIMED AUTHOR Salman Rushdie made a surprise visit to the Bard campus on Monday, April 12, and gave a reading from his new novel *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*. The appearance preceded the first publicized stop in his American tour at Cooper Union in New York City. His tour is heading towards the West Coast this week, promoting his eighth novel.

The student body was informed of the public reading only the previous day, in an e-mail from Dean of Students John Becker, who requested that for security reasons only the local community be told of the event. Rushdie spent most of the hour reading from his newest novel, while sitting on stage with President Botstein, and answered questions from the student audience for the remaining time. The excerpt he read introduced the main characters: an Indian rock star and a photojournalist who becomes obsessed with her.

"I was delighted he chose to launch his book at Bard," remarked President Botstein about the event. "It was a pleasure to have him on campus. I'm very proud of the quality of the questions asked by the students. I think he was very impressed as well."

The discussion sparked by the questions of the audience varied from the significance of the Orpheus myth in his latest fiction, to his relationships with



IN HIGH SPIRITS: After reading from his novel, Rushdie takes questions.

celebrities such as Madonna and U2. Very little of the discussion focused on the death decree that has so shaped his life in recent years.

While introducing Rushdie, President Botstein mentioned his invitation to the author to teach at Bard. When asked what he thought of the likelihood that Rushdie would accept the offer, President Botstein replied, "I think we have a good chance of

getting him. He's very well disposed to the college. He has a great affection for Bard."

After the hour-long reading, Rushdie spoke as a guest in Professor Brad Morrow's "Contemporary Innovative Fiction" class. The discussion allowed students the chance to pose direct questions to the author about the process of writing his new novel and the stylistic mechanisms at work. The class was provided with advanced copies of the book, which was released in stores the next day. The class of 20 students included five photographers whose incessant flashbulbs punctuated the discussion.

Despite Dean Becker's notice, a press conference took place at Bard Campus the Sunday before the public reading. A score of photographers and journalists were present at the reading on Monday afternoon.

Rushdie has lived and traveled in secret since 1989 when the Shiite Muslim theocracy of Iran issued its now famous death decree, for what it interpreted as blasphemy in his fifth novel *The Satanic Verses*. Though the now more moderate leadership of the Iranian government officially distanced itself from the *fatwa* last September, many conservative Muslims believe it to be irrevocable, including one Iranian foundation that has issued a \$2.8 million bounty on the author.

Bard-Backed Charter School Proposed

New York Charter School Act allows for development of community-run institutions

By CIPRIAN IANCU

A GROUP OF PARENTS and concerned citizens, which includes a number of Bard faculty, are engaged in an effort to organize and open a charter school in the area that would be affiliated with Bard College. The effort began as a response to a memorandum from President Botstein sent early this year, indicating that the college would be supportive of a community group committed to such a task. The President's memo followed last December's ratification of the New York State Charter School Act of 1998, which for the first time allows such schools to open in the state.

A charter school is a state-funded school run by an independent non-profit entity (typically a community group organized for this very purpose), authorized to operate through the "charter" or contract, granted to it by a state agency. The New York State Charter School Act allows schools that operate through this agreement a blanket exemption from most regula-

tions, while holding them accountable to performance standards and rigor requirements districts school are held to. New York joined 34 other states in which similar laws operate last December when it passed the law.

The movement to support this type of legislation demonstrates the growing desire in many communities for a deregulation of local schools that could accompany greater community participation in the educational process. A charter school may develop its own curriculum, as well as establish partnerships with other groups and institutions in the community that could be involved in the educational process. Charter schools that are not successful or do not operate up to standard can have their charter revoked and be closed down.

The interest in this possibility has motivated individuals to unite and take up the task of organizing and drafting an application for charter. Their proposal will

A charter school may develop its own curriculum, as well as establish partnerships with other groups and institutions . . .

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

New Smolny Blazes Path

The college, modeled after Bard, champions progressive education

By STEPHANIE SCHNEIDER

SMOLNY COLLEGE in St. Petersburg, Russia, a school that has formed a lasting partnership with Bard is leading Russian higher education system in a new direction, one that Professor Gennady Shkliarevsky thinks well suited to the political changes Russia has undergone in the past decade.

"The whole idea to be creative, and to be flexible and to be prepared for different kinds of careers seems very fitting," said Shkliarevsky in reference to Smolny College's approach to education.

Susan Gillespie, head of the Institute for International Liberal Education at Bard cited three new developments concerning Smolny College. These are the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

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NEWS

P2 The Beauty of the New Cafe

P4 Manea On Freedom and Exile

INTERVIEW

A & E

P12 History of Rollerjam

BACKPAGE

Coffee Shop Opens

New campus center café opens to limited enthusiasm

By Lauren Kilian

LOOK QUIZZICALLY upon the grill at the campus center's new coffee shop; the fact that it had to be "specially ordered" helped push back the opening of the café several weeks. Other missing equipment and insufficient power lines contributed to the delay as well.

In a recent interview, Associate Vice President for Finance and Administration Jim Brudvig assured *The Observer* that the delay was worth it, as he has relished the "Panini" sandwiches that are featured on the menu—sandwiches that could not be made on the former grill. Made with "special" bread supplied by Bread Alone in Rhinebeck, these sandwiches are "packed" with a choice of grilled vegetables and are an obsession of Brudvig's, who mentioned them four times in a 15-minute interview.

If you don't remember helping to design the menu, it's not because you missed some kind of questionnaire—it's because you didn't join the committee of students, faculty and administrators that helped plan the new coffee shop. Since it happened two years ago, many of those gastronomy-and-zymurgy-savvy students have graduated, and the rest of us are left with their choices.

The feeling around campus however, suggests that not too many students are enthused about the new menu. Many are too busy lamenting the loss of the old space.

"The old deKline was better. The campus center just doesn't have the same atmosphere," says Jessica Pavone who works directly outside the café at the "information" desk. "It has a different quality, like it belongs more to the administration than to the students."

Many students share Pavone's worries about the new space. If you think the only difference in the coffee shops is the clean, new carpeting, think again. Even the old name will not carry over. "deKline" referred not to the space next to Kline Commons, but was part of the deKline club that was started by students in 1992, back when there was no place to hang out in the evenings or hold an informal performance. A group of students has formed to keep the "spirit" of the old deKline alive, fearing the new coffee shop will fail to capture that *esprit de corps*. The group is in the process of renovating the basement of the old gym with money out of the convocation fund. According to David Janik, who is involved in the process, the space will open shortly and will be a place for students to hang out, drink coffee or espresso, and see (hopefully) nightly performances.

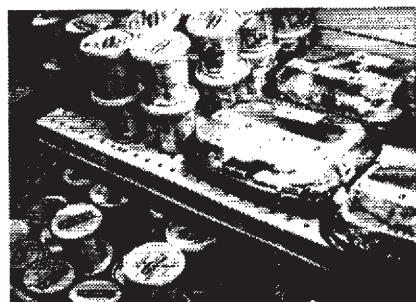
The old deKline will see such student performances no longer. And if you're thinking of simply rebelling and hanging out in the old space it could prove to be a bit uncomfortable, as the old deKline will be used as a faculty lounge. Unlike the famous menu committee, this was decided solely by the administration, according to Brudvig. Luckily, the administration has no plans for usurping the basement of the Old Gym from student control and Brudvig himself heartily approves. He sees it as "a good space to stay dedicated to student services, club activities and parties."



AMANDA KIERKAMP



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AMANDA KIERKAMP

READY TO GO: Handy snacks abound at the café.

Charter School Proposed

CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE

delineate an educational plan and will describe an intended curriculum and organizational structure for the school. In order to receive state approval, the charter application must demonstrate a strong organizational framework, as well as show that the planned school will be diverse and innovative, and will fulfill a present community need.

The local charter group has met regularly for the last few months on Bard campus, and has grown to involve between 70 and 80 individuals from the local area, including Bard Professors Daniel Berthold-Bond and Chris Lindner. Though most participants are from Red Hook and Rhinebeck, the Hyde Park, Pine Plains, Germantown, Kingston, and Poughkeepsie districts are also represented in the group.

The group has recently drafted a mission statement stating the values, goals, curriculum focus, and educational approach of the proposed school. The mission statement describes a plan for an integrative and participatory curriculum that will heavily emphasize a creative approach to learning and that would be supported by the involvement of families and groups in the local community. Professor Lindner mentioned the excitement he shares with so many in the group currently involved in the planning of the interdisciplinary curriculum for the school.

As well as crafting their mission statement, the charter project group has formalized their committee structure, and is working to increase awareness and support from communities in the area. Their Outreach Committee, in fact, aims to make this very goal possible. Organizer Susan Hinkle (who was head of the Packer Collegiate Institute in New York City for many years) stresses that a major goal of the project is to establish strong connections with families and community groups at this stage in development.

An important part of the mission and spirit of the project, according to Hinkle, is the development of positive, cooperative relationships with local school boards. The charter project aims to augment and enhance the primary and secondary education available to all children in the local area, as well as to fill the present need, and so hopes its involvement with district schools will be mutually beneficial.

One challenge facing the process is that local districts will lose funding from the state for each student that attends a new charter school, rather than the district's school. Despite this fact, Deb Neyowith, chair of the Outreach Committee, reported that recent meetings with local district superintendents have allowed a friendly and positive exchange of concerns and ideas about a possible new school to go on.

Another important challenge that faces the group is the building of financial support necessary to begin such an institution. The group will meet with the President on April 28 to present their work to date, including their new mission statement, and discuss possibilities like Bard financial support for the school.

The group has until October 1 of this year to submit their application for charter approval to the state. If the application is approved and charter is granted, the organizers can begin immediately to secure or build facilities, hire all staff, and instate their organizational structure. The school would be able to open in the fall of 2000, but could take another year if necessary, before admitting students of grades K through 12.

In the meanwhile, Susan Hinkle hopes that students and faculty will actively participate in the planning of the school, as well as its realization. For her, as for so many involved, cross-generational community involvement in the charter school would represent a fulfillment of its mission to draw the community closer together.

NEWSBRIEFNEWSBRIEFNEWSBRIEFNEWSBRIEFNEWS

DOGGY TAKES DIVE OF DEATH FROM EMBANKMENT

On Friday, April 16, in Fort Tyron Park near the Cloisters Museum in New York City, a puppy named Sativa fell off a very steep 200' cliff above a cement street. In Sativa's lucky case, she was caught eight feet below the wall she tumbled over in a bed of weeds and other delicate plants. While Sativa patiently waited for police and fire trucks, she laid perfectly still, instinctively knowing not to panic. Every few minutes, the puppy's mother would bark from above, keeping her puppy

calm—the way a mother always does. After 45 minutes of terror, the rescuers came to take charge and make sure the mother and pup would be reunited.

One rescue man crossed the wall with ropes tied around him so he wouldn't fall. A "heavy-duty" fire truck came and parked itself on the street many feet below the steep rock face. This incident attracted the attention of at least 100 onlookers who were captivated by the drama. The two firemen stood in the enclosed lift and were

raised to the exact spot where Sativa lay. She was still and panting from anxiety. The rescue man who stood near Sativa placed a strange rope around her neck so that it would be easier for the men in the lift to grab hold of her.

Many in the crowd speculated that this device would hang the dog, instantly killing her instead of saving her. The trained firemen managed to retrieve Sativa and held her affectionately. A sigh of relief was heard from the crowd. Sativa's owner and mother finally reunited, there was much sniffing and licking, and all was back to normal on a sunny day in the park.—Adina Estericher



ADINA ESTERICHER

STILL ON CALL: F.D.N.Y. wants you to adopt this pup.

Pemstein Ready to Rock

Since December, new VP of development/alumni/ae affairs has brought big-city expertise to Bard's fundraising program

By PETER MALCOLM

LATE LAST YEAR Susan Gillespie left the position of Vice President of Development and Public Affairs. She did not leave Bard, but went on to become the director of Institute of International Liberal Education. However, her old office on the third floor of Ludlow remained empty until December, when Bard hired Debra Pemstein. When Pemstein arrived, the name of the position changed to the Vice President of Development and Alumni/ae Affairs.

Pemstein is a powerhouse in the world of raising money for the arts. She graduated from George Washington University with Honors, earning a bachelor's degree in business administration. Since then, Pemstein has worked to raise cash for the New York Philharmonic Orchestra, the Paul Taylor Dance Company, and the New York City Ballet.

Someone at Bard knew of Pemstein's reputation, and when the Development position opened, that person recommended her. When I asked her who this person was, Pemstein laughed, and said "I never found that out, actually." At any rate, Pemstein took the position here. She liked Bard and the surrounding area. Not only that, but her family felt that it was time for a change. Previously, Pemstein, her husband (a painter), and her two young daughters, were living in New York City.

Being the Vice President of Development and Alumni/ae Affairs involves what fund raising people call "cultivating and soliciting." That is, Pemstein spends her time cultivating good relationships with potential donors, and then soliciting them for money. Back in '96-'97, Bard raised \$8.7 million in Gifts and Donations. The figure remains around \$9 million every year, and it is Pemstein's job to keep it there.

Pemstein does not do this all by herself. She heads up the Development Staff, which consists of 12 people including her. She also works closely with the Board of Trustees. Boardmembers are mostly Bard alumni/ae, who often donate money themselves. Sometimes Boardmembers will solicit potential givers, but often they will pass names on to Pemstein. After Pemstein gets a name of a possibly generous source, she starts to develop a strategy to win them over.

First, she finds out as much about the person as she possibly can. She learns exactly what it is about Bard that would appeal to them. Then she invites them to come find out about Bard. This might involve inviting the person to tour Bard, or to hear Leon speak. She also works hard to match their interests. A film buff, for example, would be invited to learn about the film department, and possibly see films by some of Bard's students.

She is not always the person to "make the ask," as she puts it. If anyone in the Bard community is good friends with the potential donor, then she asks the friend to do the actual soliciting. It's all about psychology. The donor has to know that he or she is appreciated.

Bard gets donations from a variety of different sources. In the past, the New York State Council of the Arts, and the Olin Foundation have both given grants to Bard. Government agencies, foundations, and corporations give money; and on a smaller scale, there are also the friends and supporters of Bard, the parents, alumni, and the Board of Trustees. Sometimes, donors will even bequeath money to Bard in their wills.

Pemstein is in charge of a couple of different giving campaigns, including a phone-a-thon, wherein Bard calls up those people who have given in the past. (Incidentally, anyone who thinks that they have the courage and tact to solicit by phone can help with the phone-a-thon. Pemstein's can be reached at x7405).

Bard recently finished the Bard College Campaign, which raised \$90 million so that Bard could have an Endowment. In the past, Bard required \$9 million dollars in Gifts and Donations every year to balance the budget. Now, the school can rely, at least partially, on the investment interest from the \$90 million. Every year, this money can go toward expenses, or possibly new scholarships.

Increasing the Endowment is part of Pemstein's job. By soliciting the various sources who gave to the Bard College Campaign, Bard set a precedent. Because they gave money once, these contributors are part of the community. After someone gives money to Bard, Pemstein explained, we always send them a thank you letter, telling them exactly where their money went, "and then we ask them again. And if that works? Then we send them a letter to thank them, and we ask 'em again."

Pemstein heads up the Development Staff, which consists of 12 people including her.

Smolny Leads Way in Education

CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE

acquiring of Russian accreditation, the trips by both Shkliarevsky and Gillespie herself to the school, and the active recruiting of North American students. According to both Gillespie and Shkliarevsky, the accreditation is not far from becoming a reality. A representative from the Russian Ministry of Higher Education has already visited Smolny and spent several days with the faculty and administration. A decree by the Ministry will validate this "new direction in Russian education," said Shkliarevsky. Smolny marks a change in the system of higher education in Russia. One immediate example is that with the accreditation, it will be the first institution to grant a BA in the liberal arts. In its past two years, students could take classes at Smolny but could not receive a degree.

In a long-term sense, Smolny will mark a change in the role of education as it relates to careers and life in Russia. As stated in the mission statement, Smolny sets out to achieve four different goals: "To cultivate the intellectual, cultural, and moral aspects of an individual through the pursuit of higher education; to develop in students critical and creative thought, a sense of individual worth, independence, and respect for human life; to prepare students for life in the increasingly global contemporary world;" and "to democratize education and guarantee the accessibility of contemporary educational programs." Since this is a new direction in Russian education, Shkliarevsky mentioned that along with a lot of support and interest, exists some skepticism.

"I think the most important thing for us to address in the recruitment of students themselves. We have to convince them and their parents that this is a valid education that will give them a good head start," he said. During Shkliarevsky's trip he met with secondary school teachers in St. Petersburg, in order to "establish connections with high school students." He said he received a lot of positive feedback from this visit and many teachers showed quite an interest in the methodology. This interest developed into a strong connection and what started as a utilitarian objective, that is, to recruit high school students, "developed naturally into a stable relationship with several progressive schools in St. Petersburg." The teachers formed a group, which will meet regularly at Smolny to further explore the particular methodology. Students who have participated in Smolny classes in the past, also responded quite positively when reflecting on their experiences. In a survey of Smolny students, answering the open question, "What was the most important for you in the liberal arts style of teaching?", the respondents stressed that "the courses improved their knowledge of the subjects" "enriched them intellectually," and "stimulated them to study the subject in depth." (Thirty-four percent of the respondents pointed out that the questions raised during class discussions were debated after class.) Smolny's educational philosophy draws upon a lot of ideas fundamental to a Bard education. In many ways, Smolny is modeled on its American cousin. Gillespie mentioned that some Smolny professors have visited Bard to "see how we teach. They understand very well that they need to change the way they teach. In the past, what they would have is a lecture."

This change in teaching style seems to be well received by the students, according to Gillespie.

"They seem to be enjoying it. The students are quite lively in the classes," she said. Smolny will use Bard's structure in many ways. As Gillespie explained, Smolny will have a Language and Thinking workshop, First-Year Seminars, Moderations and Senior Projects, and have the same distribution requirements as Bard. As far as recruiting Russian students, Smolny has been hosting several open houses and will start registration in May 1999. Admission standards are presently being crafted that will depart significantly from those typical of current Russian education. Traditionally, to apply to a University, a student takes exams but "Smolny will have a combination of determinants of admission," said Schlivaresky. These will include high school academic record, an interview and an essay. According to Schlivaresky, "the purpose will be to recruit the most interesting, the most creative, the most original students."

Another requirement will be an English examination as this will be a bilingual institution, offering classes in both Russian and English. In the recruitment of North American students, Gillespie and Schlivaresky both stressed the fact that one does not have to be a Russian studies major to study at Smolny. Though some language experience is required, Smolny offers a whole range of courses. The curriculum, modeling itself after Bard is focused around programs, which are specific to Russia and differ from Bard. An example that Schlivaresky cited was the greater emphasis on Asian studies and democratization. One example of class titles include "The Popular Song and Artistic Consciousness in the Soviet Era," and Gillespie also reminds students who may be interested in attending Smolny that despite what they may have read in the newspapers, "There's plenty to eat, the buildings are heated and one can actually manage very well over there."

Norman Manea and the triumph of the Artist

The acclaimed writer and Bard Professor discusses personal victory in the battle between the artist and the regime

By CIPRIAN IANCU

NORMAN MANEA WAS BORN in 1936 in Suceava, Romania. At the age of five he was deported to the concentration camp Transnistria, in the Ukraine. After WWII he returned to Romania, and survived the next four decades under the totalitarian dictatorship of the Communist regime, which was not overthrown until the violent revolution of 1989. By then he had emigrated to America, and taken up residency at Bard College.

Through the course of his life, Norman Manea has written novels, collections of essays, and volumes of shorter fiction; and his writing has been translated into ten languages. His work is known for describing life in concentration camps, within totalitarian social orders, and in exile. His many honors and awards include the MacArthur Foundation and Guggenheim Fellowships, the Writer's Union of the Socialist Republic of Romania Award (which was withdrawn on demand of the communist authorities), and the National Jewish Book Award for *On Clowns: the Dictator and the Artist*, a collection of essays.

On Clowns includes an essay by Mr. Manea entitled "The History of an Interview," which explains the circumstances leading to his censorship by the Communist government. In 1981, Mr. Manea participated in an interview in which he gave guarded, yet honest answers to questions about, among other things, his views on the place of the artist, and his or her work, in society. The interview was ultimately published at great risk to all. The result was a scandal in which the powers in control of the Romanian literary scene attempted to discredit and silence Mr. Manea, precipitating his eventual emigration to the West, in 1987.

In this candid interview, Norman Manea discusses his experience as a dissident writer, an exile, and an émigré, as well as the obvious challenges of the writer who must adjust to a new home. He is currently Francis Flounoy Professor of European Studies and Culture, as well as Writer in Residence, at Bard.

Ciprian Iancu: In the interview that is the subject of the last of your essays in *On Clowns*, the first question of the interviewer is, in part, "To what extent do you consider a writer to represent himself, and to what extent is he a public person? Might there exist a conflict of interests here?" Your response concludes with the statement, "Any writer worthy of his serious mission would struggle to overcome this impasse, if it indeed exists, between solitude and solidarity."

I would like to ask you to comment on that response. What would your answer be now, all these years later, having left the totalitarian regime you were in when you gave that answer. Would it be different, and if so, how?

Norman Manea: The situation changed there, and my situation changed, but the answer would be the same as seventeen years ago. In order to express public opinion, the first condition is to have a public opinion. There it was a way to say more than I said, because the reader understood between the lines what I meant . . . it wasn't really possible to have a public opinion. This interview was published with great difficulties and provoked a huge scandal, despite the fact that if you read it now, in a normal situation, nothing seems so explosive or extraordinary. In that time and place normality was explosive. The simple fact to be normal, the simple fact to say normal things, not to use the inflated 'party' language, was already a challenge, a kind of "hidden bomb."

Between the writer and the reader there was an invisible code, a special connection indeed, but I will not praise too much censorship. As you probably saw, I quote Borges at some point saying that censorship is the mother of metaphor. We should prefer to invent metaphors without censorship, not to be forced to praise too much achievements due to and through oppression.

So, I think the answer is the same. Of course in an open society the public opinion may also be manipulated. Through the mass media, through commercial trivialization. But the risk is smaller. The big surprise here is that there are not too many people ready to take the risk, to fight it, even if the risk is not so great. You will not be put in jail. Maybe you will upset your boss, maybe you will even lose your job . . . yet people are not very ready to do it.

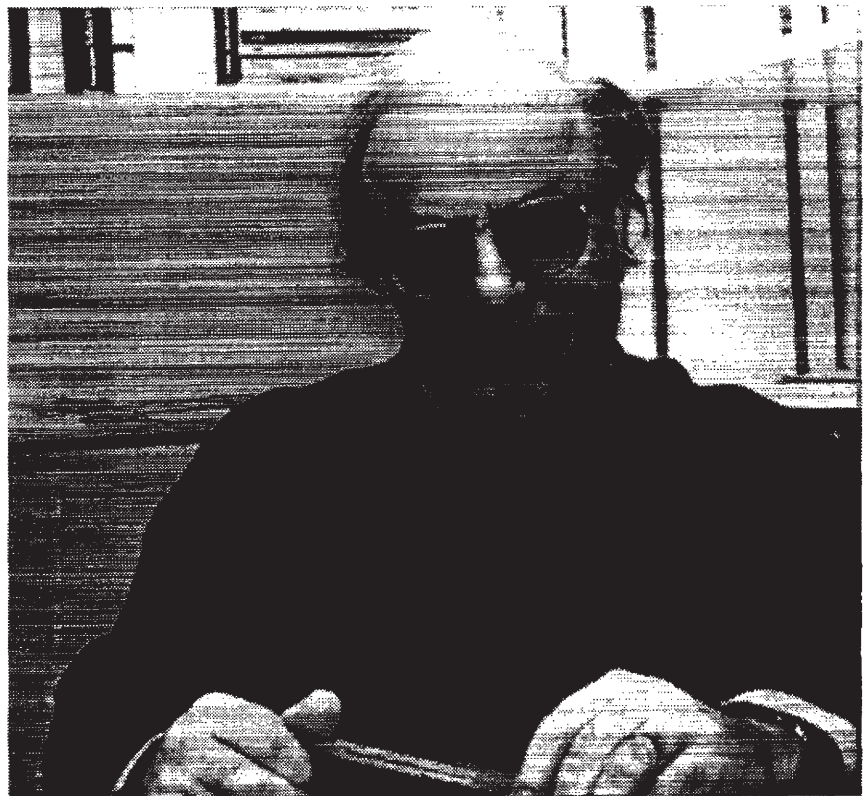
It is in a way also understandable. This is a society where the focus is on the individual and on the individuality. What I said there about the writer who tries to overcome the contradiction between solitude and solidarity is in a way valuable also for another type of society. There, we had an extreme situation. And yet, also in a free society based on competition, it's difficult to overcome this contradiction. You follow up your own interest first of all, and then what remains for solidarity? It's a question we ask ourselves. Sometimes it seems easier to show a kind of solidarity for the people of Kosovo, than to show solidarity with a colleague with whom you are in competition. I'm sure even students experience this, despite that they are not yet in the social competition which involves earning money and having a better position. It is felt in any social group, it is the engine of the capitalist society and it is not easy probably to overcome this contradiction . . .

If we translate these two terms for a broader category of population, the con-

tradiction between solitude and solidarity becomes the contradiction between self-interest and the common interest. Regard a work of art? The criteria for evaluating art are different, more fluid and complicated, of course. The "competition" became, unfortunately also in this area, more and more a commercial competition, distorting the essential way at deals with solitude and solidarity.

C.I.: What most compelled you to write when you began writing in Romania? Do you believe there is a particular thing, within a dictatorial regime, that motivates a 'true' artist?

N.M.: Under solitude, under dissatisfaction with trivial daily life, we face an inner, deep need for something different, higher. In a closed society the possibilities of expressing this need were drastically reduced. In many cases people there became readers, and very faith-



ful, sophisticated readers, due to the fact that they didn't have a big choice. How to avoid or overcome the banality and/or darkness of daily life? It was a way of finding a dialogue with unknown, intelligent, invisible friends. It was very important, and it was also a way of keeping your privacy. To lock yourself in a room with a book protected you in a way from the outside world. I think it protects you even here, yet there it protected you from a lot of dangers and risks.

A lot of things I must say which happened there, happen here also, but in a different way, in a milder way. The tragedy has become here switched mainly to comedy, tragi-comedy, not a very dangerous one, not a heavy one . . . It's perhaps the difference between blasphemy and carnival.

The individual is here also under the outside pressure of a lot of vulgar and cheap things. However, they are not so hostile, they are not so risky, they are not so dangerous. There, the fact that it was a large readership for books, a growing one, had also a social-political explanation. And we see now, after things changed, that also the readership changed. So it's not the difference between a newborn American and a newborn

Romanian. It's about society . . . and the relation between individuals and their social environment.

C.I.: What was your education like in literature during Romania's totalitarian regime? Did you depend on a black market in books?

N.M.: I graduated as an engineer in hydraulics and I worked as an engineer for more than ten years. But I was, from my childhood, a very avid reader, and I even started to write very early. The reason why I studied engineering was quite complicated, related to the sociopolitical pressure and distortions. In fact, I was in love with literature. You may remember what Kafka said when he chose to be a lawyer. It wasn't affinity for his profession, it was, rather, the hope that it could protect his indifference. He said, "I'm indifferent to anything which is not essential." Which meant literature, of course . . . And he added, "I must find a profession which allows me this indifference, without hurting too much my vanity."

When I graduated from high school it was still a kind of Stalinist

Under solitude, under dissatisfaction with trivial daily life, we face an inner, deep need for something different, higher. In a closed society the possibilities of expressing this need were drastically reduced.

or post-Stalinist period when literature was very propagandistic. I am a self-made man of letters through my reading and my writing. During the first years after the war (I mean my high school period), which politically was very tense, I took advantage of reading the great Russian literature. It was a period when the Russian literature was heavily and very well translated into Romanian. So even in that tough and crazy period you could find some very good books, and I mean not only good Russian literature . . . I followed up to the western classical literature and the Romanian one of course. When I was already an engineer, there was a cultural opening in Romania, a lot of modern literature came in, and I followed up again.

From time to time, through friends, to connections in the West, I also received modern and contemporary books that were never translated and brought into Romania, smuggled in by different underground channels. More or less I was in touch with the evolution of western literature, and also the American one. It wasn't like here: you go in a library . . . you go in a book store and you buy whatever you want or you order and then finally you have the book about which you heard or you were told. It was an effort for every book, to have it, to read it, a great excitement and risk to reach something which is forbidden.

It was not through the black market. It was only through friends, a channel, a kind of underground channel, but not for money. A kind of cultural conspiracy.

I remember my first visit to Paris in the late seventies. I entered that huge FNAC bookstore, and . . . and I almost fainted there. Going from one shelf to another and trying to make a list and to see what I can select. I wanted to buy everything. I had money maybe for three books. How to choose these three books from the thirty, at least, which were on the first line of my preference? We were really avid, hungry, curious to know. It was heroic, in a way, and quite rewarding, despite the risk and the tension, quite rewarding to remain culturally alive.

C.I.: What was the experience of emigration to America like for you? One is reminded of Czeslaw Milosz's book, *The Captive Mind*, in which he discusses the experience of being a dissident writer and mentions the feeling of loss for the exile who cannot contribute to the literary consciousness of his people by writing in his nation. Was there a similar feeling on your part about emigration?

N.M.: It's not easy for anybody to uproot himself, from a culture, from a family, from memory and the past. It is much more difficult for a writer. The language grows in a writer from the moment when he as a young person becomes a reader, until he hears his own voice in his own language . . . To lose this suddenly is a disaster. The Romanian writer Cioran said at some point . . . that for a writer to switch languages is a disaster greater than any historical disaster in the world. And it happens paradoxically in the moment when you are freed—because exile is also, as it was in our cases, freedom. It meant leaving a closed prison type of society and penal colony, reaching finally a shore of freedom. Yet in the same moment, the tongue was cut; I mean, exactly in the moment you had most to say about your experience.

So, the linguistic exile is quite schizophrenic. I postponed to the very, very last minute this very tough decision to leave. I didn't want to leave Romania not because I was happy there, I was childish enough to fool myself that I don't live in a country, that I live only in a language. So I did not want to separate myself from my language which was my real homeland. I was forced in the end to leave. Certainly, I was very happy that I still left in time, that I succeeded to escape, that I saved, in a way, my sanity. Of course I had to go through difficult experiences here.

So on one hand I'm, I should say, very grateful being here. On the other hand I still face my own personal problems as a writer in translation, usually as a betrayed writer . . . starting to write again, trying to reach the foreign reader. It's a problem of language and it's also a problem of culture and tradition. Tradition of writing, tradition of reading. It was essential, a crucial human and spiritual experience confronting exile. It has also some great advantages. I don't mean the material advantages, a better house or a better job. I mean spiritual advantages. Being challenged in a very tough way, being obliged to revive your values, to take a quite critical approach to your biography, to your old and your new place. A lot of advantages and disadvantages . . . We are finally made and defined by our life experience, by this human adventure, which contains, always, in one way or another, exile. I was there already in a kind of internal exile. I was not an official writer, I was not a party member;

I had quite a difficult time with authorities. Finally, I changed the internal exile to exile itself.

C.I.: How does the current state of things in Romania, considering both the sociopolitical changes that have taken place since the revolution and the struggling state its in as a new republic, effect your sense of identity as a Romanian writer?

N.M.: Despite the fact that Romania changed the political system through a violent fight—the only country in eastern Europe that did it this way, because it was the toughest dictatorship in the area—despite this fact, which had a heroic side, I must say that in that change a lot of farce and masquerade was going on. Partially, the change was directed by the secret police which succeeded for a while (and I'm not sure about today) to be behind the scene, to manipulate the political scene even after the change. A lot of old nomenclatura [privileged] people and people involved with the secret police became after the change very rich, and gained a kind of freedom and power which they did not have even with the communists. Serving the communist system assured you some privileges but you were still under the control all the time. Having money, you are not any more under any control. This is absolute power. The situation is boiling still there. A lot of corruption and lies and masquerading is going on. The normal people, the working population, has a very difficult time. Capitalism entered there with a very tough hostile face.

It's difficult to predict anything. It's a chaotic type of situation, which can grow (step by step, I mean, not by force) to a milder type of democracy, or to a new type of authoritarian system. Not necessarily the old one—I don't believe that it can be exactly the same as it was, it cannot be—but it can be still despotic. The place has a Byzantine tradition . . . and these 50 years of communism really did a lot of harm to the core of the Romanian civilization itself. It's difficult to recover. A lot depends on the West. The West is, as we know, very busy, as it has its own problems. Capitalism itself is going through a new phase, even a crisis, and there is a lot of questions about the future of global capitalism. Usually the West intervenes in the East only when some trouble appears, not before. And this is much always late.

My relationship to the country is still not the best. I criticized the old and new post-communist nationalism in Romania. Coming from the famous exile in America, this criticism was not taken in the best way. So I still have a complicated relationship with the place. I have friends there of course, and I have people with whom I have an interesting dialogue. Yet the connection to the country is still tense. I am more and more here than there.

C.I.: How do you view your place here in America? Do you consider yourself a Romanian-American? How do you characterize yourself in the political, academic, or literary world you are now in?

N.M.: Well, I live here. I own an apartment here. I have a job here. I have students here. I publish my books here. I have plans for the future here. It is more and more my place. Of course I still have the translation problems, or other very specific problems related to my writing. As for a citizen, if this is what you ask me, I am more and more

here. I will never pretend to be the typical American, I am not even convinced that America needs too many typical Americans. I think my work here can contribute to the spiritual climate of the country. I watch carefully and with great interest what happens. I think the country goes through a political and moral crisis. It's a huge and strong country. It's still an immense human laboratory, and I don't want to believe that something wonderful will not happen to establish this great democracy as a leading spiritual force of our troubled world.

I am quite often disturbed by the huge contrast between the wealthy and the poor, about health insurance, for instance, for the wealthy and the poor. About the market trade of cultural values, the overwhelming trivialization of political and cultural life, the cynical invasion of privacy. I am quite uncomfortable with the system of election, which is in the end the expression of a real democracy. Do you need to be a very wealthy man in order to be a new candidate in an election? To express the will of the people? Success, which is at the core of the American civilization is usually and unfortunately measured first of all financially. Yet a lot of men and women that succeeded extraordinarily in their human enterprise and intellectual adventure and yet were poor, or even died poor or unknown. From the human and sociopolitical view of the sanity of the society, I think that this brutal emphasis on money is not the best simplification of life.

There are of course many, many other things which disturb me, and a lot of other things which I like. I'm still amazed by the extraordinary energy of this country, even if not always going in the right direction. Optimism, creativity, energy, liberty, charity, inventiveness, resilience . . . I do hope that at some point in the future I will be able to write about my American experience. I don't dare to say about the American side of my personality. I'm not yet sure about that, although it is already a part of my life.

And I hope that the view of the newcomer, who is not even so new, can bring something fresh and interesting to the vision of the country. I'm glad that it happened so that I landed at Bard. I'm here already ten years. It became certainly my real American home . . . I have been noticing that it keeps being more for me a familiar, even a family—new, American family—environment.

The language grows in a writer from the moment when he as a young person becomes a reader, until he hears his own voice in his own language . . . To lose this suddenly is a disaster.

CCS Spring Shows Present Diverse Works

Graduate students bring year-long creative process to end

By KERRY CHANCE

AS PART OF THE SPRING THESIS SERIES, the Center for Curatorial Studies (CCS) featured three experientially distinctive exhibitions: "Fluid," "Sound Foundations," and "Variations on Themes: Selections from the Marielise Hessle Collection." These exhibitions, curated by graduate students Henry Estrada, Benjamin Portis, and museum director Amada Cruz, respectively, ran through March 28.

The thesis exhibitions were the culmination of a year-long process in which graduate students developed a theme, chose artists, and used their professional skills to illustrate the integration of concept and artwork.

Sound Foundations

For his Master's thesis, Portis presented recent videos that focus on the importance of sound as an integral but often overlooked part of video art. The six artists featured—Jessica Bronson, Amy Jenkins, Christian Marclay, Daniel Pflumm, Alyson Shotz, and "Screen" (Willy Le Maitre and Eric Rosenzweig)—elicited new approaches to the medium in the technical and formative realm. Recent advances in computer technology have allowed for the synchronization of sound and video. This technology was used in "Fleabotics," by Screen, which depicts the regeneration process of the detritus of daily life; a crumpled paper moved in unison with the tempo of the soundtrack.

These artists also broke away from the former tradition in video art which, like television and movies, demanded a narrative form. Alyson Shotz's video evaded such a demand as it depicted a female figure in a mirrored costume almost merging with the wooded background and moving to a soundtrack of underwater recordings. This piece, like the others in "Sound Foundations," was repetitive and cyclical, allowing for the possibility of multiple interpretations depending on length of viewing or position in the room. Aside from varying perspectives, Shotz said she intended to convey "the border between humans and nature but also the continuity that is seen when the mirrors dissolve into nature, but never do fully."

While nature sounds accompanied several of the pieces the music of popular culture and machine were also included. With all these different sounds and images in his show, Portis explained that he "had to make the [exhibition] more than a sum of its parts." In doing so, he brings "the more subtle aspect of the art: sound" to the fore.

Fluid Exhibition

In this exhibit, Estrada explored the ways in which sculptor Thomas Glassford, painter Paul Henry Ramirez and conceptual artist Ethel Shipton, challenged the standards of their mediums by treating each piece as a fluid or "open-ended proposition." All three created site-specific installations and used mixed-media to evoke passage and transformation in ambiguous, playful, and even erotic ways.

Moving between pieces, the work of one artist often overlapped and moved toward the work of the next so that the concept of fluidity was contained not only in the pieces themselves but also throughout the exhibition. A new work by Ethel Shipton, entitled "Vamous, Let's Go," was comprised of an orange sisal rope that ascended to the ceiling from a heap on the floor in front of a stenciled backdrop, suggesting passage itself. It also provided a continuity between the pieces.

The pieces were unified as well by the artists' originally shared cultural region, near the U.S./Mexico border, and reflected what Estrada called, "a bicultural sensibility, negotiating, translating, and crossing borders."

Even the canvas "borders" could not contain some of Ramirez's work—his sinuous lines shaped and transformed the human figure and often "trail[ed] off into architectural space." Despite the seemingly free form of Estrada's exhibition, he explained that "in the field of contemporary art, a curator authors a concept that acts as a 'framework' for new trends in art." Authoring an exhibition demands a clear structure in the yearlong planning for the event. However, according to Estrada, "an exhibition is not completely realized until an audience views it and brings their responses and discussions to the show and to the individual artists' pieces."

Variations on Themes

Cruz's exhibition, though not a part of the spring thesis series, drew from the sculptures in CCS's permanent collection. These pieces balanced the more contemporary artists featured in the students' exhibitions and created a more linear, historical theme.

Using a minimalist starting point, she traced the evolution from the geometric forms of the circle and square of the 1960s and 70s to the human body that emerged primarily during the 80s. "There are links between themes" said Cruz, pointing to furniture like Jackie Winsor's blocky, granite "Pair of One Part Chairs," and to the allusion of the body that appeared in Felix Gonzalez-Torres' metaphoric candy spill.

Because the show was arranged from pieces in storage, Cruz said that the exhibition simply required "a light curatorial touch." She added, "I enjoy working with the artists because through them you can see and learn about different experiences."

Through the careful planning by the curators, the shows allowed the artists to contribute to a larger theme while well representing their own work.



FIELDS OF CAKES: An installation at the CCS.

ARTREVIEWARTREVIEWARTREVIEWART

IF YOU DIDN'T CATCH IT YOU aren't likely to. But it was great while it lasted. With a short two week time slot, Seth Wiley, Angela Farrell, Sheila Refael, and Nick Emmet, all Art Club members, conspired to bring the best and the brightest of Bard's considerably talented artists and anti-artists out into the open. Their encouragement, taking fullest form as the spray-paint sign hung outside of Kline, brought in painters, photographers, sculptors and dirt.

Shying away from the constraint of a theme, this most recent presentation left all the doors and windows open. This made the curating a time-consuming endeavor. Many hours were spent sorting and slaving over the pieces, attempting to find the right balance and opposition of concept and form. The evidence of thoughtful process is all in the details; you may not have noticed that one of the student curators was "partially inspired by the organization of meat products at the IGA." Only partially however, and without long-standing effect on the final outcome of the well-presented show. The main room of the Fischer Art building was adorned on all of its walls, floors and sometimes even doors with the strange and wonderful selections of Bard's collective conscience.

Fishing for opinions among those not immediately involved brought only positive comments. As Peter (Xico) Greenwald readily submitted: "It's exciting to see so much different kinds of student work. The Art Club has really outdone themselves." The only criticisms, if they can even be described as such, came from the Art Club itself. They felt that not enough submissions were forthcoming, and half of those that were came from consistent contributors, most of whom were art majors. In the future they would like to see more of the stuff that they know is hiding under the anthropology student's beds.—Evan Robertson

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Stanley Kubrick is Not Dead, He's Downloaded

By D.C. CAUDLE

TWO WEEKS AFTER completing the film *Eyes Wide Shut*, which will be released in July, Stanley Kubrick downloaded his consciousness into a mainframe somewhere to be resurrected at a later date. The official word was that he died in his sleep at his home in England. I'm not buying it. Knowing Kubrick's career and maverick reputation as I do, it is impossible to accept that he merely "passed away." I'd rather cling to the notion that his head is in a cryogenic tank next to Walt Disney's, merely awaiting the time when A.I. (Artificial Intelligence) can be brought to the screen with the advanced technology of the twenty-first century. A.I. was Kubrick's legendary project that consisted in filming a young actor literally growing up over twenty years. As the actor aged, Kubrick supposedly filmed key scenes for the film. It is also said that he was waiting for the technology of cinema to become advanced enough to do justice to the special-effects-heavy idea. Perhaps he finally realized that technology would never catch up with his "out of this world" images, at least in his lifetime. So it makes perfect sense for him to lop his head off and put it into the freezer for a couple of centuries until the world is ready for his film. Better yet, I'd like to believe my main frame theory. Kubrick has now been downloaded into a super computer and will continue to direct his films appearing to everyone as a blinking red light like HAL in Kubrick's masterpiece *2001*. "Dave, pan the camera left," he might say on his next film shoot.

Kubrick's reputation as a recluse and extreme taskmaster on his film shoots is the stuff of legend. From 1953 to 1999, Kubrick only made 13 films. They have become a literal bible of filmmaking for anyone who has ever wanted or dreamed of making their own films. He is without a doubt the most influential and important filmmaker of the post-war generation. Not only for the films he made but in the way that he made them. His films have aroused controversy and have made taboo topics such as pedophilia, nuclear annihilation, rape and gang violence, the evil of technology, and the horrors of war, viable and entertaining subjects for the cinema.

Kubrick started as a *Look* magazine photographer when he was 17. He eventually shifted into motion pictures and garnered the attention of the public with his third feature, *The Killing* (1956). This led to the anti-war picture *Paths of Glory* (1957), which starred Kirk Douglas. In 1960 Douglas hired Kubrick to replace director Anthony Mann on Douglas' gladiator epic *Spartacus*. Douglas assumed the still-novice director would be overwhelmed by the scope of the picture and would be tractable. This was far from the case. Kubrick and Douglas battled for creative control for the rest of the shoot. This was Douglas' baby, but Kubrick was not used

The stories of forcing actors to do take after take of a scene, his productions always being shrouded in complete secrecy, his ability to replace actors and re-shoot all of their scenes, are what make him the idol of nearly every young filmmaker today.

to being a "yes man." *Spartacus* is the story of slave leading a revolt against the Roman Empire. The behind-the-scenes fights became so intense that Kubrick once quipped to Douglas, "Whose the real slave of this movie?" or something to that effect. After this experience, Kubrick fled to England where he lived and worked for the rest of his life. He vowed to always have authority over his own set.

Kubrick was an innovator. He shot *Barry Lyndon* (1975) completely by natural and candlelight using a special lens that was originally created by NASA. He was instrumental in developing the Steadicam, which his film *The Shining* (1980) was the first to use. His film *2001* (1969) raised the level of special effects in film by leaps and bounds, making films such as *Star Wars* possible. His most controversial film *A Clockwork Orange* (1971) caused riots in London and had to be pulled from theatres. It is to this day banned in England.

It is said that Kubrick lived like a hermit. Supposedly he didn't

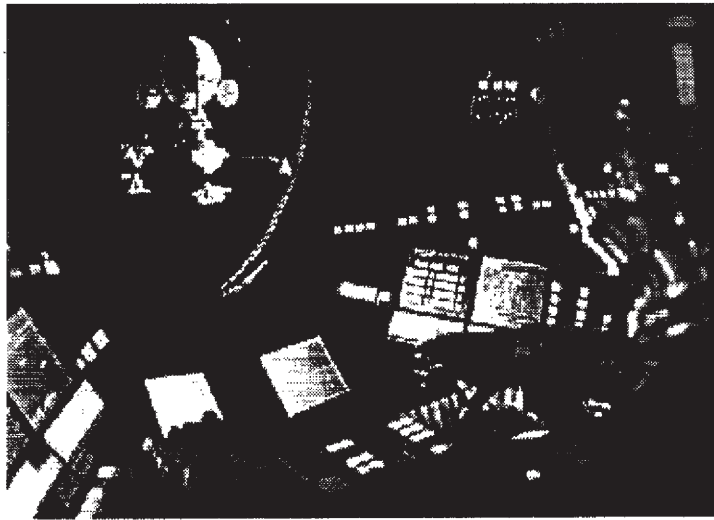
socialize. He didn't drive. He never flew. He never gave interviews. However, Kubrick had a pilot's license, loved baseball, had many friends in and out of the film industry, and raised a family. Last year he accepted a lifetime achievement award from the DGA. He did not appear at the ceremony, but instead sent a video tape of his acceptance speech. I think that sums up Kubrick perfectly. He was not nearly as secretive as people would have us believe, but he was not the "publicity hound" that many celebrities are, either. To Hollywood this made him seem strange. But we loved him for that: The stories of forcing actors to do take after take of a scene, his productions always being shrouded in complete secrecy, his ability to replace actors and re-shoot all of their scenes, are what make him the idol of nearly

every young filmmaker today. By average standards he acted like a nut, but who in the hell likes average. His last completed film, *Eyes Wide Shut*, took over two years to make. Kubrick replaced two cast members and re-shot all of those scenes, and wound up costing Warner Bros. in excess of 65 million dollars before the film was finished. And no one at the studio ever got to see it until Kubrick was done. That's power. That's madness. It's pure Kubrick.

I just hope the truth is revealed in my lifetime, the truth that Stanley Kubrick is not dead. He's just out there somewhere waiting for a new society to emerge so he can push their limits as well.



REVOLUTION: Kubrick's films include such masterpieces as *Full Metal Jacket* (left) and *2001* (right).





FOODREVIEWFOODREVIEWFOODREVIEW

For me, the name Buffet 2000 conjures up images of greatness. Hearing that name makes me enter into a dream state, one where I picture a restaurant the size of a warehouse, with a Wal-Mart style arrangement of hundreds of buffets of all different varieties. There would be a pasta bar, a pizza buffet, assorted fried items, and on and on, as far as the eye could see.

In reality Buffet 2000 is quite different. First, it must be said that this restaurant is not the easiest to find, especially if you get directions off the Internet. Due to this difficulty, I was able to explore all the nooks and crannies of Poughkeepsie before happening upon my ultimate destination. I did get distracted for a good hour when I happened upon Fun Central, which claimed to have an indoor rollercoaster (which turned out to be nothing more than a broken down virtual reality machine). Fun Central did have the Japanese version of Bust-A-Move, skeeball, and a really great skiing game that makes you look like an idiot.

But this is not a review of Fun Central, I must return to Buffet 2000. First of all, the outside of Buffet 2000 looks as if it was once a bank, with its metallic lettering and marble finish. The inside was strange as well. First of all, there were no endless aisles of buffets, only one that featured Chinese food. I really appreciated certain parts of the decor, such as the indirect blue lighting and surrounding mermaid designs evoking that underwater feel.

The buffet was nice though it did not go on forever. As is usually the case with me and buffets, I got really excited right away, planning in my mind an 8-course meal. Each item looked better than the next, and they had shrimp and crab legs, great all-you-can-eat rarities. Various soups and salads enticed my palate as well as did the chicken on the stick, the deboned barbecued rib strips, egg rolls, and the great sauce section with a must-have dumpling sauce, which coordinates with everything. I piled my plate up, trying to restrain myself, not forgetting the ice cream bar for dessert.

When I got back to my table, I relished every item, until I realized that perhaps I didn't come at the best time of day. I think to really appreciate Buffet 2000 one should go for a breakfast or brunch, enjoying the food when it is first cooked and still hot, avoiding the dried-out jerky-effect. Yes, to start out early in the day would be the best. Since it is all you can eat, you could always start breakfast and just hang around for lunch, maybe taking a break in the middle by napping in the bathroom to gather your appetite again for dinner.

Also, because I did eat there towards closing, items were being taken away. Feeling the pressure, I ran up and prepared a second plate, trying to get all the items I missed the first round. This proved fatal as well. As with buffets, it is so tempting to make a mountainous plate but then you return to your seat, take a small bite of everything, feel a little queasy from the various combinations you made, and let your plates sit—all that food just wasted! You try to muster up a little energy, reminding yourself you are going to pay \$8.99 but nevertheless, it becomes impossible to fit another piece of beef or broccoli into your tired worn out mouth. Ah, such is the double-edged sword known as the buffet.—Stephanie Schneider

Creating A New World With Universal Power

A troupe of performers takes on social issues with theatre

By STEPHANIE SCHNEIDER

"Four elements of hip-hop, we be the fifth," exclaimed the four performers who made up the Universes, as an introduction of themselves and their performance.

The Universes, a group that embraces the elements of hip-hop along with theatre, creates a performance that is unique. Made up of three men and one woman, two of whom are Bard alumni, the Universes shared their talents with Bard Students on Friday, April 10 in Bard Hall.

The beginning of the performance sealed a promise that this would be a show of creativity and boundless expression. The show started off with the members in the back of the room making varied sounds of warm-up singing exercises. Each performer took on an individual sound and when they reached the front of the room, congealed into a unified group.

This example threaded itself throughout the whole performance, that is four individual actors separating themselves and uniting again and again. The performance consisted of smaller individual monologues intermitted by unified group-oriented bits. This perhaps was the most impressive aspect of the performance: each member branched off into separate characters but then managed to return to the whole.

The individual performances concerned drug addiction, police brutality, living in housing projects, feelings of worthlessness, loneliness, and struggle. The audience witnessed the drug addict "inhale fantasy and exhale reality," as he questioned sanity and insanity and how the borders blur. The female performer sang with explosiveness in Spanish about the tragedy of her "Soledad" and when she finished, joked, "I can sing it in Chinese, too." The "assassin" who "kills with words" questioned, "OJ is free—but is Mumia?"

These are some of the social issues addressed by a group that encourages their audiences to take an active stance, a new stance with a new energy. One performer said, for example, that he didn't want to hear anymore about the phrase "revolution will not be televised." Instead, he encouraged, "Take a pen, erase the 'R' in revolution, let it be evolution, and bring it live."

The Universes stem from a greater organization known as The Point. The Point's home base is located in the South Bronx, in a 12,000 foot building, along with a courtyard; the facility was renovated with the help of fundraising campaigns, New York State Council on the Arts, and the Booth Ferris Fund.

"When all was said and done, the Point's total expense for architectural services rendered was \$1 and a lifetime of gratitude," read their web site at the point.org. The Point is a community-based organization that offers a variety of resources, including an institute of photography. As one performer said, it is "a diamond in the rough."

Two of the Universes, the founders of The Point (both are Bard graduates), Mildred Ruiz and Steven Sapp, urged Bard students in the audience to take advantage of resources of Bard. Sapp studied Drama and later worked for Admissions in 1990 to 1992. He has continued his interest in theatre by writing, directing and choreographing six theatrical productions, including the critically acclaimed "Purgatory and Another Dies Slowly."

Mildred Ruiz majored in Language and Literature during her time at Bard and later worked at the Devereux Foundation, which is a residence home for emotionally disturbed males from ages 14-21 in Red Hook. She actively works in her community by organizing ethnic festivals and cultural heritage presentations.



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FILMREVIEWFILMREVIEWFILMREVIEW

South Park. Frasier. Ally McBeal. There's Something About Mary. That Seventies Show. Saturday Night Live. Friends. Kingpin.

Feh.

Call me spoiled if you want. I prefer to say that I know how to recognize quality, except I'm not sure that the works of Savage Steve Holland are "high-brow." Oh well. The point of comedy is to make us laugh, and Savage Steve Holland does that. I have the honor of seeing not one but two of Holland's movies: *Better Off Dead* and *One Crazy Summer*.

Better Off Dead is the tale of Lane Meyer, the classic underdog. The film starts off with Lane losing his chance at joining his high school ski team, being taunted by team captain Roy Stalin, and having his girlfriend Beth dump him for Roy. Lane is persecuted by his family, math teacher, boss, blind date, the paperboy, car-racing fanatics, and his own drawings. He tries to hang, asphyxiate, and burn himself, as well as leap to death, until foreign exchange student Monique steps in to save the day.

One Crazy Summer is sort of like *Better Off Dead*, only in Nantucket and with no suicide. (Sadly, this film is my best argument that my mom's plan for a vacation in Massachusetts this summer is a bad idea.) John Cusack is an artist and wannabe basketball player. He and his friends go to Nantucket, where they save Demi Moore (pre-nose job) from evil creditors.

Better Off Dead and *One Crazy Summer* have several elements in common (I mean, besides John Cusack). For one thing, Holland's frequent collaborator, Curtis Armstrong of *Revenge of the Nerds* fame, is in both: in *BOD*, as Lane's druggie best friend, and in *OCS*, as the gentle Ack-Ack, apparently nicknamed for the machine gun sound made by his Pattonesque father. These are both quite different roles, and it is to Armstrong's credit that he can pull them off so well.

Both movies also feature characters who are eccentric to the point of being grotesque. In *BOD*, this not only includes the immediate family, but next-door neighbors Mrs. Smith and her son Ricky "who sits in his house crocheting and snorting nasal spray." (I resent this slur on people who crochet.) In fact, *BOD* may be Holland's best-known film because of its supporting characters, who turn Lane into an innocent caught in a surreal suburban nightmare. He is only saved when he meets the similarly sane Monique, who is somewhat less fazed by her surroundings.

OCS lacks the bizarreness of the minor characters, with a few exceptions: a kid sister and her ugly dog, the uncle who lives in hopes of winning a radio show prize, and, as a standout, Bobcat Goldthwait. In fact, his collision with a Godzilla suit and a high-class party had my entire family literally rolling on the floor (actually, we were already sitting there, but . . .) Even my mom! The film is dragged down somewhat by Demi Moore, for whom I really don't care. She does, however, get one good line: she tells the bad guys that she knows Dow. "Dow is the chemical company that makes Mace." Heh heh.

I have yet to watch Holland's third opus, *How I Got Into College*, but I recall seeing it on the shelf in the video store, waiting for me to watch it repeatedly this summer because I won't be in Massachusetts! Right? Come on, I know somebody has something bad to say about the place! Anybody? Please? Please?—Anne Matusiewicz



TALES OF GLORY: Holland's third opus.

Two Bardians Explore Life in "Hell's Kitchen"

Siblings Samir and Marisa Vural produce drama in NY

By ANDY VARYU

IMAGES CAPTURE US. Poetry enchants us. Social issues displace and confront us with the dissonance between our lives and the reality of the world at our periphery.

"Hell's Kitchen" accomplished all of this. The two times I experienced "Hell's Kitchen," at Bard in the fall and recently at its NYC debut at the Arts at University Settlement on Eldridge Street, were of special significance to me. This is not only because its creators, Marisa and Samir Vural, have attended Bard, but also because I have been blessed to witness the sincerity and strength with which they, as a family, confront the struggles of their lives. The multimedia dimensions of the "Hell's Kitchen" performance are tied together by this integrity, showing in microcosm the victory of the human spirit over the multiple social challenges that accompany a rapidly developing world.

In "Hell's Kitchen," current Bard student Marisa Vural portrays all eight of the characters, drawn from figures and social issues surrounding her and her brother Samir's youth in the Midtown Hell's Kitchen area of New York City. The dialogue between these voices is achieved through the budding production and directing genius of Samir, a Bard film graduate of '98. Through a combination of video projection and interactive live performance, the impeccably timed show rotates through a conversation between Marisa, live as Esperanza, the spiritual mother of the show, and Marisa on video as Paulie, a sixty-something, outspoken Italian Teamster. Esperanza exits, and the video cuts between Paulie organizing over the phone, and Abdul Abdulla preparing water and chips in the back of the restaurant in which "Hell's Kitchen" is set. Abdulla disappears from the video display and a moment later is live onstage to deliver snacks to the audience, which is seated at cafe tables incorporated into the performance space. All of "Hell's Kitchen" works with this smooth transition between characters and settings. Images of NYC life are blended with shots of Vural's characters going about their business on the streets, lending to the authenticity of the production.

Incensed candles and the red neon "Hell's Kitchen" sign illuminate the characters as they reveal their personal struggles with the changing neighborhood, and their unique strengths and pains in dealing with it. Zarathustra, the security guard, blames dropout youths for ruining the neighborhood, predicting "we will burn if we don't learn." Paulie recalls the once paradisaical community of Hell's Kitchen, blaming the "idiot box" for the demise of the Unions, while Irene, with "lungs full of charcoal but a heart full of lemon-lollipops" laments the area's infestation by Starbucks and McDonalds. Maggie, an African-American bag-lady invades the audience, crying on the some shoulders, shouting defensively at others, building to the emotional apex of the performance when she screams that God "took, He took, He took!"—Esperanza explains behind her that she has lost two children to AIDS.

However momentous the issues dealt with in "Hell's Kitchen," its commentary avoids alienating the viewer by remaining wedded to the particulars of life. Thus when Marisa enters playing herself, down from Bard for a visit, her complaints about Bard food and how it's "hard to keep focused up there" strike home, especially for the seven or eight Bard students in the audience. But when the long-awaited waitress Colleen finally arrives to take the audience's orders, we discover that her rush masks the more serious sense in which she is late—she is pregnant again. "Hell's Kitchen babies havin' babies" becomes a mantra for lament; "walkin' west without ever seein' the Hudson River sunset . . . We're just Hell's Kitchen babies havin' babies—that's what we're supposed to do."

The triumph of "Hell's Kitchen" lies not in its artful presentation of so many troubled voices, however, but in the ways they rise above fear, individually and together, to claim hope, peace, and purpose amidst the confusing paths of everyday life. To Abdul Abdulla, cleaning the floor is "sweeping away the decrepitude" of the neighborhood. And Esperanza, in advice that also helps us take in the performance in its full complexity, reminds us to "Listen to the voices that keep you searching, that help you doubt, and question what's around you. That's how you find the soul."

The multiple talents of the Vurals are showcased beautifully in "Hell's Kitchen," and it is well that they should feel at home there. The visual and verbal poetry of Samir, the abundant personality of Marisa, and the vibrance of both was nourished by their mother and grandfather—and the other people whom they thanked after the show—in Hell's Kitchen, NYC. In "Hell's Kitchen," then, we see a tribute performed to those who shaped them, a willingness and ability to stare social problems head-on, and a demonstrated commitment to the area they call home, acted out in hope and not fear. What we can learn from "Hell's Kitchen" is exactly what we can give it.

MISS LONELYHEARTS

Searching for G-Spots and Good Men at Bard

WHILE I CARE FOR YOU and all your problems deeply, I must confess part of the joy I receive from writing this column is that it allows me to rant to my heart's content. I will spare you the (gory) details, but certain events have arisen which have caused me to continuously ponder the question: are there any "good men?" While this is partially spurred by the forthcoming letter I received, my recent conversations with women have led me to believe that perhaps only I know all the "good men" because these women seem to have very little faith in the male gender. I tend to give men the benefit of the doubt, and I will say that I believe I consort with a good many upstanding young gentlemen on a regular basis. Yet I have ceased to be amazed by the number of women who are just plain fed up with them. I know what your thinking: "Oh please, like I haven't heard this bitch fest before, tell me something I don't know." Well, grin and bear it baby, cause I'm going to ride this until the saddle breaks. Here's what I want: feedback. Men, defend yourselves, write and tell me why I shouldn't condemn you. Women, write and tell me why we can't just let them go. Or for pete's sake just help me figure out what a "good man" is, 'cause I'm damned if I know.

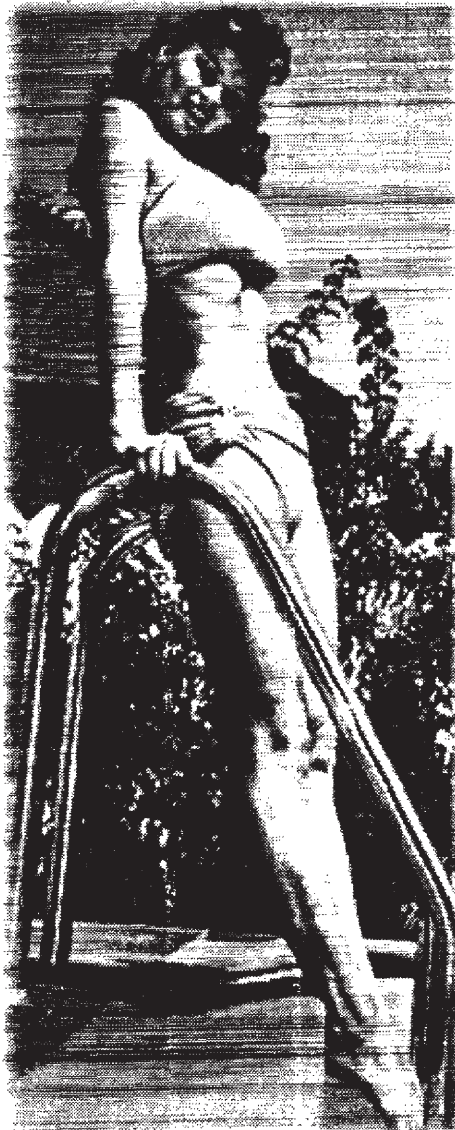
Dear Miss Lonelyhearts,

I always hear the women around campus talking about how there are no "good men" at Bard. I don't have a girlfriend right now and from all of the people you talk to I know you must have some idea of what they're looking for in a man. How should I proceed from a positive first encounter, and what makes the perfect man? Yours,
Hungry for Love

Dear Hungry,

That's a pretty tall order. You want me to tell you what makes the perfect man? Well, I can only tell you what I (and several of my intimate friends) think is perfect. I mean some people like Gianni—whatever floats your boat. So anyway, I'm not exactly sure what the perfect man is, but I have a pretty good idea of what an almost-but-not-quite-perfect man should be. I plan on pushing his button (see below) pretty soon. We're talking about a "good man" here. So I guess we should figure out what constitutes a bad man. Ummm, let's see. He doesn't change his socks very often. Nah, we can let that slide. He wears said socks in bed. No problem. He snores. Buy some earplugs. He never listens. Talk louder. He still doesn't listen. Get a dog. He doesn't understand you. Teach the dog to translate. He makes you feel like his mother. Stop taking care of him. He doesn't like you very much. You'll grow on him. He hates your guts. He's a bad man.

I don't really know what to tell you with regards to what is perfect. I know that some people are just good people. Therefore, some men are good too (is that genius or what). If you respect someone



and treat them well, then you should have no problem, however you can increase your "goodness" by mentioning how often you enjoy giving head. Still, without sounding too cliché, just be yourself. If you are a "good man" hopefully your desired women will be able to sense this. You see, women have this incredible radar sometimes, and when they detect a "good man" it overloads their system, and they find it impossible to talk to him. You may think that a girl is not interested when actually you've merely blown a few of her fuses, and all you have to do is wait for her to flip her switch. Unfortunately, this is also how girls act when they are not interested (i.e. "bad women") so you're kinda fucked either way.

In terms of where to go after a positive first encounter, I would suggest showering her with diamonds, rubies, pearls, and other such frivolous gifts. No, I'm just kidding. Try calling her, or sit at her table in Kline. Whatever you do, don't harass her. You are in the process of building a possible relationship, so start slowly, as this is a slow process. At this point you are merely aiming for building a sailboat, so don't expect the Titanic (unless you are the spitting image of Leonardo, and even then, be prepared to spend a lot of time in the water).

Dear Miss Lonelyhearts,

I recently saw a *Cosmo* with the headline "Male G-Spot" on the cover. The article didn't help me understand exactly how a guy or girl should "push the button" - in fact it seems kind of dangerous. I tried it in private and didn't notice a big difference. Can you explain this mystery? How does this thing work? Signed,

Ready to push the button

Dear Ready,

Three words: practice makes perfect. I think your first mistake was trying to "push the button" in private. Get a little duo action going on. (i.e. I'll push yours if you push mine). The "Cosmo" article to which you are referring has grabbed the attention of many a man as he went through the check-out line whilst buying his twelve pack of Meister Bräu. Most of these men didn't even know women, let alone men, have G-spots. So, basically you are curious as to why you can't get this thing up and running. The way I understood the article, the male G-spot is kind of like one of those red "in case of emergency buttons." No, scratch that, it's like the eject button on a VCR; there that's better. I mean, you could pry the tape out of the VCR, but it's so much easier with the eject button, and much more pleasurable to boot. AAAhhhh, the eject button, the way it makes the tape just pop so smoothly right out of that VCR. But I digress. This analogy is wearing thin (if it ever had any weight).

I think your main problem may be that you just need to get used to this new "toy" of yours. In the "Cosmo" article, which I am sure was based on highly scientific medical experiments, they pointed out that it may take awhile. So don't fret, satisfaction is on the horizon. I suppose the only advice I can give you is to persevere.

Most of these men didn't even know women had a g-spot, let alone men. So, basically you are curious as to why you can't get this thing up and running.

PERSPECTIVES IN MUSIC

From Blur to XTC, Via Chicago

Pop Moves in New Directions While Post-Rock Gets Promiscuous

By SCOTT STATON

IN 1997, Blur released a self-titled album that consciously disposed of the Brit-pop trappings that made them household names in Britain, ironically winning long-deserved commercial success in America but leaving more than a few old fans a little confused and somewhat skeptical. The group toyed with new ideas and styles, took a few steps away from excessive pop pretense, and delivered an album that is at times frustratingly inconsistent and tentative in its experimentation. They needed to shed their skin and stylistically reinvent themselves. Their new release, *13*, is proof positive that they succeeded. A dense, experimental work with emotional catharsis at its core (much has been made of the break-up between lead singer Damon Albarn and girlfriend of eight years Justine Frischmann of *Elastica*), *13* is more confident than the previous album and finds the group truly coming into its own. No accusations can be made that Blur are attempting to cater to a certain audience or sound a particular way, and if they were made the group would most likely not give them a second thought. *13* is the sound of a very comfortable group doing things most pop stars haven't even contemplated. Produced by William Orbit (ending Blur's relationship with long-time producer Stephen Street), the musical characteristics of the old Blur are gone, making room for gospel choirs, sculpted noise and feedback, and spaced-out arrangements. Hardly an album of singles, the music on *13* is nevertheless compelling. It is a song cycle of sorts with little interludes separating some of the tracks. Each song has its own special place in the album's atmospheric haze. Damon's lyrics are delivered in the first-person and are at times quite personal, with "Tender," "1992," "Caramel," and "No Distance Left to Run" ranking as some of the most moving songs Blur have ever delivered. *13* is Blur's most adventurous album to date, a long, dynamic work that asks much of the listener and ushers in a new age of striking musical development for the group. Coming from a band with as solid a legacy as Blur, fans old and new will want to sit down and judge for themselves the remarkable stylistic evolution of one of the decade's most vital recording groups.

With the February release of his self-titled solo debut, Sam Prekop of the *Sea and Cake* kicked off a series of solo releases from the shockingly incestuous Chicago post-rock scene. The album features Jim O'Rourke producing, arranging, and playing a variety of instruments on the album, which also features playing by Chad Taylor of the Chicago Art Ensemble, *Sea and Cake* mainstay Archer Prewitt, Josh Abrams, and a cameo or two from Tortoise mastermind John McEntire. To answer the obvious question, no, the album is not terribly unlike the *Sea and Cake*. What is notable about the album is Prekop's emphasis on organic, jazzy arrangements as opposed to the more electronic leanings of his other group's more recent work. The album finds Prekop refining his songwriting and perfecting his sensuous croon, a distinctive voice that floats along the breathy melodies of the work. O'Rourke's production and string and horn arrangements gently augment the tracks and are further testament to his studio talents. All in all, *Sam Prekop* is a delightful album that builds upon the jazzy aspects of Prekop's songwriting while establishing a strong solo identity for the artist.

Jim O'Rourke was the next to release a solo album, adding to his already impressive discography. *Eureka* is, for all intents and purposes, O'Rourke's unique take on pop music. Featuring such guest musicians as Glenn Kotchke, Tim Barnes and Rob Mazurek, the album finds O'Rourke challenging pop structures by allowing his compositions to develop and reveal themselves gradually, often culminating in a revelatory outpouring of melody and songwriting, as on the opener "Women of the World." Elsewhere, O'Rourke tackles a Bacharach/David song, "Something Big," with expectedly successful results, the song lending itself well to O'Rourke's quirky style and guest Edith Frost's remarkable backing vocals. The material on *Eureka* begs comparison with the inventive avant-pop of Van Dyke Parks and Drag City labelmate Mayo Thompson, and one must view the work as O'Rourke's distinctive contribution to that genre. Ultimately, there is no question that O'Rourke is an excellent producer, arranger, and songwriter, and *Eureka* finds him realizing his finest in all respects.

Despite the respective merits of *Sam Prekop* and *Eureka*, both are nevertheless overshadowed by the solo debut of visual artist Stephen Prina, also on Drag City. *Push Comes to Love* finds Prina in enthusiastic collaborative spirit with Chicago's elite. Produced by the former Gastr del Sol team of David Grubbs and O'Rourke (completing something of a production hat trick for O'Rourke), the two are also big players in Prina's backing band, which also notably includes John McEntire, Sam Prekop, and Rob Mazurek. The music is mostly composed by Prina but also variously features collaborative contributions from O'Rourke and Grubbs, respectively. Prina writes some of the lyrics, but they are for the most part contributed by David Grubbs, Mayo Thompson, Lynne Tillman, and others, including Dennis



HE'S FOUND IT: O'Rourke embraces pop in his own peculiar way.

Cooper, whose "Hand In Glove" from *The Dream Police* receives an adaptation. The music continues in the vein of the classic cerebral pop of Brian Eno, Robert Wyatt, and the aforementioned Parks and Thompson, but is undeniably distinctive and utterly brilliant. *Push Comes to Love* recalls Gastr's *Camoufleur* while also bringing to mind the sunny Californian pop of the 70s, its lyrical playfulness and warm collaborative air augmenting the endearing quirky melodicism of the music. The artistic triumph of this release virtually legitimizes the Chicago post-rock scene's incestuous nature. If these individual talents can all come together and make music like this, they can play with as many of themselves as they like.

John McEntire has also recently released a solo work of sorts, his score to the John Hughes film *Reach the Rock*. McEntire's work is predictably Tortoise in nature, but certain Ennio Morricone-esque arrangements and

left-field electronics maintain interest. The soundtrack also features exclusive songs from the *Sea and Cake*, former Tortoise bassist Bundy K. Brown, Polvo, and Dianogah.

Also based in Chicago, Jeff Tweedy's Wilco shares nothing with the above artists except the location. One of two bands that formed from the ashes of Uncle Tupelo, Wilco first won many critical plaudits with their second album, *Being There*, a sprawling, ambitious double-album that largely tested the bounds of the alterna-country No Depression scene. The group won further success with last year's *Mermaid Avenue*, a fruitful collaboration with Billy Bragg that added music to unused Woody Guthrie lyrics. *Summer Teeth*, the long-awaited follow-up to *Being There*, finds Wilco shifting gears into defiantly pop terrain, abandoning the group's country roots while maintaining the earthy quality of its music. The album's title accurately characterizes the material: a dark lyrical vision wedded to melodic, inventively arranged music. The album emerges fully formed, opening with an eruption of mellotron and keyboard flourishes driven by the tastefully insistent guitar line of first single, "Can't Stand It." From then on, Wilco builds upon several different pop styles, adding any number of keyboard tracks and harmony vocals to the songs. The musical innovations of *Summer Teeth* alone should

make the album great, but Tweedy also felt inclined to test the bounds of his lyrical muse, singing any number of disturbing lyrics throughout the album. Despite the sunny quality and catchiness of most of the songs, Tweedy's words set the tone of the album, and the listener soon realizes not to trust the lyrical voice, as on "How to Fight Loneliness" and "We're Just Friends." The album's centerpiece, however, is "Via Chicago," featuring a dissonant guitar section that just may be the most transcendent musical moment of the year.

Whereas *Being There* found the group experimenting with various musical styles insofar as they related to roots-rock, *Summer Teeth* finds Wilco no less willing to push the sonic and lyrical envelope while fully exploring its pop inclinations. It's an album deserving of much praise that reflects the continuing interest and love Tweedy and his fellows share of music.

Legal problems with their label have kept British pop group XTC from releasing an album the past seven years. Now that they are free from their contract with Virgin, the quirky collective of Alan Partridge and Colin Moulding has returned with two albums for 1999 under the title *Apple Venus*. *Apple Venus Vol. 1* is an almost entirely orchestral album, each track impressively melodic and sophisticated, showcasing XTC's uncanny grasp of the pop song. The group makes ample use of acoustic textures and beautiful harmonies, with tasteful string and horn arrangements played by the London Session Orchestra. As with any XTC release, however, the group is still frustratingly clever and cloying, a trait that has always kept them from the mainstream. Take for example Partridge's bitter take on his recent divorce in "Your Dictionary" ("F-U-C-K / is that how you spell friend in your dictionary?"). Musically, the group may seem at times almost effortlessly melodic, saccharine, and ornate, leaning heavily to the McCartney side of their Beatles-esque sound. In the end, however, *Apple Venus Vol. 1* is an enjoyably listenable album that shows XTC has hardly run out of steam after an influential career that has spanned over 20 years. The best pop album McCartney never delivered. Look for *Apple Venus Vol. 2* later in the year.

The artistic triumph of
[*Push Comes to Love*]
virtually legitimizes the
Chicago post-rock scene's
incestuous nature.

Rollerjam: Bastion of American Pride

The legendary tale of a sport that has taken up permanent residence in the heart of the American experience

By LUKE COHEN

COUNTLESS TIMES I have had people say to me, "Hey, earth to Luke, quit dreaming, man, and keep up with reality." And to this comment I would like to put my arm around Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and say, hey, this is America, land of the free, where dreams become reality. It is this land that gave rise to dreams such as Henry Ford's "Model T," Walt Disney's charismatic Mickey Mouse, and Mr. Zacky and family's delectable "Zacky Farm" chickens. Anyone who thinks these streets aren't paved with gold obviously has their head buried in the dirt, for those of us with our heads in the clouds can see these 25kt highways and byways. We know that it takes a special man to find his way to these paths of glory, but we also know it takes a real "hero" to roller-skate them.

It was during the Great Depression, a time when money was scarce and living was one's only reward, amidst the hopes of Franklin D. Roosevelt's "new deal," that the dark clouds parted and shed a warm light on the feet of Leo Seltzer. Not only was Leo an American, but a man—a man with dignity, pride, and a dream to fix this crazy-world-gone-all-wrong. It was his highly developed intellect and profound human insight that helped him make the connection between marathon running, wheels, circles, and hand-to-hand combat that created the world's first roller derby. By December 1935, roller-derby was synonymous with "family values," and figures such as Herman Stozetsky were esteemed as great athletes and deemed warriors of Homeric proportions.

Never was there a game so versatile, so strategically complex. This was a game that required wit, intelligence, and class. Aside from the enjoyment one garnered from the aesthetics of this Dadaist performance, one became attuned to the strife of contemporary society. Gender issues of the thirties were made quite apparent, for this was the first coed-full-contact sport at which Americans could marvel. This was a time before humanism meant prissy bulimic princesses vomiting gin and potatoes on African landmine victims, a time when men and women took matters into their own hands, on wheels. It is a crying shame that the world seems to have forgotten the day Josephine Bogash and her son Billy first strapped on their skates. This 47-year-old housewife and 15-year-old broke down every social barrier placed in their path.

Of the many issues of the '30s, alcoholism was something these politically charged "athlolutionaries" always stood firm against. Unfortunately, their bus driver Frank "Whiskey and Clams" Windelclutz never took this oath of sobriety. February 12, 1937 was a night that almost ended roller-derby, as we know it. Heading through Salem, Illinois, a very drunk "Whiskey and Clams" drove the bus off of a twenty-foot suspension bridge, killing 25 of roller-derby's most loved skaters. Of the survivors was Josephine Bogash, who was able to hold her son in her arms until the ambulance came. Little Billy lived, but only one year longer. After having his arms and legs amputated, he decided that he would dedicate his life to bringing an end to drunk driving. He and the surviving roller-titans decided they would roller-skate across America, starting in New York. As a part of the marathon, little Billy's body was passed like a baton until they reached San Francisco. With support from the President and major steel corporations, they funded the first-ever long-range skate with an amputee. Spoon-feeding Billy peanut butter, they were able to keep him in constant motion for two weeks until they finally reached sunny San Francisco. Once there, his mother met him on the Golden Gate Bridge, where she hugged him and said that in heaven they would definitely give him his arms and legs back. Billy is reported to have said, through a very peanut-buttery phlegm, "As long as there are roller-skates on the feet of Americans, the fight against alcoholism will never end." His sobbing mother kissed him, wrapped his skates around his neck, and threw him to the sea. After his tragic demise, shirts were supposedly made which said "Billy Bogash, He gave an arm and a leg to end drunk driving."

It took a good year to bring roller-derby back to the people. The majority of the players, too depressed to skate, looked to meditation to quell their depression. With the loss of some of his greatest players, Leo Seltzer knew it would take close to a miracle to bring the derby back to its feet. Nevertheless, by 1938, Leo and the remaining players were able to rally together a league that would shock the world. The year 1940 became the beginning of the roller derby "Golden Age". November 29, 1948 marked the first televised roller extravaganza. Within months everyone who owned a television dreamed of the day they could meet athletes such as the much-adored Johnie Weston, captain of the Bompers. Jerry Seltzer, son of roller tycoon Leo, was to take over the empire in 1958. Little Leo "Son of Roller Derby" Seltzer, proved he could do more than just follow in his father's footsteps. These glorious days following Jerry's reign inspired such movies as the critically acclaimed "Derby." The league thus stood as concrete American truth; it had made it through World War II, gotten through

Rollerjam may seem to be more white trash than you can shake your soggy corn-dog at, but underneath is the will-to-power which made our country, the United States of America, free.

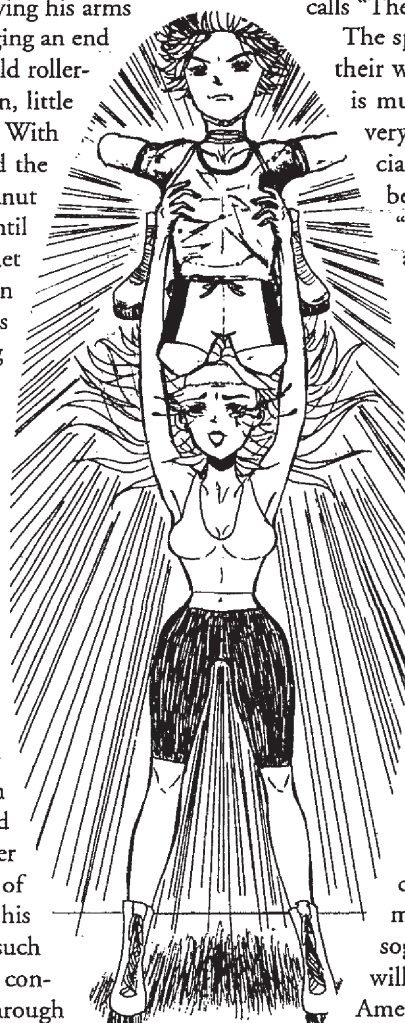
the McCarthyism of the fifties, and by 1970 seemed almost indestructible. The glory and prestige enjoyed by these few roller heroes seemed eternal, but little did they know that they only had three more years left to skate into the hearts of Americans. The Oil Embargo of 1973 proved to be the downfall of Jerry Seltzer's empire.

But now, as we stand on the cusp of the millennium, the world of roller sports has awakened from its slumber. With much care it has been able to heal the wounds inflicted by oil embargo's taxation. Jerry Seltzer lost the battle, but he definitely did not lose the war. With the help of TNN, the station which brought you country sensation Kenny Chesney, Jerry has been able to roll his empire back out into the limelight while meeting the demands of modern day society. To take a step past roller derby is to take a step into the ring of "Rollerjam," which has proven to be a post-modern thrust into the realm of roller sports. With a sloped track, the introduction of in-line skates, and a flurry of pre-game lights, one has a hard time lifting one's jaw from one's lap. The hits not only seem stronger, but even seem to be more graceful as these vanguard ballerinas pirouette at each other.

It is hard to discern whether following these physical artists around the track or following them around the country is more exciting. There are six professional teams with names as exotic as the Florida Sun Dogs and the Nevada Hot Dice. And if this doesn't whet your intellectual appetite then the issues are still as present as ever. The women are definitely out to prove that they are more than just blond hair and a good body on wheels. Jamie Conemac of the California Quakes points out that before Rollerjam she was a professional cage dancer, but she makes it very clear to us that she didn't strip. Stacey Blitsch, a Quakes All-star, is a woman who left the kitchen years ago and knows no boundaries in creating respect for women's struggles. "The craziest thing I ever did was bungee jumping topless while on spring break," she said. This two-fisted-terror on wheels proves to be a modern-day Olympes de Goughes in every shape and form. The true humanism of this sport radiates from Amy Craig; When asked to look past her skating career she stated, "I'm thinking about geriatrics, I just like old people." Denise Loden of the Florida Sun Dogs is one lady who finds herself quick to quibble with anyone that has a bone to pick with these brazier-burning purveyors of women's pride. Denise is rather defiant in her position as a multi-talented human being. She makes it quite clear to all that if her Rollerjamming career were suddenly to end, she could make a decent living with a special skill she calls "The Tongue Roll."

The spandex-clad men of these teams prove to be as diverse as their women counterparts. Sean Atkinson lets us know that he is much more than your average biceps on skates. He is also very proud of his cooking and states that lasagna is his specialty. Of all these athletes it is Sam Martin who proves to be the true martyr. His speed earned him the nickname "The Flame," and aside from this he is very proud of his ability to jump off a twenty-five-foot cliff without injury. He has long debated which of his two talents to choose, but don't worry, he prefers the hard-hitting truth spawned from Rollerjam to the corporate glamour of twenty-five-foot-cliff jumping. Of his devotion to the uniform, he states, "My body becomes my best weapon and I'll do anything it takes to gain advantage for my team."

It is this idea of "the team" which makes me proud to have Rollerjam a part of my heritage. The devotion to "the team," of which Sam "The Flame" Martin speaks, resonates with that do-it-for-the-Gipper attitude on which America was founded. Is life not a "team" effort? Like little Billy Bogash, don't we sometimes feel unable to move while the passion for the fight still propels us forward? Is it not times like these that we have to play our part in the "team"—the team of life and of America—to keep the dreams and spirits of our country alive? If we evolved to stand upright on our feet, would it not seem foolish to stand still when we can move forward, on wheels? On the surface, Rollerjam may seem to be more white trash than one can shake your soggy corn-dog at, but underneath, at the core of it, is the will-to-power which made our country, the United States of America, free.



Drawing by Yuko Aramaki

WXBC 540 AM Programming Schedule Spring 1999

SHIFT	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
3-5 p.m.	Diana Oboler	Jeff Eastman	Nancy Bomse	Shaun Winter	Dan Hirsch	Represent What?	Louis Thomas
5-7 p.m.	Amy Russell	Vance Stevenson and Patty	Mike Ginsburg	Kim Kovacs	Hannah Adams	Luke Wyatt	Kris Stanley
7-9 p.m.	G.J. Echterkamp	Zak Vreeland	Mickey Mendelson	Adam Phillips 8:30-Gridley Wave	Sameer Reddy	Sara Plante 8:30-Gridley Wave	Kate Happ and Jocie Splitter
9-11 p.m.	Nora Kindley	Luis Moreno	ArtTalk with Logan	Cassandra Bull	Julius Masri	Howard Megdal and Courtney Rice	Mike Bortnick
11-1 a.m.	Marie Godyn	Max Kenner and Joe Carrey	Loren Steele	Sandy White Darren Flusche, and Ken MacLeish	Nathan Corbin	Joe Stanco	Electronic Arts Club
1-3 a.m.	Carlin Lord	Ben Brunner	Aisha Butler and Mary Molina	Ian Dreibratt	Johnny Cristol	Pool!!	Starson-Holsen Show

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ARCHAEOLOGY AND EGYPTOLOGY, ECONOMICS AND ART, YOUNG PEOPLE AND OLD PEOPLE
Overloaded with school work? Sick of your classes? Interested in pornography? Check it out: The first of five seminars which are open to both Bard students and Hudson Valley residents began this Monday. "The Global Economic, Political, and Cultural Revolution" taught by Professor Kurt F. Hermer of the University of Memphis, met April 19 and will continue on Monday nights until May 3. The other seminars include "Is It Art or Pornography?" with Bard veteran Justus Rosenberg; "Landscape Archaeology of Bithwood" taught by Christopher Lindner, an archaeologist-in-residence at Bard; "Fighting Prejudice and Discrimination: Strategic Suggestions from Social Psychology" led by Iracie Stewart; and "Egypt: The Language, History, and Culture of Ancient Egypt," conducted by Luis Perez. A registration fee of \$25 will be charged. For more information call 758-7508.

STUDENT SAVORS PANCAKES AT LOCAL EATERY
Holy shit, those were some good pancakes! remarked a certain gray-eyed student after finishing a short stack at the Red Hook diner last Saturday morning. The student, who has glasses and sometimes wears a hat, commented that he went to the diner expecting "just another breakfast to kill a hangover, but what he got was utterly fantastic." While the bacon and eggs were "nothing special," those golden pancakes, which the student from the Northwest smothered in butter and syrup, "hit the spot like a million dollars." Driving away in a white Saturn with a blue-green interior, the student, who likes skiing and writing poems about nature, said, "That's the last time I don't eat here."

THE RETURN OF ALAN GAMPEL
Alan Gampel, hailed by the Chicago Tribune as "a

gifted pianist with a debonair command of the idiom," will give a lecture/recital entitled "Beethoven—The Sonata" on Wednesday, April 21 at 8 p.m. in Olin Hall. He will be accompanied on cello by Robert Martin, Bard's dean of graduate studies and professor of philosophy and music. The lecture/recital is sponsored by the Bard Center.

OPERA EXCITEMENT BREWS!!!
If you want tickets to "The Magic Flute," you'd best get them now seeing how quickly the last two operas performed by Bard's drama/dance department sold out fast. Mozart's mystical piece premieres on Friday, April 23 and will run through Thursday, April 29. This will be a particularly interesting production of the opera as it will be performed in English; the opera was recently translated from the German by William Driver. Admission is free, but reservations are entirely necessary; please call 758-8622 and make them.

JOHN ASHBERRY POETRY SERIES CONTINUES
Harry Mathews, a member of the New York School of poets and the Paris editor of *The Paris Review*, will be reading in Olin Room 104 on Friday, April 23 at 2-30 p.m. Mathews has won awards from the American Academy of Arts and Letters and received grants from the National Endowment for the Arts. The series continues on May 7 with poet John Yau.

CELEBRATE THE CELEBRITY PLANET
The Earth Coalition is constructing a solar oven from wood, glass, and black insulating material and will cook cookies and soup for adults and children on Earth Day, April 24. The fun and events celebrating Earth Day, one of America's finest holidays, will occur in the multipurpose room (a.k.a. the Green room) from 2 to 5 p.m. From 9:30 p.m. to 12:30 a.m., Jay Ungar and Molly Mason, two of America's best-known folk musicians, will set feet dancing to great fiddle music.

Earth Day celebrates the environment, but also presents a challenge.

ALUMNUS HOME PREMIERES RECENT DOCUMENTARY
According to (The Man's) News Release, Chris Hume "has a sometimes reckless disregard for his own safety" when it concerns making his films. His most recent film, *Beneath Los Angeles: The Making of the Redline Subway*, began with Hume trespassing onto a subway construction site in Hollywood. The film documents the construction of L.A.'s subway system, which is years behind schedule, billions of dollars over-budget, and a "potential environmental disaster." The screenings will be held at 7 and 9 p.m. in Preston on Thursday, April 29.

A STUDY OF WOMEN AND MADNESS
Phyllis Chesler, a psychologist, author, and feminist, read from her classic 1972 book *Women and Madness* in a talk entitled "Women, Madness, and Opera." Her book has been reprinted several times in the United States and discusses "the various ways that women were driven to madness by living in a male-dominated world, how women's legitimate rage was usually defined as insanity by medical men, and how psychoanalysis existed as a kind of cottage industry that made a living off these injustices." Chesler now teaches at CUNY's Richmond College. The talk was sponsored by DUSO, the Women's Alliance, BRAVE, and the Office of Alumni/ae Affairs.

Authorities warn that the head could be dangerous and precautions must be taken.

UNKNOWN TOXINS, PESTICIDES, IRREVERSIBLE GENETIC MISTAKES: A CALL TO ACTION
According to the Mothers for Natural Law, 60 to 70 percent of the food you eat contains genetically engineered organisms which present a threat to your health. They say "You have the right to know what you are eating" and want you to sign their petition. To sign it, call 877-732-5366.

PHOTOGRAPHY LECTURE SERIES WINDS DOWN
Donald Hoffman, author of *Visual Intelligence*, will speak on Monday, April 26 at 8 p.m. at some location on campus, probably in Olin 102, according to a trustworthy source. Hoffman is a professor of cognitive science, philosophy, and computer science at the University of California, Irvine. His book explores "how we create what we see" in connection with vision and science. A must see lecture for sure.

PSYCHICS HOLD CONFERENCE AT BARD
Twelve psychics of international repute met last week in Olin to determine "what disasters lie in the foreseeable future." After hours of strenuous debate, they determined that within the next thousand years, floods, earthquakes, and blizzards of epic proportions will ravage the earth, leaving a trail of destruction behind. "Heed our words," one psychic commented, "these things will be done."

HUMAN HEAD OPENS EYES, QUOTES NIETZSCHE
A head discovered outside Bithwood last week opened its eyes and quoted extensively from Nietzsche's *Ecco Homo* last night. The head was found by three freshman students and immediately transported to Health Services; it was determined conscious but without a body. (Brominate elixir was promptly administered.) The head, affectionately referred to as "Randy" by Health Services staff, has lost consciousness again.

AMERICAN SYMPHONY CHAMBER ORCHESTRA
Leou's American Symphony Chamber Orchestra will perform Schönberg, Grieg, and Dvorak April 30, at 8 p.m. in Olin Hall in the last of the Bard-Vassar Concerts. Botstein will collaborate with Vassar professor Blanca Uribe, who will perform as a soloist in Grieg's Concerto in A Minor, Op. 16. Tickets are \$15 and can be obtained by calling 758-7425. The concert is free for students, except Nick Westlund.

ROVING PHOTOGRAPHER

A Bit of Spring Fun with Paddles and Players



GATHER YE ROSEBUDS: (from top, left to right) Two shots from last weekend's white-water rafting trip, at which ritual spanking were carried out among the participants; Rocky Horror blues; "A Midsummer Night's Dream" performance; image from Scott Gendel's opera and senior project that was performed in the new Student Center's Multipurpose Room.

the second coming . . .

MenageMenageMenage



Saturday May 1, 1999 10p.m.—3a.m. in the Old Gym
Admission: \$2 w/ID \$3 w/o,
Free if you come naked (ID *still* must be on your person)

SUMMER JOBS FOR STUDENTS

The Bard Music Festival needs Ushers, Caterers and ticket-takers for this year's festival, Schoenberg and His World, August 13-15 & 20-22. Two weekends of twelve-tone fun.
Contact Jeremy Brett in Ludlow 306, X7410; brett@bard.edu

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IRTECH

Letters to the Editor

To offensive@bard.edu,

You, whether you are one person or many, recently put some signs up that imitated the signs I created for Sexual Assault Awareness Month. The signs, with which you replaced mine, with phrases such as "Take it on your back," "Live titty display," and "Take back the kitchen," were among the most juvenile, amateurish, and uncreative things I've seen in my three of years at Bard. This is truly an accomplishment. But I'm wondering why you did it. I can't quite figure out why you felt the need to mock Sexual Assault Awareness Month, why you thought you had to degrade and humiliate all of the survivors of rape, childhood sexual abuse, and domestic violence, why you had to help silence those who may be struggling with these issues right now, perhaps when they are eating at Kline, looking up and seeing their lives demeaned and their hope dwindle when looking at your sign on the window. Maybe you thought you were being funny. Maybe you thought, "Hey, nobody but feminist, man-hating lesbian chicks care about this stuff, and they take it so seriously," so you felt you could take a few jabs at women's equality. Maybe you thought that no one is raped or is in an abusive relationship at Bard, and everyone could use a good laugh about it.

Rape, relationship violence, sexual harassment, and sexual abuse happen everywhere, and no one wants to think about it. Even fewer want to admit that it happens here too. I was extremely insulted and disheartened by your actions. I am not a survivor but I am part of the anti-rape movement. But I do not have to be either to be disgusted by what you've done. I do not want to speak for all of the survivors who may be at Bard, or those who may be working through an abusive relationship or memories of child abuse as I write this. I do want to try to give these people the opportunity to speak about their experiences in their own voices. I want to try and create an environment where

they can feel safe and supported when doing this. I would like to see everyone talk, even just for one day, about sexual violence, about how it has affected them already, about how it could affect them in the future about what it would be like to feel safe walking in Tivoli Bays or down the street at night – to not have to treat everyone as a potential rapist. I would like to know that everyone would at least respect everyone else enough not to assault each other, physically or emotionally. The signs you put up do not allow this to happen. The signs you put up mock the idea of equality and the concept of respect. I, for one, cannot and will not tolerate it. You have the right to free speech and so do I so I will speak out against them. But there is something to be said for taking responsibility for this right. If you try to put up these signs again, put your real name on them so others can respond to them. I will take them down like you did mine, but you will know that it was me who did it. If you want to hide behind a fake e-mail name and pretend you're funny, feel free to do so. But if you want to talk about the issues you degraded, and if you want to understand my anger or let me understand yours, and if you want to do something to change things for the better, talk to me. If you don't want to talk to me, talk to BRAVE, talk to the chaplaincy, talk to your friends and professors, talk to someone and see what you come up with. If you disagree with what is being said or done, take responsibility for your actions and your words and try to construct something worthwhile and usable from it. But do not offend people, do not insult people, and do not silence people, because then nothing will change.

Sincerely,
Chris Pappas

PS—In the minimum amount of time I'm guessing it took you to make and post your signs – around three hours – sixty people, mostly women, were raped in the United States.

The Bard Observer Editorial Staff 1998-99

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Bard Observer
Editorial Policy

The Bard Observer is Bard's only student-run newspaper. A forum for the opinions of the student body, the paper is distributed to all students. The next issues are planned for the next issue. The distribution generally takes place Mondays on a monthly basis. Everyone is welcome to submit.

The deadline for all submissions, be they stories, cartoons, photographs, statistics, or advertising, is 5 p.m. on the Tuesday prior to publication. Late submissions (with the exception of late breaking news and sports articles) will not be accepted.

Submit all writings on a labeled disk with files saved in a Macintosh-compatible format (no PC files). Include a double-spaced hardcopy (printout) labeled with author's name, suggested headline and subheadline when relevant, and a short description of the work.

Letters to the Editor are welcome. We strongly discourage anonymous submissions. If anonymity is absolutely necessary, the writer must reveal her or his identity to the Editor.

The Bard Observer reserves the right to edit letters for spelling, grammar, length, and coherency.

Send submissions via Campus Mail to P.O. Box 609.

The Editors can be contacted at observer@bard.edu, 758-7131, and P.O. Box 609, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, NY 12504.

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