

# OBSERVER

Vol. 9    No. 7    May 18, 1999

- Page 1    Bardians Craft Event to Support Kosovars  
          Group raises \$1,000 for refugee center in Vienna"  
          Peter Malcolm  
PAC Site: North Campus  
          Redesigned building shall be underway next fall  
          Nate Schwartz  
Bacchanalian Menage is Back  
          With foam machine, volcano and virgin sacrifice, banned party returns  
          Kerry Chance
- Page 2    Alternative Spring Break: Building in Appalachia  
          Angela Ross  
News Briefs  
          Commencement Speaker and Awardees [Martha Nussbaum]  
          Michael Haggerty  
          Bard Nursery School Accredited  
          Michael Haggerty  
          People Moving Around in Ludlow [Jonathan Becker, Erin Cannan]  
          Michael Haggerty  
          Music Continues at Bard in June [Hudson Valley Chamber Music Circle]  
          Michael Haggerty  
          More Music at Bard This Summer [Aston Magna concert series]  
          Michael Haggerty  
          And Now, on to the Harp [Harpist Mara Galassi]  
          Michael Haggerty  
          First Museum Survey of Japanese Artist Takashi Murakami to Open at CCS  
          Michael Haggerty  
          Take Back Bard  
          Joe Stanco  
          Alumna Chesler Speaks on Feminism  
          Paul Vranicar
- Page 4    NYC Gardens Saved  
          Activists take charge as City encroaches on the green  
          Andrea Davis  
Finding a President in El Salvador  
          Student traveled to Central America to oversee election process  
          Rowena Kennedy-Epstein
- Page 5    Delighting in the Refulgent Spring  
Page 6    A Rant on Opera and "the Magic Flute"  
          John Coyne
- Page 7    The Greatest Food Review, Without Question, of All Time  
          A comprehensive account of restaurants in the vicinity of Planet Bard  
          Stephanie Schneider  
Film Review  
          [Kevin Smith's Dogma]  
          Anne Matusiewicz
- Page 8    Film Review  
          [1980s B-movie classics]  
          Anne Matusiewicz
- Page 9    Perspectives in Music  
          An American Band: A Tribute to the Parachutes  
          The all-star group of legendary heroes who rocked like no other—  
          they touched not only stardom, but also our hearts  
          Scott Staton
- Page 10    Miss Lonelyhearts  
          Wham, Bam, Thank You Ma'am
- Page 11    Letters to the Editor  
          *Observer* Editorial Policy  
          Taking a Stand on Sweatshops  
          Code passes, protecting the rights of workers making products for Bard  
          Michael Chameides
- Page 12    Bot-man  
          Gettin' Funky at Menage  
          Chris Van Dyke and John Holowach

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



THE BARD

# OBSERVER



May 18, 1999 • Issue 7, Volume 9 • Annandale-on-Hudson, NY, 12504

## Bardians Craft Event to Support Kosovars

Group raises \$1,000 for refugee center in Vienna

By PETER MALCOLM

PLAY FOR RELIEF, the sporting event held on May 2 organized to raise funds for Kosovo refugees, was poorly attended but successful nonetheless. All-in-all, the event raised approximately \$1,000. The Play For Relief Committee will now use this money to help Kosovar ethnic-Albanian refugees in Vienna, Austria.

The event took place at the Stevenson Gym, where, for four hours, Bard and Red Hook High School students played softball and basketball, and then ate pizza donated by Broadway Pizza and Village Pizza. Participants were sponsored with a minimum of \$15,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3



SARAH SHAPIRO

TWISTIN': Revelers display their (eco-friendly?) outfits during the festivities. Approximately 1,000 attended the event.

## Bacchanalian Menage is Back

With foam machine, volcano and virgin sacrifice, banned party returns

By KERRY CHANCE

IN THE DENOUEMENT of the highly anticipated Menage, after the talk of legacy and the hype of return, the student body sighed, and murmured that more went than came. On May 1, an estimated 1,000 partygoers petted and gyrated in an Old Gym flashing with laser lights, decorated with art installations, and pulsating with techno. Featuring two cages, a papier-maché volcano, a fetish room, and a sex tent, the party attempted to capture the old Bard bacchanalia, emphasizing, as primary organizer Mary Molina said, "sexual expression and loosening inhibitions." Midway through, the party was interrupted for the ritualized "Virgin Sacrifice," that was advertised as a pyrotechnics show, but in actuality combined magic and erotic dance. And while there was no shortage of used condoms for organizers to clean up, even Molina agreed that the party did not live up to its legend mainly due to inhibited attendees. "I wanted people to be less stand-offish, less judgmental, and more participatory," she said.

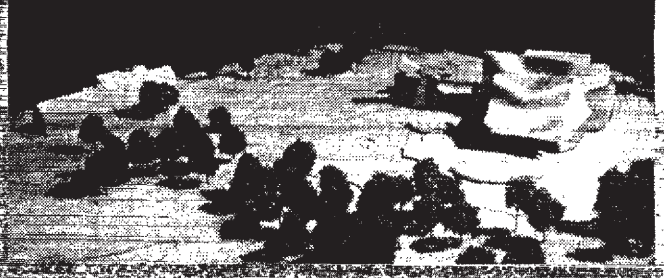
For many, the mystery and hype that preceded the event dulled the effects of the actual party. From the start, when Molina secured \$2,500 from Big Brother/Big Sister, rumors stirred about the money and the eventual culmination. With the organizers reminding students of the older, wilder Menage, with its *Rolling Stone* coverage and orgiastic tradition, Bard students waited in curiosity for the event's return. But as Kenneth MacLeish said, "Though it's cynical to say people wanted to be

disappointed, that was my general feeling about it. It was just made out to be more than it was." And, as another partygoer, Brad Alter, said, "I would characterize it as anti-climactic."

Despite deflated expectations, as organizer and Virgin Sacrifice performer Devon White said, "There were a lot of different takes on the event." Some students had, as promised, intensely sexual experiences while others enjoyed the dancing and atmosphere. Molina described student's experiences by saying, "they ranged from having sex and having fun, to being laid back and having fun, and taking a drug and having fun." Even the organizers had different conceptions of what the Menage should be for students. White said, "Mary [said], 'I want them to fuck' and I said, 'I want it to be sensual.'" Despite these conflicting perceptions of the party, MacLeish echoed Molina's statement and simply said, "Regardless, people had fun." On a similar note, attendee Amy Cara Brosnan said, "I had a good time. I'm glad someone decided to get it together and organize one this year... But more than anything else, it was just about the concept of having the Menage."

One experience shared by some young women at the party was unwanted groping. Although B.R.A.V.E. refused to give an official statement, citing internal conflict and victim vulnerability, Greg Johnson, who was on duty for B.R.A.V.E. during the event, said, "The Menage acted as a magnifying glass in that the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3



THE RHINO: The building will be constructed north-west of the Manor dorm.

### PAC Site: North Campus

Redesigned building shall be underway next fall

By NATE SCHWARTZ

IF ALL GOES WELL, the performing arts center will break ground next fall at its new site on north campus, about 200 yards north-west of the Manor dormitory. The 105,000 square foot Frank Henry building will take two years to construct.

Jim Brudvig, associate vice president for finance and administration, hopes to get approval from the Red Hook Planning Board over the summer.

The redesigned building will include 800 and 200 seat theaters and six studios that will be used as teaching spaces. The current drama/dance facilities will be taken over by the film and music departments, leaving room in Preston for the psychology department.

Elsewhere on campus, construction will soon begin on a new Cruger dorm that will have 67 beds; half the rooms will be singles, half doubles. The finish date is set for next December.

Brudvig hopes to build, in addition to the new dorm, 200 beds in the next two years. Likely locations: between the Stevenson Gymnasium and Cruger Village or south of Robbins, which could be renovated in the process.

With this new housing, the Ravens will be retired as dorms and converted into studios, office spaces, and possibly club houses or religious centers.


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NEWS



P5 Senior Hill Party Rocks Registration

THE PARACHUTES



P9 American Rock


A & E

MORE A & E



P10 The Final Lonelyhearts

HEHE HE!



BOTMAN!

# Alternative Spring Break: Building in Appalachia

By ANGELA ROSS

THIS SPRING, nine Bard students went on an alternative spring break. Instead of getting a little rest and relaxation during the days between March 27 and April 4, these students offered their services to a struggling community in Appalachia.

Nancy Bonse, Lena Brodersen, Seth Compton, Rick Eichler, Matthew Elliott, Ambika Orrill, Lynne Purvis, Christian Rober, and myself spent spring break in Fries, Virginia, a small rural community in the Appalachian mountains. Fries is a former mill town that has lost its economic base and is struggling with high unemployment and a general sense of powerlessness. With the closing of the cotton mill, which had been the area's only industry for over 100 years, residents have lost most of their jobs. The residents of Fries are now addressing their own needs through active community based organizations. One of these organizations is Volunteers for Communities, sponsored by the Southeast Rural Community Assistance Project, Inc., the program with which the students worked.

Students spent their days painting porches, cleaning houses, raking yards, toppling trees, painting a caboose, clearing a bank along a main road, replacing lights, and more. When not providing physical labor, the volunteers spent time with various people in the community. Dinners were brought to the students by local churches and community members. Conversations with the locals were an important part of the week. Community

Students spent their days painting porches, cleaning houses, raking yards, toppling trees, painting a caboose, clearing a bank along a main road, replacing lights, and more.

members were very interested in sharing their stories and teaching the group about the history of Fries and its surrounding area.

Most evenings were spent in the community center, making use of its bowling alley (all nine students can teach you anything about duck pin bowling and can set their own pins), pool tables, ping-pong tables, basketball courts, piano, video games, library, TV and VCR, etc. Or, the group could be found mingling with the crowds at a local square dance. They even had a song dedicated to them at a big Maple Festival in a neighboring town.

The trip was part of a project by students in the Trustee Leader Scholar program. The goal was to provide Bard students with an alternative spring break where they could offer their services to those less fortunate while learning about a different community and culture. The nine students that attended the trip this year worked together for months in advance to raise funds and to plan the trip.

The group wishes to return to Fries next year over their spring break. They also hope to get to Mississippi or Louisiana at the end of winter break next year to do similar work. If you have any questions or want information on how you can attend future trips, please call

or email Rick Eichler (extension 4377, email ge488@bard.edu) or myself (extension 4663, email ar735@bard.edu).

## NEWSBRIEFNEWSBRIEFNEWSBRIEFNEWSBRIEFNEWS

### COMMENCEMENT SPEAKER AND AWARDEES

Martha Nussbaum, noted philosopher and "Socratic gadfly" will be the keynote speaker on Saturday at the 139th Annual Commencement. Nussbaum is currently Professor of Law and Ethics at the University of Chicago. She has published several books, including works on classical literature, philosophy, and liberal education. In 1997, she won the prestigious Philosophical Dialogues Competition at Oxford University.

Honorary degrees will also be awarded to Nussbaum, San Francisco educator Anthony Alvarado, painter Chuck Close, freejazz innovator Ornette Coleman, American Museum of Natural History President Ellen V. Futter, economist David Landes, and performing arts executive Harvey Lichtenstein. Awards will also be given to Susan Sontag, Margaret Creal Shafer, George D. Rose, Daniel Pinkwater, and Connie Bard Fowle. Commencement begins at 2:30 p.m. in Ludlow field. —Michael Haggerty

### BARD NURSERY SCHOOL ACCREDITED

The Abigail Lundquist Botstein Nursery School was recently granted accreditation by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), an organization of child-care professionals dedicated to improving standards of early education. Only seven percent of childhood programs in the United States have been granted this recognition which is rewarded only after a rigorous examination. Terney Korn, the director of the school, attributes its success to its excellent and hard-working staff of teachers, which includes Judy Whalen, Lisa-Sue Quackenbush, and Ginger Glynn. She also gives credit to the many students assistants who "create and maintain a warm and safe environment in which the children's needs are met." Congratulations to the nursery. —MH

### PEOPLE MOVING AROUND IN LUDLOW

Changes in the administration are bound to affect at least one or two students next year. Jonathan Becker will become the Dean of Studies, and will, in Dean Levine's words, "ensure that Bard will continue to be known for the lack of separation between the life of study and life of community." He will work with HEOP, community service programs, and scholarships, among other things. Erin

Canaan, formerly the Dean of First-Year Students, will take over as Dean of Students. —MH

### MUSIC CONTINUES AT BARD IN JUNE

The Hudson Valley Chamber Music Circle has announced its 1999 season, "Quintets and More," featuring a special performance by the Emerson String Quartet. Three concerts will be held in June in the "air conditioned" On Hall. On June 5, the Quartet will perform pieces by Schubert and Shostakovich with cellist Sharon Robinson; the June 12 performance will feature Oliver Messiaen's Quartet for the End of Time; and on June 26, piano quintets by Shostakovich and Brahms will be performed by host of famous musicians. All performances begin at 8 p.m. and tickets are only \$5 for students. —MH

### MORE MUSIC AT BARD THIS SUMMER

The Aston Magna concert series performs music using historically accurate instruments and performance practices as imagined by the composer. They will hold four concerts at Bard on Fridays between July 9 and August 6. The series will feature works by Mozart, Handel, Beethoven, and Bach. Tickets are \$15. For more information, call 758-7425. —MH

### AND NOW, ON TO THE HARP

The Bard Center for Studies in the Decorative Arts will present Ambiente Barocco!, a night of music featuring internationally renowned harpist Mara Galassi. Galassi will perform on Wednesday, June 2 between 6 and 8:30 p.m. at the National Academy of Design in the city. She will perform on a reproduction of the famous and mysterious Barberini Harp. For more info, call 212-501-3011. —MH

### FIRST MUSEUM SURVEY OF JAPANESE ARTIST TAKASHI MURAKAMI TO OPEN AT CCS

An exhibition featuring works of Takashi Murakami will open at CCS on June 27 and will remain on view until September 12. This is the first comprehensive collection of Murakami's work to be on display and will include both early and recent pieces. Murakami combines traditional Japanese painting with figures inspired by Japanese animation and promotional advertisements. He currently lives in Tokyo and New York City. The show will

be curated by Amada Cruz, head curator at CCS, and Dana Fries-Hansen, senior curator at the Contemporary Arts Museum in Houston. —MH

### TAKE BACK BARD

On April 29, students marched to Take Back Bard from violence, in an effort to protest sexual abuse and preserve the memory of those who have suffered as victims.

Prior to the march, a Speak Out was held on the Kline Commons green. Students, administrators, staff, and faculty gathered to share experiences related to sexual violence. Director of Residence Life, Allison Bennett, who worked with sexual assault victims at a crisis center before coming to Bard, emphasized the need to bring "issues and feelings out of the closet and into daylight." By allowing people to express their experiences openly, she hopes that others will be able to empathize, reflect upon their own behavior, and break the cycle of violence.

The Speak Out was much better attended than last year, with a diversity of voices represented. Some showed their strength in being able to tell their own stories. Others raised awareness, making it clear how many are affected by the problems of sexual violence. The emotionally-charged accounts promoted greater sensitivity to the fear many women experience about walking alone. "When you stop and hear these stories, you realize how close they are to your life," said BRAVE member Melanie Brookes.

After the forum, students gathered to march at the triangle. There they lit candles and marched in silence, recognizing all those who have been silenced as victims of sexual abuse. —Joe Stanco

### ALUMNA CHESLER SPEAKS ON FEMINISM

On April 21, feminist author Phyllis Chesler of City University of New York, gave a sensational feminist presentation. Dr. Chesler was invited to Bard by Erin Canaan, as a part of an ongoing effort to develop a stronger sense of a feminine agenda on the Bard campus. Chesler, the author of numerous books, including her latest release, *Letters to a Young Feminist*, is a celebrity in her field. She has appeared on numerous talk shows and has been interviewed on several occasions by the *New York Times*.

A former Bard student, Chesler was happy to speak to an interested audience at her alma mater. The self-described slavery abolitionist

spoke passionately about her experience living in Afghanistan, married to an Afghan, where she encountered enslavement on the basis of both race and gender. Chesler is reluctant to point solely to social influence on gender perceptions and discussed briefly the difficulties the media have caused for the feminist movement.

According to Chesler, men, too, must play a role in the feminist movement. She attacked the assertion that women already have the rights for which they have fought so passionately. It is of utmost importance that women not be judged by their appearance in what she described as an "ethical discipline." She admits that women share the blame for society not having progressed far enough towards their goal, meanwhile quoting the words of Edward Burke, "All that is needed for the forces of evil to conquer the world is for good people to do nothing." Chesler cites action as the key to women's liberation. "In any way possible—through education, through making men and women's voices heard, and through relentless determination."

Action has certainly been the cornerstone of Dr. Chesler's success. "My work is my life," she says, turning her talk towards her own experience as a feminist and a fighter. She played an instrumental role in a historic lawsuit in Israel for women's religious rights in 1987. Her credentials include scholarly research at Brandeis University, work with the United Nations, and extensive lectures and campaigning all over the world. She is now professor emerita of psychology at City University of New York, and works as an expert witness. Earlier in her career she also worked with NOW, one of the first feminist organizations to campaign for women's rights in the 1960s.

Nonetheless, Chesler offered some delicate criticism of these and other feminist organizations as well as some criticism of her own generation. The single mother also took the opportunity to talk about and read a few excerpts from her new book *Letters to a Young Feminist*. "This book is a legacy to the new generation of feminists," Chesler remarked. She wrote the book in the hope that all the knowledge gained from her generation's struggle with the movement might be passed on to the next one. One of Chesler's primary goals was that such valuable information, obtained at such a high price, not be lost over time. —Paul Vranicar

## Event Raises Funds for Kosovars

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but most raised more. Ian Schaff, a participant from Red Hook High, single-handedly raised \$300.

Play For Relief was the brainchild of Bard student Rachel Mahoney. In addition to Mahoney, the event, Chaplain Rev. Bruce Chilton, Kerry Chance, Peter Malcolm and Duffy Connolly organized the event. "I was watching '20/20' one night," said Mahoney, "and it was really hard to watch all the images of war-torn Kosovo. I was really upset. I felt so helpless and I knew that I wanted to do something, I mean I had to do something."

Chilton, who facilitated the event, encourages Bard students to take political action on behalf of others. He said, "Bard Collège has a tradition of progressive rhetoric where it concerns our own rights and privileges," said Chilton, "but our record of action on behalf of social justice has been spotty at best. The way that people have reacted to the crisis in Kosovo gives me hope."

If you were not able to support this event and are interested in donating, the Bard Chaplaincy is still collecting donations. Please write checks to the Bard Chaplain's Fund, and send them through Campus Mail to Bruce Chilton. All the money will be sent to the Kosovo Refugee Center in Vienna, Austria.

The Vienna Kosovo Refugee Center shelters a small community of mostly children and teenagers, many of whom have been separated from their families. Beverly Davis, mother of Bard student Ami Copeland, works at the Center. Kerry Chance, a member of the Play for Relief committee, contacted Davis two weeks ago regarding the relief project. Since then, Davis has sent emails detailing the shelter's needs. According to Davis, the Refugee Center now needs a low cost computer system. The refugees have sufficient food and necessities, but they have nothing to do with their time, and no way of keeping up with events at home. They speak only Albanian and English, and although they are learning German, they could certainly benefit from contact with the outside world on the Internet.

The Play For Relief committee plans to buy a computer for the Center. It will combine funds with those donated by Lara Chance, a student at the Maryland Institute of Creative Arts, who raised \$650 selling flowers. Once the Center has a computer, it will be possible to contact the refugees via the Internet. Davis plans to set up a penpal program for the refugees. Anyone interested in having a Kosovar penpal should email Kerry Chance at kc886@hotmail.com. Chance can give you the mailing address for the Refugee Center, and Davis' contact information.

Due to the recent developments in Kosovo, it appears that the refugees may be able to go back home within a year. The computer that Bard sends will still be put to good use. "When and if the refugees go home," wrote Davis in an email to Chance, "then we will donate the computers to the Vienna Orphanage Homes (there are several who need this sort of thing)."

Until then, the refugees can use as much as the Bard community can donate. The Refugee Center especially welcomes donations of American clothing. The Kosovar youths covet American gear, which, according to Davis, the Center "doles out on special occasions." If you can make a donation of clothes to Kosovars, please contact Bruce Chilton.

There are now an estimated 750,000 ethnic-Albanian refugees in the border countries of Kosovo. Sheltering these people is causing major problems for the border states. Macedonia, for example, faces a potential political or economic breakdown, due to the number of displaced Kosovars seeking refuge there. In short term, these refugees need food and medical aid. In the long term, perhaps they will be able to return home, but returning and rebuilding will both take a considerable amount of money.

Chilton wants the Play for Relief Committee to become the first phase of an ongoing program at Bard. With a long-term international aid program, he said, "we might take our place within a network of social justice, so that what we do might correspond better to the progressive ideologies that we tend to embrace." Next fall, the existing Play For Relief committee will continue to organize fundraisers to respond to the emergency in Yugoslavia. After that, the committee will become a permanent organization at Bard that will respond to crises all over the world. Mahoney said, "I'm really excited for next year when I hope we do a lot more."

## Menage Returns to Bard

CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE

people causing problems at the party are also causing problems outside the party. . . The event set up problem situations for women."

The number of the partygoers and the amount of consensual sexual activity taking place presented a challenge for B.R.A.V.E. members, security, and even students whose friends were engaged in questionable behavior. As Natasha Brooks-Spurduti said, "It was really hard to assess where the line [was] being drawn, and when [my friend] was in control or not. . . It was a dangerous situation." To this, organizers respond that the problems arose from non-Bard students attending the party. Several organizers developed ideas on how to prevent sexual harassment during the next Menage, possibly by limiting the party to Bard students. Because, as Molina emphasized, "Pretty much everyone at Bard knows that 'naked girls' does not mean touch." Conflicting definitions of sexuality and different expressions of that sexuality created a cultural clash between schools such as Sara Lawrence, Vassar, and Smith, who were officially invited to the Menage, and schools such as West Point and U Mass who were not invited. Johnson noted, however, that "It's a lie to think that there are not people at Bard sexually assaulting women. If it didn't happen here we wouldn't have B.R.A.V.E." For the future, Student Activities Director Allen Josey offered this advice: "If I'm going to a party with a provocative, sexual theme, what I need to do is keep alert. If not, that's what Security and B.R.A.V.E. are there for. People need to take responsibility for themselves."

Few other problems occurred at the event. Administrators and security agreed that even for a typical Bard weekend there were few injuries. Josey, who confirmed that one student was taken to the hospital, said, "People are taken to the hospital numerous times per week, so compared to any given weekend it was pretty good." The organizers stressed that many safety precautions were taken to prevent any drug or alcohol related injuries, such as distributing memos and providing a shuttle service. The Menage's abrupt suspension four years ago came when a drunk student totaled his car and suffered head injuries resulting in a month long coma.

In the end, \$2,100 was brought in, \$1,500 of which organizers are donating to Beyond the Horizon, a summer program for underprivileged children that received no funding at the budget forum. The remaining profits will pay for unanticipated expenses, and will be given to Big Brother/Big Sister. A representative of the national organization said of the Menage, "I'm sure that's nothing Big Brother Big/Sister would have anything to do with and the national organization is certainly not going to comment on it." He did specify that, "there aren't really any restrictions placed on local fund raising as long as the events are in good taste." Dean of Students Jonathan Becker said of the organization sponsoring the Menage, "My personal feeling is that the purpose of the party is incommensurate with the goals of Big Brother/Big Sister."

The original \$2,500 Menage organizers received from the Bard emergency fund was mostly spent on the lighting system which cost over \$1,000, the professionally made ads costing over \$700, several hundred more for the installations, and likewise for weather balloons and food. Brooks-Spurduti said, "I was outraged by how much money they got."

Though the newly restored tradition of the Menage remains on shaky ground, organizers and students hope that it is one that will continue. Chelsea Guerdat said, "It was good they had the Menage again. It was nice to see the whole community come together like that."

## BROADWAY PIZZA



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Good on any purchase of large pizza or dinner  
(cannot be combined with any other coupons or specials)

## NYC Gardens Saved

*Activists take charge as City encroaches on the green*

By ANDREA DAVIS

WHEN MAYOR GIULIANI announced he was planning to sell 112 of New York City's community gardens to the highest bidder, the response by the public was one of outcry and resistance. Twenty years ago, the city allowed citizen groups to transform the vacant lots in an open-ended, temporary agreement. It appeared as if time would soon be up. The gardens that had mitigated crime and served as public gathering spaces in our privatized world were sitting on death row. Gardens that provided local food to the homeless and green space in a cement city were in jeopardy, so that Giuliani could increase his tax rolls and revenue.

Due to the massive outcry of public disapproval, it appears today as if the gardens have been saved. Sixty-three of the gardens will be sold to the Trust for Public Lands at the price of \$3 million. The remaining 51 will be purchased by the New York Restoration Project, run by actress Bette Midler, for \$1.2 million. Although these prices are below the market price for which Giuliani was determined to sell them, citizens and various coalitions have demanded that he compromise his original agenda. After numerous demonstrations, lawsuits, email tirades, letter writing campaigns, and acts of civil disobedience, the issue has become such a hot topic and so well-covered in the mainstream press, that Giuliani and his supporters cannot rid the city of its gardens as easily as they had originally hoped. As the *New York Times* reported Wednesday, May 12, "One week brought a protest at City Hall that led to the arrests of 30 people, some bearing kazoos; another week found a man, dressed like a sunflower, screaming, "The gardens must be saved!" from his perch in a ginkgo tree in City Hall Park." On May 5, another 62 citizens were arrested, including five Bard-related activists, in another act of civil disobedience, sitting in the street, as a swarm of garden supporters on the sidewalk chanted "More Justice, More Gardens!", some bearing signs that threatened to use Giuliani as fertilizer if he did not spare the gardens. Three activists shackled themselves together inside a city office using Kryptonite bike locks Monday, May 10, demanding that the gardens be saved. Police had to use electric saws to cut the locks before they could be arrested (Barry 1999). These demonstrations, and many others, have been combined with lawsuits filed by the New York City Environmental Justice Alliance, More Gardens!, the Puerto Rico Legal Defense and Education Fund, and the Trust for Public Land.

The success of these efforts teach three important lessons. The first is that urban gardens are priceless spaces, allowing city dwellers access to fresh, local produce as well as fostering a space that is conducive to community organizing, beneficial to the environment, and a source of neighborhood health and pride. As the group More Gardens! advocates, we indeed do need more gardens to make our cities greener and the lives of citizens more enriching. The second lesson is that if we remain silent, those seeking profits will auction off that which we love and need as a human community. If there had been no mass insurgency of citizen disapproval, the gardens would be no more, plain and simple. This brings us to our third lesson, by far the most empowering.

Public demonstrations and lawsuits have given rebirth to the community gardens of New York City. These citizens have proven that activism is both a necessary and effective tool in the fight for social justice. Demonstrators bore no arms, only their voices, their words, and a few lady bug costumes. Together, they saved the gardens. Their flowers have yet another season to bloom.

There may be a day when the profit-seekers return for the gardens. If that day comes, we will rise up again. Until then, we will be busy planting more gardens, sowing the strength of our communities and struggling for what is right.

## Finding a President in El Salvador

*Student travelled to Central America to oversee election process*

By ROWENA KENNEDY-EPSTEIN

I HAVE RECENTLY RETURNED from a 14-day trip to El Salvador, where I served as an official election observer during the country's national presidential election in April 1999. El Salvador is the smallest of the group of countries that comprise Central America. Like Nicaragua and Guatemala, it has survived a ferocious 12-year civil war. That war ended in stalemate, with a peace agreement negotiated by the United Nations. The ruling Nationalist Republican Alliance (ARENA), is comprised of the large land-owning families and business groups who could not defeat the guerrilla forces of the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN). The FMLN was also unable to defeat the military forces of ARENA, which were strongly supported by U.S. government and transnational business interests.

These opposing forces are now engaged in a delicately balanced continuation of their struggle, but the process of democratization, including elections, defines the terms of battle. Such transitions to democracy are often very fragile. Where they occur, human rights, religious, and solidarity organizations from Europe and the United States send observers to the elections in an effort to curtail electoral violations and voter intimidation at the polls.

I went to El Salvador with the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES), a long-standing solidarity organization in the U.S. Other observer delegations included the Veterans for Peace, United Nations, and the SHARE Foundation. Prior to election day, the CISPES observers attended seminars on the electoral law; met with representatives of the political parties, labor unions, neighborhood and campesino groups, women's groups and the U.S. Embassy; and talked to maquila workers (sweatshop workers).

I observed the election in a neighborhood in San Salvador, the Capitol City. The ruling ARENA party defeated the FMLN in this third-ever national election, gaining roughly 50 percent of the votes cast. Fraud and widespread irregularities in procedures marred the election. Nearly two-thirds of the eligible voters were either unwilling or unable to vote. There are many reasons for this. First, the registration process was difficult for poor and illiterate voters. It requires three different forms of identification. Thousands of applications were rejected due to lack of birth certificates, and thousands more never received the voter cards required to vote. Secondly, polling places are not located by district. Rather, they are organized alphabetically by voters' last names. This meant long trips to the polls. In addition, bus transportation on Election Day was slower and less frequent than usual. At the polls there was enormous confusion as crowds of voters struggled to find the proper table at which to cast their ballots. After enduring hours of this turmoil, thousands of voters discovered their names had been mysteriously dropped from the registry. Thirdly, the ARENA party bought votes, offering people food and transportation in exchange for their support.

What I saw and learned in El Salvador has left me both angered and hopeful. I was angered by the poverty endured by the people, and the corruption and the murder hanging in the air, the residue of the 12-year civil war. I saw the destruction and havoc left by Hurricane Mitch, and people struggling to rebuild their homes and communities. I heard of disaster aid which was diverted for political use by the wealthy ARENA politicians of San Salvador. I spoke with women who work in the maquiladoras 12 hours a day for a wage of \$4.75, who told me of the sub-human working conditions they endure in these factories that produce the Liz Claiborne and GAP clothing.

I also witnessed much that makes me hopeful for the future of the people of El Salvador. Despite the great losses and the enormous obstacles they have yet to overcome, the people I met had hope for the future and willingness to struggle ferociously for a better life. Everyone, from the activists of the FMLN, to the people in their community groups, to the women in the maquiladoras, continued to fight. When they expressed gratitude for our support and presence as observers, I was deeply moved. These people had fought twelve long years against overwhelming odds for their land and freedom. They had lost family and friends who were murdered by death squads that the US armed and trained. Many had been tortured and imprisoned. Yet they spoke to me as to a comrade. I felt proud to be part of their struggle in this small way; to be part of the U.S. solidarity movement that continues to raise the awareness and consciousness of Americans, even against the aims of our own government.

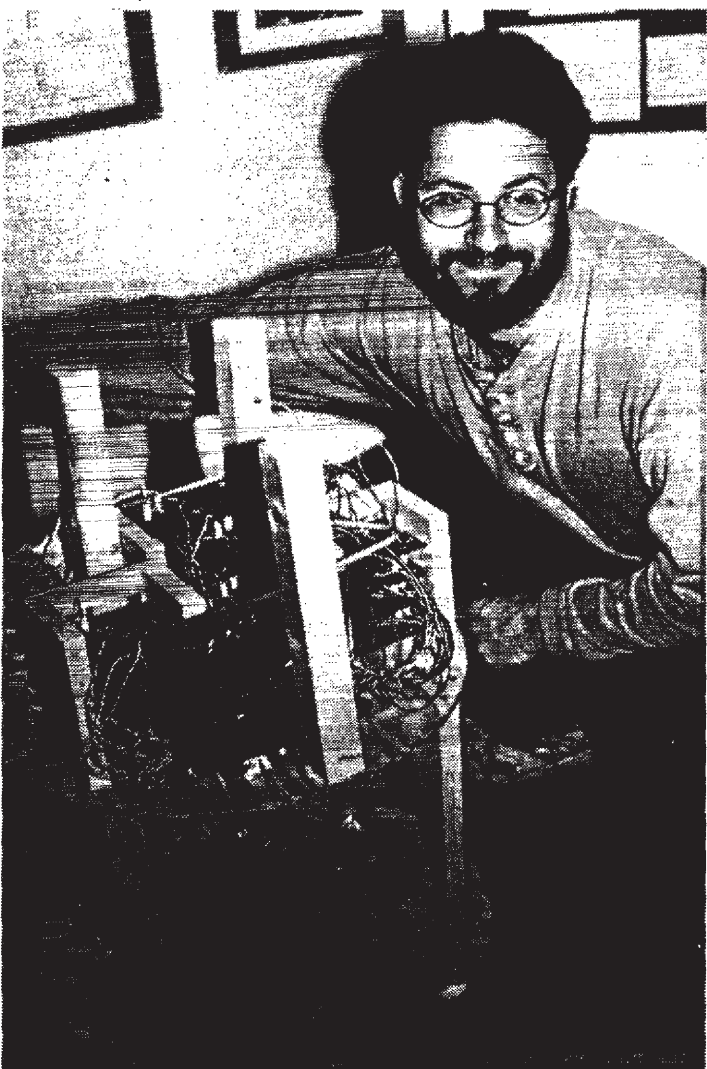
Though there have been only small advancements in comparison to the 1993 Elections, El Salvador is still far from becoming a democracy. The FMLN has moved from a people's front Guerilla army to a democratic political party in eight years. The women's and workers movements are fighting with a power similar to their strength in the war. Though the FMLN lost the election they appear to be gaining strength. The people who were tormented by twelve years of bloody war, death squads, poverty, Hurricane Mitch, and a corrupt government, are not giving up. They are fighting with a hope and power that I have never seen before.

If you would like to know more about the elections or El Salvador, you can e-mail me at rk932@bard.edu, or call CISPES at 212-229-1290. There is a women's community in El Salvador that I am trying to raise funds for. If you are interested please contact me. Resist and react, we have a responsibility for our governments actions. Silence is consent.

# Delighting in the Refulgent Spring



AMANDA KNEEKAMP



**GATHER YE ROSEBUDS:** Bill Mullen (top left) directs an event he organized for his class on rhetoric and public speaking, April 29. Fifty West Point cadets travelled to Bard to give and hear battlefield eulogies and to conduct a debate with Bard students regarding public speaking. Graham Stroh (above right) and Shanti Marthaller organized a hill party for seniors on registration day, last Wednesday. Beer and steaks were plentiful as the seniors gloried in the fact that they were finally freed from Bard's punishing bureaucratic machine. On the left, Director of Admissions, Mary Backlund, captured before undertaking a gravity-defying keg stand. Bottom left: Senior Brian Duran shows off a robot he built as part of his senior project.

# A Rant on Opera and "the Magic Flute"

By JOHN COYNE

TRANSLATIONS are such impossible things. Human languages, being the fickle and illogical creations they are, preclude any attempt to duplicate a text from one language completely and wholly into another. It's not that the act of translation is an impossible thing, as anyone with a little knowledge of a foreign language and a dictionary can produce at least a readable approximation of most original texts. However, any hope of retaining any more than a shadow of the phrasing, rhythm and character of the original is an impossible one, and must be understood by any aspiring translator. This is also not to say that there do not exist translations of exceptional quality that are both faithful to the original text and worth reading. Speaking as a reader of English, I would much sooner read Francis Steegmuller's translations of Flaubert than spend years perfecting my French in order to read *Madame Bovary* in the original. Sure, it would be great to learn German to read Goethe, Italian for Calvino, or Czech for Kundera (although I've heard the Kundera is actually better in English), but it would also be severely impractical.

It can be said that what is most impossible about translations is our need for them. Realizing that many of the greatest works of literature would go unread without them, we have understood and come to terms with this demand for English language editions in our literary world, and consequently there now exist a myriad of exceptional English translations of literature from just about every known human tongue.

But if we leave the literary world aside for the moment and examine the world of music, specifically that of opera, one finds a dearth of workable English translations of even some of the best loved European operas. If we are to assume that the economics of opera function similarly to those of literature, this lack begs the question "Where is the demand?" I suppose that the first reaction to this question would be "Why should there be a demand?" After all, didn't the composer blend the words, meaning and melody in such a way that, if he knew his craft well, all three of these qualities would support and compliment one another in a unique and inseparable way? Yes, this is true. Everyone who even attempts to write an opera must have as keen an ear for the rhythm and cadences of the language in which they are writing as they do for music. But since the composer sets not only the sound but also the meaning of each word, what good will it do to perform an opera in its original language if nobody in the audience can even understand the words being sung? If anything, more of the opera is lost to its audience in this way than if it were given in translation. If the composer deemed the sound of the voice to be more important than the words being sung, why, then, should he limit himself to real words or real languages? Composers like Philip Glass and Meredith Monk, deciding that words were secondary elements in their individual operatic visions, did not limit themselves merely to real words, but used also phonetics and solfege syllables, as well as nonsense words of their own creation. Only a few actual words and phrases, if any, are used in these operas. When they are, their contextual significance in the opera is therefore magnified.

Since it seems that the words are as necessary a part of the opera as the music, the question of English-language versions of opera surfaces once again. The next objection against such translations comes from purists who argue that the original language of a libretto, aside from determining the music to which it is set, actually determines and shapes the structure of the opera itself. Roger Sessions, American composer and essayist, accurately observed that some of the traditional operatic devices that exist now developed in order to fit the language of the text with greater felicity. As examples he mentions the *secco recitativo*, which so comfortably fits the Italian language, or the German *Singspiel*, which, with its spoken passages, better suits the capricious German tongue. It must be remembered, however, that these are stylistic developments, which only facilitate the way the music carries the words, and therefore the overall drama. Anyone who has seen opera in Germany, Italy, France or Russia may have noticed that almost all opera in these countries is given in the language of that country, regardless of the language in which the opera may have been originally written. If it seems ironic to some that the very countries in which the genre of opera developed have such disregard for the original language, it should be noted that opera-goers in these countries consider not only the music and the plot of the opera, but the word-to-word action as well. Now, I am not saying that there is a "correct" and "incorrect" way to experience opera. It is perfectly rewarding and satisfying to experience it as merely vocal sound with instrumental music and some sort of plot (as a matter of fact, houses like the Metropolitan Opera and the Glimmerglass keep themselves in business by delivering this type of experience to a mostly English speaking audience). This is, however, only one part of the total operatic experience.

That said, I ask once again, Where is the demand for English translations of opera? Granted, there have been a small number of English-language versions in recent years, like the Met's production of "Così Fan Tutte" a while back. Instances

like this, unfortunately, are few and fleeting in the professional opera scene in this country. Rather, the place where English translations of opera are needed and used most often in this country is in amateur, student and small-scale performances. These are situations in which it is difficult to either find singers skilled in foreign language singing, or where the prospective audience will be naïve enough of "pure" opera that they will naturally want to follow along with the word-to-word action. As a consequence of this freedom from the kind of hardened purists which large-scale opera establishments in this country attract, small-scale student or amateur productions manifest the true spirit of the piece more effectively than their more illustrious counterparts.

One such production was recently performed here at Bard. Having last year re-introduced opera to Bard with a performance of *Don Giovanni*, the drama and music departments put together a long-anticipated staging of another Mozart opera, "the Magic Flute," in English. The translation was by Bard drama professor William Driver, done especially for this performance. It is a good feeling to know that there are people with enough awareness of the importance of English opera translations that they are compelled to produce their own, dissatisfied as they are with the few that already exist. As I mentioned earlier, translations are truly difficult, especially with opera. Preserving the phrases, accents and expression of a good vocal line in translation is no small task, if not an impossible one. Driver's translation

seemed pretty sound on a literary level, for the most part, even in spite of a somewhat antiquated vocabulary, which made use of words like "stripling," "riven" and "blightley"—words that exist now for the most part only in dictionaries. This was not much of a problem though, as it was still possible to understand most of the dialogue. In some cases it even created a few charming rhymes. After all, Willa and Edwin Muir's Kafka translations, until recently, have managed to satisfy modern readers in spite of a late-Victorian vocabulary. The most impossible thing about Driver's translation, however, was the difficulty of singing it—there were some parts that just did not fit smoothly with the music. One wonders whether Driver's quest for literary polish in his translation made the musical considerations

of the text little more than an afterthought. As a result, once the musical element was added, a great amount of meaning was lost when the singers were forced to drop some of the more awkward words and syllables from the text in order to maintain a coherent flow of melody.

Aside from the problems of the words, however, the performance of "The Magic Flute" itself was very satisfying, showcasing some of the more talented singing and acting I've seen at Bard. The character of Papageno, played by Youssef Kerkour, was a pleasure to watch, so well did he capture the merry, zany bird catcher. The number of talented voices in the cast, everywhere from Tamino, the protagonist of the opera, to his love Pamina, to the three ladies, to the priests of Sarastro, to a stunning Papagena, played by Marissa Vural, all fit the spirit of the music, if not the words, beautifully. There were some aspects of the direction I didn't understand, like the portrayal of the three guiding spirits who advise Tamino and Papageno on their journey. Just why these chaste, angelic spirits, which in many productions are played by young boys, were portrayed as three flirtatious, clumsy, nymphomaniacal girls is beyond me. However, I have long since learned not to question the finer points of the Bard theater department.

It may be that one of the reasons why English-language opera seems so disturbing to many audiences is the lack of a healthy, definitive repertory of operas in our own language. Even the operas of Benjamin Britten and Virgil Thomson, which have managed to enter the mainstream repertoire, make up only a fraction of the whole output. Perhaps when more English operas, especially those written by Americans, are taken with greater seriousness by our professional opera companies, the English language may actually begin to sound like a natural operatic language. Until then, one firm way to approach this problem is by giving English translations of already well-established European opera. And in spite of the obvious problems with "The Magic Flute" heard here at Bard, it is nevertheless a step in the right direction. Who knows, perhaps one of these days the Drama department may summon up enough courage to perform an actual, honest-to-god American opera. One can only hope.

Perhaps when more English operas, especially those written by Americans, are taken with greater seriousness by our professional opera companies, the English language may actually begin to sound like a natural operatic language.

# The Greatest Food Review, Without Question, of All Time

*A comprehensive account of restaurants in the vicinity of Planet Bard*

BY STEPHANIE SCHNEIDER

AS THE SUN SETS on my Bard career, my project having spiraled into non-existence, my dorm room condemned by order of Maid Linda and the horrible dark cloud of a whole new life hovering over my head, I reflect on all the great places, and not so great places, that I have reviewed or haven't reviewed for the *Bard Observer*.

Here you will find a sampling of my life's work:

## MOST DEPRESSING RESTAURANT:

**The Taco Maker.** Formerly an Arby's, this fast-food venue represents the farthest reaches of the Puerto Rican-based, monolithic corporate juggernaut Pa' Taco Maker. As it attempts to portray itself as an okay place to eat, it relies on faded paper party products, a dried-up salsa bar, and their overly masculine mascot, Taco the Cat. With his thick, trunk-like limbs, squashed into those Contempo Casual red shorts, he smiles at you in the most sordid manner. As you sit in the solarium, waiting for your food to be brought to the table, you are slapped in the face by the next-door McDonalds, complete with Disneyland-sized Playland, under oh-so-golden arches, boasting "Billions and billions served." And not one of those billions has accidentally stepped into the Taco Maker from the looks on the faces of the Taco Technicians, who seemed overwhelmed by the influx of customers that totaled four in my party.

The menu seemed to be constructed from a generic kit mail ordered from Harriet Carter. It did prove itself to be somewhat mysterious by offering for dessert, "El crusto," which, translated into English means "The Crusto."

Runner's Up: The Islander a.k.a., the Super K Cafe, Sizzler (Kingston location only), Texas Lunch (even though I've never been there), and Bois D'arc (because it represents the unattainable).

## RESTAURANTS I HAVE REVIEWED THAT HAVE CLOSED DOWN:

**Chez Phillipe:** I knew this place was on its way down the moment I stepped into the dining area. Maybe it was the dusty furniture or the lone cries of Phillipe himself, I don't know. What I do know is that even though this place was filled with mystery and intrigue, it proved too much for its own good. I write with a hole in my heart when I write about Chez Phillipe.

**Scheff's Kitchen:** The reason why this establishment closed down remains unknown. The only thing I can think of is that perhaps the intimate ambiance it evoked became too much of that "family feel" and forced the owners to give away free food. I miss the breakfast pizza as much as I miss those sparkling cans of condensed milk on the Kitchen's shelves.

**Cafe 7 West:** The reasons for this closing are obvious. This short lived restaurant offered exploding egg salad sandwiches and a 7th Heaven decor that made it into a prime example of a self-fulfilling prophecy.

## BEST INEXPLICABLE MAKEOVER:

**Michael's Diner:** A collage of many themes, from cross stitch to neon lights to Rococo, Michael's Diner has reestablished itself as a place of great confusion. As I sit in the white pleather booth, my attention is taken away from my Jitterbug and focused on the generic tiffany lamps and art deco woodwork. No relaxing meal offered here anymore.

Runner's Up: The Bard College Coffee Shop (now referred to as The Bard College Cafe) and Arby's (which turned into a Taco Maker).

## BEST PHOTO OPPORTUNITY

**Foster's Coach House:** Getting your picture taken while talking on the phone in a horse drawn carriage is an experience too great and rare to pass up.

## BEST BREAKFAST PLACE

**Another Roadside Attraction:** Besides being the only place I know of to name a dish in honor of Bard, this restaurant offers a far-away feel by being far away. It also offers the Yam-Yam special, which stars the Yam-Yam cake, a dense and indestructible coffee cake topped with the sweetest sugary goop around.

## BEST APPETIZERS

**China Rose:** I love scallion pancakes.

## BEST, WORST, STUPIDEST, EXPENSIVE, FAR-AWAY, CRAPPIEST DINER

**The Eveready Diner:** It may have that shiny chrome outside but that just masks the sad truth of the inside.

## BEST (OR POSSIBLY WORST) PLACE I'VE NEVER BEEN

**Blondie's Cafe, Bear and Babe, and Crabby Dave's**

## ALL-AROUND GREATEST PLACE (AND BEST SOFT-SERVE)

**Del's Dairy Creme.** Whether you sit outside and enjoy the elements or sit inside and get that birthday-party feel, this is a place where everybody knows your name (as it's shouted over the intercom when your order is ready) Anonymity is not its strong point, but delectables from a deep fryer are. From fried mushrooms to the "Ooh La-La," you just can't go wrong if you go to Del's.

## FILMREVIEWFILMREVIEWFILM

MY ONE FEAR for the best film of 1999 is that its targets won't get the point.

*Dogma* will be out in October. You may not have heard of it before, but that's probably because director Kevin Smith is following a rather odd publicity policy: he was not upset when the script appeared online (try "Drew's Scripts" on Yahoo), and he regularly updates the *Dogma* website as to how the search for a distributor is going. Smith, who has something of a cult following after his wonderful *Clerks*, his horrible yet oddly watchable *Maltrats*, and his acclaimed *Chasing Amy*, has made a satire. About religion.

So far as I can describe it, *Dogma* will be *Clerks*—except with famous faces, a different focus, more action, and a whole bunch more money. The plot (yes it has one of those too): one of the descendents of Jesus's siblings is called upon by Metatron (Alan Rickman), the voice of God, to stop two renegade angels (Matt Damon, Ben Affleck) who are trying to get back into Heaven via the old plenary indulgence clause. If they succeed, they will have proven that God can be wrong, thereby invalidating all being. ("Leave it to the Catholics to destroy existence.") Along the way she meets the muse Serendipity (Salma Hayek), the apostle Rufus (Chris Rock), stoners Jay and Silent Bob, three evil skater kids, a monster made out of excrement, and a gangster who really, really likes *Fat Albert*. Oh, and on the seventh day, she goes to the arcade.

If the film's messages actually reach their intended targets, people will squirm in their seats like slugs. There's a great speech in which Rufus, who gets regularly kicked out of Heaven to give its other occupants a break from his Black Nationalist lectures, says, "White folks only want to hear the good shit: life eternal, a place in God's kingdom. . . Folks just can't accept a black Savior." And then there's the old "Catholicism—Wow!" campaign. I'm not so sure why people who consider Jesus their close personal friend would be offended by him off the cross giving a big thumbs-up, but they probably will be. But then, I still argue that it's mostly Protestants who do that sort of thing anyway. And if your kids like watching *Barney*—beware! The executives for the show *Mooby the Cow* learn about idolatry the hard way.

The thing is, I fear that these messages may be lost in that carryover from *Clerks*, the feeling of everyday triteness which drops off suddenly into the absurd (and, yes, the somewhat bothersome tendency to rely excessively on pop culture references). When the two renegade angels go on a last sin-punishin' rampage, they use handguns instead of flaming swords. If you see protestors, they might be against the anti-Church-dogma stuff (but if you're a priest and you bless something, it really is holy!), or the this-seems-blasphemous stuff (Rufus talks about Jesus as though Jesus were—gasp!—human), or Jay's foul mouth (no comment). Or it might be because they think religion is being dragged down and degraded (more so than when films ignore it completely?).


Also, if you go, remember to talk to the protestors outside. Be sure to point out that Kevin Smith is a practicing Roman Catholic and that his alter ego, Silent Bob, gives his coat to Rufus (apparently you're naked when you get kicked out of Heaven), thereby clothing the naked as Jesus taught. Warn them against reading *Dante's Inferno* and Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, and ask them if they've even seen the movie. And, although I'm also Catholic and delighted to see a Hollywood film that acknowledges that religion even exists, I'll probably be there too. I'll be the one holding the sign that reads, "Alanis Morissette is not God."—Anne Matusiewicz



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## FILMREVIEWFILMREVIEWFILM

IN MY COPY of the excellent *Pretty in Pink*: the Golden Age of Teenage Movies, Jonathan Bernstein notes that a repeated motif is the triumph of the underdog. Molly Ringwald gets her crush in *Sixteen Candles* and shows up the obnoxious richies in *Pretty in Pink*. Three popular sadists met their maker in *Heathers*. The *Karate Kid*. *Lucas*. *Back to the Future*. *Footloose* (sort of). *Weird Science*. *Valley Girl*.

No longer, my friends. The roots of this movement are waaay back in the *Breakfast Club*, but I believe it was *Clueless* which actually set the standard that popular kids in the late nineties would actually be. . . portrayed as people. At the expense, of course, of the outcast. Sure, it's almost always preferable to be popular than to be sneered at and despised, but by suggesting that the popular kids are to be sympathized with, the last solace of the reject—the stubborn pride and moral superiority—is washed away.

I was thinking about this in light of the recent Columbine High School massacre—or not so much that, but in the way it was handled by the media, that is, as usual: badly. The Trenchcoat Mafia, I read in magazines, was contemptuous of the popular kids, who in turn held such outcasts in less regard than they did for, say, dirt. Coming from a high school the size of a small autonomous state, and being completely unaware of what happened within my little group of friends, let alone outside it, I was never really sure of the dynamics of popularity, or even who the popular kids were, but I do know that I was never like them. I never wanted to be unlike them in that quiet, fade-into-the-walls manner either; instead I wanted to continually wave it in their faces: "Hey, I'm not like you! I think your ideals and everything you do is so much shit! Yeah! And *Seventeen* blows!" When the news media talks about outcasts and friendless students, I get the creepy feeling that they would include me.

And what is on-screen for such outcasts? Let's see. We could have the class bitch all prettied-up in *Ten Things I Hate About You*. We could go see the class freak all prettied up in *She's All That*. We could watch *Buffy* (as I did, last week) kick the crap out of a "kind of quiet, but nice" guy who planned to unleash evil, brain-eating creatures (network TV executives!) at the prom, and see her announce that she's given up on any chance at a regular high-school moment for herself. Very nice. Take a little pride in that declaration, there are some of us who never had that option in the first place. (I'd also like to address the idea that the prince always returns in time for that one special dance. In reality, there is no prince.)

What is popularity? In the olden days (the 80s), Bernstein writes, "War movies had Nazis. Spy movies had Commies . . . 80s teen movies had friends. Hip, cool, powerful friends. Icy, perfectly accessorized arbiters of taste who decided with the arch of an eyebrow or the curl of a scarlet lip who would be allowed to continue breathing the precious air of the inner circle and who would be plunged into social oblivion." Now the enemies are, variously, grown-ups, jealous exes, and many an anemic substitute that fails to be believable on-screen for the simple reason that they are not the enemy here. Films changed. Times haven't. Were I still a high-school student, I would be incensed. As it is, I don't watch teen movies anymore. It's entertaining enough watching the people who try to make them.—Anne Matusiewicz

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## The Five Most Common Sights On Campus

- 1) Pathetic egocentric music majors playing guitars on the Kline Wall (surrounded by even more pathetic female groupies.)
2. Mark Lambert, training for the 1992 Olympic Walk-a-thon.
3. Annoying Kline sleepwalkers who are always standing exactly where you would like to be walking as they circle from the entrees, to the salad bar, to the soup tureens, until finally coming to rest permanently on the pasta line.
4. Self-selected campus D.J.s perched on their window sills as they select their personal favorites for the enjoyment of everyone.
5. Obstructive vendors selling products made by exploited third worlders to politically correct Bard students.

## PERSPECTIVES IN MUSIC

# An American Band: A Tribute to the Parachutes

*The all-star group of legendary heroes who rocked like no other—they touched not only stardom, but also our hearts*

By Scott "PILE 'O' FLUFF" STATON

OF ALL THE COUNTLESS COLLEGE BANDS making music on campuses across the country, few are so audacious, so frequently stunning, as Bard's own Parachutes. So it was destined that these four fortunate souls would cross paths musically and spiritually in the Hudson Valley and make some of the most potent and pure rock of our day. Make no mistake — there is nothing innovative or groundbreaking about the Parachutes' music — but therein lies its brilliance. The Parachutes listen and make music with their guts, and it is with our own that we must listen in order to recognize the ingenuity and heart behind it. Their work is rock stripped to its essence, sheer simplistic melody and abandon with a healthy spoonful of sloppiness for good measure. It's meant to make your head bob, your feet shake, your fists rise and your bellies rumble.

I was one of the lucky ones who saw the live debut, singer/guitarists Shawn Vandor and Ezra Feinburg, assured and a jumble of nerves, respectively; bassist Gaddy Davis, all rock-'n-roll and stone-faced; and lovable skin-beater Matt Hayes about as drunk as the Mats in Minneapolis used to get. A Parachutes show in all its bright, unmitigated glory is a celebration of rock's virtues run amok, the proverbial chicken running around with its head cut-off. Ezra's vocal range straining to strip itself of its owner and rocket into the stratosphere; Shawn's deep, knowing anti-croon smugly tellin' it like it is from seven feet high and rising; Gaddy, the epitome of cool, the be-all and end-all of hard-core bassists who know when to play and when to shrug; and the striking Matt, never quite following through on his Bonham-potential but making quite an impressive racket with what must be the most predictable rhythms since Harry & the Bears, albeit infinitely more agreeable and engaging. Which brings me back to why they're so damn good: they aim for the gut and not the cerebrum. It's not that they couldn't sit down and try coming up with something a bit more clever, but that they couldn't care to. They don't bother taking themselves too seriously. It's not worth it to them or the legions of fans, friends and family that love what they do as it is. Perversity and pomp the Parachutes are not. The Parachutes are the idiot savants of modern rock, and their brilliance lies in their not knowing it.

And then there are the songs. In the tradition of the Beatles, not coincidentally the most classic and influential rock act of all time, the Parachutes feature not one but two talented songwriters with a marked stylistic tension that fuels the tank of the vehicle that is the group. Pursuing this absurd car analogy (inspired no doubt

by Ezra's naggingly driving and catchy "My Car"), a Parachutes experience can be likened to that of a pleasant car drive. Ezra is the propulsive pop tunesmith of the group, the figurative gas pedal, if you will, providing a strong impetus with tunes such as the aforementioned gem and the transcendent "Artist Boyfriend," whose development from the excitement building stop-start verses to the cascading chorus is a rollercoaster ride in itself. Meanwhile, Shawn's own off-kilter melodies shine through on his trademark "Hey, Girl!"

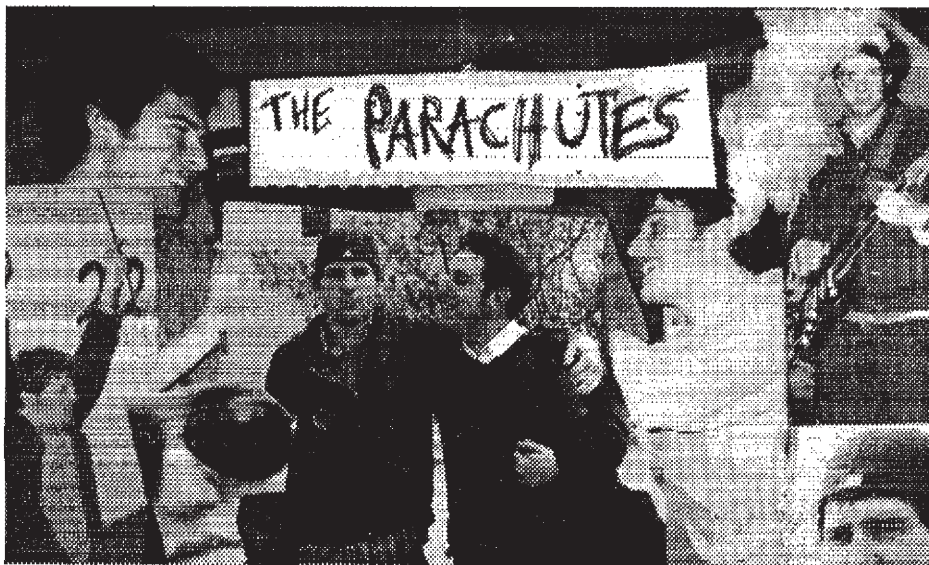
and the riot-inducing, slide guitar frenzy of "Uncle Nudebar's Cabin," while elsewhere he realizes a priceless level of introspective rocking with the remarkable "Rarely Ever Do I Think I'm Wrong." If Ezra's songs add the occasional surges of fuel that urge things on down the road, Shawn's songs are all about allowing yourself to coast, look out the window and enjoy the trip.

I would be committing a grave injustice if I failed to recognize another fine craftsman of music in the group. Though he contributed only one composition to the Parachutes catalogue, Gaddy's "Bugged" had enough pent-up energy, spit, and visceral power to make it an instant favorite. It indicates so much potential for the smooth-looking

bassist, letting people know he's not just the group's pretty face. Apparently that's enough for Gaddy, even though the song is rarely performed and spoken-of even less. What he's left behind is a myth of a song and a would-be songwriting legacy.

Once this semester comes to a close and brings the graduation of Shawn, Ezra, and Gaddy, (leaving Matt as something of a free agent) the future of the Parachutes may seem a bit questionable, and rightfully so. Live music on Bard may never be the same. But perhaps I'm being too short-sided. Did we not just see this past weekend Boba Fett (or, rather, Challenge of the Future) return to Bard, twice in about a year and a half, to show they still gotta little steam left

inside to rock with the best of them? And with members of Variety City (or, rather, Daddy) no doubt rocking the night away in some night-time urban locale this summer, thoughts of the imminent decline in live Bard music are probably best put to rest. So let's look forward to what perhaps might be for the Parachutes. Their music is simultaneously primitive, brilliant, goofy, and poignant. They have an open invitation to play Bard any time they like.



They don't bother taking themselves too seriously. The Parachutes are the idiot savants of modern rock, and their brilliance lies in their not knowing it.

## MISS LONELYHEARTS

## Wham, Bam, Thank You Ma'am

Miss Lonelyhearts

Well, I guess this is it. I don't know what you will do without me all summer, though I have faith that possibly a few relationships will persevere without my assistance. I'm a little disappointed in this final piece, I mean, somehow it just doesn't seem to have that Lonelyhearts ummpphh we all know and love. It seems to me that in the wake of the menage there might have been more than a few confused and misunderstood people out there, but I guess I underestimated your ability to recover from a night of debauchery. I suppose you could use the impending doom of finals as an excuse, but quite frankly I would be surprised if this is really impeding your ability to get laid. I mean, think about it, this is the primary, and most enjoyable form of procrastination (besides writing this column). I find that beginning new relationships just before the year ends is the perfect way to avoid doing your work and significantly healthier than sitting in your dorm room and sniffing glue. If you think about it, any kind of sexual relationship can provide hours of not only sex, but fun-filled discussions about the direction of your relationship, and whether you really feel ready for commitment. So give me a break, step away from your computers, go out and find someone as stressed as you are and relieve some of that tension, baby. Otherwise you might actually have to turn that paper in on time.

Dear Miss Lonelyhearts,

I just started seeing this girl & I don't know her very well yet. We've just started fooling around & I'm new to this sort of thing (I'm a virgin). How do I tell if she's ready to go all the way?

Sincerely,  
Groping in the Dark

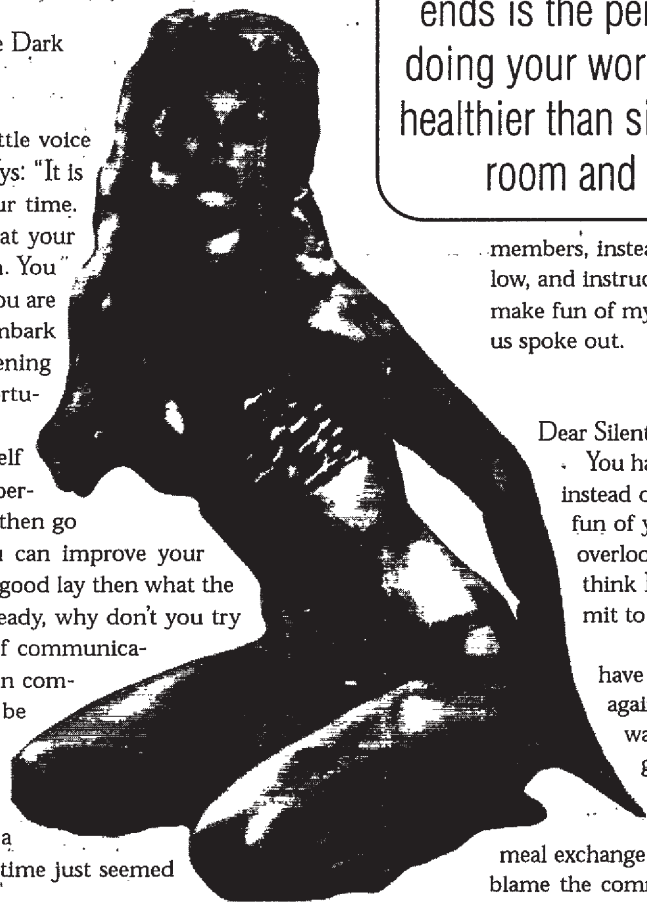
Dear Groping,

There comes a time in every boy's life when a little voice deep down inside begins to rear its ugly head and says: "It is time to become a man." Well, groping, now is your time. You heard it when you saw your first gun, swung at your first fastball, now it is time to hit your first homerun. You see, this is a decision only you can make, and until you are ready, it doesn't matter if she is. You are about to embark on a decision that will change your life, you are opening yourself up to a plethora of new and exciting opportunities (i.e. "You can put that in there?").

However, if you have reached down inside yourself and realized that "golly gee, you really are a great person," and "boy are you comfortable with yourself," then go right ahead. In fact, if the only way you feel you can improve your Robert Redford good looks or girlish smile is with a good lay then what the hell, go for it. If you really want to know if she is ready, why don't you try talking to her? Talking is a very underrated form of communication, and I should know, I spend all day at this damn computer. You can approach the subject delicately, or be blunt and get right to the point, the choice is yours. I personally do not believe in all the nonsense about the physical signs of readiness. I mean, just 'cause I had a mole on my right shoulder didn't seem to me a good enough reason to have sex, but somehow the time just seemed right. (Editor's Note: Huh?)

I would like to quickly dispel some of the common misconceptions that men have about when a woman is ready to have sex:

1. She comes over, lays down on your bed, condom clenched between her teeth and writhes.
2. She can breath through her eyelids.
3. No matter what you say to her, she just says: "please, please, please me!"
4. She constantly mentions that de-bunking you and your roommates beds will "really open up the room."
5. She reminds you that getting a water bed will "really tie the room together."



I find that beginning new relationships just before the year ends is the perfect way to avoid doing your work and significantly healthier than sitting in your dorm room and sniffing glue.

While many of these situations seem to imply that this girl is ready to sleep with you, you will find that more often than not, she is merely interested in home decorating. This is not the girl you want to sleep with, or else you will find yourself owning lace window curtains to match your bed ruffle. This is very bad, studies have shown that living around too much lace causes cancer. Be wary of the obvious, because more often than not the knowledgeable one is much more subtle.

Dear Miss Lonelyhearts,

I am a freshmen at Bard, and I must say when I came here I never expected to encounter such a blatant embracement of sex and promiscuity. The recent "menage" party, during which I actually witnessed people fornicating in the hall appalled me. I find all this talk of sex and promiscuity worrisome, and I can't even escape it when I attempt to read a fine piece of literature such as the Bard Observer. Every issue I open up contains your despicably lewd column accompanied by a positively offensive picture. How can you write such

filth? I am disappointed by the community for actually supporting your column by writing you letters. When I open up the school newspaper, I expect to find articles which pertain to the enhancement of our community and the achievement of its

members, instead I encounter debates about whether to spit or swallow, and instructions on how to locate my "g-spot." I expect you will make fun of my prudishness, but I thought it was time that some of us spoke out.

—The Silent Majority

Dear Silent,

You have made a fatal mistake by addressing this letter to me instead of the editor. You see, now I get to respond and make fun of you. Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha. Unfortunately, I am going to overlook all the ways in which I can belittle your letter and I think I might actually take it semi-seriously. I refuse to submit to your personal attack with one against you.

You see, I am not telling everyone to go out and have tons of sex all over the place without protection against a wall on the second floor of Ludlow while being watched by Australian sheep herders who are trying to get copies of their transcripts. No way. All I do is honestly answer people's questions and provide a little comic relief for those of you who are stuck in line at meal exchange (or sniffing glue). And I also see no reason for you to blame the community for writing me letters. These are your fellow students, and they are just asking me what they want to read about. I mean you don't actually have to read this, and if the picture offends you that much I'm surprised you read it at all. Although apparently you couldn't turn the page fast enough and somehow know the topics of several letters I replied to. That picture is just a ploy to get you to read the damn thing, and apparently it is pretty darn successful.

I respect your values, whatever they may be, but see, you don't get to write this column and so I don't know what else to say to you except that maybe you should go out there and join the wild rumpus. Sometimes being positively offended can be fun.

## Letters

To the Bard Observer,

I am writing in response to the previous *Observer* issue's Bot-man, "On the Ground, Beneath her Feet" in which feminists were portrayed as "unbathed hippie-chicks with hairy legs." In my opinion, as a male feminist, this was yet another botched attempt at humor on the part of the Bot-man crew. It simply was not funny, particularly following the blatantly sexist offensive@bard.edu signs that mocked Sexual Assault Awareness Month. Those signs clearly demonstrated the lack of awareness of the sexual violence that is prevalent in the Bard community and the need for events like Speak Out, Clothesline Project, and Take Back Bard to increase the awareness of such issues. Chris Pappas, who created the original Sexual Assault Awareness Month signs, wrote a letter to the author/s of the doppelganger signs, that the *Observer* also printed in the last issue, ironically on the flip side of "On the Ground, Beneath her Feet." Chris wrote to the mystery author/s, "Maybe you thought, 'Hey, nobody but feminists, 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." Though obviously the fliers and the comic took different forms they conveyed a similar message: the women's movement and the anti-rape movement is a laughing matter.

"On the Ground, Beneath her Feet" suggests that Bard students accept the notion that sexual violence and assault does not occur in the beds and hallways of Bard. Whether this is apathy, ignorance, or an image of Bard that the *Observer* perpetuates, students should read with discretion and help shake this illusion. Do students really need another Bard relationship to end in murder or another rape in Tivoli Bays for this illusion and that kind of humor to be destroyed?

To mock the effort of people who work for equality and to falsely stereotype them, inevitably shifts the balance and insults every victim of inequality and sexual violence. Since so much more effort needs to be put into increasing the awareness of sexual abuse, it is disheartening to see how much is put into mocking those efforts. Humor can be a powerful weapon. Those who wield it should consider at whose expense it comes and how it could be used to help instead of hurt. Those who are reading this may think I am being over-sensitive, but we all do and say hundreds of things every day that support a sexually violent culture. Most of those things people do not even realize support such a culture. Every time someone refuses to let things like this slide by unnoticed, we become one step closer to a world and a community without sexual violence.

Sincerely,  
Greg Johnson

(EDITOR'S NOTE: The *Observer* reminds readers of the notice that appeared at the end of last issue's Botman, indicating that the publication's views are not necessarily consistent with those of the comic; and that the Opinions section, as a matter of established form, has and will continue to appear at the end of the publication, on the flip-side of the Back Page.)

### Observer Editorial Policy

The *Bard Observer* is Bard's only student-run newspaper. A forum for the exchange of ideas and information, the paper is distributed free-of-charge on campus. Eight issues are planned for the academic year; 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 850.

The Editors can be contacted at [observer@bard.edu](mailto:observer@bard.edu); 758-7131; and P.O. Box 609, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, NY 12504.

## Taking a Stand On Sweatshops

*Code passes, protecting the rights of workers making products for Bard*

By MICHAEL CHAMEIDES

DOES BARD COLLEGE Support Sweatshop Labor? Your Bard t-shirt, like most apparel, could be made in a factory with abhorrent conditions, including exposing workers to toxic chemicals, forced labor, employment of young children, mandatory strenuous hours, and a less than livable wage.

For example, many companies lock women into factories forcing them to work over 14 hours a day. Factories with these conditions are commonly referred to as sweatshops, and the goods we find at the bookstore and Kline may be manufactured in such places.

This semester, Bard students joined a national student movement against sweatshops. Over the last year, thousands of students at schools ranging from Duke to the University of Wisconsin have hosted protests in attempts to stop sweatshop labor. The movement has focused on the fact that most clothing, such as T-shirts and sweatshirts that bear the names of colleges and universities, is made in sweatshops.

Barnes and Noble is responsible for making the t-shirts sold at Bard. They contract the labor out to Champion and a number of other companies. It is difficult to know whether the t-shirts are made in sweatshops. Large corporations do not disclose where their factories are located, and in what labor conditions, unless there is a contractual agreement that forces them to do so. In line with other schools around the country, Bard's Student Labor Coalition took on the cause and sought to add a code of conduct for fair labor standards into the contracts of Bard's major vendors.

After meeting with the administration for months, a code has been finalized. In March, a group of students drew up a code and began meeting with Jim Brudwig, vice-president of finances. Brudwig suggested a shorter and less dense version of the code along the lines of a one-page value statement. But, students wanted to ensure that the code would have "teeth" and would be strong enough to force corporations to end the use of sweatshops. In the end, Jim Brudwig and Leon Botstein were supportive. Last week, both of them signed an effective code and agreed to enforce it.

The code covers Barnes & Noble and Compass—the parent company of Chartwells/Flik and Service Master. The code draws out a set of clear labor standards including a living wage, health and safety standards, and anti-discrimination clauses. Bard will only enter into contract with companies that adhere to these standards. In order to ensure compliance with the code, Bard may request that contractors disclose certain information such as the location of factories; the sub-contractors they employ, and specific labor conditions. Furthermore, Bard has the right to send independent monitors into factories. All the information collected will be considered public and be available to Bard students and the community.

Passing the code of conduct has been a major victory. With the code, students and the administration can monitor Bard's major contractors and guarantee that Bard doesn't support sweatshop labor. Next year, the Student-Labor Coalition will put the code to use to investigate the clothing in the bookstore, the fruit in Kline, and Compass's dealings with Norpack food company, in order to ensure that these products are sweatshop free.

The code is posted on the website, <http://student.bard.edu/~sg584>. Students who are interested in getting involved are encouraged to contact Shankar Gopalakrishnan of the Student labor coalition at x4442 or by e-mail [sg584@bard.edu](mailto:sg584@bard.edu).

## The Bard Observer Editorial Staff 1998-99

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# BOT-MAN: GETTIN' FUNKY AT MENAGE

Bot-man, Volume 3, Issue 7, 1999

