

budget forum: affinity groups, convocation fund severely under-funded

BY GRACE DWYER

Tensions ran high and confusion reigned on a wintry night two weeks ago in Kline, as some deep-seated issues larger than Croquet Club vs. Ultimate Frisbee Team grudgingly came to light. It was Budget Forum, student government's most widely attended general forum, where amendments are made to the semester's budget through a combination of friendly negotiation and club-on-club attacks, new members are elected to the Student Government Association, beer is served, and costumes are not uncommon.

The budget allotment process had begun with Saturday's Budget Defense, where members of the Planning Committee question club heads about their proposed budgets. Budgets were assigned and posted in Kline, and this semester they elicited a stronger response than usual. In what some argue is a growing trend, identity groups like the Black Students Organization (BSO), Asian American Students Organization (AASO), Anti-Racist Discourse (ARD), and others were allotted significantly less than their proposed minimum operating budget. ARD in particular was given \$800 dollars in funding, \$2,200 less than they

had received the previous semester and \$4,400 less than their proposed minimum operating budget.

At 10:30 on Monday night secretary

As a group representing... students of color on campus we were being...put on the same lines as groups concerned with interests, activities, hobbies, or petty activism.

of the Central Committee Oliver Traldi received a call from Dean of Students Erin Cannan asking if the Planning Committee could reconsider ARD's budget. Traldi responded that this was constitutionally impossible - once the preliminary budget had been agreed upon by the Planning Committee, the only recourse was Budget Forum and hostile/friendly amendments.

ARD members met daily with

administrators and, that Wednesday, with the newly convened Diversity Commission. They discussed the possibilities of a system other than the one offered by Budget Forum and the Planning Committee that would ensure affinity groups integral to a healthy campus environment funding adequate for their needs. According to Director of Student Activities Andrea Conner, it was an airing of "growing concerns that have festered for some time...it was about more than just the budget allocation." That same day, many club heads and attendees of past ARD events received an email informing them of a meeting half an hour before Budget Forum began. The email explained: "At Budget Forum, white students will be expected to stand in solidarity with the students of color who will announce the cessation of A.R.D. and other affinity groups from the current budget allocation process ... This action is not about asking for changes in the budget allocation process; it is about informing the Bard community about what has happened over the past week."

The night of Budget Forum began as contenders for the vacant treasurer position

Andreas Knab and Doug Moses were given five minutes at the microphone. "Doug and I have spoken and we've decided to join together and talk about the larger issue at hand here," said Knab. He proceeded to denounce the efficacy and legitimacy of student government, calling for internal reforms that would wrest power from administrators. Izzy Sederbaum, chair of the Planning Committee and sit-in treasurer, noted that the treasurer does not have a vote on the Central Committee and that their main responsibility is signing checks. Knab was asked to cede the floor several times but refused, continuing to speak heatedly despite growing unrest and shouts from all corners of the room that he sit down.

These first twenty minutes would characterize the night. Knab remained at the front of the room, silenced by a powerless microphone, and Sederbaum revealed that due to illness and other unfortunate circumstances only four out of eight Planning Committee members, not including her, had been present at Budget Defense and that she was uncomfortable with the budgets as they stood. A motion

TO PAGE TWO

naked news: "old bard", new moderator

BY RACHEL MEADE

For those students who have grown to rely upon the Moderator parties as the best fix for the mythologized "Old Bard" Drag Race parties, Friday's release party was likely a disappointment. The party bore little resemblance to the inebriated debauchery of previous events. Following a particularly raucous burlesque-themed

Moderator party last spring from which three students were sent to the hospital, administration asked that the club not serve alcohol at future parties.

In compliance with administration, the event was hosted in the Old Gym, which, post-drag race, is an alcohol-free zone. It was publicized as an art show rather than a party, which was reflected in the set-up of the room. The elegant gallery-style layout, with photos from the Spring Fling photo-shoot pinned up around the room, left little space for dancing. Yet despite the toned-down atmosphere, the event was remarkably well attended and guests were inspired to dance naked on tables, even without the aid of alcohol.

According to the Moderator's editor-in-chief Carla Perez-Gallardo, Friday's opening was their most successful event to date, and, in comparison to previous parties, the most representative of the true spirit of their magazine. "We're about normalizing nudity," she said. The absence of alcohol highlighted the normalcy of nakedness, unlike previous events that highlighted wild partying and unrestrained sexuality. "It's hard for people to take off their clothes without being trashed," said Perez-Gallardo. Thus, the voluntary and unexpected nakedness of the various table dancers were markers of a successful event.

Although the editors of the Moderator



Students mingle at the Moderator art show Friday, February 22nd.

photo/Rachel Meade

ultimately embraced the opportunities of a non-alcoholic event, when they were first approached by administration, they were less enthusiastic. "At first I got a little defensive," said Perez-Gallardo. "[I thought] this isn't our problem." However after a series of conversations with Student Activities Director Andria O'Connor and Dean of Students Erin Cannan, the editors realized that they needed to promote other ways of encouraging nudity than through the aid of alcohol.

These discussions prompted the Moderator to make several changes in addition to their party-style, such as a daytime nude photo shoot during Spring Fling and a new format for the magazine. The latest issue of the Moderator is smaller with the text more widely distributed.

According to Perez-Gallardo, in the old poster pin-up sized issues, "the message of the Moderator was lost." Many students ignored the text, and thought of the Moderator as a porn magazine. Because of the higher cost of the new format, the Moderator will probably not be hosting any other parties this year, although they do plan on putting out another issue or two.

The shifting values of the Moderator are part of a long history of changes in Bard's party scene. The continual lamentations by students for the wonders of Old Bard anything-goes parties have been a prominent to every Bard class going back decades. Graduate of the class of 1999 Devon White attested to this commonality among classes. "For some

TO PAGE SEVEN

INSIDE

club budgets, p2

interview with Rami Shamir, Bard alum and author, p5

graffiti in olin, p9

new! serial fiction, p14

message from Student Labor Dialogue, p15

observer final budget allocations*

*clubs in italics are new this semester and subject to a restriction of \$350 dollars; final budget reflects the club's standing after Budget Forum.

Organization	Allotted Fall '07	Minimum	Ideal	Allotted	Final Budget
Active Resistance Coalition		\$1,024.00	\$1024.00	\$350	\$350
Alternative Women's Health Collective		\$350.00	\$350.00	\$100	\$100
Amnesty International	\$835.00	\$1,180.00	\$1280.00	\$680.00	\$680
Anti-Racist Discourse	\$3000.00	\$5,200.00	\$6450.00	\$800	\$3149.99
Art Co-op	\$.01	\$100	\$100	\$100	\$100
Asian-American Student Organization (AASO)	\$1500.00	\$6,866.00	\$7526.00	\$1200.00	\$1,250
Bard Board	\$135.0	\$160.00	\$404.00	\$404.00	\$404.00
Bard Brewing Co./Annandale Ales	\$280.00	\$547.90	\$847.90	\$547.90	\$547.90
Bard College Boating Club		\$25.00	\$350.00	\$0	\$0
Bard Debate Team	\$3854.00	\$3905.00	\$4761.00	\$3905.00	\$3905.00
Bard Democrats	\$400.00	\$275.00	\$325.00	\$275.00	\$275.00
Bard EMS	\$2341.85	\$1784.00	\$2054.00	\$1784.00	\$1784.00
Bard Film Committee	\$1308.00	\$1488.00	\$1488.00	\$1488.00	\$1458.00
Bard Journal of Social Sciences	\$1520.90	\$1520.90	\$2281.35	\$1520.90	\$1520.90
Palestine Solidarity Coalition	\$1000.00	\$2100.00	\$4550.00	\$2100.00	\$100.01
Bard Musical Theater Company	\$1254.75	\$2655.00	\$3265.00	\$2655.00	\$2655.00
Bard Prison Initiative	\$5263.00	\$3288.00	\$5283.00	\$2300.00	\$2300.00
BBQ Club	\$500.00	\$1000.00	\$1500.00	\$0	\$0
Bike Co-op	\$1025.48	\$1954.83	\$2445.90	\$2200.00	\$2200.00
Black Student Organization (BSO)	\$5000.00	\$6300.00	\$6300.00	\$3050.00	\$3050.00
Bomb Squad	\$0	\$340.10		\$0	\$0
Book Exchange	\$518.79	\$93.34	\$463.34	\$353.34	\$353.34
Boxing Club	\$250.00	\$200.00	\$350.00	\$100.00	\$100.00
Brothers of Rise		\$350.00	\$350.00	\$350.00	\$350.00
Chess Club		\$930.00	\$930.00	\$130.00	\$390.00
Circle	\$300.00	\$300.00	\$540.00	\$450.00	\$450.00
Clay Club		\$76.00	\$729.80	\$76.00	\$76.00
Coalition for Peru Relief		\$350.00	\$550.00	\$350.00	\$550.00
Coalition for Student Space	\$.01	\$.02		\$.03	\$.03
Coalition of Cool Kids (COCK)		\$3000.00	\$4420.00	\$2020.00	\$2000.00
Conservative Student Union		\$1.00	\$350.00	\$.01	\$.01
Conradance	\$1200.00	\$1200.00	\$1350.00	\$1500.00	\$1200.00
Creative Music Committee		\$400.00	\$1200.00	\$.00	\$.00
Croquet Club	\$220.00	\$240.00	\$340.00	\$240.00	\$245.00
Czechoslovak Club	\$150.00	\$620.00	\$670.00	\$120.00	\$120.00
Dance Club	\$3050.00	\$3750.00	\$3750.00	\$3750.00	\$3750.00
Darfur Action Campaign	\$1360.00	\$2085.00	\$2465.00	\$2005.00	\$2005.00
Dimestore	\$815.00	\$900.00	\$1000.00	\$1000.00	\$1000.00
Economists		\$2730.00	\$3500.00	\$350.00	\$350.00
Entertainment Committee	\$23000.00	\$25500.00	\$28000.00	\$24000.00	\$24000.00
Environmental Collective	\$1590.00	\$1710.00	\$3410.00	\$1710.00	\$1710.00
Feminist Alliance		\$.01	\$.01	\$.01	\$.01
Forum	\$760.45	\$1700.00	\$2200.00	\$1700.00	\$1700.00
Foursquare	\$30.00	\$.01	\$10.00	\$10.00	\$10.00
Free Press	\$3857.00	\$4444.00	\$5771.80	\$1994.00	\$1994.00
French Club	\$100.00	\$456.00	\$1,100.00	\$350.00	\$350.00
Fromagerie	\$0	\$350.00	\$500.00	\$.01	\$.01
Give Weight to Everybody (GWEB)	\$490.00	\$253.00	\$283.00	\$283.00	\$283.00
High Tea	\$190.00	\$155.69	\$260.69	\$190.69	\$190.69
Hindu Student Organization (HSO)	\$300.00	\$1280.00	\$1660.00	\$980.00	\$980.00
Improvement	\$0.00	\$1660.00	\$6180.00	\$.01	\$.01
International Students Organization (ISO)	\$3530.00	\$5850.00	\$7400.00	\$2700.00	\$2695.00
Jewish Student Organization (JSO)	\$400.00	\$800.00	\$1100.00	\$800.00	\$800.00
KLOUDS	\$275.00	\$214.91	\$390.83	\$214.91	\$214.91
Latin-American Student Organization	\$3550.00	\$4900.00	\$5995.00	\$4000.00	\$3900.00
Migrant Labor Project	\$2000.00	\$2200.00	\$3022.00	\$2200.00	\$2200.00
Mind's Eye Theater and Gaming Club	\$86.97	\$112.96	\$175.94	\$175.94	\$175.94
Model UN	\$1000.00	\$1200.00	\$1500.00	\$1000.00	\$1000.00
Moderator	\$2000.00	\$1895.00	\$3000.00	\$2000.00	\$2000.00
Monthly Funnies		\$282.00	\$300.00	\$0	\$0
Muslim Student Organization (MSO)	\$2100.00	\$2000.00	\$2500.00	\$1200.00	\$1200.00
Neva on the Hudson		\$1200.00	\$2240.00	\$100.00	\$300.00
New Orleans Project	\$2250.00	\$2200.00	\$4300.00	\$1500.00	\$1500.00
Observer	\$5464.00	\$5934.48	\$6254.48	\$6254.48	\$6054.28
Old Gym	\$5150.00	\$4950.00	\$6200.00	\$5500.00	\$5500.00
Orcapelicans	\$340.00	\$400.00	\$640.00	\$400.00	\$400.00
Outdoors Club	\$1000.00	\$800.00	\$1429.00	\$724.00	\$1024.00
Paintball	\$300.00	\$365.00	\$685.00	\$365.00	\$365.00
Psychology Club	\$.01	\$.01	\$128.83	\$.01	\$.01
Queer Gender Discussion Group		\$.01	\$.01	\$.01	\$.01
Queer-Straight Alliance	\$3600.00	\$6111.15	\$7061.15	\$6111.15	\$6111.15
Remedy	\$350.00	\$2975.00	\$3550.00	\$3550.00	\$3550.00
RESIST	\$.01	\$.01	\$.01	\$.01	\$.01
Rethinking Height Difference	\$100.00	\$730.00	\$1623.80	\$0	\$0
Roosevelt at Bard	\$.01	\$100.00	\$300.00	\$150.00	\$150.00
Root Cellar	\$1000.00	\$1500.00	\$3000.00	\$1500.00	\$1500.00
Shapenote Singing Society	\$103.91	\$407.45	\$615.27	\$407.45	\$407.45
SMOG	\$2200.00	\$2286.66	\$2883.43	\$2286.66	\$2286.66
SMOG Audio Co-op	\$2325.00	\$2733.00	\$3191.00	\$2733.00	\$2733.00
Socially Responsible Investment Collective	\$.01	\$68.00	\$84.00	\$84.00	\$84.00
Sound Crew	\$1189.00	\$974.00	\$1124.00	\$1124.00	\$1124.00
SSTOP	\$812.45	\$1315.88	\$2045.88	\$615.88	\$615.88
Stand-up Comedy Club	\$678.50	\$947.00	\$1047.00	\$917.50	\$917.50
Step Team	\$430.00	\$2155.00	\$2605.00	\$600.00	\$600.00
Student Association Government	\$3177.00	\$3200.00	\$3400.00	\$3100.00	\$3100.00
Student Labor Dialogue	\$800.00	\$1700.00	\$2330.00	\$1400.00	\$1250.00
Student Reading Series		\$402.00	\$835.00	\$350.00	\$350.00
Student-Run Darkroom		\$210.00	\$760.00	\$500.00	\$500.00
Student Theater Collective	\$1847.54	\$2578.75	\$2942.75	\$2578.75	\$2578.75
Students for a Free Tibet	\$0.00	\$708.50	\$909.50	\$295.50	\$415.50
Students for People's Relief (SPR)	\$100.00	\$500.00	\$550.00	\$500.00	\$500.00
Students With Academic Priorities (SWAP)		\$25.00	\$350.00	\$0	\$0
Surrealist Training Circus	\$373.00	\$1009.00	\$1609.00	\$1609.00	\$1509.00
The Fifth Column		\$20.00	\$35.00	\$20.00	\$20.00
Universal Healthcare Collective		\$170.00	\$300	\$100.00	\$100.00
Verse Noire	\$1935.00	\$2100.00	\$2220.00	\$2220.00	\$2120.00
Wayfinder Experience	\$250.00	\$400.00	\$600.00	\$200.00	\$200.00
Writer's Bloc		\$350.00	\$350.00	\$0	\$0
WXBC	\$3251.00	\$5469.00	\$7467.39	\$5584.39	\$5584.39
Emergency Fund	\$4000.00	\$4000.00	\$4000.00	\$4000.00	\$3500.00
TOTAL		\$177,397.96	\$230,168.86	\$140,833.54	\$140,833.54

budgets

CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE

– which would need two-thirds majority to pass – was made to overturn the budgets determined by Saturday's session. No one on student government addressed the budgets of ARD and other affinity groups – for many in the room at this point, this issue was no doubt under the radar. A shouted discussion broke out as to the logistics of throwing out the budget. A half hour later there was a vote. The motion failed, though not by much. “This is embarrassing,” a girl sitting next to me said to her friend.

Elections were finally held. Before the beer was passed out ARD representatives and their supporters, who took up most of the front half of the room, took the floor. They explained the situation and their proposal to secede from the Budget Forum process. As ARD member Marika Plater said in an email, “The fact that the Planning Committee can shut down ARD's scheduled events shows that the system of allocating funds to affinity groups is deeply flawed. The Planning Committee cannot deny funds to the only resource on this campus for students of color.” Clubs with hostile amendments against affinity groups were urged to retract them in a show of solidarity, and around 9:30 voting on amendments began.

There were many friendly amendments, including transfers of \$1999.99 from Palestine Solidarity Coalition to ARD and smaller amounts from the Student Labor Dialogue, Surrealist Circus, and Bard Observer. Hostile amendments made by the Outdoors Club and Chess Club against the Emergency Fund, Paintball, and Bard Film Committee passed. The Croquet Club's hostile amendment against AASO failed as, in the words of one student, the issue became one of race. The night ended with ARD's budget at \$3,149.99, still roughly \$1,800 below their operating minimum.

Anti-Racist Discourse is a non-hierarchical umbrella group that encompasses all students of color and their white allies on campus. It works to provide a forum for dialogue on race relations and create a sense of unity among community members. Funding goes towards student-run workshops, guest lecturers, community dinners, and, this semester, the foundation of a library containing books that give a voice to people of color and are not available elsewhere on campus. When ARD member Zahra Malkani was asked she had become interested in the group, she explained, “It's not really an interest at all – it's just something that has to be there for the sake of the campus. I don't think I really had a choice in the matter, I just had to do it.”

ARD's fluctuating membership is representative of how few students of color there are on campus, but according to Malkani most are involved. She, and other ARD members, argue for a system under which funds for affinity groups are drawn from a pool separate from the Convocation Fund allocated by the Planning Committee. Malkani and other ARD members weren't comfortable with quoting numbers from their budget, as they explained that the issue wasn't one of numbers at all or whether or not the request for funding was legitimate. As Malkani explained, “the issue was the fact that as a group representing the ridiculously misrepresented students of color on campus we were being equated with and put on the same lines as groups concerned with interests, activities, hobbies, or petty activism.” According to Malkani the showing at Budget Forum wasn't to vent any specific frustration with the Planning Committee, but rather to communicate that affinity groups shouldn't be competing with recreational clubs for funding. She was also wary of student government's ability to give a voice to under-represented students of color, saying, “They [student government] haven't done anything.”

The fund from which ARD and other student groups and organizations get their money from is called the Convocation Fund, and it is made up of a fee paid once a year by most undergraduate students called the Student Activities Fee. At Bard this fee is \$140 a year or \$70 a semester – significantly lower than the average paid by students at most comparable liberal arts institutions. Coupled with the last few semesters' high number of clubs, Bard has one of the lowest ratios of fund money available to number of student groups around – \$2221 to one student group compared to an average of \$4300 to one at four randomly sampled, similarly sized, schools.¹ Add this on top of a growing number of clubs and increasing ambition on the behalf of many established clubs, and the Convocation Fund is stretched very thin.

“Little things [on budgets] are always questioned – it's because we're on a tight budget. It's something that the more involved I am the more frustrated and exhausted I become – we're always saying, if we only had \$25,000 more,” said Sederbaum in an interview. “Unfortunately, it's all about money.” After the meetings with each club head at Budget Defense are over, the Planning Committee's job has only just begun. First, the committee goes through each group's budget and assigns it the number they think it merits, without looking at the total amount of money they are authorized to spend. Ideally this would mark the end of the budget allocation process. Unfortunately, every year Sederbaum has been involved, they've been significantly over budget. This year after the initial allocation the committee had to go back and find a way

TO PAGE THREE

1 Sarah Lawrence, Vassar, Wesleyan, and Brown – see accompanying table for details.

budgets

CONTINUED FROM PAGE TWO

to cut close to \$20,000 from the collective budget. As Sederbaum put it, "If every club wrote a perfect budget we'd be screwed - you almost have to rely on someone writing bad budgets."

Aside from the information sheet on budget writing distributed at Club Head Day, there is no formal literature on how to allocate the limited Convocation Fund. There are a variety of factors the Planning Committee takes into account, including precedence, or the group's past performance and spending habits, and the specificity and feasibility of their budget. This semester one of the major cuts to affinity groups resulted in a decision that the Convocation Fund could not support a \$10,000 conference spearheaded by Brothers of Rise but co-sponsored by ARD, BSO, MSO, and others. Funding for a workshop with Ewure Osayande, scholar, political activist, and co-founder of POWER (People Organized Working to Eradicate Racism) in ARD's budget was also denied, on the grounds that he has run a workshop at Bard three times within the past five semesters.

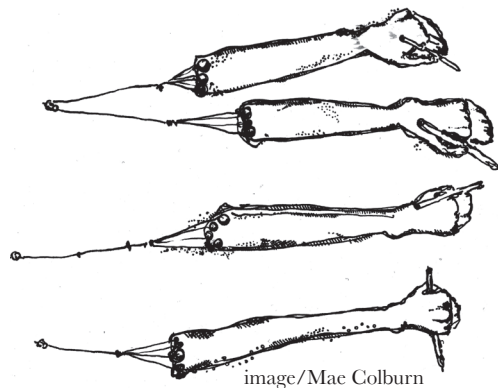
These potential cuts were not mentioned to student groups at Budget Defense, a decision Traldi, who was present though not active in decision-making, advocates was due to the inexperience of the truncated Planning Committee. "[After we were done] I had a sense politically that budgets were wrong...we were more biased in favor of new clubs than we usually would be, a little less respectful of club's records, and [we had been] reticent at Budget Defense."

Both Traldi and Sederbaum argue that changes need to be made, both to Budget Forum and the Planning Committee process, though they have slightly different ideas of what that change might be. Both see the merit in a system where a certain percentage or margin of funds are earmarked for certain purposes, with these purposes to be determined and voted on by the student body. Many schools, including nearby Vassar, have a system under which before club budgets are allocated portions of the total budget are set aside to be used as separate supplementary funds for conferences, media publishing, social/political programming events, political activism, and other special concerns. This makes the relatively impossible tasks of funding a large conference or starting a new student publication in a competitive budget environment much more feasible.

Malkani and ARD as a whole are still uncertain that funding of affinity groups should fall under the jurisdiction of student government at all, saying, "Our existence and ability to function as a group should clearly not come into question and we shouldn't have to depend on the planning committee to ensure our existence from semester to semester."

While fully supportive of ARD and other under-funded affinity groups, some students point to similar anomalies in the budget allotment process. "No one's talking about EMS having to apply for budgets alongside [a club like] KLOUDS - not only is EMS an essential but it's one of the biggest commitments Bard students make to this community," said senior Basha Smolen. Queer Straight Alliance (QSA) head emeritus Genya Shimkin also questions, "if QSA wants to have a party should it come out of affinity group funds or the Convocation Fund? It's a confusing line to draw." Other students have addressed the concern that, far from ameliorating an unhealthy and unsafe campus climate, a separate fund for affinity groups will only increase atomization of the student body.

According to Director of Student Activities Andrea Conner, "[funding for affinity groups from administration] is on the table - so is it all still coming from Student Activities Fees." A subcommittee has been founded as part of the Diversity Commission to address the problem, and both constitutional reform and a vote on increasing student activity fees are on the agenda this semester for student government. ARD and other groups will have to function this semester with budgets far below a reasonable working minimum. But with cooperation between students and administrators, we can hope for a reformed system that is democratic, transparent, sustainable and ready to be implemented by next year.



MYSTERIOUS PUBLICATION STIRS CONTROVERSY

BY ENRICO PURITA

One of the stranger sightings at Kline Commons two weeks ago, aside from the brilliant crunchberry cereal cocktail, was the sight of a double-sided newspaper titled *The Jewsnake* complete with a logo consisting of a star of David inside a skull and a lone article titled "The Virtue of Fascism." This puzzling newsletter, made public to the student body by an email from President Leon Botstein on February 20, has been treated with scrutiny, astonishment, and indifference, by the president, on-campus organizations, and students alike.

In an email last week, Botstein informed the student body that an anonymous publication, *The Jewsnake*, had appeared on campus with an off-campus email address and an offensive logo. The email also stated that two swastikas had been drawn in the bathroom of the campus center and a homophobic remark had been written on the Kline comment board.

Botstein referred to these incidents in the email stating, "The most charitable explanation would be to call these actions childish. The worst interpretation would be that these actions were perpetrated by a member or members of the community and that beneath the crassness of the gestures is a serious level of malevolence, hate, and prejudice."

In an interview with *The Observer*, Botstein stated that he had no knowledge as to whether the two incidents were related by saying that "they are related in a climate." This, of course, refers to the "climate of fear" that he talks about in his email to the student body.

The editors of *The Jewsnake*, known only as Levy Penkstein and Odo Helax,

consented to an anonymous interview via email. Due to their anonymity, however, *The Observer* will not directly quote them and readers should think critically about their responses. The editors did state that they had no knowledge of the other incidents mentioned in Botstein's email to the student body, that the publication's intent was purely satirical, that they apologize for the offensive symbol/name, and that if they continue with the publication it will be under a different name/logo.

In the interview, the President stated that the newsletter did not personally offend him. However, he did say, "I feel sorry for the person who did it. I'm embarrassed for them." He went on to state, "It's definitely not funny. You have to be as great an artist as Mel Brooks in *The Producers* to contextualize symbols in the Nazi era."

Botstein said that he had been in email correspondence with the editors and despite the fact that they told to him that the newsletter was homage to Jonathan Swift's *A Modest Proposal*, (a smart move by the editors considering Botstein's open appreciation for Swift's work,) that what he rejected most to was the anonymity. He also echoed his statements about punishment in his email by stating, "I wish them no harm; only a base for civilized criticism."

The student reaction to this incident has been mostly indifferent. Many students have responded to the newsletter and the President's email by asking the question, "What's the Jewsnake?" or "I've never heard of it." First-Year Student Austin Julian stated, "I actually didn't read the article so I have no idea." Clark Frankel, also a first-year, said, "I haven't seen the newsletter, all I've seen is the symbol." Others fell right in

line with Leon Botstein. First-Year Roland Schwartz said, "Botstein put it pretty well by basically saying 'listen, if anyone thinks this is funny, you're a fucking retard.'" He also admitted to not having read *The Jewsnake*.

The Jewish Student Organization's response was also very mild. JSO President Marissa Friemdan responded as follows: "I have nothing to say against the publication of *The Jewsnake*. I think it is entirely appropriate to have alternative, satirical publications on this campus; in fact, it should be encouraged. I was, however, repulsed by the image that was chosen as its logo, as it appears highly offensive and abrasive. I understand that publicity often needs to be inflammatory to catch attention, but I think if *The Jewsnake* wants to have some kind of a following, or appreciation, or even be allowed to display their publication on campus, it is highly encouraged for them to find a logo that is befitting of its purpose, and that is not blatantly offensive to anyone."

Botstein also wrote off the incident as rather frivolous by stating that something of this nature occurs at Bard every few years. When asked what he recommends to other Bard students seeking to send shock waves with underground newsletters, he stated, "I encourage them to do so. If they want to take the model of Swift, that's great. However, always poke fun with a sense of affection and give it the greatest literary merit as possible."

Amidst all the confusion and controversy surrounding the incident, the word "Jewsnake" and any of its possible meanings, implications, and/or references are still left up in the air.

	Student activity fee (full year)	Convocation fund (full year)	Approximate number of clubs	Undergrad	Ratio of fund money to number of clubs
Sarah Lawrence	\$200	~278,000	70	1391	3971:1
Bard	\$140	~220,000	99	1600	2222:1
Vassar	\$265	~\$600,000	123	2400	4878:1
Wesleyan	\$270	~729,000	217	2700	3359:1
Brown	\$146	~849,000	170	5821	4994:1

The accumulated Student Activities Fees, at Bard called the Convocation Fund, is not always allotted entirely to student clubs. For example, while Wesleyan's "Convocation Fund" is significantly larger than that of comparable schools, it goes towards the Wesleyan Student Association's one full-time staff member and a New York Times Readership program, in addition to several other on-campus programs and club budgets. Bard's Convocation Fund does go entirely towards funding student clubs, including the Student Association Government, EMS, the Entertainment Committee, and student publications.

All numbers obtained from student government and college-maintained websites. The approximate "convocation fund" was calculated using the undergraduate population and the required student activities fee; projected figures may be slightly high due to adjustments for students with financial aid.

next issue

meeting: 7pm tuesday, march 4th, obs office
release date: thursday, march 20th

observer@bardDOTedu

times of darkness, cheeks of red:

a round table discussion with the blushing players

BY JESSE MYERSON

Jesse Myerson: To start off, the play was universally acknowledged to have been a huge success. It was extremely clever, so congratulations on a great show. The theatrical part of it is less interesting to me for this interview, because, while it was a very inventive and imaginative theater piece, it was specifically a political theater piece, so I want to focus on its content rather than form. At the onset, we were led into this world, introduced as being a land of light to which we've come from a land of darkness. When we enter it, it's completely dark. In fact, it never gets particularly light until the very end. But the people who inhabit this land find this light so abundant. What was your inspiration for that?

Sasha Winters: That whole thing started because we had the idea of a globe with light, and we thought that might make a pretty scene.

Maxwell Cramer: We also thought touch-lights would be cool in the circus.

SW: It was late in the process of the first week of intensively creating what the play would become, but I don't actually remember the moment of "Oh!"

MC: We had one exploration in the dark that was very informative.

SW: We turned off the lights for 40 minutes in the gym. The actors weren't allowed to speak. They were only allowed to use their clown noises and language. I also had Angelina hide and pretend to be injured, and they had to discover that someone was missing and then find her. And then exist without light.

Claire Moody: And light became a really powerful and important currency.

JM: It read like you were saying that people in supposed lands of freedom actually have very little freedom, but they're willing to fight and die, under the delusion that it's actually enormous. The first time I saw it, the light board had broken that day, so there were just the touch-lights, and as people died in battle counter-combatants would extinguish their lights, which made a metaphor: that "life" and "liberty" are equivalent. Was that discussed beforehand?

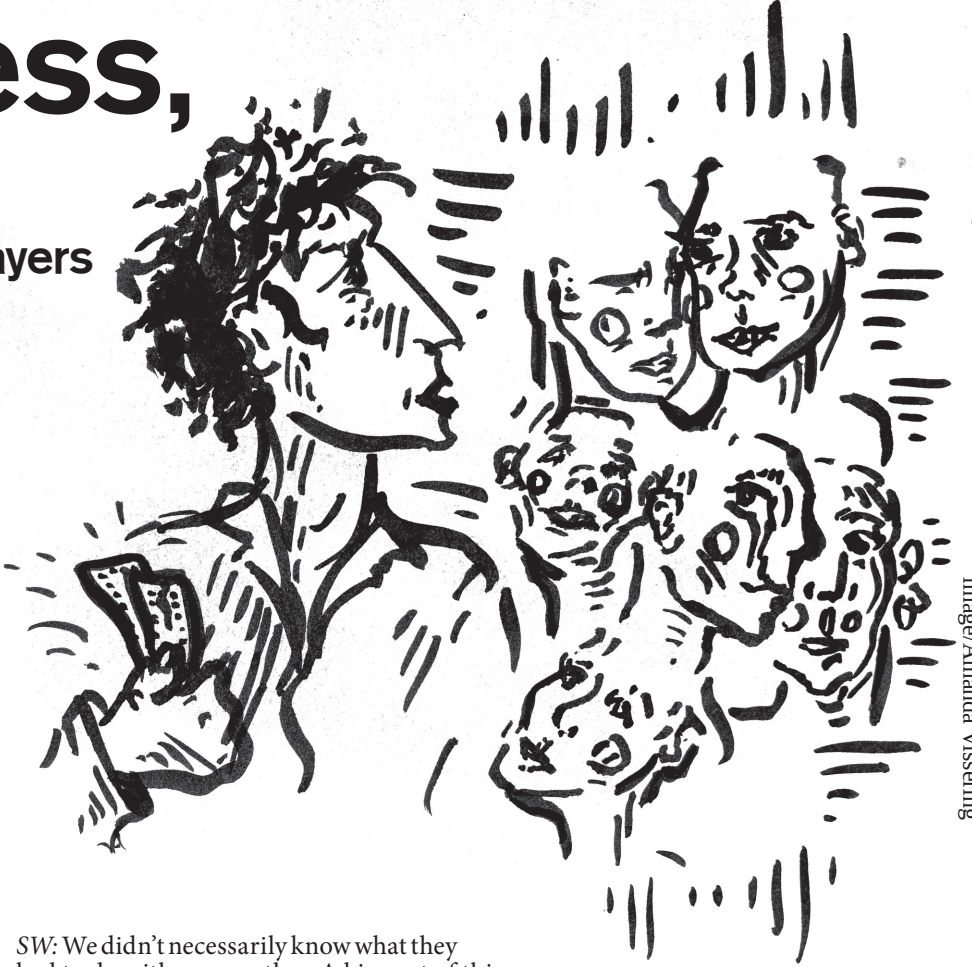
CM: I guess that light sort of became everything to everyone, and it wasn't something we needed to talk about a whole lot because we all understood it as "life" and "currency" and "knowledge" and "liberty" and all of these abstract things that you can't touch, that you think are really good and are living for.

SW: The light symbolized "love" and "friendship" too.

CM: It just came so organically from the group, and there was such a mutual understanding of it all the time. Occasionally, someone would be like "Oh, it means this too." We all understood it together, but it wasn't all verbalized.

SW: It was always going to go all dark after the war. We knew that from the beginning.

JM: The whole time I was thinking, "What does this symbolize?" and "What does that mean?" and "Where does the analogy fit together?" It clearly connected media control with wealth with food inequality with war with empty patriotism with security apparatuses, but it didn't seem to connect them in any specific relationship. Was the goal just to present these different things and have the audience wonder what they had to do with one another?



Image/Amanda Vissering

SW: We didn't necessarily know what they had to do with one another. A big part of this process was that we wanted to talk about really big things, but we didn't want to talk about them as if we knew more than we do. We wanted to talk about it as college students, who are generally apathetic. Being apathetic, mostly what we can do is question and note that something is wrong but not necessarily know why or provide an answer.

CM: Apathy was one of our biggest ideas or motivations, and part of that was that we didn't just want to point out a lot of problems and say "This is really terrible," and have the audience say "Yeah, I know that; I think that too. I feel that. I feel like I've done something good by going to see this."

CM: We kind of wanted to end on a note of "Yeah, this shit is wrong, but we actually have some agency." That's part of how we found rediscovering the light and then creating more light and then sharing it with the audience

SM: We were really interested in the audience doing something that had an immediate good effect: when you hug someone the light goes on, and the harder you hug, the more lights come on. I agree about political theater encouraging its audience to think that going to the show is an act of activism, without giving its audience tools actually to do something.

CM: And we don't exactly know how to do that, but we wanted to get closer to it.

TO PAGE FIVE

observer interviews: the remedy

BY HOMER HILL

On Saturday Feb 24th the KTLTDP (kids that like to throw dance parties) threw its first Remedy party of the semester ZOO ARE YOU, headlined by Starkey with opening sets from Bard DJ's H. Harper and Taliesin. For nearly five hours SMOG was filled wall to wall with party goers dressed in an assortment of anamorphic attire. I sat down with the KTLTDP on a quiet Monday evening after the dust had settled from Saturday and Sunday morning's dance extravaganza to discuss the origins of the Remedy parties at Bard and what an apprehensive campus socialite might expect in the future from the KTLTDP.

Observer: So can you explain how your recent budget approval (\$3500 for the semester) is being used at these parties?

Vanessa: Well my man Tally basically wrote the proposal himself, but now I know what spatial transformations means...I guess I always did, I just didn't know there was a real name for it. Basically fucking up SMOG with shit that looks cool is spatial transformation..... that's a decent part of our budget.

Tally: Yeah its about \$75 per party

O: And what exactly does that spatial transformation entail?

T: Well this last party we had a pair of ferns from the Phantom Gardener as well as a cow hide that was modified by SaraLee, a cow skull, etc.....

O: Were you at all concerned about how Bard's vegan demographic might react to the hides as part of your decoration?

T: I like the idea of vegans dancing around taxidermied animals.

V: Haha, yeah, no I mean even I got weirded out by holding that deer head and I love meat. Yeah we've spent more time and money this year on spatial transformation. The last party we threw last semester we got a bunch of props from this scrap metal

place in Kingston.

T: Yeah that party was rad we basically ended it by trashing a bunch of CRT monitors with hammers and boots.

V: About three fourth's of our budget this semester is being used to bring live acts to the parties about half of which is going to be used to host an electronic music and art conference.

O: So how does this conference fit into the KTLTDP's purpose as a club?

V: Well it's going to be a conference where there will be actual workshops on electronic music and art.

T: It all depends on what Ed Halter gets into.

O: And is there a time established for this conference?

T: The people we focus on bringing are on the bleeding edge of the global bass scene. The dates not confirmed but the conference will bring DJ/Rupture, Matt Shadetek, and others from the Dutty Artz Camp. Infrasound has always been utilized for its mystical properties, and now there's this whole culture that fetishizes frequencies below 90 hz. These are folks that are international quality people who are sympathetic to our cause and believe in the power of bass materialism.

V: Yeah, and the conference is going to be great, it's going to really give students a chance to actually engage the theory of the music and performance we're trying to bring to SMOG every other month. I think a lot of kids come to our parties not knowing exactly what they're going to be listening to and we're trying to offer a chance for people to further interact with the types of artists we bring here.

T: So yeah, the Remedy is basically based on three things. The main one is creating new spaces and re-imagining existing spaces in a way that allows people to express themselves outside of standard



Starkey DJs at SMOG

Photo/Tally Gilles-Bower

norms of embodiment.

O: Pertaining to Bard?

T: I guess there's really a greater set of social mores that I feel that we subscribe to unconsciously that have to do with how we engage the bodies of ourselves and of others. And I think it's really important to find and create spaces to questions these norms at Bard.

O: So what's the deal with this upcoming Ghislain Poirier party?

T: Ghislain Poirier is a DJ and producer from Montreal. His latest album "No Ground Under" just dropped on Ninja Tune - he dubs it global ghettech - which is this international combination of a bunch of dance genres from around the world. He has done a bunch of high

profile remixes for the likes of Dipset, Lady Sovereign, Clipse; and is an amazing DJ who is going to absolutely slaughter Manor on the 15th.

O: Anything else you wanna say about the Remedy's purpose at Bard?

T: I guess we're really just trying to get people out of their dorm rooms and houses and into a liminal space where anything can happen. It's really just so nice to be able to use SMOG for that purpose. SMOG is a great place, we really like it, it's just so nice to see student dedication resulting in tangible results, which isn't to knock any other student groups, but it's wonderful to have a place for students to get together and makes things happen with minimal administrative oversight.

train to pokipse: Flatlined. Coked Up. Famished in a Land of Plenty. Welcome to my Generation.

AN INTERVIEW WITH RAMI SHAMIR. BY SHAWN POWELL

Rami Shamir is returning to Bard this March for a reading of his novel, *Train to Pokipse*, joined by artist AVOID pi and the one and only Mother Flawless Sabrina. *Pokipse* is a powerful novel that speaks for our generation—coming of age into the 00's—into nothing. Battling with love, heartbreak and loss of innocence—*Pokipse* dives into the darkest and most vivid corners of life's experiences. On a personal note, this book has become a profound life-line for me, and a beautiful escape from the artificial and irrelevant.

Observer: Rami, your novel takes place at Bard College, in NYC and on all the tracks in between. How did Bard influence your story?

Rami Shamir: Bard can be beautiful and also an extremely difficult place to attend. Nestled in the woods with a really small community, it can feel either like prison or like a protected camp. You can either collapse under the isolation or flourish under the protection. I spent most of my time at Bard figuring myself out. In retrospect I was beautifully innocent and others around me were as well, and that beauty became destructive in the end, at least for me. I felt like I wasted all those years brooding over something that just wasn't really worth it. *Pokipse* was my attempt at rectifying those lost years and became what a lot of people are now calling the novel of a generation. That probably has to do with *Pokipse*'s original intent having grown and expanded, much as I too have grown and expanded.

O: What are we facing in this generation that is desperate for something original and different?

S: A lot of people talk about the war in Iraq or 9/11 as being the defining themes of our time. They might be of our time but not of our generation. For me the defining theme facing our generation is that we have no coherent generation. A lot of us have been brainwashed into a pure niche consumerism; reared solely for the purpose of consumption. But all of us, to varying extents, have this desire, it seems, for some sort of great change. Our generation needs its own literature so we can stop harking back to the literature of the past. I mostly think of 'On the Road' and 'Less Than Zero,' both exceptional and important—but not about us. *Pokipse* is. I got tired of people saying that my generation didn't read; that it was stupid. Against all those odds, we're actually very smart. Why should we read the dead? We aren't dead. We want to read about ourselves, at least I do; about things we

can relate to. It's important to finally have an authentic story about what's happening to kids in the generation of zeros.

O: Your unapologetic and bold writing has provoked a wide range of responses, everything from poetic to pornographic. How do you feel about these reactions? What do you hope for young readers to get from reading *Pokipse*?

S: I care to hear the responses *Pokipse* inspires but I don't care to control them. I wrote the book for our generation and across the board our generation has received it with passion, hunger and gratitude. That means I've achieved what I set out to do. Kids have started to write because of it, and those who had stopped reading have started to read again. Cameron Carpenter, a brilliant musician and a friend of mine, called me the "poet of our generation." A lot of older people, unfortunately, might not get it. The pornographic criticism has come from an older demographic. For them I might be like Bill Burroughs, Dennis Cooper or Ellis, a pornographer, which really just means I'm describing unapologetically what's going on and they find it distasteful. For a lot of people truth eventually becomes distasteful.

O: You dedicated *Pokipse* to Jack. Who's Jack?

S: Jack Doroshov, a.k.a Mother Flawless Sabrina, has the distinction of being one of the most important cultural figures of both the 20th and 21st centuries. He ran drag contests in the 60s, and made a film about them called 'The Queen,' which won the Cannes Film Festival in 1968. Jack has been a friend of and influence on all the important figures of American culture. He grew up with Lenny Bruce, was a part of the Warhol scene, and he's been a muse to so many writers, ranging from Bill Burroughs to Gore Vidal. He was my first reader and has been and remains a wonderful friend. Most importantly he has been my muse. Without him, *Pokipse* would never have been written.

O: The protagonist of *Pokipse* is a graffiti artist, an art form that is crucial yet often unappreciated. You write, "break a window and art is born, fix the broken window and art begins to die." What is the importance of transgressive art in our generation?

S: Transgressive art will be the defining art of our generation. Graffiti is so important today because it breaks down the barriers involving freedom of speech. I could once be jailed for writing *Pokipse*, but no more, (not in the U.S., at least.) But graffiti



Mother Flawless Sabrina

writers are jailed everyday and what are they really doing? If you say vandalizing, then you have to justify all the fucking ads that vandalize our culture—which we can't do anything about. How come ads and commercials are legal but graffiti isn't? It's because ads and commercials are the propaganda tools of the corporate system. Graffiti fights that system, just as illegal pamphlets used to fight other systems of censorship.

O: The artist AVOID pi is touring with you and *Pokipse*. What is the connection between his work and your writing?

S: AVOID pi is a graffiti artist who lives in NYC, and is originally from the South. I have called him one of the most important artists of our times, mainly because he's bridging the gap between graffiti and 'acceptable' art. This isn't someone who studied graffiti and became a 'graffiti artist'. He has been doing it his whole life, he's from the culture, and he's traveled around the country doing his work, always under prohibitory laws. If you walk around Williamsburg with AVOID pi, you'll see, he'll point out some name like Faroh and tell you all about him/her. He even knew MUTZ, a deep Brooklyn writer, who is in *Pokipse*, so that's really impressive.

O: Finally, what advice would you have for us Bardians, as we graduate and look to make a place for ourselves in this world?

S: I see people I went to school with and sometimes we laugh because we say we want to go back. I mean, so many of us hated it by the time we left. I probably hated it less than a lot of people because I had come to terms with certain demons. I think the distaste comes from wanting to grow up so fast—then you hit New York, or wherever, and you find that things can be quite similar. I'm from New York so I had an easy transition socially, but a lot of people don't. I'd humbly advise people to try and enjoy Bard because even when I hated it most I still loved it deeply. If you have a love-hate relationship with it, try to focus on the love, on the beauty. Take advantage of all the facilities, support, faculty, and the student body, and if it ever gets too overwhelming pick up *Pokipse* so that you might know you are not alone. You are never alone. Not any more.

Rami will present *Train to Pokipse* on Thursday, March 13th at 8PM in the Old Gym. If you're interested in purchasing a copy, please contact sp653@bard.edu.

SLC Updates:

Wanna be in the know about the recent activity of your favorite ten SLC'ers? Good.

People being met with this week:

- April Kinsler from the career development office to discuss potential improvements of the CDO
- Chas Cerulli from Chartwells to discuss the possibility of adding flexibility to the meal plan and to discuss last semesters food forum
- Erin Cannan and Jim Bruvig to discuss improving the laundry situation
- Laurie Husted from BERD to discuss long term plans for 'greening' the campus

Otherwise in the works:

- Processing surveys recently passed out by PCs to residence about housing in hopes of improving freshman roommate matching and other housing problems.

Things to look for:

- More shuttle schedules
- A new SLC logo
- SLC updates on WXBC

Interested? Angry? Confused? Email slc@bard.edu or pop in on Tuesdays at 8:30 in the campus center!

blushing players

CONTINUED FROM PAGE FOUR

MC: And I think we ended on a note that encouraged community and peace and compassion which, however small, are all steps towards "a better tomorrow."

JM: That actually turned into my biggest dilemma about it, that all the problems were solved. I'm not so sure that you've got to present a solution. To me, it seems a valuable tool in artistry or politics to articulate the problem in an inventive way that makes people think about it differently. It felt a bit unsatisfying that there was hugging and suddenly there was no power imbalance or war or security apparatus anymore.

CM: I said that one of our main motivations in conceiving of it or wanting to do it was apathy. In regards to that, seeing theater that makes you see social problems in new ways can be so overwhelming that you don't know how to do anything, or you feel powerless, and that can lead to apathy. So, while all of the problems did sort of end, it was more important to us that we felt like we were helping to empower. I think that getting bogged down is so dangerous and the source of so much cynicism. It's funny: when you talk to people, they do care a lot about these issues, but they don't understand how to help or to make time to

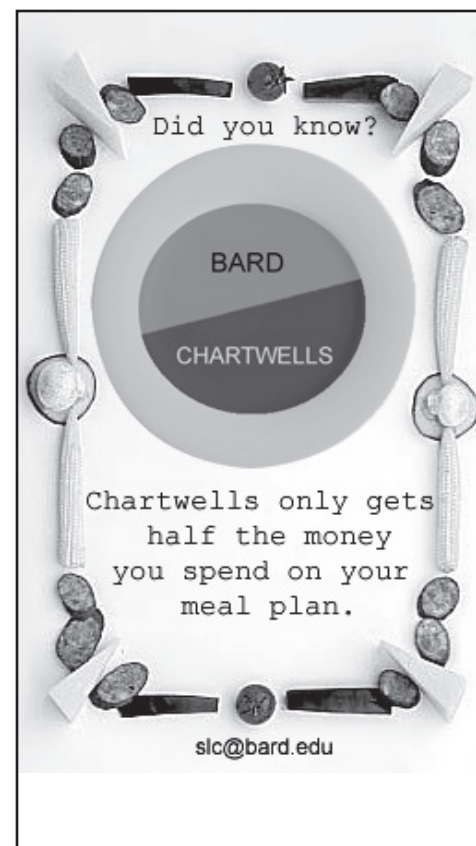
deal with them. I agree with Max that a lot of the things you can do are little every day decisions, which is hard to come to terms with. There are other things you can do and ought to, but realizing that little things do help and that you can cumulatively make a difference is so important.

SW: I agree: we couldn't have talked about everything without having some sort of solution, because it would have been overwhelming. For me, the play is not actually over when the lights come back. I think they rediscover their love for one another, and that love is a tool that can then be used to fix the other problems. That's also why it went outside. It's about taking it outside, taking the light in your hands and taking it into the world.

CM: And that's why we're not going to bow for you, you're not going to clap for us, you're just going to continue living in this new way.

JM: I wonder if you don't run the counter-risk of encouraging the audience to feel that as long as they love, then that's enough.

CM: I mean, I think that you run a risk with any kind of theater you do, and we were trying to do a different kind of theater. Maybe that's a counter-risk, but I don't really care. I didn't feel that performing



TO PAGE EIGHT



bard on

BY CAROLINE FRIEDMAN

What exactly is “Bard-on”? Is it the lonely feeling you get after a Manor party when you realize you’re going home alone? Is it what motivates the masses to initiate a very intimate mosh-pit at SMOG? Or seeing that random hottie in Kline while you are trying to digest Swedish meatballs and oddly textured lettuce? No! Bard-on is way better than that; it’s an annual event where sexual health awareness and protection are celebrated, and flow freely without abandonment.

Bard-on is an event planned annually by Peer Health to promote sexual health and knowledge. On Valentine’s Day this year the MPR was turned into a sexual health festival.

Upon walking in, you are granted a free raffle ticket. The prizes, you discover, are a vibrator, massage oils, user-friendly sexual awareness books, and a cock ring. At the next table, there are many different styles of condoms on display and ripe for the picking. Ribbed? Studded? Heated? The assortment and style of the condoms bemuses and disorients you, and you quickly grab for something that looks more like a spider-monkey than a prophylactic. But this is all for the best. Any kind of condom is protection against pregnancy and STIs, so even if it looks like Queen Latifah, it is serving the greater good. You’ve never used a dental dam before, but given the spirit of the afternoon you decide to give it a whirl. That’s what Bard-on is about: making protection (and awareness) easy and acceptable.

Next up, the ability to win more raffle tickets by answering sexual health trivia

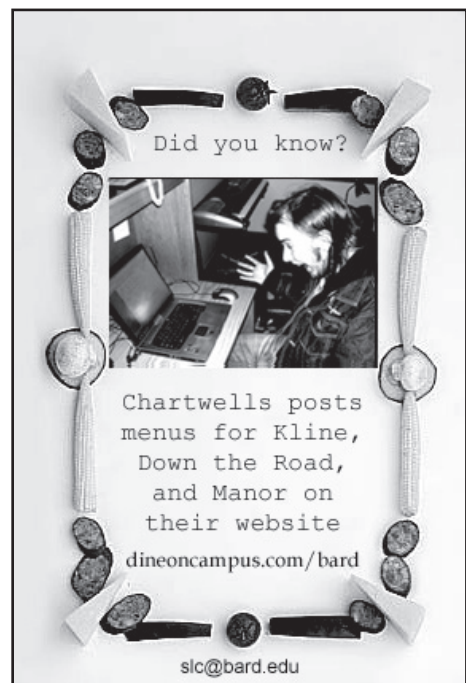
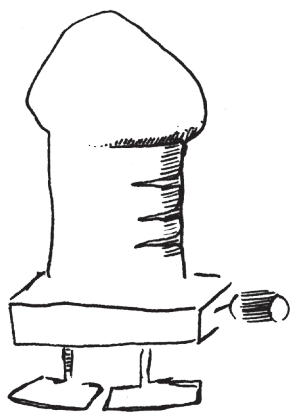
questions correctly. What people don’t realize is that by putting more and more tickets into the raffle, we are causing inflation; your tickets are losing more and more value every second. You tell your economics-major self to shut up and just go with the flow. You cannot answer where the male g-spot is (the prostate), so you get another question. You do know that you can only use water-based lubricants with latex condoms. You get a worthless ticket. You are going for the cock ring and massage oils. Good luck.

At the next table your mission is to decorate a cookie. But not just any cookie: an anatomically correct cookie. The assortment includes penis, vagina, and breast cookie shapes with chocolate and vanilla frosting, sprinkles, and whipped cream on the side. The vagina cookies seem to get eaten the fastest (they have the greatest surface area). They taste suspiciously delicious. It must be the genital magic. The next table is manned by BRAVE, the group dedicated to taking questions and giving advice on sexual harassment and sexual health issues. There, you can decorate a card for your Valentine or your favorite booty call.

At the next table Plan B, aka “the morning after pill”, is being sold at a very low rate of \$10. While it should not be used as everyday protection (some women complain of cramping with use). Plan B just became over-the-counter very recently, which was seen as a breakthrough for reproductive rights activists. However, it remains expensive. Health Services subsidized the cost of the Plan B, making it much more affordable to students.

And then, the event you’ve all been waiting for! The Sex Olympics! No, you do not need to participate in an orgiastic triathlon, but you do have to put a condom on a banana...blindfolded, pin the clitoris on the vagina, and answer many questions testing your sexual health knowledge. Teams are being eliminated left and right. You pin the clitoris somewhat above the vagina entirely. Someone else puts on the condom more quickly. However, you do know that that fish hook-looking contraption is called an IUD. You are definitely in the running for the grand prize (\$100 certificate to Hannaford), when suddenly the rug is pulled out from under you. “No,” says a Peer Health counselor, “when you wear the patch you can’t overdose on hormones, they can wear off.” Nooooo! You sadly trudge off the stage, the battleground, with a bag of free condoms, dental dams, and cookies.

Peer Health’s “Bard-on” seeks to remove stigma from sexual health awareness and inquiry. Protection should be free and accessible if one wishes for it to be widespread and effective. Bard-on has annually provided a comfortable and fun atmosphere in which to learn and ask questions. All too often, health services gets questions from people who clearly don’t know their own bodies or what to expect from them. If people weren’t too embarrassed to ask, or schools hadn’t been too scared to teach, most young people would not be needlessly contracting STIs or getting pregnant. It’s all about accessible information, and Bard-on is the most fun I’ve had in YEARS.



sex workers art show: an interview with annie oakley

BY MAE COLBURN

Valentine’s Eve, 2008

Annie Oakley is the founder and director of the Sex Workers Art Show, an erotic performance art spectacle created by people in the sex trade to challenge the myth that sex workers are, in Annie’s words, “anything short of artists, innovators and geniuses.” I asked her to elaborate on the show’s beginnings.

Photo/Lizzie Munro

Annie Oakley: It started in, like, 1997 or something, and I’d been working in the industry, getting shitty responses from people. I was getting angry and wanted to have some way to have people confront the industry. I blurted out that I would have a sex workers art show...but didn’t know what I was going to do [with it]. The first five years it was an annual show in Olympia, [Washington] but it’s become a touring show since. This is the 6th national tour.

O: It’s Valentine’s Day tomorrow. Is this a popular time of year for the show?

AO: It’s difficult to do things on V Day because Vagina Monologues has such a stronghold.

O: I see. Makes sense. Can you elaborate on what you said about the industry? How would you like people to begin seeing the sex industry?

AO: I don’t care about people seeing the industry in a different way. The industry and the people who work in it are different. There’s an argument that the sex industry must be abolished. Most of the people [in the industry] are in the position of: do I make \$5.83 an hour or \$500 a night? Criticising the sex industry does nothing for those people, it just makes them more isolated, so they don’t have rights. People who benefit from the sex industry are club owners, pimps. It doesn’t do anything to sex workers to call them unfeminist. Women don’t have access to jobs in the construction industry.

O: So what differentiates this performance from say, a club or a brothel?

AO: They’re different things. Clubs and brothels are a workplace, and this is a performance space. There are some of the same dynamics, but it’s a different context.

O: How do you select performers?

AO: There’s a call for submissions every year. About two hundred people respond. I invite people directly, people I appreciate. I like acts that are humorous and that get across a political message in a way that’s entertaining.

O: You come from a background in the sex industry yourself, don’t you?

AO: Yes. I hated working in the sex industry, in the food service industry, and in retail. I didn’t have a college education. It wasn’t like ‘I love the sex industry.’ I just, like, had that option and I wanted it to be safe and dignified.

O: Do you ever have any opposition, say from religious groups?

AO: Yes, in the state of Virginia at William and Mary. There was a shit ton. The Attorney General crafted a contract for us to sign, the ACLU got involved, and the legislature ended up calling the board of visitors into a special session. We sold out a five hundred-seat theater twice in one night. There were twenty-four student groups who signed on. It’s become a battle about who has the right to decide how student expenses are spent.

Funny, I had just come from budget forum...

O: Where do you see yourself in relation to the larger sex workers movement?

AO: Our show has had a lot to do with the movement. People network. The concept was so new [at first] that people would come up crying. In Huntsville, Alabama, a group of people who had seen [the show] decided to start their own support group. Bard is out of the way but at a lot of shows we have sex workers present. There are Bard students who are sex workers. People will come up to you and tell you they stripped their way through college. Your school has at least a handful statistically.

With that the beautiful Annie Oakley made her retreat backstage, suggesting I check out the nipple tassels at the merch table before the show got started. Hesitant to make a purchase that would compromise my virtue, I kept my money, but took the opportunity to get to know Rocco and Sarah, glib roadies sitting in the back.

O: So how did you two get involved with this...?

Rocco: I’m a personal friend. My ex-girlfriend went on tour three times.

Sarah: I’m a personal friend.

O: Do you work in the sex trade?

Rocco: Yes.

Sarah: No.

O: Who usually shows up to these shows?

Rocco: A wide range. People in the industry. Sex nerds. People who are sexy and wear sexy outfits and corsets.

Sarah: Usually a multi-generational, diverse audience.

O: And you say they pull out their sexiest garb?

Sarah: Yeah, but when I see people wearing sexy clothes to the show I think they’re missing the point. It’s fine if people came to be titillated, and to bring out their inner whore, but...

Rocco: Most people here look like hipsters.



Dirty Martini and Annie Oakley pose by the merch table post-show.

Photo/Mae Colburn

VALENTINES ALLEYCAT RACE



Alex gives Ben a heartfelt Valentine.

AN ODE TO STAR WARS

Star Wars is my favorite movie, duh
When I think of storm troopers
massac'ring
I can see how filled I am with LO---VE (2
sybaluls)
When ever I see Jabba's dirty thing.
Darth Vader is a dark dangerous fiend.
His harsh music makes my body shiver
But when LUKE is up I feel fully cleaned
And prepare my love bow and heart
quiver
When the light sabers are sheathed I get
hard
Leia has the rack of a true princess

If Han Solo asked, he'd have my V-card
And I can see why they went to incest.
I love star wars, don't you see that it's true
But you know not as much as I love you.

PERSONALS

19/M/NYC

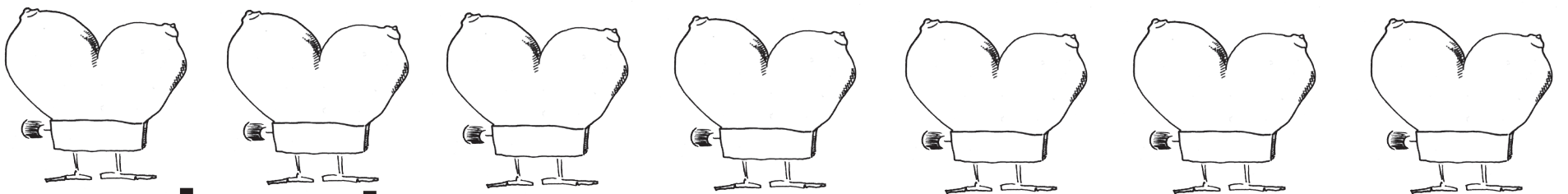
I am tall, dark, and handsome, lovable
and intelligent. I like making art but I
prefer circle pits. My ideal mate is spunky
cute girl who likes to rock the fuck out
My ideal date is to get smashed, go to a
show, get into a drunken brawl and have
you win. Then you buy me a steak dinner
to apologize.

19/M/Boston, MA

5'8" dark brown hair, significant
embarrassing facial hair, pale skin.
Looking for a confident woman over 5
ft. enjoys outdoors, relaxing, rock 'n roll,
sushi. We could go out and watch farm
animals mate (preferably horses) then
go back to my place for O.J. and a movie
starring Rock Hudson.

21/F/Ilovit

Me-Tall, deadly hot, sexy curls. Divine
(but not in drag) Ideal Mate: Tall, deadly
hot, sexy curls, Divine (can be in drag)
Ideal Date: snowball fight.



moderator

CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE

reason the current year is always the last year of Old Bard," said White. Yet despite much conflation and mythology, it cannot be denied that Bard's party-scene is continually changing.

White's descriptions of a hardly-recognizable party scene just a decade ago corroborate these changes. White co-owns a small company that hosts seminar-trainings on topics ranging from sex to parenting. For the past two years, he has delivered well-attended lectures at Bard titled, "How to be an unforgettable lover." His experience with talking to students about sex spans back to his days at Bard, where he advised freshman on sex and alcohol related issues during first year orientation. "I teach people how to be at their best," explained White.

White's first Bard party was a memorable experience. "I was blown away," said White. The party took place in a transformed Old Gym, and had an S&M theme. He described the scene: "There were people dancing in cages hung fifteen feet above the floor. It was a wild thing, especially to my virginal eyes."

Drag Race was a crucial event for Bard in White's era. He described one particular drag race with evident nostalgia. It took place his sophomore year and was hosted by a drag queen named Nick. He emceed in a female alien costume, while students paraded down the catwalk in drag. As the night wore on, partiers abandoned their costumes and proudly strutted in their birthday suits. He fondly described the miniskirt and tight top donned by his rather large and hairy friend. "[There were] forests of hair sprouting out all over. It was disgusting and beautiful," said White.

In addition to Drag Race, various sex-oriented clubs, like Ménage, which was banned twice during White's years at Bard, threw a number of large, sexualized parties. Smaller invite-only sex parties took place intermittently. There was also an Orgy club, which White had no real experience with, other than a ticket he received through campus mail informing him that he had won two sex slaves. Before he could call the number to find out whether it was a joke, his girlfriend overheard and put a stop to it.

According to White, a Ménage party that took place the year before he came to Bard made it to Rolling Stone's Top Ten Parties. Ménage was subsequently banned for several years until a short-lived revival, during which time the club threw an infamous party to which West Point cadets were invited. Apparently, this party had a "sex room" and a steady stream of ambulances out front. In addition, the manners of the West Point guests left something to be desired. White chalked it up to the rigidity of their institution. He compared the cadets with young people who drink irresponsibly at school after being kept on too short a leash at home. The combination of repressed cadets with free-spirited, Bard students was lethal. "It was like locking a bunch of wolverines in a henhouse," said White. Unsurprisingly, the club was again banned.

Although Bard has had its share of wild parties in recent years, the sheer number of sex-themed clubs and parties provide a contrast to the current party scene. White noted that there has seemed to be a historic dissonance between the mythical spirit of the school and the reality of student values

and administrative structure. "Why is it that [the myth of Old Bard] is the continual storyline of the school?" wondered White. He hypothesized that the changes President Botstein has made over his presidency (from a recent focus on sciences, to the types of students he looks for) are all part of "a brilliant and strategic design that has been in the works for years."

Botstein denied any such design, pointing out that he doesn't have the power to decide which students apply. "The only grand plan was to provide a good education," said Botstein. He added that Bard has become more popular as of late, and thus more rigorous. As for the Old Bard myth, he has not noticed any consistent shift in Bard's history. Rather, he



Two fellows dressed down for the Moderator release.

ascribed changes noticed by alum to changing cultures and generations. "Every generation of Bard students thinks it's their place," said Botstein. "It's charming."

photo/Rachel Meade

blushing players

CONTINUED FROM PAGE FIVE

it. I can't say what different people in the audience felt, but in terms of things people said on various nights afterward, they still were reflecting on the horrible things that were jarring to them. The fact that it didn't end on that note made it mean something slightly different, but all those other things were still affecting the way they were thinking about and viewing the play.

JM: Part of what was so striking about it was that there were these heinous acts of violence and misery being committed by clowns, doing slapstick things. What do you think that does to the piece?

MC: I think it's really dramatically interesting. In the initial process, there was one scene we created that didn't go in the play. It was a patriotic dance done in the good old days and then done again post-apocalypse, which went from funny to sad. I think Claire's torture at the end seemed more powerful because she was a clown, and I think that's jarring, because you weren't prepared for it.

SW: Clowns, to us, became the ideal victims, because they're so sympathetic, they're innocent and funny and something you can recognize. Their logic isn't quite there, they have very short attention spans, short term memories. They're very endearing. And to have these horrible things happening to them and then to have them start doing the horrible things was very effective. The idea is that they're using these simple things—umbrellas and balloons—that are all over the stage. Weapons are everywhere. They can decide that it's for a dance and then that it's a weapon, and then there's actual death. The idea of when it stops being make-believe

was really interesting.

CM: When we first started talking about doing this project, it was more about fairy tails. There was a lot of discussion and research into fairy tales and their relationship to America today and apathy and escapism. In America, we are living fairy tales. So, in a way, it makes sense that we're all clowns, these privileged people who live these fantastic lives, but we're perpetuating all these horrible things in that fairy tale world. We talked a lot about Cinderella being a rags-to-riches story, just like the American dream, and I think that was less focused in the end, but it influenced a lot of how it was done.

SW: Clowns are a way of doing a show with characters that are very childlike, without having to cast a lot of children. You're rooting for the clowns, who don't necessarily know right from wrong. They're learning.

CM: We're fed so many lies as the American public by the media and politicians and we think that we're learning something. We're so avid to learn in so many cases, so the clowns learning something from Zoe's television is really exciting for them, but it's also not true or right, and it leads to these horrible things.

JM: Do you think that the form of the theater, as a moving piece, as a piece without a traditional audience-stage division, refers to the content?

MC: First of all, theater is a live event, and a social/communal event, even when it's clearly separated between performer and audience. So, I think that some of the message of the play was also inherent in the nature of theater.

CM: The audience's actions having a direct effect is related to that too, because where the audience moves influences how a scene plays. Also, the fact that they have to move at all engages them in a different way with what's going on.

SW: It gives them agency. Claire and I love to talk about the action of going through the curtain in the beginning. Entering that space, the audience is complicit. That's a conscious decision: "I'm going into that other space."

JM: Even when warned against it by arguably the most sympathetic character we've met.

CM: Punch Drunk's production of Faust in London had a big inspiration for us in that way.

SW: It had to be interactive. Because we were battling apathy, it had to be about agency, about empowering the audience to choose what they saw. I also have to say that one of the most fascinating things for me was just to watch where the audience was watching. Watching the audience watch Zoe, while Chris' torture is going on blew my mind every time.

JM: Regarding people who came to the show and really liked it, what is it that you hope they will go forward with? What do you hope they'll do now?

CM: I hope that people look at things in a new way for a while, and that the new way they view it is with a coat of optimism, so that it doesn't stop at "Oh, that's fucked up." I don't know how big I see that being for any one audience member. But that's the hope.

SW: More than being empowered, I would like them to acknowledge the power that they already have and have always had. We have a tendency to pretend that we have less power that we do, when the fact is we have enormous amount of control. If we all just exercised that a little bit, then things would change. In fact, that's the only way things will change. I think it's important to know that we already have it. You don't have to do anything to get it. You already have it. It's inherent in you. It's that you, as a person, have agency, and what you do

affects your life and affects other peoples lives. Just see yourself in relation to other people and to the country and the world and the universe.

MC: I feel like, while I don't know what's right and wrong, or what I want, or if I believe in morals, I want people to share, breathe and smile. I feel like attitude is so important in life. And to feel secure and loved. Those things are a good basis from which to exist.

CM: Something I want to share, that wasn't necessarily part of the play, but it's something I learned from a lot of the things that contributed to making the play, was related to the potential that everybody has. One human can do such amazing things. Like the Maly Theater Company workshop we went to—it was amazing what those people did. Or like bread and puppet—it was amazing how much work we did every day.

MC: Or like watching Jim Carrey.
CM: It's just incredible the potential we all have.

SW: People are awesome.

CM: And it's not unique to any of those people, or to any of us; it's unique to every single human being. And we all have different limitations and handicaps in different ways, but it's insane that we have all this power and potential and exercise so little of it. I guess I want to try to exercise more and to help other people to feel like they can, too.

MC: Yeah, to realize the joy of your voice and body being alive, that's a good thing.

JM: In deference to the theme of the issue, can you say something about sex?

SW: You want to know how clowns have sex? Okay, imagine our cheeks are painted (rubs cheeks with Claire). And when you get pregnant, you get another dot on your cheek.

CM: Also, when clowns get STDs, their cheeks get smeared. They have to put saran wrap on their faces.

MC: The disease is called "the Oogily-Boogilies."

CM: Also elbow rubbing and butt rubbing are forms of intense foreplay. So be safe, clowns of the world.

EXPRESSIONS OF FAITH



Articles in this series will examine religion on campus – where it exists, where it is absent, and above all, how experiences and conceptions vary from student to student.

being jewish at bard

BY SARAH LEON

In mainstream America, practicing a religion is totally mainstream, while acting on an alternative sexual preference remains comparatively rare and frequently closeted. So naturally at Bard, the exact opposite is true. People here are so broad-minded in terms of "lifestyle choices" that it almost makes more sense to come out as heterosexual. Thus, I announce that I'm a Jew: a not-completely-secular, not-decidedly-atheist and denigrating of organized religion at large, Jew.

A Jew can be many things, and the label is largely interpretive in scope. Some people think it's an ethnicity thing, in which case I'm "7/8ths Jewish". Alternatively, I'm a Jew because my mother is Jewish. I'd like to extend

the branch to anyone whose father is Jewish even if their mother is not as well, because the more Jews, the merrier. Of course, the Jew-count in the New York metropolitan area is second only to Israel's, so chances are high that at least one of your Bard friends is one. Hell, there's a decent chance that you're one. Unfortunately we Jews are not encouraged to seek converts – Judaism has to choose you. Either you're born into it or you make it your own through a pretty extensive conversion process. Luckily, since individualism is the American way, I happily pick over my given religion like a buffet, heaping large portions of Nostalgic Childhood Tradition Chorizo and Cultural Identification Casserole onto my plate while ignoring the God Gravy.

So turns out I don't keep kosher (oops) and remain agnostic, but if someone asks me that elusive question of "What are you?"

(Inexplicably tan?), the answer is almost always "I'm Jewish". This particular identity encompasses my family, my spirituality, my intellectual curiosity. It's the reason I laugh at the Producers and Curb Your Enthusiasm. It means I have Jew-dar – you know, talking to new people and within minutes figuring out if they are Jewish or not. It's exactly like gay-dar and serves the same minority-solidarity function, and you (or your "friend") should try honing

yours sometime if you don't already. We are the Tribe, after all, and the sooner we all gather together at our Middle Eastern home base, the better to enact our plans of worldwide monetary denomination. Kidding! There is no conspiracy theory.

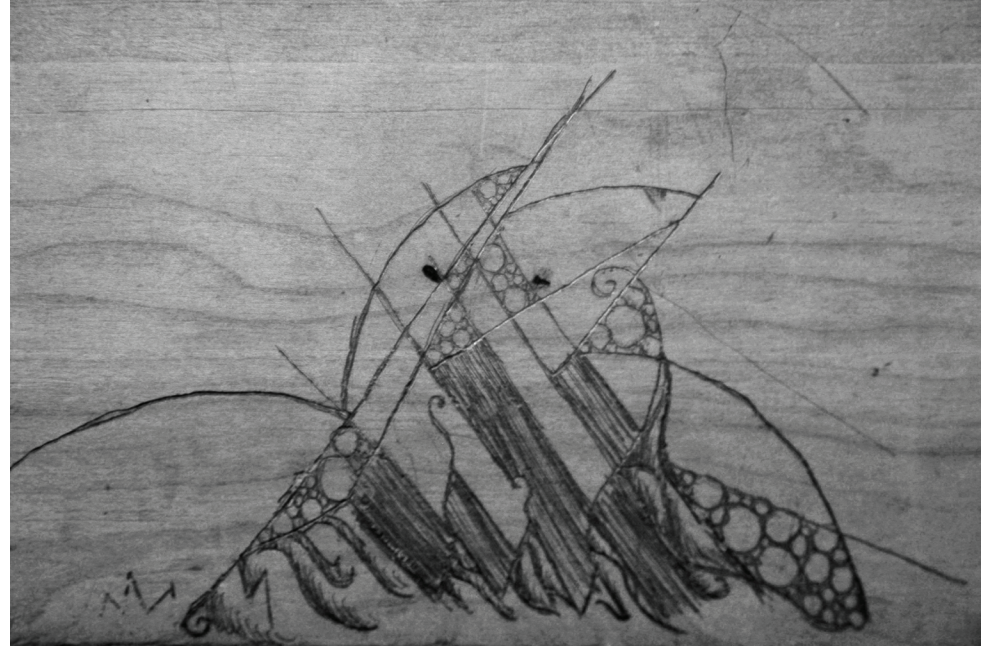
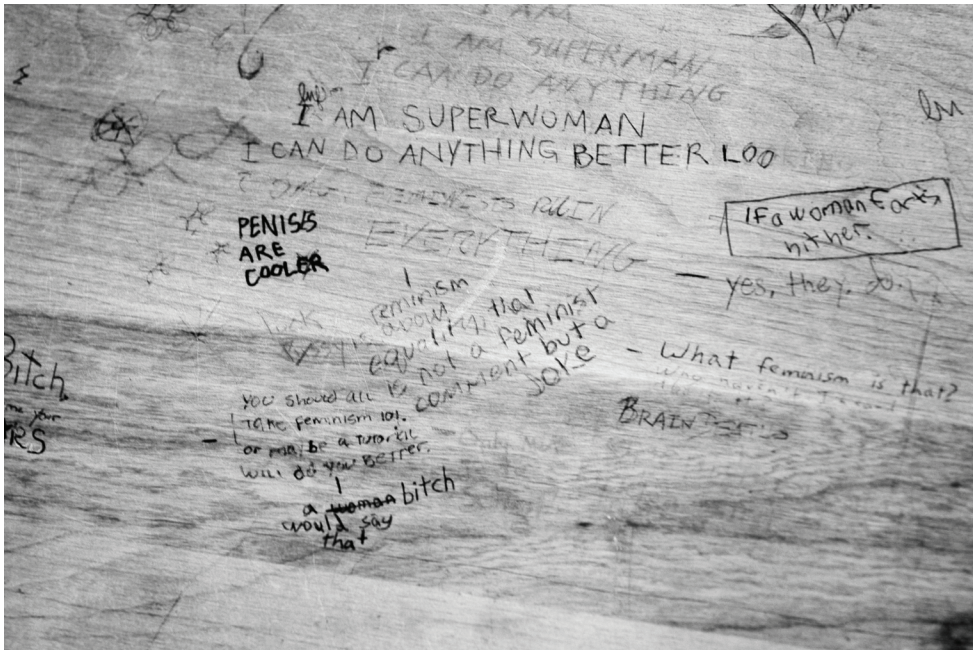
And if there is one, perhaps someone can let me know because I might want in.

No doubt, Judaism's been good to me overall. I'm proud to be a "member", among both Jewish and non-Jewish friends. And after years of historical adversity and conquering weird minority odds, I'm certainly not about to give it up. No, I'll remain neck-deep in the tasty brew that is Jew, contemplating tikun olam and tolerance, eating large Passover dinners at my aunt's house, and celebrating Shabbat when I remember to. Shabbat, by the way, is essentially the "Glen Day" described in the Observer several weeks ago. It's all about unplugging your electronics to unwind, relax, and spend physical time with people you care about. Yes, even that kind of physical time - it's considered a mitzvah to have sex on Shabbat. Somewhere in central Jersey, my Rabbi is kvelling.

It's considered a mitzvah to have sex on Shabbat.



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PUBLIC EXPRESSION: GRAFFITI IN OLIN
BY BECCA ROM-FRANK

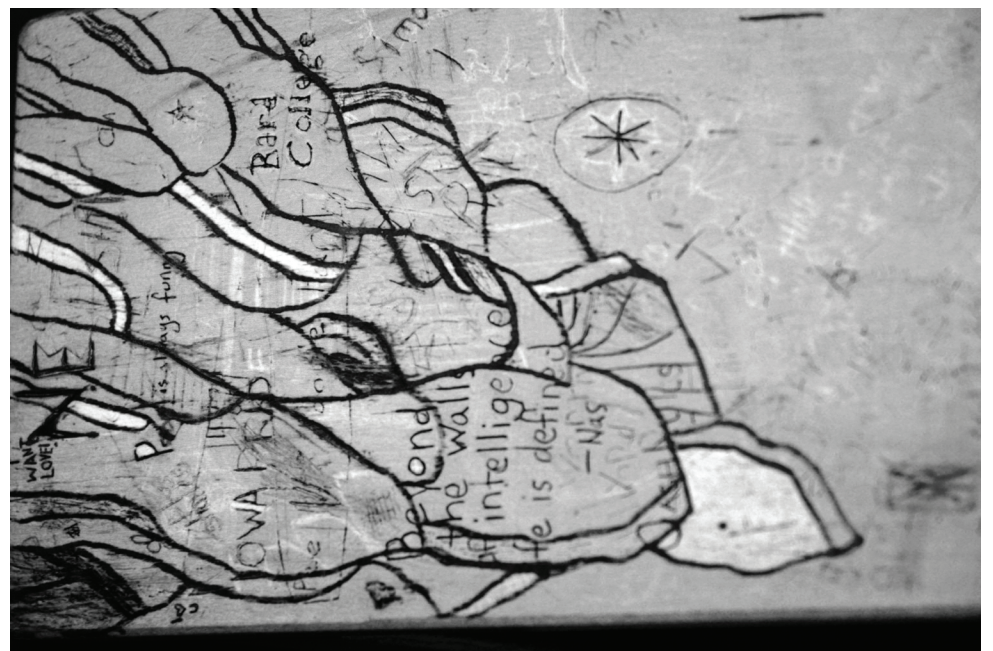
Switchboard

People Soft
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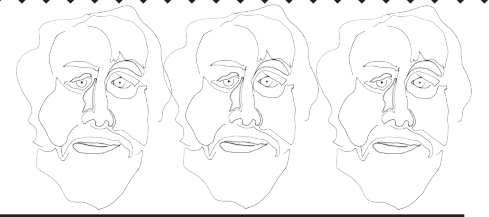
During all classes conducted in Olin, there exists a subliminal discussion. The discourse takes place on the arms of chairs, on the surfaces and legs of tables. Who has never, while sitting in class, let a restless pen or eye drift downwards to the arm of their chair? From detailed drawings to aimless scribbles; from philosophical declarations to a superfluity of Bright Eyes lyrics, Olin graffiti appears in countless forms. Senior Rachel Schragis conceived an art project around this notion. In one Olin classroom, she filled the entirety of twelve chairs' arms with drawings and poetry. Since the completion of the project, the chairs have been dispersed throughout Olin as Aramark workers rearrange the furniture. Next time you have a class in Olin, cast an eye down to your armchair.

It was a little project I did last spring for After the Monument, a class about public sculpture. Our assignment was to make something permanent. I've always liked how people draw on the arms of chairs in Olin, sometimes rather blatantly, in class. It's basically an acceptable act in that one place on campus—no one gets in trouble, it doesn't get sanded off. I especially like when people complete one another's drawings. In a way, drawing on the chairs in Olin is actually a big collaborative public art project that the school unofficially sanctions. I really like the whole phenomenon of people drawing on the chairs, because it makes the building less cold and impersonal, it's one of the only signs of Bard students in the building. Some of it is dumb, but it's totally harmless graffiti.

-Rachel Schragis



dialouges on zizek



the repression of the dialectic: a response to ben bliumis, or defending zizek against his kantian inter- locutors

BY ZOLTAN GLÜCK

As Ben Blümis pointed out in a recent article in the Bard Observer, these days 'the name Slavoj Žižek is on everybody's lips'. But one of the real dangers of being on peoples lips, is evidently the close proximity of the lips to the teeth, and thereby the very real threat of mastication. Žižek has become ubiquitous, and with his rising popularity has come the pop-versions of his thoughts, its commodification into the sound-bites, and all the rest of the fanfare of stardom – which, undeniably Žižek himself encourages with his films and eccentric lectures. But one might excuse all of these ornate productions, in light of the changing contexts of intellectual work: after all what is wrong with getting the basic message out to wider audiences. We live in an age of mass medias, and Žižek is just one more PR-savvy mediator. Knowing how to package and distribute one's message, is about trying simplify the message without altering its essential kernel too severely. One might be less inclined to excuse a different form of mastication: that of a philosophical heist which strips a thought of components which are essential to its identity, then repackages the mutilated thought under the same name and sells it, in place of the original. There are two words conspicuously missing from Ben Blümis' article about Žižek: Marxism and Dialectic.

A discourse is that which defines the limits of what it is possible to say. Within the framework of Kantian discourse the words 'Marxism' and 'Dialectic' are the abject, they are the unspeakable. Even in Kant's own Critique of Pure Reason the Second large division of the text, 'The Transcendental Dialectic,' is a study in abjection: a study in the limits of pure reason, and the limits of what 'we' can know. Therein it is precisely Dialectical thinking as such which is shunted as Kant goes through all of the reasons that thinking dialectically will lead you to paralogisms and other such monsters with ugly names. Dialectically thinking, for Kant, takes you beyond the limits of what you can know with certainty, and thus it does not belong in the realm of Pure Reason.

The fundamental reason that a Kantian cannot understand Marxism is that Kantian thinking rejects dialectical thinking. To put this more radically, the dialectical thinking of Hegel and Marx destabilizes the edifice of Kantian philosophy. And the dialectical Materialist Method is at the heart of all of Marxist thinking. Ladies and gentlemen, let (the obvious) be said for the first time within the pages of the Observer: Žižek is a Marxist. Moreover he is a Marxist still firmly invested in the project of Dialectical Materialism.

There is double metonymy of obfuscation at work here: Firstly, in the use of the word anthropological, Ben Blümis writes about "the anthropological and psychoanalytic foundations of Žižek's oeuvre..." – in this instance it is the word 'anthropological' that has been substituted for and usurps the place of 'Marxist'. Žižek is self-professedly a 'Lacanian-Marxist'. Secondly the phrase 'radical materialism' has eclipsed the place of 'Dialectical Materialism'. Certainly Žižek, might, at times, identify himself as a 'Radical Materialist', but anyone who has read his work and understands the (Marxist) tradition in which he is writing cannot fail to recognize that this 'radical' is in essence a radicalization of the dialectic. His materialism is certainly not, as Blümis writes: "a political move to unload a baggage that 'idealism' holds without fundamentally disavowing it." Žižek is not as closet 'Kantian' afraid to espouse the term because he "wishes to escape associations with the prevalent misconception" of Kantianism.

There is a reason for this metonymic mastication of Žižek's Marxism. The Kantian paradigm from which the author writes cannot cognitively process dialectic

tical materialism. The Kantians hear the word 'materialism' and think back to old 17th and 18th century British Empiricist definition of the word they cannot see the difference between the it and the radical materialism of the Marxist Dialectic. In brief the materialism of the Empiricists posited a real 'material substrate' to the physical world which must stand outside and give rise to our sense-perceptions; their questions were fundamentally epistemological in nature, and were articulated from the standpoint of the fixed subject for whom the world of objects was external and knowable through empirical method. In the Marxist's dialectical materialism on the other hand, 'material' refers to the socio-economic structures and their history as it unfolds dialectically. The subject in the dialectic is no longer the immovable rationalist subject founded on an axiom (cogito ergo sum) nor is it the immovable transcendental subject whose unity is generated by some magical synthesis of the noumenal realm; –rather, dialectical thinking problematizes the relation

Ladies and gentlemen,
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between subject and object by showing the radical historical contingency of subject-formation, and asking what are the Historical conditions of possibility for philosophy itself. This is the Hegelian turn which neo-Kantians disavow. Marx takes this turn, and the basic critique of classical bourgeois (and Kantian) philosophy is that it refuses to acknowledge the material socio-economic conditions which make its own philosophizing possible (think empire, colonialism, slavery – all of these are outside of the realm of Pure Reason for Kant and therefore cannot be known with any certainty). It is easy to see why neo-Kantianism disavows this turn.

Disavowal is a form of repression. A refusal to recognize something traumatic, a stubborn refusal to let go of an illusion which has already unraveled. Hence we find in Blümis' text another conspicuous omission. What is wrong with this sentence? "both Žižek and Lacan rely heavily on the German Idealists e.g. Emmanuel Kant." Period. I find it interesting that the sentence expresses the plural form "idealists" (with an 's') suggesting that it acknowledges that there are many (a whole tradition) of German Idealists (of whom Kant was the first)—nonetheless the traumatic disavowal prevents their names from being uttered ("Fichte, Schelling, Hegel," say it!). This is the typical behavior of trauma, which represses what it cannot integrate while simultaneously hinting that on another level the trauma had been recognized; the 's' is a symptom of this recognition. This splitting into two, this simultaneous repression on one level and recognition on another, is a form of what psychoanalysis calls schizophrenia. But perhaps this is the only viable mode of existence for neo-Kantianism today: a schizophrenic mode. Hence repression of the rest of the history of philosophy after Kant articulates itself in Blümis' text as a repression of the words 'Dialectic' and 'Marxism'.

This domestication of Žižek, and the mastication of his thought cannot be tolerated. We must combat the reified consciousness of bourgeois philosophy where it lies in wait, prowling ready to masticate again. Free Žižek! Žižekians of the world unite!

thanks for the diagnosis, doc!

BY BEN BLIUMUS

Yes, Žižekians of the world, unite... For as Russel so astutely points out, Žižek writes, "One is tempted to... affirm that... everything... up to the survival of humanity in the ecological crisis, hangs on the answer to this related question: is it possible today, apropos of the postmodern age of new sophists, to repeat mutatis mutandis the Kantian gesture?"—and I for one agree.

Žižek is not pro-capitalism, pro-industry, or any such thing—Russel is correct. And so, as to this sensationalist smoke about my thinking being 'bourgeois', as Zoltan Gluck accuses... now that's just laughable (albeit very cute). ::pat pat:: But even more to the point, why should I be discussing Marx, sociology, and the subtle positions that Žižek takes on those topics, in an article that was strictly about Darwinian Evolution? Beats me. I guess there's more to the commonplace that "readers write the article" than I'd thought. In any case, Gluck does a good job of botching Kant and Žižek. So lets take a look.

While Gluck has written a witty response to my article, I warn the audience against confusing a sharp tongue with a clear mind. Sophistry, though a skillful art, is a dangerous one against which Žižek warns (Russel's quote): "it's a slippery slope from sophistry to fascism." And if fascism does not belong anywhere, it is within academia. So instead of an ad hominem response, I have decided to allow Slavoj Žižek and Immanuel Kant to speak for themselves. But first...

Sound the bells! Zoltan Gluck has forgiven Žižek for "his ornate productions" in consideration of his "getting the basic message out to wider audiences." However, Gluck's depiction of Žižek's writing as diluted and basic is brashly reductionist, as is evidenced by those who find profundity and subtlety in Žižek's words. Gluck concludes this thought, reflecting that, "We live in an age of mass medias, and Žižek is just one more PR-savvy mediator." It almost sounds as if Gluck is saying something here, but while such empty reductionism may be en vogue with a few undergraduate basement cliques, what do these words actually mean?—that Žižek has a message and that he intends to spread it? Well, duh... Gluck makes an 'argument' that is conspicuously devoid of textual justification. So be it, lets provide readers with some text so that they may decide for themselves.

Zoltan Gluck writes: "There are two words conspicuously missing from Ben Blümis' article about Žižek: Marxism and Dialectic." First let it be noted, again, that this was not an article about Žižek's relation to Marx but rather Žižek's implications for evolutionary theory. But with that said, lets not confuse Zoltan for Žižek. First, it should be noted that Žižek's Marxism is not classical Marxism. It is not dialectical materialism but, emphatically, "radical materialism." Zoltan is wrong to say that "he is a Marxist still firmly invested in the project of Dialectical Materialism."—An idea mired in the backwaters of antiquated thought and which ignores Žižek's own distinction.

Žižek's brand of dialectical reflection is Kantian and Hegelian because he reads Hegel to be a further articulation of Kant (rather than a historicist's evolution from Kant). Žižek's reading of Hegel is therefore not standard, and Zoltan Gluck's insistence that I admit that Žižek is influenced by the likes of Hegel is not problematic; he is. But Hegel is the truest Kantian. Slavoj Žižek writes that Hegel's articulation of Kant is, "in Kant more than Kant, that is to say, more than the common perception of Kant."

Gluck writes: "Within the framework of Kantian discourse the words 'Marxism' and 'Dialectic' are the abject." 'Dialectic' is very important within Kantian discourse. However, 'marxism' is not a word within Kantian discourse: Kant does not and could not have used the word 'marxism' because he lived before Marx wrote. And as for the 'abject', again, Kant never used it. The 'abject' was invented by Julia Kristeva in the 20th century, and is not a

meaningful part of most Kantian discourse today (especially the discourse that is relevant here). Defining Kantian dialectic as the abject is a far cry from Kant's own definition, so don't think that Zoltan is speaking for Kant (or Žižek's reading of Kant) here.

Gluck writes that it is, "dialectical thinking as such which is shunted as Kant goes through all of the reasons that thinking dialectically will lead you to paralogisms and other such monsters with ugly names." Actually, paralogisms are not monsters for Kant but are, rather, something that the understanding must recognize in order to escape dogmatism. In order to deflate Zoltan's balloon as he states that "The fundamental reason that a Kantian cannot understand Marxism is that Kantian thinking rejects dialectical thinking," we look to Kant. Kant writes that dialectical thinking characterizes ALL thought: "[It is] an entirely natural antithetic... into which reason of itself quite unavoidably falls. It certainly guards reason from the slumber of fictitious conviction such as is generated by a purely one-sided illusion... [and from] dogmatically committing itself to certain assertions, and refusing to grant a fair hearing to the arguments for the counter-position.(385, CPR)" Let us prey for Senior Gluck, that he may free his mind from such a slumber with regard to Kant (or at least that he read the texts more closely).---sizzle...

Zoltan writes, "In the use of the word anthropological, Ben Blümis writes about 'the anthropological and psychoanalytic foundations of Žižek's oeuvre...' – in this instance it is the word 'anthropological' that has been substituted for and usurps the place of 'Marxist'."

Now, Zoltan, if you read this, one word of advice: not everything is about Marxism... Marxism forms a minor part of Žižek's work, which is concerned far more with Kant, Hegel and Lacan. He also likes to write about anthropology, citing Levi-Strauss, etc., and, for an article about evolution, I spoke of Žižek's anthropological foundations because I meant his anthropological foundations.

Karl Marx's sentiment is noble, and his socio-economic analyses are valuable, but his philosophy is non-existent. Not even Žižek takes Marx, the supposed up-turner of the philosophers-past, very seriously. Slavoj Žižek writes that, "what Marx boxes with is ultimately the idealistic shadow of his own ontological premises. In short, 'Hegel as absolute idealist' is a displacement of Marx's own disavowed ontology. Is not the symptom of this displacement, and thereby of the inherent impossibility of the Marxian project, the radically ambiguous

Kant's philosophy does not and has never justified colonialism, racism, or any such disgusting misappropriation.

character of Marx's reference to Hegel? (27, Tarrying with the Negative)"

Finally, one last point that is importantly made: contrary to Gluck's excited imagination, Kant's philosophy does not and has never justified colonialism, racism, or any such disgusting misappropriation. Zoltan asks us to "think empire, colonialism, and slavery," apropos of Kant, explaining that, "The Kantians hear the word 'materialism' and think back to old 17th and 18th century British Empiricist definition of the word." This is in some ways true; but Gluck seems to miss the point with regard to the thinking of the 'British Empiricist' tradition. Although Gluck does not tell us what he means by the 'British Empiricist' tradition, he seems to conflate it with Imperialism—but don't confuse empiricism with imperialism.

Somehow confusing the two, Gluck

TO PAGE ELEVEN

looking up at the sky

WITH AARON AHLSTROM

Clouds speak to us. Their distinct and fascinating patterns are weather's language. When read properly, they can endow a common skywatcher with the predictive power of a seasoned meteorologist. When certain cloud formations grace the sky, you don't need elaborate models or Doppler radar images to know what weather to expect. Looking up at the sky often allows one to look forward into the future. One of the main tenets of The Manifesto of the Cloud Appreciation Society pronounces that "We think that clouds are nature's poetry." Thus, every cloud has something to say. Their eradicable meanings cannot be interpreted away in a postmodern frenzy. Though we may contemplate and analyze the clouds' literary stylings, we can never gain a critical distance from their watery endings that douse Bard College in snow and rain. Just as our ability to read street signs allows us to function in society, cloud literacy enables us to live in the world.

One of the more profound and significant lines the sky can write is the altocumulus cloud. According to The Cloudspotter's Guide, "Altocumulus are mid-level layers or patches of cloudlets, in the shape of rounded clumps, rolls, almonds or lenses." Sometimes they take

on the appearance of fish scales, while other times they resemble long furrows lining plowed fields. Whatever image they call into your mind, Altocumulus often speak in ominous undertones. When you witness a growing expanse of them, beware since "larger areas of altocumulus usually accompany the more important moving weather systems and the flow of significant moisture over hundreds of miles."

Those apparently benign and cute conglomerations of cloudlets can foreshadow snowstorms, deluges, and high winds. Behind their carefully constructed sentences lie impending discomforts. Here, though, one must employ some close reading. The presence of altocumulus doesn't necessarily denote coming precipitation. Letters only convey meaning when placed next to other letters and a word's import often depends on its neighbor. Context clues are necessary tools of both the poet and the cloudspotter.

When altocumulus is the only cloud type keeping the sky from complete blue, terrible weather most likely isn't crouching behind the Catskills. Only when other clouds crowd above and below Altocumulus should you begin to worry. Take caution if you see them arrive, reside,



and expand over the course of the day and notice that around nightfall a void has replaced the starry sky. Altocumulus can carry water from Canada, the Gulf of Mexico, and the Pacific. When a gang of them reaches Bard, they're probably pretty eager to relieve their burden.

Though they can't speak English, clouds still get their message across to us. Whether we want to hear them or not, clouds have the potential to alter our environment and our lifestyle. Altocumulus, though not always coherent, often tell a story of disturbed air and water which may conclude with snow. Once you learn to read the sky, you can prepare yourself for the onslaught of moisture heading towards campus.

a greener bard



BY LAUREN DUNN

There are over four thousand colleges and universities in the United States. Of these institutions, four hundred participate in Recyclemania, and Bard College happens to be one of them. Until early April virtually all the waste and recycled goods generated by the college will be measured and compared to all the other schools choosing to take part in this friendly competition. But while this competition encourages waste reduction, it characterizes itself as geared towards schools that already have admirable recycling programs in place. The website even goes so far as to say "the universities participating in this competition boast some of the highest recycling and waste diversion rates in the country." Certainly, any form of recycling and waste reduction has countless benefits for the community in which it is taking place as well as the environment at large. Encouraging recycling is something I totally stand behind; but I take issue with Recyclemania's focus on schools that (for the most part) are already aware of what they should be doing and how to do it.

One could argue that perhaps the campuses involved in Recyclemania are more drawn to the competition because of their pre-existing programs and groups on campus; but with the current "green revolution." Taking place everywhere from the classroom to the consumer industry that defense doesn't hold up very well. While a scant ten percent of U.S. colleges and universities participate in Recyclemania, it's not a stretch to say that more than that have some sort of environmentally-focused group on campus. Perhaps the groups on campuses uninvolved in the competition are not as organized or popular as at other schools. Is it not even worth entering the competition if you know your school's going to come in close to last before anything has even begun? It may be daunting for a small group of college students to try and get their school to rethink their entire waste management strategy, which is what some of these schools might need.

It seems a significant restructuring would be in the best interest of both the competition and the competitors. What exactly would have to happen? There's no easy answer. A good beginning might be convincing companies to sponsor Recyclemania participants, which could provide some much needed money to schools which are trying to improve or create recycling programs. Perhaps veteran participants could be partnered with first-timers for advice or support. More media attention would almost certainly draw positive media attention. And finally, why limit the competition to colleges? Kids LOVE science. They eat that stuff for breakfast. Students from grade schools up through high schools might like to get involved if they had the chance. If the ultimate goal is reducing as much waste as possible, then the competition should really consider drawing from a bigger pool.

zizek as marxist

BY RUSSELL LIFSON

Slavoj Zizek can be described, in the words of Ben Blumis, as a "radical materialist." However, the proper understanding of this title lays in that Zizek is radical only in so far as he is a materialist from the Marxist tradition. I am writing this article after noticing that Ben didn't mention the words "Marx" or "Marxist" in describing Zizek's academic flavor, to draw attention to the most radical aspects of Zizek's thought.

Much of Zizek's work is highly informed by and bound up with Kantian Idealism, but it is developed from a Marxist political perspective. Zizek engages with Kantian Idealism and its philosophical gesturing in the introduction to Tarrying with the Negative:

"Plato accepts from the sophists their logic of discursive argumentation, but uses it to affirm his commitment to Truth; Kant accepts the breakdown of the traditional metaphysics, but uses it to perform his transcendental turn; along the same lines, Lacan accepts the 'deconstructionist' motif of radical contingency, but turns this motif against itself, using it to assert his commitment to Truth as contingent. ... is it possible today, apropos of the postmodern age of the new sophists, to repeat mutatis mutandis the Kantian gesture?"

Zizek's role is to illustrate the many forms of this maneuver through as many examples as he can, whether they be from pop culture, politics, history, film, or philosophy. His position is that the only way to properly analyze the movements of a political regime, a narrative structure, or a historical event is as one would analyze the neurotic symptoms of a patient of psychoanalysis. But why bother with this analysis? One of Zizek's observations is that in today's Western social and political climate, it is easier to cognize the end of civilization or of the world, a la theological eschatology, ecological collapse, disaster movies, or even the interesting recent fad of programs dealing with an Earth without humans, than it is to even imagine advancing beyond global capitalism as a social order. This is where the Marxist element of Zizek's thought is crucial, and must be recognized. We must think of Zizek's work as firmly planted in the ideological landscape of contemporary capitalism, but what makes Zizek's work so provocative and radical is that it confronts today's

dominating (class) ideology with its own 'obscene superego supplement', in an attempt to shift the coordinates of discourse towards a situation where radical political action can at least become feasible. Zizek allows Lacanian psychoanalysis do the work of uncovering what our ideological premises are, and in presenting these new truths to us, helps us realize where we are coming from, and put us in a position to alter our ideological starting coordinates.

Why should any of this matter to us, students at a liberal arts college, each with our own specific field of study? It is precisely the issues that students like us and institutions like ours obsess over, such as human rights, animal rights, anti-racism, gender studies, queer studies, "sustainable" energy, etc. that Zizek condemns as non-radical, niche pseudo-political sectors that cannot be universalized in their logic, and ultimately take global capitalism for granted. The students in your classes who always draw attention to these issues, to-

Our professors who preach radical politics make sure not to go too far into revolutionary territory, at risk of losing their tenured positions that enable them to make such radical claims

wards the particular suffering of refugees and the intricate tensions of a conflict that make intervention (un)necessary, are students who want "revolution without revolution", who want social justice and equity without (being able to begin) dreaming of offering the blood and necessary to acquire these things. And our professors who preach radical politics make sure not to go too far into revolutionary territory, at risk of losing their tenured positions that enable them to make such radical claims - they too count on global capitalism always-already being there for them.

While Zizek maintains that this academic environment is one of merely 'keeping up appearances' in the thoroughly Kantian sense, I urge you as a reader to never be distracted from the ideological position that a speaker must occupy. Confronting the ideology of the dominant class is the main radical component in Zizek's work, and I would hate to see that message be lost on an audience that could surely use a great deal more radicalization.

in defense of kant

CONTINUED FROM PAGE TEN

continues that Kant, "cannot see the difference between it (materialism) and the *radical* materialism of the Marxist Dialectic." It is difficult to trace this line of thinking because it is profoundly deformed, but if Gluck understood what the British Empiricist tradition was then he would see that in fundamental ways Marx himself implicitly turns back towards it as he turns away from 'Hegel and Kant': Marx's turn back towards 'the ground': a turning back towards 'the scientific and the material'. If this sounds odd, that's because it is, and that is why Zizek points out that Marx does not seem to understand Hegel or Kant and thus boxes with shadows (above). Suffice it to say, for purposes of clarification, that Kant's (and Zizek's) rage against classical materialism is precisely for the purpose of freeing the mind from ossified ideas like "racism", etc. Kant writes that when we, "secure our thinking self against the danger of materialism... so completely are we freed. (354, CPR)" He means it.

Therefore, when Zoltan asks us to "think empire, colonialism, slavery," apropos of Kant, the only way that this could be rendered meaningful is if he were asking us to challenge those ideas and, perhaps, to free ourselves from them. But this is not, unfortunately, what Zoltan asks as he goes on to state that we should reflect upon them because they are "outside the realm of Pure Reason for Kant and therefore cannot be known with any certainty."—A final display of good sounding sophistry papering over an utterly misguided rationale. Empirical phenomena, as exemplified by colonialist agents, are not outside of the realm of what is knowable for Kant: phenomena=knowable, noumena=unknowable. But hey, noumena is the subject matter of the next installment of this Zizek inspired series: "Speculative Philosophy and Animal Mind".

It is doubly ironic that Gluck calls my article a "philosophical heist" as his reductionism, confusion, and misrepresentation, reveals little more than a bent towards egotistical sophistry and empty declaration. Slavoj Zizek preserves the sentiments of classical Marxism by cutting off the fat of Marx the supposed philosopher. He thus takes what can be saved and weds it to sound philosophy (Kant, etc.)/psychoanalytic theory (Lacan, etc.): hence "radical materialism." Whalla!

Thank you Russel and Zoltan for your enthusiastic responses to my article. I hope that your examples inspire more people to actively engage in dialogue.

meeting the father

By BENJAMIN GREENBLATT

On Tuesday February 19, Upstate Films welcomed director Ivan Solovov, who was on the second-to-last stop of his four-city U.S. tour for his new film *The Father (Otets)*. The Father, which takes place in the U.S.S.R., stars Alexei Guskov as a Capitan in World War II. When the war ends, he must stop fighting and come home, a task that becomes increasingly difficult for him. In *The Father*, Solovov captures and diffuses emotion that seems absent from most recent American films.

While the aesthetic of the film is severely lacking in displaying the cold of Russia, the characters make up for it. Before Guskov's character, Alexei, can finally return home, he has a troublesome layover in a small town with a young, pregnant, female cadet named Masha. Alexei offers to pose as her husband before returning home. However, he falls in love with Masha (or so he thinks), making his journey home much more difficult. When he finally decides to return home, all is not well. The remainder of the film captures the struggles of Alexei's return, and Guskov's acting successfully isolates not just his character, but the audience as well. As Alexei feels like a stranger in his house, so does the audience.

Guskov's performance, at once detached and passionate, provides a sentimental context of for the U.S.S.R. in the post-World War II climate, a feeling often overlooked in Western history. One woman in town casually remarks in an almost comical way, "Why did the Germans have to attack Russia?" This question sums up the central message in the film. This war devastated the lives of not only the soldiers fighting, but the women and children left home to weep. These soldiers and women and children were not fighting for a just cause, but were simply dragged into a situation that leaves people with bitter, confused, and estranged emotions.

After the film, the director was on hand to answer questions. And while Guskov, the lead actor, was supposed to appear, he could not for reasons unknown, much to the audience's dismay. The Q&A with the director proved meaningful. Queries ranged from very specific cinematographic and business inquiries, to kind and sentimental questions about the director's own experiences with this film. Solonov gently answered each question through a translator, and illuminated certain aspects of making this film which one would not be normally aware of. Solonov explained the process of working with the child actors, mainly the difficulties of working with a young girl who was only four at the time of filming.

An interesting question came from an old gentleman in the back who asked very sincerely Solonov's who his biggest influences were in making this film. While this could have been easily misconstrued as either obvious or pretentious, Solonov very quickly responded, without any hesitation: his six-year-old son. The inspiration Solonov continually receives from his son clearly leaks into all aspects of this film. A very touching moment, indeed.



Director Ivan Solovov (left) poses after the discussion.



Austin and Vizhel Prasad of the Voodoo Puppets.

By ENRICO PURITA

Everyone knows Tewksbury as the legendary residence hall home to those who like to be excessively loud and belligerent when under the influence. What many people may not realize, however, is that Donald J. Tewksbury's cinderblock legacy houses an incredibly diverse collective of musicians.

A typical day, night, or twilight at Tewks will consist of multiple jam sessions. Tom Anderson, the resident keyboard player, is at the forefront of many of these sessions.

"There's a lot of very good and interesting musicians here and a lot of potential," says Anderson, whose third-floor triple is a popular jam space that is constantly overflowing with amps, pedals, guitars, basses, and his own unique keyboard setup. Although his room is overcrowded with musical equipment, Anderson feels that "res-life isn't exactly accommodating when it comes to practice space availability."

Dan Schwartz, one of Tom's roommates, has his drumset in the small Tewksbury practice room in the basement. When he plays with his fellow band members and Tewksbury residents such as Alexi Bazekis on bass and Sam Share on guitar, their hardcore punk riffs resonate throughout the South Campus quad.

Moreover, Tewks' second floor features music ranging from hot beats to the tight banjo-tinged jams that can be often heard on cold, snowy, and by definition, drunken nights.

Another second floor native, Sebastian Castill, can often be heard mixing beats

Tewksbury: Jam Sessions, Beats, and Bands

and writing killer poetic raps under his alias GreenHandMixTapes.com. He also has two tapes being released, "Fresh Food Volume 1" and "The Torrent Volume 1." One will be released on March 20th and the other on April 20th.

Sebastian's roommate, Brice Ormesher, besides being a fixture in everywhere but his own room, is also a common participant in Tewksbury jam sessions, sporting his massive conga drum, extensive musical knowledge, and not to mention, a lovable "teddy bear" personality.

Furthermore, on the first floor, musical talent is overflowing. Almost every room on the freshman side of the hallway has a guitar, and at any given time during the day, one can potentially hear the edgy musical stylings of Austin Julian. His jagged guitar sounds, along with experiments in sound ranging from a theremin to amplified radio signals, transforms Tewksbury into the eerie "crack den" that everyone knows and loves.

Julian is currently in the process of getting his NYC band, the Voodoo Puppets, to take off. As an avid fan of the NYC underground scene, Julian will be

organizing a show featuring three bands. Two will be coming from the punk scene in New York and the third will be Schwartz, Bazekis, and Share's band. The show is scheduled for March 8 and will most likely occur in the Multi Purpose Room (MPR).

Additionally, Gryphon Rue's lo-fi acoustic guitar playing is a welcomed addition this semester, and it is another fresh new sound that adds color to the barren Tewks walls. Room 108, the home of resident harmonica player Steve Pikelny and yours truly, has the blues... and a lot of other things. Pikelny's prowess on the blues harp (a rarity in the age of Pro Tools) is unique along with his collection of harps.

In some ways, there may even be too many musicians. Jamming is everywhere, but many in Tewks are still waiting for focused acts to spring from these grandiose jam sessions.

"There is a lot of creative jamming, which I think is great. But there needs to be more started," Bazekis said. Nevertheless, Tewksbury's jam-heavy atmosphere may, by the end of the semester, breed some great musical acts.

benevento plays bearsville

By JUSTIN LEIGH

Marco Benevento likes to multitask. Whether he's playing in a quartet, a trio, a duo, or solo, Benevento is constantly finding new ways to feed his immense musical appetite and produce a powerfully original body of work. After gaining considerable notoriety while performing with drummer Joe Russo in the instrumental rock group The Benevento Russo Duo (a.k.a. The Duo), Benevento, a virtuoso jazz pianist-keyboardist-electrician, recently recorded his first solo studio album "Invisible Baby". For the third stop of his CD release tour, Benevento played at the Bearsville Theater in Bearsville with bassist Reed Mathis (Jacob Fred Jazz Odyssey) and Andrew Barr (The Slip). The intimacy and laid back nature of the theater, when combined with groovy bass lines, anthemic drumming, enmeshed with dynamic melodies and synthetic reverberations, created a symphonic atmosphere that was unlike any other.

The new CD, which is written and produced by Benvento, delivers a wild array of stylistic innovations that blend unique electronically generated sounds to produce a musical journey that begins at hypnosis and ends with narcosis. Benevento and his band skillfully reproduced the album's heavy use of effects on stage, creating a spectacle of sonic innovation that revealed a jaw-dropping use of circuit bent instruments among an indie-rock backdrop.

Although a solo project, "Invisible Baby" is not meant to turn Benevento's towering mountain of electronic keyboards that surround his upright piano into an island. Playing with other musicians, Benevento says, "brings a refreshing breeze through my own musical doors. I'm not the kind of person that will ever be satisfied with one band, or one style of music; I've come to learn that music is a life long study. I need to explore every possible music outlet I can in order to be a better musician."



And "Invisible Baby" is a perfect example of Benevento's musical exploration, as the album wondrously incorporates trance-like soundscape auras with up-beat tempos to establish a musical fluidity and complexity that derives from Benevento's desire to create outside of his comfort zone, or as he likes to refer to it, his "exploratory zone." With the ability to portray his heightened creative control, "Invisible Baby" is an apt representation of Benevento's musical dynamism; it is a uniqueness that synthesizes a multiplicity of styles into an evolved form that is, above all else, mind-blowingly original. "I am uncomfortable when I feel like I'm not in charge of what I want to do musically," Benevento says. "The only thing I 'try' to do [when making music] is everything I want to do! And I hope to cover as many bases as possible in my life."

spice girls join forces for reunion tour

By TESS HALL

I don't care what anybody says, everyone here knows every word to "Wannabe." O-kay, so maybe you're not quite sure of that one awkward rap part, but there was definitely an important chunk of your life circa 1998 when you sat around in groups of five, just like I did, and argued over who got to be Baby Spice (I, being a particularly argumentative pre-teen, won that fight). Naturally, I'm pretty confident that when the Spice Girls announced their prospective reunion tour, all of you were hyperventilating just as much as I was to finally be able to fill that void that was not filled in the days before we got our periods.

In the months between that initial announcement and the day our dreams came to fruition, I had often stated with much candor that I would pay anything and go anywhere to see the Spice Girls. As news of their European tour selling out faster than you can say "Slam your body down and wind it all around" popped up on the various insignificant gossip websites that we shamefacedly hit up after we check our facebook, my anxiety grew fiercer. Are they even going to come to New York? Am I actually going to have to travel to somewhere obscure to fulfill my 'tween fantasy? Then, one fateful Saturday morning in November, at approximately 10:45 AM, I checked my email. There it was, an email from the five British pop princesses themselves, alerting me that tickets are going on sale at 10 that morning—wait a tic, 10 AM? Realizing I was already 45 minutes late, I tripped over the letters on my keyboard as I scrambled to type in that really weird security code on Ticketmaster. I did not waste a second in trying to secure myself a spot at their show at Nassau Coliseum on Long Island. Without even thinking, I had chosen two "best available" tickets, and before I knew it, I had spent 250 dollars on two tickets to see the Spice Girls. I winced for a second when I realized what I had done, but then reassured myself that I did say I would pay anything to see the Spice Girls. Not a minute later, though, I noted something most important: Ok, so I'm secure enough with myself to actually spend 120 dollars on a Spice Girls ticket, but who the hell am I going to find who is just as willing as I am to come with me and pay me back for the second one? I called a few people, all of whom were ecstatic to be invited to such a momentous event, but once I told them the price, I was defeated. Finally, I phoned my 25 year-old brother (yup, Top Chef), asked him the same question, and after a pause, he replied:

"Ok, I'll come. But

SOUPS



don't tell anybody."

What seemed like decades of anticipation later, the big day finally arrived. Yes, it was two hours away and yes, it was a school night, but it wasn't like I was going to stop now. My brother was more of the New Kids on the Block generation than the proceeding Spice Girls/Backstreet Boys/etc one, but hey, he agreed to come with me, right? In fact, it was he who found out exactly when it started, and who yelled at me when I hadn't left Bard yet to make it in time. Being from Long Island, I rushed home, picked him up, and we set off to make the 7:30 start of the show. Halfway during our 25-minute trip to Nassau Coliseum, after we passed a liquor store and he commented that it would be cool if we could sneak in a flask of something, he asked me if I brought any weed. Confused because my brother does not really smoke and often teases me for my occasional indulgence, I answered the truth: no. You didn't bring weed? He asked, just as confused as I was. No, I didn't. Wait, we're not getting high for the Spice Girls concert? Huh? I clearly had not been on the same page as he. He proceeded to turn the car around, called up a friend, and trucked us back home, stubbornly insisting that if he, a 25 year-old straight male, was going to see the Spice Girls, he was going to be baked.

Forty minutes later (and not late either—much to our luck, the show didn't end up starting until 8:30), we entered the coliseum, to find ourselves instantly submerged in an ocean of thousands of screaming chicks, all dressed up like the Spice Girls. No joke. There we were, my very straight brother and my quasi-dreadlocked self, and everywhere we looked there was another quintet of wealthy Long Island Jews attired in bastardized versions of the artists we were soon to witness and scream a little too loudly at. In all my life of being the younger sister, I have never seen my older brother as uncomfortable and embarrassed as I did when I looked back at him while we were trying to weave through the estrogen and dumbly find our seats. Sitting down, I remarked to my brother that if he doesn't watch out, he's bound to be recognized. Let's be real here: Long Island Jewish chicks make up probably 90% of the demographic that watches Top Chef. He had thrown himself into the lion's den.

Finally, the lights went down, and our hands jerked to clutch our ears. So perhaps

in actuality the people here were all pretty much my age, but everyone in that room in that second became eleven again, and in that very same second I learned why my dad often brought earplugs on extended family vacations. When my ears had finally adjusted to the excruciating din of the testicle-less audience, the music started. Before I knew it, there they were, in person (and hundreds of feet away): Ginger, Sporty, Posh, Baby, and Scary. I was in a stoned star-struck stupor. In that instant, I paid a silent and gleeful tribute to the fivesome that had shaped so colorfully my and millions of others' pre-pubesence: But of course I will spice up my life, girls, I thought to myself. In fact, not only have I already committed to spice up my life with a 120 dollar ticket, 30 bucks in gas to and from, and 20 bucks to the substance that is making this moment all the more holy, but I think I will buy a t-shirt when this show is over. Yes, a t-shirt. Perhaps a mug too. And a keychain? Oh shit I could really go for a pretzel. You got me, girls. You got me hook, line, and sinker. With a cherry on top.

Tee-shirt, mug, keychain, pretzel, coke, and two hours of nostalgia later, it was time to leave so that we wouldn't have to experience the same overwhelming weaving through the womanly waves in order the get out of that hormone pit. As my brother slipped his hood over his head and pulled his brim slightly down over his face to avoid to the glares of potential fans, we started to scoot through the seats. We had almost cleared the exit when some random chick grabbed my brother's arm and asked in a high-pitched voice: "Are you from Top Chef?!" Rather than looking at her for a second in the eye, he instead decided to run away.

Clearly, the entire experience was beyond a positive one, aside from the fact that the Spice Girls are actually rather untalented. They're not impressive singers or dancers, nor do they even look that hot anymore. Scary still has big tits, Posh still doesn't have it in her to smile, Baby's a bit zaftig (if you don't know what that means, ask a Jew), Ginger's as sluttish as ever, and more than half of them have had kids and whack solo albums. In fact, one thing that particularly struck me as odd about the experience was that their songs were pretty damn sexual! Shit when I was ten I was singing "I need some love like I never needed love before/ wanna make love to ya baby." That's a bit creepy. Oh well. At least I got a dope t-shirt.

from the kitchen of: Ted King
recipe: Bean Gruel

This is a recipe for those who like power all the time.

Though bean gruel may not sound appetizing your body will love it, especially with winter setting in. Bean gruel is pure power. The plan is to make a lot of it, enough to keep around for about a week. It is a source of whole grains and protein and satisfied my philosophy of starting with good ingredients, that way if you screw something up, or if it doesn't taste as good as you might like, you are still putting good things in your body.

The simple version of bean gruel begins this way, get some dried beans at the grocery store. Black beans, kidney beans, white beans, pinto beans, whichever flavor suits your fancy. Soak these beans, (mixing of bean types is encouraged) over night, covering them with enough water so they sink about two inches below the surface. In terms of how many beans, I would suggest anywhere from 3-6 cups, but depending on how many you think you'd like to eat over the course of a week.

Once the beans have soaked overnight you should pour them out of the pot and rinse them in cold water, then, put them back in the pot, covering them with water once again. The next step here will be to add some rice and other grains, thus you should put in enough water to cover the beans plus a 2 to 1 ratio of water to grains. Put your pot of beans on the stove, on high. You want the water to come to a boil. When the water comes to a boil, add brown rice and other whole grains, like Barley. Stir the mixture a few times and then cover the pot and reduce the heat, (medium low). Cook like this for about 45 minutes, or until the water has been soaked up. Cooking rice and beans together in the same pot allows them to form a complex protein, this is the source of the bean gruel's pure power.

Now that was the simple version. Obviously you do not want to be eating bland beans and rice for a week, so flavorful creativity must come to the rescue. At the point of adding the rice and grains to the mixture, I suggest putting in spices, usually more than you think you will need to get the job done. The beans and grains will soak up these spices and taste good. Some spices to consider: cumin seeds, turmeric, mustard powder, thyme, basil, dill, you get the idea. After the cooking process is over, it is time to add the liquid versions of flavor. Honey can be very good in this, apple cider adds a nice sweet and tangy taste, apple cider vinegar takes tangy one step further, soy sauce, always a good decision. The point is to get creative. I don't know what you like.

Bean gruel is infinitely expandable. If it doesn't taste that good the first time, you can improve upon it. Take a little bit out of your Tupperware, add some vegetables, some fresh garlic, heat it up in a pan, add some more spices, add canned tomatoes and make chili. Add chili powder and hot peppers, roll into burrito, eat, delicious. Try steaming some greens, like kale or spinach or something, mix them with the bean gruel, add favorite spices, also delicious. Bean gruel makes cooking simple. So, make some bean gruel on Monday, eat some more on Tuesday, enjoy it on Wednesday, savor it on Thursday and be powerful everyday.

horoscopes



ARIES (March 21 – April 19) : You will have a dream in which you are running, not knowing from whom, but certain that you can never, ever stop or turn around. Drink a glass of Kool-Aid and clutch a soft object as you wonder what in the world your dream could mean.

TAURUS (April 20 – May 20) : I'm glad you're reading the Observer today, Taurus, because you've been spending far too much of your time lately doing little besides sleeping and engaging in "auto-erotic behavior." It's time to take a nice walk, meet some new people, and have a little fun before the shit hits the fan in early March. Remember to stay away from the "Death Spot" in Kline.

GEMINI (May 21 – June 21) : Sometimes the world is just too much for one man to bear. Over the next few days, Gemini, you will feel yourself sinking into a mire of depression and apathy, unable to find pleasure among those you once called your friends. I suggest you sit alone in the Campus Center, or some equally busy public spot, and silently take note of the faults of every passer-by.

CANCER (June 22 – July 22) : Please see the lyrics to R.E.M.'s "Everybody Hurts" for your horoscope this week, Cancer.

LEO (July 23 – August 22) : When I hear your name, Leo, I think of ferocious lions. Lions tearing my flesh. Biting me. Killing me. The birds are silent in the trees. Everything is so, so silent. Friday will be a lucky day for you.

VIRGO (August 23 – September 22) : Be wary. The nervous energy that has been bothering you for the past few days isn't going to go away, not until it intensifies and renders you utterly incapable of performing the most basic tasks. Keep your shirt tucked in and, when you feel ill at ease, lock yourself in your room and listen to "Power, Corruption and Lies" all the way through, twice.

LIBRA (September 23 – October 22) : There is a tall man in your future.

SCORPIO (October 23 – November 21) : If it feels like someone's been watching you lately, Scorpio, it's probably because someone has. Those "big secrets" aren't so secret anymore; did you really think that anyone would stay fooled for long? Your chances for real happiness this semester may have turned to shit, but you may still be able to get laid if you remember to keep taking the long way around the library.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22 – December 21) : Cornrows would be a poor choice at this point in your life.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 – January 19) : Time is running out for you, Capricorn. Eventually the consequences of your actions will catch up with you and you'll be left beaten and heartbroken, just like before. There are some battles you can't win. Try to avoid receiving or performing fellatio this week.

AQUARIUS (January 20 – February 18) : They don't call you the "water-bearer" for nothing. Stop by Health Services as soon as possible.

PISCES (February 19 – March 20) : If that mysterious rash still hasn't gone away and you're tired of people telling you it's "probably nothing," wait in the graveyard at 10:00 Wednesday night. A certain Taurus has some information for you.



image/ Sofia de Guzman

THE NEW SON

(Part 1 of 4 in a new serial story)

By NICK OGONEK

Fiona was not thrilled when she arrived home from work to see her son Peter with some strange older boy on the couch watching television. She was also not thrilled to see that the strange boy was bloody in several places. His forehead was split open and had caked dark pink with scab. At least it looked as if Peter had had the good sense to wipe him off a bit, give him a Band-Aid or two to plaster loosely over the angrier-looking wounds. But still, the front of his shirt was ripped, as were the knees of his jeans and the brown skin beneath them. There was black grit, she saw, in some of these cuts. From asphalt, it looked like.

"Who is this?" she asked, trying not to sound exasperated. Peter had a penchant for finding hurt things out around their home in the Catskills and bringing them in, thinking he could help them. Usually it was birds or frogs or maybe the odd cat. This was the first human.

"Just somebody who crashed."

Fiona was unsure of how to react. Should she call an ambulance? He was bloody, yes, but he did not look particularly hurt. Peter was sitting next to him, and they had a similar slouch to their shoulders, a similar slight gape at their mouths. The same underwater glow from the TV set flickered over their faces. The strange boy blinked languidly as if sleepy.

"What's his name? What do you mean crash? What did he crash in? Where does he live? Have you even asked him?"

They both looked at her simultaneously, Peter a slightly annoyed look, the strange boy with a blank, interested expression, a contraction of his thick dark eyebrows, an upturn of his mouth.

"I tried," said Peter, "But I think he has amnesia."

"I think he's right," said the strange boy ruefully.

The sun had been sinking steadily for the last fifteen minutes. The sky was stained and pale, and Fiona realized that she should make dinner.

"You need a shower," she said to the boy, "and you," she pointed at Peter, "need to set the table." He rolled his eyes but got up and Fiona led the new boy upstairs. He left very faint dark marks, she saw, on the beige carpeting. He was not wearing shoes, but his socks were filthy, almost black with grime. "You don't remember anything?"

"That's right."

"We should probably take you to the police station, but I don't think it's urgent."

"Me neither."

"Would you mind some dinner?" They were at the top of the stairs now, and she went to the linen closet and brought him out a towel.

"I'm starving."

"And very dirty. I can't believe Peter didn't suggest you take a shower." She crossed the landing to the other side now and stood by the door to the bathroom, waiting for him. He stood still, stooped a little, clutching the red towel in one hand, the banister in the other.

"Thank you very much," he whispered.

"No," she went to him and took him by the elbow, led him to the shower, "don't even think about it. You'll need some clothes. You can't wash yourself and then put dirty clothes back on. Peter's clothes

will probably be too small for you. Do you mind wearing some of mine?"

"No."

"I'll leave them outside," she said and pulled the door shut behind her. Most of the clothes she owned were fairly unisex, and after a quick rummage through her jumbled drawers she came up with a pair of black sweat pants and a t-shirt that was green and too big for her. His shoulders were a little broader than hers, but not much. As she went back to the bathroom door to leave the folded clothes, she remembered that he might need underwear too. Water from the shower drummed on the floor of the bathtub on the other side of the door. She heard a change in its rhythm as he moved. He could figure that out, she thought. One thing she should do, though, was to make up the guest bed for him. She did this quickly, shooing Pacha, their black cat, from the unmade bed. Pacha looked at her with an expression of disgust and ran from the room. Fiona lay a thin sheet out on the bed, because it was summer, but also stacked two blankets at the end in case he got cold. She surveyed her handiwork and then descended the stairs again. Peter was back on the couch in front of the TV. What was he going to do all summer, she wondered. She opened her mouth to say something as the passed through the living room to the kitchen, but couldn't think of something that was the right tone, politely curious but very firm.

The kitchen was Fiona's favorite room in the house. There was a row of windows above the cluttered counter that faced west towards the too bright setting sun. So while she was making dinner she would draw the curtains. The sunlight streamed in through the white curtains giving the room a clean, comfortable ambiance that she loved. Cooking was a habit from her lonely childhood that had become, in a better-adjusted adulthood, a hobby. She liked to cook dinner every day, it was a reassuring part of the evening and one she rarely went without. Dinner tonight would be one of her specials - lemon, thyme and mushroom linguine. As she gathered ingredients - lemons, mushrooms, Parmesan and thyme from the crisper, olive oil and pasta from the pantry - she saw Peter had set the table rather carelessly. The silverware was askew, and he had set out paper napkins instead of cloth. A spark of frustration flared and was gone. She set the armload of food onto a clear space on the counter. Usually paper napkins were OK by her, she thought, picking them up and stuffing them in the trash, but today they had a guest. She filled a pot with water and set it on the stove to boil and then went hunting for some good napkins in the boxes in the basement.

From the basement, she could hear the water rushing from the boiler through the pipes for the guest's shower. She paused underneath the half-dead lightbulb, listening to the water rushing, gurgling, and then crossed to the pipe. She touched it with her fingertips, but it was too hot. She pulled her hand back, inhaling sharply through her teeth.

And upstairs, in the shower, the guest made himself a mask out of soap and peeked around the curtain to make faces at his reflection in the semi-fogged mirror.

TO BE CONTINUED



FUZZY SLIPPERS PLAYLIST:

folk to keep you warm

By CHARLOTTE BENBENISTE

If B&G made midnight house calls, perhaps the FUZZY SLIPPERS playlist, the brainchild behind this article, may have never been compiled. You see, like many Keen residents, I'm suffering the achin' pains of a broken heater so I followed my mom's advice to "just keep layering, sweetie!" Stick with me for the next few sentences. All right, so you know how in 7th grade you made the Bar Mitzvah rounds? Remember how at the Bar Mitzvah of the year, MTVs My Super Sweet Sixteen: Bar Mitzvah edition worthy extravaganzas, they'd be pseudo-sumo wrestling? Two affable men, usually both named Bobby, would help you into these ginormous padded flesh toned fat suits and release you to let the Bar Mitzvah boys' pipsqueak little cousin have it? Remember?

Yeah, well, I'm wearing every layer I own, I look like I just escaped from an illegal underground Japanese wrestling rink, and I'm still fuckin' freezing. After violently round-house kicking the wonky heater a few more times, to no avail, I resolved to turn to my trusty iTunes Library for the answers. In an attempt to warm up, I lined up a couple of albums of some fightin' folk and bluesy tunes, some older, some newer that have made me feel toasty and nice inside.

1) *One by One* - Robert Francis

After listening to *One by One*'s second track, "Good Hearted Man," you'd probably believe me if I told you that Robert Francis was a 47 year old Texan cowboy whose smoky voice had been gradually weathered by with Whiskey, tumbleweed dust. You may be surprised to hear, however, that instead of citing home as a home on the range, Mr. Francis is a 19 (!) year old Los Angeles native whose voice was more likely textured by a prepubescent smoking habit. Influenced by the folky twangs of Townes Van Zandt and Ry Cooder, Francis' lyrics are poetic and poignant and savor of heartbreak unworthy of his age. "And I've lost all the things that I lost in you from losing ourselves in each other like we used to do," Francis sings against a melancholy violin and the rhythmic plunks of a banjo on the album's the self titled track.

Francis has said that *One by One* was inspired by a failed relationship, and although I should be wishing his broken heart a swift recovery, if his premiere

album is a manifestation of those feelings, I'm secretly hoping his heart doesn't mend till after a sophomore effort.

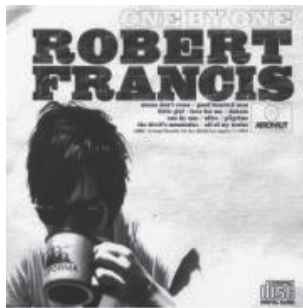
2) *Beat the Devil- Beat the Devil*


If Fiona Apple and CCR's John Fogerty had a love child, it'd be Shilpa Ray, the singer/songwriter/harmonium player/all-around badass chic who fronts Brooklyn's *Beat the Devil*. On their self-titled EP, Ray howls and moans and roars and snarls, transfixing listeners out of a smoky Williamsburg bar to a wooden ship sailing past Siren-Island. Rather than springing fresh out of the *Odyssey*, however, Ray's roots grew from a traditional Hindu household where western music was a big No-No. Luckily for us, after reading a Velvet Underground reference in *Doors*' manager Danny Sugerman's *No One Gets Out Alive*, Ray's library afforded her a copy of *Peel Slowly and See*, and the rest is history. In early 2007 Ray and bassist/bass drum banger Mishka Shubaly were joined by fifth (and hopefully, final-try) drummer Mitchell King to complete the trifecta.

Ray's lyrics are as unusual and powerful as her voice, raw and wry and relying heavily on allusion to wail homage to some prominent figures like Solomon Grundy, Saint Augustine, and Kathy Lee Gifford. This EP is bursting with gradual layering: first always come swells of *Beat the Devil*'s distinctive harmonium, then Ray, with lyrical invites like on "Raging Bull Blues" "close your eyes and bite your lips you come along with me on my death trip," she sings. The real head bobbing begins when King comes in on bass and rhythm drums, followed finally by Shubaly's foot-tapping bass lines. If pitted in a rock-off with Satan, I'd bet on this trio to take home the prize.

3) *We Brave Bee Stings and All- Thao*


We Brave Bee Stings and All is the pet project of Virginia 'gal, Thao Nguyen but its inception is largely thanks to her band of boys, Frank Stewart, Adam and Willis Thompson, collectively known as *The Get Down Stay Down*. Nguyen hasn't always been this lucky though, starting off at 12 with quite different backing instrumentation: an orchestra of washing machines at her mother's Laundromat. Thao's sound didn't make it out of that Laundromat unscathed. *Bee Stings* is clean, charming and wholesome folky pop that gives Chan Marshall a vocal run for her money and sends a nod to Electrelane scrambled guitar jingles.





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BY BARRY LORBERBAUM

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a message to bard students

FROM MEMBERS OF THE STUDENT-LABOR DIALOGUE

Bard College calls itself “A Place to Think,” but it has never been strictly that. For some it is a place to live and socialize; to learn, to teach and to think—no one could deny that. But for all, it is a place of work. Learning, teaching, and thinking are the work of some in the Bard community. For others, work means cleaning and maintaining the College’s buildings and grounds, cooking and serving food that students, staff, faculty, and administrators alike eat, managing the College’s accounts and sending the emails that keep the school running day to day, running the post office, handling the College’s daily waste, providing the College with a safe water supply, and, of course, keeping the campus safe.

This latter group of workers—those who are not here primarily to learn, teach, and administer—are paid wages that fall far beneath a level necessary to live in the Hudson Valley. Many workers are forced to find second or third jobs elsewhere in order to supplement their inadequate pay. It is a simple fact that without these workers, the College would not run for a day. We do not feel that the College’s wage practices are consistent with the bill of goods we were sold as prospective students, which pertained to the school’s progressive character.

In the present semester, members of the Student-Labor Dialogue will initiate a campaign to transform Bard College into a living-wage institution through the adoption of a campus-wide Living Wage Policy.¹ A living wage, or subsistence wage, is defined as the minimum rate of hourly pay that will enable workers and their families to cover their basic costs of living (housing, transportation, food, healthcare, education) without going into debt. Consequently, a living wage is a dynamic, not a static hourly rate. It rises as the costs

1 Bard’s Code of Conduct includes language that promises that the College will ensure that corporations and companies to whom it contracts work will pay their employees a living wage, but the phrase “living wage” is not defined and, more importantly, the policy is, for the most part, ignored. We would like to see a broader policy that would apply to all workers on campus, not just contractors.

of living rise.

Such a campaign is a long-term project, but a living wage can be won. In the last two decades, there have been one hundred and forty successful living wage campaigns in the United States. In New York State alone, successful within communities campaigns include county- and citywide ones in Nassau, Suffolk, and Westchester Counties; Albany, Syracuse, New York City, Oyster Bay, Rochester, and Buffalo. At institutions of higher learning, there have been successful efforts at Colorado College, and at Stanford, Harvard, and Wesleyan Universities.

There are industry standards for every job and profession. Bard boasts that its professors are paid in the 90th percentile compared to professors in other colleges. Aramark employees, Chartwells employees, and Security employees are paid closer to the 50th percentile compared to people in similar positions at other colleges. The Bard administration needs to acknowledge that teachers and administrators are not the only people needed to maintain a healthy college community.

A campus-wide living wage campaign has been the largest undertaking of the Student-Labor Dialogue’s to date. Last year we campaigned successfully during Buildings and Grounds contract negotiations to have those forty-odd employees reach a living wage.² We will be relying on the support of the student body in our work, and we thank you in advance for it. Please look out for the launch of an official web site for the campaign, as well as for announcements of events and activities throughout the semester.

Yours,

Members of the Bard College Student-Labor Dialogue

2 That is to say that, by the time the contract expires in, B&G employees will be at wage parity with B&G workers at Marist College (which represents itself as being notably less progressive), and their wages will be a living wage by 2007’s standards. There is no guarantee that these standards will still apply.



Image/Ben Wlodz

through a stranger’s eyes: like, a converse!

BY ANDREA ONDRUSKOVA

As I wrote last issue, Bard is a nice liberal place where ‘being different’ counts. Yet Bard also has two great mysteries of conformity. Conformity is an unexpected, almost ugly word, especially here at Bard, and so I will rather quickly rush to my point.

Walking around the campus, I often wonder why despite the fact that difference and self-expression are so highly praised in this community, the majority of Bardians

and you are sure to see some Converse around.

Recently, I was waiting for a shuttle at the bus stop shelter opposite Kline. It was raining cats and dogs, and eight out of ten Bardians waiting there with me were wearing Converse. Most of them were somewhat dressed up. “Going to the party at Manor?” I pondered. And really, all of them got off there. Yet, what startled me was that their shoes were soaked with water and all of them were shivering from cold. That just made me think about my mother and grandma. In any kind of weather, maybe except for hot summer days, they keep on checking whether I am warmly dressed, carefully inspecting both my dress and shoes. I think they would have very, very hard time here at Bard.

So why is it that Americans seem not to care about extremities of weather? The other day, I read in one very wise book that unlike Europeans, Anglo-Saxons have been traditionally brought up in a harsh, ascetic discipline and made used to hostile climatic conditions. Even though the discussion was about the elite New England prep schools based on British Eton, I think something of it must apply also to the wide American society at large. Maybe it is the part of the survival of the fittest?

And what about “like”? Sometimes when I sit alone in Kline, inhaling the atmosphere of that vibrant place, I listen to the conversations at the nearby tables. I know, it is a very impolite act but I can assure you that my motives are purely linguistic. This is a perfect way to study the intricacies of Bard vernacular. Of course, my findings are always the same. “Like” can be heard everywhere and a linguistic model of an ordinary sentence would be something like this: “You know...it’s like... like... like... I am like... you know, like!” The weeks of secret study conducted at Kline led me to the conclusion that “like” is by far the most frequent word in everyday conversation. Of course, I cannot claim that it is a phenomenon chiefly restricted to his campus. I promise to continue in my study outside of the Bard region and inform you about the results. To wrap this issue up, I have a little story. I once discussed this subject with a friend of mine, also a foreigner, who told me, “They should teach us ‘like.’ It should be in books. Everyone uses it!” And I agree. Sometimes I wonder why we all go through so many pains to learn all different tenses in English when almost everything can be expressed in a much simpler way, by “like”: “I was like...why study proper English?” Hm, but that’s, like, enough for this time.

I first became acquainted with Converse when I was about seven years old.

happily conform to two things: namely, to wearing shoes with a little star known as Converse and to overusing the word “like.” To you, Americans, it may seem a commonplace, something you do not even notice on your peripetia through everyday life but to us foreigners these two phenomena have become two conspicuous symbols that distinguish Bard from the rest of the world. Thinking about our first days here at Bard, I remember as most of my foreign friends would remark why everyone wears those “ugly shoes that no one else in Europe would wear?” Forgive me, dear reader, but I am determined to write truth and nothing else, and I honestly declare to inspect this issue from various angles that may lead us to a conclusion of some sort.

I first became acquainted with Converse when I was about seven years old. My father bought a pair of trainers, nothing special about them; the only detail that struck me was a little star on the heel. Unfortunately, this first and only pair of Converse shoes that my family has ever owned suffered a rather harsh fate. When they became kind of worn out, my dad bought a new pair of rather modern-looking sneakers, and the Converse were thrown into the cellar where, I believe, they still are today.

But moving on, why are Converse shoes so popular here at Bard? Of course, I do not want to judge taste, for there are different styles and colors depending on everyone’s deepest desire. Yet, as far as practicality is concerned, there must be something at stake there, for people wear them regardless of weather conditions. No matter whether it is a sunny day, snowing or raining, just walk around the campus,

memo

A COLUMN BY OLIVER TRALDI

Many voices were raised and views heard at Budget Forum this semester. In all likelihood, more remain unheard. It is not my intent to discuss any of those views in particular; instead, I want to suggest a way to solve a more general problem, which is that worthy clubs that consistently do good work are sometimes unable to get funding for the work they want to do.

I’m talking about raising the Student Activities Fee. Every semester, almost all enrolled students pay \$70 towards the Student Association’s Convocation Fund, which funds all student clubs. This semester 99 clubs requested funding; they range from the Observer and the Free Press to Bard’s Emergency Medical Services, from the Bard Democrats to the Fromagerie. \$70 per semester has proven to be enough for the day-to-day functioning of most of these clubs. Recently, however, the events students are planning have become more and more ambitious. For example, several clubs banded together to ask for ten thousand dollars for a large conference, featuring well-known speakers and students from other colleges. Unfortunately, our Student Activities Fee has not been sufficient to fund this sort of project.

We should raise the Fee to a level comparable to that at which most schools set it. In our research, members of student government have not found any other school where the fee is under \$100 a semester. At some it’s close to \$200. This enables a diverse range of activities; it allows these schools to fund academic clubs and club sports, which our Convocation Fund doesn’t, as well as a broad range of artistic, musical, cultural,

and political activities.

The argument usually made against raising the Fee – by administrators, not by students – is that the current Convocation Fund is not always used up entirely. They argue that we must improve our method of allotment to ensure that each student’s \$70 is spent every semester, and that this will be enough to cover a wider range of activities. This is not the case. It may have been at some point in the past. Right now, Bard is growing and changing, and its students are becoming more involved and, as I said before, more ambitious in their involvement. We need a fee structure that represents that growth.

Our biggest concern – our only concern, really – should be the possible negative effect raising the fee would have on students who are already having trouble paying to come to Bard. We do not want to make it even more difficult for these students to become a part of our community. Along with the Student Accounts office, student government has come up with a number of ideas for ameliorating this effect. But we need to hear from you to know if this should happen. Should the fee be raised? How can we avoid hurting students who are pressed for tuition money as it is? Should the funds gained from raising the fee be earmarked for any specific type of activity, or should we simply increase the size of the Convocation Fund and apportion it using the process to which we’ve all become accustomed?

Please send us your thoughts. My email address is ot119@bard.edu, and I am happy to discuss all aspects of this issue. Be in touch, and stay involved.

COMIX

By AMANDA VISSERING



The Eclipse, February 20, 2008. Photos by Nick Scribner.



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FROM THE ARCHIVES

Vol. 7 Issue 4 November 18, 1996

a look at writing on the wall

By MEEKA BHATTACHARYA AND JEANNE SWADOSH

Does this look familiar? There have been ongoing incidences of BiGaLa [Bisexual Gay and Lesbian Alliance] signs being defaced on campus over the semester. Reactionary steps have included memos sent to all students from Dean of Students Shelley Morgan and President Botstein, as well as the establishment of a forum in which to discuss the issue.

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

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

Shelley Morgan, who also attended the forum, agreed that it brought up discussion pertaining to freedom of speech. However, as a student pointed out, there are ways of expressing one's thoughts other than threatening fellow students, i.e., through the Observer or the open dialogues of the forums. Morgan also indicated that the homophobic contingency is comprised of a very small number of students, maybe even one or two. Wolk pointed out that the handwriting on the signs was all the work of one person.

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

Not everyone shares the feeling that Bard is growing conservative. President Botstein cited that twenty years ago at Bard there

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

Botstein believes these homophobic incidents were the work of people who were either visiting the campus, or are employed at Bard. Regardless of who the perpetrators are, Botstein takes a firm stand against such behavior and said it would not be tolerated.

"The least effective [action] is searching out and punishing somebody," Botstein said in regards to what measures would be taken if the suspects were found. He explained that "one has to look at the question of teaching and changing people's attitudes. This is a learning institution, and one has to understand that part of learning is unlearning." More disconcerting than the defacement, said Shelley Morgan, were the "people who are seeing this happening and not saying anything about it."

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

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

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

SUPPORT STUDENT SEXPRESSION

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