





# Bush Signs UVVA; I Interview A Fetus

The March For Women's Lives Is April 25th

By: Christina Rosetti

On April 1, Bush signed the Unborn Victims of Violence Act (Unborn Victims of Violence Act), giving the fertilized egg, embryo or fetus legal status as a person separate from its mother. This effectively defines abortion as a form of legalized murder and dangerously undermines a woman's right to choose. The UVVA doesn't contribute anything to the legal system because assaulting a pregnant woman is already viewed as a heinous offense. For clarification about this I contacted pro-life activists Leslie and Jeb Robinson, as well as their prenatal son, Jeremiah.

The cozy, loving home of Jeb and Leslie provides everything a young fetus could need, namely a warm swollen belly. Above the television hangs a portrait of the now 45-day old fetus from when he was a lady-bug sized youth whose passionate interests included firmly planting himself in the lining of the uterus, making preparations for the development of a nervous system, and according to Leslie, "baseball."

Leslie, aside from producing the nutrient rich juices that sustain little Jeremiah's life, has also cultivated in her son a love of arts and crafts. "He loves whittling" she said, aglow with pride for her unborn child. Jeb nodded in approval, "He's a remarkable son." I conducted the interview with Jeremiah via stethoscope while Leslie napped on the couch and Jeb watched a VHS of the Best of the 700 Club with extra bloopers.

I began the interview:

CR: So, little Jeremiah, how does it feel to have legal status transferred to you? Empowering? Liberating?

[no response]

CR: Ah, clearly you're speechless. Jeremiah, the UVVA is good news...

[no response]

CR: F-For fetuses...

[no response]

(At this point in the interview, Leslie woke up momentarily. She offered me a plate of twinkies cut into small pieces with toothpicks stuck in them. I took one and confessed that little Jeremiah seemed reluctant to be interviewed. She said, "Oh, don't worry, he's just a little shy." I resumed the interview and Leslie resumed her nap)

CR: Surely, Jeremiah, you must be proud of your parents for crusading to make their religious, extremist conception of human life written into the United States of America's code of laws.

[no response]

(As I grew increasingly frustrated with Jeremiah's lack of compliance, I decided to change the subject to other issues.)

CR: You enjoy whittling, yes? Alright. You must be glad your parents have worked hard to 'whittle' away the protection given to women by Roe v. Wade?

[no response]

CR: Surely you must have something to say for yourself, you ungrateful little squirt.

[no response]

(The interview was going nowhere, so I decided to end it. Clearly Leslie and Jeb had not yet taught little Jeremiah how to communicate with adults. Perhaps he should spend less time playing baseball and more time learning how to articulate his ideas confidently.)

When I returned to Bard College, I went to Kline and told the people I was sitting with about my disappointing interview with Jeremiah. Everyone at the table shared their opinions about why Jeremiah refused to answer my questions. One student suggested that Jeremiah was unresponsive because he had no brain function. Another asked if we really knew that for sure, but that student was ignored because he was high. Someone accused Jeremiah of being nothing more than a cluster of cells, a parasite even, completely dependent on its mother for food. In response, an anthropology major asked if a person locked inside a room and fed through a slot in the door would be considered a human being, since that is essentially what a fetus is, if you believe in the soul. This idea blew the mind of the person who was stoned, and he stared, mouth agape, at his plate for the rest of the conversation.

The controversial question of when human life begins is personal and religious, yet one possible answer to it has been aggressively asserted over all others by making it law. Aristotle believed that the soul fused with the body after 40 days of conception; Thomas Aquinas agreed and believed that abortion was a sin, but not murder. A debate about when a human life begins stirs up all kinds of opinions about the soul and what it means to be a human being.

The March for Women's Lives is on April 25 in Washington D.C.



## Bard Gives Tony Kushner A Bear Hug

Memo to trustees: now get him to teach here.

By: Josh Sucher

Bard welcomed a very impressive visitor last Wednesday evening, April 14th. Tony Kushner, the gay, Jewish, socialist playwright (as he was identified in the expensive but spare olive-green program celebrating the event) came to accept an honorary degree from the school. He stayed to participate in a question-and-answer session in the black box Theater 2 and to read a scene from his latest play, "Only We Who Guard The Mystery Shall Be Unhappy."

The Q&A, skillfully moderated by theater professor Dominic Taylor, was thought by many students to be nowhere near long enough. Perhaps this was a result of Kushner's infamous long-winded style. The event was treated like a hasty guide to playwriting, in a sense; everyone in the audience wanted to be a fellow "crackpot public intellectual." Kushner explained that his main occupation is that of a liar. His job is to "learn enough to fake it." Much of his advice was very reasonable, as he described that though he edits some plays for years, a playwright must be aware of the possibility of ruining a piece. He also mentioned that some plays are, as Goethe described, incommensurable - "Perestroika," the second half of Angels, will never be finished. Kushner also gave some sage advice about accepting criticism - he called it "the purest S&M" - by suggesting that one oughtn't dismiss it as kvetching, but instead try to balance what you hear from others with your knowledge that "it's your play; you're the only one who can fix it."

Wrapping up the Q&A, Kushner also noted that the thing on the cover of Homebody/Kabul is a sculpture made by his sister consisting of his late mother's dresses and a bassoon's bocal. Also, for those of you looking to model yourselves after him the way he modeled himself after Brecht, his favorite playwrights are Shakespeare, Chekhov and Goethe and, for the record, today's most important playwrights are fellow Pulitzer-winners Susan-Lori Parks and Maria Irene Fornes.

The delivery of the degree was far more amusing than the Q&A session. After speaking some Latin and securing a nice red and black hood around his neck, Leon and the rest of his gang shuffled off the stage. Immediately, Kushner took the hood off and stuffed it behind the podium (and was reminded by Leon not to forget it when he left) and moved into the scene he read, playing Laura Bush to Naomi Hard's angel and Jacob Burstein-Stern's stage directions. The premise was essentially that Mrs. Bush was doing one of her usual elementary school meet-and-greets, but with a macabre twist. Here, she met a group of dead Iraqi children.

LAURA BUSH: Most of the kids I meet when I visit for a reading program--and I do so many of these, I love reading to kids, I meet so many kids--but most of the kids are, are wearing----

ANGEL: They aren't usually wearing pajamas?

LAURA BUSH: No, they aren't! They...well, they wear uniforms! Or if they go to a school that doesn't require uniforms, they wear, well of course you like to see them dressed neat, I do, but you know they'll wear all sorts of things. Except PJs. I just never saw that before. It's sweet.

ANGEL: Perhaps this is the first time you have read to dead children, Mrs. Bush?



The dead students are, logically, not the centerpiece of the play. When they open their mouths to speak, the "Sermon to the Birds" from Olivier Messiaen's "Saint Françoise de Assise" plays. This was an amazingly moving piece, obviously entertaining on the surface but exceedingly dark within. Making small-talk with one of the children, Laura Bush asks

LAURA BUSH: How did you die, darling?

ANGEL: In 1999, an American plane dropped a bomb filled with several tons of concrete on the power station near his village. He was already malnourished; he had been malnourished since birth, because of the sanctions. The power station that was crushed by the bomb was believed to be supplying power to a plant suspected of producing certain agents necessary for the development of biotoxins. We do not know if it did. We do know that it supplied power for the water purification system for his village. He already had gastroenteritis and nearly chronic diarrhea, for which medicines were unavailable. Then the water purification system failed and he drank a glass of water his mother gave him infested by a large intestinal parasite. He died of dehydration, shitting water, then blood, then water again, so much! Then a trickle, everyone was sad, there was no food, he shook so hard the screws holding his

bed together were loosened. It took three days to die.

LAURA BUSH: That's really awful.

ANGEL: Yes.

LAURA BUSH: Saddam Hussein is a terrible man.

And at the end, before reading from Dostoevsky's The Brothers Karamatzov, Bush kisses the children, setting into motion the ultimate predicament of the play.

LAURA BUSH: The kiss glows in my heart.

But.

I adhere to my ideas.

After reading the scene, Kushner went on a rollicking speech about the current state of the Union, in which he described President Bush as a "feckless, blood-spattered plutocrat" (among other such epithets) and glorified his bile duct. He concluded by giving us a solemn command, telling us that we must "dare to participate in the great historic mistakes of your time."

In the end, after giving the College a night of some of the most eloquent and meaningful political sound bytes we've heard on this campus in a while, Kushner offered the following to sum up his career - "I guess it beats trying to clean radioactive material out of a vat." Well played.



# Kerry's Radicalism Comes Back to Haunt Him

Did The Democratic Nominee Once Plan To Assassinate Senators?

By: Rebecca Giusti

By the time John Kerry returned from the Vietnam War, he had received three purple hearts, the Bronze Star, and the Silver Star. In the years that followed, Kerry became one of the most well-known and most outspoken veterans against war, as well as a prominent member of the 10,000-person organization, Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW). It is because of Kerry's persistent battles with the US Government in the early 1970s to end American involvement in Vietnam that he was labeled by the Nixon administration as "a possible threat to the nation." For this reason, in the beginning of 1971, then-FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover authorized extensive surveillance of Kerry's cross-country travels serving as a spokesman for the VVAW. In 1987, two years after being elected Senator of Massachusetts, Kerry requested that the FBI hand over the file it had compiled on him. According to the British newspaper The Daily Telegraph, Kerry later told aides that the file was "just boring news clippings." He was unaware that his file was much larger than the one the FBI had initially allowed him access to. It would not be until much later, in March of 2004, that Kerry would discover the amount of information the FBI had collected on him during his involvement in the VVAW.

Throughout his presidential campaign, the media has frequently questioned Kerry about his participation in the Vietnam War and his subsequent battle with the US Senate to withdraw troops from the area. In November of 1971, a VVAW meeting was held in Kansas where members of the group seriously discussed the possibility of assassinating US Senators who supported the war. Kerry had repeatedly denied accusations that he had attended this meeting, until author Gerald Nicosia called the Kerry campaign to notify them that he had expansive FBI files—over 20,000 pages—on Kerry's post-Vietnam activities that proved otherwise. According to CNSNews.com, Nicosia recommended that Senator Kerry review the files before making any further statements on the matter of his attendance. The Kerry campaign offices immediately sent a messenger to Nicosia's Marin County, California home to collect fifty pages of the files that Nicosia had copied for their reference. According to the minutes of the 1971 VVAW meeting, Kerry was in attendance from November 12 to 15. He voted against the plan to assassinate various US Senators before resigning "for personal reasons." CNSNews.com sources speculate that Kerry left because of conflicts with the executive director of the VVAW, Al Hubbard, who had ties to the Black Panthers. Supposedly, Hubbard was leading the VVAW in a more radical direction than Kerry believed appropriate.

The same evening that the messenger collected the FBI report, Kerry issued a retraction of his previous denial that he was in Kansas in November 1971. According to CNN, Kerry was unaware of the extent that the FBI had documented his involvement in anti-war efforts. Kerry later issued a number of statements condemning the FBI's actions, telling the Los Angeles Times, "It is out of order. I am surprised by the extent of it. I am offended by the intrusiveness of it. And I am disturbed that it was conducted absent of some showing of any legitimate probable cause. It is an offense to the Constitution."

But who is Gerald Nicosia and why did he have so much information on John Kerry? Nicosia is a Vietnam War historian and avid Kerry supporter who recently pub-

lished a book entitled *Home to War: A History of the Vietnam Veteran's Movement*. During the eleven years of research Nicosia conducted for his book, he exercised his right under The Freedom of Information Act to request FBI files on John Kerry's involvement in the VVAW. Because the FBI was "very uncooperative" in processing Nicosia's request, he did not receive the information in time to include it in *Home to War*. However, according to CNSNews.com, soon after the book was published he began to receive unmarked boxes (fourteen, to be exact) in the mail containing thousands of pages that chronicled the FBI's surveillance of John Kerry and the VVAW. Only recently did Nicosia begin to sort through all the files to discover an immense amount of information on presidential hopeful John Kerry. Realizing that he had a valuable resource, Nicosia notified the press about the files and granted them access to the entirety of the information.

On March 25, 2004, Nicosia returned home in the evening to discover that three of the fourteen boxes containing FBI files were missing, along with a number of other file folders, all concerning John Kerry's past. Although Nicosia has no idea exactly what information was taken because the documents were not marked or catalogued, CNN reported that approximately 20% of his research was missing. The documents chronicling Kerry's attendance at the November 1971 meeting were not stolen, most likely because they were separate from the other files, near Nicosia's copy machine. Strangely, the police report concluded that there were no signs of a forced entry. Nicosia also would not allow the police to process the crime scene (which meant that no fingerprints and fiber samples were taken). The detective in charge of the investigation characterized Nicosia's refusal as "not normal."

Despite the overwhelming lack of evidence, Nicosia is now publicly speculating that the Republican Party was responsible for the robbery. Immediately following the burglary, he told CNN, "It was a very professional job. The odds are in favor of a very strong political motivation for taking those files." Nicosia later told CNSNews.com "I would say that the Republicans had the largest motivation [for stealing the files]. It almost sounds like a West Coast version of Watergate, 2004. I would think it would be the Republicans and not John Kerry. I was cooperating with John Kerry." He also told The Los Angeles Times, "These files would cast a bad light on the Republican Party. The surveillance happened under the Nixon Whitehouse and Nixon FBI." The Republican Party is denying all involvement. In fact, The Daily Telegraph stated that the Republicans believe that the documents may have been stolen by Democrats who are "anxious to avoid scandal" over the assassination meeting. The Twin Cities Police Department still has no suspects.



Kerry Stares Down The Senate Foreign Relations Committee

## News Brief: Bard Vegan Devours Debaters

By: Jeremy Low

Stephen Davis (affectionately referred to as "Stephen the Vegan"), along with a cohort from Vassar, Ruth Zisman, took the national first year debates in competition as well as receiving 7th and 5th, respectively, in the speakers category (the Vegan failed to explain what the hell this meant, but I thought it should be noted at least). Of debate, Stephen said that a group of students is currently in the process of plying the administration for money to sponsor debate at Bard next year, hopefully with Zisman as the coach for those not as skilled in the oratorical arts. Debate at Bard, it is hoped by the argumentative group, will hopefully grow enough to bring in debates here on campus, such as those regularly held at more esteemed colleges, such as Vassar.

## Fun Website Links!!!

Compiled By: Ethan Porter

The tragic and the comic. At a computer near you.

Article: "Reversing Vandalism," by Lisa Davis  
<http://slate.msn.com/id/2098846/>

For over a year, a vandal meticulously attacked over 600 gay-themed works in the San Francisco Public Library. Instead of cowering to a coward, community artists responded with full force. The result is the art show "Reversing Vandalism," some of which can now be viewed on-line, accompanied by an essay. You have to see this.

Article: "Kerry Hits Back at White House, Defends Patriotism," Reuters  
[http://news.yahoo.com/news?tmpl=story&cid=615&u=/nm/20040416/pl\\_nm/campaign\\_kerry\\_dc\\_14&printer=1](http://news.yahoo.com/news?tmpl=story&cid=615&u=/nm/20040416/pl_nm/campaign_kerry_dc_14&printer=1)

So says the junior Senator from Massachusetts: "I'm tired of Karl Rove and Dick Cheney and a bunch of people who went out of their way to avoid their chance to serve when they had the chance. I'm not going to listen to them talk to me about patriotism." Word.

Article: "Shades of LBJ," by Derrick Z. Jackson  
<http://www.commondreams.org/views04/0416-01.htm>

Yes, Iraq is becoming a quagmire, and yes, it's an imperial war, but Bush can't even admit the obvious. He staunchly defends his record and claims to lack all regrets. As this article reveals, LBJ's statements concerning Vietnam were eerily similar. At least he had the decency, however, to actually try to end the war.

Article: "Can Sharon's Plan Survive After 'Bush Effect?'" by Yossi Verter  
<http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/pages/ShArt.jhtml?itemNo=416299&displayTypeCd=1&sideCd=1&contrastID=2>

Sharon realizes that no matter what the crazy cowboy in the White House may say, he still has to run his own government, cracks and all. The strength of support for the plan now on the table (at least on the Israeli table) has among the Knesset leadership, and—egadsl—the Foreign Minister is in serious doubt. Poor, poor Ariel. Hopefully he'll get indicted, resign, and spend the rest of his life firing off rounds into the sky. For his sake.

Cartoon: "Iraqi Idol: The Making of a Superstar," by Mark Fiore  
<http://www.villagevoice.com/fiore/>

The Iraqi people vote! Al Sadr wins!!! Sigh.

Website: [www.americansforwar.com](http://www.americansforwar.com)

Here, you can buy gas masks and learn why America needs to declare on the lead guitarist from Phish. If this site is a joke, it's hilarious. If these people are serious...I don't even know what to say.



# Kerry Prepares To Select A Mate

By: Matt Rozsa

John F. Kerry is the now the Democratic candidate for President of the United States in this 2004 election, but the question remains, who will his Vice Presidential running mate be?

To some this may seem an irrelevant question; after all, Americans are going to the polls to choose between Bush and Kerry, not between Cheney and whomever. Yet history has shown that, ever since Richard Nixon in 1960, the Vice President of the United States has always been the heir apparent to the presidency (it is for this reason that some believe Bush will drop Cheney in 2004, as there is little chance of Cheney ever seeking the presidency in his own right).

Kerry's pick could help (or hurt) him in his effort to win the election in November. Generally speaking, advisors who tell their candidates whom to pick aim for "balance" of some form or another. The most frequently sought-after balance is geographic balance; based on this criterion, the Northeastern Kerry would be pressed to pick somebody from the South, West, or Midwest. Another form of balance pursued is ideological balance; here the liberal Kerry would be pressed to find a moderate or relatively conservative Democrat (perhaps one closely aligned with the DLC). Finally, candidates seek "personal" balance - that is, a candidate whose own personal qualities are different from their own. In this scenario, the relatively old Kerry (he is in his early-60s) would seek a younger man, and considering Kerry's blue-blooded background, someone who does not come from a wealthy family.

Any combination—or possibly all three—of these criteria will be used by the Kerry campaign when trying to decide who they want to pick as their Vice Presidential choice. The likely contenders include Senators John Edwards of North Carolina, Evan Bayh of Indiana, Bob Graham of Florida, Representative Dick Gephardt of Missouri, Governors James Kerner of Indiana and Ed Rendell of Pennsylvania, as well as General Wesley Clark of Arizona. Long shots include Senators Hillary Clinton of New York and John McCain of Arizona.

One candidate who seems to obviously meet all of the normally-used criterion is

John Edwards of North Carolina. What's more, Edwards still has a loyal following from the primary race in 2004, and has strong labor backing that Kerry—who voted for NAFTA and the WTO—will need if he hopes to win the election. However, it is a generally-held belief among political circles that Kerry and Edwards are none-too-fond of each other, in which case one of the two Indianans, either Senator Bayh or Governor Kerner, are likely to find themselves on the ticket, since they come from the much-needed Midwest (although the Democrats should bear in mind that no presidential candidate from their party has won that state since 1964). Bob Graham, though widely popular in Florida and certainly capable of helping Kerry carry that state, would be a bad choice for one reason: Jeb Bush would certainly use Graham's vacancy to appoint a Republican Senator in his place. Dick Gephardt is the personal favorite of the writer of this article, though that is mainly for sentimental reasons; the fact remains that Gephardt would probably only appeal to blue collar votes that Edwards would also accumulate, and his only real advantage over Edwards is that Gephardt is very popular in the Midwest.

Ed Rendell, though coming from the pivotal state of Pennsylvania, would be a terrible choice; as a resident of that state who is well-versed in their politics, I must remark here that it is disturbing just how unpopular Rendell is within our increasingly right-wing Commonwealth, and that there is a good chance picking Rendell could actually hurt, rather than help, Kerry's chances. What's more, Rendell is Jewish, and the last thing the Democrats need is to pick a Northeastern Jew as their Vice-Presidential candidate two elections in a row. Wesley Clark, though obviously a brilliant man who would offer a lot to this country as Vice President, has too many skeletons in his closet with regard to his "incompetent" handling of the Kosovo War, and would be deeply unsettling to many Americans who don't want to see two military men on one presidential ticket. Hillary Clinton would be a poor decision because she, like Kerry, is a liberal Northeasterner, and a woman to boot. John McCain (who has already turned down the Veep spot, despite persistent rumors) would be a poor decision for many of the same reasons that Clark would be a bad choice.

## Veep Contenders Get Ready For Their Close-Up



*Edwards doesn't have as good a chance as you might think.*



*Senator Bayh is the stealth front-runner.*



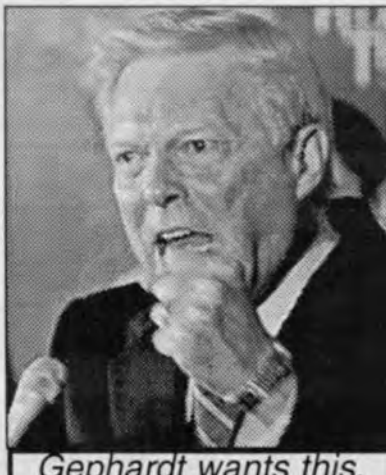
*McCain: object of unfulfillable fantasy*



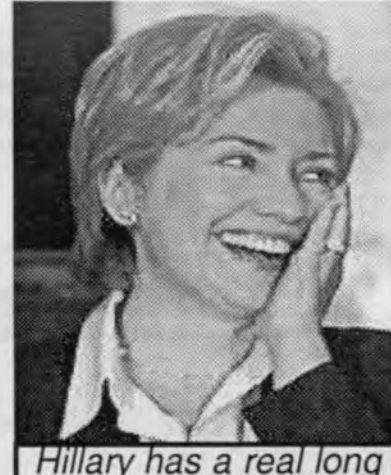
*Wesley Clark is on the short list.*



*Bob Graham is just too nice. And too old.*



*Gephardt wants this. Gephardt needs this.*



*Hillary has a real long shot, but a shot.*

The Carlyle Group's David Rubinstein on the group's formation:

"When we were putting the board together, somebody ... came to me and said, look there is a guy who would like to be on the board. He's kind of down on his luck a bit. Needs a job. Needs a board position. Needs some board positions. Could you put him on the board? Pay him a salary and he'll be a good board member and be a loyal vote for the management and so forth. I said well we're not usually in that business. But okay, let me meet the guy. I met the guy. I said I don't think he adds that much value. We'll put him on the board because--you know--we'll do a favor for this guy; he's done a favor for us.

We put him on the board and [he] spent three years. Came to all the meetings. Told a lot of jokes. Not that many clean ones. And after a while I kind of said to him, after about three years--you know, I'm not sure this is really for you. Maybe you should do something else. Because I don't think you're adding that much value to the board. You don't know that much about the company. He said, well I think I'm getting out of this business anyway. And I don't really like it that much. So I'm probably going to resign from the board.

And I said, thanks--didn't think I'd ever see him again. His name is George W. Bush. He became President of the United States. So you know if you said to me, name 25 million people who would maybe be President of the United States, he wouldn't have been in that category."

observer

The Bard Democrats. Every Tuesday at 9 PM, Room 214 in the Campus Center.



# Chomsky Endorses Kerry, "Betrays" Left

Ramifications Felt Around The Globe

By: Rebecca Giusti

In a surprising about-face, radical left-wing political theorist and MIT professor Noam Chomsky somewhat reluctantly endorsed John Kerry for president on March 19, calling him "a fraction better than Bush." In an interview conducted by the British newspaper The Guardian, Chomsky explained his decision, saying that there were only "small differences between Bush and Kerry," and that the men were simply "two factions of the business party." However, he continued to rationalize that small differences in points of view can translate into large variations in public policy, and in that light Kerry is the obvious choice.

Chomsky seemed to believe that the outcome of the upcoming election was crucial not only to the future of America but also to the world community. He expressed deep concern that the Bush administration might take actions that would threaten the well being of the American people if the president was re-elected in November. He told The Guardian that "The prospect of government which serves popular interests is being dismantled here." For this reason, Chomsky believes that it is imperative that Americans vote for Kerry, if only to save America from another four years with Bush. The Left Hook, a prominent leftist newsletter quoted Chomsky a month before his official endorsement of Kerry: "The current incumbents may do severe, perhaps irreparable damage if given another hold on power—a very slim hold, but one they will use to achieve very ugly and dangerous ends. In a very powerful state, small differences may translate into very substantial effects on the victims, at home and abroad. It is no favor to those who are suffering, and many face much worse ahead, to overlook those facts. Keeping the Bush circle out means holding one's nose and voting for some Democrats."

Chomsky did not neglect to mention the candidates more popular among less extreme leftists: Ralph Nader and Dennis Kucinich. In a transcript of his interview with The Guardian posted in the online political magazine zmag.org which also contains Chomsky's weblog, he is quoted, "I admire Ralph Nader and Dennis Kucinich very much, and insofar as they bring up issues and carry out an educational and organizational function—that's important, and fine, and I support it." However, there was no indication that Chomsky supports Nader or Kucinich enough to vote for them in the 2004 presidential election. It seemed as though he was telling leftists that in such an important election, they cannot risk Bush's re-election by voting for third party candidates.

Although John Kerry has not yet issued a public reaction to the endorsement, many left-wingers were outraged by Chomsky's endorsement. On the leftist website wsws.org, numerous angry responses were posted in reaction. David Walsh, a writer for the site which initially reported the endorsement wrote, "These are bankrupt arguments, which avoid the substantive political issues facing wide layers of the American population. If Chomsky admits that Kerry and Bush are merely two representatives of the same imperialist elite, how can he possibly justify support to either one?" It seems as though Chomsky may have risked his reputation as leader of the far left in endorsing Kerry. And his endorsement could have done more harm than good to the Kerry campaign, which is trying to create a more moderate image of the senator in order to appeal to a wider range of voters.

# My Spring Break Was Better Than Yours

XXX Tales, Involving A Muffler

By: Laura Bomyea

So it's 10:30 at night, over seven hours since I left the Tewksbury parking lot, and I'm driving 20 miles an hour down a pothole-ridden back road in fog thicker than James Bagwell's accent, when Lizzy pipes up on the other end of the walky talky in the car behind me saying "Um, Laura, I think something just fell off your car..."

"What?" I reply, slowing down as I feel something else break free from the back end of my sad little Oldsmobile. At that point I turn down the radio, but the scary noises the car is making have already drowned out the music. I pull over. "Gosh darn," I say...

I would love to say that my spring break involved swimming in the ocean, sleeping in some beach-side bungalow with breezy porches and sipping a tropical drink. But, since my car would not have made it south of Pennsylvania and my paycheck would not have funded anything more exotic than Juicy Juice, I decided to go the most tropical place of all—home.

For those Bard students hailing from LA, Miami or Hong Kong, home may not sound like such a bad place. But, I don't live in LA, or anywhere near a beach. No, sir. I live in Canada—basically. There is nothing tropical about toothless farmers in overalls, barbeque stained white t-shirts or giant barn boots covered in manure. There are no quiet bungalows, only fields of trailers. Rensselaer Falls, NY has a population slightly less than that of Cruger Village. Needless to say, I was really surprised when two of my Bard friends, Sean Smith and Lizzy Stemmer, decided to come with me. Maybe they thought I was kidding...

So there I was, instead of swimming in the ocean I was standing in the fog and rain, pulling on this piece of shit muffler hanging off the back of my car. Pathetic.

Lizzy pointed at the rusted muffler, laying sad and dejected in the puddles. "Is that important?" she asked. Ah Lizzy, sweet, innocent, city girl Lizzy. I looked at her.

"You don't know what that is, do you?" She didn't. Lizzy is from Brooklyn. Lizzy doesn't like getting dirty. Most importantly, Lizzy doesn't know anything about cars.

"That's the muffler."

"What does it do?"

At this point Sean looked at her. He looked at the muffler. He looked at me. "It muffles."

Sean is from Brewster, NY where all the mufflers are clearly labelled. He tugged at the muffler. He kicked it. I kicked it. I looked around me at the fog and the trees and the craters in the road. Finally, I did what any self-respecting college student would do. I cursed. I cursed my car and Bard and spring break. I cursed the automotive gods and Eisenhower and the Canadians. And then I called my parents.

"Hi Dad, what's up?"

"Nothing, why are you still not home?" I looked at my watch. My trip home takes about six hours—I was still two hours from the middle of nowhere.

"Well, you see..." I explained what happened. First, we had gotten off the Northway in Albany, accidentally. I fucked up. Then I un-fucked up and we were back on the road. Then we got to Plattsburgh, and I fucked up again. We weren't lost, I knew where we were, it just wasn't where I wanted to be and it defiantly wasn't where I wanted to be losing a muffler.

My dad laughed. He laughed heartily and loudly. And then, when he was finally done laughing, he chuckled. He sniggered. He hummed. And then he said "well, what are you going to do now?"

So I kept tugging. We stood there for quite a while, tugging, poking, kicking and cursing. A few cars drove by. At some point one of us thought to flag down a car. So when we saw headlights coming around the corner, we were ready. We waved like your mother when she chaperoned for the prom, and it worked. A burly, lumberjack-esque man pulled his full-sized white van to the side of the road. It wasn't until he was rooting around in the back of his van for something large and sharp that one of us decided he might be a pretty shady character. Sean suggested just how similar the situation was to the premise of a bad teen horror movie. Thankfully, the lumberjack didn't ask us to come into his van, or into the dark scary bushes, he just chopped the muffler off all the way, stuck it in Sean's trunk, and drove away.

About forty miles from my house, the fog cleared up and we could drive at a normal speed again. It was at this point that Lizzy's voice came across on the walky talky. Sean was almost out of gas. In most areas, it wouldn't have been a huge problem. But we were driving to a place where they roll up the streets and sidewalks at sundown, and nothing can be found for miles and miles. For fifteen or twenty miles Lizzy and Sean exclaimed at the lack of open gas stations before we pulled into a 24 hour Stewart's. A half-hour later we pulled into my driveway, wet and dejected, more than 9 hours after we had departed Bard.

Things were relatively uneventful after we arrived at my house. We went camping for a few days, and Sean and Lizzy marveled at the tiny outhouse with its linoleum floor and the mounted deer head whose mouth was wired shut because it was falling apart. Birds made birdy noises, it was pretty warm inside and we ate like kings. I've decided that taking city kids to the country might be my new favorite pastime.

# Easter Bunny Mercilessly Beaten

The Easter Bunny Died For Your Sins

By: Genevieve Wanucha

Do you remember when you stopped believing in the Easter Bunny? For children who attended the Glassport Memorial Stadium in Pennsylvania this April 3, their innocent childhood fantasies were not gently broken apart by growing more mature and aware, but torn apart early and gruesomely by reckless religious fanatics. On April 3, a church presentation in Glassport, Pennsylvania featured a teaching on the crucifixion of Jesus. Included in this presentation was a group of actors whipping the Easter Bunny and smashing Easter eggs. An audience obviously filled with children was bombarded with yells of, "The Easter Bunny doesn't exist!" During the performance, a teary four year old complained to his mother,

"Why is the Easter bunny being whipped?"

Patty Bickerton, aside from being the minister of the Glassport Assembly of God, had been the person dressed up in the Easter Bunny costume. She explained to a local newspaper that she had tried to act with a tone of irreverence. She also stated that the performance was not meant to be offensive. "The program was for all ages, not just the kids. We wanted to convey that Easter is not just about the Easter bunny, it is about Jesus Christ," Bickerton said.

She forgot to add how pleased Jesus would have been to see his crucifixion displayed along with a sadomasochistic bunny whipping. Adding to the horrifying performance were actors who destroyed the eggs meant for an Easter Egg hunt. In Glassport Memorial Stadium, children searching for the meaning of Easter found, amongst the perversion and slander of a mystical childhood dream, the message that Jesus died for their sins..and wanted all furry creatures who handed out chocolate eggs to be beaten and ridiculed.

At left: The Easter Bunny sits quietly and prepares His/Her revenge. It is, after all, only a matter of time before He/She emerges from the netherworld and smites all non-believers. Will little Suzy be the first to go?





# Bard Cricket Vanquishes Vassar

*Hell Yeah! We Kicked Their Ass!!!*

By: Maanas Agarwal and Ananta Zakaria

Cricket is a game of passion and often emotions ride high. Feelings overtake skill and talent and the friendly game becomes a battle. This is the very essence of cricket- the gentleman's game. The cricket club wanted to show the Bard community why cricket is gaining popularity everywhere. And there could not have been a perfect occasion than spanking Vassar- yeah, Vassar, at home. The moment for which the whole college had been eagerly awaiting finally arrived: an occasion when Bard would display its obvious supremacy over its archrival, Vassar. In a cricket match played between Bard and Vassar outside the campus center on Saturday, April 10th the Bard cricket team humiliated Vassar, just as the cricket club had promised.

Hell Yeah! We kicked their Ass!!!

It was a beautiful day and the conditions were perfect for a great game of cricket. Indeed, the cricketers did not disappoint. Vassar won the toss and elected to bowl. People had already started streaming in. Amanda, Angelique, Zubair and Ayesha were the official scorers. The opening batsmen for Bard were Ananta Neelim and Tapan Maniar. Just as it is very crucial in any game to gain the initial advantage, cricket is no exception. These two ensured that we got off to a steady start without any wickets lost. The opening bowlers for Vassar bowled beautifully, but Tapan and Ananta ensured that all that came Vassar's way was despair. Tapan Maniar was the first batsman to get out for Bard. However, the foundation for a good total had been laid. Imran was the next batsmen. He started off a bit edgy. But with Ananta he gained his confidence and both looked set. Just when Vassar players started to look frustrated, their best bowler, Rahul Lulla, struck gold. With a beautiful ball which swung in, he clean bowled Ananta. Next to come in for Bard was Suvash. He did not stay there for long. He got out on the 3rd ball. The innings which had been calm so far seemed to be entering stormy waters.

But difficulty brings out the best in a man. Seeing his team in dire straits, Imran took upon himself the responsibility of restructuring the innings. He started playing aggressively, which intimidated the Vassar bowlers. They lost their line and length, and faltered. Reazur stayed long enough to see Bard past the panic stage. By the time Reazur got out, Bard had regained the advantage. Adeb Sultan, a very flamboyant batsman, replaced Reazur. He displayed streaks of his style, but good bowling from Vassar outdid his style. Next to come in was Nikhil John. Known for his aggressiveness with the bat, none expected him to stay there and not display some fireworks.

Meanwhile, on the other side, Imran was quietly and quickly batting beautifully and ensured that the runs kept coming. Nikhil, fondly called Nikky by friends, had a short stay at the crease as he tried to take risks by playing some shots. In the ending overs, one is expected to hit to gain extra runs. Nikky was caught in the outfield trying to hit a boundary.

of the stipulated 25 overs, Bard scored a majestic total of 133 runs. This was indeed a very high score and would eventually prove to be more than a handful for the Vassar



"Mama," took the next wicket when Nikky took a stunning running catch. The match was in Bard's pocket. By the seventh over, Bard's victory looked inevitable. Vassar batsman did not do much to really oppose the fact. They had seemed to lose interest and the realization that they would lose had sunk into them. Their meager supporters had fallen quiet. The Bard camp was quite a contrast. Everyone was cheering and smiles were abundant. However, the game is never over till the last wicket falls. Bard bowlers, fully aware of that golden statement, stuck to their task. After the drinks break, Tapan quickly removed another batsman to pick up his third wicket. Reazur continued his strong showing and picked another wicket. Victory was in sight. Maanas then picked two wickets in his over and a win over Vassar was a mere formality. Reazur took the last wicket and the whole crowd erupted in cheers. Vassar team was all out for 81 runs, giving Bard a comfortable 52 runs victory.

The players themselves were overjoyed as the feeling of the tremendous victory over Vassar slowly sunk in. All of them formed a huddle and cheered. Vassar players also strode in the field, looking dejected. However, they were very sporting and acknowledged that they had been outplayed in every department by Bard. Bard bowlers were a major contributor to the victory, notably Tapan Maniar and Reazur Rahman. With their immaculate line and prodigious air swing, they baffled almost all the Vassar batsmen. Maanas was also consistently accurate and put immense pressure on the Vassar team. Nikky and Imran's opening spell had been the catalyst in beginning the onslaught.

It was Imran's tremendous batting that had given Bard an unbeatable score. Even the Bard fielding was fantastic. The Islam brothers, Saiful and Monirul, were a treat to watch. Their enthusiasm was evident as they fielded well and also cheered the bowlers. Sutha and Daniel expressed their willingness to play cricket by substituting for other Bard players. Rahul Lulla was the star player for Vassar team. The Vassar team left with an invitation to play another match in May! They thanked Bard for the warm hospitality and the good arrangements made by the Cricket Club. They were amazed at the infrastructure of cricket in Bard as compared to Vassar. In the end it was time for victory pictures and celebrations.

The heartening fact about the match was the tremendous crowd support and also the huge crowd that turned up. Popularity of cricket has reached an all time high. We hope that more matches will pique more interest in the Bard community in this wonderful game and more people will express interest to play

this game. Those interested should contact Maanas at mal174@bard.edu or x4732.

Overall a very satisfying performance by the team left everyone in a good mood. I personally was congratulated by many unknown people for many days. People still ask me about our victory. This not only makes me proud of



our victory but also of the fact that cricket club is achieving its aim. The Bard cricket club is thankful to everyone who supported us and helped us win. Also, it requests people to be there when Bard plays Vassar again in the first week of May. The weather, refreshments and above all the excitement will make it a perfect day for outdoors, we promise that.

## Cricket: The Rules of The Game

There are two teams, each made up of 11 players. They play on a large circular field with a batting area at the centre (22 yards by 3 yards). This centre part of the field is called the pitch. At either end of the pitch is a wicket (28 inches high); the wicket consists of three vertical poles (stumps) and two small horizontal sticks (bails), which rest on top of the stumps.

To begin, one team bats and the other team fields (bowls). All the members of the fielding team are on the field at one time, spread out in various positions across the field. The batting team have two members on the field at any one time, each standing at either end of the pitch. One member of the fielding team acts as a 'bowler' and throws a cricket ball overarm from one end of the pitch towards the wicket at the other end. His aim is to try and hit this wicket. The aim of the batsman is to protect his wicket and to score runs by hitting the ball. There are two ways for a batsman to score:

By hitting the ball out of the field. If the ball bounces before it reaches the edge, then the batsman will score 4 runs. If it does not bounce then six runs are scored.

By hitting the ball within the field and then running to the other end of the pitch. The batsman as this end does the same, so that the two of them cross over. A single run is counted for each time that the batsmen cross each other.

There are many ways that a batsman can be deemed to be out (he retires and is replaced by another member of his team). The four main ways are:

If the bowler hits the wicket that he is defending with the ball.

If the player is caught (a fielder catches the ball hit by the batsman before it hits the ground).

If the ball hits any part of the batsman's body and it is judged by the umpire (referee) that the ball would hit the wicket if it had not hit the batsman. This is known as leg before wicket (LBW)

If the batsman is run out. To achieve this a fielder must hit the wicket with the ball whilst the batsmen are running to the alternative end of the pitch.

When 10 players from the batting team are out, the teams swap over so that the fielders become the batters and the batters become the fielders. The aim of the new batting team is to try and beat the number of runs that the other team have scored.

BY THE BARD CRICKET CLUB

team. Vassar had to score 134 runs in 150 balls, by no means an easy task, considering Bard's bowling strength. However, the Vassar team only had itself to blame for losing the early initiative. Its fielding lacked quality, as there were many dropped catches and also sloppy misfieldings. Many batsmen were lucky enough to be dropped more than once. The highest scorer, Imran, got many lives. Whenever Bard was in a tight spot, Vassar bowlers lost the initiative by giving extra runs which eased the tension.

A huge crowd had gathered to cheer the home team. The tons of free refreshments had attracted everyone, but the major factor was the excitement associated with the game. You could smell it in the air. The crowd was very vocal and appreciative. Every good shot was cheered and every mistake by the opposing team was booed. It was evident that the crowd was enjoying itself thoroughly. The most encouraging fact was that everyone made an effort to understand the game. Also to support the team were faculty and staff members like Fred Barnes, Peter Gadsby, David Shein, Allen Josey, Geneva Foster, Bethany Nohlgren, and many others. The crowd enjoyed both the glorious weather and the match.

After the intermission, it was the turn for the Bard players to bowl. Their aim was very clear: to keep Vassar as far as possible from scoring 134 runs. Nikky, along with Imran, opened the bowling. The first over was the only over when Vassar batsman showed confidence. In the second over of the match, Imran showed his class with the ball when he trapped Rahul Lulla, the Vassar captain in front of the wickets. Nikky, not to be left behind, struck his 2nd over. It was all downside from there for Vassar. When they seemed to be coasting, Maanas and Tapan bowled immaculately to make sure match did not drift away from Bard. Tapan's hard work and consistency with the ball was rewarded when he got two wickets in one over leaving Vassar in crutches. Reazur Rahman, fondly called



Maanas was the next to come. He played the perfect partner to Imran. While ensuring that no wickets were lost he also ensured that Imran got to bat most, since he was in wonderful touch. The heat finally got to Imran, and he finally got out trying to hit a ball outside the field. But his innings had swayed the advantage towards Bard. The damage had been done and the next batsmen, Mahmud and Maanas ensured that further damage was done. They both added valuable runs at the end of the innings. At the end

April 20, 2004



# "Understanding Arabs and Muslims" Conference

## Brings Bard and Red Hook Together

By: Amanda Selin

While most of us spent the last weekend of spring break catching one last ray of sun or finishing a chapter of our Senior Project, Ramy Hemeid was working diligently to bring together the first Understanding Arabs and Muslims Conference at Bard College. The goal of the conference was to educate area high school students about Arab and Muslim history and culture through guest speakers, film screenings, small discussion groups, and of course, great food.

When asked where the idea for the conference came from, Ramy recalled the initial work of the project, which began last year. "The work we did before was to increase awareness of issues of Arabs and Muslims in the United States, mainly targeting the Bard Community. This year I decided it's necessary to try to influence the very surrounding community," he said. "I contacted several high school students. We got a response from Red Hook and talked to interested students."

So on the afternoon of April 2nd, a group of Red Hook High School students, with overnight bags in tow, settled into the village dorms for a weekend of great films, food, and conversation. The night began with dinner from a Pakistani restaurant. As the high school students and on-campus Bard students shared this delicious meal, Imam Sallahudin gave a talk about the history of Islam and addressed the presence of Islam in the world today. The talk was brief but informative, and students were given the opportunity to ask questions at its conclusion. Following the dinner, students were shuffled off to Preston for a viewing of Muslims, a film that explores the history and culture of Muslims from various countries around the world, including Egypt, Malaysia, Iran, Turkey, Nigeria and the United States. The film examines the relationships between Islam, Christianity and Judaism, and the different ways in which Muslim people around the world view Islam. After a long night of eating, watching and talking, the Red Hook students returned to the village to rest up for the following day.

Ramy led a calligraphy workshop on Saturday morning, instructing the students how to write their name in Arabic, while discussing reactions to the events of the previous night. Pat Kelly, a 10th grader, reported "[the film] showed the diversity of opinions in the Muslim world. It is very easy to assign an opinion to an entire culture." In the afternoon, the students viewed *Driving an Arab Street*, a documentary that follows various Egyptian cabdrivers around Cairo as they diverge very differing views on American and Egyptian politics, and the relationship between the two societies. Upon being asked what she thought of the film, 11th grader Shannon Perez stated, "I learned a lot about the people

there. The media here makes everything extreme there. Me and some people didn't realize that a lot of people go to college there. I also learned that it isn't that they hate Americans, they just like the Americans policies that affect them."

Ramy concluded the afternoon with *Shahrbano*, a heart-warming film about an American woman, Melissa, who visits the family of her new husband in Tehran, Iran. She befriends Shahrbano, the housekeeper, and spends her time talking politics and feminism with Shahrbano's family. Melissa realizes over the course of her stay that while she is very different from those she has met, she is very similar as well. Reflecting on the film, 11th grader Adam Fincke stated, "it focuses on a normal Iranian family instead of a stereotypical view. [The film was] a sharing of culture. It makes you want to go there and learn more about it." The film was followed by an excellent Egyptian dinner in the Multipurpose Room, accompanied by Egyptian music. The night ended with tea in the mediatin garden and, once again, discussions amongst the students about the day's events.

The weekend concluded on Sunday morning, when the students were given the opportunity to offer feedback about the conference and ask any further questions they had concerning the new information they had been presented with. Generally, the sentiment amongst the students was positive, as Amelia-Rose Harrar, an 11th grader at Red Hook High School, stated "The weekend was great...a lot of fun...All of the videos were diverse: we talked about how valid they were...The group was great. The people were great. We all had input. The media doesn't really portray everything correctly...I want to do it again."

Shannon Perez was in agreement. "It was a lot fun," she said. "I liked that we learned a lot about the culture and not just the religion. I liked that there were films and not just classrooms. I also liked the dinners. It is not something you can get around here. Adam Fincke concurred. "Egyptian dinner and music was the highlight," he said. "It would be better if it was longer and had a few more people."

Ramy seemed pleased with the outcome. "I am very happy with the conference," he said. "Working with a small number of students gave us the opportunity to go into deep, honest discussions we wouldn't have been able to have with a large group. The group was diverse enough to have constructive discussions. I want to try to have it next year and have Bard volunteers lead their own discussion groups, which would allow us to have more high school students."

# An Interview With Monique Truong

Bard Fiction Prize Winner Begins Conquest of Literary World

By: Laura Bomyea

"Ordinarily, I am plagued, like the Old Man, with a slowness. In him, it was triggered by cowardice. In me, it is aggravated by carelessness. Ours is a hesitancy toward an act that is habitual and common to those around us: the forming of conclusions. We are, instead, weighted and heaved by decades of observations. We gather them, rags and remnants, and then have no needle and thread with which to sew them together. But once they are formed, ours become the thick, thorny coat of a durian, a covering designed to forestall the odor of rot and decay deep inside." -from page 22 of *The Book of Salt* by Monique Truong

Recently, I was given the opportunity to sit down with the current Bard Fiction Prize Winner and recent recipient of the New York Public Library Young Lions Award, Monique Truong. I sipped black current tea from round white teacups while she graciously answered my questions.

Bard Observer: "So if you would like to start by telling me a little bit about yourself, your writing and how you found yourself here at Bard."

Monique Truong: "Well, I suppose I've always sort of written, you know, typical story right? [laughs] I've kept a journal since middle school, I wrote short stories in high school but I never took a writing class or anything like that in college, but I did creative writing projects when I could. I graduated from Yale in 1990 and then took two years off. I was working as a paralegal. Then I went to law school, Columbia, and graduated from there in 1995.

Between when I graduated from college and all the way through basically the first year after law school, I didn't do any sort of creative writing at all. And then I started working on a project co-editing an anthology of Vietnamese American Literature called *Watermark*. I was working with two other people and I tried to submit a piece of writing I did when I was in college. My two co-editors said no to the piece. They said 'look, this is good for college, but you're not going to want this floating around out there in the world.' I was completely devastated because even though I wasn't doing any sort of creative writing, I still would say 'oh I'm a writer' if I met you.

So I took a couple sick days off from work and I started writing a short story. I thought I'd write something so that I could submit. So I sat down and I wrote a short story that is now basically the second chapter of the novel that I wrote [*The Book of Salt*]. That process of writing again reminded me how satisfying and how wonderful it is to write. It was the first short story I had written where I really felt like there was more to it, not just that it could be a longer short story, but that it had the scope of a novel. That's basically how this particular book got started and how I started writing again.

I'm here at Bard, as you know, because of the Bard Fiction Prize which is a lovely, lovely prize. It's amazingly free of expectations in terms of your time. There's no teaching requirement involved. I have office hours every Tuesday 11:00am- 1:00pm. I also have evening sessions that I've been basically every other week."

Bard Observer: "What do those involve?"

Monique Truong: "They're sort of anything-you-want-to-do kind of things. Basically I sit in a classroom and whoever shows up, shows up. We just talk about whatever people want to talk about with respect to writing. We talk about what we've been reading and we talk about publishing and the reality of publishing, marketing, things that you probably shouldn't be talking about in a creative writing class, you know, but I'm not running a creative writing class. I think of it as more of a real-world writing, the professional aspect of being a writer, which you never should think about while you are writing but it's always good to know otherwise."

Bard Observer: "It sounds like something that you need someone to tell you but that you don't necessarily need to think about until you're done writing."

Monique Truong: "Exactly."

Monique then went on to explain that the Bard Fiction Prize is for authors aged

39 or younger. She remarked that this was pretty rare for such a generous prize, but that it was a wonderful opportunity for young writers just starting out in their career or those that have published a few works previously. Bard provides the prize winners with an office on campus and a modest apartment. Her apartment was furnished with many small chairs, books and great windows that opened out into the forests behind the building. It was modest—sparse, but comfortable. She also has an apartment in Brooklyn where she lives with her husband.

Bard Observer: "So are you enjoying Bard?"

Monique Truong: "I really like it up here, it's very nice. Anyone who's lived in New York or been to New York will understand that when you're walking on the streets you basically try not to breathe in very deeply. So, I've realized that when I leave New York, especially for a more rural setting, I have to tell myself that it's okay to take a deep breath when I'm walking around. I walk from here to my office and I start out taking short breaths and then I'm like "oh yeah, there's no pile of stinking garbage!" It smells really great here. I know that sounds really silly but it's one of the lovely things about any sort of residency like this because they're often in less urban settings."

Bard Observer: "I've been reading your novel, *The Book of Salt*, I haven't finished it—it was hard to get ahold of a copy because we only have one in the library. I actually had to beg borrow and steal one from a friend. But I'm wondering... the first couple chapters that I've read are so involved in being from another country and traveling, I was wondering if you've traveled much more than coming to the United States."

Monique Truong: "Well, as you know, I came to the United States from Vietnam when I was six, almost seven, I've been to Paris probably four or five times now, but I've never really lived there. The longest I stayed was four or five weeks when I was a teenager. I've traveled a lot, to Italy and Spain, but this book is set in France."

"I'm writing about a man who feels incredibly displaced, without language and profoundly lonely. If you think about it, that's how most teenagers, really if you think about it, isn't that your experience when you're traveling alone? I'm talking basically about my experience when I was sixteen living there for the longest period of time. My French then was probably the best that it's ever going to be and it was still pretty bad. I certainly could draw upon that, the sense of being alone, but also, my father went to school in France and England when he was a very young boy and he stayed there until after he finished graduate school. He would tell me stories when he was growing up about what it felt like to be there without a family and without money and all these things. So I thought a lot about those stories too."

When she's not in her office or giving talks around campus, Monique is working on her second novel. She describes it as "a sort of re-imagining of the American Southern gothic novel." She just finished reading Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *Living to Tell the Tale* and explained to me Marquez's concept of the story. "For him," she said, "there is the story that you're writing, and the story that you tell people that you're writing. Both of them exist parallel to each other and they may intersect, they may not but he doesn't think that's necessarily a bad thing. I kind of like that." I laughed. I kind of like that too. So her next book might be a re-imagining of the American Southern gothic novel, or it might not.

Her novel, published by Houghton Mifflin, is available in the bookstore and at most commercial bookstores. It's a lovely book, filled with vivid description and captivating character development. She has two more events this semester, on Tuesday April 20 and 27 in Olin Language Center 210 (keep an eye out for the time), which I urge anyone to check out. Take advantage of the opportunity, she's a wonderful person and a really great writer.



# A DEF JUX ROUNDTABLE REVIEW

By: Henry Casey and Noah Weston

**NW:** When I first heard Karniege on Vast Aire's *Dirty Magazine* mix tape, I thought his mic presence would lend itself to a great live show. I was proven oh-so wrong, four times over.

**HC:** He had a guy introduce him, who wasn't even known by the crowd, who spat a 16 that was by far the worst moment, up until ...

**NW:** 4th Pyramid disgraced Def Jux, hip hop and all things audible. His show confirmed all the worst that I thought about him, primarily that he was another case of EI-P choosing new rappers for his label with total, potentially marijuana induced, abandon.

**HC:** As I said in my review of the *Definitive Jux Presents 3...* album that this show was promoting, 4th is by far the least appealing and challenging act to arise from somebody's womb. I'd rather listen to Ja Rule.

**HC:** Despot seems like the rap version of suburban lawn gnomes, small in stature, rarely moving and clad in red.

**NW:** If he suffers from some sort of muscular disorder, this



Shock G, for all the children, demonstrating that there are 5 fingers

is the only condition under which I'll excuse such total inertia. I have to say that he is a deft lyricist, but considering that I in a packed crowd, moved around more than he did on an empty stage, he doesn't deserve commendation for anything more than his rhymes.

**HC:** DJ JS1, up until his set, I thought that I would need a shower to get these shitty emcee's off my mind, but JS1 knew what he was doing and spun some great records.

**NW:** I was familiar already with his work, and his impressive set reinforced my respect for his skills on the 1 and 2's. Though I've seen the sort of juggling and body tricks (i.e. cutting with his shoes) that he performed, it is always a pleasure to see them executed so well.

**HC:** I had seen Hangar 18 before, opening up for the last two Def Jux concerts I had been to, and the guys brought it again. Also, now that the crowd knew who they were, they gave off a sense of confidence that was accentuated with as fine a swagger that emcee's named Alaska and WindNBreeze can.

**NW:** Hangar 18 demonstrates one important element of showmanship, the capacity to constantly outdo oneself as a performer. Though I am not as big a Def Jukie as say, Henry, I couldn't help but bug out when Alaska and WindNBreeze rocked over Eric B. and Rakim's "Juice (Know the Ledge)."

**NW:** It was nice seeing the guy [RJD2] on the cover of *Dead Ringer*, without all the blood on his face. In addition RJ proved how adept he is at mixing, although he didn't excite me much. Perhaps though, my view has been retroactively colored by the unpleasant experience of listening to an advance copy of his next release, which isn't

worth buying or downloading.

**HC:** I thought RJD2 held the crowd's attention well, something hard to do when there is no actual emcee on stage, without using the physical tricks of DJ's like JS1. Overall though it was nice to have three good acts in a row for once

**HC:** I had really liked the songs on record that I had heard from Crayz Walz, and really appreciated how kind the guy was at the merch table, but for the most his set didn't stand out much to me, except for a well done rendition of "Elephant Guns."

**NW:** Regardless of his somewhat insubstantial catalog, I still have mad love for C-Rayz. He has an unparalleled voice, incalculable energy, and witty yet accessible lyrics. I don't think there was a single disappointed person in the house throughout his set and reasonably so. However I really could have done without the small child and his adult stylistic equal who took the stage during C-Rayz' set along with Breeze the Everflowing. Breeze would have sufficed while the other two "rappers" would have been more suitable for Showtime at the Apollo.

**HC:** Um ... SA Smash ... yeah, sorry, but I had no idea what was going on onstage during this set.

**NW:** SA Smash is sort of the Katherine Hepburn of Def Jux. Instead of discreet single performances on stage and on record, they produce a continuous single narrative of misogyny and gore. Needless to say I love SA Smash, especially Camu Tao also of the Mhz crew, whose off-kilter, shards-of-metal-and-gravel-flow consistently enlivens any effort of which he's a part.

**HC:** As I find The Perceptionists' (Mr. Lif, Akrobatik and DJ Faks One) track "Avengers" to be one of my favorite hip hop songs ever, I was hyped for their set. Lif, for those who have only heard him on recorded songs, not live, sounds much different, with a very higher pitch. Great set though.

**NW:** Ak and Lif have terrific chemistry on wax that translates into equally terrific stage interplay. Yes, I used the word "terrific," [ed. note: actually used it twice] and that makes me somewhat of a herb, but for the sake of this review, I'll accept that onus. I essentially came to the show to see Mr. Lif, and from his set on, I could have seen a two-hour long 4th Pyramid encore and still would have been content.

**HC:** Murs talked to us after the show was over, and while signing his new album, *Murs 3:16 the 9th Edition*; he said that they were forced to cut his set short. I thought it was a damn good set though, showcasing his eclectic base of songs. When he started talking about BET, I knew that the next song was going to be "Risky Business," the hilarious track that has a very raunchy, and therefore only fit for late night programming, music video. As a surprise, Humpty Hump came out and performed his verses with Murs, increasing the grins in the audience by a whole inch.

**NW:** The new Murs record, *Murs 3:16, The 9th Edition*, has quickly become my favorite Murs album. I'd really hoped for a great deal more of his work from his new jawn, but ended up unsatisfied, even though Murs dropped a few hot records on us.

**HC:** Aesop Rock, or as he's becoming Dictionary-Man,

had a very tight set including what I will call perfect performance of "No Regrets." The stage production, for the whole night, only seemed to be thought about for this song, which was done in a way that each verse had it's own tone and feel. As the song goes on the protagonist of it, Lucy, is aging more and more, and that was conveyed in color tones and the speed Aesop spat verse at.

**NW:** Aesop Rock: I'm of the opinion that Aesop Rock has steadily declined since he dropped his last non-Jux album, *Float*. Back then, he had an incomparable flow, a syrupy rhythm in every line that permitted him the chance to say the most ludicrous, haphazardly constructed verses if he wanted. Since those days, he's become stiffer, less listenable, and his live show has suffered similarly. It felt like he phoned in his entire performance, relying heavily on the crowd's slavish devotion to his every word and movement to keep the energy going. Frankly, C-Rayz deserved far more of the enthusiasm that the audience showed for Aesop.

**HC:** Headlining a show, after only releasing two songs in



Mr Lif, Cyclops has Nothing on Him

the past year and a half must seem like a challenge, but the crowd loved EI-Producto. Near the end of his set, he brought out Cage for a well-orchestrated performance of "Oxycontin Part 2." He went on to declare that Cage was the latest signee to Definitive Jux and that The Perceptionists, were signed as well.

**NW:** EI-P: The best way to close a show is to return to the start, the formative energy behind all that just took place on stage. In this case, EI-P served as a reminder of what lit the fuse for Definitive Jux's explosive sound, and really for that of a great deal of independent hip hop. EI came as confident as he ever has, with an absolutely flawless delivery, on some General Patton type of shit. As usual, he went the extra mile, blessing us with a new record, which I took to be called "Everything Must Go." If this new track was any indication of how EI-P's sophomore solo effort will sound, then people might very well forget about Fantastic Damage.

**HC:** Despite the first desolate half hour, by the end I was in the firm belief that my twenty-five bucks were well spent.

**NW:** On a final note, I must say that the show featured the most obnoxious, inconsiderate crowd I've had the displeasure of encountering. I was jostled at inappropriate times, choked by weed smoke that didn't drift that freely amid the congested venue, and shoved aside so Def Jux groupies could hurl their undoubtedly shitty demos at the lesser knowns on the label. Normally, I'd say something cheesy like "the real winner here...were the fans," but since I ultimately loathed the lot of them, I won't give them that much.



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**MONDAY:**  
2:30pm - 4:30pm  
*Hipsters For Dummies* - Jennifer Hollup and Joma Leitch  
4:30pm - 6pm  
*Monday Afternoon Lecture Series*  
6pm - 8pm  
*Thanks for the Relish* - Max ZT  
8pm - 10 pm  
*Pre-Emergency Room Jamz* - Henry Casey  
10pm - 12am  
*The Phillip K. Dick Bedtime Hour* - Michael Goldman  
12am - 2 am  
Abe  
**TUESDAY:**  
2pm - 4pm  
Tracy and Gaia  
4pm - 4:30pm

*The Outside World Radio Project* - Nick van der Kolk and Howard Megdal  
4:30pm - 6pm  
*Songs for Hana* - Nick van der Kolk  
8pm - 10pm  
*Professional Hot Girl Radio* - Karen Trindle and Adrienne Mathiewetz  
10pm - 12am  
*Die Zeit!* - Nate Bush and Joe Stewart  
12am - 2am  
*DJ Turd's Craptastical Crapstravaganza*  
**WEDNESDAY:**  
2pm - 4pm  
*The Denise Show* - Janaya Kizzle  
4pm - 6pm  
*Slo's All Music*

*Meltdown* - DJ Slo  
6pm - 8pm  
*Adventures of Chester Brannigan* - Walker Pett, Lauren Stutzbak and Julianna La Bruto  
8pm - 10pm  
Julian James and Matt Wing  
10pm - 12am  
*Refining the Lost Art of Chillin'* - Peter Rolland and Blake Malin  
12 am - 2am  
Sebastian  
**THURSDAY:**  
2pm - 4pm  
*Sopping the Biscuit* - Woody Litman  
4pm - 6pm  
*The Funk-Rock-Soul-Motown Muthafuckin'* - Throwdown - Elijah Tucker

6pm - 8pm  
*Sports Talk* - Collin Orcutt and Adam Turner  
8pm - 10pm  
*A Geography Lesson For Cats* - Jesse Crooks  
10pm - 12am  
*Bedtime Stories* - Sara Carnochan  
12am - 2am  
*Misery Loves Company* - Joyce Li and Christine Friskey  
**FRIDAY:**  
2pm - 4pm  
*Drink Your Breakfast* - Jesse Kovnat, Sam Sherman, & Kaelin Ballinger  
4pm - 6pm  
*Dance Commander* - Lauren Kitz & Amy

MacKay  
6pm - 8pm  
*Class: Jazz Grass* - Nadnerb  
8pm - 10pm  
*Party 'Til You Shit* - Karen Soskin & Ben Schultz-Figueroa  
10pm - 12am  
*Lugging the Body Upstairs* - Pedro Icaza & Zach Smith  
12am - 2am  
*Smokey & T-Bone* - Will Baylies & Matt Cameron  
**SATURDAY:**  
2pm - 4pm  
*My Mother, Her Boyfriend, and His Obsession* - Samuel Kraft  
4pm - 6pm  
*Beagle Treats* -

Jennifer Lewis  
6pm - 8pm  
Angelique  
8pm - 10pm  
*Watch Your Grill* - Noah Weston  
10pm - 12am  
*Sweat-T and Burgun-D* - Corinne Hoener & Stephen Perry  
12am - 2am  
*The Time Machine* - Jack Woodruff  
**SUNDAY:**  
2pm - 4pm  
*The Mighty Return of the White Man Show* - Matt Cummings & Sean Boylan  
4pm - 6pm  
*Jack's Hour of Enrichment*  
6pm - 8pm  
*Sounds For Tha Soul*

*With The Preacher's Son* - Andy Hardman  
8pm - 10pm  
*Two Hours of Misery* - Brel Froebe & Ray Mack  
10pm - 12am  
*Get Out of My Chair* - Owen Conlow  
12am - 2am  
*I Read Books* - Michelle Devereux  
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observer



## Interview with Russell Banks

By: Tom Mattos

**Tom Mattos:** Looking back on a career, both impressive and prolific to say the least, what was it that made you turn to writing? Why sit in a lonely office for hours on end, anxiously typing away? What's at stake for you when you write?

**Russell Banks:** Well, there are two questions there. The first--what prompted you to spend as much as your life, to decide to spend your life doing this--and the second, what's at stake, is a much harder question.

For me, and I think this is true for most writers, there wasn't any "Aha!" moment where you think "I'll become a writer," or "I'll dedicate my life to becoming a writer." It was in incremental slow process over several years that started when I was about nineteen, and fell in love with reading, and with literature. I thought I was going to become a painter at that point, because that's the only obvious talent that I had. Writing doesn't usually manifest itself as a talent, or a gift particularly, it's a slowly acquired skill. It's an attitude, or a temperament. When I fell in love with literature I wasn't in college. I didn't go to college until later in any serious way. Then sort of like a clever monkey I started to imitate what I loved, either in poetry, short stories, or novels, and I'd sit up late at night trying to do that. And before many years past I was organizing my life around my writing, so that by the time I was twenty-three or twenty-four, I really had to admit that that's what I had become, without necessarily intending it, or desiring it even, it was just how I was living my life, increasingly.

Then after a few years more there wasn't much else I could do, I wasn't good at anything else, it was too late to learn how to do anything else very well. So that's how I ended up, as you put it, that I dedicated my life to this business--writing stories and novels.

But what's at stake for me has changed over the years as I think it inevitably does. When you think of a marriage, a long marriage, you're attracted to a person for one set of reasons, but you stay on and stay on and stay on as the years go by for different reasons, different virtues and values. That's true for me with writing. Early on, I don't really remember or knew what was at stake for me when I first began (probably not a great deal), because I was merely imitating what I love. At that point if I'd stopped it would have been no terrible loss to myself or the world. But I kept at it, and the longer I did it, the more was at stake. Because before long you discover that in the process of writing, or the practice of any art, the discipline of the tradition that you're working with, forces you--allows you--to become more intelligent and more honest than you are in any other time in your life. So as a result, it became the place where I could be most honest and most intelligent. So that's what's at stake. And then as time goes on it becomes increasingly how you learn about the world--so ultimately it becomes a whole question of identity in a very subjective sense--in a final sense--it's what you know about the world that's most important, and your relation to it is what you get from the process of writing. That's my very long answer to a very simple question.

**TM:** I read an interview that you gave with book magazine in August of 2000, I don't know if you remember or not... but you defined the role of a storyteller as someone who strives "to tell people where they came from, and perhaps, to give them an idea of where they are going." In your writing, I'm thinking specifically of the "Sweet Hereafter" and "The Child Screams and Looks Back at You." In these stories you present the reader with often unanswerable moral conundrums. With your definition of a storyteller in mind, if you want to stick with it, where is it that we are going, and what do you hope readers will take away from your work?

**R.B.:** That definition of the storyteller's role in the larger community is important to me to keep in mind who I am and what I do, not just in some private personal way. I try to think of it in a primitive sense--an ancient sense--of what the storyteller does. That's how I meant it, I think, in that interview. But there are other parts to my thinking then just simply those two questions. That's a part of a larger question that I think all storytellers try to deal with, and all of humanity tries to deal with, which is "what is it to be human?" I think that's really the defining sense of what I'm trying to do as a writer, as a storyteller, is to dramatize over and over again what it is to be human. You know, we are the only species on this planet that has to learn with each generation what it is to be itself. Every other animal, every other organic thing on the planet, knows what it means to be itself, except human beings. I think that's what storytellers do on a basic level.

So to answer the question as to where are we coming from and where are we going, we're coming from being humans and we're striving to continue to be human beings, but we have to learn with each generation what it is to be human. So we can go back and read Homer, we can read Shakespeare, we can read all the great stories from all the cultures of the world. But all of them come back down to the fact that you're reading them to learn what it is to be human.

**TM:** In order to create some sort of collective memory?

**R.B.:** Creating a collective memory, creating a master tale, creating a collective consciousness-- these are all ways of talking about the same thing.

**TM:** Michael Ondaatje refers to you as "the uncompromising moral voice of our time..."

**R.B.:** That's a rather grand claim...

**TM:** It's what he said... But what do you think is the role of a novelist such as yourself in the moral fabric of America?

**R.B.:** Well... I think that this is a hard question to answer, because the experience of writing is different for everyone. The occasion of the public, and the occasion of the writer's life is felt differently by every writer. I don't have any sense of what a novelist ought to do, but I do have an idea of what I personally want to do. And not especially as a novelist, but as a human being, as a citizen of the world, as a citizen of the United States of America, as a white male of my generation and my era, a sense of social responsibility and obligation to address public issues. All of these go with the territory for me, but as person, not as a writer. The fact that I'm a novelist and have some public identity and acclaim for that activity is almost irrelevant. It does, however, give me a soapbox to stand on. I can get into the pages of the New York Times or other periodicals, but that doesn't necessarily oblige me to do so. I happen to do it, but that's my nature as a social human being, not my sense of myself as a novelist.

**TM:** So you try to keep the two separate even though they seem to blend together?

**R.B.:** Yeah, they do blend in the public eye, and I know that, but if I was a prominent businessman or a prominent dentist it would be the same.

**TM:** In an interesting change of pace you decided to draft the massive novel "Cloudsplitter," which is a novelization of the life and times of John Brown. What about Captain John Brown was attractive to you? I know that your home in upstate New York is only a few miles from John Brown's, but what else is there that so fascinated you to step out of the modern contemporary landscape and step into the turbulent world of the 1850s?

**R.B.:** Well actually I didn't leave the issues and the concerns of the later twentieth century or the early twenty-first century because the story of John Brown is so taken up with issues of race, class and terrorism. Violence motivated by religious principles and convictions. So these are issues and aspects of our immediate culture. I went to John Brown for a combination of personal relations but having got there realized that there were very large implications for our own time. I told the story the way I did in many ways because of that. For instance, I didn't want to tell the story from the point of view of the nineteenth century. I wanted it told in the twentieth century. Kind of an old man looking back, so that we could feel his light shining forward, and make us understand that this was not that far back. It may have been in the 1850s but there were people alive in the early twentieth century who could remember these events, and who had even participated in these events.

That affected how I structured the book. But more to the point and more personally, John Brown first came into my consciousness as someone of significance in the '60s, when I was in the university and involved in the Civil Rights movement and the Anti-War movement. Brown was an emblem of the left. You could see posters of John Brown on the walls next to Jimmy Hendrix and Che Guevara. He was a radical; a man who, on principle, or through adherence to natural law, opposed the prevailing system and did so even to the point of giving his life. He also has terrific rhetoric. At the same time he was connected to literary figures, so he was very attractive to me. His friendships, with Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson and Walt Whitman, who celebrated him in his time and after his death, connected him to the writers that I was most interested in that time in my life. He was a very unique figure, he crossed over between literary life to the political world and then back; it was just irresistible to me. But after the '60s he began fading, and it wasn't until the late '80s when I saw posters of Brown being invoked by the extreme radical right. The radical anti-abortionists, the militias up in Michigan and in Montana invoked John Brown for many of the same reasons we invoked him in the '70s. And I thought my God, this is the same guy, and no one disagrees about the facts, but he's gone from a transformation in twenty years from an emblem of the left to an extreme emblem of the extreme right. That must say something about his centrality to the American imagination. Then I became aware of the fact that there were two radically different views of John Brown that were based on race. There is a black view of John Brown, where he is a hero of the first order, someone at the top of the pantheon of heroes for African Americans, people like James Baldwin, and Malcolm X, and W.E.B. Dubois' first book was a biography of John Brown. Then there is the white version of John Brown where is the well-attended madman. But no one disagrees about the facts.

About the same time I moved to upstate New York and just by happenstance ended up moving in down the road from where he was buried. The house is well kept up and the landscape is much of the same. So there he was, haunting the woods right around my house. I figured that by this time I really didn't have any choice--I might as well sit down and live with John Brown for a few years. I never intended it to be a thousand page novel, or to take

up six years of my life, but it did.

**TM:** "The Sweet Hereafter" (D. Atom Egoyan) and "Affliction" (D. Paul Shrader) have both been adapted into films. The table has been set for "Continental Drift," "The Book of Jamaica," and "Rule of the Bone." We were wondering if you might be able to give us some insight into what it's like to see your work on the big screen and to work with a team of other people excites you, and what about the process frustrates you?

**R.B.:** Well, I've been very lucky. The two films that have already been made are, on their own terms, good films. Interesting and ambitious, morally and aesthetically serious films. And they also both happened to be commercially and critically successful as well. So that's a great piece of luck. But I was also lucky that Egoyan and Shrader invited me into the process, and gave me a crash course in film making from the inside. This came at a period in my life where I was ready for it and open to it. I kind of fell in love with the process, the collaborative aspect of it. Especially when you are working with really smart people who are serious artists in their own right, as both Egoyan and Shrader are. And so, as a result, I decided that this is something that I'd like to do, for as long as it is satisfying and productive, is to work on films. And not only on my work, and not only as a writer, but as a producer as well. But I want to try to make films in a specific way. I don't want to make big movies or blockbuster movies or movies with studios; I'm trying to make independent films and develop them artistically and financially at a level where you can still have some control. As long as I can do that, I can enjoy it and feel I'm doing something both interesting and worthwhile, if it comes to the point where I can't I'll simply stop and return to my day job, which is writing novels.

**TM:** I've heard that you recently adapted "On The Road" into a screenplay that is going to be produced by Francis Ford Coppola. What was it that brought you to that project?

**R.B.:** Actually it was Francis. It was put to me as 'would you be interested in this project?' and I hadn't read on the road since it was published. I never did teach it or deal with it in any other context than when I originally encountered it, which was probably the ideal context at nineteen years old. For me it was a very useful and important book at that stage of my life. Kerouac was a figure of some more than passing interest to me, a great interest, for lots of different reasons. I did know him slightly; I spent a week with him about a year and a half before he died. It was an unforgettable and tumultuous week as one might expect. So he was part of my life in a way, but not part of my academic or intellectual life especially, and I hadn't thought about it much in a while. Then my friend at American Zoetrope said 'would you be interested in doing this, and if so, how would you do it?' And so I started to think it would be very interesting to do, but mainly because it would be really interesting to work with Coppola. He's a giant, and I'd probably never have an opportunity to learn from him. So we went ahead with it. Then I got really interested again in the Beats and Kerouac and the others who surrounded him as well. That whole sensibility. It was a pleasure to reread and re-experience that work from the vantage point of fifty years later. And then I fell in love with the book again in a different way, because you're quite a different person at sixty-two than you are at nineteen. Very few books can make that transition, but that book did for me. It seemed different, a wholly different book, and meant a whole different number of things to me.

As to whether or not it will be made, you know, with Francis it's a hard question, because it's he's so easily distracted. He'll go off in a direction obsessively for a few years and then swerve and go in another direction. I just recently got an email from one of his people who said that he is back on it again and he's casting again and yada yada yada so we'll see. He's been thinking about it for a really long time. He bought the rights around 1970, so he'll own the rights and it will be part of his estate. Maybe Sofia will make it at some point. Haha.

**TM:** We heard rumors floating around the Observer office that at one point in your younger days you upped and left and vowed to fight for Castro. Is there any truth behind this?

**R.B.:** Well the truth behind it is that when I was eighteen in the winter of 1958, I had already dropped out of Colgate (I was there for about six weeks), and then there was the possibility of Fidel Castro--of his incipient revolution, of his rebellion against the Batista regime. He was being praised as sort of a Robin Hood figure, a bearded, educated, courageous man. So I decided that he needed help from a teenage American boy, who spoke no Spanish.

So I hitchhiked out there, that winter, to join Castro. But it was also a way to get out of this dead end that I found myself in so prematurely. There were other factors involved--Hemingway had endorsed Castro, and he was in Cuba. This was this literary aura surrounding it, and I was just beginning to find the romance behind literary figures. And then I also had a romantic sympathy for the underdog, which was part of my anti-establishment nature as well.

So I got down to Miami, in January of 1959, but then in February the revolution was over and I was no longer needed. So I stopped there, and got a job moving furniture, and got married, and became a father. By the time I was twenty-one it seemed like I had gotten myself into another hole.





# The Bride Continues to Strike Back

By: Henry Casey

During the final confrontation with The Bride (Uma Thurman) and Bill (David Carradine), I noticed that there was a Western movie on the television set that Bill owned. I bring this up because the cowboy on the screen wasn't your typical John Wayne. He was Asian in fact, and it is that image, of an Asian Cowboy that I think symbolizes the whole *Kill Bill* series.

After *Vol. 1*, it was obvious that Quentin Tarantino has affection for Asian Cinema, and more specifically the grindhouse films that he borrowed so much from. But from the start of *Vol. 2* (now in theaters), I knew that the film was much more of a Hollywood affair. Throughout the movie my hunch was confirmed. The dialogue in particular was a return to how Tarantino's characters usually speak. An example would be Bill's monologue near the end of the movie that was akin to Christopher Walken's from *Pulp Fiction*. This stylistic change in influence does not seem to have charmed or angered critics though, as *Vol. 2* only is three percentage points higher on Rotten Tomatoes than *Vol. 1*.

I don't think I like *Vol. 2* more than *Vol. 1*, I consider them to be like apples and oranges, different but equally well done. The fight scenes that were so abundant in the first are used sparingly in the second one, mostly because there are only three people left on the "Death List Five" that The Bride carries around. I enjoyed that each of the confrontations had a uniqueness to them, as opposed to the "Showdown at the House of the Blue Leaves" which was the same katana fighting for a really long period of time. Don't



The Bride Goes to a Japanese Toys'R'Us

get me wrong, I loved the scene, but I'm glad that *Vol. 2* isn't just a rehash.

*Kill Bill Vol. 1* was a combination of fight scenes that the audience was told were done for The Bride (whose name was bleeped out, possibly to set up a joke in the second part)'s revenge against her former master, Bill, and the four former co-workers of The Bride. Bill, The Bride and her former comrades were the Deadly Viper Assassination Squad were the top assassin group in the world, and when The Bride decided to quit, her former boss and coworkers stormed the practice of the wedding The Bride was going to have, and killed everyone in the church, except for The Bride, who was pregnant and fell into a coma after she survived a bullet to the head. The movie consisted of The Bride killing O-Ren Ishii (Lucy Liu) and Vernita Green (Vivica A. Fox), angry as all hell over their betrayal and the death of her unborn child. and on her way after Budd (Michael Madsen), Elle Driver (Daryll Hannah) and Bill. Bill also has related to us, that The Bride's daughter is still alive.

In *Vol. 2*, Budd, aka Sidewinder, is one of the funnier characters that Tarantino has written in his career, Mr. Blonde from *Reservoir Dogs* without motivation. Madsen delivers the lines showing a combination of remorse and idiocy, making Budd a lovable asshole. When we first meet Budd he seems to be the only Deadly Viper who feels remorse for the El Paso Wedding Chapel Massacre. Bill's bumpkin brother, Budd is considered useless by his employers and his only desire nowadays is money. His actions though are quite contradictory to the guilt he claims to feel, which I think makes him a much more interesting character than Mr. Blonde. Budd understands his due comeuppance, but that doesn't mean he wants to die.

Gordon Liu, who played Johnny Mo in *Vol. 1* returns to play Pei Mei. Originally intended for Tarantino to play, this racist, sexist überguru is rendered perfectly by Liu. In a flashback when Bill and The Bride were not only on speaking terms, but in a relationship, Bill sends The Bride to Pei Mei for her training. Bill also warns her that it might take a long time to earn the respect of Pei Mei and to have graduated from his tutelage. Liu is badass extraordinaire here, verbally abusing the confidence out of The Bride. The training scenes are so tough, we never actually see the conclusion of The Bride and Pei Mei's sessions. The major task that Pei Mei gives The Bride is to punch through a block of wood that is only three inches away. For each time she fails to break the wood, a giddy Pei Mei hits her over the shoulder



Pei Mei, only Spider-Man's Web Shooters can Touch Him

der with his cane, it's like the training from *Rocky*, just with an abusive coach.

When the titular Bill first appears in *Vol. 2*, outside of the church where The Bride and her fiancé are to be wed, it's the closest thing to the grim reaper showing his face. Carradine hasn't had many big roles lately, and Tarantino's decision to cast him as Bill was the smartest move in the whole movie. Up until the final chapter of the movie, Bill strafes in and out of the scenes, teasing us with his presence. I would have liked even more of him earlier in the movie, to show his skill with the Hanzo blade would have made him an even greater badass. Qualms aside, when Carradine gets his chance to make a name for himself, he passes with flying Hanzo blades. The sandwich scene, as it will be known is one of the pinnacles of the movie, and I was in awe of Carradine the whole time and want to learn everything I can about him.

Finally, I have to talk about The Bride, the backbone of the whole series. After I walked out of this movie, I swore that both *Kill Bill* volumes, were the best Quentin Tarantino movie yet. Since that moment of fanboy hyperbole I've realized that while they are not the best QT movie, The Bride is the single greatest character that Tarantino has created. On the other hand though, as I said about Bill, The Bride would have been perfect if we saw her in her prime as an assassin, killing for a living. The risk would be that we might not love the character as much, but the final chapter, I think would have fixed that. Upon finding her daughter to be alive and in the possession of Bill, Thurman throws



The Bride, now a model for Sunglasses Hut

the character into a state of shock that seems exact. I don't think I can know how one would feel in this situation and to find that their asshole of an ex, has been an amazing parent to the child and dealing with the child being around, but something told me that Uma played it right. Could you kill your daughter's father, even if he had tried to kill you? In the end, to find out that it's a hard decision, to actually *Kill Bill*, was the most rewarding part of the movie, the whole chapter felt utterly original and perfect.

Something I thought was a step up in this movie compared to the last was the cinematography. Specifically in the burial scene, when there was little to work with. And while the black and white scene at the beginning of the movie really annoyed me, I thought that the colors helped emphasize Bill's first full on-camera appearance.

Going back to the beginning of this article though, the large difference in the styles that each movie seems to be based around makes me happy that there were two chapters. Even if the two movies (minus the last 10 minutes of the first and the first 15 minutes of the second) were combined, the result would have been terrible. A certain other film critic on campus told me that that the division was only done as a money making scheme. But to be honest, even if this is true, I don't care. Each movie has its own style, and each works very well, and it would be nice they stayed as two movies.

Another of my compatriots said that the movie could have been edited down to one feature film and still been everything that it was. Considering his suggestion, I went back and watched the bootleg of *Vol. 1* I have on my laptop. After it was over, I thought that, as Bush would say, "no scene should be left behind." With *Vol. 2*, while there are parts of scenes that should have been cut out, the amount taken away would be under ten minutes. Combined, these movies would have been a little under four hours, which would have been impossible to ask anybody to sit through. Separate though, as the *Lord of the Rings* books and movies are, the *Kill Bill* story is nothing short of brilliance.



Bush Regime Responds To Gay Marriage in New Paltz



# Remembering The Toadies

By: Len Gutkin

Back in 1994, when Nirvana was still cool, before "nu-metal" took over the major rock stations, and before irony spread like leprosy to all the hippest acts, the Toadies topped the charts with a Pixiesque tune about sexual obsession and murder called "Possum Kingdom." Unfortunately, this minor masterpiece of the mid-nineties is all but forgotten. Try to remember frontman Todd Lewis, with a voice like a cross between Francis Black and Angus Young, belting out that chilling refrain: "Do you wanna die? / Do you wanna die? I promise you / I will treat you well / my sweet angel / my sweet angel / so help me Jesus." "Possum Kingdom" was catchy, rocking and dark; it was possessed of the kind of thrilling energy and passion that animates all of the Toadies' music. Part of this passion results from the Toadies' refusal to tackle any but the most emotionally charged, extreme subject matter: sexual rejection, obsession and the potential for violence implicit in sex is never far from their music or their lyrics. So why, now, is their debut full-length album, *Rubbebeck*, which includes not only Possum Kingdom but the wonderful single Tyler, all but forgotten? And why did the Toadies' 2001 sophomore release, *Hell Below Stars Above*, which featured Elliot Smith, pass by almost unnoticed?

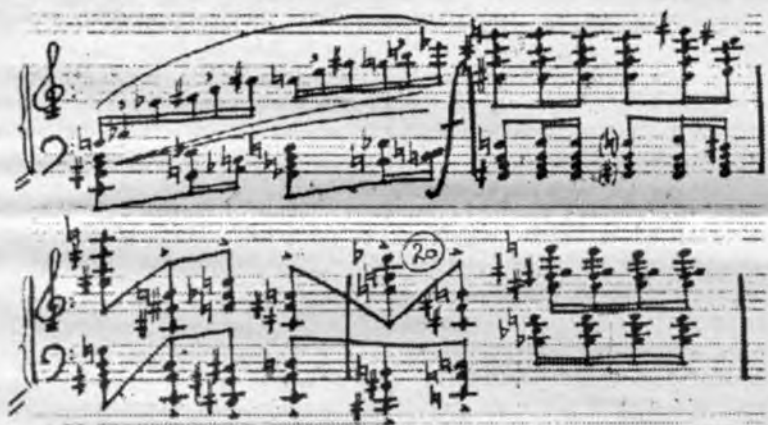
Poor timing accounts for a lot of it. The Toadies caught the tail end of the grunge wave, and it's not hard to see that waiting seven years to release another record was a poor move. By 2001, decent music had essentially been



purged from the rock stations, and the ascendancy of Radiohead, in whose wake emerged the success of bands like Calla, Interpol, Neutral Milk Hotel and even the re-popularization of the Flaming Lips, had made the college stations a sort of testosterone-free zone, full of the sort of stuff you'd find in artsy downtown cafes. There was no longer any place for The Toadies' anguished Texas drawl, which owes a lot more to Led Zeppelin than, say, to the Talking Heads. But the recent batch of bona fide—if largely mediocre—rock and roll bands who have infiltrated the rock stations—I'm talking about the White Stripes, the Strokes, the Yeah Yeah Yeahs, et. al.—may have cleared some room for a little belated Toadies appreciation. Unfortunately, they're no longer together. But the stellar *Hell Below Stars Above* is gathering dust in a warehouse somewhere—so download "Possum Kingdom," remember how much you loved it when you were ten, and then order *Hell Below*. It's really a brilliant album: sexy, rocking and a little creepy. Highlights include "Little Sin," an examination of the tension between sex and a puritanical vision of innocence; "Heel," a brutal portrait of domestic abuse framed in dog-training terms; "Doll Skin," a slow reminiscence about a house, a girl and some unnamed sorrow that has the feel of an English gothic novel; and the excellent title track, a break-up song that moves from thrashing hard rock into a bluesy croon backed by Elliot Smith. Smith can't use the royalties anymore, but I'm sure the Toadies can, so do yourself a favor and check it out.

# If Classical Plays for No one, Does it Make a Sound?

By Matthew Wing



The maximum room capacity for Olin hall is 400 people. On Wednesday night, March 17, the Nikos Skalkottas Centennial, it held twenty five. Three of those were Bard students, including myself. Nikos Skalkottas must have felt good about being dead for fifty years.

It would have been nothing new however. During his life, almost his entire output was unknown, unpublished and unperformed. The first pieces were both composed in 1949, the year of his death.

The beginning was a duet featuring a cello and piano. It was a mournful slow melody. The cello line moved through minor chords with melancholy. You could feel from the sound that Skalkottas knew he did not have much longer to write. He had not had an opportunity to hear any of the music in the program before his death.

It had been announced at the beginning of the program that Eva Lindal, his granddaughter and a famous violinist, had come to this event all the way from Italy. Lindal came on midway through the program to perform the world premier of the Piano Trio No. 1. She was asked to speak about her grandfather to an almost empty

forum. Her words were brief.

"My grandfather was so young when he died. The only way for me to get to know him was through his music. Tonight to play with this trio is his birthday present."

The piece began with the violin and cello reverberating melody off each other in succinct waves of high pitch, contrasted by the slow dark pace set on the piano. In the middle a vacillation between the strings rose; the violin would call and the cello would answer. The feeling was one of quick patterns filtered together through the time set in the composers mind. It was neither sweet nor sad, but violent and resistant, building up into wavering catches, too complex to map by ear. The cello hovers over two notes, leading the violin into a soft drawn out line. The two play on themselves and meet to grace the piano which in turn brings them back across the melody for a final slow pull of harmony over their strings that echoes even after the bows have been lowered.

This rough amateur description, depicted through untrained ears, cannot convey the full extent of how this music works. A piece will for no tangible reason deliver a memory you had long since forgotten. It will set your mind wandering over pink clouds and golden strings of reverberation. Worries shrink from the overbearing weight of the sound. It makes you feel bigger than you are; an exaggeration of the senses.

You might often hear the question or wonder yourself, "What are we paying \$40,000 to go here for?" Education is not a guaranteed product, there are no receipts. You may have to give it money, but that becomes nothing but paper if you do not also give it your will. The mind is made up mostly of what we choose to put in it. It should be no surprise that if you choose to fill your mind with substance, you will feel and express things substantial; if you choose to fill your mind with substances your experience will be filtered through substances. This is not a judgment, it is not even a recommendation, just an observation. Wonderfully enough, the choice is all our own. For the first time in our lives maybe, our free time is ours to do with however we want. The next concert, *De Capo Celebrates Bard*, is tomorrow, Wednesday the 21<sup>st</sup>. Enjoy.

## The Dramatic Adaptation of Kafka's *The Trial* Friday April 30th 8:00pm in Olin Auditorium

XZIBIT AND MTV, PLEASE "PIMP"  
THIS FRANCOPHILE'S RIDE!



## B.R.A.V.E. Offers Students A Chance to Skydive For a Great Cause.

On Saturday April 24, 2004, from 11:00am to 3:00 pm, Operation Free Fall will take place nationally, as a part of Sexual Assault Awareness Month. Operation Free Fall provides a creative and exciting opportunity to raise awareness about sexual assault and to raise funds for RAINN, (Rape Abuse Incest National Network) as well as local sexual assault awareness and prevention programs.



# Introduction:

Why You're Reading All This...

The Editors

At the Observer office this weekend, we spent a good deal of the day in the basement of our smoky Tewksbury basement office working on this edition. We did our best to gather articles that are diverse and interesting.

We appreciate each author's courage in tackling such a large issue, and we proudly stand behind every single author's right to think and express his or her opinions.

In order for discussion to continue, we encourage anyone and everyone to submit articles on the recent racial situation on campus (or anything else for that matter). It is important to continue debate and argument. The issue is too big and too important to let it slip away and fade into discomfort.

As always, responses and criticism to articles featured in the Observer can be mailed to [observer@bard.edu](mailto:observer@bard.edu) or campus mailed to one of the editors. We sincerely hope the community weighs the opinions found in the editorial section as serious work demanding serious attention.

Hopefully these Ideas can be offered as a sounding board for future discussion and learning.

Sincerely,  
The Observer Staff

## Vincent Taubner

As a continuing response to the events that have occurred on campus of late, and to follow up the town meeting held on the Wednesday before break, I would like to summarize a few points regarding the campus response to racism.

Unfortunately, despite the efforts of a panel of clear and articulate speakers, there were a shocking amount of individuals who, throughout the night, continued to voice misguided opinions despite the many speakers' attempt to clarify student concerns quite specifically. Many students insisted on supporting the notion that the two-strike policy was aimed at robbing people of their freedom of speech when, given the panel's explanation of the policy, this was clearly not the case. Liz McWilliams-Hernandez quite simply stated that the two-strike policy would be used only for severe offenses that involved violence and intimidation, and would not go without reasonable examination of the facts and parties involved. Student's persistent confusion and vocal disregard for this point gave the effect of a blatant overtone that such severe cases of racism were acceptable. In most cases, this can be looked at as nothing more than a group of students attempt to alleviate their feelings of guilt and fear resulting from the realization that we do in fact live in a world where unpleasant and disagreeable things occur. An abdication of responsibility on the part of white students is not acceptable in the process of setting community standards, and harsh penal measures against hate crimes are not too severe. The suggested two-strike policy was an effort to establish a more specific measure for dealing with hate crimes on campus.

Marie Brown made a poignant point when she asked why it is often assumed to be the victim's responsibility to forgive the offender. In light of many outspoken student's suggestion that we forgive and forget the ignorant and violent offense of others, Brown's comment brought a reality to the situation. Communities and individuals must often take on the hard task of not forgiving, and it is our right to do so if we so choose. That we must always forgive and tolerate is not only a simplification of the demands of life, but also suggests that we live in a world that has no consequence. By setting standards of behavior and also consequences, students actively engage in defining the value and meaning of our community. Many students seem intent on resisting a world of consequence, perhaps to avoid the responsibility that such a world demands. Instead people are more likely to remain passively engaged in the world around them, and completely alienated from horrible things that affect many others who live with them. However, at an institution which prides itself on upholding the intellectual tradition of active critique and engagement with ones society, it is our duty to respond to these recent events with legislative action that codifies direct and specific consequences to actions of racism and homophobia. This should take the form of an added clause to the existing policy on harassment that takes a more direct procedural stance on harassment. Of course the pursuit of rectifying ignorance through education should be a goal, but there are limits. When people live in a community, they agree to the values and standards of conduct of that community, and when a member of a community acts against these standards, the community has the right to ask that member to leave, and furthermore, to not forgive that action.

The acts of racism that have recently occurred on campus cannot be looked at as merely isolated and freak incidents because of the lack of any similar incidents in the past (although it should be noted that similar events in the past have indeed occurred). It is naïve to think that just because severe violent and hateful incidents do not take place frequently that we necessarily live in a campus free of prejudice, racism, and homophobia. During the recent events many people expressed a sense of surprise remarking, "I never thought that this could happen on our campus". This and such statements demonstrate a remarkable naïveté and ignorance on the part of many students who seem to believe that we live in a world where power is symmetrical and disagreeable things do not occur. Furthermore, verbal intimidation is violence. Though people often argue that it has no visible physical affect, it is in fact felt in the body. People who are verbally harassed feel as sense of instability, helplessness, and fear that is experienced physically, and that is mentally debili-

## The Observer Needs You!

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observer

## the drab report

by Tom Mattos

In a freewheeling, free-association bubble of free thought I am going to try to decompress all of my feelings sublime. These past months have been especially crazy, and not to write about Bard's shift from interesting to insane would be a crime. A list of images will be sufficient for introduction: Outrage, protest, mud wrestling, a good rock concert, a campus filled with people with bad words written on their t-shirts in duct tape, a beautiful woman with a French Canadian accent, pony rides, an official investigation, the Bard Cricket Club beating the shit out of Vassar, a victory for the Bard Reds by a margin larger than forty points, a tic named Godfrey and an awesome campfire.

With the benefit of hindsight, we can always go back in time and pinpoint the exact moment when the horizon shifts, when the green grass turns pale blue—when the belt unravels and the pants fall. That moment was the shocking (and strangely vague...) email that notified us of the campus racism and bigotry. What exactly had taken place? Within days there were meetings, protests—a group of students with black t-shirts encircling a smaller body of supportive souls—the suspicion and confusion that lurked in the shadows at the Town Meeting IV. The lies. Who had done what? Committees are created, bodies formed, memoranda—a special Opinions section in the Observer, the back of your tongue trying to restrain the front from pronouncing certain syllables with emphasis.

That scary day, when the campus was up in arms over vague accusations of blatant and total disrespect, will live in my mind forever. It forced me to see things as symbols—to reexamine my preexisting definition of hollow words like community (hollow for we find that often the word is a simple abstraction and nothing more). What we are left with is nothing more than a simple reevaluation of self. With this dim restructuring going on in my head I began to see some things that I normally wouldn't. Here they are: naked; hysterical.

Situation: Montreal, Canada (a good enough place for good things to happen; .667 batting average). While staking out a bar for hours on end, I finally got up the courage to offer to buy a beer for a wonderfully supernatural French-Canadian woman. She was beautiful. When I offered to buy her a drink she looked at me very strangely, and in a polite-sounding (but nevertheless malignant) French-Canadian accent told me to go fuck myself. I wasn't very disappointed (mainly because I didn't have much money and would rather buy myself drinks) but since we had just been through the racial explosion I started thinking. Do we recognize a good thing when it crosses our path? Why did she run? She was drinking, and so was I... what's wrong with a little friendly conversation? She must have connected my innocent gesture with something she had seen on T.V. I was no ax-murderer, I was no American asshole (ostensibly) and I was no rapist. It was more like picking up a beautiful shell from the surf, marveling at the power of nature to concoct something beautiful with nothing more than the absurdity and nastiness of waves battering the coast, and then tossing the shell half-heartedly back into the abyss, wishing it good luck. I wanted to listen to her strange accent and find something in common. Yet somehow "community" can get in the way of community.

When I returned from Montreal I watched the Rugby game, as the Bard Reds faced off against the Drew Whatevers. Yeah, I used to play for the Reds, so I'm kind of biased, but I think that they rocked that game hard, and deserved to win by such an impressive margin. Watching the game, I realized that the Bard Reds are integral to this community. They've been doing their thing for years, amidst criticism and misunderstanding, and they've never lost faith. Hats off, gentlemen.

Then there was the campus center weekend before last. I woke up, and as I wandered the quad in a haze of confusion I noticed that there were several students playing some sort of fascinating fantasy game with a name of strictly international reputation: cricket. I've seen a few of these games in my day, and let me tell you, that is not baseball. I sat with a good book and a sheet printed by the Cricket Club that had the rules for Cricket on it and watched them trounce Vassar. That was awesome. Lurking in the back of my medulla there was that burning reconfiguration of the "scene" at Bard. "Hey Tom," I spoke to myself, "isn't this cool? Without a community tolerant of difference, we may not have whipped Vassar in cricket." But then I cursed myself for even thinking like that, for was I not putting my dear friends—Maanas and Tappan—into a category, a group of "others?" I don't remember where the next thought went... at that point I zone out and stare at a tree or something.

Across the field that day the WXBC station (an interesting group of people) was having a fundraiser for the station. I putzed around there for a bit, watching Texas Soph ride a pony around the field. Just before Sophie took her ride Henry Casey could be seen bouncing along on a large horse. I saw them walking and I thought... well... this is a strange place.

Stay with me on this. There IS a point to this article.

Continued on Page 18...



# The Gospel According to Ethan

*I'm Taking off My Clothes and Giving Everyone a Club. Either Flog Me or Love Me.*

Ethan Porter



I do not claim to offer the whole truth. What I have written below is merely what I know—this is only my truth, in its entirety. This paragraph is not a disclaimer; rather, it is an acknowledgement of the variegated ways in which truth can be perceived. Read what I say and judge me in whatever way you wish.

The story begins at 1:47 in the morning, on March 17, 1985. At that precise moment, I was born. Over the next nineteen years, I lived what all accounts and interpretations would consider an extraordinarily ordinary life. At times, I was loved, at other times I was not. I have had worthwhile habits and pointless indulgences; and, for better or worse, I have often been surrounded by family and friends. Family, as is often lamented, cannot be chosen. We are born into the family. Friends, especially friends of our youth, are much the same way. We grow attached to those who live around the block, and those who sit close to us at the lunch table.

I remember being very young, sitting around my school lunch table and viewing my friends in a way that the passage of time and the brutalizing experience of experience have rendered impossible. As its inhabitants are fond of telling all who do and not wish to know, my town was the first in America to voluntarily desegregate its schools. Now, some four decades later, the district is a virtual United Nations. Five dozen languages are spoken, as students hail from nearly every country in the world. I know this to be a fact, and am proud of it. When I was very young and sitting at the lunch table, in a place that still exists as a faint glimmer in the far recesses of my mind, I could not even tell the difference between black and white skin.

After elementary school, my parents decided that the educational quality in my town had declined precipitously. They sent me to a typically homogeneous, wealthy prep school. The towering importance of difference became clear immediately upon my arrival. I was from Teaneck, New Jersey, and Teaneck was fundamentally unlike the other towns most of the kids came from. As a result, I had very few friends. I paid attention in class, studied hard and then went to bed. I did manage to make good two friends, one being a geeky type who received a perfect score on his SATs in the eighth grade and is now spending his days in Romania doing LSD. Another story, another time. My other friend's name was Rob. He was nice and goofy, a sort of ne'er-do-well who loved to defy his Christian fundamentalist parents by preaching anarcho-syndicalism and by being a half-closeted bisexual.

After freshman year, I was too frustrated with the narrow cultural and intellectual outlook of prep school to continue, and went back to public school, where I experienced severe culture shock. Unlike childhood, I was consciously aware that society gave certain significance to ethnic differences. Everyone else was aware, too. Despite the school's idealistic aspirations, ethnic tension was seemingly pervasive. I read Eldridge Cleaver and Arthur Rimbaud at night, but during the day I had to figure out whether to enter the "black doors" or the "white doors," and what the subsequent consequences of my decision would

be. Rob, meanwhile, was struggling to find his footing in the subtly homophobic atmosphere of prep school. Rumors circulated, but they didn't even care enough about him to call him a faggot to his face. I wanted to find a way to transcend ethnicity, and he wanted to transcend sexual orientation. We were fighting the same war on different fronts.

1:47 AM, March 17, 2004. My nineteenth birthday. Usually I'm not one for birthdays, being vaguely put off by their artificiality. But this year, for no reason in particular, I felt different. I wanted to celebrate. The next day, I invited a few friends over to my room. At the last minute, I called up Rob. I hadn't seen him since Christmas break, and his dad had suffered a heart attack a few weeks earlier. He was in the city, and told me he would be up at Bard as soon as he could.

The last time I saw Rob, I had spent the time talking about Bard to him. He was intrigued by what he heard, since it sounded like the school had successfully accomplished what we had wanted to accomplish back home. Sexual orientation, race, geographic origin, in my naïve opinion, held no importance here, except when scrutinized for academic purposes. Although instinctively Rob found the atmosphere I described appealing, he also thought it was full of shit. Too simple. At its heart: Untrue. People may act as if they don't care about the surface, he said, but they do. If people don't like you because of superficial attributes, they have to give you the dignity of letting you know.

Although I had been thinking about what Rob said ever since he said it, I sincerely hoped that he would not bring it up once he got here. And for a little while, my wish was granted. I turned on music and we all drank beers and talked about philosophy and sex. Eventually, the conversation turned to the perceived political correctness of this campus. A Bard friend opined, half-jokingly, that a "PC Mafia" exists on this campus. I saw Rob's face transform from placid to angry, beat-red.

He announced to us, the four or five people who had gathered in my room, that he hated Jews and homosexuals, just like a good Nazi. I immediately knew that he was trying to provoke us. He wanted to see how Bard students, with our holier-than-thou attitudes and our sense of attained liberal elitism, would react. I knew in his mind he believed his comments to be lacking malicious intent, but I recognized that this was not exactly the right forum to hold a debate on the virtues of political correctness, and any such debate should not be so abrasive. This was, after all, supposed to be my birthday party.

A Bard friend, Len, tried to reason with him, but Rob paid Len's rational arguments little mind. I told him, in no uncertain terms, to shut the hell up. He didn't listen to me, either. As a circle of aggressive criticism descended upon him, Rob's excitement level only grew, and he launched into an angry, stereotype-riddled diatribe against all possible minorities. Suddenly the night became theater of the absurd—a bisexual friend who had once declared a vendetta against stereotypes was now trafficking in the worst sort. I felt as if my head was literally about to explode. I punched him (in clear violation of the Bard handbook), square in the chest. He grimaced and clutched his stomach. I had knocked the wind out of him, and by extension, I hoped, the vile matter pouring out his mouth.

Once Rob seemed to have calmed down, we ventured outside onto the balcony, to enjoy the cold night air and smoke our cigarettes. For a brief period, the night resembled normal. Human silhouettes moved in the distance, trudging from one Thursday night to the next. I saw nothing of significance in these figures. Rob saw targets. And so he began hurling derogatory terms for homosexuals and Jews—namely, "kike" and "faggot"—at whomever happened to have the misfortune to be walking by. My pleadings for him to stop went unheeded. I said to him that on one level, he was being absolutely ridiculous, as one of the terms could be applied to him, and the other could be applied to me; on another, more practical level, his words would be taken out of context by all who heard them. Any ambiguous "point" he was trying to convey would surely be

lost in a fury of anger.

Soon after he began shouting, two people who had heard Rob walked towards us. I knew one of them. I shouted apologies to him and his companion as Rob continued to assault them with epithets. One of them wanted to fight Rob. Quite understandably. I wanted to fight Rob, too.

Rob avoided fisticuffs by offering the student a half-formed apology. I then abandoned Rob. I could not tolerate any more of his actions. I did not have enough energy to continuously tell him to stop talking. I rushed to the other side of the campus, where I hoped to find peace of mind.

Sometime in between my moment of departure-in-disgust and the next morning, Rob managed to find a pen and scrawl heinous, disparaging words across the cork board in the Campus Center. At no time, according to all accounts I have heard and trust, did he call anyone a "nigger." Yet I cannot say for sure, and I certainly do not want to be put in the position of defending any of his actions that night. It is possible he committed that most egregious offense, but I find it doubtful. As was said during the town meeting, calling someone that word in the New York-metropolitan area is basically a death wish.

Nearly a month has passed, and I am as bewildered now as I was that night. I have talked to Rob several times since. He has apologized profusely, but has shed no light on his actions. He claims that all of his actions were meant to prove something vague about the emptiness of political correctness. Yet this claim seems defensive—a means of intellectually masking baseless hatred, for himself and others. A person who I thought I knew and loved behaved in a manner totally unbecoming to the character I had ascribed him.

My guilt has been overwhelming. I want, more than anything, to move beyond this guilt. But the guilt is real, and immensely powerful. I feel something beyond knowable pain when I realize that I was associated with someone who would perpetuate such deplorable ideas. The ombudsman asked me what I could have done differently. I have to report that I do not know. I should have reported Rob to security upon his arrival, yes, but that obviously would not have necessarily placed the night upon a different, more peaceful path. I couldn't have articulated any more clearly to him that I disapproved of what he was doing, and I figure that one punch was one too many.

Geneva Foster, Dean of Multicultural Affairs, has said that I ought to remain friends with Rob. I dismissed this idea outright when I first heard it. How can I be close with someone who had so thoroughly convinced me he was of one mind, only to reveal that deep underneath this pose was something far darker? In the immediate aftermath of these events, I felt that Rob had betrayed me. And he had—but not then. He betrayed me when he first tried to convince me to believe in a false façade.

I did not choose to be friends with Rob. When we were younger and stupider, we sat at the same lunch table and realized, for whatever it mattered then, that we had a lot in common. I must remain friends with him, as it is now my responsibility to make him a more honest human being. In a crisis of community, such as we have just all been a part of, responsibilities are imparted upon all of us. It seems to me that the most pressing responsibility is to demand among all members of this community and our communities elsewhere to be more honest, in regards to each other and our differences. We must confront that which we do not want to. We must not shield our eyes from what pains us, or else, when the acting is over, we will be forced to face what we had willfully ignored. We must not condemn—we must convince.

I understand the urge to condemn very strongly. Part of me desires to condemn Rob and forget about him. I do condemn him, but I cannot sever our bonds out of ideological hatred. For in condemnation and hatred, what do we become but the cousin of the bastard bigot child? I will never return to the lunch table of my youth, a place unclouded by history and culture. I eat at Kline Commons with all of you.

## Peace in the Middle East?

Room 214, Campus Center Second Floor THIS THURSDAY  
5 pm, April 22nd

Speak with activists who have dedicated their lives to making peace more possible in Israel and Palestine

Help establish a group on campus to promote peace and justice!

Speakers include: Guy Ben-Dror, the North American Emissary of Hashomer Hatzair, the Kibbutz Artzi Movement and the Jewish-Arab Center for Peace at Givat Haviva, and Aaron Wolfe, Executive Director of Hashomer Hatzair, one of North America's Socialist-Zionist Youth Movements.

For more information contact Adam Roe at ar869@bard.edu



# Geneva Foster

The Dean of Multicultural Affairs Clarifies the Rumors...

At the end of March an investigation into complaints regarding incidents involving racist and homophobic language were brought to the community's attention. An investigation into these matters has been conducted and a report will be issued shortly. To review the incidents being investigated are:

1. *Racist graffiti written on a poster in a laundry room*
2. *Conversations overheard in a residence hall, which were classified as racist and homophobic*
3. *A second incident of graffiti on a residential students' dry erases board with racist and homophobic epithets*
4. *The last incident occurred on Thursday, March 18. A Peer Counselor, instructing a loud group of people to quiet down and leave the area, was confronted by racist commentary and threatening behavior. Later that evening more racist graffiti was written on a poster in the campus center. This is the only physical evidence available of any graffiti. It has been determined that the verbal altercation and the racist graffiti are two aspects of the same incident.*

Community awareness was raised at a Town Hall meeting on Wednesday, March 24. President Botstein met with a group of concerned students, faculty and staff prior to the community meeting, to discuss suggested solutions. The president has called for a special taskforce to convene to review the college's policies and procedures for misconduct, especially identity-based harassment. The taskforce will determine if policies and

procedures should be modified or replaced with reviewed policies. V. P. of Student Services Mary Backlund is organizing the taskforce, which consists of administrative staff, faculty and student volunteers, from the Diversity and Inclusion Board (DIB), Student Life Committee (SLC) and Student Judiciary Board (SJB).

The DIB tabled in Kline Commons during lunch on April 8. The purpose of that tabling session was to inform students of the existence and purpose of the DIB and to provide an opportunity to explore and express the individual's definition of community. Over two hundred people responded. Those responses will be disseminated via student newspaper and/or the Bard website.

On the evening of April 8, the Offices of Multicultural Affairs hosted a dinner discussion about these incidents and how we move forward together, from the perspective of students-of-color. Suggestions from that discussion are being considered for the evolution of the Office of Multicultural Affairs and the DIB. Students are also renewing their commitment to shaping the campus environment.

The SJB met to discuss the proposed two-strike policy. A joint meeting with the DIB followed on Monday, April 12. Notes from those two meetings have been forwarded to the taskforce.

The DIB met with representatives from the identity-based student organizations on Tuesday, April 13. Students representing AASO, BSO, LASO and Queer Alliance were in attendance. Those representatives will report about the meeting to their respective organizations. The Office of Multicultural Affairs will report to the identity-based organizations not represented (i.e. ISO, JSO and MSO). These organizations, along with student government, are asked to appoint a representative to liaise with the DIB.

The Office of Multicultural Affairs has facilitated a series of small group and individual meetings with constituents of students, faculty, and Inter-group/Intra-group Relations & Cross Culture Communication consultants to discuss programmatic approaches for the remainder of this and the following two academic semesters. Recommendations from those discussions are being considered in the establishment of a five-year strategic plan for Bard College Multicultural Affairs. The president has assured that the Office of Multicultural Affairs will have the budget necessary to support these efforts through the end of the 2004-05 academic year.

## Ketaki Pant

A Response to the Town Meeting...

It is telling that the issue of "diversity"—which seems to have lost its currency and seems to be viewed as a marginal issue because "the situation today is so much better than it used to be"—still makes people so uncomfortable. At the town meeting this general discomfort could be seen in many students' complete renunciation of responsibility in the social climate of our campus. In this environment many students are being violated—both verbally and physically. The cases specifically being discussed at the meeting pertained to race and sexual orientation. Ironically, the fact that issues of race and sexual orientation complicated the basic issue made it lose its potency.

What ensued was not a supportive atmosphere in favor of a more coherent code to reference for future severe violations of community standards, but the creation of a cleavage. There are people concerned with issues of race and there are those who aren't. It would be unfair to suggest that there were no non-minority students who understood that the issues were universal in their effect, so that it was as much a problem for a minority student as it was for a student who was not a minority. But there were a number of individuals who strongly opposed severe penal measures, and instead nebulously and repeatedly suggested "education" as more appropriate. The most grave implication of this suggestion of course is the idea that a violation based on a minority identity somehow comes with fewer consequences, and that this violation is somehow not that important. There is also the curious idea that somehow the onus of "education" should somehow fall on those that were violated in the first place. This, to me, is altogether absurd. Certainly learning can be and is a dialectic process. So I am not suggesting that it is somehow not a collaborative effort. But why must collaboration somehow always become the problem of the minority? While this is a somewhat controversial comparison, do we suggest to an individual who is raped is now responsible to make sure it never happens again, to go out and "educate?" It seems to me, I reiterate, entirely absurd.

While certainly these individual instances have importance in themselves and need to be addressed, these incidents are not isolated, and are not new. They are certainly prevalent in the classroom. Euro-American centrism prevails, and on many occasions, when issues are raised regarding marginalized identities, they are dismissed on grounds of not being relevant, or addressed in a way that suggests they are a function of the identity of the individual who asked the question. Instead there is the general attitude that there is a separate place designated for these discussions, and should be solely addressed in classes that relate to Gender and Sexuality Studies, Africana Studies, or Asian studies. It is certainly true that these concentrations need to exist and are important, but they need not be the sole sites of these discussions. Can we really say that these areas are irrelevant when discussing Europe, for example? Of course our minds necessarily jump to Slavery or Colonialism. While these are obvious ways in which Africa and Asia were central in the formation of the various Euro-American identities that exist, they are not the only frameworks within which to think about ideas that pertain to Africa or Asia. To be perfectly honest, even these issues are not substantively addressed in some classes.

Why then does this happen at Bard, in what we call 'a place to think?' What are our politics of thinking? It is easy to pay lip service to other places, other identities, to create the appearance of political correctness and to affirm ourselves. What is at stake of course is power, the power that is being asserted. Michel-Rolph Trouillot in *Silencing the Past: The Power and Production of History* argues that white liberal guilt for Colonialism

and Slavery is misplaced for two reasons. Firstly, it is misplaced for the reason the white liberals today are neither colonialists nor slave owners. Secondly, it is misplaced in the sense that by sealing the past off from the present, as separate, liberals exculpate themselves from the racist present. So by paying lip service in classrooms to so-called diversity issues, one is really wielding a sort of power, by control—control in the sense of regulating the degree to which these issues can be addressed. They are addressed, but only to a certain extent. They are managed. In effect, our conclusions and discussions in some classrooms are not only based upon a Euro-American version of the world, but are also eventually not academically sound. What seems to elude this system is the complex linkages of the world, so that the recent 'ethnic cleansing' in Sudan by Arab militias is somehow connected to British colonial practices, and that British experience in the colonies shape what we see today as the English nation. From this I suggest the basic idea that with the complex histories we all bring to Bard with us, we are each implicated in specific and connected ways to such conflict, even to phenomena that may seem as removed as ethnic cleansing in Sudan. It is easy to confuse geographic distance with semantic difference, but the fact is that our identities and places in society are bound up with each other, that the world is connected in more ways than might at first glance appear to be the case.

*What ensued was not a supportive atmosphere in favor of a more coherent code to reference for future severe violations of community standards, but the creation of a cleavage.*

In many ways I see this general academic attitude deeply connected with the abdication of responsibility that I recognized at the town meeting. The refusal to understand the fact that everyone is implicated in the current climate at Bard, the refusal to take responsibility is indicative of our academic attitudes fostered in the classroom that, one that doesn't take into account the complex connections of the world. Taking responsibility should not amount to impotent liberal guilt, which is equally useless. The way each person on this campus was affected by the events or the general social atmosphere on campus varies. I am certainly not trying to suggest that there should be a uniform response, rather the understanding that we are all implicated in the problem, in both individual and collective ways.



# Juan Martinez

## Stating the Obvious...

The night of March 24, 2004 was the most dynamic night I have seen during my four years at Bard. I saw my peers rally around one another, Jews and Blacks, homosexuals and Latinos, all for a common cause, all to celebrate each other's right to live, study, and interact safely and comfortably on Bard's campus. In the eyes of the protesters I saw shades of sadness, tears of rage, and a large glint of hope. We marched through Kline, stopping you, the Bard campus, from eating dinner, and stated what should already be obvious; "niggers, spics, faggots, Jews, and chinks" deserve and demand the right to a safe and peaceful four years on campus. However, at the student forum later that night I saw those same protesters come to tears, losing the heart to fight the everyday battles that we, the minority (for lack of a better word) community, fight on an everyday basis.

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*Remember the night of the March 24, 2004—remember it as the night we marched together and demanded the community's attention, and also, remember it as the night that our fear, pain, anger, and freedom to exist comfortably on this campus was ignored.*

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When I came to Bard four years ago, racial tensions were so bad that the section of Kline in front of the TV was known throughout the school as "Little Africa." I heard stories about, and eventually came to see, the reality that males of color stood very little chance of graduating from our school. Although I am not allowed, nor am I willing, to list the names of men of color who have been threatened with expulsion, actually expelled, or put on social probation, I urge you to ask H.E.O.P. students to recall the names of students who have been or almost were lost. Faculty members of color have been assaulted in the same way that Saran and Elizabeth were these past few weeks. For years students have been meeting with Leon, participating in Diversity Awareness programs, and speaking directly with students that have insulted them; these efforts have always been in vain. When a group of students at the forum focused more on limiting the punishment of the offenders, rather than rally around Saran, my heart dropped. The fear that I have had for four years finally rang true; things at Bard are not going to change.

Instead of defending Saran, Elizabeth, and the rest of the protesters, many students felt it was necessary to defend the first amendment. Someone put up fliers that quoted Noam Chomsky warning against censorship and defending free speech. Students at the forum said that we should learn to forgive the offenders. One female student even said that we should learn to love them. I wish that after four years of feeling alienated, condescended upon, and threatened, that I felt the same way. Noam Chomsky states, "We cannot ignore the fact that we live in a profoundly racist society, though we like to forget that this is so." Never have I felt the impact of that statement more than the night of the forum. To hear someone say that the usage of the word NIGGER could even be remotely compared to calling someone a "dirty Republican" reinforces the fact that Bard students continue to marginalize racism. Although most students are able to fully denounce bigotry, the comparison between the words NIGGER and "dirty Republican," shows me that our community will continue to trivialize the issues that students of color have dealt with throughout Bard's history. We as a community intellectualize the simplest ideas, something as uncomplicated as the denunci-

ation of the word NIGGER has to be broken down into a million complicated arguments. I have, and need, only one argument in support of expelling the offenders: Saran's face as the community made her fear, anger, and discomfort secondary. Throughout our entire lives students of color have been made to feel inadequate. We grow up with poor budgeting in our public schools, and then we come to college and realize that we make up less than fifteen percent of the student body. We study with students who travel to protests all over the world to fight globalization's spread of poverty, but who are apathetic towards the fact that our little brothers and sisters are living in poverty in a city only 90 miles away. If we make it through our first year at Bard, we are still faced with the realization that out of fifteen percent we are lucky if half of us graduate on time or at all. These are things we deal with daily. But to be called NIGGER and to have our peers downplay the distinction between bigotry and the protection of free speech is something that we were not prepared for. The students who were advocating leniency for the offenders quote the first amendment without a full understanding of what free speech truly means. The Supreme Court held that in every case the question is "whether the words are used in such circumstances and are of such a nature as to create a clear and present danger that they will bring about the substantive evils that Congress [or the Bard administration] has a right to prevent. It is a question of proximity and degree." Whether the word NIGGER presents a "clear and present danger" is exclusively for students of color to decide. The same goes for the word FAGGOT, and other derogatory epithets. The use of the phrase "dirty Republican" could possibly represent a "clear and present danger" to the recipient of the insult. However, it does not always represent a clear and present danger. Conversely, the words NIGGER and FAGGOT always, without exception, invoke a history of violence that necessarily presents a feeling of imminent danger.

Although I completely understand and agree with some of the arguments made at the forum, I believe that the argument of trying to educate those who would call a black woman a FUCKING NIGGER is not the responsibility of the Bard community. Like basic reading skills, if one hasn't already learned the connotation behind this word, he/she does not deserve to be at our school. I do agree, however, that each instance of racial discrimination has to be dealt with on a case-to-case basis. I do not think that a white student who tells a "black joke" deserves to be kicked out of Bard. But when you call a black woman a FUCKING NIGGER, blow smoke in her face, push past her, and threaten to return to the scene, you are not using your first amendment privileges, you are taking away her humanity. It is certain that she will feel a "clear and present danger." Someone at the forum shook their head when Elizabeth Anderson, one of the forum's moderators, said that all minority students deserve to live without fear. This person huffed and internally denounced what Elizabeth was saying. Although you may not believe that "angry" blacks, Latinos, and homosexuals are capable of living in fear, I will break it down for you in sixth grade school-yard vernacular: I swear to God being called a NIGGER scares us!

I only have two months left at Bard, a place I will cherish for the rest of my life despite the racial tension I have felt. When I leave, my agency in matters such as this will have been taken away from me. No longer will I be able to march into Kline and demand to be noticed. But for those of you who feel the daily effect of the racism at Bard, don't let the community forget. Make the community remember each and every incident that arises. Don't wait for it to happen again in order to stand up and say that we won't accept it. Take whatever action necessary in order to keep the memory of what we've lived alive. We run the risk that the suffering of Saran, Elizabeth, and all of the students of color who never got to graduate will have been futile. Remember the night of the 24th, remember it as the night we marched together and demanded the community's attention, and also, remember it as the night that our fear, pain, anger, and freedom to exist comfortably on this campus was ignored.

## The New Emporia - Free Speech, Even Hate Speech

By: Matt Rozsa

So there I was, talking politics – ironically the subject was John Ashcroft – when I hear the chant "Free speech, not hate speech!" emanating through the halls of Kline cafeteria, where I was holding this conversation. I turn around and see the eminent Katie Crockford, followed by her traditional brood, marching through the cafeteria and informing its occupants that there will be a meeting that night to discuss the "pathological issue of racism" that has been plaguing Bard College.

Now, I will say many things about Bard College. I do not think one can, with any sense of sanity, call this campus racist. That isn't the same thing as being tolerant, of course; towards conservatives, towards people who dress "preppy," towards people who are perceived as having "strange personalities," there is a large portion of the Bard College community which is very intolerant. But race and religion are simply not issues on this campus.

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I do not think one can,  
with any sense of sanity,  
call this campus racist.

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That is not what you would believe based on the statements of much of Bard's more politically-active community. According to them, racist flyers have been posted all over campus making despicable and ignorant statements such as "I hate minorities" and "These are the minorities I don't like." Or so I've heard. I have not actually seen any of these flyers (though I do not question their existence).

Now a bunch of prominent campus liberals are jumping on this incident – along with a much more despicable incident where several Bard students called a fellow student

a "nigger bitch" and blew cigarette smoke in her face – are being used by some of Bard's more prestigious students to make the case that Bard has a problem with intolerance and prejudice, and ought to be remedied.

This is an argument that simply has no basis in reality. Anyone who has ever talked at length with a Bard student on political issues knows this to be so. But beyond that for a moment, I do have a pertinent question for those who would ban "hate speech" while crying out for "free speech" – doesn't free speech mean that, to paraphrase Voltaire, you should allow those to say anything they please, even if doing so makes your blood boil with anger? The incident of the girl having cigarette smoke blown in her face and being verbally harassed is a complete exception to this rule; your rights to speech end where my nose beings, so to speak, and nobody has the right to harass another student regardless of their beliefs. I am not advocating hateful behavior; nor, for that matter, am I advocating hateful speech. But I would argue that much of the anti-American and anti-Israel propaganda hanging around this campus drips with as much hatred as any of the equally-despicable "I hate minorities" flyers. The fact that they're more socially-accepted doesn't alter the offense I take to these statements. Yet would I advocate tearing those flyers down and prohibiting the people who hold those positions from speaking their minds? Of course not – just like I know they would allow me to speak my own in response to their views.

The most despicable arguments should not be exempted from this rule of free speech. The hateful statements of individuals on this campus, though obviously not representing any large segment of Bard's population, are nevertheless ones that ought to be put down in a forum of free speech – and both sides should be allowed to make their case. Otherwise, if we prohibit racially-charged and hate-filled statements from being said, then I would have just as much grounds for demanding that, say, anti-American posters be torn down on the basis that they offend me as an American. One does not have the right to be selective about which offensive statements are allowed to remain and which ones ought to be removed; it's an all or nothing deal. Either all offensive statements should be allowed to be posted – so long as they do not infringe on the rights of students who hold differing views or personally threaten the well-being of any group of individuals – or none at all. Personally I believe the only decision that this – or any other college – should make is all.

Oscar Wilde coined the word "dude," combining the word "duds" (clothes) and "attitude" to describe his friends.



# Louis Godfrey

In recent weeks, the Bard community has been confronted with the wounds that bigotry inflicts. Repeated incidents of harassment and vandalism involving racial epithets have created increasing tensions among the students and faculty. It is saddening that even at a school so insulated and high-minded in its ideals, we are forced to deal with issues of racial prejudice. I was shocked by the news of these acts, and became concerned with the potential for repercussions on campus. This is a major test of Bard's liberal values which have been so easy to take for granted, and our reaction could shape how the school deals with unpopular actions and opinions in the future.

The most immediate reaction to these events has been an outcry from many minority students on campus, and rightfully so. The only reaction to torments such as these is anger. In an open letter to President Botstein, Kena Hazelwood voiced outrage on behalf of many minority groups, and called for radical action from the administration. Among their requests are a clear administrative definition of discrimination, the institution of a two-strikes policy (under which repeat offenders would be expelled), and the creation of a discrimination and harassment board to oversee issues when bigotry is involved.

I for one stand in opposition to these measures. Let me make myself clear, these acts were nothing short of disgusting, and I have nothing but contempt for those who committed them. They should be disciplined for these acts of harassment and vandalism by the appropriate administrative bodies already in place. Once we enter the arena of dishing out punishment based on the words that were used, the issue becomes murky. What would prevent a new discrimination and harassment board from becoming (forgive the hyperbole) a sort of witch hunt? Once the school begins to make moves to define acceptable speech and thought, a line has been crossed and we face a grave danger.

# Elizabeth Anderson

I have, perhaps like many students, been doing a great deal of thinking about racism and homophobia at Bard since the March 24, 2004 town hall meeting, but truthfully I have been doing a lot of thinking about racism and homophobia for all four years that I have attended Bard. One of the recurring themes at our town hall meeting was the concern for diversity education. I was both frustrated and excited by the comments students in the audience made regarding the need for increased education. While I certainly agree that there can never be too much education, I am frustrated by the general attitude that seemed to come from the student body that no efforts towards diversity awareness have been made.

The question of diversity education is a complex one, regardless of the institution. The question of diversity education at Bard is perhaps even more complicated because of where on the ideological spectrum Bard students are presumed to fall. We are, in name and reputation, and also often in practice, a very left-leaning or liberal school. Our liberalism means that student educational efforts must be more sophisticated than the simple dichotomy of "racism is bad, tolerance is good" that is espoused at less left-identified institutions, or so I thought until March 24.

I know first-hand how difficult educational efforts at a liberal (with all of the positive and negative connotations of that word) institution can be. I have served in just about every capacity a student can serve on the campus in the fight to increase cross-cultural understanding. I joined the Diversity and Inclusion Board in September of 2000 when Nicole Woods was the Dean of Multi-Cultural Affairs. I interviewed students, faculty, and staff from all across campus to cull information for the college's diversity report. After more than a year of work by everyone on the board we watched the report shrink from a massive document of several hundred pages of information to a less than fifty page incomplete (in my opinion) final report. I spent several of my Friday mornings in 8:30 meetings at Dean Dominy's office advocating for the creation of two new areas of study at Bard: Asian American Studies and Queer Studies. I conducted surveys, I wrote reports, I met with faculty across many disciplines and fields, and many people professed support. Now, a year and a half later, the results are all but negligible.

I joined the Diversity Awareness Peers in 2001 under the direction of Jennifer Jimenez, the college's second Dean of Multi-Cultural Affairs. Under her guidance I, and several other students from all over campus, met once a week for two years to plan, implement, and execute programming to increase diversity awareness on campus and promote community dialogues. In the 2002-2003 school year alone, the Office of Multi-Cultural Affairs and D.A.P. sponsored at least twenty-five events that were open to the Bard community. The events were well publicized; we sent flyers, we tabled in the campus center and Kline, we sent e-mails, we posted signs, and in the end, my work and the work of other student organizers was rewarded by spending evenings in empty rooms with tables full of cookies, soda, and handouts for students who never bothered to show up.

My experiences as president of the Queer Alliance were very similar. I could organize relevant and useful discussions till the cows came home but unless we were armed with kegs and a laptop full of 80s music, nobody attended our events. As the chairperson and as a member of the Planning Committee I have allotted thousands upon thousands of dollars to student organizations whose primary missions are to educate the Bard community on issues of diversity. The Planning Committee grants the money, the treasurer cuts the checks, and guess what happens? No one shows up.

My frustrations are two-fold: My first frustration, which was magnified at our recent attempt at education and awareness, the town meeting, is the implicit assumption

Some may think that this is not an issue of freedom of speech, but what could be more vital to the concept of free speech than the right of others to say that which most deeply offends you? Yes, the school has a responsibility to ensure the fundamental right of all students to feel safe in their own residences. But the school has a higher responsibility to ensure that all are free to think and speak without fear of retribution. It only takes small and sudden acts to set the cycle of fear and anger in motion, and once tensions begin to brew, it is hard to keep them from erupting. White students and minority students must face up to these incidents with clear minds and open arms. It is essential that we come together as a community to preserve the ideals that make this a community worth living in.

Living in a free society is not easy—it is not supposed to be. We have to recognize the right of those to say that which makes our blood boil with anger, otherwise any other principles Bard stands for are useless. Harassment and vandalism are crimes, and should be dealt with as such, but once we try to legislate speech, the school has failed as an institution of higher learning, and we have failed as a community. If we give into fear and anger, we will divide ourselves along lines skin color, religion, nationality, and sexual orientation. This is not the school I want to attend, and I know it is not the one many of you want to attend. If Bard stands for freedom of expression, then it must stand for total freedom of expression, without exception. Only with this in our minds and hearts can we come together as a community and address these most painful issues.

that some students in the community made that students of color and queer students should be the primary, if not only, educators and organizers of programming dealing with diversity. My second, and most salient, frustration is that we already are the primary and sometimes only students engaging in this important work. While I believe there are many important conversations that can and should occur between heterosexual students of color and white queer students, as well as students who express a multiplicity of minority (for lack of a better word) identities, our struggles at Bard are often very similar. Our conversations are valuable, but often they are "preaching to the converted." Queer students and students of color at Bard know what doesn't work because we live each day with the problems. So when I organize a program on some aspect of racism at Bard and only students of color show up, I feel like there is a severe lack of commitment to these issues by the general student body.

The way some students in the meeting spoke about the issue of education was very problematic. The tone of some students' comments was "these people," the bigots, need to be educated so that we can accept them into the community and love them. No. The community needs to be educated so we can rightfully call ourselves a community in all senses of that word. Part of the problem is that perhaps we need to go back to basics. Hate speech is an aggressive assault and it is wrong. I thought I would never have to say that at Bard. I took for granted that everyone in the entire student body knew that certain kinds of speech are unacceptable. I know now that I was wrong.

The distance with which some students talked about the need for education scares me because it means that they do not believe the fight against oppression is their fight. Or maybe they do (and this is my sincere hope) but do not know how to get involved. One student expressed one such genuine concern in the meeting: "what about straight, white middle class people like me, whose families have been in this country for fourteen generations?" I will tell you now that I am a white lesbian from Georgia, born into a family of severe and violent racists, with an ancestral line who, if they did not own slaves, certainly approved of the practice, but in my time at Bard I have led only a handful of discussions on queer issues; almost every program I have ever led has involved issues of race at Bard. I have led these discussions not because I was an authority on what it means to be a person of color at Bard or anywhere else, or because I, as a gay person, can relate or feel like I am 'down for the struggle,' I lead these discussions because I am white and racism is now and has always been a white person's problem.

Despite my frustrations with the town hall meeting, I was also excited. I saw people who were genuinely moved by the events of recent weeks and who, I believe, will try to become involved in the efforts to make Bard a safer place for all students. I challenge all of the 99.9% of students whose hearts and minds are in the right place to take up this struggle as your own, because fundamentally, it is and always will be. If you are white or heterosexual, there is a place for you in this educational process, indeed, yours, like mine, is the perhaps the primary place.

If you would like to suggest a program, speaker, or activity or would like to discuss the issues presented in this article, please feel free to e-mail me at [ea876@bard.edu](mailto:ea876@bard.edu).

the bootleg "Guy@KLINE"

What's Your Phone Number?



Adam



Brendan



Genevieve



Josh



Karen



Mara

8675309

1-900-FREE PRESS

4470...  
Wait, are you serious?

404-873-6254

xLOVE

1-900-MOO-SHOO-ME



# COMMUNITY IS...

The "Bard Community" is probably a myth. I don't see what the fuss about creating a "Community" is. People fall into "community" naturally or not at all, and perhaps, trying to enforce or "subtly" suggest a communal sentiment really just perpetuates a sort of "bubble" mentality that simply isolates Bard from the rest of the world. I don't like to think of myself as a "Bard Student" primarily. This is just a school where I stay while I try and get my degree. This is not a way of life, it's a means to an end. Also, the student body is although more tolerant about minority issues than anywhere else I've been, which is awesome! And there's really very little everyone does here together other than drag race, which apparently people are just too dumb to handle. I mean really, didn't you ever go to one bad keg party in high school and learn your limits? Essentially, the real problem is that any ideal of what "Bard" is seems to be inherently elitist and often...imaginary. Suggestion: paint lines in the parking lot so people learn to park. Because some can't and my car has like three inexplicable scratches on it.

Good food,  
good people,  
good times!

Cooperation; Organization;  
Mutual Goals; Memories; Unity;  
Neighborhood; Integrity; Team;  
Youth

Community means a safe environment where there is the possibility to find friendship and love in a diverse group of people.

Community is a group of people who interact in ways for the benefit of itself and its members!

Community is unity.  
(x3)

Community  
is the most  
important thing  
in  
your life.

Community is having a sense of mutual understanding without needing to have people drop pieces of paper into a little box.

Community is all hands on deck.

Community is everyone, no exceptions, helping each other, caring for each other and for each other.

Love.

The inevitable aura of consistent proximity to people with differing agendas.

A society where I shouldn't have to sit by myself because everyone in "little Africa" aren't present on my side of Kline. Why are there sides?

A constant steely resolve to eat less chocolate.

Bard is a delicate flower  
With pretty petals and soft leaves  
The sun's rays pierce its cozy bower  
And your shadow marks its decease.

Sho Spaeth



Dignity.

Community is a place that costs \$40,000 per year.

Community is a place where people can share ideas freely and comfortably, where people have a common love of beauty, tolerance and peace.

TOGETHER

Community is respect.



# Late Breaking News: Bard Takes Vassar Booty

People Interested in Restoring A Tradition of Excellence at Sea...

By: Josh Klein-Kuhn

When Thomas and I first made the claim, "We're going to raid Vassar," while crazily drunk at the Budget Forum, I think a lot of you doubted us. A couple of drunk freshmen, starting a "pirate club." Ha! What a joke! But now, the joke's on you.

On Saturday, April 17, twenty-four members of the P.I.R.A.T.E.S. (People Interested in Restoring A Tradition of Excellence at Sea), dressed to the nines, raided arch-rival Vassar College. Beginning in their Campus Center, the raiders swung swords, screamed about Vassar eating their babies, and claimed the land for Bard.

After exiting the Campus Center, the pirate crew ran screaming towards the quad, site of a day-long, outdoor hip hop festival. While screaming "Bard College runs this shit!" and "Bard Pirates in the house, motha-fucka!" the group made off with stunned Vassar students' booty and planted the Bard Pirate flag.

With a cry of "Run Away!" the group left the quad and made for the dining hall. We sent in a group of members dressed as virginal maidens; screaming for protection. Following closely on their heels were twenty crazed pirates, hollering for booty, and screaming "Fuck Vassar," all the while. After chasing the maidens around tables and serving areas, they escaped, running to the softball team's practice field for protection.

After doing sword to bat battle with the softball team, kicking their asses, and making a speech from a stage, we went in search of water. It was at this point that shit got hairy.

They rolled up on us mad deep: One on a bike, one in a golf cart, and two in trucks. Vassar security had gotten word of us. Actually they had gotten word of us from the numerous prospective students and parents who were there for prospective student day. They were "upset about how profane we were being, and how disparaging towards Vassar we were being." The one in the golf cart was really nice, encouraging us to continue to have our fun, while being slightly less obnoxious. The asshole in the Honda SUV who told us to stop filming the situation was just that, an asshole.

After a quick respite in the Campus Center, we decided to go back out to the quad and ask people for loot. We fanned out, collecting things like apples, pencils, traffic cones, hookah smoke, and barbeque. After a shout-out from the Cunnylinquists, who were performing on stage, we took off. On our way back to the ships, we were assaulted by members of the "Fairy House." No really, the "Fairy House." It's their version of Feitler, and they attacked with pitchers of water and condoms filled with water. After handily defeating them, we posed for a picture and invited them to come to Bard later that night.

If you missed the celebratory gathering in the Community Garden, that's your loss. It was fun. We plan on making this a once a year occurrence, and hope that Vassar rallies and creates a retaliatory crew. If not, we'll keep taking their booty till they do.



Q: Why couldn't the little kids see the pirate movie?

A. It was rated ARRI



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Across:

1. Oil function in a engine
6. Found in Vegas
10. Places to relax
14. On guard?
15. Chuck Yeager's barrier
16. It might be chased
17. Might do to xmas lights
18. First bet
19. "To educate a child is to save a man" org.
20. Pittsburgh to Philly dir.
22. NY isle
24. When describing a pen, maybe
25. Found next to a hwy
26. Moosejaw locale?
29. "The spur of a cock"? Wtf?
30. Costar in '98 Bruce Willis flic
31. French storytellers
37. Aquatic Nile resident
39. \_\_\_ Lanka
40. Banshees singer
41. Like an oval that should've been a square

Down:

1. Physicist Max von \_\_\_
2. Arm bone
3. They may all be off
4. Latin robin?
5. Often of meat and potatoes
6. Like most in mensa
7. Terra Firma?
8. Misnamed month
9. The best pop song ever!
10. In lieu of
11. \_\_\_-pris
12. Yacht maker of note
13. Yo yo yo, ie.
21. Like Africa, say
23. Horse's gate
26. Maybe one on Valium
27. Jai - \_\_\_
28. NY team
29. For measuring a farm, ie.
32. Kobe made news here
33. \_\_\_-friendly
34. Possessed by oranges and bananas
36. Found in a theater
43. Monthly concern
44. Defunct dept. store chain
45. Landed man?
47. Bossert of "Trite Words"
51. Used by many an electronica band
52. Durkheim 1893 subject
53. In many a personal
57. Ctrl-Z?
58. Kung Fu actor's recent work
60. Romance writer Ashworth
61. Fed to a bird
62. Genesis brother
63. Like some cheerleaders (no offense meant)
64. Allay
65. All good things...
66. Racing switchback

Down:

1. Physicist Max von \_\_\_
2. Arm bone
3. They may all be off
4. Latin robin?
5. Often of meat and potatoes
6. Like most in mensa
7. Terra Firma?
8. Misnamed month
9. The best pop song ever!
10. In lieu of
11. \_\_\_-pris
12. Yacht maker of note
13. Yo yo yo, ie.
21. Like Africa, say
23. Horse's gate
26. Maybe one on Valium
27. Jai - \_\_\_
28. NY team
29. For measuring a farm, ie.
32. Kobe made news here
33. \_\_\_-friendly
34. Possessed by oranges and bananas
36. Found in a theater

38. \_\_\_'ah (law)
42. Protozoa?
45. NFLer Pasquarelli
46. Air out
47. Effect preceder
48. Bluegrass (Poa \_\_\_)
49. French fashions
50. Most women are really good at this
51. Matador's foes
53. Could be lead or plastic, depending
54. There happen to be well more than seven of these
55. End of a threat
56. Hymonym of 54 Down
59. Sorry but "IBN" was the only that fit and I'm past deadline anyway.

## Drab Report

Ofentimes Bard can seem as if it's ruled by the moon (and no, that wasn't some joke about Bard's collective menstrual situation). I'm talking werewolf type shit. Michael J. Fox etc. Mud-wrestling. When I stepped into the Old Gym on Friday night my shoes were instantly covered in muddy water, for there were two topless women were wrestling in a kiddie pool that seemed to only be able to fit like one kid, not two flailing muddy adults. Catcalls and such were hurled, calls for blood, pulling hair, etc. Pictures were taken, most of them published on [www.collegeamateurlwrestlers.com](http://www.collegeamateurlwrestlers.com). Since I was a bit tipsy when I was watching the mud battle, I'm not going to act like I have the authoritative understanding of what it was, but I will go so far as to issue a blanket challenge to the anthropology and psychology departments: I dare you to explain that shit.

In the midst of all of this the racial outbursts are still being investigated.

On Saturday night I had the privilege of building a fire with three of my friends. We decided to light the fire early because we couldn't find a four square ball, and within ten minutes of arriving at the fire pit we had an impressive blaze going. Pooling our knowledge, we built an octagon of logs around a center teepee and the whole thing lit up faster than one of those poorly planned cities in the eighteen hundreds. We had a blast, hanging around a total blaze, shooting the shit. Perfect.

When I got home I found a tic sucking blood from my thigh. Sometimes there are parasites. A tic is difficult because you have to either burn him out or needle your skin until his chompers let go. Tics suck. Literally. This

particular tic was named Godfrey. The little sucker must have made a nest of my pasty white thigh while I was enjoying the fire with my friends.

But you know what? I drowned Godfrey in a Dasani bottle. And though I thought it strange to have an insect burrowing into my thigh and sucking my blood, I don't let that reality take away from the good time I had at the blaze with my friends. Yeah, this campus has been through some shit, some horribly nightmarish interactions for a few people (nightmarish, not for just the victims, but for everyone living and working on this campus). My heart goes out to everyone. When I look over everything—the woman with the French Canadian accent, the mud wrestling, the Cricket game, the rock concert—the only clear thing I can understand is the murkiness, the blurriness of our interactions. We are a bunch of nut jobs, blindly bouncing off one another and getting excited. My evidence to this profound conclusion was a result of Sunday, as I stared out of the high windows of the Observer office, watching the Quad turn into a circus of fine weather fun, I noticed that there is no way to understand our community—it's firmly based in strong individualism and passion. Though it may get us into trouble (Bard Space Program, the BardJge, Drag Race etc.) we are up to the task of handling what comes down our path. To all of those who were hurt or offended: my deepest sympathy. But let's also remember that this collection of strange people is still, at bottom, amazing and sympathetic. I drowned my Godfrey in a water bottle. Now it's time to heal.

Peace.



**Staff Ox:** 

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: Tom Mattos

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JEREMY LOW: Jeremy Low

ILLUSTRATIONIST ADOR: Laurence Laufer, ESQ.

SPY: Kelly Burdick

DRINK OF CHOICE: Water (We've run out of Bardbucks.)

FOOD OF CHOICE: Box Lunches for Accepted Students Only

AMBASSADOR: Genevieve Lynch, Briarcliff NY

WRITERS WHO MAKE IT HAPPEN: Rebecca Giusti! **Laura Bomyea!** Genevieve Wanucha! Noah Weston! Matthew Wing! Chelsea Doyle! Emily Sauter! Kate Myers! Noah Weston! Matt Rozsa! Jeremy Low! Maanas Agarwal! Mandie Selin! Len Gutkin! Adam Langley! Hamish "H-Bomb" Strong! Andrew Lyman-Clarke! Kevin Wright! Josh Sucher! Christina Rosetti! Josh Klein-Kuhn! Louis Godfrey! Elizabeth Anderson! Juan Martinez! Geneva Foster! Ketaki Pant! Vincent Taubner!

Workers of the World, Unite!

SPECIAL THANKS: Russell Banks, Bradford Morrow, Monique Truong.

GO-FUCK-YOURSELF: Godfrey, the Deer-Tic.

COVER: Laurence Laufer, ESQ.

Dear Friends:

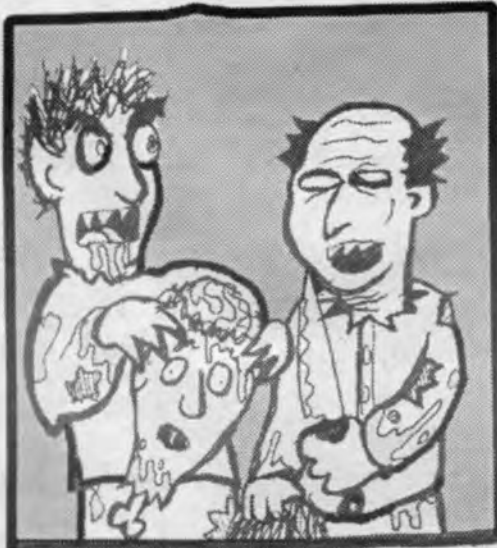
If anyone would like to write articles or generally help the Bard Observer we would love to have you.

If you help us we will make you cookies.

They will taste good.

So will working for the Bard Observer.

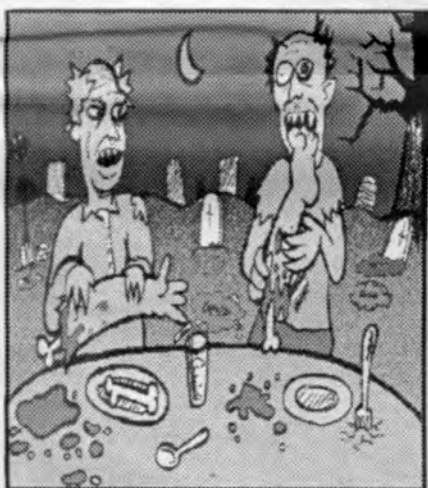
Love,  
the Observer Staff



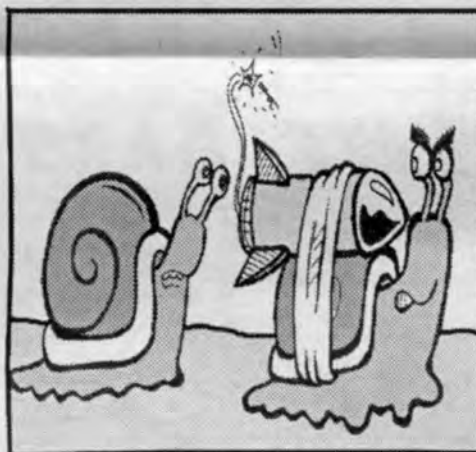
With this new diet I'm on, I can only have 3 brains per day.



Ok, on 3 we make the switch... And NO funny stuff.



Dude... I can't believe you're eating that.



I don't know man... I really think this is a bad idea.

[www.feverdream.com](http://www.feverdream.com)

C O M I X B O X L A U R E N C E L A U F E R E S Q .

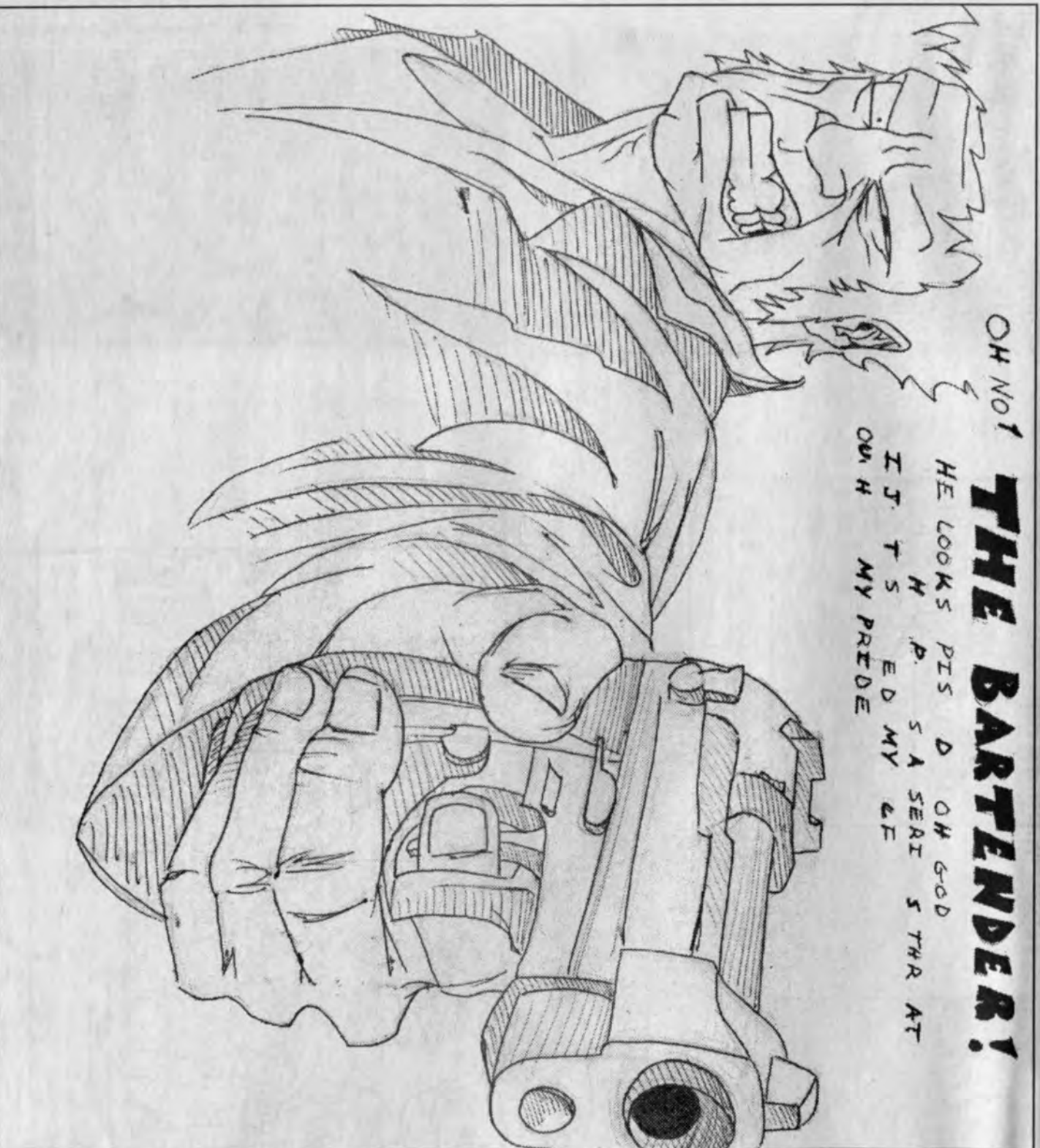
**Adventures in Bardland - Emily Sauter**







by Kevin Wright



THE BARTENDER!

OH NO!  
 HE LOOKS PIS D OH GOD  
 H P S A SERI S THR AT  
 I J T S ED MY GF  
 OH H MY PRIDE