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Students of Bryn Mawr College

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THE COLLEGE NEWS

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BRYN MAWR COLLEGE

March 5, 1996

Feminist Expo Lacks Holistic Vision

by Emily Hughes

Expo '96, February 2-4 in Washington D.C. was to be the feminist gathering of the year, a time to envision a feminist future and rally together in the face of conservative attacks on women. Frankly, all I expected was a feminist feel-good event, an exposition area where we would congratulate ourselves on our activities, and a couple Feminist Activism 101 workshops.

Expo '96 was a much more complex conference than I had anticipated. I was impressed by the organization, materials, and facilities. The energy of 3,000 women gathered to create change pulsed through the building.

Yet gradually, I began to feel as if all

our efforts were disjointed, somehow we were failing to grasp the big picture. Instead of feeling confident in the feminist future, I felt alarmed at the inadequacies of "the" movement.

One of the workshops, "Framing the Debate for Feminism", highlighted the absence of a unified and realistic vision. Half of the panelists were from pro-choice organizations and focused their remarks around the abortion debate. I kept flipping through the program booklet—had I misread pro-choice for feminism? One speaker envisioned strategies to defeat attacks on abortion in a way that would make the army proud.

Then a speaker from a Latina health organization stood up and reminded the audience that women are not only wombs but an entire body, that women's health care does not stop at abortion but includes her whole being, her mental health, and the quality of the environment around her.

When the speaker finished and sat back down next to the woman from the pro-choice organization. I can't remember if they even looked at each other.

What would they have said anyway? Their remarks were almost in complete contradiction of one another. While the Latina speaker did support abortion

rights, she had just called on the women in the room to move beyond their narrow scope of activism to address the many issues important to women. This workshop didn't provide vision, only revealed our inability to talk to each other.

Thankfully, my Latina sister also dared to comment on the homogeneous composition of conference attendees.

The organizers of Expo '96 chose to go mainstream and hope that diversity would be embraced on the way. Maybe this was their chance to prove that feminism today is inclusive. The rhetoric of diversity oozed out of people's mouths. In truth, however, at Expo '96 women of color, poor women, and lesbians were near invisible. Not a single workshop and only a few speakers specifically addressed issues unique to these groups.

To me it appears that the straight middle class white feminists who dominate the movement must ask themselves two very important questions: (1) why do they sincerely desire and seek diversity in their organization and environment aside from a politically correct understanding that it is "right" and (2) how might the "mainstream" agenda fail to reflect what is important in the lives of the very women that they wish to attract?

These questions are not easy to answer. Yet it is my feeling that the answers will lead to a much more holistic movement, that not only cares for the well-being of the entire woman, but also addresses the diverse needs of many different women.

Sometimes concern arises over what constitutes a feminist issue and what should be left for others as a race or class

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Multiculturalism and Literature: a Response

by Kathryn Kingsbury

The publication in the *Bi-College News* a couple of weeks back of "Education Slain at Hand of Multiculturalism" by Ilana Greenstein gave me, and I'm sure many others in the bi-co community, a chance to discuss and reassess what it is we value in literature and education. Greenstein argued that the multicultural curriculum of her Freshman Writing class at Haverford ignored the Western literary canon in favor of works "by lesser known authors" that "were shallow and, more importantly, represented one (liberal) political point of view... We were no longer learning an array of literary perspectives chosen by merit." She also argues that "multicultural authors often refute or build on Western authors' theories and ideas," and thus that it is important to read Western works before or instead of non-Western ones.

Greenstein, however, fails to clearly define in her article how one is to judge literary merit, though she does offer a few criteria; a work has merit, states Greenstein, if it contains "timeless literary and ideological perspectives" and if it "stand[s] the test of time and become[s] classic."

Greenstein's first statement is problematic. She claims that "in a literature class, diversity is essential, but the diversity should be embodied in a wide range of timeless literary and ideological perspectives"; but what, exactly, does she mean by "timeless"? I ask the question because the first thing I was taught by my (politically and socially conservative) twelfth-grade English teacher was that the works of Shakespeare, Euripides, and John Donne—indeed, of any author—are not timeless; i.e., they cannot be well



understood without at least a rudimentary knowledge of the time period in which they were written. This was why, when we began our semester-long exploration of Shakespeare, my teacher spent a lot of time and energy ensuring that his students understood the culture out of which Shakespeare wrote. My teacher had to explain to his students Shakespeare's most basic assumptions about the way the world works—if he hadn't, we simply wouldn't have understood what Shakespeare was trying to say.

For example, one cultural assumption with which Shakespeare wrote was that all humans are intrinsically ranked on a scale from highest to lowest. (For the sake of brevity, I am simplifying things dramatically here.) Kings were the highest; oyster-shuckers' wives were way down at the bottom. If anyone tried to change places on the scale (to gain power or riches that were not willed to them, for example), or if one failed to heed the commands of someone ranked more highly, that person was rejecting what fate had handed them. Chaos ensued.

This came as a surprise to many of the students who were used to the ideals of individualism and socio-economic mobility. Without this explanation, they

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Hell Week: the Traditions Mistresses Speak

by Ellen Herr and Sarah Wakefield, Traditions Mistresses

As usual, the *College News* has featured a variety of articles asking for changes in or the abolition of Hell Week. We, as the Traditions Mistresses, feel obligated to reply to a few of the complaints aired.

One writer compared Hell Week to other Traditions, like Lantern Night, and said that Hell Week singles out frosh and subjects them to embarrassing behavior. Gee. For Lantern Night, frosh are asked to come to several rehearsals so they can perform a song in front of many people, to wear funny-looking robes, and to receive lanterns in a color which distinguishes them from everyone else. Sound divisive to anyone? Sound vaguely like a Hell Week performance in Erdman? If everyone is so concerned about division in the community, why don't we just dump everything that differentiates between the classes? Have one color for lanterns, abolish the Senior Steps, let everyone yell the college cheer, and put an end to all those different Maypoles.

That would be truly egalitarian. It wouldn't be much fun, either.

Hell Week Alternatives were run last year, but not this year. In 1995, there were alternative events, like a game fair, scheduled during the time periods of traditional Hell Week events. If someone wants to revive that, fine. We believe, however, that such a set-up would only divide the frosh into more groups, which, as the articles state, is a problem.

We held two "information sessions" to give new students the low-down on Hell Week. Attendance was poor, as is often the case. Anyone who came was told: 1) Don't bother getting up for the Duck Pond Run since it's a waste of time and energy, 2) Copy the schedule only if you want a copy for posterity, 3) If anyone bothers you, call a Traditions Mistress to clear things up, 4) Try not to take things seriously, and 5) Hell Week is as fun as you make it. That's really true. Give a Mawriter another reason to stress and she'll take it (please excuse the stereotype). Anyone concerned about

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Crossroads members know how to drink without getting a hangover. Wouldn't you like to know, too?

Come to the open forum on alcohol use at BMC on Thursday, March 28, at 7 PM in the Crossroads room in Erdman.

EDITORIAL

yesterday, a bomb went off in a busy Tel Aviv shopping area, killing 12 and wounding over a hundred others. This explosion, which happened about a block and half from the horrible bus bomb which killed 26 people a year and a half ago, was the fourth incident of terror in the past nine days in Israel. This terrorist attack came on the eve of Purim, one of the most joyous Jewish holidays which commemorates a time long ago when a Jewish community in Persia thought that they were going to be annihilated by an evil man named Haman but were saved by a courageous woman, Esther, and her cousin Mordechai. Traditionally, on this holiday, Jews dress up in silly costumes and have parties and festivities in the street. Ironically, in the latest terrorist attack, counted among the dead were young children, dressed in their Purim costumes.

The goal of these terrorist attacks was to halt the peace process. Unfortunately, they have had a profound effect on the state of mind of the people of Israel. For many Israelis, it is hard to keep up a brave and united front in the face of such random and devastating acts of terror. Many Israelis are advocating the permanent closure of the borders that separate Israel from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Others want Yassir Arafat to crack down on the Hamas infrastructure within the constructs of the Palestinian Authority's control. These have been very trying times in the Middle East, and it seems as though things will get worse before they will get better.

However, there are a few hopeful voices in this dark time. During last Sunday's bus bomb in Israel, 22 year-old American graduate student, Sara Duker, was killed along with her fiance, Matt Eisenfeld, a rabbinical student. Both were ardent supporters of the peace process. Their tragic death has not weakened the beliefs of their families. Sara's mother said of her daughter's death: "Her death at the hands of terrorists is in total contrast to the way she lived her life. Our family is certain that she would not want her death to in any way deter efforts to achieve peace in Israel."

In these difficult days, we can look to the words of the prophet Isaiah for inspiration: "Nation shall not lift up sword against nation. Let them learn no longer ways of war." As distant as it may seem, we must not give up on the dream of peace.

THE COLLEGE NEWS

BRYN MAWR COLLEGE VOLUME XVIII, NO. 5, February 13, 1996

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The College News does not accept any advertising.
Free announcements from or for the community are welcome.

The next deadline is Friday, March 23 at Midnight. Letters and articles should be sent to our mailbox (C-1716), or placed outside our Denbigh office (x7340). All submissions should be on MAC disks or hard copy. They will be returned via campus mail. All opinions expressed in articles or letters are those of the author only, and are not representative of those of the editorial board; all pictures are the work of the artist, and do not necessarily represent the opinions of the authors of the articles near which they appear. Come to the Thursday night meetings at 7 in the News Office or call one of the editors if you are interested in submitting to the paper.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE: The College News is a feminist newsjournal which serves as a source of information and self-expression for the Bryn Mawr community. Recognizing that feminism is a collective process, we attempt to explore issues of interest to all women, both as members of this college and of the larger world community. Through this continuing dialogue, we seek to promote communication and understanding and to foster self-confidence and independence in expression.

A Mother Responds to Anonymous

To the College News Editors:

As I read the article "Why My Name Does Not Appear Under This Headline" in your February 13th issue, I was brought to tears by the young woman's plight and I felt that I had to respond in some way. I don't know if you have any way of getting in touch with her...please do so.

Dear Anonymous,

Your letter in The College News touched me deeply and I wanted to write you and express some of my thoughts. I am writing as a middle-aged, Catholic, heterosexual wife and mother and as the mother of a gay son. My son came out to my husband and I a few years ago and I'd like to share with you some of my thoughts. First of all I'd like you to know that I am praying for you to become comfortable with the fact that you are who you are and there is absolutely nothing in the world wrong with that. There is nothing wrong with being homosexual—that is just the way that God, or genes, or something made you and even if it may not be as usual as heterosexuality it is every bit as right and normal and good. Second, please don't blame yourself in any way for the fears and trepidation you have about coming out. The problem is not you—the problem is a homophobic society. Any one of us as a finite amount of strength and energy with which to face the world. Sometimes some things have to be put on a "back burner" while we deal with other things. That doesn't mean that you are a coward or dishonest, just human. I know that my son has come to terms with his sexual orientation in a way that amazes me for it's maturity and wisdom; but there are other areas of his life that he is not dealing with at all or in anywhere near as mature a manner. This seems to me to be totally normal and the natural consequence of all of the things that need to be managed in all of our lives. You spoke in your letter of not wanting to ask for so great an amount of understanding from people. Two responses that I heard after my son started to come out to people may help. My best friend's response was "I'm surprised but he is still the very same person he has always been." She is totally right. My son is still has all of the wonderful qualities that he has always had and the same traits that drive me crazy as well. My son's best friend is a young woman who is very conservative—politically, socially, religiously, personally. Her response to me after he told her was, "Yesterday I would have said that gay was immoral and horrible, but then when I realized that someone I love is gay I had to accept how very wrong I would be to keep that view about any gay." You said that your mother would cry. She might but that is okay. By the time our son came out to my husband and I, we had suspected it for quite a while. Many years before when my husband and I first started to share with each other our fears, I did cry. I think that I cried mostly because like every other parent I had certain dreams and aspirations for my children and they did not include having him live a life that

would put him on the outside of society. I was terrified that his life could be in danger from homophobes, that he would be treated with disdain, dislike, or pity by some people, that he would not have all of the freedom of choice I thought he would have were he straight, and frankly I was sorry that he would never father children because I think he would be a great father. Some of these things still worry me; other things have either gone away or become easier to deal with because I have done much reading on what it means to be gay in this society, because I am fighting as hard as I can to make this world a more accepting one for anyone who does not fit the narrow molds that we are all placed in. A lot of my tears were dried up, however, when he came out and we could talk honestly and openly about where each of us was. People can and do grow, learn, and change. While you certainly know your parents and family better than anyone else, please remember that although parents act at times as if their love is based on your behavior and achievements, in reality real parents' love is unconditional. This is not always easy to accept and because none of us is perfect there may well be temporary lapses and pain but it can work out. Time is often a big healer—think of how difficult it was to come out to yourself and give your parents the same gift of time to deal with their own myriad of emotions. I don't know what, if any, religious affiliation you have but the way I have come to know God makes it impossible for me to believe that (s)he would in any way disapprove of any love that is positive, joyous, and other-oriented. We just don't have enough of that kind of love in this world—we can't afford to turn away from love in any way. Although I know that my son's life will not necessarily be as trouble-free as my son with his eternal optimism believes, I do think that some progress is being made and I believe that the heterosexual world will see that homosexuals are normal people leading normal lives and this will hopefully make the prejudice harder to maintain. You might want to contact the local chapter of P-FLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays). They are some wonderful people there who might be able to offer you some insight or to help your parents if you choose to come out to them...what I really just wanted to say to you is that I don't judge you harshly and I hope and pray that you will find a way not to judge yourself too harshly and to be at one with yourself. If you ever feel the need to talk to someone who is probably your parents' age, I'd be happy to hear from you and if positive thoughts and caring help at all, please be assured that my husband and I are both keeping you in our thoughts and prayers. You are cared about.

[Anonymous, if you would like to get in contact with the woman who wrote this letter, address an empty envelope to Megan Munson, Box C-948, with your box number on the back or instructions on how to return the info.]

Hell Week Rocks!

To the College News Editors:

Upon reading the latest College News and finding it full of only negative articles on Hell Week, I became very concerned. I realized that not everyone enjoys the Hell Week experience and that it can actually give a negative twist to Bryn Mawr, but I also see what its intent truly is and that any February could use something unusual to spice it up.

As a frosh, of course I was unsure about what to expect from Hell Week. But, even though I knew it might be silly or even sometimes frustrating, I wanted to give it a try and also remember that my participation was optional. So I went into the week ready to experience the odd and actually looking forward to

meeting new people through Hell Week activities.

At first, I was shocked by the excitement of the upper-classwomen, afraid that maybe some had become overzealous in their desire to torture me and my friends. But, even though I was exhausted from activities and avoiding the thought of school work, I felt a closer bond to freshwomen and my own Heller. We were all going through Hell, with all the noise and excitement. My co-Heller, my Heller, and I actually spent time together talking about last year's experience, our work, what this year was like, and just getting to know each other better. I did not feel overwhelming

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Traditions

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study time for exams should have approached her Heller, her Sympathetic Junior, or one of us about her concerns. Anyone who worried about lizards was told, if she bothered to ask, that she wouldn't have any reptiles under her door. We got only one phone call regarding Hell Week problems.

The woman who stated that "Everyone is woken at six o'clock on Friday" didn't have her facts straight. In Denbigh, for example, the Friday morning music started at around 7:45 a.m.; this did not mean that people got out of bed. Many went back to sleep. Wake-ups varied from dorm to dorm. Everything, in fact, varied from dorm to dorm (all three articles in the Feb. 13 issue, it should be noted, were written by Rock residents). Were some frosh unhappy? Probably. As nice as 100% satisfaction would be, that's not a likely scenario. It's not likely for Parade Night, Lantern Night, May Day, or life in general.

We're at a loss. We did what we could, and so did the soph reps. We would rather put in the time and energy to work out the problems people still see in Hell Week rather than abolish it. Getting rid of a tradition is not something to be taken lightly.

All we really would like to say is that we cannot make women have fun, no matter how hard we try. We can only ask women to give this Tradition a try, and the rest is up to the individual. Hell Week is an optional, community-building, female bonding event. It is a rite of initiation. That's how we see it, and we welcome your constructive comments about Hell Week.

Why I Loved Hell Week

by Heather Forkos '99

Calisthenics started off ordinarily enough. We stretched for a few minutes, and then started jogging around Pem East, starting up on the third floor. When we got to the first floor, the dark hall was lined by upperclasswomen holding their lanterns and shouting "99!" What was going on? We got to the living room and everyone was saying "Congratulations! Welcome to Bryn Mawr! It's all over! Happy Flower Day!"

"What's all over? Trials? They weren't that bad—they were fun." I said to my Sympathetic Junior when she ran over to give me a hug.

"Hell Week's over!"

"What?"

"Now you know the secret of Hell Week. The reason we can say we're going to make you do all of those horrible things is that you don't really have to do them." And we hugged again. As I'm sure you can imagine, I was just beginning to realize the sheer enormity of the secret.

"Wait! Isn't there a Duck Pond Run?"

"No! It's over!" And I started to really appreciate the joke. No Duck Pond Run. No potato lectures (except, of course, for Cam's hilarious one for Pem East). No washing my Heller's car. No signing up guys for "Sex for PE Credit" at Haverford. I never heard of a better joke in my life-

never mind that it was on me! I love practical jokes as long as they aren't mean, and this was the nicest one I'd ever fallen victim to. Instead of most practical jokes, which have an innocent facade with a nasty surprise, like a bucket of water over someone's door or a short-sheeted bed, Hell Week was an innocent or maybe bad facade with a nice surprise. When I got my lizards, I couldn't believe they were all for me! They're so beautiful, and I really appreciate everything that the upperclasswomen did to make Hell Week special to us. Ah, I love Bryn Mawr.

I remember thinking this summer when I was reading the letter the College sent on Bryn Mawr traditions, "Hell Week, seems sort of out of place from the rest of the traditions. It sounds like sorority hazing. Well, whatever, I guess it'll be fun."

Well, I was right. Hell Week, as I thought it was until Flower Day, is a little out of place with the other BMC traditions. But Hell Week isn't supposed to be Hell Week at all, and that's the beauty of it. Some people think that the lie of Hell Week undermines the trust and relationships that we had with the upperclasswomen during the first semester, but I feel closer than ever to the upperclasswomen now that I know that they wouldn't really hell me.

Besides, "Hell Week," Thursday and

Friday, was a blast. Most of the people I know really got into and enjoyed the tasks they had to do, like setting the table nicely for their Heller or writing a poem for their Heller. Putting together a creative costume was fun, and showing off the costume I had put together was even more fun, not humiliating as one of the anti-Hell Week articles claimed. And we were willing to do more than just the small tasks we did—I'm not the only one who was looking forward to some of the more exciting tasks planned for later in the week.

I feel bad that not everybody had the thrilling experience I did. We really needed a break in the winter. School can be a real pressure cooker, and sometimes the pressure builds up before we realize it. Though I think that Hell Week is probably good for everybody's mental health, I realize there will probably always be some people who for whatever reasons can't or don't get into the spirit of it. Maybe there are ways to amend Hell Week so that it doesn't interfere as much with the lives of those who don't want to participate. But overall, there's nothing inherently wrong with Hell Week, as some people think. Hell Week is one of my favorite things about Bryn Mawr, and Flower Day is the best thing about it.

Chillin' in Hell

by Erica A. Dale

I would like to express my concern regarding this week's centerspread about the Hell Week "controversy." It seems ludicrous to me that our college newspaper would run so many opinion articles with no opposing viewpoints. These few people have managed to denigrate severely an experience that was wonderful for me, and I'm sure for many other freshmen. Hell Week did nothing but bring me closer to the upperclasswomen of my dorm and make me feel even more a part of Bryn Mawr, if that were possible. I feel for the frosh who were pressured by upperclasswomen, but I don't believe that their lack of self-control could be in any way changed by altering Hell Week. It was made very clear from the beginning that none of us was obligated to participate in Hell Week activities. As for the upperclasswomen who tried to pressure frosh—obviously they were wrong, but the best way to deal with such people is to ignore them. Life will not always be perfect, even at Bryn Mawr, and there are people who will not always behave in the spirit of the Honor Code. Those Mawrters who don't wish to participate in Hell Week can hold to the strength of their convictions without doing away with this tradition.

The reason for Hell Week is obvious—it makes a family of us all. Just think of the thousands of women who have kept this secret for years. What holds them? Their loyalty to our school, and their sense of themselves as Mawrters. And now we have the chance to be a part of that.

This centerspread has proven to me how isolated we all become here. I do sympathize with Mawrters who, for whatever reason, did not enjoy Hell Week, but my advice to those who would completely do away with this tradition is—relax a little. There are more important things to worry about in our world.

[Editors' note: The College News is an opinion paper. We welcome submissions from all perspectives and print the articles we receive. While we do prefer diversity, no articles were submitted for our last issue in favor of Hell Week, thus none were printed.]



A History of Hell Week in 3 1/2 Chapters

by Julia Alexander

Well, there's something to be said for slacking off. I had been going to write this article for the last issue of the 'News (which was supposed to come out the Tuesday after Hell Week, but was delayed due to mechanical problems). This worked out serendipitously, since it can now serve as a frame for the current debate over the status of Hell Week. So here we go.

As a history major, I have been interested not only in the discussions about Hell Week in the present, but also in the way that Hell Week was viewed in the past. Several years ago, I went into the microfilm room to see whether anyone had complained about Hell Week before I was a freshman, since the heated debate at Plenary over abolishing Hell

Week (this happened both my frosh and sophomore years—'93 and '94) didn't seem like something the Bryn Mawr community would sustain more than once. I was wrong.

Hell Week has existed in various forms since the early part of this century, and debates have raged and dissipated over it since the '50s. What seems to happen is that Hell Week increases in intensity until it gets badly out of hand. At that point, public opinion is strong enough against Hell Week that major reforms are made that will make the experience less miserable for incoming freshmen, and will make the sophomores feel better about their roles in the tradition (since most of the protests seemed to have begun with sophomores, not freshmen). It remains at this stage for a year or two, and then people get frustrated with the

way that the tradition has been "watered down" and the cycle begins again.

Until fairly recently, Hell Week varied according to the dorm in which it was held, so that freshmen could have anything from no Hell Week at all to a full week of hazing and harassment. Although this would be easiest to attribute to the time when people could be sure of living in the same dorm all four years (and often in the same room), the diverse forms of Hell Week continued after Room Draw had been established. We still have some variation, but the high points of schedule copying, trials, confinement, bedtime stories and calisthenics are common to all dorms, as is the threat of the Duck Pond run and Potato Lectures.

This history of hell week will be continued in later issues.

Hell Week Rocks

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reassure to perform or complete activities. All the things that I did were suggestions, but also a part of me wanted to do them.

During those days, I learned that I did have a choice about my autonomy and enjoyed knowing that slight embarrassment was something I should not fear. I did those

things so that I could say to myself: "I did something silly. I don't regret behaving silly sometimes. And I am comfortable enough with myself not to worry about whether other people think I am silly." For me, Hell Week was not about fitting into the crowd, being pressured into humiliation, or feeling small underneath the weight of upper-classwomen.

One of the reasons I had a great experience was because my Heller was excited about getting to know me and building a new friendship. She was very sympathetic and supportive. She constantly asked me if I felt comfortable with the tasks she asked me to do. I

I did those things so that I could say to myself: "I did something silly. I don't regret behaving silly sometimes. And I am comfortable enough with myself not to worry about whether other people think I am silly."

believe that her enthusiasm helped me to remember that Hell Week was meant as a bonding experience, in which we can see Bryn Mawr and the people we go to classes with in a different light.

Although I can see where people are upset about privacy being broken, the connotations of frosh being ordered around, and other worries, I think that Hell Week is not meant to belittle, intimidate, or erase last semester's work.

Anyone who is truly unsure about participating should not do so, because it will only make their opinions worse and will affect others as well. Hell Week bound me securely to Bryn Mawr and the people I spent it with. I feel strongly attached to the campus and my classmates because I feel the value of my strength and the fact that we all know each other a lot better. The welcome on Flower Day means a lot more to me than it could have last semester because the people that welcomed me are people that I know and care about. After all, a flower means a lot more coming from friend or family than a stranger down the hall.

So even though not everyone will always love Hell Week or Flower Day, it is important to try to understand why some of us do. Sometimes difficult or strange experiences bring people closer together and help shake up the "blahs" of a wintry February week at Bryn Mawr.

A Look at Multiculturalism in Education

by Kara Goggins

In high school I had a class called World Literature. I remember being excited about the class and disappointed when I found I couldn't relate to many of the books we read. Only just recently, thinking back, I realized that the class dealt exclusively with European male authors. The teacher's idea of world literature included Greek mythology, a few French Existential men, Hermann Hesse, and Dostoyevski. There is certainly nothing wrong with any of these authors, and many of them have interesting things to say. The problem arises when a class that deals exclusively with the European male viewpoint claims to represent "world literature." As if European men are somehow endowed with powers that allow them to speak for everyone. As if they are somehow the only important and intelligent people around.

Just last night I was talking to my parents about the kinds of courses they were offered and required to take in college. My father still resents the two years of Latin his school said everyone needed to be "educated." In addition, he was required to take two years of the philosophy of Saint Thomas Aquinas. The history, literature, religion and philosophy courses offered at both of my parents' schools all dealt exclusively with the experience of white European men. Again, these are certainly worthwhile subjects to study. But I am thankful for the steps most schools have taken forward

since my parents were in college. I am thankful that at many schools, it has been acknowledged that there are other voices that have important and worthwhile things to say. I am especially thankful that in my experience at Bryn Mawr, I have not found that the European male viewpoint is taken to be representative of all people's experience.

Reading Ilana Greenstein's article

Greenstein's argument that her professor's attempt at diversity "inevitably resulted in disaster- a curriculum controlled by a political agenda" seems to suggest that there is no way a teacher can have a diverse range of perspectives and still teach a good class.

"Education Slain At Hand of Multiculturalism" in the *Bi-Co News* last week, I tried to put myself in her shoes and understand her point of view. I tried to see how somehow who has a strong interest in and liking for European male authors might feel defensive or somehow threatened by the multiculturalism that she has encountered at Haverford. But it became more and more difficult for me to empathize with Greenstein as her article went on and she made assumptions that were illogical and unfair to the non-European ethnic groups she spoke of.

Greenstein's main assumption is that professors who choose to include the works of women and ethnic minorities in their curriculum, such as her Freshman English professor, choose these authors solely on the basis of their gender and

ethnicity, without regard for merit. I would argue that this is not at all the case. Greenstein may have viewed the African-American women authors she read in her Freshman English class as shallow, third-rate writers, but some of her classmates may have thought otherwise. Greenstein's argument that her professor's attempt at diversity "inevitably resulted in disaster- a

insightful, and oftentimes deeply inspiring.

Another assumption that Greenstein makes is that many non-western cultures "were more racist, classist, and misogynistic than Western culture." She goes on to say that Western authors were among the most progressive in the world and that therefore multiculturalism "often gives voice only to oppression."

First off, I would have to say that as human beings limited by our own experience, none of us can really claim to know whether one culture is more oppressive than another. But more importantly, it simply isn't an important or relevant issue.

I can't recall ever reading an author of any cultural background who claimed that their culture was perfect. No one is suggesting that non-Western cultures are somehow perfect or lacking in patriarchy or injustice. But in order to understand the experience of Indians living with a caste system in India and what that means to them or African women living in a culture that may at times make it hard for them to exercise their freedom, we have to listen to the voices of these people, rather than the voices of people on the outside who have their own (sometimes exploitative) goals and agenda. Multiculturalism is about appreciating and understanding cultures by allowing individuals define themselves rather than accepting a notion of non-Western cultures defined exclusively by European males.

Multiculturalism and literature

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wouldn't have understood why Macbeth's desire for more power is, in Shakespeare's view, intrinsically wrong. They wouldn't have understood why Hamlet's life goes down the tubes when, on moral and emotional grounds, he decides to ignore his father's instructions to kill two of his relatives.

Shakespeare's work is not timeless. It was written in a certain place, in a certain time period, and must be understood from that perspective. With a definition that says good literature is that which is timeless, Greenstein excludes the works she means to include.

Greenstein's second claim—that works with merit are those that "stand the test of time and become classics"—is not intrinsically problematic. Not only does it lack internal contradiction, it also allows for works from non-Western cultures to be included in the Canon, as long as they have been around for a while. (Greenstein does not specify the amount of time it takes for a work to become classic, but one assumes she has a specific length in mind.) If she ended her argument here, students in Freshman Writing might study not only Shakespeare and Genesis, but also the Navajo creation stories, Vietnamese epics, the Qu'ran and the Tao Te Ching.

But Greenstein goes on to argue that "other cultures were not necessarily as progressive in literature or other matters as the West." She cites Chinese labor camps as an example of non-Western barbarity, and, presumably, the reader is to believe that this lack of progressiveness in one area of Chinese government/culture precludes progressiveness in other areas, as well. But China has a much longer literary tradition than most of the European cultures do. Clearly, then, Greenstein's lumping together of "literature [and] other matters" is misleading.

Moreover, if the same standards that Greenstein applies to non-Western cultures were applied to the West, we would find that Western literature is also unworthy of academic study. Western societies have, in practice, been

remarkably unprogressive. For example, slavery was legal in the United States until only a century and a quarter ago; Japanese-Americans were sent to "internment" camps during World War II; African-Americans were legally prevented from registering to vote only three decades back. But I do not believe that Western literature should be ignored; many Western works have been remarkably more progressive than the society out of which they came—and even those that aren't can teach us fascinating things about Western culture.

Finally, I take issue with Greenstein's assumption that, because non-Western works often address similar issues as Western works, non-Western authors take their ideas directly from Western authors. Of Rigoberta Menchu, a Guatemalan Indian woman who has fought for human rights and won the Nobel Peace Prize, Greenstein says, "[Her] views are adopted from Marx and other Western philosophers." While Menchu's awareness of Western philosophies may have influenced the way she articulated her ideas in a book written, in large part, for a Western audience, she did not "adopt" wholesale her views from anyone. Rather, her views developed in response to painful denial of her and her community's basic human rights by the Guatemalan government. The fact that she shares some political views with Marx and other Westerners is merely an indication that both she and those Westerners have grappled with issues of oppression from the vantage point of the oppressed. In this sense, reading Marx may help one to understand Menchu, but only insofar as reading Menchu would help one to understand Marx.

The underlying question in Greenstein's essay which unfortunately never surfaces and which is never clearly answered is this: Which is the more important factor when a person considers whether a piece of literature is good or not—that it has withstood the test of time, or that it reflects values and cultures that are familiar to that person? To which I would add: How does the handling of these criteria effect notions of merit?

curriculum controlled by a political agenda" seems to suggest that there is no way a teacher can have a diverse range of perspectives and still teach a good class. I can not claim to know whether or not Greenstein's professor chose works solely on the basis of the author's political point of view. Every professor, no matter what they teach, has their own preferences and ideas of what they view as important, and certainly these preferences influence the books they choose. This is as true for professors who teach "multicultural" classes as for those who choose to focus on European culture. But I resent the suggestion that classes attempting to include multicultural perspectives are inherently inferior. I found the works in my class on multicultural women writers to be incredibly intelligent, well-written,



Making Creative Space at BMC

by Anita Senes

Do you ever just feel the need to jump in a big muddy puddle? To make stew out of leaves and rocks and poisonous berries and twigs and water and dirt like you did with your best friend when you were little? Or maybe just to go for a walk, you know? To just *be*, not to be responsible or studious or successful. Bryn Mawr has a high standard of academic excellence, for which I'm grateful, but what about our other parts, that un-methodological half of our brains, the places that everyone seems to turn away from that in fact need more attention?

I'm talking about our creative selves. I sense that many of us, overwhelmed with papers/exams/reading assignments, don't really know or nurture that part of ourselves. We don't give ourselves time to really explore *who we are*, what makes us tick, what's awaiting us behind our worries and endless work.

Keenly aware of this, my friend Kate and I started the Creative Workplace, a group that focuses on exactly this. I wrote to my friend Sara after our first meeting, "It's a group people can join to give themselves the support, confidence, time to CREATE and PLAY. Bryn Mawr is very academic, and sometimes I can just *feel* the void, the absence walking around. I can taste the bitterness, the loneliness, the need. All women do here is STUDY. Success success success can rot in hell. The money will come. There is so much more. How can I explain this without

going on for pages? You see, for many students here, well, at least for Kate and I, anyway, Bryn Mawr or college in general is very *stifling*. My work takes priority over anything else. I never just take a walk or watch a bug or plant my butterfly garden or order a root beer float just for the hell of it. They don't teach you that in school, you know. They don't teach you how to be. We have to learn that on our own. But everyone needs to know their worth, their wisdom. That's what this group is for. I gotta follow my bliss and I know I can't do it alone. We're so happy we got this thing going; I can

Bryn Mawr is very academic, and sometimes I can just *feel* the void, the absence walking around. I can taste the bitterness, the loneliness, the need.

feel that sense of myself; perhaps it's pride, but it's just like that real SATISFACTION, like when you taste the cheese sticks and mozzarella sauce..."

Do you see? Even just the creation of a group nurtures that empty part of myself. I'm sure many of you do create—if you do, keep it up! If not, come

join us every Friday evening from 7-8 p.m. in the Denbigh back smoker. We'll each be working on an individual project which we'll share with one another, gaining and giving support and feedback.

We're also planning on taking field trips to art museums and art centers, or just taking walks or swinging under the stars or creating children's stories and skits or writing love letters to ourselves or making paper-mache masks and...the list never seems to end. Basically, you get the idea. These things are important too! How can we expect to do all the great things we envision ourselves doing if we don't learn to love ourselves?

EXPO...

continued from page 1
 issue. To me this debate over feminism gets very tangled and unnecessarily confused.

Let me tell you what I do find clear. I am a woman living in a sexist society. My encounters with gender-based discrimination have awakened me to the injustice of domination. What I seek is responsible use of power.

No one will ever achieve universal responsible use of power if the process of seeking gender equity perpetuates existing patterns of racial domination, class-based discrimination, and homophobia. When we face the ugly beast of domination, this too we must attack completely, leaving no part to yield its unjust influence.

While dreaming of a holistic feminist movement I must write of another aspect of the Expo that bothered me.

The Expo in many ways resembled a kickoff for the Freedom Summer '96 voter registration campaign. A carefully choreographed panel of speakers aroused the assembly to stop attacks on women's rights, and it seemed that this voter registration drive was the way to do it.

As people signed up right then and there to go to California to register voters, the atmosphere of the room reminded me of a revival. The excitement was contagious.

However, as much as I support voter registration drives, that type of activism is not for me. The work would burn me out within a month.

The Expo's narrow focus on political reform did not tap the many other talents in the room. Theater, arts, and music have the potential to move political debate into the realm of personal self-examination and change. Being a cool camp counselor can touch the lives of girls and women more effectively and deeply than the exclusive ERA.

I don't know what to think about Expo '96. The excitement of the women there filled me with new energy and inspiration to organize. Expo '96 also had many faults which were symbolic of the feminist movement at large and not the sole responsibility of Eleanor Smeal and the Feminist Majority.

Maybe we need to get together one last time like this to convince ourselves once and for all that the interests of feminism will not advance if the movement remains disjointed. At the very least I hope Expo '96 has sparked much-needed discussion.

Multiculturalism: Musings on Free Speech in the Bi-Co Community

by Leah Coffin

The other day, a freshman on my hall remarked that she had observed that whenever someone here voiced, in class or in public, a potentially controversial opinion, that person would often as not come under attack by her fellow students. Her statement made me seriously rethink and re-examine exactly how tolerant and open the Bi-Co community is. For all the tolerance, liberalism and open-mindedness that we lay claim to at Bryn Mawr and Haverford, whenever a situation demands backup for this claim, we buckle under and succumb to the usage of thoughtless statements and personal attacks. Not disagreements, not controversies. All-out, no-holds-barred attacks. An opposing viewpoint shuts down people's minds and opens their mouths. I know that this happens regularly in the real world, and I accept it. What shocked me was to find it in the community in which I have chosen to immerse myself for four years of my life.

As a person who has always been labeled as the class loudmouth, the one who never shut up and always had something to say, I have become used to coming under fire for my viewpoints, as well as for expressing them in the first place. Teachers have had to ask me not to answer questions so that others could have a chance to speak. Men and women alike have treated me like I had a social disease for daring to speak out. Having to endure such treatment throughout high school was a key factor in my decision to attend a women's college. Here, for once, I could finally get respect in the classroom and the opportunity to express my opinions without fear of dismissal, ridicule or—worse—attack.

Having been in situations where only men spoke out while women remained silent, I assumed that, given the opportunity, women would speak out more in class without men present. Instead, I found that once the men were gone, nobody spoke out in class at all. The professor's every query of "Are there any questions?" would be met each time with a stony yet timid silence, and the question would begin to sound more and more like a plea. People seemed afraid to express themselves for fear of being thought "wrong". Surely, even if others did disagree with their opinions, at least people could air their differences in a neutral, objective, non-threatening environment.

I soon found out why people spoke

out so little in class: not for fear of being corrected by the professor, but rather for fear of coming under attack by the other students. This is, of course, less true of lectures than of discussion-based classes. Nevertheless, the problem exists, both in and out of the classroom, and must be addressed.

In a class that I took last semester, the question of whether or not objectivity is possible, or even desirable, arose from time to time. Although I feel that a certain amount of subjective, personal opinion is an essential component of any argument, it can be carried too far. "Too far" is when people bring their personal and emotional issues into the classroom and use them as the basis for their arguments. The first problem with this approach is that it effectively dispenses with even the slightest pretense of, or effort towards, objectivity. Secondly, any calling into question of these "personal" opinions constitutes a personal attack. Call me an idealist, but somehow I thought that college students were above this high-school level of discourse.

Thus, you can imagine my shock when once, having expressed an opinion in class that could have been considered controversial for a number of reasons, I was attacked. No effort was made to address my opinions on their own terms, or to attempt to maintain a certain level of mutual respect and decorum. Rather, I was attacked by about five people at once, all of them vehemently shouting out examples that they felt contradicted my argument. The level of tension in the room rose considerably. It was an ugly scene. I don't want to get into the further details of what happened, nor do I want to get bogged down in discussing what the actual argument was about, as I feel that this is neither relevant nor of general interest. But as long as we're getting personal, I want to make a point to this community.

When you respond to someone else's argument in an emotionally charged, confrontational, subjective manner, you automatically polarize the situation. It is no longer the individual opinions, but rather the individuals themselves, who are in conflict. You have the right to disagree with someone's opinion, even to disagree strongly. You do not have the right to attack them personally. You can, of course, and no one can stop you. But when you do, you are dispensing with the ideas of mutual respect and tolerance that are the basis for the Honor Code that we all hold so dear. You are transforming

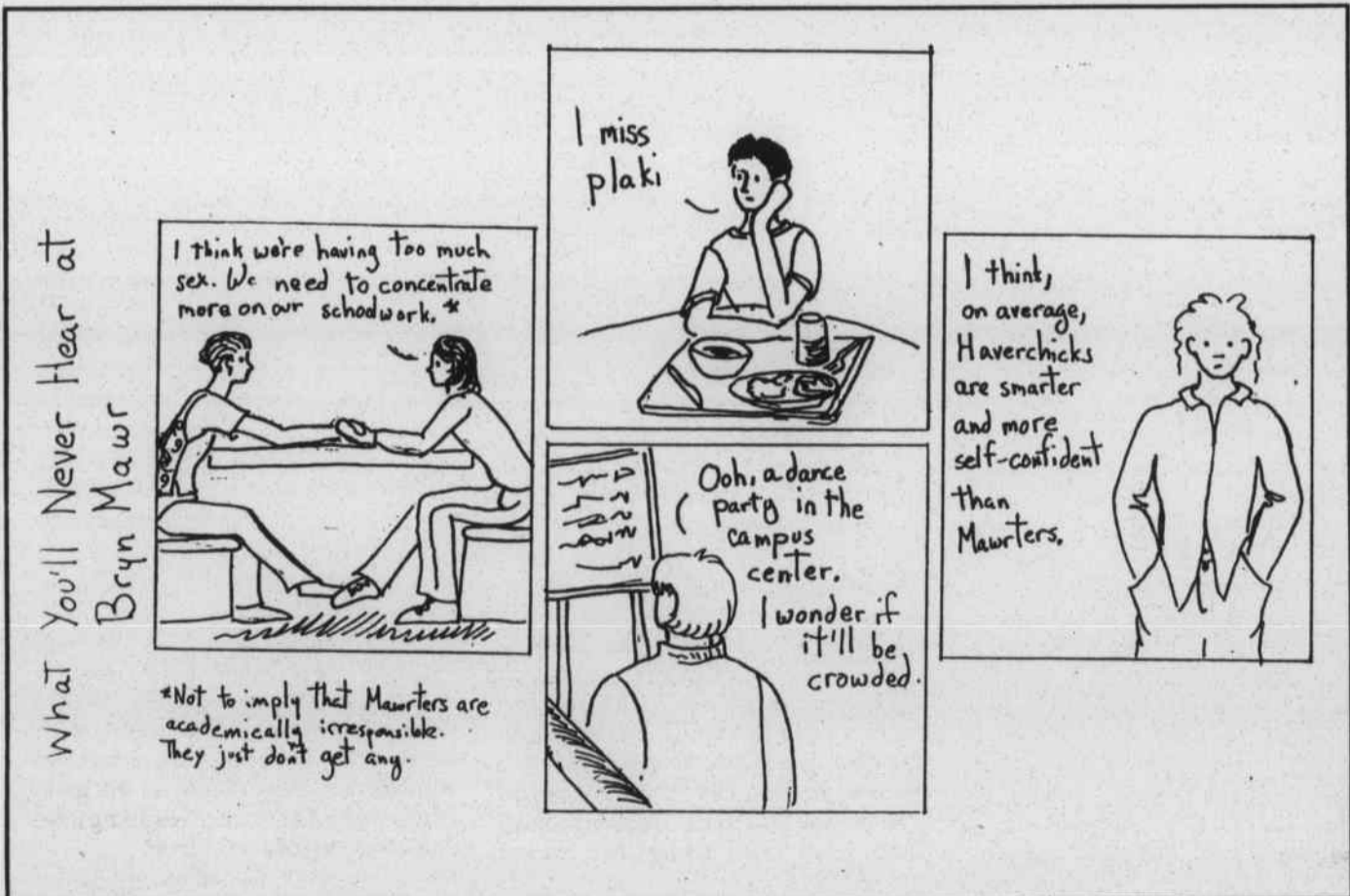
a dispute over opinions into an attack on someone else's right to have them. And most importantly, when you make a personal attack, a person, and not an opinion, is on the receiving end of your firepower.

This is not just a problem in the classroom. I have seen people write opinions on comment boards, only to have others (anonymously, of course) completely blast them for daring to speak out in contradiction to their own opinions. I have seen attacks in print and in person, in newspapers and on comment boards, inside classrooms and outside of them. Mutual respect reigns most of the time, until someone has the temerity to contradict the general consensus of opinion. Then, what could have otherwise been a serious intellectual discussion degenerates into so much verbal fist-fighting.

Ilana Greenstein has a right to her opinion. Others have a right to disagree with it, to challenge it, to question the validity of her arguments. I think we are all agreed on this. However, as members of a community that prides itself on mutual respect, people owe it to the community and to her to back up their arguments with solid evidence to the contrary, not with attacks on her intelligence and character and with deliberately inflammatory remarks. Otherwise, we are being unfair to her, to ourselves, and to our community and its reputation.

Having read about my own experiences with having my opinions come under fire, you may feel that I am projecting too much of my own experience onto the whole debate about Ilana's article. Also, by not focusing on the article's content, I may come across as skirting the real issues at stake. But if we dismiss what was said as mere verbal sewage and its author as a mindless, ranting bigot, then we are, in fact, skirting a very important issue: freedom of speech. We claim to hold freedom of speech as one of the most important values in our community, in the country and in the world as a whole. Yet when Ilana or I or, indeed, anyone, cannot express an opinion without fear of retaliation, then the members of this community are simply not putting their money where their collective mouth is.

One of the most troublesome things about freedom of speech is that we cannot claim it only for opinions that we agree with. We must behave like mature adults and not twelfth-graders, and treat others and their arguments as we would like them to treat us and ours. To paraphrase Horace Rumpole, we may utterly deplore what others say as rubbish, but we must defend to the death their right to say it. And as long as we're getting personal, that's my own personal belief.



- The College News extends zoey gerberts to:
- the addition of blue to M&M's (you don't need Paris for chocolate to melt in your mouth).
 - the women planning International Women's Day (get your acts together and get up on stage).
 - French Twist, the eighth lesbian movie to hit the big screen. (Now playing at the Ritz—check it out!)
 - Mary Pat, for sticking around to see the Class of '97 graduate.
 - Jenn Hogan, just for being the wonderful, inspirational, stress-free role model that she is.
 - The Offspring for writing a song about the News Editor's life.

Centerspread: I We're all Out... of Labels

by Amy Karon

I have mixed emotions even sitting down to write this article. Writing means trying to communicate the last two and a half years of coming out to myself and to others, and that process is something I am still trying to make sense of myself. What does it mean, to translate a thing that is central to your being, which you have known for years but kept silent about, into an exterior identity, a word that suddenly dominates who you are when people look at you? What does it mean to become comfortable with this, to incorporate into yourself this new-ish facet of your identity? I have only begun to ask these questions and I think I will be a lifetime in answering them. For now, I can say that for me, coming out is no longer primarily about telling people what I am. Instead it is about living these questions, which are only a part of larger questions that my life is about.

I wonder what it means to be out at Bryn Mawr. I did not come out for the first time here and so I do not connect those excruciating first conversations and phone calls, those anguished letters and journal entries, with this community. I came to Bryn Mawr having been generally out for about a year, yet I had only one or two close non-straight friends. For that reason I hoped very much to find what I roughly defined as a gay community here. In the first weeks I was thrilled to see crew cuts and buttons,

to occasionally see women holding hands. The feeling of not being out and alone was still so new to me.

I joined BGALA and there found a group of caring and supportive individuals. Some identified as bisexual, some as lesbian, and I think that some, like me, felt uncomfortable calling themselves either. Sexuality has always been such a confusing thing to me that I have difficulty trying to squish it all into one descriptive term. I have asked myself again and again what these labels mean. What are you saying if

me how I identified, I told them: I guess I feel closer to lesbian than bi, but frankly I don't really feel either. It was nice. For the first time I was Amy first. I was explaining one aspect of me to people who wanted to know, people I cared about. I didn't feel the vulnerability I had experienced before when I made public announcements in the wake of homophobic vandalisms.

Like most of us, I come from communities that are far less accepting of sexual diversity than Bryn Mawr is. I know how important it is to come out, to give a face

Sexuality has always been such a confusing thing to me that I have difficulty trying to squish it all into one descriptive term. I have asked myself again and again what these labels mean.

you call yourself a lesbian? That you love women? Primarily? Exclusively? That you have never been attracted to a man — or never in the way that you have been to women? And what if you call yourself bisexual? I think I was more comfortable with "bisexual" until I met women who called themselves that and really meant it— who would date a man as readily as they would a woman. Then I began to feel that neither label really said anything about me. So, at Bryn Mawr, for the first time I did not come out by saying, "I am _____." I hung a rainbow sticker on my wall, when people asked me where I was going I said, "to a BGALA meeting." Later, when people in my customs group asked

to what is otherwise only an abstract and often derogatory label. It's important to answer people's questions, to wear the triangles and march in Pride parades. Because our societies have so damn far to go, it's important to be as out as you can be. But what I think I never expected was how doing that, taking on that label and broadcasting it, could get in the way of my own process. It's lovely to be as comfortable with myself as I am after so many years of struggle—and for me it was a long and difficult struggle. But if I said that I was out and comfortable, period, thank you very much, I would be relinquishing so much of the honesty I've fought so hard for. I hang up the posters and the news clippings and wear the triangles because I think visibility is important. But when I do that I also realize that it affords me an air of security that I don't really feel. Maybe that's what it means, to become a label.



by Reka Prasad

Haverwomen:

by Leah Coffin

As I was passing through the Campus Center the other day that had been posted for the benefit of general Tri-Corner one day. Intrigued, I walked over to see what, if anything, runs to Swat and the general miserable state of Tri-Corner my attention. "Why are Haverchicks so dumb?" it said. "Dumb?" I thought. "Haverford women aren't dumb, know. And why are they chicks all of a sudden? Why?"

The comment went on to describe a class the author had taken of Haverford women. These "Haverchicks" appeared not to be in the particular class, I couldn't say whether they were saying dumb things or asking dumb questions. The author was outraged. I started thinking about my own experience with Haverford women. I remember the first class I had with any Haverford Mawrter and about three Fords, one male and two females. It was that in terms of the class, they were everything together after class, and generally bonded together to deal with in the class. They always showed up on time, showered and neatly dressed. In class, they took notes, not only had done the reading, but actually cared and listened.

I, on the other hand, would show up five, ten, or fifteen minutes late, unprepared and probably wasting my time by even trying to deal with the reading, that usually meant skimming it right before class as often as my mind did. In short, next to the two Haverford women, I was an unclean slacker. If I looked on them unfavorably at all,

continued on page 9

Look, Ma! Is that a wheelchair?

by Kelly Mack

Sometimes it is difficult for me to understand how people perceive me because it is so utterly different from the way in which I perceive myself. When I look in the mirror, I see a small, brown-haired, blue-eyed woman who thinks she might have a potential to be a doctor, or a psychologist, or maybe even a neurosurgeon. But I realize that this is probably not a first impression that people may have when meeting me or bumping into me on the way to the PSB.

Backing up from my mirror, I see more physical characteristics that you might recognize. I am short and use an electric wheelchair. To me, it is a tool for getting through the day, as a car would be to a traveling salesman. But to others it is my identifying quality, what plants me to the earth, and what labels me for life. Unfortunately, I cannot help what people might see about me, except to hope that I am given a chance to prove that I am much more than a motor and some batteries.

It is comical to me to think that my mind is thinking about calculus equations and testing rats in the psychology lab, but when I go out into a crowded street people pull their friends to the side and say: "Watch out for the wheelchair," or "Let the wheelchair pass," or "Look! A wheelchair!" or various other phrases that indicate my status. My ideas are non-existent as if the remote possibility that I have actual thoughts does not exist. At times I might be insulted because I am grouchy and cannot understand why people would call me a wheelchair instead of a woman or a student. And I wonder: am I control-

ling the wheelchair, or is it controlling me? I doubt that anyone wants to be solely recognized by an inanimate object that they happen to own.

The point is that I am a great deal more than what I look like. Women have been fighting their imprisonment in their image for a very long time and still continue to do it. Since the chain of women began, we have learned that our identifying features are what our superficial image is and not what is inside our body. Women go to painstaking measures to fulfill the expectations society has formed in the past. We still have to worry about fitting in with these limitations and endure the

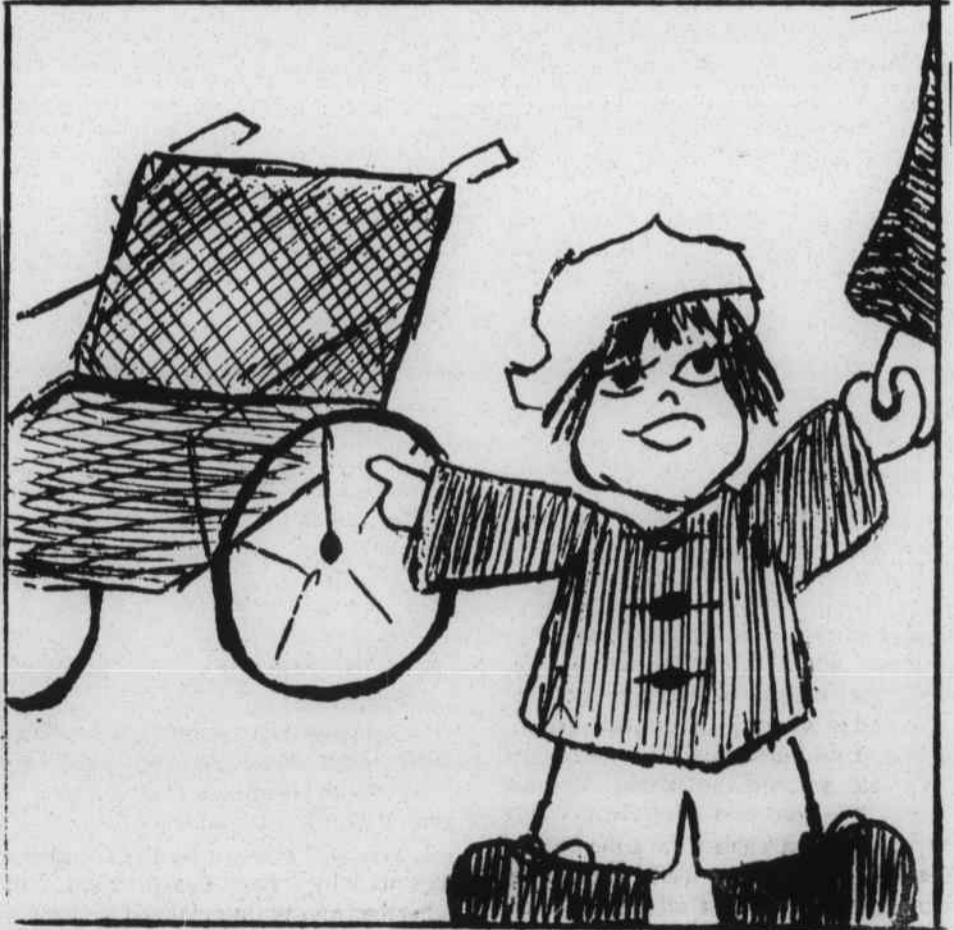
pressure of the media and society in general to do so. Yet more and more, the ideas and minds of women are being explored and recognized as valid and vital to the world community.

I do not find pressure to be a typical disabled person (whatever that is), but I do find myself rejected from the feminine chains that society often wraps around women. I am not seen as a woman because I do not typify this icon with my wheelchair. But I also feel separated from a group that I do feel a part of— can't win, can't lose. And even though women in general are being discovered and appreciated, disabled people are not. It is good not to be encumbered by the stereotypes women have to deal with, yet women are more easily recognized as free-thinking and intelligent human beings than people with disabilities. As a disabled person/wheelchair user, I am doubted, talked down to in public, and sometimes humiliated by the way in which disabled people are referred to.

I have to admit that I often have a hard time identifying myself as a person with a disability. I just don't think of myself in that way because my thoughts and ambitions mean more to me than what I cannot physically accomplish. I may have special needs, but so does everybody else for particular parts of their life. At times I find myself feeling sorry for "those disabled people", not thinking: "Oh! I am one of those!"

So when I go out into the world (or out of my dorm), I always try to keep in mind

that people are not always what they look like. It may seem to be a simple lesson, one that you already know, but honestly, it is hard to remember. Sometimes it is very easy to classify people and find yourself limiting their potential and also your potential for getting to know new minds. But maybe if I remember how I look and try to teach others what I am, it will help just a little to make others feel comfortable enough with my appearance to let their guard down and get to know me.



by Maria Barbo

Issues of Identity



"So many FREAKS..."? The truth about the 'backsmoker' community

by Shannon Cochran, Jessie Bennett, & Christy Kissileff

We're having a great deal of trouble writing this article. We know it's about identity, and think it might be about politics—it's about who we are, anyway, and what people think about us. Beyond that, though, we get into trouble. We are only three people, but we are attempting to represent the entire backsmoker community—a problematic label that has never really been defined. And as to what people think of us—well, how can we know that for sure? The three of us have always been inclined to believe that most of Bryn Mawr doesn't know who we are at all, and wouldn't care if they did. But recently we've heard (secondhand) some rumors about ourselves that would be enormously flattering if they didn't reflect disturbing misconceptions. The fact that no one is hunting us down and burning us at the stake makes it safe for us to laugh at the utter absurdity of the things that are being said, but it would be truly sinister if these rumors reflected the serious views of larger, more influential groups. Apparently, there is some interest in us and what we do.

We're back, then, to Who We Are. The present backsmoker community centers around Erdman Backsmoker, although in the recent past there have been backsmoker cultures in Denbigh and Brecon. We're not sure precisely how old it is, although we think it's been around for at least ten years. These days, it encompasses some fifteen people, including a few alums who remain involved, but it has been much larger in the past. The history of the smokers creates something of a problem in self-definition, because, although there are

continuous traditions, student turnover obviously causes constant change in the nature of the community. So what we are, is hard to separate from what we have been. Also, we are not one unified group; there are several distinct circles of friends who share the smoker, linked only by a few common traits and interests.

Those traits and interests? When we threw out words, we ended up with "fantasy/sci-fi", "pagan", "queer", "punk", "feminist", and "leftist". Obviously, not all of these labels apply to each of us...but that's the flavor. We're (some of) the ones who wear cloaks and gothic black around campus. We're the ones who howl at every full moon. We're mostly responsible for the Robin Hood May Day plays, and, until recently, the King Arthur May Day plays as well. We host High Table (a celebration in Denbigh backsmoker which is open to all but especially geared toward returning smokerite alums) once every semester. We keep Elsinore, the ongoing interactive fantasy novel residing in Erdman backsmoker (by the way, we're always happy to have new writers...), as well as the Erdman backsmoker diary (a collective dorm diary), and the Doublestar Library, the collection of fantasy and science fiction also kept in Erdman (check them out!). We run pagan rituals and vampire roleplaying games. We *don't*, contrary to rumor, drug people, drink blood, feed off hate, sacrifice squirrels (or anything else, except for the occasional *Wall Street Journal*), worship Satan, or plot harm to anyone. A lot of these ideas probably stem from misinformation concerning neopaganism, the nature-based spirituality that some of us practice. Judith Leone has written an article for the Bi-Co News that

explains this religion in much greater detail.

The one word that lies at the heart of the issue, the touchstone of the relationship between the backsmoker community and much of the rest of the campus, is "freak". This word is used both as an insult by others, as in "They're all fucking freaks" (actually said to one of us) or "too many freaks on this campus" (written on the comment board in the Campus Center) and as a term of pride in one's individuality, contrasting the "freak" smokerites with the "normie" mainstreamers. Shannon feels that both usages are objectionable: she thinks everybody is, at some level, deeply weird. Jessie, however, sees labels such as "freak" and "normal" as purely a matter of definition (by self or others) and alliance with or separation from a perceived "camp", not as declarations of intrinsic nature. Therefore, although relishing the self-descriptive "freak", she feels that the terms have no innate negative or positive charge.

It is easy to get lost in the world of Bryn Mawr identity politics, the baffling attempt to codify the myriad complex wholes of the Bryn Mawr student body. Often, one can get so bogged down that it becomes difficult even to classify one's self. The gist of the matter for Christy is to plumb all the depths of who she is and "out" them to her heart's content. She believes that college might be the only chance she will get to be so wildly and fully herself, and, although her antics might shock the innocent passer-by, she does nothing out of malice. With apologies to any to whom this does not apply, this seems to be an approximate description of most of the present smokerites.

worthy sisters

her day, I came across the Tri-College comment board venting. The second board had already been filled after thing, had been remarked upon besides the lack of various Co relations. One comment, though unrelated, caught began.
 umb! Some of them are some of the smartest people I at's going on here?" Then I read on.
 nor was taking in which about half the students were ot to get anything that was said in the class. Not having not getting it" meant not speaking out in class, or just t started me on a more pensive track than my initial eriences with Haverford women.
 people in it. It was a small discussion class with mostly female. The first thing I noticed about the two women that I was not. They came together, left together, ate in the face of the wild and woolly Mawrers they had ime, organized, prepared, having done all the reading, t notes and asked questions that showed that they not ad thought about what they had read.
 sometimes twenty minutes late for class, woefully being there. My personal appearance and grooming f bed ten minutes ago" look. If I had done ev'zn part of efore class. My notes wandered in and out of the class verford women in the class, I felt like an unmotivated, all, it was probably out of envy, disguised to myself as

Removed at the request of the author.

Bordo Brings Gendered Reality to the Main Line

Femininity: Minding the Body

by Shannon Geary

On Monday, February 12th, The Greater Philadelphia Women's Consortium and The Renfrew Center presented Susan Bordo at Rosemont College. Bordo's lecture and slide presentation, entitled "Minding the Body," focused on the power of media images in shaping cultural standards of beauty and women's self-image. She argued that the connection between images of beauty and eating disorders is substantial and revealing of our culture's attitude towards women in general.

Bordo began her lecture with an oversized image of People Magazine looming over her head, the skeletal face of Kate Moss decorating the cover. Here Moss was presented not as a figure of beauty, but as a representation of the increasingly emaciated bodies of super-models. The cover story discussed this epidemic that is sweeping the fashion industry and profoundly affecting girls and women everywhere. Despite the token sit com, movie, or magazine article such as the one in People, the mass media have generally trivialized the increasingly severe problem of eating disorders in the United States.

Bordo asserted that with three decades of the Women's Movement under our belts, we have now entered into an era of Power Feminism, characterized by disdain for women who complain about gender inequalities. Feminist writers are expected to downplay our problems and instead offer uplifting messages of empowerment to women. You may ask, "What's so bad about that?" What's so bad is that advertisers and other industries that cater to our culture's obsession with consumerism have tapped into this wave of Power Feminism in a very destructive manner. These industries expound expensive and often dangerous practices such as dieting, exercising, and plastic surgery as empowering opportunities for women to take control of their lives, their destiny.

Bordo's emphasis was on the power of images to formulate the often unhealthy, if not impossible, standards of beauty American women are pressured to meet. The female images we encounter every day are characterized by hyper-slenderness and simultaneously celebrate women's underdevelopedness, childlike-ness, and sexual receptivity. The enlarged images that Bordo presented gave much weight to her assertions. Not only were the models presented painfully thin, they were often dressed in school-girl clothes, so small and childlike that they were sexually suggestive in their skimpiness.

Alongside her assertion that images are a primary catalyst for anorexia nervosa and bulimia, Bordo provided the fashion industries' argument in the defence of such images. According to Bordo, the fashion industry bases its arguments on the claim that women are not victims, and can do what ever they choose with their bodies. The industry claims that fashion is not reality and girls and women should know better than to try and emulate super-models. Bordo responds to this ironically, asking why anyone would bother investing millions of dollars in an industry that is not "real"?

Disputing this innocuous position assumed by the fashion industry, Bordo states that "We are never just looking at a picture." Images are imbued with deep cultural meaning. They teach us how to see the bodies around us, how to judge beauty and, perhaps most profoundly, what is necessary in our culture to achieve happiness and love. Among academics the cult of slenderness is too often considered a problem present only on the surface of our society, not a meaningful cul-

tural tendency. However, the reason these images are so successful in inspiring starvation and exercise compulsion is their ability to touch deep psycho-cultural currents. It is therefore our culture as a whole, and not just the fashion industry, that is creating these images and sending destructive messages to girls and women. Why does our culture insist on reducing, androgenizing, and hating the natural female body?

...it is only too easy for women to view themselves as too fat, too aggressive, too sexual, too hungry, too loud...

A powerful connection has been developed in our society between female sexuality and female eating habits. An excess of flesh is too often equated with an excess of desire. If a woman is unable to control her eating habits, she is cheating on her diet (and her husband?). The lack of appetite control is frequently considered evidence of an equally insatiable sexual appetite. Essential needs for food and sex are devalued, and discouraged in women while they are encouraged in and considered a sign of a healthy man.

Closely related to the idea of women's desires as disgusting, is Bordo's concept of "woman as too much." In our culture it is only too easy for women to view themselves as too fat, too aggressive, too sexual, too hungry, too loud, etc. As a result of fearing the "too much," women participate in often self-destructive practices of being "too little." These include compulsive exercise, starvation, reductive plastic surgery, and the negligence of sexual gratification.

The negative effects of such "too little" behavior result not only from the physical and mental denial, but from the excessive practices on the opposite end of the spec-

trum that almost always accompany it. Here, Bordo posits that bingeing and purging are not terms applicable to eating disorders alone, but to the behavior of our society as a whole. Unlike cultures who value balance, such as those centered around Eastern mysticism, our culture insists upon extremist lifestyles. For instance, millions of Americans spend the hours from nine to five every day working under great stress. Then they come home and veg out in front of the television for the entire evening. Such excessive behavior swings result in type-A personalities, high stress, heart problems, and ulcers. We submit ourselves constantly to destructive bingeing and purging of the body and mind, failing to achieve a healthy state of equilibrium.

Because of our culture's value of white male characteristics, not only do women attempt to reduce their curves and androgenize their bodies, but women of different ethnic backgrounds are forced to struggle against their various identities even more. In an attempt to assimilate women have given up not only their bodies and their desires, but their power as individuals as well. It is no wonder women experience vulnerability, as they are pressured to become part of a superior white male culture.

Bordo views the mass media and their relation to women's body image as far more profound than just a cause of eating disorders. Images of what is considered "beautiful" in our culture reveal much about our cultural norms and group psyche. The power of these images and consumerism in general keeps millions of Americans in a roller-coaster state of either a Big Mac Attack or a membership at Jenny Craig. Bordo left her audience with the encouragement to find healthy balance in their lives, to challenge the standards of beauty as they are constructed by the media's images, to realize the value of their desires, and act on their power as women.

Masculinity and its Discontents

by Leah Coffin

On Tuesday, February 20th at 4:30 p.m., Chase 104 at Haverford filled up to and beyond capacity as people from both campuses spilled in to hear Susan Bordo's lecture, "Masculinity and its Discontents." Before the lecture officially began, Bordo informed the audience that they were to have the honor of being the first to hear her lecture. As such, she was still working out the format of the presentation, and she would appreciate any feedback we could give her on the lecture format she had chosen. With this in mind, the audience settled back into their seats as the talk began.

Modern masculinity, Bordo suggested, is made up of a series of double binds. She defined double binds as two directives which were mutually incompatible, inasmuch as to fulfill the one would mean to fail the other automatically.

In the past, in Western civilization, men had been classified into two distinct categories. On one hand, there was the "Civilized man", Western, white, cultured, intellectually superior, and utterly devoid of every trace of savagery. On the other, there was the primitive man, "the Beast", biologically inferior and by definition there to be subdued and dominated. Throughout the course of the lecture, she presented a series of slides of magazine advertisements and colonial-era pictures which she felt fulfilled these conflicting directives, as well as historical representations she felt were still expressed in modern culture.

Bordo introduced the first slide, a magazine cover featuring a glowering, unkempt, tuxedoed Jeff Bridges, with three relevant quotes. The first, from Hegel, introduced the lecture's recurring theme

of connections between race and masculinity with the author's statement that the Negro was a "natural man": primitive, backward, and a step removed from civilized man. The second, a quote from Joseph Conrad's "Heart of Darkness", described civilized man's role in the Congo as battling an "accursed inheritance" to be "subdued", and stated that civilized man

was too far removed from his past to remember it. The final quote was from Freud's "Civilization and its Discontents", from which Bordo derived the title of her lecture. This stated that man, even civilized man, was not a gentle creature; rather, he actively sought opportunities to be aggressive towards his fellow men.

Bordo explained the progression in the three quotes as moving from a view of wildness and animality as being outside of civilized man, to being internal to man but distant, to having a continuing role in the human psyche which was repressed in civilization. The last view, Bordo argued, went beyond Freud by saying that wildness was not only deserving of expression, but also that it could, and should, be integrated into society.

With her first slides, Bordo presented a series of images from the 18th and 19th centuries which attempted to establish a link between primitive people and apes. These created a coded hierarchy in which the heroic white man battled the forces of animal nature. She then skipped forward chronologically to several magazine quotes and pictures from an interview with Laurence Fishburne, the star of "Othello". The ads for the movie depicted Fishburne, a black man, as the object of desire;

...aggressiveness was seen as a mark of manliness, and being passionate by nature was considered a desirable trait.

several quotes from director Kenneth Branagh reinforced the idea of animal savagery implicit in the ad. Pictures from earlier eras re-emphasized the hierarchy of dominance and subordination, positioning savages against civilization in a harsh duality.

As the chronology of the lecture moved on, Bordo said that civilized man underwent a transformation.

He was not unassertive, but expressed his aggressiveness by exercising power over others. She argued that civilized man had aggressive behavior but was surrounded by the accouterments of civilization, creating a paradox by simultaneously rejecting the primitive

past and longing for it. This had its roots in the increasing industrialization of the 19th century, when stress first became a symptom of the times. The recovery of primitive emotions increased in importance as a return to nature from industrial culture. At the same time as civilized man attempted to correct the savages, he also sought to identify with them.

This is manifested today in the desire to rule over others within civilized society. The new vogue in body building also expresses animal instincts within a civilized context. Rather than its previous view as being incongruous to civilized society, aggressiveness was seen as a mark of manliness, and being passionate by nature was considered a desirable trait.

Bordo demonstrated this modern-day opinion through film clips from "Beauty and the Beast" and "Wolf". The Disney movie, Bordo argued, shifted the original focus of the film from Beauty's having to

look beyond the Beast's outer appearance, to her not needing to because of the erotic charge the new Beast had been endowed with, thus an awakening her own sexuality. "Wolf" expanded on the idea of the juxtaposition of savagery and civilization. The film suggests that elements of the savagery awakened in the Jack Nicholson character in his transformation into a werewolf awakens his inner zest for life and are essential to both his personal well-being and to his earning success and respect in the workplace.

The distinction between civilized and savage man blurred so that elements of savagery were considered an essential characteristic of civilized man. As a result of this abrupt and contradictory transformation, argued Bordo, modern men no longer know what is expected of them. Thus, the discontent of the lecture's title is modern man's discontent with being told to incorporate into one identity another which he had been told to reject in favor of the first.

Overall, the lecture was very entertaining and well-presented. The snippets of pop culture presented in the slides and film excerpts enlivened the talk and helped to give relevant modern-day examples of the concepts explored. However, there was some chronological jumping around in the slide examples as well as in some of the examples in the lecture itself. Furthermore, there were several points of controversy which Bordo touched on and raised questions about, then proceeded on with the lecture, leaving the questions unanswered. However, bearing in mind that this was the first time the particular lecture had been given, and that therefore not all of the kinks in the format had been worked out, Susan Bordo's lecture was overall an entertaining and admirable effort.

Haverchicks? NO, Haverwomen

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disdain for people who actually worried about things like their personal appearances and setting aside time to do work.

Last semester, I had a reverse experience in terms of Ford-Mawrter ratios. I took a class at Haverford about the same size as the one I had taken at Bryn Mawr, only this time, I was one of only two Mawrters in the entire class. Just like the Fords in the other class, she and I stuck together. We took the Blue Bus together, sometimes ate lunch together, discussed reading and homework assignments together, and were even in the same discussion group. As for the rest of the class, there was an even mix of men and women, and the women were no more timid about speaking out in class than the men. But even though they sometimes ran off at the mouth, which I find unattractive in both sexes, they generally possessed the rare grace of speaking only when they actually had something to say. To a loose cannon such as myself, I suppose this came across to me as timidity and a lack of confidence in their own opinions at the time, but I have since rethought my position.

The reason is a friend of mine who lives on my hall. She's a sophomore, majoring in Romance Languages. I met her at Customs Week last year and we've been friends ever since. She is bright, funny, talented, motivated, fun-loving and serious-minded, opinionated and considerate. She takes classes, eats, and has friends at both campuses. We hang out together, go places together, have both serious and silly discussions. I consider her to be both my equal in every way and one of my best friends at college. By the way, she also happens to go to Haverford.

Make no mistake about it. Ford women are every bit as outspoken as we Mawrters are. They get involved, run for office, speak out when they want to, serve the greater community. They write, sing, dance, make art, represent other students, hold positions of authority. They are feminist and

traditional, liberal and conservative, just like us. They bond with other women, just like us, and the presence of men on their campus does not hinder this process. They are strong, intelligent, beautiful, interesting women, just like us. Yet just because they choose to attend a coed school—and therefore have some motivation towards personal hygiene and social skills—we dismiss them as fluff-brained, unempowered, giggly little twits, and make up disparaging nicknames (e.g. "Havergirl", "Haverchick") to prove it. No wonder they don't want to have anything to do with us.

For women to do this to each other is both unconscionable and counterproductive. We can't have it both ways. If they agree to stop stereotyping us as black-wearing, chain-smoking, anti-social, radical castrating bitches with more hair under our arms than on our heads, then we must stop stereotyping them as well. Remember, until 1980, there were no Haverford women at all. They had a hard enough time getting to go there in the first place without getting hostile treatment from us. We should be supportive of them, not disparaging. The more we stereotype them, the more they will return the favor, and then neither group will speak to the other and nobody will have any fun at all.

Stereotypes are like those three-dimensional pictures everyone likes to stare at. When we see them from a distance, they are a disorganized jumble of preconceived notions. But when we get closer to the picture and really look at it, the jumble melts away, leaving a clear picture that we didn't even know was there before. Similarly, when we look at a group of people, they all seem anonymous, faceless, and homogeneous. Yet the more individuals from the group we know, the less they fit the molds of our preconceived notions, and we are eventually forced to abandon those molds in favor of the truth. If we can look past our preconceived notions and reach out to each other, then, like the song says, "Sisterhood can be strong."

Official Warning

"No pink nudes in the niches this year, no melting snowman in front of the Library, no stuffed corpses hanging from trees. By unanimous vote Veritatem Dilexi has been effaced from every fireplace, and our new motto: "I can't—I haven't got time"—has been carved on instead. After spring vacation there will be a five dollar fine for smiling, and, starting tonight, anyone who talks about anything but work will be given a loyalty test by the Senate."

The College News, February, 1949

YOU are needed!

Volunteer with the Congreso de Latinos Unidos AIDS project

by Amy Karon

Congreso de Latinos Unidos, an organization in northern Philadelphia that provides a wide range of services for the Latino community, is looking for committed volunteers for its HIV/AIDS program, Programa Esfuerzo. Volunteers must have a week of training before they begin working. A number of different positions are available including assisting case managers by interviewing new clients, working with the food bank, in the street education program, teaching about STDs and HIV, and others.

If you are interested in volunteering with Congreso or would like more information, please contact me at x5445 or at akaron@brynmawr.edu, or you can contact Congreso directly at (215) 763-8870 and ask for Floyd Whited. I found the volunteer coordinator to be very flexible about time commitments. Spanish is helpful but not necessary.

The Feminine Face of Poverty: Nicaragua's women and Structural Adjustment

by Amy Karon

For most of us, recent developments—or, perhaps, regressions—in Nicaraguan socioeconomic

It is a thousand times easier to win a battle—and I have been on the frontlines—than to change people's minds.

—Carlota, Nicaraguan woman

conditions seem an estranged topic, irrelevant to the U.S.'s problems. Nicaragua's history is, after all, one of incredible poverty and extreme economic and political instability. But on closer examination, the country's "neoliberal" programs of "stabilization and structural adjustment," instituted by the Sandinistan government and reinforced during this decade by international economic organizations, are not so far off from the economic agendas currently resounding in this nation's capital.

Facing a national economy whose instability was exacerbated by wartime conditions, the Sandinistas instituted anti-inflation and stabilization policies in the late 1980's that, under the U.S.-backed UNO government (or National Opposition Union), were later made even harsher by exterior powers like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Goals of the neoliberal policy included privatized industries, an increase in production of exports, decontrolling prices, and vast cuts in public expenditures.

Social scientists are now arguing that this market-oriented, macroeconomic emphasis, which is aimed at economic stabilization, may have contrary effects because it cuts out support for the private and informal sectors of the nation's economy. Thus, households and small businesses, which in Nicaragua are often headed by women, are bearing the brunt of the country's economic streamlining. In 1992 alone, 7,000 small and medium-sized businesses collapsed in Nicaragua; women, who head about half of urban households, have also been forced to offer services through the informal sector that were once provided by the state.

Says Florence Babb, an anthropologist at the University of Iowa, "because the work of stretching household budgets, caring for the ill, and... [copying] under conditions of economic and psychological stress are unpaid services that do not generally affect the market, women are over-

looked by development planners." These economic policies, while supposedly gender-neutral, demonstrate a gender bias that is manifesting itself in women's forced return to a traditional sphere that lacks social services, where domestic violence, depression, alcoholism, and suicide rates among both women and men are increasing. As individuals in the private and informal sectors are forced to underwrite the price of "neoliberal development" without relief, a negative impact on the market is inevitable.

Although many Nicaraguan women express that now "there is no time [or] spirit" to work for anything beyond daily survival, the country is witnessing a growing activism born of desperation. Although participation in neighborhood organizations has decreased, women's memberships in labor and feminist organizations are on the rise. Women are fighting anew for employment and for basic services like

health care and schooling—services that have been swallowed up by almost ten years of "structural adjustment."

The U.S. has backed economic policies in Nicaragua that mirror its own. Yet socioeconomic trends in both countries today demonstrate that any policy that assumes that individuals, households, and small businesses can unconditionally compensate for rapid economic streamlining is unsound. Said one Nicaraguan woman, "I feel terrible... a suffering that completely destabilizes me... a wanting and not being able to..." Economic stability is not built on such suffering. Nicaraguan women's growing activism offers a challenge to all of us, regardless of background, to reconsider the supports from our own communities, which originate from each of us and which cannot be assumed.

These economic policies ... demonstrate a gender bias that is manifesting itself in women's forced return to a traditional sphere... where domestic violence, depression, alcoholism, and suicide rates are increasing.

Sources: from *Latin American Perspectives: "After the Revolution: Neoliberal Policy and Gender in Nicaragua"* by Dr. Florence Babb, University of Iowa and *"The Disruptions of Adjustment: Women in Nicaragua"* Dr. Fernandez Poncela, Metropolitan Autonomous University in Xochimilco, Mexico.

ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

50s Style Fun and Fries

by Julia Alexander

I first saw Ruby's in Suburban Square last fall, when the woman I babysit for was driving me home one afternoon. She told me how her husband had noticed it recently, and had suggested they go there one night because it looked like it would be good "period food." She had taken offense, it being the time of the month for taking offense at comments like that; he had looked bewildered enough that she realized he had meant "time period food," as in the 'fifties.

Well, I was shopping in Ardmore tonight, and we walked past it on our way back to Bryn Mawr, and decided to pop in. I'm in a position to say that it's good food for both kinds of periods.

It was after nine, so we were in the market for snack food. I had a mocha shake, and my friends had a vanilla malted and a hot fudge sundae. We split a small order of fries and a large order of onion rings. The servings were generous, and we paid under five dollars apiece. My shake was excellent: just the right amounts of coffee and chocolate, thick but not impossible to suck up through the excellent bendy straw provided *gratis*. For \$1.95, I got the equivalent of two BMC Cafeshakes, and my choice of about ten different flavors. My friends were thrilled with their ice cream concoctions as well, although the one with the sundae wished she hadn't eaten it quite so quickly as she did.

The onion rings were excellent, just the right combination of greasy and hot (neither too much nor too little of either), and they were tender enough that I mostly didn't end up with a string of onion and a lot of crumbs when I took a bite. The fries were just a little bit overdone, but for eighty-nine cents, we got half again what we get at the Cafe, and our waitress brought us both ketchup and mustard without our having to ask for either.

Other menu items seemed equally worth the money, although not necessarily strictly from the fifties. The salads I saw were generous, and included not only iceberg lettuce, but also romaine, red cabbage, and skinless grilled chicken. There was also a vegetarian burger, so you can come soak up the authentic fifties ambience with your vegetarian friends. The decor included numerous old Coca-Cola ads, the traditional steel-and-linoleum furniture and walls, and a train suspended over diners' heads. Oldies music was played at just the right level to make conversation audible at our table, but not across the aisle. Our table had all the necessary items, including a napkin dispenser just in case someone thoughtlessly used her original napkin to catch onion ring crumbs and subsequently wanted to wipe

ketchup off of her fingers.

The service was friendly and prompt, and we were seated immediately even though the place was thoroughly crowded. They didn't even seem to mind wearing the "authentic" facsimiles of fifties diner uniforms, and that's saying something! This is worth the money if you're paying for yourself, or if you're taking a friend out for a special occasion.



Reka Prasad

KIDS: sexuality and silence in the streets

by Reka Prasad

I remember when I first heard about *Kids* and all the controversy it created: this nineteen year old twit writes a script about New York City teenagers, Gus Van Sant sees an opening, and everyone calls it a wake-up call to our society or the most disgusting thing they had ever seen. Well, they both got what they wanted, but I was one of those kids once, and as I sat in Thomas 110 I felt sick to my stomach. Over the summer my best friend took out our city bible, *The Village Voice*, and showed me an article. It was a review of *Kids*. The article said that the movie dehumanized and objectified the females in the film. In laymen's terms it was a teenage boy's wet dream. Why would I put myself through that? Isn't real life enough? So I told myself it wasn't worth my seven fifty, and I swore I would not see it. I thought back to the sign recently put up at the Angelika, one of the more famous non-mainstream theaters in New York, that read "NO REFUNDS FOR KIDS." It seems people were walking out in the middle of the film and demanding their money back.

Finally, my best friend broke down and saw it. She said she thought I should see it because it was about our lives, where we hung out, the things we did, as painful as it all was. When I saw the sign for it in my dorm, I thought if a documentary film about my life back in high school was making people walk out of a theater in New York City, I might as well check it out. Thomas 110 was packed well before the previews started (we all know we have to get there twenty minutes early to put as much clothing on as many seats as we can), and after all the horrid previews (I think we can all agree that a psychotic Burt Reynolds in a movie titled *The Madding* is a straight to home video release), *Kids* finally began. The first image is darkness, the first sounds; saliva. The second image is of two half-naked teenagers on a bed, tongues down each others' throats. The film begins with a fairly graphic scene of the twelve-year-old girl's "deflowering" and, as the title of the film came up, I found myself beginning to regret my change of mind.

The story follows a group of teenagers through a typical humid New York City summer day. These characters are the quintessential soulless Generation X lost children, looking for a quick fuck and a sustained high to fill the void of their lives. But the difference here is that they aren't characters in a fictional novel; their holowness is very real. The only female who is central to the story is Jennie, who finds out she is HIV positive after having had sex once with Telly, who takes pride in having sex with virgins, as he did in the

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You Love the Strip, Now Read the Book

Book Review

Unnatural Dykes to Watch Out For (Complete and Unexpurgated!), by Alison Bechdel, Firebrand Press, 1995, \$10.95.

by Julia Alexander

Right at the beginning of exam week last semester, I happened to be downtown, so I bought myself a copy of the latest "sordid collection" of *Dykes to Watch Out For* by Alison Bechdel. I first became acquainted with the strip in this very new journal my freshman year (lo, these many years ago!). My personal collection of the comic collections began sometime last year when I needed to get together \$10 worth of merchandise so I could purchase a forty cent package of Kleenex with my MACcard.... Obviously, I like the books well enough to pay ten bucks a pop for them, and not return them to the bookstore as soon as I have a receipt.

But on to this particular collection. This one picks up right where the special insert at the end of *Spawn of Dykes to Watch Out For* left off, which is to say, mere hours after Toni and Clarice's baby, Rafael, was born. (If you aren't familiar with that episode in *DTWOF*, go over to Haverford's library and request the book.) Despite the cover's promise to give us "A candid look at the tormented urgings and forbidden passions of women who have strayed far beyond the bounds of decent society," we actually get the continuation of the mostly mundane, but sometimes exciting in a painful way, lives of Mo and her pals.

The big draw for this book was the final mini-series, which told the histories of how all these characters met: in the guise of Ginger doing a oral histo-

ries for the Lesbian Herstory Project. I'm not going to spoil the surprises, since I recommend buying this book to anyone who likes the strip, or thinks she might like it. But to you *Dykes to Watch Out For* veterans, I will comment that there's something very cute about seeing our heroines twenty years ago ("gasp!") when they were just sweet young things like us.

This book brought back memories, since it covers most of the comics that have come out in the years that I've been here at BMC, ending right where the last comics we've received from Ms. Bechdel for the *College News* also end.

This is one of the few remaining really excellent comic strips available. Bechdel took the time to develop her characters, so they have definite personalities, and she takes the time to make them change, so that they never get boring. What's more important, she draws complex panels, placing her characters in a changing, three-dimensional world. The Madwimmin Books sign on the window is reversed from inside the store. The books have titles written on their spines. And there is one thing Bechdel does that has ruined me for other comic strips: she changes the headlines on newspapers and books in each panel, so that she offers a running commentary on the state of the world. It's the detail that makes these books worth buying. You can read them half a dozen times, and still not catch little things, like the double-woman symbol on a jar of pencils in the background.

The best way to show all of this is to offer some strips up for examination, so take a while to look at all the fine details of the two strips placed somewhere around this article.

Dykes To Watch Out For



KIDS...

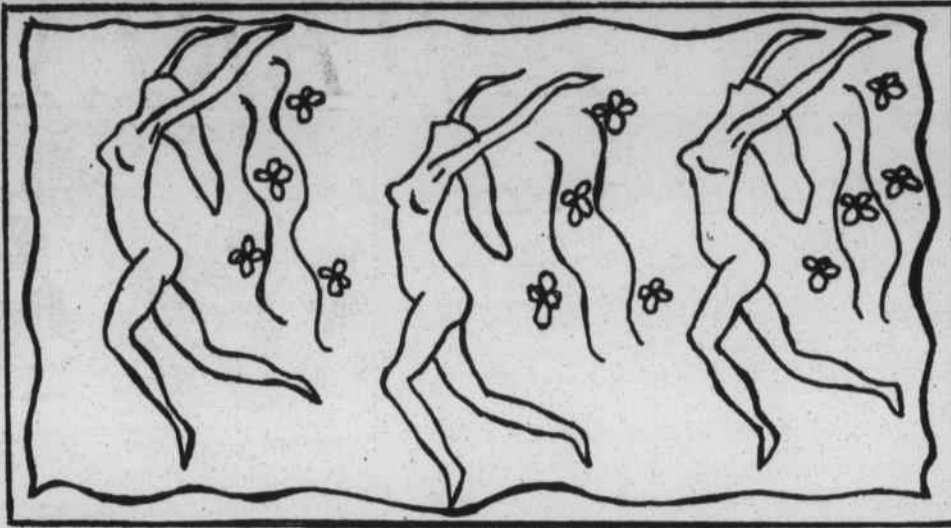
continued from page 10

opening scene. She then proceeds to wander their hangouts in search of him before he infects another girl. Casper, the other main character, is the ring leader of sorts, extreme in his self-destruction. They wander from place to place doing drugs and each other. I sat there listening to the language and watching the images, and an old numbness found its way back to me. It was in self-defense from the film.

I thought back to the article in the *Voice* and looked at the girls on the screen. It seemed their only purpose was for a physical reference to body parts. They barely had any dialogue at all. They were just "holes" for the boys to use and discard. I realized that the article in the *Voice* was right, they were faceless, but here's where my version differs. The author of that article said it was a sexist disservice to all women and was not a realistic portrayal. What she does not realize is that this is reality. The abuse and objectification those young women went through is reality, and it is a realistic portrayal. It was a representation of all the girls never found by our movement, the ones not reached, the majority of young girls growing up. Too often in this country we do not bring up our girls to cherish their bodies and be comfortable about sexuality. We do not teach them that they are whole individuals and that loving themselves is just as important if not more than someone else's love. So when we are left with the stained sheets of their premature loss of innocence, who is there to blame?

My concern is that the whole country will remain in denial of this reality because they do not feel it is theirs. They will continue to think it is an "urban epidemic" and not allow it to be shown, or they will walk out and demand their money back. The controversy in the end always overshadows the issues and sacrifices the content. My real fear is that the females of this country, of my generation, of the past and future, will remain faceless and muted without a dialogue of their own. I was a young girl in New York City and I know that it is not a warped reality. I sat there in the darkness preparing myself for the rape scene I knew was coming up. Nothing ever does prepare you, does it? As the credits rolled, the first comment made was "I'm never having sex again." Granted it was a tension reliever but it is an all too often occurrence in this country, in the world. Make a joke to make light of it and forget, don't let yourself absorb what you really just experienced. People laughed and everyone started leaving.

The saddest part of the whole film was when I was walking out and two women were imitating the noises the young girls were making while losing their virginity and said they had wished they would have shut up already. I'm still not sure what to do with that. I suggest seeing the film if you can handle a lot of overwhelming images and graphic language. It was meant to disgust you and make you think, "My god what is wrong with this country?" In the end, it is the imagery that a viewer is left with, and that is what is most powerful about *Kids*.



by Reka Prasad

FUCK Depression

by Syniva Whitney

"There should be a science of discontent. People need hard times and oppression to develop psychic muscles."

-from "Collected Sayings of Muad'Dib" by the Princess Irulan (Frank Herbert, *Dune*)

I can't help but think there's something wrong with being depressed all the time. Maybe it's the weather.

"Joyful spring (it will come)!" - *Moirá's Mom*

People charge by outside my window looking angry all the time. I get mean looks from people eating in Erdman. I overhear nasty comments from other people while trekking from my dorm to the Campus Center.

"The appeal of reason is more to the head, but the penetration of the heart comes from suffering." - *Mahatma Gandhi*

Even though there are all these sad and overworked people roaming around BMC, there are still fantastic moments of escape and inspiration: three a.m. Frisbee, animal cracker fights, an hour session with the shiatzu, imitating a squirrel having a seizure on Merion Green. Anything to avoid the boredom of depression.

"I see so clearly now my similar years

Repeat each other, shod in rusty black,

Like one hack following another hack

In meaningless procession, dry of tears..."

-*Edna St. Vincent Millay*

Sing even if you can't. Dance even if you don't. Laugh if it hurts.

Forget your roommate(s), your cramped single, your girlfriend, your boyfriend, your girlfriend AND your-boyfriend, your fish, your three eight-page papers.

WARNING

Inside everybody's nose
There lives a sharp-toothed snail.

So if you stick your finger in,

He may bite off your nail.

Stick it farther up inside,

And he may bite your ring off.

Stick it all the way and he

May bite the whole darn thing off.

-*Shel Silverstein*

I'm pretty depressed at this point, which is probably why I'm writing an article about it (duh), but I really believe this is a shared subject. I haven't talked to one person this semester who has told me she's NOT depressed, or sad, or "blah." How can anyone avoid it? I just think many people forget it's OK to act like an eight-year-old again. Or has everyone forgotten why kids are so HAPPY all the time?

"To fling my arms wide

In some place of the sun,

To whirl and to dance

Til the white day is done.

Then rest at cool evening

Beneath a tall tree

While night comes on gently,

Dark like me—

That is my dream!"

-*Langston Hughes, "Dream Variations"*

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The Northwest Corner

by Megan Munson

So here it is, the first official column that everyone has been waiting for and I have been sweating over. What do I write now that I've committed myself to *The College News* and to you? I was thinking about women climbers, perhaps comparing the slim deciduous trees of the East Coast to the majestic conifers of the West, or the granola-consumption phenomena that has existed in liberal western communities for years (in fact, last Christmas, my sister and I gave our parents a homemade granola-making kit, complete with molasses, dried cranberries, and jars with labels that read "Munson's All-Natural Granola, organically made with love", pretty cute, eh?). But I didn't have time to research the first two ideas, and granola, while infinite in variety, just isn't the subject for a captivating article.

Then it hit me. Coffee. It is the culture that truly distinguishes East from West. It is more than a craze, it's a way of life. Downtown Portland (Oregon, not Maine) has at least three espresso shops per block, McDonald's, Burger King, Kinko's, and the majority of gas stations are all serving espresso. In the yellow pages there are more coffee shop listings than dentists and house repair people put together (well... I haven't actually counted, but I'm sure it's true.) We have tons of "drive-through espresso" chains, including Motor Moka, by Coffee People (it's the best, just in case you're ever in the area). Motor Moka has a menu longer than any fast food chain, hippie cookies, and a radio station that plays melo-dramatic parodies of Star Trek: where no coffee bean has gone before, and beatnik poetry coffee-style (imagine drum beats, and a low, slightly grainy voice chanting "Lat-te, cup in my hand/ woke up this morning/I groaned "oh...man..." /this cat's gotta have his lat-te").

While home, the number and creativity of coffee shops amazed me (after the dryness of the east), and I thought "no one back at school would believe this... maybe I'll do a photo essay!" Fortunately, I remembered I have no photographic talent and so had to be content to simply enjoy the mellow aura espresso shops create. And that's the thing, it's not so much the quality of the beans (though it's truly excellent), it's more the ambiance that espresso shops create: a laid back atmosphere where people take the time to ask for "a tall skinny latte with a shot of hazelnut on ice". Hanging out, chatting, and enjoying the infrequent sunbreaks coming through the crazy clouds. Eagerly await next the next issue: Coffee critiques, the best and worst of the Main Line, quality, quantity, and foam.

Dykes To Watch Out For



FEATURES

LADY ORACLE: Reading the Leaves

I've found myself a new religion... Seems all I ever feel like doing these days is sitting around in my room drinkin' tea outta my well worn mug... Who woulda guessed it would change the direction of my life? Have you ever noticed those handy aphorisms so many tea companies provide gratis with each and every tea bag? With those firmly in mind and a quick glance at the constellations, I feel I've matched each of your tea-drinking needs with the problems you are currently facing.

ARIES March 21 — April 19

Despite the lingering winter, your temper remains as feisty as ever. Girl, when it's cold outside, there ain't nowhere to go. Settle down and channel that energy into finding yourself some quiet, indoor entertainment., if you know what I mean.... To set the mood, why not put on a kettle of soothing Chamomile, an herbal tea whose very special and subtle flavor transcends comparison.

TAURUS April 20 — May 20

One thing you can't afford is to catch a cold. Wrap yourself up in a fuzzy blanket, and find yourself a steaming cup of Mint tea. This one can be enjoyed at any time, but is especially invigorating during wet and cold weather. And while you're at it, why not cover your head up with that blanket and steam your sinuses over your hot cup of tea. Never can be too careful, and why not treat yourself doubly special?

GEMINI May 21 — June 20

Mmm, hmm. Looks like it's finally your turn to partake of the mug that overfloweth with a Passion fruit Herbal Infusion. Your devoted Oracle has even managed to find a certified Tea Shaman to mumble a few chants over the anxiously awaiting tea leaves. You watch out....our Shaman warns that true passion is intoxicating and invigorating, soothing and sensuous, mysterious and magical. We just thought you should know what you're in for....And remember—this ain't no sippin, tea!

CANCER June 21 — July 22

Just because it's cold outside doesn't mean you can't transport yourself to a summery paradise....providing you choose the right beverage. I think a fragrant, summery tea that's full of the refreshing flavor of sun-ripened Strawberries is in order. This one provides that much needed pick-me-up you know you can count on again and again, unless of course the company that makes it goes bankrupt.

LEO July 23 — August 22

Let's face it.... You've barely got time to read this column, let alone sit and wait for a pot of water to boil. But that doesn't mean you can't enjoy your own cup of tea. What do you think they invented instant for, anyways? Bribe your roomie to run over to Acme and pick up some Iced Tea Mix. Hey, aren't the words 'free scoop inside' enticing? Nothing beats that 'natural lemon flavor.' You provide the water, we provide the sugar, citric acid, tricalcium phosphate, caramel color, maltodextrin, artificial color (red #40) and BHA. It's a drink, it's a chem exam; no, it's both!

VIRGO August 23 — September 22

Girlfriend, go quickly and grab yourself a stiff cup o' hot, black Coffee. 'Nuf said.

LIBRA September 23 — October 22

Listen up. It's time to get back to basics. Remember how, once upon a time, you used to enjoy the whole tea drinking experience? Back when you were little, and grandma would

bring you a hot cup of tea, and everything seemed okay again? What can delude you into that false sense of security again better than Country Peach? If it doesn't work, you haven't added enough honey yet.

SCORPIO October 23 — November 21

Y'know, tea drinking ain't just for wimps. It's not all doilies and raised pinky fingers. Forget everything your grandma told you. It's time to reclaim tea drinking and initiate it as an angry grrrrl ritual. Two words: Cranberry Cove. Yeah, yeah, okay, I know. Doesn't sound that exciting, does it? But if you brew it real strong, it looks kinda like blood. Think of it as a menstrual metaphor.

SAGITTARIUS November 22 — December 21

We're all hit by rough times, once in a while. People understand when you reach out for help. Hey, isn't sympathy part of that Bryn Mawr community we all came here for? So grab your travel mug and prepare yourself for a steaming brew of Whatever Tea Your Neighbor Has. Go ahead. You might even make up a good sob story, and maybe she'll offer you tea out of pity, so you won't even have to ask.

CAPRICORN December 22 — January 19

Hey, when it's stripped bare of all the fancy packaging, isn't relaxing what tea's all about? And what better way to help the soothing powers along by adding a little liquor to give it that extra punch? Don't worry if your hand slips and a little too much gets in. You'll just get relaxed a bit faster than you'd originally planned. What kind of tea goes best with some added liquor? Who cares? Drink up. Just don't dribble.

AQUARIUS January 20 — February 18

We know how easily frazzled you get these days. Let me suggest a few grounding exercises. Follow the directions carefully (I'll keep the instructions simple), and maybe you'll have better luck getting a cup of tea to turn our right, since you haven't had much luck with anything else lately. 1. Fill kettle. 2. Turn on burner. 3. Wait for water to boil. 4. Find a clean mug. 5. Pour boiling water into mug. 6. Don't forget the tea bag. In keeping with the theme of simplicity, I suggest that trustworthy standby, plain ol' Lipton's. Let's face it, you could probably use the caffeine. You can even put it on ice so you won't burn yourself. And heed my warning—stay away from those new-fangled round tea bags. I've a hunch they aren't friendly.

PISCES February 19 — March 20

Bet you didn't realize spicing up your life is as easy as boiling water! Come on, let's be daring and risk it all on a loose leaf tea! None of those confining little tea bags for you, girl! Prepare yourself for an exciting encounter with Cardamom Cinnamon. Native to the shadier regions of India and Ceylon, cardamom has the gentle, airy taste of the forest itself. Cinnamon, derived from the bark of a small evergreen, brings to the cardamom a spicy depth and fresh perspective. And if cinnamon can do that for cardamom, just wait until you see what it can do for you!

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The National Institute of Mental Health estimates 17 million people in the U.S. get depressed every year. That's one out of ten people. Whoa, and HEY, compared to men, women are twice as likely to be depressed, and more likely not to seek help.

"I'm spared no pain. I lack no pain to be spared me."

-Medea in Euripides' *The Medea*

The NIMH also blamed this fact on various things, like hormones, genetics, and psychological factors. Oh, and as an afterthought they throw in the obvious reasons: abuse and oppression.

"Would it please you if I strung my tears
In pearls for you to wear?"

Would you like a gift of my hands' endless beating
Against old bars?"

-Naomi Long Madgett, *"The Race Question"*

What to do, what to do? A dinner conference with a few of my friends led to the realization that we have all experienced depression. This may not sound surprising, but while talking, we all found out that we have all gone through treatment (with or without our absolute consent) to deal with it. We bonded while reminiscing about old doctors, anti-depressant drugs, and our opinion of what the hell depression is anyway.

"It's like a tunnel...like a black pit. You go through the day physically and emotionally sick, angry with people that don't KNOW you're so down, and who can't help you anyway..."

-one of my buddies

Where do we go from here? Up or down or all around? Whatever we do, life keeps coming. Everything keeps moving. There may be no avoiding it. To the "everyday average Jane," the definition of depression may be the same as the definition of life (this does sound very bleak though, doesn't it?). So all of us Mawrters will deal. Then again, maybe it is just the weather... but I don't think so.

"And then a strange thing happened. For where the tear had fallen a flower grew out of the ground, a mysterious flower...It was so beautiful that the little Rabbit forgot to cry, and just lay there watching it."

-Margery Williams, *The Velveteen Rabbit*.



Dear Ms. Hank,

I noticed on the front page of last week's *College News* that you were referred to as "Mrs. Hank." Are you married? If so, where do you live? Is there married housing on campus, or do you have to live in town? Did you take your husband's name? Is he a nice guy? What does he look like? Does he go to Haverford?

Ms. Frosh

Dear Sadly Mistaken,

Due to those fascist, woman-hating, heterosexist, anti-Hell Week, Chix with Dix who call themselves the editors of this illustrious newspaper, a typo mistakenly implied that I have bound myself in the handcuffs of unholy matrimony. When will we women stop referring to each other in terms of our relationships? When will people begin to look past the surface to our real beauty, which has nothing to do with who we sleep with? We must break the remaining bonds of Victorian bourgeois society!

(By the way, Ms. Hank has been involved with her lover for over two years now, and they share a double in, well, let's just keep you guessing as to what dorm she actually occupies. But Ms. Hank does not intend to imply that she

encourages marriage or even monogamy, especially if you're cute.)

Death to the Patriarchy,
Ms. Hank

Dear Ms. Hank,

My friends and I are wondering why the campus smells like cow dung when the snow melts.

Disgusted

Dear Nose-y,

That would be because this campus is made out of cow dung.

Death to the Patriarchy,
Ms. Hank

Dear Ms. Hank,

Yesterday when I went to open the door to my room, the doorknob fell off. What should I do?

One Frustrated Woman

Dear Sexually Frustrated,

Why are you so tense that you must rip doorknobs out of their moorings? Has it been so long? It is my personal advice that you come to the above-mentioned double, and my lover and I will help you relax and teach you how to treat all things more gently.

Death to the Patriarchy,
Ms. Hank