

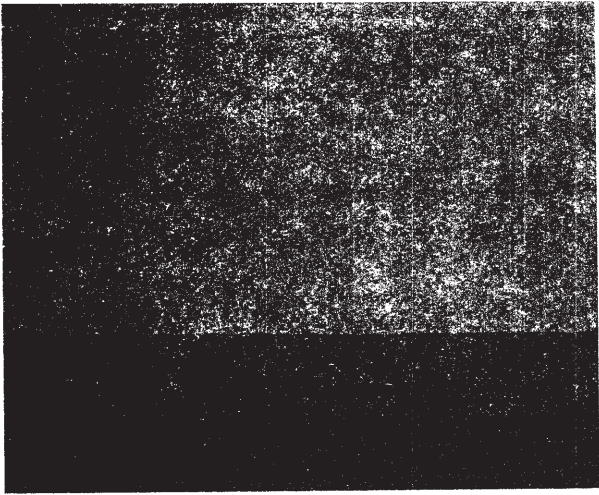
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BARDIAN

Vol. 1 No. 3 [November 15, 1948]

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Culture Club

The action of the Culture Club has brought forth the following weaknesses in our student government: 1) general apathy on the part of the members of Convocation toward the importance of *their Convocation* and student government; 2) resulting from this apathy is the ability on the part of pressure groups to gain control of Convocation; 3) the ineffectiveness of the present student government in dealing with a critical situation; 4) the limited scope and the nebulous nature of the Constitution.

In viewing the action of the Culture Club, we suggest the following as possible solutions of the above mentioned weaknesses: 1) More efficient house governments are a prime requisite for the reduction of apathy and for more effective student government. This was clearly demonstrated by the actions of one unified dormitory at a recent meeting of Convocation. Although this may result in the formation of more pressure

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Poetry Week-End is Success

Dr. William Carlôs Williams opened the Poetry Weekend at Bard with a curiously one-sided talk advocating structural innovation in American poetry. He said that a poem is composed of two parts, the theme, and the form, and went all-out for the latter.

Leaving no doubt as to his position, he defined as "a small machine constructed of words and the spaces between them." He said that this machine was primarily a matter of time, (in the mechanical sense, we presume), and what the poem says is entirely secondary to its form. "The structure of the poem says more than anything you can say," he stated, "for it means that you have sought satisfaction in a particular form." His whole talk was given with such vigor and conviction that its limitedness did not disturb us until hours after leaving the auditorium. While we were there is sounded wonderful. In fact it still seems wonderful, but now we state these few reservations.

A significant poem will be written in America, he went on, only when a new structure has been invented—one more flexible and adapted to our language. Our tongue, Dr. Williams explained, is very distinct from that of the English, in its speed, intonation, and general structure and contours. It demands a new form. The formal English foot and metrical line must be abandoned for a freer structure, one into which our looser-jointed

language can be more comfortably fitted.

He suggested, as a step toward a new and flexible, yet still regular measure, a change in the conventional foot (addition of more syllables), and the legitimacy of dividing a word at the end of a line. As Dr. Williams insisted, he has nothing against the English meter and other formal elements, but he does feel that we must destroy their dominance on us if we hope ever to have a vital and individual American poetry. "We must invent an art form," he said, "so subtle—no metrical clichés—that it is commensurate with the whole world."

The emphasis Dr. Williams put on structure, and his depreciation of the importance of the theme, probably represents more of an attack against an opposite trend in the poetry of today, than a strongly held position of his own. As he pointed out, the poetry of the little magazines has been just as strikingly in the other direction. All experimentation has been in subject matter, and little has been done in the way of departure from the familiar conventional form. Dr. Williams' speech may well have been merely a calculated attack upon this trend toward formal sterilization. Taken as such, it was very successful and very important, because it was very much needed.

E. Halpern

the bardian

AN EDITORIAL LETTER

Two questions asked us of the Barracks perhaps more often than any others are: "Do you feel that you are part of the Bard Community?" and "Do you want to be part of the Community?" The answer to both, from where I stand, is the same. No.

It should be established at once that I do not know how many of us, if any besides myself, my viewpoint represents. But I think, to some of us, our goal as students or as students' wives has changed considerably since we arrived on campus. We have found that our dreams of an education at Bard have faded like last year's catalog in the sun. Now the big drive is to last it out until graduation, and get the B.A. that will at least look good on job-application forms, and resume

the life interrupted to come here.

We believe in the Seminar system, and want to see it work. But sometimes we see a class turn into a kind of solemn litany, in which the student response to the brilliant professional question must be exact down to the last adjective and stressed word, or it's not admitted. In Church, one has the advantage of a prayer book with everything written out.

It is a curious fact, but it begins to seem as though we are more serious about our education than are a few of our professors. We wonder if perhaps the obvious hardships of married life under the GI Bill are not evidence enough of our desire to learn. If we weren't stimulated and curious about the things we're studying, we

wouldn't be here. We want to be treated with dignity. We wish one professor could skip the challenging insult, the Jovian splendor, the brilliant expose of our or another student's stupidity, and get down to the subject at hand, in terms of a Seminar.

We also feel, some of us who have voted several times in local or national elections, that there is less and less point in our little test-tube Community Council, in which a kindly President tells us how to vote. Even a true progressive college only hopes to be a laboratory community, from which facts about the larger community of city and state and nation are to be learned. Our allegiance and our

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Vol. 1, No. 3.

George Coulter Speaks

The Special Committee was formed for the specific purpose of educating the individual to the social standards of Bard College. This educational process presents itself in several forms. Namely: pointing out to the person concerned — why his questioned specific action has not and cannot be accepted in view of the laws made by the Convocation and Council; having posters made depicting the real meaning of the initial laws; and having laws made that will uphold the social moves that the committee deems necessary to hold Bard among the highest colleges.

Nevertheless a great many of the members of the Convocation hold a grossly misconstrued view of the Committee's purpose. The Committee has never held the attitude of being a prosecuting body, a sadistic group, or a glorified Gestapo. On the contrary, the Committee tries to secure a satisfactory solution, a solution that will point out the alleged misdoing.

Theoretically, Bard College, has a very workable student government; composed of the Convocation, Council, the House Governments, and the Special Committee. It seems, therefore, that the Special Committee can serve, in view of this fact, a dual role — that of either the strongest or the weakest link in our student government chain.

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"In Kingston Men Who Don't Have Businesses Aren't In Business"

Kappie and I started our senior project almost a year ago, and according to the rulings of the college we will have it done in a couple of weeks. The problem of a deadline doesn't worry us, it just means we'll have to leave out two chapters.

This is a joint project. We're both working together, and as a result we've been able to write more, and get it done in a shorter time than any other senior in our class. The problems one has in choosing a project in our particular division are many. First of all you have to look at all the projects that have been written in the past few years. This is just to make sure that the same groups are not used too frequently. You see, groups are pretty important. There are all different kinds of groups, and you have to know just what bunch you're working with. The Tivoli group for instance (that's all the people who live in Tivoli) has been used so much that the faculty knows more about these people than any student could possibly learn in one year. This eliminates any chance of faking facts. Also the Tivoli crowd has become bored with questionnaires and interviews, and refuses to cooperate. Luckily we found a virgin town composed of a fine bunch of virgins; the small business men of Kingston. There was a difficulty here; the lack of a definition for the group. Some people thought that we should use special physical characteristics as the factors which made "our group" different than the other senior project groups. However, my advisor pointed out that factors such as "under five foot two, weighing over two hundred pounds, a ready smile, and rose cheeks" were not the points that made the small business men different. Finally we came upon the perfect definition. Syllogism; 1. Kingston is a small town, 2. all the business men must be

small, 3. therefore, all the Kingston business men must have small businesses.

Then Kappie and I made up some questionnaires, and sent them out to all the people who owned, or who planned even remotely to own businesses. The results of the questionnaires have always been a mystery, so we sent out a second batch, and interviewed some people. This didn't help much. It was only when our advisor explained certain things to us that we became aware that we would have to write the project regardless.

The writing is quite easy. It's very much like the projects that are being done in the Literature Division, only it's much easier to get permission to do a creative project in our department than in the latter group. There are a couple of fellows who are writing short stories for projects this year. They have it softer than we do, they just have to write, and we have to know about business men, and statistics, and then write too. Not to brag, but we have some of the finest dialogue in our thesis that you'll find anywhere.

Incidentally, we feel we're much better off than the painting majors. In a couple of years every wall in the school will have a "big" painting on it, and then the more ambitious painters will be stuck for space. This is really quite a problem for the artists to face, particularly since the price of canvas is so high.

Well after examining all the men's businesses in Kingston, we certainly have learned something. As yet it isn't quite clear to us, but you all know young people absorb things, and it comes out later in life. In closing we want to remind everyone that our project will be in the library next year. The title is (if we don't change it) *Kingston, the Result of Small Businesses*.

Robert Corregan

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Amero Views Conference

The Poetry Conference—Part II

The second half of the Poetry Conference consisted of a talk by Louise Bogan on "The Pleasures of Formal Verse" followed by a panel discussion on poetry by all the participants in the conference including guest poets and members of the audience.

Miss Bogan immediately took issue with many of the statements Dr. Williams made the preceding evening while taking account of their common points of agreement. She recognized that measure is intrinsic to the nature of poetry; admitted that the use of rhyme was optional to the poet; and stressed the fact that *vers-liebre*, so-called, is not formless or free verse at all, but "stretches, contracts and distorts" through variation around a central sustaining meter. While conceding the defects of Victorian formalistic verse, Miss Bogan added that the reaction to Victorian excess had gone as far as it could go and now the pendulum appears to be swinging back once more towards the precision of formal discipline in structural, imagistic, sound, and rhythmical inter-relationships.

To Miss Bogan the results of the experimental school of poetry seem to have had a permeating and perhaps devastating effect upon the sensibilities of our younger generation. Unlike Dr. Williams, she said that she had discovered as a result of teaching that young people today do not tend towards what might be considered old-fashioned forms because they feel, rightly or wrongly, that there is something artificial and deceitful about them. According to Miss Bogan, the attitude of the young is not so much cynical as it is frightened. We strike her as being afraid of expressing emotions at all. When we think of these emotions in the formal poetry of the sonnet, the lyric, and the ballad, they appear to us as rigid, mystical, affected and untrustworthy qualities which are there not intrinsically, but only because we ourselves have imposed, through prejudices and urbane skepticism, a distance between formal poetry and ourselves.

Miss Bogan suggested, rather than revealed, that throughout the history of poetry since Greek civilization there has been an ebb and flow in formal construction, a co-existent conflict between classicists and experimentalists; those to whom certain mechanical properties of the poem such as the Alexandrine or the regular foot are sacrosanct and those to whom these properties are hind-

rances. The very ebb and flow of this conflict creates at times a status quo of now one group and now the other. She could not predict what direction American poetry would take in the near future and thought that today the two opposing influences were mixed citing Auden, Mac Niece, and Spender as her examples of poets who combine the best of discipline with free verse.

Miss Bogan finds in man a psychological instinct for rhythms. Rhythm is a flow abounding in natural phenomena such as the movement of waves, the gestures of the body, and even more basically it exists in the beating of the pulse and the heart. The idea of rhythm as basic to poetry and broadly speaking to art, Miss Bogan finds most beautifully exemplified in the primitive song-dance poetry of the Greeks which is "not merely beauty, but that sort of beauty which makes the heart yearn."

In conclusion, Miss Bogan, like Dr. Williams, pointed out that in the successful poem there is no disparity between form and matter; that the two are indistinguishable and inseparable from one another because they are in a perfect state of interaction.

Discussion Follows Talk

After Miss Bogan's talk, the visiting poets joined her around the conference table and an interesting discussion ensued about poetry and its hallmarks. Dr. Williams began the discussion by agreeing almost entirely with Miss Bogan but still insisted on his basic assertion that modern American poetry must *be* modern American poetry; that is, it must own up to the tremors and tensions of our contemporary life and embody these qualities in a manner entirely its own. All of the poets at the conference table treated Dr. Williams with a great deal of respect though there was much disagreement and each poet was anxious to defend his own style and his particular way of looking at things against those of others.

Mr. Frankenburg asked the question—"What does the reader expect from poetry?"—and appealed to the audience for an answer. The somewhat surprising reply came back that the reader expects nothing because he doesn't read poetry anyway. This answer failed to upset the poets because, as they pointed out, the sale of poetry has gone up and there appears to be an awakening of interest in poetic practices and poetic insights.

Mr. Rexroth asked a rather difficult

question, which immediately caused considerable flurry among the poets and in the audience, about the poet's role as a prophet, a leader of this people out of chaos and into salvation. Mr. Rexroth seemed to think that the salvation he mentioned consisted in environmental change but soon conceded that any good poet doing his job genuinely and with conviction is in his own particular right a salvationist of sorts.

The discussion as a whole centered around meters and sound values in poetry and while it opened up new ways of hearing poetry, did not really concern itself exhaustively with the over-all subject which is perhaps inexhaustible. There were many ideas offered at the table and from the floor which are still with those of us who enjoy poetry. While none of us, including the poets who attended, have the final answers to the questions raised we are all, I believe, deeply concerned about them. The poet's value to society, we believe to be the highest of all civilized values and because of his tremendous significance in explaining our being and experience, few of those who attended the conference were indifferent to his problems.

Poetry Reading in the Afternoon

The afternoon following the panel discussion was taken up by a reading and discussion of poems read to us by Richard Wilbur, Robert Lowell, Richard Eberhart, Kenneth Rexroth, Jean Garrique, and Elizabeth Bishop. The afternoon meeting was unexpected and due entirely to the interest which the guest poets took in us. The students who attended made many valuable remarks about the poems they heard and were talked to by the visiting poets not as adolescents, but as adults, and, the greatest reward of all, as human beings capable of an imaginative experience.

Amero

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"The Rendezvous of Friends"

OUR FATHER'S FUNERAL

They laid my poor, dear father in the ground
the other afternoon. I heard the sound
the wet clods made upon the coffin lid
and listened, standing as the others did
head bowed black and ministerial,
to the tappings of our father's funeral
the indifferent preacher's voice, the prayer,
the words of comfort, the gesture in the air.

But when the flowers were removed, and gone
the other mourners, I remained alone
to tamp the tight-packed earth and quickly made
a monument of stones. I was afraid.
For all night long, all the night before,
I wrestled with my father's body there
where he, bolt upright in the coffin, called
for wine to wet his burning throat. I held
him down, not breathing yet, clamped shut the box
and made it fast with iron padlocks.

Lie still old man, for God's sake dead remain.
Lie still old father, don't rise up again.

John Senior

Vassar Exhibit

It is scarcely within the bounds of hospitality to emulate in this review the dubious habits of the daily press and attempt qualitative judgments of the individual works of our neighbors. When we invited this show we gave the Vassar Art Department carte blanche in the choice of exhibits. They have obviously tried to give us a sampling of the kinds of problems they set before their students and of the solutions they find; in other words, to show us their teaching methods. The variety of sub-titles on the labels suggests this; e.g. Formal Analysis of Seurat's Grande Jatte, Form Study, Color Rhythms, Color Balance, Color Composition, Emotion in Color, etc.

Some of these pieces are naturally more satisfactory as works of art than others. Rather than evaluate their artistic perfection it might be interesting to examine the Vassar approach to art teaching in comparison with ours.

Vassar puts the emphasis on the study of art history. Of the 120 points a student needs to complete graduation requirements only 14 may be taken in creative work for credit. A major in the practice of any art would seem impossible. While some of the students may have professional ambitions, the college appears to believe it outside its province to encourage them even though it offers pre-professional courses in other fields. At best Vassar seems to consider art historical studies the most important preparation for an art career. All we can say to this is that up to the time of Vasari (1511-1547) who wrote what amounts to the first important art historical work, no artist had undertaken a formal study of this sort and actually none enjoyed the benefits of modern historical research for several centuries thereafter. Yet even Vasari's master, Michaelangelo, did several rather respectable paintings and sculptures. With the contemporary barrage of artistic and social influences from all corners of the world and the resulting artistic confusions, it is undeniable that the occasional clarifications coming from the historians can be extremely useful to the artist, or that in an essentially eclectic age the artist must understand his tradition. The great educational question is how this can be achieved.

At Vassar, because of time limitations, it has to be done in the academic rather than in the organic way even in the studios. The artist teachers have very capably analyzed the main stylistic components of modern art as

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The old "help your buddy" system works with fire protection too. We are so equipped to be fairly self-reliant in fire protection but we need the whole-hearted cooperation of the community, to make our plans totally effective.

The college now has a well-equipped (we have four sirens) private fire department that is maintained by volunteer membership of students, faculty,

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Vassar Exhibit

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exemplified in the above sampling of sub-titles. They introduce students to the creative activity by an a priori laboratory isolation of the various stylistic problems, expecting the students to make a gradual synthesis from these studies. At Bard we begin with the main issue—the student's desire to paint pictures or make sculptures. As the style problems present themselves—in different sequences with each individual young artist—we, too, isolate the problems and take them under close scrutiny, but view them constantly against the context of a pictorial idea in the student's consciousness. The immediate result is often horrible to behold but the long range effect frequently leads to great awakenings and fine art. Whether the Vassar way, given the opportunity of four years of major work in the studios reinforced by historical studies, would lead to the same thing, is something I would hesitate to question without actual demonstration. As it is, and as this exhibition shows, artistic consistency is rarely achieved even under the tutelage of excellent artist teachers in a system in which the historical studies add to, rather than relieve stylistic confusions. Not enough time and effort is allowed for digestion of great stylistic experiences and for their maturing into personal expression by following the maxim "*nulla dies sine linea*".

Let there be no misunderstanding about the meaning of this criticism. The exhibition shows clearly to the trained eye that there exists just as much real talent among Vassar students as at Bard. Some of the works reveal beauty, depth, and sensitivity. If their work appears less accomplished than some of our own it is because their students as well as teachers are hamstrung by the conservative demands of a much more fixed curriculum than ours.

Stefan Hirsch.

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Fire Department

(Continued from Page 4)

and staff. We have two well equipped fire engines, (they both have four wheels) and other safety equipment, such as smoke mask for entering council meetings, (on clear nights you can see Ralph Schley).

Speed is the most important factor in the case of this community. (A small faculty child remarked that the reason Mark Richard was on the Fire Department was that he drives so fast). The college has only 26 thousand and gallons of water (it could easily all be used in 50 minutes). After the supply is used up prayer is our only recourse. The six surrounding fire departments could come to our help but they could not bring their water towers with them. Hence the community is faced with the problem of putting out the fire quickly or not at all.

Each man in the Fire Department gives up an average of one and one-half hours per week for your safety, to protect you and your property.

Now Chief Brown directs us in our fireman's frolics. In the old days (1946) George V. (for virtuous) Blackstone used to meet with three eager (for a fire) students and tell them where the fire extinguishers were and how to call Red Hook, (thanks to our Chief Operator Henry Milliken telephoning is still a grave problem). Now with two fire engines (one white and one red, the Bard colors) the Department has about \$8,000 worth of equipment.

Our important need now is more water. B. & G.'s budget in the future plans for more water storage tanks to be put in hot spots around the campus, probably near North Barracks. (Personally we advocate a large indoor swimming pool, which would be fun to swim in and also hold about 262,500 gallons of water if it were 100 by 35 by 10 feet deep).

Hoby Pardee,
Asst. Chief, B.C.F.D.

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Coulter Speaks

(Continued from Page 2)

Practically, therefore, is the Special Committee strong or weak? This is a difficult question to answer. For the Committee's strength varies proportionally to its membership. However, regardless of membership, the Committee can not nor will not function to its upmost unless the student body realizes that its active cooperation is necessary, that the administration realizes that its participation is invaluable and likewise the faculty lends its whole hearted support.

Not only must these three groups work together in bringing social misconducts before the Community but when a problem is posed they *must all equally stand behind the Committee in its decision*. At present it is not thought that this participation is expressed very generously, for the student body in particular must become more socially conscious of the laws and their significance, and in turn the faculty and administration must give substantial support. Hence, if the administration, faculty and students can convince each other more or less simultaneously that when a misconduct is brought to the committee's attention, definite and fair action will be taken.

Also, to obtain this goal the student body must choose its representatives to the committee not on the basis of popularity but with respect to their ability to deal firmly and adequately with any problem.

When these objectives are reached, and it seems as if at last they are in sight, the Committee will have obtained its ultimate and satisfactory aim.

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Culture Club

(Continued from page 1)

groups, no one pressure group will be able to control Convocation; and the increased interest and participation in student government will tend to prevent pressure group control. Furthermore, unified dormitories will establish the much sought *esprit de corps* on the campus. 2) Council members must be made aware of the fact that they have assumed the responsibility of maintaining the integrity of our student government. An efficient government must have interested and conscientious leaders who are willing to devote more than one evening a week toward fulfilling their duties. 3) The inadequacy of the Constitution is evident. The Constitution should be completely revised so that a definite procedure is available to provide the government with necessary power to deal effectively with such emergencies.

Abolishing Convocation meetings is neither desirable nor is it an adequate solution to the aforementioned problems. Through more effective house governments, a more active and responsible Council, and a revised Constitution we feel that the Convocation could efficiently fulfill its legislative function and would serve as an excellent method toward educating the students to their democratic privileges and responsibilities.

Robert Hawkes
Armon Kaplan

PETERS
UPPER RED HOOK, N. Y.
-- : --
STEAKS - COCKTAILS

ANDY'S Restaurant



RED HOOK, N. Y.

Editorial Letter

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deep interest had already been given to that larger community, when we came here. We can't go back to the test-tube. We don't feel like signing out when we go to Rhinebeck to pay bills. It seems both false and profitless to try it.

We don't think special allowances should be made for us, and we don't hope for or expect any changes, if our ideas are in minority. We only count the months until graduation when we will be free to continue unhindered the adult lives we are suspending while we remain here.

Margaret M. Houser

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