

I am deeply offended by Jaime Clark's public reading of Bret Easton Ellis' work. Ellis has the right to write what he chooses, Clark has the right (in the privacy of his own mind) to read what he chooses. I also have the right to not fill my mind with graphic depictions of sexualized violence against women. To be subjected to such images without warning (images I may never be able to erase from my thoughts) is a violation.

As writers we are all concerned with freedom of speech, but Clark crossed the line - his action was disrespectful and unacceptable. I, for one, take issue with what he did - I protest.

Wendy Frey
First Sem.

I agree P. Baby Powers (and I had previously read the passage out of choice.)

It would have been nice to have had the option to leave the room (or go read the passage myself if I wanted) before this gratuitous reading. It was nothing less than mental rape. Sincerely, Ellen Santanoro (1st semester non-fiction)

I agree - what was the point?

Why I agree?
Just not. ;)

Please, no
an my maw
debate.

William
Malloy

1) Jaime Clark could have spared a handout of the BEE passage, then any consequent debate would have been, as it should have been, about it, not about his method of presentation.

2) This debate isn't about censorship, but about courtesy, specifically about ways of demonstrating respect for others' sensitivities.

3) Providing those of 'tender sensitivities' an opportunity to leave would not have been a good solution. The image of women (rising + leaving) raises ~~an~~ attendant images of women ~~withdrawing~~ withdrawing from men after dinner - to their (with)drawing room. A solution that literally separated us would be no solution at all. ~~Is it~~ ~~is it~~ common ground a pre-condition of community?

Karen Bassel

"The Point" of quoting the program in my mind was to illustrate the nature of the writer's work in American Psycho. Simply to have labeled Bret's narrative "sexually violent" or "graphically extreme" would have completely sacrificed real understanding to gentility, in the same way that a feature story on Robert Mapplethorpe that failed to print an accurate picture of the artist's work -- which of course would involve faithful representation of the very images that cause the controversy first hand -- would leave a reader without central knowledge of the subject of the piece.

Please let's not begin to censor each other.

This is not about censorship! Aloha,
It's about choice!

*(i.e. not reading the quote)

CH
CAROL G.

The material of Bret Easton Ellis is strong, unpleasant, and to my mind, not very important, which is why I chose not to attend the lecture. But should what is presented here be shaped to the most vulnerable among us? With all respect for the sensitivities of those who find the material offensive, as a woman I find it ironic that we seem on the verge of returning to the time when someone else decided, "This material is a bit rough. Perhaps the ladies would like to step outside," or even worse, to a time when in the back rooms others would say, "This material is something that might be important to hear, but in deference to the ladies, we can't even consider it."

I didn't come here to be protected, thank you.

Niki

niki fox

Wendy's protest about no being warned
and Ellen's clarification that we can give an option to
leave in such cases as these — general points. Jaime gave
warning. Maybe we could make a bit more of a
ritual out of it in the ~~far~~ future, give more time. Carol's
point also well made — Let's not an unwritten agenda that
implies censorship. — William Males

The quoted excerpt from Brett Easton Ellis, though vulgar & offensive, WAS NOT IN fact the focus of Jaime Clarke's lecture. The lecture WAS INTENDED 2B a study of and interview with a writer who influenced Jaime, a look at Ellis's writing life & writing habits, at his own influences & opinions.

~~unintentionally~~ In his lecture, while Jaime said that critics have found Ellis's work "everythingless," his mistake WAS IN NOT EXPANDING & EXPLAINING THAT criticism, NOT citing, or rather the decision TO NOT cite the critical analysis of writers as misogynistic as Norman Mailer and anti-feminist as John Irving who explained exactly why, though Ellis's intent was to use violence as a means of obtaining & illustrating a moral end, he failed. IF such analysis WAS included, I believe Jaime would NOT have the problem of the ~~read~~ read excerpt overshadowing the rest of the lecture. As it was, though, Clarke ended up with a flawed structural ~~lecture~~, and this flaw created a gap which made the excerpt a tacit endorsement of ~~Ellis~~ ^{thesis} Ellis and perhaps even an insensitive & offensive gesture. A wonderful parallel (no?)

In the end, Jaime MUST have the right to make this mistake,

~~that~~ ~~we~~ All have this right, just as we have the right to be offended, to WALK OUT, and to tell Jaime to his face he is full of shit.

However, we do NOT have the right to STOP him. Taste is subjective. As writers, we should ~~be~~ and MUST be vigilant of the threat of censorship. Remember Oscar Wilde. Arthur Miller IN Jail, where you might NOT WANT Brett Easton Ellis read aloud, I might object to something else, ~~like~~ like overly sensitive mid-life crisis domestic wife stories. And someone else might hate young Jewish writer stories.

But they all have a right to be out there.

Chuck Bork

I absolutely agree with Aya. But why stop with burning Jaime's interview? What about TS Eliot's anti-semitic tracts? Hemingway's sexist screeds? Austen's novels, fraught with a bourgeois complacency that implicitly condones the oppression of Lancashire millworkers? Such works make fine kindling. Nor should our righteous fires flicker ^{only} ~~only~~ on the ~~main~~ pale fuel of Anglo-Saxon canons. The ~~sexist~~ ^{misogynism}, the kikuyu-centrism of Ngugi wa Thiong'o; the explicit paean to Zulu imperialism of Indaba, My Children; the systematized domination of women, not to mention the ~~parade of the~~ Bedouin war-mongering of the prophet Mohammed: these too constitute firewood of the driest, hardest kind. Let us not be swayed by facile analogies to Savonarola's Florence or Hitler's Berlin. We do this only to affirm ~~our~~ the fierce freedom of our spirits. It is not our problem if beyond the brightness of our fires the night hangs with a darker weight.

George Michelsen

Sean James

Here's my reaction to your lecture on Brett Easton Ellis:

It did disturb me to hear the words of violence read aloud. I am a human being and a woman - these words can't be anything less than disturbing. But you were presenting them completely in the context of an interview with the author. Key words: with the author. You did not write the words, nor did you say you wanted to write similar words. You seemed to be telling us that the author interested you - his style, his subject matter, the trajectory of his career - all of it. And mostly, you let him speak by presenting his answers to your questions. You gave us the background behind his writing of the violent words. I found it revealing and of value to me as a writer. His rebellion at Wall St. His depression. ↘

I might add that, apart from
from its content, your
interview also showed
a level of professionalism
that impressed me greatly.
I hope you go on to
interview other authors
and give many more
lectures and write and
publish many more
stories. I don't know
you well and new year's
is going on, but I also
appreciated your many
contributions to the
Bennington program. I
think you were doing the student
readings last semester when
I started and you seem to
have given a lot of your
time to keeping things
rolling around here.

So — Bon Voyage,

Cheers

Adios

my Best —
Anne Jarboe

Dear Jaiin -

Since you've been getting some public hate mail -
I thought I'd send you some private love mail.

1. Your lecture was great!
2. The quote, while very difficult to listen to - was illustrative of the theme of the lecture. It was Not gratuitous, NOR was it there to shock.
3. Some people are so hypersensitive dirt offends them. To quote Robin Williams, "Assholes do vex me!" but they are assholes, and can safely be dismissed. The smallness of their minds and the narrowness of their vision will curse them to a writing life that will reek claustrophobia.
4. Political Correctness is the enemy of art - but of course there is responsibility, and I want you to know that you were responsible and thoughtful. Anyone with a brain knows that.
5. You're a sweetheart.
6. You're an amazing writer.
7. FBP et al. are jerks. They are

also grandstanding cowards, who didn't have the guts to tell you what they think in person.

8. If it wasn't you, it would have been something else, like serving bananas for breakfast as an anti-feminist political gesture.

9. When you're accepting that Pulitzer, they'll be off somewhere nursing their righteous anger and writing shit.

10. Love Ya!

Laura