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From Nepal with Love

*Anthropology major
Emily McNair
speaks about her
current semester in
a country torn by
revolution*

by kerry chance

Emily McNair, a junior Anthropology major at Bard, arrived in Kathmandu this February amidst heightened violence in the Maoist People's War. Only a few weeks ago, international newspapers reported on the 'bloodiest massacre in Nepalese history,' which ended in the deaths of over a hundred people in western Nepal. In this interview, Emily talks to the Free Press about the present violence, Texan missionaries, pseudo-Buddhists, and the evils of ecotourism.

Considering the very recent outbreaks of violence, have you been scared to be there?

No, don't be silly. I have put off plans to leave the Kathmandu Valley, but I am perfectly safe living in Kathmandu, and even the Maoists issued press releases a few months ago encouraging foreigners to keep coming to Nepal. They are insurrectionists, yes, but practical, and can see the devastating economic effects the fall off of tourism is having for the country.

The Maoists have never had much popular support in the valley, although they do occasionally bomb government offices and highways. However, in the last few weeks, they have placed bombs around Kathmandu - one in a trash heap that blew off the hands of the garbage collector, and another sewn into the corpse of a dog that killed the policeman who went to move it. But really the only danger is wrong place, wrong time-style, and let's face it, Kathmandu is no Jerusalem.

When did you get there and what are you doing?

I arrived in Kathmandu Feb.7. For now, I am doing an intensive Nepali language study.

This is also the auspicious wedding season - most of my friends here are Newari, and traditional Newari weddings

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Let Me Spark This Fatty

Changes are ahead for Bard's dormitory smoking policy

by ariel bardi



Ashtray Monument: This is what all the ashtrays will look like if Bard students are forced out into the cold to huddle near the entrances of their dormitories. photo by Vincent Valdmanis

Negotiations are currently underway to transform Bard into a "non-smoking" campus. This possibility, proposed and reviewed almost every year, was recently reintroduced at a meeting of the Campus Safety and Policy Review Board (CSPRB).

The change would involve an increase in buildings and areas designated as non-smoking, yet would not entirely prohibit smoking.

"Smoking is a very controversial issue among the Bard community with opinions split on both sides," says Robert Lee, CSPRB Chair and student government member. The intention would be to lower the amount of secondhand smoke non-smokers are subjected to, and also to further adhere to

the laws of the state.

John Kelly explains, "New York state law prohibits smoking in public spaces, so we must remember that we are still in New York." Also, the change would presumably "clean up" Bard's stereotypical image as a smoke-congested beatnik community.

The issue has become particularly relevant with the construction of new buildings on campus and the need to determine whether or not they will be smoke-free.

"The cool kids will have no place to live," worries Jesse Novak, one of many smokers who oppose this plan. "I don't see enough student support for this to happen without a big messy conflict. I can

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Bard Students Rally for HEOP in Albany

*Proposed cuts in
tuition assistance
bring hundreds to
state capitol*

by lora jaramillo

On March 7th, Bard HEOP students joined other students from all over New York State (including Mount St. Mary's and Marist Colleges) in Albany, to lobby against this year's severe budget cuts. Primarily affecting HEOP students, the cuts would drastically reduce all state-funded tuition assistance programs. Students met with Senator Stephen Saland and Assemblyman Joel M. Miller to pressure them to support HEOP.

"We want to impress upon them the importance of their constituents because we are their votes. We need their commitment to high education, more than just lip-service," said Bard HEOP director Idhalia Stoklas.

The Higher Educational Opportunities Program, which provides scholarships to edu-

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For a Response to Unbearable Questions

Writer-in-residence Nathan Englander speaks to the Free Press

by alison forbes

Bard College is an institution that takes its writers very seriously, and to prove the fact the College has established the first annual Bard Fiction Prize. The prize consists of a \$30,000 cash award and position as writer-in-residence at Bard for one semester. This year's prize was awarded to Nathan Englander, author of *For the Relief of Unbearable Urges*, a collection of nine remarkable short stories. In a statement announcing the award, the judges noted that "In each of the nine stories that make up his beautiful book, Nathan Englander looks at the human condition through the lens of Jewish tradition with utter and compassionate clarity...Englander is first and last a brilliant storyteller."

The prize is intended to encourage and support young fiction writers by allowing them to pursue their creative goals in a productive and scholarly environment. President Botstein clarifies the rationale behind the prize stating, "The award exemplifies Bard's long tradition of teaching literature

and writing and its dedication to encouraging and supporting our best young writers."

Aside from providing hearty, engaging texts for readers of short stories, Englander imparts a wonderful wit and approachable charm in regular, everyday Down the Road Café conversations. The following words were shared over coffee and an outdated handheld recorder on a sunny day last Monday in the Campus Center.

The classic question: When did you first realize you wanted to be a writer?

Pretty young I guess. In high school. I always wanted to be a writer. I guess I always wanted to do something creative.

I loved the idea of being a writer as well. But I also think I was starved for something. I was in this very closed world and was desperate to find some sort of outlet. In a completely closed world you have access. Most every person can find access to a



pencil and paper.

I've always liked language. In this world out of nowhere that's what I started to do and wrote bad high school angst poetry. I'd write whole chapters and throw them in the garbage.

I think it's almost a state mandate that even the worst school has at least one good teacher. That was it. I had this English teacher that got me reading.

I really want a black and white world. I'm horrified that there are all these shades, the gray is horrifying to me. There are just shades of gray coming up all the time. The idea is that I was wrestling with these very vague ideas. I was sixteen and found out there was hypocrisy in the world. Shocking.

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Dispelling the Rumors about Faculty Rehiring

by emily schmall

Dean of the College Michele Dominy wants students to understand the extent of their influence in hiring decisions made by the College.

The issue is particularly timely in light of recent student action over the fate of a political studies professor.

"Student input in how evaluations gets defined, who we look for, and who we hire, is given parallel consideration

"Students really have a lot of input,"
said Cannovino. **"Everyone came to the table with the same clout."**

to that of faculty members of [a search] committee," said Dominy. "This doesn't mean, however, that students carry the same weight."

Hiring a new professor begins with a recommendation from the Committee on Vacancies when there is a departmental position open. The committee is comprised of student representatives from the Educational Policy Committee (EPC) and members of the faculty. After Leon Botstein has been consulted, and the deci-

sion to perform a search has been made, a new committee is formed.

The search committee, the initial body that reviews and evaluates all candidates, is also composed of faculty members and students.

Though students may not carry the same weight as faculty on the search committee, Tom Cannovino, a Bard student who was on both the Italian and

the French search committees last semester, felt his contributions were given equal weight.

"Students really have a lot of input," said Cannovino. "Everyone came to the table with the same clout."

Search committees place advertisements in academic publications and generally receive a strong response. A search committee narrows the selection down to twelve candidates or less.

Applications must include a letter of interest, resume,

credential file of three letters of recommendation, sample copies of course syllabi, and copies of publications in fields that are applicable.

"We specify what we want depending on what the student interest is and what we already have," said Dominy. "We favor candidates who are broadly trained, because our departments are so small and we need professors who can be flexible."

Members of the search committee travel to job fairs and interview a small, pre-selected group. Students on the EPC usually participate. Selected candidates are invited to Bard for what is perhaps the most important part of the evaluation, said Dominy.

"The Committee talks to a selected three very extensively. The students' participation is crucial because it is the students who can say if the person spoke to them," she said. The review within the setting of Bard is intended to discern "whether [candidates are] quick on their feet."

The administration has been accused of blindly pursuing candidates on the basis of how much they've published. Dominy cannot dismiss this allegation entirely. Professors who publish, "Raise our pres-

tige, which in turn helps the students," she said. A demand for publication is also positive for faculty health. "It keeps them working hard, thinking and producing. Otherwise, teaching could get a little routine. Research keeps courses young and vibrant."

Dominy said publication is also indicative of professional commitment, one of the most important characteristics sought by the search committee. "We look for people who are professionally engaged. Publications show a passion for the discipline."

Often, said Dominy, good teaching and publication go hand in hand. "A gifted teacher is usually also a productive scholar." As to whether either publishing or teaching is more important, Dominy looks for professors who are able to succeed in both. "You have to show in those first few years that you can balance the two," she said.

The person selected for a position has to be a literal diamond in the rough. Dominy said the committee looks for "people who dazzle, exceptional people."

"Bard is an energetic and creative campus," she said, and professors often are regarded as a reflection of the institution

in which they work. Bard is a small place and accordingly not all candidates will fit in.

Cannovino echoed that thought. "We tried to judge whether candidates would be a good match for Bard," he said.

Those selected are offered a two- or three-year contract. Recent hires are evaluated after two years and are either offered another contract or are given a terminal year for non-renewal. The process repeats itself again two years later, but by then professors have generally established themselves well enough to secure a place in the Bard community. After six years, the College must decide whether the professor will receive tenure.

Every faculty member up for tenure has to resubmit a statement of interest, list of publications, and sample syllabi in a process that lasts about one year. Faculty and students write letters and the EPC fields oral testimony. After all contributions have been collected the dean writes an assessment of the faculty member's file, which is sent to President Botstein for a final judgment.

A Tale of Two Cities: An International Peace Talk in NYC

by emily schmall

On March 6, Mayor of Jerusalem, Ehud Olmert, and former mayor of New York, Rudolph Guiliani, were scheduled to meet.

Bard junior Hannah Janal, with sponsorship from the Jewish Students' Organization, the Hebrew and Arabic Department, and the Jewish Studies Department, led a group to New York University's Cooper Union Great Hall to witness the mayors come face to face and discuss the future of democracy.

The Caravan for Democracy, a pro-Israel organization, hosting the event, hoped the meeting would symbolize Israel and the United States' similar struggles with retaining democracy. In conjunction with Media Watch, a New York based organization that monitors the mainstream media's depiction of foreign affairs, and the Jewish National Fund, the Caravan commenced its nationwide lecture series.

Due to the heavy shower of bombs over the week in Jerusalem, Mr. Olmert refused to leave Israel and instead was broadcast live via satellite. No explanation was given for Mr. Guiliani's absence.

In anticipation of the event, approximately fifty Palestin-

ians, Palestinian-Americans, and other sympathizers demonstrated outside the entrance-way of Cooper Union, many holding up signs that read: 'End U.S. Aid to Israel! Defend Palestine.'

Upon notification of this opposition, Mr. Olmert started out his speech on a note of optimism. "I am happy to hear that there are Palestinian demonstrators outside. It is one step the Palestinians are making to take democratic measures of expression." At this, the pro-Israel crowd gave a hearty applause.

Olmert regretted being unable to meet Guiliani in New York, since Israel and the United States were currently "fighting against the same phenomenon." He continuously likened the conflict in Afghanistan to the conflict between the Israelis and Palestinians. Giving praise to President Bush's actions, Olmert said the United States was justified in its occupation of Afghanistan. "Terror is fighting the fundamental rights of our democracy. Because of this, the U.S. and Israel have the right to reach out past the natural borders to combat terrorism."

Visibly wearied by a week of heavy warfare, Olmert said

he did not foresee a peaceful resolve. "This conflict cannot end in a friendly way until there is a change in the nature of their society. It is not a territorial dispute," he said. "Deep down, it is something entirely different."

Certain conditions of democracy would have to be altered to effectively rid the countries of terrorism. "Israel and the United States have an enormous responsibility. This is really a war that will determine the way of life of our societies."

When asked about the sincerity of the recent solution proposed by President Barak of Egypt and the Prince of Saudi Arabia, Olmert was very skeptical. "How can it be sincere if it offers a re-entry of refugees which would liquefy the state of Israel? This is only a PR balloon by the Saudis to try and get favor in the United States. It looks nice and even sounds reasonable, but upon close analysis, it is clearly as dangerous to Israel and other initiatives have been." The proposal introduced last week called for the allocation of the Gaza Strip



Pictured: Mayor of Jerusalem Ehud Olmert and former mayor Rudolph Guiliani.

and West Bank region to Palestine, but has since been rejected.

Olmert recalled the Camp David talks of 2000, the results of which led to a proposal that offered Palestinian presence at Temple Mound, a sacred area for Muslims in Israel, and access to parts of Jerusalem. Palestine rejected the proposal.

Now, while Olmert said he is willing to offer greater concessions, he refuses to see the city of Jerusalem split. "I will fight with all my power and all my passion against the division of Israel." The audience honored these words with a standing ovation.

A panel of international experts, consultants, and journalists watched as the Mayor of Jerusalem delivered his address. The panelists later

reflected on the words of the mayor. The Political Advisor for International Affairs to Mayor Olmert, Jehudi Kinar, concurred about the need to sacrifice liberties usually upheld by a democracy. "There are things in democracy that must be compromised in times of crisis. The punishment system, for instance, changes entirely."

According to Kinar, the foundation of democracy in Israel too could be changing. "Religion effects Israel's democracy more and more as the population of religious people coming into the country continues to grow." Mr. Kinar had no reply when asked which rights could not be compromised.

Bard student in Nepal, continued

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last 10 days, so I have been going to various marriage-related feasts and parties in most of my spare time. It's been great getting to see everyone from the last time I was here, seeing my friends get married, or meeting their new husbands/wives and babies.

After my language study is completed in early April I hope to relocate to Chitwan, in the Terai (the jungles and malarial plains of southern Nepal) to work with Tharu women's collectives and begin work for my senior project, which will focus on the intersections of environmental and human rights, the tensions between indigenous peoples, in-migrants, state and nonstate actors, and how this plays out in the areas of ecotourism and the modern conservation movement.

What's the best thing that's happened during your stay so far?

The second night I was here, my friend Bhai Raja came running over to my guest house as soon as he heard I was back and brought me to his house, which is a very old Newari home, with tiny, tiny doorways and rooms, low ceilings and incredibly beautiful, intricate woodwork everywhere. He brought me up this tiny staircase to the third floor to see his mother, and to meet his wife, who he had married a year and a half before, and his little three month old baby daughter. They invited me to the rice-feeding ceremony, held when the baby is 4 or 5 months old, which is when the baby is given a name -- it's normally a small, intimate family ceremony, so it's a great honor for me to be invited.

What's been the worst thing that's happened?

Politically nothing really good has happened, and the worst was definitely the attack on the bus near Birganj. It has been horrible seeing how bad things are in Nepal right now, and how difficult the situation has made life for many of my friends. My closest friends here, the Manandhars, a Newari family, had to close their restaurant in Thamel because no tourists have been coming.

There have been the requisite bouts of food poisoning, of course, which are never fun but are inevitable for our pansy foreigners' stomachs, and the hassle of walking through the tourist district, but nothing terrible. It is very difficult, though, for me to see all of the negative changes in Nepal, between the rampant, crippling corruption of the government and the escalation of the Maoist conflict, and how so many of my friends, along with all Nepalis and anyone who loves this place and wants to work here to effect positive change, are now stuck between a rock and a hard place. The Maoists have

begun attacking civilians, so cannot be supported, but the government shoots you in the foot at every turn, systematically stifling the initiatives of the people, stuffing their own pockets with public funds to buy big cars and mansions to exile themselves in Delhi, and doing whatever it takes to maintain their slipping grasp on power; they can't be supported, either.

It is very disheartening to hear everyone talk about little besides trying to leave Nepal, because especially amongst young people, they can no longer envision any sort of positive outcome to the current situation any time soon. It absolutely breaks my heart. Most of the people I talk to here think there will be full-scale revolution within five years.

What's been your experience with missionaries in Nepal, especially as the Bard Christian Student's Fellowship is raising money for the 'largest mission in the world'?

One of the worst things I've experienced has been meeting a group of teenage missionaries from Texas who were spreading the word of Jesus here in Nepal. Talk about my nightmare come true. Missionaries, as agents of colonialism and now of neocolonialism, have been one of the single most overwhelmingly negative and destructive forces the world has ever seen. They terrify me with their unquestioning self-assurance and belief in their own righteousness and disgust me with their hypocrisy. While these kids are telling me about how they went to Pashupatinath (one of the world's largest, holiest Hindu temples) and prayed for Jesus to burn down the heathens, two of the girls are sitting there having pulis done, mindless of the cultural and religious significance nose piercings have in Nepal, only thinking about how trendy they are at home in Texas. They learned nothing, saw nothing while they were here -- actually told the guys at my guest house that the reason the U.S. was so powerful and rich was because it's Christian and that George Bush could do no wrong because he is a holy warrior. Nepal is so poor and backwards because they are wallowing in sin and ignorance. Give me a fucking break. I held my tongue (because there were 20 of them and only one of me, and they were leaving the next day) but I hinted at the carelessness of tourists from an environmentalist angle, and asked one of the girls to please, please do me the favor of reading Renato Rosaldo's "Imperialist Nostalgia" when she got home.

The other thing that really pisses me off here are all the pseudo-Buddhists Ooh-look-at-me-I'm-easternly-enlightened-and-spiritual types who parade

around Kathmandu. Case in point: I'm having breakfast at my friends' restaurant, The Roots, before it closed, and in walk these two American kids, dressed in full saffron and crimson monks' robes, who start talking to us about how Buddhist they are. Great, you think you're good, practicing Buddhists, devout enough to walk around in monks' robes. First of all, you're a couple, so the chances that you've taken a vow of celibacy are pretty slim. Second, you've both got full heads of hair—the girl with dreads, the boy with long hair past his shoulders and a full beard—so you didn't get that into the look beyond the pretty clothes. Third, what did you order for breakfast? Ham, bacon, sausage and eggs, so I guess the dietary restrictions didn't appeal to you either. This type of thing is just disrespectful as far as I'm concerned.

I have found that Americans in particular do not respect the places they visit and the people who live there. This often happens unintentionally because they do not bother to learn about the places they are going to. Almost every time I tell someone I'm American I find myself thrown to the bottom of a hole dug by the Americans that have come before me.

What interests you so much about Nepal and when did you know you wanted to continue studying there?

I have known from the moment I stood on a ledge 1,000 ft above Marshyangdi River, at about 14,000 ft altitude -- having blown my knee out on that very river 8,000 ft below 10 days before, having contracted dysentery from that same river and been mistreated with amebicides that it turned out I was allergic to and that caused me to lose about 25 pounds in 12 days and vomit water continuously, about to press myself flat against the rocks and gravel and pick my way over a washout on the ledge, scared to death that the 3 or 4 inches of sand wouldn't hold me and I'd fall into the river again, but probably die this time -- that I was meant to be in Nepal.

I guess in this way you could say that our relationship began in kind of a love-hate way. The country was clearly trying to kill me, but this made me determined to find a place in it, and I think now, almost 5 years later, that I have, as long as it doesn't implode before I settle in. You meet so many people who come here year after year -- this place and especially the people here have a way of getting inside you, so when you leave, you never really leave.

For more information about the situation in Nepal, go to www.nepalnews.com

Where's the Beef?

In your fries, apparently.



by vincent valdmanis

Bard students paused this week to reconsider the French fries on their trays after a sign was posted alerting them of the presence of beef tallow in them.

Beef tallow is hard fat derived from bovine body parts and is commonly used in processed foods for added texture and flavor.

Reaction to the news was mixed.

Some students expressed dismay that they had possibly eaten animal products while believing they were vegetarian. They were alarmed at what they viewed as the deceptive act of adding animal products to a presumably animal-free foodstuff. "It was shocking," said Katherine Bower. "It raises questions about what other things they're putting in the food."

Others were concerned about the political implications of the situation.

"My motivation as a vegetarian is out of trying not to support factory farming, and it concerns me more that I'd be tricked into doing that instead of fooled into eating a meat product," said Kelly Berry, a junior.

"It should cause people to question the consumption of French fries," said Matt Dineen, also a junior. "It's kind of a fast food culture here on campus."

But not everyone faults Kline.

"It's a symbol of apathy

among the Bard vegetarians to not take into consideration that all fries are fried in animal fat," said Dan Lichtblau. "The fact that they assumed they were fried in some kind of vegetable product is absolutely moronic."

"I was overjoyed by the news," said Eben Kaplan, head of the student group People Eating Tasty Animals, or PETA. "When I came to this school I was a vegetarian. But I got really sick of the attitudes of people who would be offended by other people eating meat. I started eating meat to offend them."

A few students saw the episode as an enhancement of their dining experience. Most applauded Kline for quick action on the signage.

"I have two thoughts on the subject. The first is that it makes eating at Kline a little more exciting wondering what other delicacies have hidden meat in them," said Matt Ornstein. "The other is Jim is so efficient it makes my nipples hard."

Controversy over animal products in French fries has been around before. A class-action lawsuit filed in Washington state last May charged McDonald's with misleading its customers by presenting its golden fries as vegetarian for more than 10 years. McDonald's later apologized for "confusion" about beef extract in its French fry recipe.



photographs by Jon Feinstein

Bump Set Spandex!

Finally, Men's Volleyball at Bard

by veta allan

Eben Kaplan, aka "Cheese" as the manager of the Varsity Women's Volleyball team, has become a part of yet another Bard extracurricular. On top of Annandale Ale, EMS, and others, Kaplan has been training and lobbying his heart out for the past three years to get a men's Varsity volleyball program up and running. Thanks to the NCAA's threatening of Bard's Division III status if they did not add another spring Varsity sport, he is now captain and setter of his very own Bard Men's Varsity Volleyball squad.

Truth is, as much as he dug the ladies short black spandex, he really wanted a pair of his own. No, don't worry; the boys don't really wear spandex. What they do do, however, is what their coach Bill Doyle likes to refer to as "Volleyball Camp Training" four days a week: a mix of brief skill demonstration to jog the boys' memories (three of which were captains

of their high school teams), followed by rapid skill practice, scrimmaging, and drills. Kaplan said he has wanted to play volleyball since he got to Bard but, "my body just hurts right now, all over." In other words, the drill is in full effect.

Doyle not only coaches the Bard women's team in the fall, but led the Rhinebeck girls' volleyball program to Sectional victories three years in a row, a 23-1 season this past year, and kept them undefeated on their home court for four years straight; he also runs the renowned Dutchess County APEX club volleyball program.

Though the Bard program is brand new, the boys demonstrated their desire to play and win in their first day of competition, despite being potential underdogs. A bit nervous in the first match against Polytechnic, they lost narrowly, only to get their act together in their second match versus SUNY Purchase and beat them on



their home turf in four games. When asked if he predicted that they would win, coach Doyle said that it was "hard to tell, but not really." On the other hand, left side hitter Brian Foote claimed that they knew they would beat Purchase because, "We are better looking, smarter, and more athletic." Foote speaks with several years of multi-sport experience, but only draws his volleyball wisdom from his freshman year of high school. It is always good to boost one's ego before entering into a competition.

Members of the team include Eben Kaplan, setter, Drew Schulze, middle hitter/blocker, who plays "to pick up chicks," Matt Aho, right side, Andriy Budnyy, middle hitter/

blocker, Jack Lewis, right side, Brian Foote, left side, and Jehan Moddie, left side, who warns, "If you play against us you won't even see it coming...wear a helmet!"

Their team spirit is quite high considering their odds as a first year team with only seven players, six of which must be on the court at all times, and their coach sees great potential due to their commitment to practice and their clearly developing skills. The biggest disappointment is that their one home game this past weekend was canceled and may or may not be rescheduled. For updates on their scheduling information you can contact the website at <http://athletics.bard.edu>.

Smoking

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understand the pressure about Bard's "smoky" image, but I just don't think it can be changed in one fell swoop."

First-year Suzanne Simburg also wants to maintain Bard's smoker-friendly environment, reasoning "I like to smoke both cigarettes and weed in addition to liking other people who smoke both cigarettes and weed."

Emily Sauter, though not a smoker herself, empathizes with the potential loss of smokers' rights and is wary of the repercussions of prohibiting this particular vice.

"Seventy percent of Bard smokes, they would be rebelling against the majority...The threat of secondhand smoke is hardly a legitimate concern for completely altering campus policy. There is already a privatized and segregated smoking section in Kline, and any other smoking on campus is done in the spacious outdoors or in private dormitory rooms. Change is completely unnecessary."

The final decision will ultimately be made by administration, as approved by the Board.

Prize-winning Author talks about his Craft

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I really think [literature] saved me. I had these big questions and no one was dealing with them and I'd open *The Plague* or *The Trial* or these horribly depressing books that still are my favorites. I think that was the match. I needed this outlet. I liked words and had access to it, and also that I was getting answers nowhere and I found these extremely heroic people who are not afraid to wrestle with these questions. I really think literature saved me. And that was it. I was done. Before that, I was just lazy for two hundred years.

Do you have a preference between the short story and the novel?

I love the short story form. I think it's just a spring-loaded, beautiful, intense form. I love short stories, it is very good for me to have nine different worlds to have worked in. It is nice to have that kind of control. To work in something of that size is a very good way to learn.

I really do love the short story and, as I'm writing the novel, I'm hungry for short stories. However, I did want to write a novel and hopefully will manage to write it or be dead. I've written longer pieces before. A 200 page version of *The Tumblers* story, a bad novella in college that I hopefully burned every copy of. The novel is a completely different form. I've spent years becoming ruthless about compac-

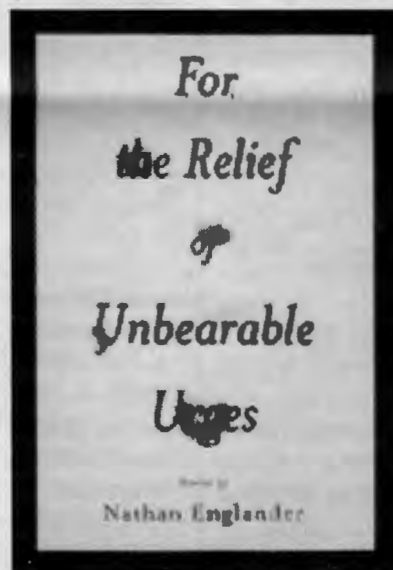
ting and stripping down. I think any sentence, any paragraph, any anything that can come out of a short story is like a house of cards or Jenga. If you can pull it out and the whole things doesn't fall down—it has to go.

Do you have any specific routines at Bard College?

I'm all about process. It borders on autism. I sit at the same table. However, this is not superstition. You build these rhythms and that's why you need to work a certain amount of hours a day. It's creating a continuum. I'm very ritualistic. The idea is that the process is very serious. That you maintain that, your time and place. The idea is about finding time everyday and composing and days ending.

It's like being a shopkeeper. If I have a candy store, maybe I've done big business or maybe no one has come in for three days. But you have done your work as an honest person if you were there, put the lights on and sat behind the counter. I think that's another thing with writing. Not everyday is a good day.

Where is your favorite place to work on campus—



any special nooks or crannies?

If I tell you, does that mean people will show up at my crannies? Had I been moving to Bard to stay, I think it would have taken me much longer to adjust. Being here for a semester

forces instantaneous adjustment. So I was really hunting spots.

Often I like to compose with people around. I need to be a very private isolated individual to write. But I'm a very social being.

I am alone so much because of my novel that I really prefer white noise.

I love a den of people. I work with earplugs. I like to work in public places. So I found the library and there are these two students working on their senior projects. I also like to be around people working hard. I'm going to find out who their professors are, they deserve an A.

Is it true that you've offered to assist/look over a student's writing?

I'm surely here to be accessible to the students. I don't think on a general basis I'm going to be doing line edits, but this is a very elegant prize.

This is the only thing I ever applied for because it's just so nice. This prize is very generous. The very structure of this prize is very loving and supportive of a young writer. I love to teach. I haven't taught in awhile, but I taught literature and writing before.

I really do believe that if I can offer any advice, not that I'm so wise, but I am surely accessible to the student body. I'm really here. I'm happy to meet with students at any time. We can set up meetings and I'll get a smoking jacket.

Do you have advice for novice Bardian writers dealing with writer's block?

I don't even believe in writer's block. I think it's one of the dumbest inventions ever. Somebody was late with a manuscript and made up writer's block. It's stupid. You can be terrified and sit in front of a blank pad for a long time. You can have good fiction block, but you can always fill a page. If you're freaking out, turn the page. Start writing something.

I don't understand why it has to be called writer's block. If you believe in the power of language and if you're working with language, why must you set up something that sounds so horrific and shocking. They should call it malignant writers block. They should add an element of cancer and make it fatal.

The world is so full of disease and death and horrible things, why must you give yourself writer's block?

This goes back to the shopkeeper. If you're sitting in front of a blank notebook and you do three hours a day, no phone calls, no cigarettes, you've done your job. So if for four weeks you're sitting in front of a blank page, that's not writer's block, that's process.

What beverage do you sip while you write/think/read?

I have a terrible addiction. I love Gogol. I love Dostoevsky. I love Kafka. The point is I'm not bringing up Kerouac because you can't have long hair and bring up Kerouac. Everyone talked about what drugs he was on when he wrote *On the Road*. I saw this great quote when I turned to his obituary saying "It was just coffee." He wanted to dispel this thing—what is the formula. Nonetheless, just coffee. I've been down to one a day plus iron.

What items do you carry at all times in that big ol' satchel of yours?

Ear plugs, pens, a pocket watch a friend gave me from Cairo.

I never change bags. When I was seventeen, a friend of mine came to Binghamton who was a bike messenger. I thought he was the coolest. I went to the Bowery and there was a factory. I bought that bag for \$45 dollars in 1987. I've been carrying it everyday since.

What is your favorite thing to order at DeKline?

They make a mean wrap.

The Struggle for Democracy

On activism, murder, and the upcoming elections in Zimbabwe

by miles tendi

The following is a letter from a student activist at University of Zimbabwe, who participated in Bard's International Human Rights Exchange this past summer in South Africa. If anyone is interested in joining the campaign for human rights in Zimbabwe, please contact Miles Tendi at <r9916728@students.uz.ac.zw>

There is only one immensely gripping day to go before the much vaunted Zimbabwean Presidential election. The run up to this election has taken the form of a loud plus gigantic tropical cyclone that has attracted the full attention of not only Zimbabweans at home and abroad, but the international community as well. From forbidden political utterances by the military, to an alleged Machiavellian political assassination plot, it has the ingredients of an Oscar-winning Hollywood political drama, and yet it is being filmed right here in Southern Africa. For the first time ever, authoritarian President Robert Mugabe's illustrious political career faces the once unimaginable possibility of being extinguished by his most potent political opponent ever—in the mould of Morgan Tsvangirai.

In recognition of his long drawn out 22 year love affair with this lady going by the name POWER, Mugabe has pulled out all the stops in order

to ensure victory come this weekend. In his own words: "We must move like a military machine"

Beyond any propagandist bias, the human rights record in Zimbabwe at present is appalling. The level of state-sponsored political violence in order to intimidate the electorate is unprecedented. The military top brass has already come out in full force to make it very clear to the electorate that it "will not salute" to a victor other than Mugabe. Allegations of rigging by the Mugabe administration are already rife as it has emerged that the security forces have already cast their votes, under close inspection by the military command, in favour of Mugabe. The location of polling stations countrywide is yet to be made public despite the minimal time remaining, and the vast majority of election observers are still to be accredited. The urban areas are Mr. Tsvangirai's stronghold while Mugabe boasts the rural vote—the number of polling stations in urban areas, compared to the countryside, has long since been drastically reduced for obvious reasons.

Part of the problem is that the media over here is mostly state controlled and so the truth about human rights hardly gets out. So too, the Mugabe administration does not take too kindly to the presence of foreign media agencies. For that

reason, Mugabe has quite a large chunk of the international community in the dark. About a year or two ago he came over to the US to get support from the African-American community for his controversial land reform programme. He scored a lot of points—it was something of a hit. But you see, all these people (including Africans on the continent plus other groups the world over that have suffered in the past under some form of oppression at the hands of the west—be it slavery or colonialism—that sympathise with him) have Mugabe made out to be a major Pan-Africanist because he is redressing the lopsided land distribution in this country. The whites own most of the land and yet they are an extreme minority, while the blacks eke out a wretched existence on barren and oversettled land. I am conscious of the need to correct this but the land invasions Mugabe chose to go about have cost the nation dearly in terms of money and lives.

Also, the land redistribution programme has been used by him as a political gimmick to win this election. Half these people do not even know the full story and even I have only scratched the surface. The real goings on here have got to get out so that the international community can make him smash this myth some have of him being a hero. I guess that is where you would have to



Vote. A poster urging Zimbabweans to register and vote.

come in. But we will have to wait to see if he will win the election so we know where to start.

I could go on, I want to go on, but I have made my point already: this election is far from free and fair. Unless the Zimbabwean electorate shuns apathy and overwhelmingly votes for Mr. Tsvangirai, a sham election result is set to ensue and chaos may prevail. How the security forces, awarded a 100% pay rise two months ago, will deal with this possible turmoil is unknown. The uncertainty and

level of tension is gripping. I put it to you that at times "one must still have chaos in oneself in order to give birth to a dancing star" -Nietzsche. What is certain is that the state of affairs in Zimbabwe in the next seven days is uncertain. What chance is there that a sublime and truly democratic dispensation will be born out of chaos, the dancing star?

Paper and Plastic Will Never Meet Again

B.E.R.D. preaches the gospel of p-recycling and reducing waste

by lydia willoughby

The new favorite of eco-friends and cheapskates alike, the Salvaged Office Supply room is entering its second semester. The room, started over a year and a half ago, and now run by BERD student employee Cynthia Sylvi, is loaded with FREE stuff that doesn't leave bagged in paper or plastic, wrapped in cellophane, or stuffed with Styrofoam peanuts, or jammed inside a cardboard box. This space is also part of a growing trend in re-thinking environmental activism: pre-cycling. Pre-cycling is a new term popping up from Eugene, Oregon to New Jersey, and at Bard—the Salvaged Office Supply room is a FREE way to cut down on the consumer's eco-impact.

Earth advocates are reconstructing that familiar 3-arrowed wheel. Recycling, though it does divert a huge amount of waste from landfill and incinerator fate, a 'huge

amount' is only a small percentage of the total waste produced in America. "It's time to think before we buy and reduce the amount of overall waste we produce in the first place," says Karyn Kaplan, of the recycling program at the University of Oregon, in Eugene, where pre-cycling is a huge part of raising consumer consciousness. Recycling does nothing if consumer consumption is not also cut down.

To escape the 'buy-then-throw-away wheel' we, as people who buy things, need to buy things with a minimal environmental impact. Pre-cycling is a method of source reduction. Source reduction has two major goals—decreasing the toxicity, and the quantity of waste. Pre-cycling has a higher priority than recycling or even reusing because it is preventative waste management; a chance to reduce the waste before it is even purchased. It also requires no processing

or transportation of materials, which recycling does.

From an industrial angle, pre-cycling mean be redesigning products. For the consumer, it entails buying in bulk, buying recycled, or buying products with refillable containers, non-toxic inks, or rechargeable batteries. Just say no to single-use products, and yes to buying products composed of pre- and post-consumer waste materials. A number of materials are available on the market from recycled contents: paper, plastic, rubber, steel, glass, construction materials, and automotive supplies. By being an eco-conscious consumer, one can support companies that support the recycling process.

35% of waste comes from packaging. 150 million tons of waste go to landfills each year. And what are we really buying that can't be purchased without all the paper and plastic padding? What if we lived in a world where you had to buy your paper and plastic bags at

the store?

Here are 10 basic things everyone can do to reduce their environmental impact:

- 1) Buy things you need and will use. Your money is a valuable resource.
- 2) Select products carefully. Is the product safe for you and your loved ones (including pets and plants)? Is there a non-toxic alternative? Is the product made of recycled/recyclable materials? Does it even support the recycling process?
- 3) Buy locally, think globally. The closer to home a product was made, the less packaging, hands, energy and fuel it took to get to you.
- 4) Buy products that have ZERO packaging. Buy in bulk if possible. Reducing packaging reduces landfill space, and toxic air and land pollution from incinerators. Remember, 35% of all waste is packaging.
- 5) Avoid plastic!!! Less than 1% of all plastic is recycled, and only types 1 and 2 plastic are recyclable, no

matter what that little 3-arrowed wheel says. Bring canvas bags. Don't take a bag if you can carry your purchase.

- 6) Avoid disposables. It's not just diapers anymore, Lunchables, air fresheners, you name it—all ubiquitous waste, all avoidable by the consumer.
- 7) Reuse things or donate them. It's tax deductible. It's easy. Junk can mean treasure.
- 8) Compost. Feed your garden and it will feed you. Feed your compost bucket, and the Community Gardens will feed you.
- 9) Take the time to give feedback. Talk to store managers about a product or packaging preference. Patronize businesses with low impact products and packaging. Write manufacturers. Be a guerilla consumer!
- 10) Teach the children you know. Kids are the consumers of the present and future.

Wildin out at the Red Room: Check your pistols at the Door

Bruised and battered, the Red Room keeps on strong

by matt dineen and kelly berry

Misunderstood by some, nonexistent to others, but cherished by many: there is a vibrant underground culture that is thriving right here on campus. Literally underground, as it is concentrated in the basement of the Old Gym, this culture is also underground in the sense that it operates autonomously from the Bard administration and the Office of Student Activities. Read: student-run.

The Old Gym Autonomous Zone is made up of the Student Action

Center, the Red Room, and the Root Cellar. The Student Action Center is where the Student Action Collective and its working groups hold their weekly meetings. It is currently being "made-over" by students who want it to be a cozier spot where people will want to hang out, in addition to being a space to organize against war and the exploitation of migrant labor. The walls of the Student Action Center are currently being stripped and painted and new furniture and posters will be added soon. To get involved with the Student Action Collective stop by the weekly meetings on Wednesdays at 7:00 pm or send an e-mail to B-SAC-subscribe@yahoo.com.

The Red Room is the only performance space on campus that is not connected to the Office of Student Activities or the Music Department. It is the

primary venue of the independent, student-band music scene. Anyone who wants to organize a show with their band or friend's band can reserve the space on the handmade calendar (courtesy of Tyler Drosdeck) in the Red Room. The Red Room also has a budget to bring touring bands that are committed to the "Do-It-Yourself" ethic and require only travel expenses.

Things have gone rather smoothly the past year as the scene has blossomed with a number of new student bands. Everyone involved has been generally respectful of the space and each other, creating a safe and vibrant atmosphere. Unfortunately there have been some recent shows in which some individuals have attempted to reverse this trend, introducing a destructive element to the scene. Rather than simply complaining about these actions, students who are committed to preserving the creativity and sense of community that makes the Red Room so special took the matter into their own hands last weekend. About 20 people spent an entire evening painting the walls over and cleaning up the space.

This is a message to people who perhaps do not understand what the Red Room is about: by destroying our space you are directly destroying our efforts and our community, so think again! There

are several shows scheduled for the rest of the semester and they should all be successful and fun. If you would like to become involved with the Red Room, send an e-mail to redroomrevolution-subscribe@yahoo.com or call 5086. There will be meetings as the semester goes on, to move toward collective decision making.

The Root Cellar is Bard's natural foods co-op, art gallery, and student-designed/maintained social space. New developments in the Root Cellar this semester include a computer set-up with Internet access, and the creation of the Radical Reading Room/Blanket Fort. The Root Cellar is also home to the Bard Zine Library, (long rumored to be the largest zine library on the east coast), a place for the kids to read independent publications or "zines", some political, some literary, some art-based. Subscriptions include *Bust*, *Maximum Rock N' Roll*, *The Nation*, *Z Magazine*, *ArtForum*, *Clamor*, *Punk Planet*, *Ms*, and *Bitch*. This semester the Root Cellar will be open Sunday through Friday, 1pm-1am, as well as Saturday evenings. New volunteers are still needed to fill open shifts. Root Cellar volunteers watch the space for 2 hours per week in exchange for a vote in the use of the space, the ability to order natural foods at bulk prices, and free coffee and tea while working.

If you want to fill a shift,



Red Room, pre-facelift.

organize this semester's art and photo openings, help plan the upcoming Root Cellar/Red Room-sponsored PUNK ROCK PROM, or contribute in any way to your student-run space, please stop by the Root Cellar meetings, every Monday at 7:30 pm, or call the Root Cellar at 4612.

It is clear that something special is happening here in the Old Gym Autonomous Zone. Many of us involved with this culture, however, tend to forget this, and those who are unaware or skeptical might even deny it. To this we offer the observations of an outsider who came into contact with Autonomous Zone last October. Jose Palafox, activist, graduate student at UC Berkeley, and columnist for *Maximum Rock N' Roll* wrote the

following in the January 2002 issue:

"As I thought about how cool it was for these kids to have a space to practice, to have shows, and info shop kinda thing, a food co-op, etc. I thought about how many other cities have had great things like here at Bard, but somehow, people ended up forgetting just how easy it is to take shit for granted, until one day, when they come and take our spaces away. Hopefully the kids here don't underestimate all the good things they have going on and nurture that into something even greater."

The way things are moving now is proof that "something even greater" truly is possible.

Put the "Big Questions" Aside. Hey. Just Live a Li'l.

by ken ober

I was speaking to one of my professors the other day about the Second Law of Thermodynamics. This law asserts that all systems in the universe tend toward a lowest possible energy state. If I am on Earth, and I am holding a stone, this stone is at a high-energy state. If I cease holding this stone, it will move toward a lower energy state (that is, it will be pulled toward the ground). If I accidentally tip over a cup of orange juice (in one of Kline's wonderful, brand new, non-shattering cups), the juice will remain neither in the cup, nor in the shape of the cup, as this energy state is higher than if it were to spill onto the floor.

Now, scientific laws are usually very interesting to me, because I tend to have a difficult time conceding to absolute truth. The American Heritage Dictionary defines a law as "a formulation describing a relation-

ship observed to be invariable between or among phenomena for all cases in which the specified conditions are met." That is, a scientific law is something that ain't ever gonna be wrong. Thus, all systems will always tend toward a lowest possible energy state. Considering this, something did not make sense to me.

Imagine a nice, warm, and moist blob of chemicals sunbathing out on the beach one day (for kicks, let's call these chemicals nucleotide bases).

Now imagine that these nucleotide bases, perhaps while relaxing on a sheet of clay, find themselves sticking together, forming a larger molecule (let's just call this RNA, for Really Neat Aggregates). Then, imagine this RNA starting to replicate itself. That, arguably, is life. And the situation would become much more complex from there on out.

Here is what did not make sense to me: would it not have been easier for all those chemicals to just mind their own business? It seemed to me that existence would require an awful lot more energy with all that replicating going on, than if it were just hanging around, enjoying the breeze. It seemed to me that life (and the creation of it) was a high-energy state. So I asked my professor about this severe violation of scientific law, and he just shrugged and smiled. To him, it appeared to be a matter of utmost blitheness that one of the most fundamental laws of science was contravened by the mere presence of life.

I asked him why we existed. He told me that some scientists devote their entire lives to figuring that out. He said that they devote their entire lives, and, because they weren't there, the very best they will ever be able to do is build a theory. The very best

they will ever be able to do is guess. So I then asked him, "Are we to just choose our favorite construct and go with it?" He told me that, as a scientist, he finds the truth that can be found. That is what he does. For many people, perhaps especially scientists, it is extraordinarily difficult to accept that there are certain realms of knowledge that humans do not have access to. I was stunned, but impressed, by his recognition of this.

And it is my opinion that he is correct on this matter. I am nineteen, and it is quite possible that I have lived one fifth of my life. I do not have enough time to try to prove what cannot be proven. I have to live.

We all choose what feels right for us, whether we find this in God(s), Science, Both, or Something Else. And we all collect our own little pieces of evidence as we go. One who believes in God can, just as one who does not believe

in God, find sufficient evidence for this theory in the beauty and order of the universe. But, perhaps it is this gathering of evidence in and of itself that should be given high regard, rather than the proving. Perhaps it is more important to see and enjoy life, then to know why it is here. I think the very best I can do, then, is choose what feels good to me, and use the rest of my time doing more important things, like walking on grass, or writing down my thoughts.

Bringing the Internet into Bard Classes

Tom Keenan leads student-formed course in new media

by onnesha roychoudhuri

It has been a long time in the making, but there will finally be a multi-disciplinary Internet class—New Media and Movement—offered next semester. This class is a response to the Bard population's demand for some sort of technological awareness. There are many disturbing and intriguing concepts that have emerged or reemerged since the coming

Many teachers have already agreed to come in and teach classes about how Internet and information technologies pertain to their field, and about what questions are arising. Topics will include censorship and accountability—how identity is constructed on-line, how culture is formed. There will be discussion on the relationship of man to the machine and the changing sense of time and space with the advent of the Internet. Questions as to how to construct community, how to communicate most effectively, and what the technology means for politics, nations, and democracy will also arise.

One of the main aspects of this class is its power of connectivity and hands-on experience. The class will be participating in these discussions concerning new media with another class exploring similar issues through the Internet. Group classes and on-line guests will give us a bona fide

"medium is the message" experience. Correspondence will also be occurring between Bard students and Serbian students. Through this connection, we hope to start a dialogue concerning the changing face of democracy and the role of the Internet in this rapidly transforming perception.

The ultimate goal of the class is to create a technologically aware and sensitive group of students discussing what this new technology enables us to do, and how it limits our ideal state. Focus will be put on how to rethink interfaces, and other forms of interaction between man and the machine.

Tom Keenan will head the class, giving it a strong foundation with his knowledge of new media and human rights. We hope to start up a connection with the Bard in Russia program starting next semester. It promises to be an amazing and multi-faceted experience in which students from every background are encouraged to participate. With any luck, this concept of interaction between different departments, and connectivity between students around the world, will plant itself firmly in the rhetoric of Bard, enabling classes such as this to take root more easily in the future.

The ultimate goal of the class is to create a technologically aware and sensitive group of students discussing what this new technology enables us to do, and how it limits our ideal state.

Focus will be put on how to rethink interfaces, and other forms of interaction between 'man and the machine.'

of such a widely embraced communication and information system—very few of which have been explored in a class environment at Bard. This class is an opportunity to bring together students and teachers from all different departments to pool their collective juices and perplexity as to where we are going with this new technology.

U Got Wapnerized!

Mid-semester update from the Student Judiciary Board

The Student Judiciary Board has heard three cases this academic year. All three concerned incidents that occurred in the Fall semester. Two cases were brought to the Board by administrative officers and one by a student. The proceedings of the Board did not include any hearings, as all parties acknowledged responsibility. Decisions on sanctions were presented to the offenders and enforced by the Dean of Students Office, as stated in the SJB guidelines in the Student Handbook.

The charges for the first case were vandalism and violation of community standards behavior (Chapter 5, Student Handbook). The case was brought to the Board by the Campus Center Office in October 2001. After discussion and majority vote, the Board sanctioned the student with ten hours of community service, a \$500 damage charge. The student was also asked to write an essay on civil disobedience on campus to be published in the Bard newspapers.

The second case was brought to the SJB by a student. The charge was theft of personal property. Since the theft occurred in a Bard residence hall, it fell under the jurisdiction of the Board. By majority vote, the student was sanctioned with monetary restitution and social warning (which means this case will be considered on the event of any future cases brought up against the same student). The fine has been paid, and a reference to the incident is on the student's record.

The most recent case was a violation of the College drug policy and housing contract. The case was brought to the Board by the Office of Residence Life. The Board recommended a number of disciplinary actions. The Board requested that the student be moved from his present residence hall to another one. The student will be required to complete thirty hours of community service, undergo a drug evaluation at the Counseling Services and submit a research paper to the SJB on drug laws for later publication in the Bard newspapers. The student is expected to complete the sanctions by the end of Spring 2002.

In each case, the Dean of Students and the Chair of the SJB corresponded with the respective parties regarding the decisions of the Board and the conditions of completing the sanctions.

One of the members of the SJB withdrew from his position this semester to study abroad and was replaced by alternate Toni Fortini. Saiful Islam was elected as the new alternate member at the last student forum of the Fall semester. The SJB is looking forward to serving the community this semester and encourages students, staff and faculty to contact the Board through Erin Cannan, Dean of Students or the Chair, Mehnaz Rabbani, by campus mail, email or phone.

Email: sjbnews@bard.edu
Phone: 6064 Ext.3
Dean of Students Office: Ext. 7454

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All articles in the Opinions section reflect the opinions of the author, not necessarily those of the Free Press staff. Responses to Opinions articles are welcome, and can be sent to freepress@bard.edu

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Theresa Desmond

Monday, March 11 7:00pm Olin 104

Multiculturalism in the Racial Polity: Problems on Racism, Ethnic Identity and Postcolonialism

E. San Juan, Jr. is Fellow of the Center for the Humanities, Wesleyan University, and Director of the Philippines Cultural Studies Center. He was recently chair of the Department of Comparative American Cultures, Washington University, and Professor of Ethnic Studies at Bowling Green State University, Ohio. He received the 1999 Centennial Award for Literature from the Philippines Cultural Center. His most recent books are *Beyond Postcolonial Theory*, *From Exile to Diaspora*, *After Postcolonialism*, and *Racism and Cultural Studies*.

Tuesday, March 12 7:00pm LC115

Filipina Domestic Workers in Global Diaspora

Delia D. Aguilar is a Professor of Women's Studies at the University of Connecticut. She was Associate Professor, Women's Studies/Comparative American Cultures Departments, Washington State University, Associate Professor of Women's Studies/Ethnic Studies and Assistant Chair of Ethnic Studies at Bowling Green State University, Ohio. Module Facilitator at Institute of Women's Studies, St. Scholastica's College, Manila, Philippines. Professorial lecturer at the Political Science Department, the University of the Philippines. Her books are *The Feminist Challenge: Initial Working Principles Toward Reconceptualizing the Feminist Movement in the Philippines*, *Filipino Housewives Speak*, and *Toward a Nationalist Feminism*. Co-sponsored by Asian American Student Organization, Asian Studies, Human Rights Project, Multi-Ethnic Studies, Office of Multicultural Affairs, Political Science, and Sociology.

Getting in with the Big Boys

China joins the W.T.O. to make more money

by stacy hunt

I've hesitated for a couple of weeks now since the WTO talk on February 7th to write this article because I can see implications of this being both a negative and a positive move on the part of China and the United States. It touches home for me because my father is a farmer. Since I was in middle school I have helped him raise our vineyards from baby vines to the 25 acres that we have today and a winery that is the newest addition since 2001.

We specialize in French and German varieties and work more on a quality than quantity type of market. This is why I do not see the big problem with China's entrance into the WTO for my father. The Chinese specialize mainly in other varieties of grapes that do not sell for the price that my family's grapes sell. They would have to grow approximately 400 acres of grapes to our 25, to make the same amount of profit.

Yet I do understand that it is often not the case that wineries and other types of fruit and vegetable businesses are working for quality not quantity. This is the day and age of quantity and mass production. I talked to my father about this issue and his major concern was the apple growers in our area, the Finger Lakes. They recently have been hit by hard times because it was a bad

year for growing apples last year due to rain shortages.

I know this is not just the case for the Finger Lakes, but also for areas out in the West, in Oregon and Washington for example. When there is a shortage of apples we turn to China, the problem is will the United States forget about its own growers? Will the price of apples increase due to these shortages? It may, but if the US is able to import apples from China then there is no need to increase prices and therefore US farmers will be in a losing game financially.

Where will the United States be winning financially? As many know the major export of the United States at this time and also what keeps us ahead of other nations is our technology. In particular with agriculture this technology is in spray materials. These spray materials are not cheap. I know for example that my own father, on his 25 acres, spends approximately 300 to 500 dollars every time he sprays, which is approximately on a 14-day cycle—starting in May and lasting until as close to harvest as safety and government regulations will allow.

While the US is profiting off of the sale of this chemical technology to China we will also be encouraging them to follow certain restrictions, and

restrictions with chemicals are desperately needed. You ask how do I know these are desperately needed? Living in the farm community in the Finger Lakes I have experienced other grape growers coming down with various types of cancer. Three in particular I know: one dying of skin cancer, one dying of leukemia, and one is in remission from lung cancer. My uncle, also a grape grower, had to have a patch of skin on his forehead removed due to cancer.

Back in the 1970's the restrictions on spraying were not great. Even my father would wear only a raincoat when he was spraying, and I still see people doing this today! Yet at the same time today people are much more knowledgeable of the dangers of these sprays. There is an exam and a license that farmers must get now in order to be able to spray at all. Farmers also are required to take a 5-week class that meets at nights once a week before this test to prepare them. To keep one's license the farmer has to attend conferences where they are told about new spray materials and the restrictions that come with them. I have been to grape growers' conventions several times before; besides being social gatherings they are highly informational.

By entering the WTO, China is also entering the realm



Eyes on the Prize: China's president Jiang Zemin

of United States spraying restrictions. I can imagine that the US would only be willing to sell these dangerous products to the Chinese if China agreed to educate their farmers. At the talk on the 7th I believe Gregory Veeck put it best when he said, "China is modern [spraying] technology at its worst". In particular Veeck emphasized how these sprays were overly used. If nothing else the United States will be making a huge profit off overuse of these products, but I would also hope that China would make use of some of the precautions that come with this modern technology—perhaps by bringing chemists who develop these mate-

rials to China to educate those in China, who will in turn educate Chinese farmers.

I am not sure whether China's entrance into the WTO is a good or bad thing. I can see both sides to the equation. I almost think this move was inevitable though, because how can a nation with such a large amount of agricultural production be blocked from this type of international organization? It all comes down to the simple fact that China is an international player whether the United States likes it or not.

Leftist Rhetoric Misinterprets Colombia

by jeremy low

What to write? I can't believe that I genuinely can't think of anything to write. What, no inflammatory invective? No magnificent insight to turn the entire Bard campus on its collective head? Well, not for now anyway.

But, luckily (for me) the Bard Observer came out yesterday or last week or som-

being hunted down by Uncle Sam and his South American cronies. I know you are probably shocked.

But let me ask you: how many times in the Observer article do the words "they kill and kidnap people for money" show up? Well, you guessed right: none. Oh well, aren't we leftists good at looking the

Oh well, aren't we leftists good at looking the other way when some "populist movement" starts to betray, oh let's say, the people.

ething like that. So I picked up a copy at the Kliner and began to read about the US-Colombia situation. Got to love those FARC-ical (sorry I couldn't resist) rebels making some noise in Colombia. Ah yes, fun fun with an autonomous zone. And now it seems that well-meaning guerilla fighters are

other way when some "populist movement" starts to betray, oh let's say, the people.

Let me again ask you: would a movement for the people 1) kill/attack/kidnap, on a regular basis; democratically elected politicians and representatives; and 2) protect drug traffickers that keep the popu-

lace poor and oppressed; or 3) promote so much instability as to preclude and sort of foreign investment which could help alleviate the poverty of the masses? This is not to say the guerrillas don't have a legitimate beef, I think they do, but it just really pisses me off when a group of power hungry South American rebels decides to call themselves "Marxists." How many gun-toting Colombian narco-traffickers do you think could tell me what "Dialectic" means?

Moving on. I think that the writer did a lot of research for the article and I am really quite fond of the table that she made (Figure 1 if you're keeping track). But unless I am mistaken and there are Andean guerrillas in British Columbia, you spelled Colombia wrong.

And how about that budget? Well, if I remember correctly it isn't set in stone yet. And chances are it probably won't be unless lawyers get unduly creative in the next few weeks. Why? Well, here's the problem. That budget is illegal if you use the Observer's reasoning. Congress (and you capitalize the name of the

legislative body of your country) passed this law that says, quite explicitly, that all aid to Colombia is to be used specifically for suppression of narco-trafficking and not for counter-insurgency campaigns. But wait, you remember those lovable FARC guerrillas? Now that they've started helping out with (and this includes protection of) the production of cocaine they can kiss that little legality goodbye. So bam! 98 million to the military. And if I remember correctly, we don't have the best human rights record in the world either.

And that's another thing. I had this friend in high school who kept telling me that oil was the be all and end all of US foreign policy. I concede that, in the Middle-East, yes, it is the overriding concern of American policy-makers. But Colombia? Come on, they at the most export 100 million barrels per year to the US and Europe. The US alone imports that much in a day, so get off it.

And before I forget, the article seems to insinuate that the US is just giving military aid to Colombia; how about the right side of the graph? Eco-

nomie and social aid amount to 164 million dollars. I don't know about you but that isn't just some drop in the bucket. So when someone starts criticizing the 493 million dollars we are giving to the Colombians, just remember the other 164 million we gave as social and economic aid.

And so ends my complaining. Well, not entirely. I particularly loath the last sentence of the article. Not that national mobilization is a bad thing, but the assertion that going to hear someone (who's probably never been there) speak on a jury-rigged platform about the demon that is US foreign aid is the most accurate information you can get is disingenuous at best. If you want the most accurate information, learn both sides and come up with your own opinion.

Just as a side note: the article below the one I've been ranting about is really good. You should read it.

*MUSIC BRIEFS



ANDREW W.K.



Andrew WK *I Get Wet* Mercury Records

It's been about a year coming but Andrew WK is starting to pop up everywhere--a video for his "Party Hard" single was featured all over NME.com and played maybe six or seven times on MTV. A native of Brooklyn, WK has so far enjoyed his biggest success in England and so *I Get Wet*, his first full-length, comes to us as an import (however easy it may be to find in the US).

In a much stronger way than the current new wave revival, WK's music is pure 80s nostalgia. No goths, no synths, of course, this is the 80s that could have only happened hand in hand with sports stadiums. The centerpiece for Andrew WK compositions is the electric guitar, and he makes no bones about it. The adjective 'anthemic' is pushed to its limits by an album in which no less than three titles are anchored by the word 'party' ("Party 'til you Puke," "Party Hard," and the opener, "It's Time to Party"). But when the prime objective is fun--and it is for WK, unambiguously--there's really no point in shying away from the fast tempo heavy riff, the break-down, the major chord, the power chord, and the 4/4 beat where every note is stressed with a kick drum and a piano. This is the type of music you may have scoffed at when you were 13 or so and, though into Nirvana, you found yourself in the dubious company of some classic/ hard rock radio station or another. It's back to ask for a second try, and you might call it metal but metal that couldn't have happened without David Lee Roth-era Van Halen. It is maximalist, but maximalist power rock, which means that it can't be much more than simple.

The appropriation of party metal is brilliant--any irony develops only through the sheer force of repetition. One song after another blasts at a ridiculously high energy,

Andrew WK belting out lyrics that combine the rebelliousness of Youth ("We will never listen to your rules/ we will never do what others do") with its righteousness ("Do what we like and we like what we do!") and a tear the roof off ethic ("When it's time to party we will always party hard party hard party hard party hard party hard...").

It is nice when others do work for you, and that's what Andrew WK does with *I Get Wet*. Mining a sound the specificities (if such a word can be applied when talking about this kind of music) of which have with time faded into obscurity, WK reassembles what he finds, with an eye towards creating the most entertaining product possible. All this so that you don't have to wade through the detritus of old record bins. Slow "power ballads" are cut out of the equation, as are any residual pretentious prog-wank inclinations. Similar in this way to my punch-packing writing style. Lesson learned? Jonah NW and Andrew WK ALWAYS DELIVER IT TO YOU RAW.

Whether you're laughing at or with Andrew WK is more than besides the point, finally, as long as you realize that something fun is going on. How long the fun will last, though, is another question. WK creates a parody that never lets up, that will keep rocking whether or not you've had your fill. Do you see the blood coming out of this man's nose on the album cover? Do you think he knows anything about doing a half-assed job?

I Get Wet is the reason there's a square on a cd player 'stop' button. The party will not stop before you do, no matter how square you may prove yourself to be. You will have to assert your inferiority, reach out, and stop it yourself. *by Jonah Weiner*



Teenage Fancub *Howdy* Thirsty Ear Recordings

Not exactly the overdriven necessity of Bandwagonesque

but still a nice little album. There isn't much fuzz and certainly less power to the pop but indeed there are some happy-simple honest-crafted tunes on *Howdy* (I can't help but say that this is a horrible title for ANY kind of album). "Dumb Dumb Dumb" and "If I never See you Again" have sweet melodies and warm, smooth harmonies; this is an album to drink back-porch lemonade to after some trying-tough tested time in your life. If you like the soundtrack to the Wes Anderson flicks (*Rushmore*, *The Royal T's*) the you'll enjoy the pure pop sound found on *Howdy*. Of course, you could always just put on a Kinks or Byrds album and be just as happy. *by Tosh Chiang*



Sarah Shannon *Self-titled* Casa Recording

Whoa, so the lead singer for Sub-Pop's late great Velocity Girl has gone Bacharach-styled lounge crooner act! She's got a jazzy LP with brass and the full band—all of it set up to showcase her smooth voice. Shannon's songs themselves are memorable and flowfull; the lyrics come out nicely. My favorite tune is the flighty fanciful "Call You On the Telephone" which has a great 60's pop feel to it. But really, this stuff really does remind me off Elvis Costello's work with Bacharach and sometimes even that of...Barbara Streisand (maybe it's the vintage sounds and delivery?). But really, Shannon has some great vocals and her songs are just as intricate as many of Burt's. The album even has a wholeness to it that makes me really want to like it a lot. But when all is said and done, I never find myself listening to this CD. I'll say that it's comforting to have, a nice pleasant option for the aurally inclined but unless you really dig this kind of music, well then, don't get excited about it. But for those of you who do, consider it the next time you stroll down those music-shop aisles. *TC*



The Mountain Goats *All Hail West Texas* Emperor Jones

Golden lo-fi nuggets of acoustic sugar-dipped pop and none of it comes off bad or annoyingly folksy in that way that any single guy and his acoustic guitar can. John Darnielle proves that great music can come in strange packages and can be recorded in odder ways too. This album was made entirely on malfunctioning mass-produced boomboxes, the most used being the Panasonic RX-FT5000; it gave it all an accentuated warmy-static charm that, well, is absolutely comforting. But that aside, the songs themselves are simply wonderful. Imagine an album that sounds something like Guided By Voices's acoustic work crossbred with Neutral Milk Hotel yet still original and charismatic. Darnielle's stories and lyrics are engaging and certainly amusing—full of quirk and the strange fancy here and there. Furthermore the guitar work sounds so simple yet so to the point and so nicely done that it's merely compelling to hear such simple ditties carry so much weight.

All Hail West Texas simply has something mysterious to it that makes it magical and lovable. The album is like a warm blanket that you've had and don't really know why you still have save for that you know you kinda need it; it keeps you safely toasty in mind and is great for sleepin'. Yes, this has easily become one of my favorite albums to crash to alongside Cat Power's *Moonpix* or even Bobby McFerrin's *Play with Chick Corea*. It's just great for sleeptime. Anyways, with songs like "the best ever death metal band in denton" you'll see why The Mountain Goats are so satisfying. *TC*

bard band focus:

Teenage Pissparty

Tosh Chiang

Angle-awkward thrash riffs with heavy-flowin' bass lines crunch and rock as the vocals shatter and the drums crash onward. Teenage Pissparty (formerly known as DJ Jonathan Feinstein) has been releasing their rampage of energetic hardcore grit rock in the Old Gym for about a year and it truly shows. The hot meld of fiery energy and Casiotone-supported melodies flash about a frenzied wall of sound that your mother would never call kosher; the screaming, the angst, the noise and fizzle all foment with jitter-jangly releases and melodic impulses of implody bliss. And for those who feel as though that hot-blooded impulse needs to be quenched even at 3am on a school night, well then, Teenage Pissparty has a self-titled CD for your listening enjoyment. Songs like "the Spoon" and "Bela" make full tuneful use of the synthesizer's heavy fuzz glory while "the makeout" and "-----" showcase guitarist Jon Feinstein's knack for unconventionally creative riffage. Bassist Tyler Drosdeck also heaves his heavy-hatched lines with that great punch-boomy sound that anchors the band while makin' 'em bigger. Frank Massarr still proves that he's one of the Red Room's most on-key and solid drummers. And yes, lastly, Tonio Hubilla is the band's frantic frashed vocalist/keyboardist. If you've seen a show then you know that the kid cranks himself into the music and becomes a small eclectic disaster of shimmer-shattered energy whilst pounding the keys and squelching the vocals.

So go see Teenage Pissparty, buy their damn CD and make it out with one of their damn catchy synth lines in your head. You'll be bound to say that you love the song that goes "da-duh-da-duh..." and more importantly, that they rocked yo' mojo into tasty pieces.

aaliyah in anne rice's

queenoftheDAMNED by tyler stevens



halle berry. billy bob thornton monster'sBALL

by kent johnson



The "Dirty South" has never looked so dirty before. With the most uncomfortable sex scenes since *Last Tango in Paris* and a plot that borders on the *Dancer in the Dark* threshold of human catastrophe, *Monster's Ball* is not an easy film to watch.

The film is centered around Billy Bob Thornton, a second generation prison guard, and Halle Berry, a struggling waitress. The two begin an unlikely romance after Berry's death-row husband is executed (by Billy Bob Thornton, no less) and Thornton's son kills himself. Despite facing every tragedy imaginable, the two somehow manage to keep each other sane.

The biggest hype about *Monster's Ball* is the Oscar-worthy acting. Billy Bob Thornton beautifully fulfills his typecast as a Southern bumpkin. But his performance isn't nearly as memorable as his deadpan portrayal of a barber-turned-murderer in the 2001 Coen Bros. film, *The Man Who Wasn't There*. Halle Berry has finally shown her potential as a serious actress, despite her sleazy role in her last film, *Swordfish*, in which she played a ditzy double agent with the IQ of a duck. Peter Boyle, who has made a career out of playing bitter old men, plays his most bitter old man yet, acting as Thornton's racist father.

However, the actors that really make *Monster's Ball* come alive are Heath Ledger, Sean "P. Diddy" Combs, and Mos Def. Heath Ledger plays Thornton's son, and his subdued performance in this film will continue to steer him away from being typecast as another hunky Aussie. Combs, who must have been ashamed of his horrible last single, "We Can't Be Stopped Now" put everything he had into this role (as Berry's husband). His performance is just as convincing as those of the other, formally trained actors in the film. Mos Def is only allowed three brief scenes, but he is incredible, and, arguably, he does the most 'realistic' job in the film.

Cinematographer Roberto Schaefer has brilliantly shot *Monster's Ball*. Each image is minimally composed with the scarcity of a Walker Evans photograph. His use of color is amazing, and he somehow gives subjects Thornton and Berry a strange, glossy skintone. He has turned the neon hue of gas stations, diners, and motel rooms into a beautiful aesthetic.

The film is unbearably miserable at times, and its conclusion is abrupt and unbelievable, to say the least. But *Monster's Ball* is successful, thanks to its incredible array of actors and its compelling visuals.

I intended to see and review the new Todd Solondz movie playing at Upstate Films, but somehow I found myself in *Queen of the Damned* at the Hudson Valley Mall. I can't say I've learned my lesson, since I am eagerly awaiting the release of *Resident Evil* later this month, but I will admit that *Queen of the Damned* has me seriously rethinking my contention that Hollywood B movies will always have some entertainment value.

This, sadly, is no pleasant surprise in the vein of *Wild Things* or *Jeepers Creepers*. It's more in the style of *Spawn: The Movie*, meaning that it's cynical, depressing, stupid, and terrible boring. I actually fell asleep, something that hasn't happened to me since I saw *Prince of Egypt* after having been up for 36 hours. Even then I only missed the

Passover sequence.

The story of *Queen of the Damned* concerns the Vampire Lestat's (played by the very ugly Stuart Townsend) rise to fame as a gothic pop star, and his ensuing battle with other, more discreet vampires. The Queen of the Damned (the literally and figuratively stiff Aaliyah) shows up and starts dispatching mortals and bloodsuckers alike. It all leads up to a lackluster final showdown, blah, blah, blah.

This all sounds, at the very least, entertaining: vampire pop stars, Aaliyah, final show-downs. But, like so many Hollywood productions lately, Queen is far too conservative. The classic fallbacks of the 80's Hollywood B movie are totally absent: no gore, no nudity, no hilarious cameos, no nothing. It's possible that, in the wake of September 11th and Aaliyah's

untimely death, the picture was hastily recut to appear more tasteful. Still, it constantly betrays itself as a piece of trash, minus the fun usually implicit in a really bad epic teen horror film. It's not even cheeky and referential, like every other



todd solondz's STORYtelling



by frank torino

Storytelling opens with actress Selma Blair climaxing on top of her cerebral-palsied lover, and from this dubious beginning one doesn't know where writer-director Todd Solondz is heading. Solondz, who burst onto the mid-90s independent film scene with *Welcome to the Dollhouse* and followed up with the brilliant 1999 film *Happiness*, has consistently provoked viewers and critics alike with his brutal, candid sense of dialogue and confrontational imagery. One would like to judge *Storytelling* on its own, but with the success of *Happiness* (arguably the best-written American film of the past decade) it is impossible not to place the two films side by side.

So how does *Storytelling* measure up? On the whole, it is a lazy film. *Storytelling* doesn't contain an ounce of the craft and sincerity that went into the making of *Happiness*. The film, at times, is entertaining, and it gets by because of Solondz's natural gift for screenwriting. But it is structurally weak, and thematically it falls to pieces.

The film is divided into two parts: "Fiction" and "Non Fiction". "Fiction" concerns a college workshop taught by Mr. Scott (Robert Wisdom), a Pulitzer prize winning black novelist, and his relationship with Vi (Selma Blair), a skanky, creative writing student. Vi is dating Marcus (Leo Fitzpatrick, "Telly" from Larry Clark's *Kids*), a boy suffering from cerebral-palsy, who is also in her class. Solondz is known for his controversial characters, but, despite his intellect, he falls into exploitation with his treatment of the mentally disabled. Like Lars Von Trier (whose film, *The Idiots*,

comments on hypocritical attitudes towards disabled people) he fails to make a worthwhile point and he sinks to third-rate humor.

In its half-hour span, "Fiction" also manages to produce a muddled comment on racism, and its connection to the judgement of art, but Solondz doesn't give it enough time or development to say anything valuable. One would think Solondz would devote more energy to such a subject, but in a 30 minute duration, this is not the case.

"Non Fiction" tells the story of Toby (Paul Giamatti), a struggling documentary filmmaker trying to infiltrate the psyche of the suburban high-school teenager. He discovers Scooby (Mark Webber), an aimless stoner, and his wealthy, dysfunctional family. "Non Fiction" shows Solondz, always self-conscious, exploring the perversity of his own controversial work. At the end of the film, Scooby realizes that he is just a joke to Toby's movie audience. In true Solondz self-reflection, Scooby bitterly mutters to Toby, "Your movie's a hit."

Essentially, *Storytelling* is too smart for its own good. With *Happiness*, Solondz gave even the most despicable characters a compassionate development. But in *Storytelling*, they are the subjects of a one-dimensional freak show. Solondz proved with his last two films that he could single-handedly save the American independent comedy. Hopefully, he'll prove his talent again.

Mekas is Packing his Bags for Bard

Famous filmmaker Jonas Mekas will screen his latest film and give talk on May third

by daniel lichtblau



The time has come for the Bard community to see that there is more to the Mekas family than krumdgening and breaking the hearts of moderating film students. This semester, avant-garde film old-timer and bona fide sibling of the extended Bard family, Jonas Mekas, will be coming to Bard to screen and speak about his newest film, *As I Was Moving Ahead Occasionally I Saw Brief Glimpses of Beauty*.

Since the 1950's, Mekas has perpetually toted his 16mm Bolex and faken names. He has devoted his life to objectively chronicling his life and experiences. *As I Was Moving Ahead Occasionally I Saw Brief*

Glimpses of Beauty, in true Mekas fashion, is a 288-minute portrait of his life and family over the past 30 years.

Throwing pretension to the wind, Jonas Mekas' attempts to visualize beauty simply for the sake of beauty. His films strive to capture moments of beauty that are impossible to recount through language or memory. Film professor and organizer of the event Peter Hutton says of Mekas' work, "When you look back, you start to appreciate the fact that somebody made a record of what happened."

Mekas' five hour screening on May 3 will be broken up into two parts, with a talk by Mekas to follow.

news analysis

Bush Under Fire

George W's penchant for secrecy

by peter d. bixler

The Bush administration is currently being attacked over accusations concerning surreptitious behavior within the executive branch. In November, President Bush signed an executive order that gives the president or any former president the right to withhold any presidential papers from the public or any other branch of government. Bush has actively taken advantage of this self-endowed privilege.

In recent months, the following measures have caused suspicion to surface: The identities of people who meet with Dick Cheney about energy policies have been withheld. The presidential papers of Ronald Reagan have been withheld. The identities of detained terrorism suspects have been withheld. Decade-old criminal investigations have been withheld. The secret plans for an emergency government have been withheld.

This blocked information is the concern of David Walker, head of the investigation wing of congress, the General Accounting Office GAO. Alongside the looming court battle of Walker vs. Cheney, the essential nature of the executive branch is brought into question. Ari Fleischer, President Bush's spokesman, provided the following statement concerning this matter: "The constitution was of course drafted in total secrecy," which displays that the Founding Fathers clearly determined that "to make careful decisions" was "to do so quietly." The counter argument is presented by Anders Gyllenhaal, the chairmen of the Freedom of Information Committee of the American Society of Newspaper Editors, who states: "If you control information, you control a large part of the debate." These arguments are answers to the broad and sweeping question: To what extent is executive privilege inconsistent with the doctrine of separation of powers.

The particular components that serve to give this overall sense of suspicion its form are quite insignificant. Gyllenhaal claims that information controls the debate. If the fairness of the debate depends on knowledge of such things as the Reagan presidential records, the debate doesn't seem to be worthy of the efforts of our divine branches of government.

HEOP continued

...continued from page 1

cationally and financially disadvantaged students at private New York colleges and universities, suffered the most severe funding cuts since 1995 this year, forcing the program to operate on a bare-bones budget of 16.4 million dollars at a state level. These cuts have made it difficult for Bard to reach its goal of admitting 14 HEOP students per year.

The amount of money allocated to state educational programs had been steadily increasing since 1995, but as a result of economic complications related to the terrorist attacks on September 11th, these programs took severe cuts—from 2001's 22 million dollar budget to 16.4 million this year. These cuts will make it harder for economically disadvantaged students to attend private institutions.

"HEOP cannot provide the academic and financial support its students need on 16 million dollars. We've had to be very creative with our funds," Stokas explained. At Bard, HEOP provides many services to its students besides just scholarships and tutoring. HEOP helps students pay for materials for their senior projects, which are especially expensive in the arts. HEOP also helps students pay for their textbooks, which in the sciences can run \$100 per textbook.

Most funds allocated by the state for the improvement of education go to elementary and secondary schools, leaving very little for higher education programs like HEOP. "Higher education picks up the deficit of poor secondary schools," said Stokas.

HEOP brings more than just racial diversity to Bard because it is an economically-based program, Stokas explained. HEOP students come from different ethnic different backgrounds and bring economic and class diversity to Bard. "The life-styles that these students have led are varied. Life-experience provides a great resource to draw upon, which contributes to the community here at Bard," said Stokas. Other schools, which do not have programs like HEOP, recruit students of color who tend to come from upper-middle class backgrounds, creating an environment with little class diversity.

"Governor Pataki's proposal for restructuring higher education funding would affect not only HEOP students, but all students that receive Tuition Assistance Program funds. Of course, HEOP students would be the ones hurt the most, because quite frankly we are economically poor," said Marcos Tejeda, Bard HEOP student, who went to Albany to lobby.

collective consciousness



chelsea beck

A P-Funk Experience in the Multi-Purpose Room

It just doesn't feel right to get down in the MPR

by colin harte

P-Funk is coming. P-funk is coming. Has Bard changed that much? A name brand music figure coming here? How's that possible? The most security ever to monitor a Bard event. Entertainment Committee was running things tight-fisted and tight-assed. Arm bracelets, stolen from Northern Dutchess hospital, were being given to students whose names were on a long, privileged list. What the hell happened to Bard? George Clinton is definitely an entertainer, but Bard was functioning like an occupied country. Things must have changed. The sensational wedding band, named Mother Ming, got the party started. Packed into the Multipurpose Room in the Campus Center were about three hundred students waiting for the Mother ship.

Well, the Mother ship never landed—probably because of the fire alarms—and instead a band called Drugs plopped out onto stage. They made some amusing comments about "this being your brain on DRUGS" which flew right over the students' heads, since no one at Bard does drugs.

After an hour of Drugs and their watered-down sound the Master of Funk himself came out. The man was a marvel. Having smoked more crack than David Crosby and the rest of Parliament Funkadelic combined, he stills knows how to entertain a crowd. He feeds off them. He used every inch of his rotund, sweat-shirted figure to wow the crowd. A funky, psychedelic, hooded Santa Claus had landed at Bard due to a cancelled gig in Woodstock. The students roared and cheered, while Allen Josey chuckled with fear. Clinton grooved, hollered and took a puff from his pipe, making sure to save some energy for the gig at Vassar later that night. With a sniff, a wink and maybe a drink, Clinton left the stage after only 45 minutes. Outrage; "we want the funk," "fuck Vassar," etc...

For those 45 minutes everyone in the MPR was having a good time. Jumping, yelling, screaming (it was a little too tight for dancing), the crowd loved every second of Clinton's funky ways. And before a quick exit stage left, Clinton managed to spout a few

points worthy of note.

First of all, Clinton was guest starring on a tour called the 420 tour. Members of P-Funk were involved in this mild project, but a central core was missing. Clinton proved to be a gentle, humorous character off stage. Besides pointing out that his band was more racially diversified than ever and that Utah was a surprisingly funky gig, there was little that the man could say that his performances hadn't said. His body of work speaks for him. Or, in the words of Adolphus Mekas, "why analyze art? You can't analyze 'art.' You see, hear it and forget it."

Those who witnessed the funkadelic spectacle were thrilled and horrified all at the same time. Despite the controversy surrounding the show—ranging from the \$5,000 price tag to the 45 minute Clinton set to the uptight security measures—Bard was left reeling, dazzled, funk up and ready for a good ole, keg beer, cheap, dirty, loud, Old Gym rock show.

"Shit, goddamn, get off your ass and jam."

On Funk...

by akie bermiss

It was perhaps a somewhat balmy day and not just a bit abnormally begun. I woke up and went to the gym, and let me tell you, I never do that. Still, there's no accounting for randomness. By 1pm, all of Mother Ming was in the MPR, like hostages in the gutted innards of a spaceship. Before George Clinton arrived and gassed the whole sphere with his absolute groovevitude, MPR was just a warehouse of strategically placed speakers, monitors, and black cables. Jake was spinning on the turntables and we were all dancing the high, uncoordinated dance of excitement. It was the amplification of a feeling we'd been carrying with us for four days. Even when the bus arrived, and the sound checks were through, when we'd taken the stage—it was hard to believe that we were going to open for the grand sage of funk.

And who doubted him? Who had in their deepest, grooviest, most syncopated of hearts the slightest question of his ability to move the crowd? To remain funky? In the sleepless night from Friday to Saturday, I may have had my reservations. But funk is in the blood, you see. Its in the heart—the rhythm starts there.

Mother Ming took the stage and we played hard. We were

like children in a candy store. I can't for the life of me remember most of what I did on stage (not that that isn't how it usually is...), but I remember seeing member of George's band rocking their heads to our music. And damn it, if that isn't just hot shizzle nizzle. So we flipped out, said our goodbye's, and prepared to be number one fans.

The Drugs hopped on the set with a mind-dripping narcotic slant and took us out to the back yard to puff clouds and exhale constellations. Some heads didn't get it. They grooved deep though...but no sign of George made us antsy...

... then the sun set.

420 Funk Mob scaled the stage finally and we all screwed up our heads to get a glimpse of George and couldn't find him. They played a little bit and we wondered what the hell was going on. More than a few people came up to me asking where the Man was, and when I looked in the eyes of the crowd, I saw doubters and disbelievers. At last, George ascended to the platform and there was an explosion. The temperature rocketed up 12 degrees in an instant, outside the stars began to twinkle arhythmically, the funk became funkier, and I—nerdy ming—began to dance.

I was in the tumult when the show began its final climactic passion throes. I was in the very thick of the funk, 400+ bodies heaving together (in a severely lewd cheek-to-cheek fashion) trying to hear the sermon. Oh yes, the lights flashed, George shook his head and bade us sing—and we sang. George commanded us to shout—and we shouted. George said jump—and we jumped. We jumped in our hot, sweaty bacchanal like the floor was falling. If you were in the funky orgy with us, then you catch my drift. It was like home, amidst the beat and the melody, the light and the obscurity, the profanity and the pristine joy. Ah yes, it was the magic of the one and only Dr. Funk-enstein.

And when he left, we screamed till our throats tasted of blood and bile. And it was good. What makes it most special, though, was that we were there for it. When George Clinton came out and made himself like Clausewitz or Isocrates or Aristotle, and gave us his treatise: On Funk. A simple thesis statement, and I was digging it from the first down beat all the way home. This sage told us, that night, at Bard College, between glory and legacy, from his vast wisdom that funk is love.

Put that in your pipe and smoke it. Funk is love.



Where's the Rock in P-funk?

by chuck comenos

The living legend George Clinton (of Parliament Funkadelic fame) came to Bard College and played a forty five-minute show. While certainly George Clinton is an easily recognizable name and Parliament Funkadelic (which this band was not) was in their heyday responsible for a lot of booty shock, I can't help but feel a little frustrated by the entertainment committee's decision.

Call me out of step with the times, but a concert, which costs one-third of the entertainment committee's roughly twelve thousand dollar budget, meets dead in the middle of the afternoon (before I was even awake), doesn't admit non-Bard students (as to make some of that whoppin' sum back), makes the students that do want to attend stand in some

weird pre-show Kline line (a wack move unknown to even the preceding entertainment committee), and that lasts not even one hour seems like a faux-pas.

While I certainly would like to avoid pointing fingers in this matter, I can't help but turn to the entertainment committee on this one. What exactly went on here? I understand that the person calling the shots this year is possibly unfamiliar with the workings of serious rock'n'roll shows. That's fine. Bard College prides itself as a place to think. I would just appreciate if in the future the entertainment committee thought just a bit more about both where they spent my money, and what exactly I might find entertaining.