

the
BARD
 OBSERVER

VOLUME 17, ISSUE 1. SEPTEMBER 21, 2006

Founded 1934
 Broken Hearted Since 2000

**\$50,000 Smog Renovation Postponed
 Construction Date Still Unconfirmed**

BY MICHAEL BROWN

More than a few eyebrows were raised when students arrived back at school to find that their largest investment from last year's mysterious \$100,000 convocation fund surplus had yet to see ground broken. The renovation of Smog was a project that was supposed to be ready for opening weekend. With money that was allocated after the student forum last spring, the proposal called for \$50,000 to expand the space so larger shows could be held in effort to redefine the image of the building as a more comfortable student space, accepting of a greater part of the student body.

A May 4th meeting between the TLS Student in charge of Smog, Brandon Rosenbluth, as well as TLS Director Paul Marienthal, Chair of the Planning Committee Karen Soskin, and a representative from Buildings & Grounds, Dan DeCiutiis discussed the budget and concluded that the project would be completed in two weeks over the summer and would not require student help with construction.

The project was instead deprioritized in favor of other buildings under construction such as New Robbins and the new Daycare Center in particular. Marienthal explained the choice to delay the Smog project in favor of the daycare facility: "There have been many children born in the past year—not just faculty's, but staff's as well." He indicated that there had been growing needs that were not being met, "The College has to take care of the [childcare] needs of its employees. That's just responsible."

Much of the confusion between students and B&G revolved around the need for a building permit from the town of Red Hook, something that, as Marienthal

that we took some liberties with the permit," a decision made by the head of B&G, John Gall—whose office could not be reached for comment.

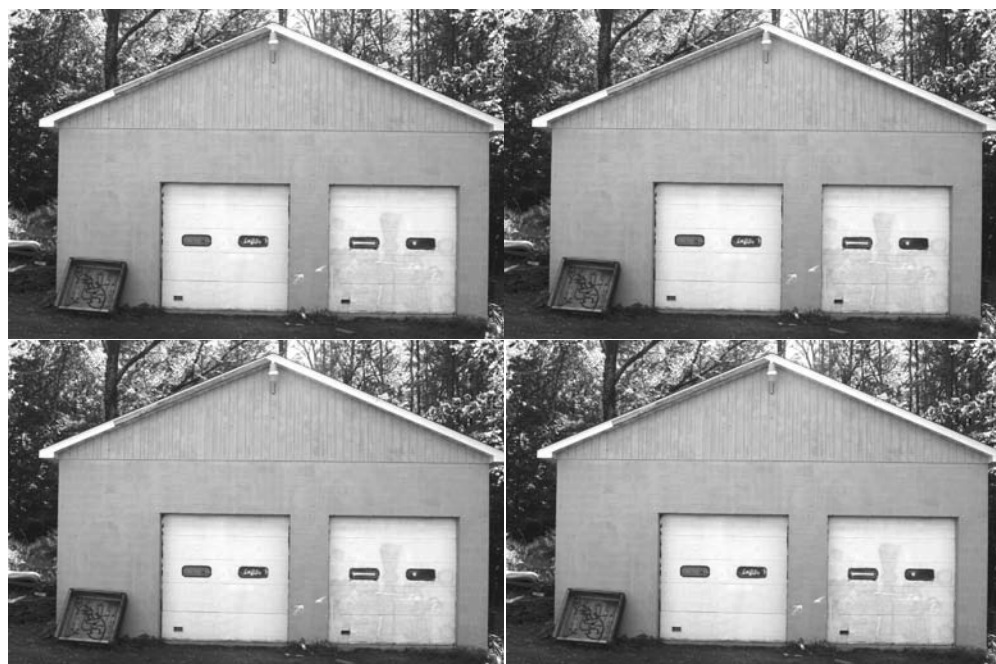
In the weeks since school started Karen Soskin and Brandon Rosenbluth have persisted in their attempts to get a confirmed date to begin construction from John Gall with the knowledge that the money designated to Smog is set to expire now that the summer has passed. If students voice a lack of confidence in the future of the project and put it to a vote, the funds could be allocated elsewhere. Rosenbluth voiced his concern over this prospect, "Smog's our only student space. It's the only place we have our own domain, to do what we want to a certain extent."

The proposal for the renovation calls for demolition of the western wall of Smog so additional garage doors can be installed, a paved patio to extend west parallel to the driveway, as well as a permanent roof to cover the patio. The hope is that large shows (last year's Wolf Parade show comes to mind, or the Lightning Bolt show the year before) can be held with the old dimensions of Smog serving as a stage while people stand outside. The driveway will not be paved, because the heavy trucks that have to go to and from the junkyard would crack the edges so long as the pavement did not reach all the way to Annandale Road—a plan that would be prohibitively expensive—not to mention the fact that "Botstein likes the look of an unpaved road," as Rosenbluth commented. The paved patio would help reduce the amount of dust

that is tracked in and kicked up, a health concern in the past, plus folks wouldn't have to stand in the mud.

Normal scheduling is going ahead as planned, despite the delay of the renovation. SmogFest, a festival comprising various clubs on campus including the BBQ Club and Squeegee Collective, a club that makes t-shirts, will start the weekend and give

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



indicated, would not be done until the daycare facility had been completed and approved. In the meantime, Marienthal explained that the opportunity to build the daycare center "Came up so fast

**Budget Forum
 Coverage
 Democracy, Son.**

BY SARAH MARTINO

Oh what could have been! The hostile/friendly amendment portion of this semester's Budget Forum sped by in what must be an unprecedented twenty minutes, with only six hostile amendments and three friendly ones. However, although the forum ended alarmingly early



at 9:30, the first hour and a half was spent on voting in freshmen alternates for the Planning Committee, Student Life Committee, and Student Judiciary Board, and of course it wouldn't be Budget Forum without a drawn-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

I want you inside me.

West Point Exchange-3
 Budget Forum Coverage-4
 No More Deaths-6
 Silly Silly Class President-7
 CCS Film Killer Shrimps-11

A Year After Katrina, Bard Students Continue Relief Effort

BY GRACE DWYER

Volunteer work in New Orleans continued over the summer as thirty Bard students expanded on last January's relief efforts. Mornings were spent at McDonogh #35 High School, one of only 54 public schools scheduled to open for the fall semester. Pre-Katrina public schools totaled 147. McDonogh school was the site of summer remedial classes for students whose standardized test scores did not meet graduation requirements. As well as flood damage to the building and shortages of basic

Bard students served as both teachers' aides in overcrowded classrooms and, in instances where there was no teacher at all, taught their own classes

supplies such as desks and textbooks, the school suffered from severe overcrowding and missing staff. The funding that would help to alleviate these problems is allocated based on performance on the same standardized tests students were being asked to study for – in some cases without desks, books, or a teacher.

Though for the most part they lacked any form of teaching certification or even a background in pedagogy, Bard students served as both teachers' aides in overcrowded classrooms and, in instances where there was no teacher at all, taught their own classes. They handled issues from writing their own syllabi to learning to work under instructors whose teaching philosophy was sometimes offsetting.

Afternoons were devoted to a project in a neighborhood called Broadmoor. In order to obtain urban planning money, each neighborhood in New Orleans must formulate a comprehensive development plan. Unfortunately, many plans fell through due to lack of cohesion and funding. In order to increase the amount of reliable data city planners had to work with, Bard students

Often reconstructed houses were demolished before they could be re-inhabited. Bard students this time around were looking for a more "systematic" and "long-lasting" way of helping.

created a cartographic modeling tool called a geographic information system, or GIS, map. The synthesis of a GIS map involves many different layers of data. The map students worked on contained photographs of every home in the neighborhood and layers describing damage levels, repopulation levels, and other relevant socioeconomic information. These maps could then overlay data and provide planners with a better understanding of the real needs of the neighborhood.

The strategy this summer was different from January's. Many of the projects last winter involved rebuilding houses and "gutting" mold-infested buildings so as to make them once again livable. Though necessary work, students found the permanent effects of building houses to be unpredictable. While local businesses, schools, and community centers remained closed there was little motivation for former residents to move back to vacated and damaged neighborhoods. According to the Brookings

many of the public schools currently re-opened are facing some of the same problems – severe flood damage, understaffing, and supply shortages.

Institution, a Washington think-tank responsible for a report on post-Katrina New Orleans, only 40% of pre-Katrina customers were receiving gas and only 61% electricity. Often reconstructed houses were demolished before they could be re-inhabited. Bard students this time

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

SMOG, CONTINUED FROM PG. 1

way to a weekend full of music—upwards of twenty bands are slated to play. The festival, originally planned to inaugurate the new look of Smog, aims to begin the popularizing process of the Smog space as a place for everyone. Rosenbluth addressed concerns about Smog's reputation of noise rock and elitism, "The goal of my TLS project is to reframe it not as a social club, but rather as a student space." He added, "If we had a newer, nicer space we could have different kinds of events, with different kinds of people."

As students involved in the project continue to try to get a confirmed date on the construction, they are also making efforts not to overstep their bounds. Central Committee member Oliver Traldi commented, "I think it's important to maintain a very good working relationship with B&G. Our balancing act is to put pressure on them for planning committee money that was allocated by the students without alienating them." Brandon Rosenbluth was aware of how busy B&G was this summer, commenting, "I understand why Smog has taken a backseat."



Photo by Fernando Garcia

Paul Marienthal indicated that John Gall "would be happy to attend" the Oct. 4 student forum to be held to discuss the state of the project.

Rosenbluth, addressing concerns that some administrators have had about the relative importance of Smog to other projects such as New Robbins or the Daycare facility, said, "This is not about entitlement. This is about students voting to put their own money to what they believe is the most important issue on campus—student space."

A Message From The Government

BY OLIVER TRALDI

Have you heard of the College Grievance Committee?

Last year I had a friend who had trouble with a professor who was, he said, grading him unfairly. I heard a story about a friend of a friend who felt she had been mistreated by a dean. And, like most here, I know several people who were suspended or expelled from Bard near the end of fall semester for drug offenses.

All of these people could have made an appeal to the Grievance Committee regarding the way their professors or administrators made decisions or conducted themselves. In doing so, they would have been able to request a hearing at a group whose membership consists not only of Bard faculty and staff but of student representatives as well.

Though it has no direct power, the Grievance Committee reports its decisions directly to President Botstein. It is responsible for hearing appeals resulting from suspensions and expulsions imposed by most

administrators and the Student Judiciary Board; for hearing complaints by students against teachers, including those regarding moderation and grade decisions and failure by

Most club heads, for example, are unaware that a two-thirds majority at Budget Forum can require the Planning Committee to redraft the semester's budget entirely.

professors to meet contractual obligations or abide by the Joint Statement on Rights and Freedoms of Students; and for hearing complaints by students against administrators based on professional conduct.

I have no idea how often the committee meets, as I first heard about it through reading the Student Body Constitution this past summer. It's just one example of the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

Common Ground Summer Developments

BY BRENDA ROWE

A year after Hurricane Katrina, Common Ground Relief, a non-profit organization that has hosted over 100 Bard students since Hurricane Katrina, continues its city-wide effort involving out-of-town volunteers and returning residents. Built on its motto of "solidarity not charity" Common Ground is evolving its efforts to suit the ongoing needs of the city and its residents.

The organization's initial focus was ensuring that homes in the Ninth Ward were not bulldozed. It hoped to stall efforts by private investment groups who wanted to gentrify the area and offered little compensation and few options to residents who had been driven out by the hurricane. Since September 2005, Common Ground has gutted and cleaned 700 homes in the Upper and Lower Ninth Ward in addition to several schools and churches. Originally buildings received a chlorine bleach soak-down to eliminate mold spores that are released in the gutting process. Recently however, Common Ground switched to Efficient Microbes, a non-toxic cleaner that not only eradicates mold but also keeps down fly populations and facilitates healthy soil.

Aware that returning residents need more than

mold-free homes, Common Grounds has turned some of its attention towards social development. It received the rights to the Woodlands, an affordable housing unit in the Algiers. The rent has been reduced and the "Kids and Community Project" started programs out of the Woodlands this past summer to distribute school supplies to students.

Common Ground runs four distributions centers in the city, providing residents with clothing, food and other necessities, and is responsible for the city's first civilian run health clinic established since the disaster. Means of communication have been offered to residents as well. The media center provides free access to fax machines, internet, and local phone calls, and a free legal clinic is run every Saturday.

Homes were not the only thing ravaged by the Hurricane Katrina aftermath. Common Grounds took soil samples from around the city and analyzed them for toxins, detoxifying dangerous areas with bioremediation techniques. Damaged and dangerous trees were trimmed by arborists working with the organization. These efforts sped the natural recovering process of New Orleans.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3



Security Still Slighted in Contract Talks

BY KEVIN POWELL

An ongoing dispute between Ludlow and the security department is set to conclude with a three-percent wage increase for the staff—with security losing out by a percent mark.

“Basically what we know is that Ludlow won’t give us a four-percent raise,” said Isidora Skular of Safety and Security. “We’ve never really asked for much and we’ve been very polite in negotiations.”

Persistent negotiations throughout last year over the staff’s contract, at the forefront of which have been Jim Geskie of Security and Associate Dean Jim Brudvig, have been relatively fruitless. “It’s an issue of principle,” remarked Brudvig, in reference to a three-percent wage increase approved for Buildings and Grounds last year. “We have traditionally linked whatever increases Security gets to whatever B&G gets. That’s how contracts work.”

“Basically what we know is that Ludlow won’t give us a four-percent raise,” said Isidora Skular of Safety and Security. “We’ve never really asked for much and we’ve been very polite in negotiations.”

Though this is not to imply that Security and B&G are one and the same. Security has maintained a separate union from Buildings and Grounds, but has nonetheless experienced repeated little success throughout the negotiations in separating their contracts from those of B&G.

“The staff has its own union,” said Ken Cooper, Director of Safety and Security—though he added, “Jim is eminently intelligent and fair about most issues on campus.”

The decision, however, is less popular beneath his office. “Certainly Security has not neglected their own work,” maintained officer Larry Benson. Chief among the reasons for the request has been the price of transportation

Repeated calls from Ludlow for Security to sign the new contract have gone unheeded, and so far no increase has been granted.

to and from the college. “I just spent forty dollars tonight in my truck,” he added. “We’re only trying to make a living here.”

Repeated calls from Ludlow for Security to sign the new contract have gone unheeded, and so far no increase has been granted. “We’re just going to implement the increase even if the contract is not agreed upon,” said Brudvig. The decision is expected to go into effect next week, and Brudvig comments that if Security agrees to the contract by then, they will be granted a retroactive three percent increase for the past year. Refusal to sign the contract, however, will deny Security this bonus.

“I’ll defend my staff as far as their pay goes,” assured Cooper, “but on the other hand, the work the men at B&G do is just unbelievable.”

DWYER, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

around were looking for a more “systematic” and “long-lasting” way of helping.

As well as ongoing clean up, the summer’s work focused on helping restructure communities and providing displaced residents with a reason to come back. The principal of McDonogh #35 High School recently sent a letter expressing his appreciation to those involved in the summer work. Test scores of the students involved in the remedial classes doubled even their pre-Katrina averages. Bard students helped to keep this high school open. However, many of the public schools currently re-opened are facing some of the same problems – severe flood damage, understaffing, and supply shortages. If these issues weren’t crippling enough, schools must also maintain their test scores to keep funding.

To some, efforts such as creating planning tools and helping to teach summer school may seem futile in the face of persisting unemployment and homelessness. The Bard students who volunteered were certainly not qualified planning consultants or teachers. They were simply the only ones there to do the job. Thanks to their efforts a struggling public school will remain open for another year and the government has a better idea of how to help plan a neighborhood in the interest of its people. As Stephen Tremaine, one of the main proponents of the Bard New Orleans projects, said, “We didn’t save the neighborhood. What we did wasn’t miraculous – the students [just] worked very hard. No one else was going to do it.”

A possible trip to New Orleans for next January is currently in the planning stages. Potential projects include helping to charter an elementary school.

ROWE, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

A “Student Solidarity Network” was created for the hundreds of schools that organized donations and volunteers. The Student network currently bands 93 schools, with an expected 140 more to join, in the largest school network of its kind.

It took only a year for Common Ground to become an effective, organized rebuilding effort. The ability of the program has depended in large part on the seasonal rush of short term student volunteers who are now required to stay a minimum of two weeks. The organization went from three people to nationally-known in less than a year, as it works to prove that New Orleans and the Ninth Ward can thrive again.

SEND THE LETTERS.

AND THE CORRECTIONS.

AND THE COMMENTS.

OBSERVER@BARD.EDU

BUDDHIST MEDITATION GROUP

Basement of Village A, Sacred Space

Mondays 730-845

Thursdays 530-645

Beginners show up 15 minutes early
gaffron@bard.edu

Bard Expands Exchange Program With West Point

BY RACHEL MEADE

Here at Bard College, communal nakedness is what happens when the Moderator, the Bard Democrats, and the Queer-Straight Alliance throw a party. At West Point Military Academy, it’s what happens every morning when the cadets line up to shower. This is but one illustration of the many differences between Bard and West Point, two schools which seem to have next to nothing in common.

Bard houses students that are primarily liberal, highly involved in the arts, and outspokenly unique. West Point cadets, on the other hand, are highly disciplined, primarily conservative, and attending school in preparation for a future military career. But with the inception of the Academy Bard Exchange (ABE), a program in which Bard and West Point students and professors can interact through



and faculty from both schools are realizing how much they really have in common, and how much they can learn from their differences.

“Each of us have something to get out of it,” said

Point cadets visit Bard. The days feature 2-hour seminars on an assigned reading, followed by a campus tour, and social interaction among students.

While West Point cadets are “exuberantly happy” at being released from their tight schedules and allowed some time to socialize, Bard students are “happy that they’ve moved beyond their stereotypes.”

Throughout the many years in which these exchanges have been taking place, Mullen has seen consistently positive results. While West Point cadets are “exuberantly happy” at being released from their tight schedules and allowed some time to socialize, Bard students are “happy that they’ve moved beyond their stereotypes,” said Mullen. In light of these and other successes in communications between Bard and West Point, both colleges have recently expressed an interest in expanding on these programs. The Deans of the colleges met last spring, the 20th anniversary of the joint-seminar program, to discuss further opportunities for communication between staff and faculty of their respective schools.

What emerged was the Academy Bard Exchange, which has begun this year with the first joint Bard and West Point class taught by BGIA Director and International Relations teacher Jonathan Cristol and West Point professor Scott Silverstone. In addition various lectures by West Point professors, the first of which was given by Silverstone on preemptive war, a co-mingling of related Bard and West Point clubs, and classes which communicate through video seminar are in the works.

Bard houses students that are primarily liberal, highly involved in the arts, and outspokenly unique. West Point cadets, on the other hand, are highly disciplined, primarily conservative, and attending school in preparation for a future military career.

Professor of Classics and ABE creator William Mullen. For Bard, interest lies primarily in gaining a greater understanding of the military and dispelling stereotypes, while for West Point, a chance to interact with the ideas of international students and civilians is crucial.

Although ABE is the first formal program outlining interactions between the schools, Bard has a long history of interactions with West Point, including a joint-seminar program, organized by Mullen, dating back to 1986. These typically take place in two days, one in which Bard students go to West Point, and one in which West

a series of lectures, exchanges, and joint classes, students

BUDGET FORUM, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

out, unorganized discussion of various resolutions and amendments to the Constitution.

The argument this semester revolved around the clubs who were not allocated any money from the Planning Committee because they did not show up at the mandatory Club Head Day, held in the MRP on Saturday the 9th. Planning Committee Chair Karen Soskin pointed out that clubs could send any representative to Club Head Day; it did not necessarily have to be the "head" of the club. The International Students Organization, the Sound Crew, and the Ultimate Frisbee Team all were denied money for this reason and requested their budget money from the emergency fund. Under the current Constitution however, this would not be possible, so the ISO proposed an amendment that would make Club Head day optional. What followed was a raucous debate about whether or not clubs should be punished for being irresponsible and not showing up to Club Head Day, the merits of the ISO, if it wouldn't make a lot more sense just to allow those three clubs to submit hostile amendments to the EFund and let the students vote in regular Budget Forum fashion (thanks to Owen Conlow for actually making sense), and a number of other things that were totally unrelated. In the end the students voted to let the Planning Committee review the three budgets again and allocate money as they see fit.

Judging by the email Soskin sent out to club heads on the 19th, it seemed as though this Budget Forum would be more contentious than it actually was. Soskin wrote,

"I am aware...that there is some confusion and anger regarding the Planning Committee's allocation decisions. I have spent the last day discussing concerns and suggestions with dozens of club heads..." Because of the astounding amount of rollover from last year's convocation fund due to money allocated to clubs but not spent, this year the Planning Committee attempted not to over-allocate funds to clubs who did not specify their needs clearly in their budgets. However, despite the apparent anger felt by some clubs, few attempted to win over more funding, perhaps waiting to request it from the emergency fund later in the year since at the beginning of the forum the EFund amounted to almost \$18,000.

Of the hostile amendments, three were to the emergency fund and all three of them passed. The Bard Film Committee kindly gave the Preston Theater Revitalization club \$39.96, but were unable to obtain money from either the Entertainment Committee or WXBC. Friendly amendments were submitted by the New Orleans club, the Darfur Action Campaign, and Bard Ice Hockey—any clubs wishing to donate money to those three groups should contact Treasurer Izzy Sederbaum.

The emergency fund thus remains at close to \$16,000. Also mentioned was the reserve fund, which now stands at around \$30,000. A meeting to discuss reserve fund requests will be held on October 4. Soskin pointed out that we would be unable to raise the Student Activities Fee, a task that the Central Committee has been working on for years in order to have more money for student clubs, until the reserve fund is exhausted.

On a final note, although I am rushed for time and cannot find the written document to verify this, I am almost positive that at either a student forum or a Club Head Day last year we resolved to no longer hold votes for freshmen alternates at Budget Forum because it takes an absurd amount of time, none of the upper classmen really know the freshmen, and it's not really the best environment for that type of voting. I'm not sure what happened with that vote, as again this year we all had to watch as people volunteered for positions without knowing what they were, and people just haphazardly voted. If I'm just crazy and tired and my cold is getting the best of me and we didn't actually vote on this...well...I hope that it's considered in the future. Welcome to first semester.

TRALDI, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

way that knowledge of this document can be a boon to protecting a student's rights and interests.

There are many other examples. Most club heads, for example, are unaware that a two-thirds majority at Budget Forum can require the Planning Committee to redraft the semester's budget entirely. A two-thirds majority

Though it has no direct power, the Grievance Committee reports its decisions directly to President Botstein.

at any student forum - there's one held every month, and they all hold equal power, including Budget Forum - can turn any proposed resolution into the policy of the Student Association and, thus, of the student government.

The Student Body Constitution can be found online at the student government website (<http://students.bard.edu/studentgovt/constitution.htm>). An inaccurate version is available in your red handbook. If you're in a bind or simply curious and you don't want to read through the entire document, the best course of action is to email the Central Committee at centralcom@bard.edu or visit our office upstairs in the campus center. This is also a good idea if you have general suggestions or concerns about academic or social life at the College.

Many students see Bard's student government as manifested only in its most decisive and most visible form, this week's Budget Forum. But we're proud, not to mention obligated, to work for you all year long. If you feel your voice has gone unheard, come talk to us.



BUDGET FORUM

*Wednesday, Sept. 21
2006*



President Botstein Still Unaware That His Lecture Was Delivered to a Roomful of Mannequins

BY MICHAEL NEWTON

Four days after delivering a lecture entitled "The Encouraging Timber: An Application of the Emotionality of Beethoven's 9th to the Outlook of the Bard Freshman Class," Bard College President Leon Botstein is still unaware of the fact that the lecture, was delivered not to the waiting ears of the capacity crowd which had filled Olin 101, but was received instead by a group of mannequins, which are kept by the Drama Club in Olin 102.

Olin 102, or "the Squeeze Room," as members of the Drama Club know it, has been a storage space for years, apart from also serving as a dressing room during the club's frequent productions.

"We call it the Squeeze Room because it gets really crowded in here when everyone is changing during shows," says Donald Dillo, Senior Props Manager for the Drama Club. Dillo, who was sorting costumes for the Drama Club's upcoming run of *Pippin* in the Squeeze Room Monday evening, explains, "I always bring the mannequins in here before a show. I put the costumes on them so that I can get a sense of how they will look on a real person. I can see how Botstein didn't notice that they weren't real. Sometimes I catch myself thinking that their eyes are following me."

Dillo, who went on to talk about the minutiae of Props Managing for tens of minutes, eventually also commented on the President's condition. "He seemed really happy that there were so many people, I was going to tell him he was in the wrong room but he just went up on the stage and started talking and at that point I figured it would be best to just let him go," he said. About the lecture itself, Dillo was less elucidating, "I don't know, I kind of drifted off until the end, what was it about again?"

When reached for comment, President Botstein was positive, saying "The attendees of the lecture were very respectful, very quiet and very contemplative. They are the perfect examples of the change in tone which I wish to bring about at the school. And when I see students of this caliber it only makes the contrast between the other type of caliber, the ruffian caliber, all the more painful." The ruffian caliber to which the President is presumably referring were the disgruntled Bard Freshmen who, after waiting for the President in Olin 101 for over twenty minutes, left the building en masse and in such a state of disquiet that their grumbling was loud enough to disturb the President's lecture.

Despite the disturbance caused by those who had been waiting for his appearance, reports indicate that Botstein was so pleased with the group to whom he did deliver his speech that he posed outside with several of the mannequins for an impromptu photo-shoot. (The pictures

will appear in the upcoming edition of the Bardian.)

For all their seeming strangeness, some believe that the President's actions, which include managing to hoist a number of heavy mannequins onto his shoulders, carrying them outside to the concentric steps of the Olin Building Main Entrance in a dramatic fashion, and then arranging them in various positions for a second round of pictures, can be explained by the mysterious illness that is said to be afflicting Patriarch of Bard College as of late. The sickness he suffers from, which, as of yet, remains unnaed, is caused by a surplus of the enzyme Ametyl-glucamine, or 'temptress sugar'. Ametyl-glucamine is found in piccalilli, a pickle relish consisting of chopped mixed vegetables, mustard, vinegar, and spices. When ingested in large quantities the enzyme forms deposits at the base of



The President, unaware.

of the spine, causing nervousness, jitters, dry mouth, visions, 'wart thumb', and can in some cases lead to paranoia and hoarding, mostly of substances which contain Ametyl-glucamine.

According to his friends and colleagues, President Botstein has been exhibiting many of the tendencies caused by the enzyme, and according to a member of the Bard Janitorial Staff who wished to remain anonymous, he can be seen "at all hours of the night, standing at his kitchen window, just chopping up those pickles." With the cause of his actions Monday night remaining to the realm of conjecture, what can be known is that Botstein's encounter with the mannequins will bear definite fruit for the school. After taking what was a limbless mannequin for a paraplegic, Botstein has vowed to commit to a campus wide renovation of services for the handicapped and disabled. "Last year when I saw that TLS project about challenges to the blind here on campus, it didn't really do it for me," the President explained, "But when I saw the stoicism and resolve glowing in the set jaw and smooth slick skin of that young student, I was nearly moved to tears. We can, will and must do better for this brave, vivacious, and exuberantly alive young man."

Is That a Dorm or a Howard Johnson's? Reconciling Giant Ass Buildings

BY NOAH WESTON

Bard is changing, at least in terms of infrastructure. For one to deny this, they would have to be seeing the world through Ray Charles' eyes, but even then, they might blindly slam into the hulking residential behemoth known as "Robbins Addition." After all, the new building dwarfs every other dorm on campus, housing over a hundred students, undergraduate and graduate, in rooms that run from cozy to socially irresponsible in size. Whatever one



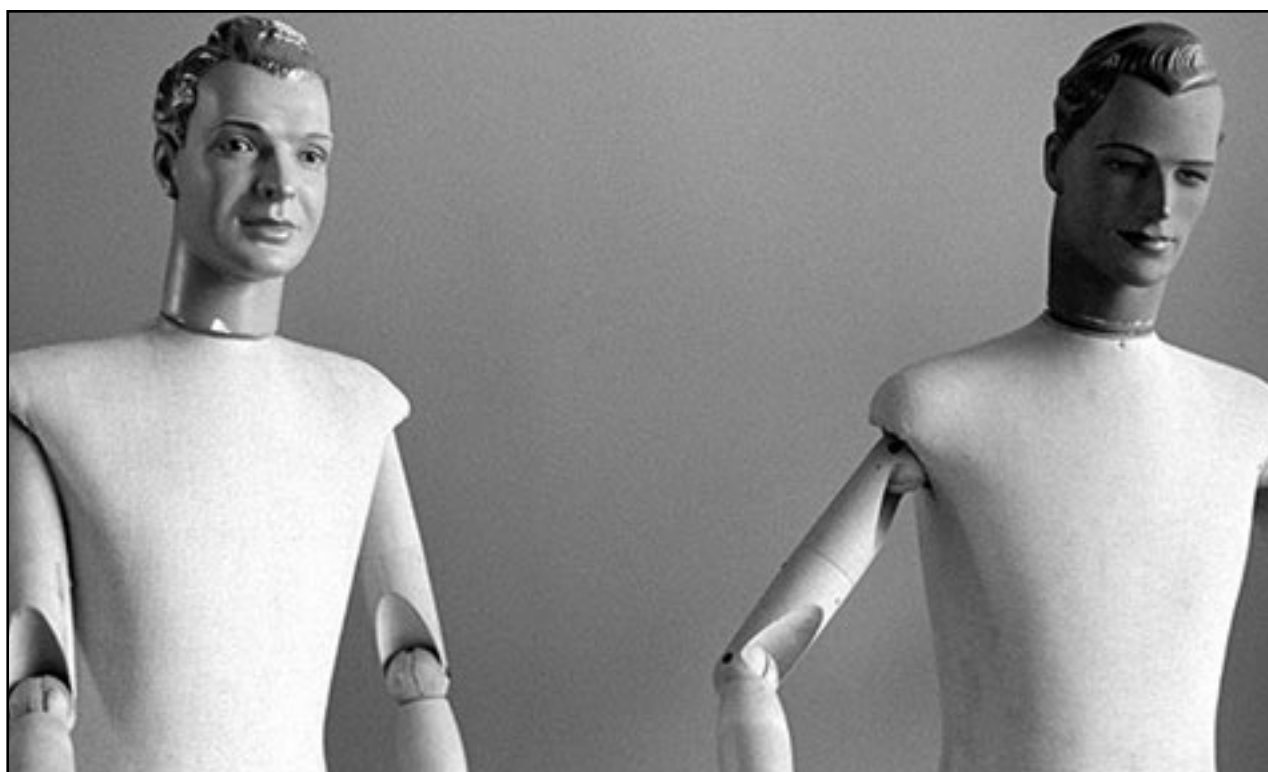
thinks about his or her individual room in the building, or about the dorm's ambience (punch me in the balls if you ever hear me use that word aloud), it seems hard to deny that we sacrificed a certain communal intimacy when we dropped that big pile of hugeness next to Old Robbins.

Before you dismiss me as just another overly nostalgic shithead who pines for "better" days out of a fear of change, I'll say that I'm usually the first to tell someone, "Hey, don't be an overly nostalgic shithead." This time, however, I think we might have made a misstep with respect to housing on campus. Granted, in building the Robbins Addition, we have essentially solved the room deficit that the school faced, yet we have also diluted the closeness and warmth present in Bard housing. One hundred and fifty more people have a place to live, but how we have chosen to arrange them may not bode so well in terms of how students interact in their own residence halls.

As I just stated though, Bard reaps a pragmatic benefit from the presence of Robbins Addition. Classes are larger than they ever have been, so we obviously require more space to house the students who are filling them. Putting aside the question of whether classes should even have five hundred people or more, we can generally agree (I hope) that we needed more beds on campus. In one fell swoop, the Robbins Addition led us to, at least for this year, enjoying a 50 bed surplus, giving the college latitude to move people about the school more freely than in the recent past. And isn't that just a bucket of smiles and ponies?

Unfortunately, what is neither smiley nor pony-like about Robbins Addition is that it is fucking enormous. The building features large, long hallways that make you feel like you're either lost or far from where you need to be, the kind you'd expect in a hospital or a retirement home, but not a dorm. Overall, its aesthetic and structure are neither inviting, nor communally oriented, and for me, a person who has lived in what was the largest dorm on campus, Tewksbury, it's a mildly pant-shitting experience. To put it another way, if you were to let a baby loose in the

WESTON, CONTINUES ON PAGE 5



Peer pressure leads many young mannequins to shear off their nipples

Bard Senior Reading Series

In Manor @9:00 P.M.

Wed. the 27th

featuring

Len Gutkin, *fiction*

Alana Siegel, *poetry*

Michael Newton, *poetry*

Creative Writing Program Changes:

What is the Cost?

By Ted Quinlan

Bard has long been known as a leader in the field of Creative Writing. This year, the structure of the program has changed. (Including its name, which is now Written Arts). The new rules left many wondering what future it had at the college. It seemed that the changes being made carried the potential for watering down the program's output. However, this is not necessarily the fate the program is damned to.

Some of the changes certainly are drastic. For one, the required portfolio has been dropped from first level writing workshops. Although upper level workshops still require portfolio submissions, the days of first years frantically compiling some passable representation of their creativity at the end of L&T are gone. At first, this was troublesome to me. However, after a strenuous bout of contemplation it became clear to me that the high levels of rejection inherent in the portfolio process for level one writing workshops fostered in some a sense of elitism, which invariably surfaced in the work they produced. By removing the need to submit, the program has been opened up not only to more students (about 50% of people wanting a class got one, whereas before it was only about 35%), but is also free from the restrictive strangle hold of pretentious, elitist writing. This will not disappear entirely, but students will be less inclined to fall into the trap of feeling superior to others simply because they were accepted into the program. Egotism will still exist, it always does, but in the future it will be determined less by acceptance or dismissal and more by the quality of work produced in the beginning workshops.

Not only has the program been opened up to more people by dropping the entry-level portfolio, but it has also changed the format of the first year workshops. Instead of concentrating on one style of writing, such as Prose or Poetry, first year workshops will be overviews of those two styles as well as Playwrighting and Creative Non-Fiction. Ideally, with the overhaul the program will be able to offer expanded creative possibilities to those who choose to become part of it. Though this will no doubt foster a greater understanding of creative writing, it does present a problem. The exposure first year students get to the various modes of writing will not be extensive and thus may affect the quality of their work.

Another problem posed is that moderating into Creative Writing requires taking a certain number of Literature classes. None of the writing professors I spoke with gave me the exact requirements, but it is known that to moderate successfully students must have two workshops, a language class, or language equivalent as well as a sequence course and an unfortunately unclear number of additional courses. If it was your intention to double major in Creative Writing and Literature then you are fine. However, many students are either interested in majoring in Creative Writing and a non-Literature discipline or feel that majoring in just Creative Writing is not an effective use of their time here.

The fact that moderation requirements are so extensive seemingly alienates the program from the other majors offered. This is a debatable point. On one hand, you have to be a good reader to be a good writer. This is what I assume the reasoning is behind tying the program so closely to the Literature Department. On the other hand, except for science and math, every other

QUINLAN, CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

WESTON, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5
building, it would likely die there.

But I don't want you to just come away from this editorial with an association between the Robbins Addition and infanticide. There are more complicated housing preferences at play here. Not everybody wants a dorm where you study, sleep, and vomit within inches of each other. I think, though, that when we have the option to seclude ourselves so thoroughly, even within the confines of our own buildings, we thicken the divisions that enable us to not relate to each other outside of convenience or common interest. Bard is already an isolated place, and to craft new mechanisms of internal isolation strikes me as unwise.

Having only been here three years, I lack some of the

experience of administrators in Student Life who have been on this campus far longer than I have. The crucial difference between those administrators and students who find the size of our newest dorm startling, is that we live here. We can attest to how it feels to live or spend time in a place like Stone Row versus doing so in a place that reminds me of Cruger on a cycling team's worth of steroids. When we are closer in proximity, we tend to interact more, for better or for worse, and we grow more as people. If we have enough means of bypassing these interactions, particularly spatial ones, then we dull the social benefits of a dormitory.

To make this more useful than a standard rant, I offer my own recommendations, some more realistic than others. Foremost, accept even fewer students in the future. This may get hard as Bard's prestige grows in tandem

with its educational breadth, but for the sake of keeping this place more like a neighborhood than a town, it is vital. Second, do not build any more dorms like Robbins Addition. I once tried to convince myself that a house is a house, and a room is a room, but that simply isn't the case. In building future dorms, we as a community must consider whether the places we live will foster unity in ways that residential life at other colleges don't. To me, this school still offers something different, and I'd like it to continue to do so.

No More Deaths

BY JULIA WENTZEL

It's with good reason that we try to keep God out of politics. But sometimes there's a good reason to invite Him in.

On September 10, Reverend John Fife of Tucson, Arizona spoke in the First Presbyterian Church of Poughkeepsie to discuss the increasing mortality rates for illegal immigrants attempting to cross the U.S.-Mexican border. Reverend Fife is part of a humanitarian, multi-faith organization called No More Deaths, which works to raise awareness while making significant change in the day-to-day lives of the people this issue affects.

Given his title and the religious foundation of his organization, we should have been ready for Fife's opening remarks. When he told the audience that "Jesus was always crossing borders, wasn't he?" the faces of the dozen or so Bard students who attended the event suddenly revealed that they were more than a bit ill at ease. But Fife quickly got to the point.

Providing a rapid history of U.S.-Mexican relations, Fife illuminated the history of the interactions between the two countries: Border crossing has always been prosecuted when we've had no need for cheap labor, he said, but in other times, the Border Patrol learns to look the other way. And yet, rates of death among people attempting to cross the border (some 200 documented men, women, and children a year) began to dramatically increase only twelve years ago.

In 1994, the border saw the introduction of a new plan called Operation Gatekeeper, an attempt by the U.S. to focus resources and developing technology in the areas with the highest documented traffic of illegal immigrants. This left the desert regions of the border in Arizona and New Mexico relatively unprotected. According to Fife, this was carefully calculated: "[The Border Patrol] acknowledged in their documents: some people will die. It will become a deterrent to others who want to cross."

In one aspect, Operation Gatekeeper met its goals; some 2000 deaths have been attributed to the harsh conditions of the desert since the operation's inception. But records show that 1.2 to 1.4 million people are apprehended and deported in the act of crossing the border each year. Despite the Border Patrol's attempt at

constructing a deterrent, people continue to cross.

This, as Fife points out, is because people don't choose to leave their homes and don't elect to survive illegally in a society that condemns them. They do it out of necessity. NAFTA, enacted almost simultaneously with Operation Gatekeeper, made the unstable economic atmosphere in Mexico even worse.

People from the poorest regions of the country and throughout Central America continue to risk everything to seek fiscal opportunity in the United States. And American institutions continue to apprehend them for crossing the border or allow them to die trying.

"People are dying," Fife said. "They are asking us for what is already their right... We have what I believe to be the new civil rights movement in America."

With this in mind, No More Deaths and groups like it have begun taking things into their own hands. Throughout the summer, NMD supports volunteers in patrolling the desert, providing support and transportation for people with serious medical needs. They also hike migrant trails supplying food and water to people suffering from dehydration. They have gone so far as to establish semi-permanent camps that provide basic services to the thousands of men, women, and children attempting to cross the border each week.

When asked about the pros and cons of the religious affiliations of his organization, Fife is politically pragmatic. He told Bard students that in the speech he would be giving at Vassar later that week, he planned to edit the religious citations. He understands his audience, and sees that the main point he must get across is socio-political, not theological.

More importantly, Fife says he can use the structure of the church to protect his cause. The government, he says, is attempting to criminalize anyone attempting to help illegal immigrants, as was made apparent when two NMD volunteers were arrested last summer for transporting migrants in severe medical conditions to a nearby hospital. "Essentially, they're now trying to convince the state of Arizona that the Presbyterian Church is participating in illegal activity," Fife says, "They never figured out how to make that case to the community."

For many students at Bard, there is something disconcerting about embracing an organization that works in the name of God. But Fife made it clear to us that channels matter little as long as the goals are reached. The services that No More Deaths provide and the level to which they affect their community and their country are admirable. As Fife concluded in saying, "No human being is ever illegal. That's a contradiction in terms." If our beliefs are the same on this point, the context, be it religious or secular, becomes inconsequential.



Immigrant rights advocate, Reverend John Fife, spoke recently in Poughkeepsie about the increased number of deaths at the U.S.-Mexico border.

Quinlan, Continued from Page 6

class offers vast amounts of reading. I feel that the long list of requirements represents an error. It should not be such a daunting task to try and combine the pursuit of Creative Writing with another major. As policy stands now, students almost seem to be punished for wanting to make the attempt. And this is wrong, for the synthesis of Creative Writing and another major would produce work of an excitingly broad and varied scope.

The program is changing. The once confined, somewhat inherently elitist system known as the Writing Program in Fiction and Poetry has been turned into the more inviting, friendlier Writing Arts. But at what cost? The initial impression I get from the changes is that in the attempt to expand the scope of the program, the framers of the new rules remained stuck in the old values of the program. They expanded the program so that it encompassed more aspects of creative writing, but in doing so have potentially cut off those who wish to build a background in other disciplines as well as writing. Although the attempt to upgrade the program is admirable the fact that it is so difficult to combine disciplines is a lamentable one. The synthesis of writing sensibilities and other passions helps develop writers who expand upon the conventions of writing; and as such the practice should be fostered, not stymied. What Bard is potentially losing with the changes made to the program is the ability to produce writers who will forge new creative material instead of simply entering into the world of writing knowing only what they should write.

To all READERS of the Observer:

DO you THINK you can write?

Do YOU like to WRITE?

Do YOU?

Well, now is a CHANCE to prove yourself!

Announcing the Observer SHORT FICTION CONTEST.

The Challenge:

Write a piece of short fiction numbering no more than one thousand five hundred words. The subject matter can be anything which you choose, the only stipulation being that all pieces must end with the sentence "And then came the robots." Whoever writes the best story will not only have it be published in the sterling pages of this fine newspaper, but will also get to hang out with the super-hep editors who chose the piece!!!

REMEMBER: The story must be no longer than one thousand five hundred words and must conclude with the sentence "And then came the robots." Other than that its dealers choice!

Send all submissions via e-mail to observer@bard.edu

National Calling Week

Support Darfur

202.456.1111

The First-Year Class President Election: A Bungled Job

BY JAMES MOLLOY

First-years, when you voted for your class president after the matriculation ceremony at the end of L&T, did you know what being a class president at Bard means? Don't worry; the candidates didn't know either, not that you knew who we were.

Bard College class president is a relatively new position. This was its first year. At the end of last year, freshmen (now sophomores) voted for their class president, but this will be the first year of duty for the sophomore president as well.

What does the class president do? According to the email sent out to all first year students that class president "provides leadership, initiates class activities and programs, and develops strategies for strengthening the class." This definition, however, is somewhat controversial. According to Heather Deichler, Associate Director of the Annual Fund (the senior class gift), the job of the class president is not to promote unity among first-years. Rather, the sole purpose of the class president position is to hold fundraisers to raise money for Bard. Instead of waiting until senior year to ask students to give to the school, the Office of Development is trying to get students used to the idea of giving money early on so that they will continue to do so throughout their careers at Bard (and presumably afterwards as well). This all sounds great. Bard needs the money as tuition only makes up a limited part of the school's spending—much of the rest comes from donors.

At the pre-election informational meeting, Ashfaque Kabir and I were asked to write a several sentence "blurb" about ourselves, and why we each wanted to be class president. These statements were printed next to our names on the ballot. Votes were made almost completely arbitrarily: based either on the insignificant blurb (though not many read it), or if someone happened to be an acquaintance of one of us. Hardly any of our first-year peers knew either of our names after only two and a half weeks at a new school. This was not the fault of the students who were asked to vote. It was the fault of the administrators who asked them (or bribed them, if you remember that you had to vote in order to get your free t-shirt) to take part in such a meaningless process. The election of the class president was a farce.

If administrators expect students to treat the position of class president respectfully, they have to first

The Office of Development is trying to get students used to the idea of giving money early on so that they will continue to do so throughout their careers at Bard (and presumably afterwards as well)

show respect for it themselves. How can anyone have confidence in an elected representative if the votes were ultimately based on nothing at all? Furthermore, how can anyone support an office if its purpose is unclear? Why was there an election at all?

The final blunder occurred over the five days after the elections – the five days it took for the votes to be counted. Only after I emailed Heather Deichler late on the Thursday night of the election asking when the votes would be counted did she email me back saying that, oh, they didn't know, because the upperclassmen were coming back, and that it would probably be done by Monday. On Tuesday I emailed her again, and finally, five days later, the first-year class received an email declaring the victor.

I realize that it is questionable for me to write an opinion article criticizing an election that I lost, so I want to be clear about my purpose here. I am more than happy for Ash, and I know that he will do a great job as our class president. What I am critical of is the process that we, and all of you, were subjected to.

The election for class president needs to be entirely revised. Voters and candidates should be aware of the function of the position, i.e. say it in the damn email. Candidates should be given the chance to speak to their class, even if briefly, about why they want the position (and so that everyone has some idea who they are voting for), and the ballots counted on the day of the election. If not, it should not happen at all. Everyone was cheated in this. Nobody benefited. Some of us were hurt. Please lets fix this for the sake of everyone involved.

Meeting Your New Sex Columnists

By Fiona Cook and Genevieve Lynch

This year the Observer is proud to welcome its two new sex columnists, Genevieve Lynch and Fiona Cook. With the hope of creating a rapport between the Bard community and the new sex columnists, we here at the Observer have trucked in veteran T.V. newsman Mike Wallace to conduct an interview with our luscious ladies.

Mike Wallace: What is your year?
Genevieve Lynch: Year of the tiger. Grrrr.
Fiona Cook: '09

MW: What is your pet peeve?
GL: The water that settles ON TOP of yogurt, the musical "Rent" (also the movie), when people speak in barking voices.
FC: Wet bathroom door handles. And being farted on. But that's more of a fear than a pet peeve.

MW: Which president would you boink?
GL: I think Bush and I could have totally hot hate sex. Or maybe President Millard FILL MORE. Or Warren G. HARDing.
FC: Andrew Jackson. It's all about the hair.

MW: What is an addiction you are ashamed of?
GL: I compulsively check out people's asses. And I often get caught.
FC: I like to smell people when they walk past me.

MW: If you could be a teletubby, which would you be?
GL: I would be the baby in the sun. My voice kind of sounds like the shrieks of the baby in the sun, sometimes.
FC: Po. Because she is the most eloquent. And the smallest.

MW: Do you polka?
GL: I went through a phase in the sixth grade during which I enjoyed all ballroom dancing. I liked to foxtrot the best. Polka was all right.
FC: Accordians and polka dots make me cream my pants.

MW: What is the color of love?
GL: All colors together...so probably some kind of dead tire brown.
FC: The color of gravy.

MW: If you were a playboy playmate, which month would you want?
GL: I would be November. It's a lovely month, and maybe we could work out a little turkey theme. It would be kind of precious, I think.
FC: June because it's warm. Hard nipples are hot. Frozen nipples? Not so much.

Those who deny our offers now will one day feel the whip of our demands

Write for The Observer

Meetings every other Thursday
September 21

The basement of Tewksbury

730

Be a part of the power structure

The Case Is Solved Audiences Members Killed by Boredom

BY TOM HOUSEMAN

In 1959, Eddie Mannix, the head of one of the largest movie studios in the world, pulled off an incredible coverup when he had George Reeves, television's Superman and Mannix's wife's lover, murdered. He was able to spin the whole thing, making it seem like Reeves had committed suicide and hiding the truth from the entire world. Believe it or not, this coverup is still being executed by major studios, although now the culprit has switched from MGM to Focus Features. In order to make sure nobody thinks twice about this unsolved mystery, Focus got Paul Bernbaum and Allen Coulter to write and direct a painfully boring film about Reeves's murder. The proof is in the pictures (or the moving picture, in this case); their film, *Hollywoodland*, makes it seem as if they were actively trying to make an awful film so as to trick everyone into

Bernbaum took a story that is only marginally interesting and buried it.

forgetting about Reeves. And considering the result, it just might work.

Hollywoodland could have been a highly stylized film that contrasted the bright lights and flashy colors of Hollywood with a modern update on film noir (a genre of detective films marked by its use of silhouette and darkness). Instead, Coulter decided to reject both sides of the spectrum, and the result is that *Hollywoodland* never approaches film noir, but seems firmly printed in film grey. All of the sets and costumes are incredibly drab, never capturing the glamour of Hollywood or the darkness lurking beneath. All that grey gets old quickly, and when nothing on screen catches the eye, tedium sets in.

But the biggest murderer in this story isn't Eddie Mannix (Bob Hoskins), who possibly had George Reeves

(Ben Affleck) killed for sleeping with his wife Toni (Diane Lane). It's actually Paul Bernbaum, who wrote the horrible script to *Hollywoodland*. Bernbaum took a story that is only marginally interesting and buried it. The story is of Louis Simo (Adrien Brody), who is hired to investigate Reeves' suicide, and finds evidence that leads him to believe that Reeves may have been murdered, either by Eddie Mannix or by Reeves' fiancé (Robbin Tunney). Bernbaum decided to dilute this story by adding several random plot lines that are all pointless and dull, and none of which add anything to the story. These added annoyances include a second investigation into a possible affair that Simo is



hired to investigate by the woman's excessively paranoid husband, and Simo's relationship with his son, who has become withdrawn and despondent since he found out

Instead, Coulter decided to reject both sides of the spectrum, and the result is that Hollywoodland never approaches film noir, but seems firmly printed in film grey

that Superman killed himself.

Hollywoodland is actually three movies—none of them particularly interesting—poorly pasted together. One is Simo's investigation, one is an unconvincing biopic of George Reeves' rise to fame and relationship with Toni Mannix, and the last is all of that extra stuff that is going

Hollywoodland is actually three movies—none of them particularly interesting—poorly pasted together.

on in Simo's life, none of which is worth paying attention to. This story telling method might have been salvageable had it not been for the dialogue and character development. Several scenes drag on long past their expiration dates, as none of the characters seem to know when to end their monotonous, pointless conversations. Much of the dialogue manages to be both unrealistic and dull, an impressive feat considering that most movies manage only one of these characteristics. What is worst is that whenever any of the characters change, the changes are drastic and inexplicable. The worst offender in this case is Eddie Mannix, who is in essentially three scenes and is practically three different characters. The occasional moments of cleverness in the film are not enough to draw attention from the glaring flaws that make *Hollywoodland* so difficult to watch.

It is only the actors that manage to keep *Hollywoodland* from being dead on arrival. Adrien Brody has proven himself to be a phenomenal actor in *The Pianist* among other films, but an actor can only be so good when his part is so bad. Simo is a one-note role that never goes anywhere, and while Brody does what he can with it, his talent is stunted. Diane Lane also has a mediocre part, although one that is juicier than Brody's. As promiscuous housewife to a Hollywood producer, Mannix latches onto the young and handsome Reeves in order to cling to her youth.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

True Magic Found in The Illusionist

BY BRIDGET BERHMANN

Do you believe in magic? Not Harry Potter magic — no adolescents, house-elves and screamed incantations — but quiet magic that starts with a few words on space and time on an almost empty stage. This is the magic of Neil Burger's *The Illusionist*. Both the movie and the magic found within have their own slow grace, even when the film dips into melodrama.

Starring Edward Norton, Paul Giamatti, and Jessica Biel, *The Illusionist* tells the story of Eisenheim (Norton) and his childhood love, Sophie (Biel) in turn-of-the-

Both the movie and the magic found within have their own slow grace, even when the film dips into melodrama.

century Vienna. Eisenheim is a craftsman's son, whereas Sophie is a Baroness, and the two are separated. Years later, they meet again; Eisenheim has become a famous illusionist, and Sophie is engaged to the Crown Prince of Vienna (Rufus Sewell). Giamatti plays Chief Inspector Uhl, investigating Eisenheim and his magic for the Prince.

Curiously, the plot of *The Illusionist* is overstuffed with true love, madmen, murder, cult, and political intrigue, but the movie itself is believable, and generally more subdued than you would expect. A sex scene between Eisenheim and Sophie is painfully tasteful, and most of the actors handle great emotion with considerable restraint. The most passionate moments are when Eisenheim is on stage, dark-eyed and rail-thin, sitting alone in a spotlight and conjuring up orange trees and ghosts.

Edward Norton and Paul Giamatti are the real reasons to see the film. *The Illusionist* could have gone terribly wrong in the hands of a less talented actor than Norton. He is one of the most intense, economical actors I've ever seen, conveying his entire character through one slight half-smile. Giamatti is equally good; I'd forgotten all about

Harvey Pekar and Miles (Giamatti's breakout roles from *American Splendor* and *Sideways*) a few minutes into the film. Biel also does a surprisingly nice job with a limited

Edward Norton and Paul Giamatti are the real reasons to see the film.

part. (Sewell, for his part, represents the occasional drift into histrionics.)

The Illusionist is a small, engrossing film. It might want to ask questions about illusion and reality, death and existence, show business and politics, but it doesn't press terribly hard. The film draws atmosphere and its characters very well, and you wish you could have seen Eisenheim perform yourself. That is *The Illusionist's* quiet magic.

Clothing to Keep the Ego Warm

BY MEGHAN BLACK

At my high school eighty percent of the student body was perpetually clad in American Eagle (the "only good store" at the local mall as teens in Amherst liked to say) so it was a refreshing change when I stepped on the Bard campus and saw that others besides myself believed style consisted of more than just the polo shirts and distressed jeans currently available at the chain stores. I came to Bard with the sense that finally I could wear my sequenced slippers and layers of bracelets without feeling awkwardly eccentric and I found this to be true. I noticed that students here know how to mix and match and come up with something original gathering inspiration from multiple sources (fashion icons of the past and present as well as from ethnic influences) and most importantly they know how to have fun with their apparel. It is apparent that fashion on the Bard campus is not just a tool to "fit in," but another outlet for creativity; why else would students

take the time to hand paint their T-shirts? This sentiment shone through with the abundance of theme based parties here at Bard.

It was hard to avoid the hoards of outrageously clad students heading to the masquerade ball: think lots of cross-dressing, satin "pin-up" girl dresses, and an array of styles in between from the sixties and eighties, and even some Willy Wonka-esque inspired threads (canes and top hats included). Or those attending Gotti Night where partygoers were encouraged to break out their designer labels, hair gel, and lots and lots of gold. Or the Wes Anderson party (which quickly was a bust) where knee socks, headbands, and obnoxiously colored short shorts were prevalent. Few missed the opportunity to bear it all in their corsets, fishnet tights, even gold-lamiae hot pants and heavy eye makeup for the showing of Rocky Horror Picture Show. Obviously getting dressed at Bard is not just a routine activity but entertainment in itself. Never before have I seen so many kids who can whip out fully accessorized outfits for any theme thrown at them. The clothes are not just the catalyst for the parties they actually are the party. They make people feel excited and uninhibited — they get people in the mood.

But Friday night is not the only time for inventive fashion. "Every time I walk into Kline [dining hall] I feel like I'm entering a fashion show," comments Matt Langan-Peck a first year here at Bard, "whereas just down the road at Vassar students hardly ever get out of their sweats," he continues. At many colleges and universities across the country athletic wear is the norm, but not here at Bard where retro inspired styles reign supreme. Clothing should not be boring, it should be a form of self expression (if I may be so cliché). Bard students take this to heart. They do not want to be seen as typical regarding their fashion just as they do not want their art or academic inquiries or observations to be viewed as typical. Bardians prefer stovepipe jeans inspired by the "A Smile" jeans of the seventies (the original matchstick jeans whose logo "put a smile on your..." was embroidered across the rear of their pants), leggings reminiscent of the eighties, headbands and bandanas worn straight across the forehead, and Frye Boots, which are making a comeback from the sixties (my mother owned a pair when she was in college) to

CONTINUED ON PAGE 9

Sleater-Kinney's Grand Farewell

BY OMER SHAH

I'm one of those homos who's dying for representation, the kind who loves *Brokeback Mountain* and *The L Word* a little too much. But not all of my desire for representation is so problematic or in need of critical intervention. In 2001, *Time* magazine called Sleater-Kinney America's best rock band, in 2005 Pitchfork gave SK's last album *The Woods* a score of 9.0. Neither of these publications mean a thing to me, but it was validating to see an uncompromisingly queer and feminist band get such deserving attention and recognition. The group is undeniably feminist; it consists of two guitar players and two lead singers, Carrie Bronstein and Corin Tucker and a drummer, Janet Weiss.

In form, they destroy preconceived male-centric notions of what constitutes a rock band by eliminating the bass player, a role which is often relegated to that of a female, while the male occupies the role of lead guitar. Sleater-Kinney also succeeded in escaping riot-grrl pigeon-holing that much movement music gets by creating some of the most sonically

complex records of our time. While my interest in the group is political, they moved beyond politics by putting out technically brilliant music, creating a sound that challenges and lands a place for queer/woman-positive music among "the boys" of rock music: Led Zeppelin, The Who, etc. The group broke up this summer after eleven years of making the most challenging, thought provoking, and interesting music, each record better than the one before.

On June 27, the group announced an indefinite hiatus. However bereaving, it was a great time for the group to go out, since they were so on top of their game. Their decision to call it quits gave me permission to quit my life, catch them in Philadelphia and New York, and then fly out west for their last two shows. I wasn't the only obsessed Sleater-Kinney fan; the first show I caught in Philadelphia was packed with people who flew in from the UK, LA, Minnesota, etc. The Philly show was very intimate and very sweaty. The group responded to the heat with a more relaxed encore, playing such rarities as "Jenny" and "Dance Song '97." Fists in the air, fingers pointed, in unison they sang "I am the girl, I am the ghost, I am the wife, I am the one".

If the Philadelphia show didn't feel like goodbye, New York City did. A certain quality of parting shone through the setlist. From the opener of "Start Together", "Come so far / So close together / Don't tear apart what we worked for." The audience then erupting with the chorus, "Baby don't you leave me, baby don't go." It was triumphant and totally heartbreaking.

At their final show at the Crystal Ballroom, long time friend of Sleater-Kinney, Pearl Jam's Eddie Vedder, warmed up the stage with two songs. Perhaps what was

more notable than Vedder's protest song and the song he performed with Janet Weiss, was what Vedder had to say about the group. Vedder lamented that he wasn't around to see The Beatles, Led Zeppelin, and the Who in concert, but reminded us how lucky we were to see Sleater-Kinney. He concluded, "There's no where on this planet I'd rather be tonight."

The group opened their final show with "The Fox", the opening track from *The Woods*. Corin's performance on this song impressed the shit out of me the whole tour, but I'm unable to describe how amazing it was when she wailed, "And there's no looking back!". Second up, "The End of You" another pretty obvious choice for the band to pull out tonight, with the lyrics, "Tie me to the mast of this ship and of this band / Tie me to the greater-things the people that I love," carrying extra weight on a goodbye tour. Crowd-surfers were taking to the air. It felt like I was twelve and watching something on MTV, when MTV



felt like a reasonable way to consume music, it was that historic to me. Throughout the course of the evening the band played the entirety of *The Woods*. During the main set the girls brought out "Stay Where You Are" ("I just need you to save me one last time!"). Other huge

highlights of the evening were, *Call the Doctor's* tear-jerking sing-along "Good Things" of which, Corin dedicated to Sleater-Kinney's biggest fan, her husband.

During one of the encores, the group made a flawless transition from the dance party anthem "Oh!" to "Dig Me Out." This song always succeeds live, because the group jumps right in from their previous song. Your ears almost do not believe it until you see Janet Weiss' drum sticks making their signature "Dig Me Out"-cross. From seeing Janet's theatrical performance of this song, when I was a sophomore in high school, the first time I saw Sleater-Kinney play, to seeing their Portland show, the last time I'll ever see the group perform, those couple of seconds when Janet's drum sticks are in the air and the Carrie and Corin's guitars are hitting the opening chords, will remain etched in my memory as one of my favorite moments in live music.

"I just want to tell Janet and Corin that I love them" lamented Bronstein, "This band saved my life countless times, I'm really grateful to be apart of this." Then the group launched into the last song they would play, "One More Hour." Tears were streaming down the faces of Sleater-Kinney as Carrie crooned, "I know! I know! It's so hard for you to say goodbye." They played the shit out of that song, thanked us, and hugged and bowed. The group went out in a blaze of glory and with a grace that most bands will never be able to achieve. What best sums up my sentiments about the shows, was the full-page ad from one of the Portland newspapers which read "Thank You Sleater-Kinney. Your influence and integrity will continue to inspire generations."

Bard student is right when she says "it's not about a formula, it's about unique finds at local stores and making something your own." Of course this is coming from a girl whose fashion icon is Kate Hudson - a remixed BoHo look always with a dash of retro that prevails here on the Bard campus. Perhaps she emulates Hudson because Hudson's clothing has a sense of creativity and self cultivation: her clothes are not all matchy-matchy and prefabricated.

After 5 Years, It's 10,000 Days

BY ERI KURSHAN

In 2001, Tool released their musical masterpiece, *Lateralus*. As their music developed since *Opiate*, their first EP released in 1992, toolheads have marveled at the band's profound eccentricity, as well as their mathematically complex, polyrhythmic heavy metal compositions. Tool has always succeeded at creating a significantly different sound with each album they release, while retaining the dynamic, crisply polished sound that makes them so unique.

After the band's five year hiatus since *Lateralus*, Tool decided they were ready to compose another album on their own accord. This is a luxury that major record labels rarely permit a band to ever do. But allowing Tool to do so results in the creation of brilliant works of art, exactly what people expect from the band.

Though all Tool albums possess a distinct element, their new album, *10,000 Days*, seems to be a far greater break from the trend than ever. The first shock came about with the album title, which few believed to be the real title upon its revelation. After all, just look at how it compares with the previous titles: *Opiate*, *Undertow*, *Enima*, *Lateralus*...and then *10,000 Days*. The music itself provided an even greater shock to the Tool community. After the storm of *Lateralus*, toolheads wanted more. But they did not receive more. Instead, once again, they received something different. Drummer Danny Carey described *10,000 Days* as their "blues album", and "not *Lateralus* Part II." This is a very accurate description of the new work.

Tool's previous albums have all been dark, cutting assaults on the listener's soul. *10,000 Days*, however, while still heavy, is bluesy, as Danny described it, giving it a more laid back and brighter aura. Since human nature tends to resist change, especially from something good like *Lateralus*, a common initial reaction to *10,000 Days* is apprehension and uncertainty of its beauty. But its beauty certainly prevails. After several listens, a true toolhead will learn to abandon the need for a similar sound to *Lateralus*, accept Tool-turned-blues. They will then recognize the elements of Tool they know and love. Yes, the interwoven layers, uneven beats, intense drum rolls, and various compounded time signatures are all there, more than ever.

"Wings For Marie (PT 1)" and "10,000 Days (Wings PT 2)" are two back-to-back tracks which make up a seventeen and a half minute long epic that is arguably the greatest Tool song ever created, though it may take many listens before they can be fully understood. "Rosetta



Stoned" is an eleven minute long, tough, hard rocking journey. Both songs should leave you in a state of shock even after listening to it fifty times. There is always more to uncover.

If you are a Tool fan, or simply a fan of rock music (one not need be a fan of heavy music to enjoy Tool), *10,000 Days* may just be the best heavy metal/hard rock album of the year. For all you toolheads out there who are resisting their new sound for any reason, do yourself a favor: embrace the new sound, as they have always produced a new sound with each album. It is what gives them their lasting appeal. You will then truly see how advanced and remarkable their new music is.

BLACK, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

"hoodies" (hooded sweatshirts) and Adidas track pants. Of course, everything has a twist: students sew up the backs of their once bootlegged jeans to make them skinny legged or search out Levis at the Salvation Army instead of just purchasing their stovepipes at the nearest Gap, rugged Frys are always that much better than when they look as if they are straight out of the box and, of course flats are the shoe of choice when it comes to leggings. Suspenders, leather jackets, and vintage fitted tees are best when it comes to stovepipes for girls and boys alike. For the students at Bard fashion is not determined by what everyone else is wearing or what the models in Abercrombie and Fitch advertisements are flaunting, Fashion must be innovative, progressive, and have a quirky twist to it or a twinge of humor like thickly rimmed glasses in an unexpected shade of yellow. Bardians reach beyond the styles featured in commercial storefronts. Alana Heath also a first year

Send us your sex questions. We're actually somewhat qualified to answer them now. Peer health. Peer sex.

You know the place--observer@bard.edu

Crank It Up

BY KIRIANNNA BUTEAU

By and large, I do not frequently take myself out to see action movies because their premises are overdone and nine times out of ten the scripting is just plain unoriginal. However, when I heard about *Crank*, I said to myself, "I have to see this, even if it's actually terrible." Consider, if you will, the following premise. Would-be ex-hitman Chev Chelios (Jason Statham) wakes up to learn he's been poisoned with a compound that limits his adrenaline such that if his heart rate drops by any noticeable degree, he's a goner. The solution, of course, is to keep his adrenaline flowing until he can get back at the people who did this to him and also hopefully find an antidote, if one exists.

This is total genius for the action genre. Not only does the protagonist engage in acts of violence, a sexual encounter or two, drug use, and general thrill-seeking for the majority of the film, if he doesn't do those things, he'll die! What worried me, of course, was that therefore all this silliness would be the only point of the film— it's a good premise, but one that can easily go awry in the wrong hands. To my vast pleasure, this is still a total popcorn flick, but within its genre it's one of the best I've recently seen. The cinematography is, for lack of a word, *Not only does the protagonist engage in acts of violence, a sexual encounter or two, drug use, and general thrill-seeking for the majority of the film, if he doesn't do those things, he'll die!*

EXTREME, in the best possible sense; the dialogue is witty or hilarious by turns; the script is, in general, supremely inventive with some of the stuff Chev winds up doing. Some parts seriously had me laughing my ass off, and best of all, I wasn't able to predict the ending. I'm pretty convinced that *Crank* was shockingly low budget compared to most things Hollywood is churning out these days, but it proves that with some simple editing tricks you don't need

The dialogue is witty or hilarious by turns; the script is, in general, supremely inventive with some of the stuff Chev winds up doing.

a lot of fancy CG for this kind of thing, depending what you're trying to achieve.

Now, Amy Smart's character Eve— Chev's girlfriend— is sort of ridiculously vapid. Overall the film doesn't exactly do a good job of avoiding the objectification of women. It's something that if I were to ever get into the film industry I would try to fight but I've learned to put up with in the meantime. If that still isn't your cup of tea, I *Overall the film doesn't exactly do a good job of avoiding the objectification of women*

don't recommend *Crank*. And even though it's immensely entertaining in a Tarantino-esque kind of way (minus Tarantino dialogue), along those same lines it isn't the kind of movie I would want small children learning ethics from. Nonetheless, if action is your preferred genre, watch this movie, particularly with a decent-sized group of people of similar taste. I saw it with a bunch of "the guys" and I suspect that somehow this improves one's impression of the quality. Other than that, I'm not sure what to say about this film because revealing any finer details of the plot will destroy certain humorous parts, and I definitely don't want to give away the end. So in closing I will repeat: watch this movie— be sure to sit through the closing credits— and also when you do so I expect to have someone inform me shortly afterward that they are beginning development of *Crank: The Game* because if there's one thing the premise works even better for than an action film, it's a first person shooter game.

the
BARD
OBSERVER

Yakuza: Perfect for the Prepubescent

BY NOAH WESTON

Video game producers should not hedge too much on whether their characters commit deviant acts, especially given that at this point, gamers have done it all. On my Playstation, I have killed, stolen, defiled, and everything between, so Sega's new game, *Yakuza* was a risky purchase for me. I frankly knew nothing more about this title other than that you beat people up, go to a batting cage, and maybe hit a massage parlor or two. Happy endings, aside, these are all paltry thrills. Luckily, the game has a little more meat to it, but not necessarily enough to warrant a second playthrough, at least not when better, more promising games are on the horizon.

The long and short of it is this: Kazuma, a former Yakuza, takes the rap for the death of his boss, so as to spare his fully justified, but overly trigger-happy brother from blame (and prison, but in the *Yakuza*, guilt for such *As Kazuma, you punch, kick, and sometimes hit people with objects that aren't usually intended as bludgeons.*

a crime means a lot worse than incarceration). He gets out after ten years, gets embroiled in a big mish mash of cin-

ematic events, involving an orphan, a Yakuza treasure, and

Sure, the graphics are pretty, with fancy Japanese neon signs and several non-player characters roaming onscreen at once, but the town is claustrophobic, the fights get tedious, and the story isn't compelling enough on its own to take you through the game.



a mission to preserve honor in his world. You can see a bunch of movies like this, but why not play it on the slightly smaller screen? I chose to do so, and lordhavemercy am I—underwhelmed.

Sure, the graphics are pretty, with fancy Japanese neon signs and several non-player characters roaming onscreen at once, but the town is claustrophobic, the fights get tedious, and the story isn't compelling enough on its

CONTINUED ON PAGE 11

SmogFest Schedule

Friday 9.22

Bunny Brains, Meneguar, Archaeopteryx, Animal, Tomorrow's Friend, Damon McMahon, Christy & Emily, Circles

Saturday 9.23

Dirty Projectors, Ex Models, Aa, Knyfe Hyts, High Places, Animal, Taigaa, These Are, Powers, Lidia Stone, More Teeth

HOLLYWOODLAND CONTINUED FROM 8

Lane plays the part well, although it is far from her best performance.

The only actor who actually benefits from being in *Hollywoodland* is Ben Affleck, for whom this film is a step up after atrocities like *Daredevil* and *Gigli*. Reeves' is easily the most complex, interesting part in the film, and Affleck does what he can with it. The best scenes in the movie (or, the few good scenes) all involve

A few solid performances and the occasional decent scene is not enough to save Hollywoodland from crashing and burning.

Reeves, and can be credited to Affleck. Perhaps next,

Affleck will take a good role in a good movie, and maybe someday he will no longer be considered Bennifer's lesser half.



But a few solid performances and the occasional decent scene is not enough to save *Hollywoodland* from crashing and burning. Perhaps Coulter and Bernbaum should stick to television—where both of them have worked for most of their careers— as both of them seem lost on a project longer than an hour. Perhaps the

biggest mystery in Hollywood isn't whether George Reeves committed suicide or was murdered, but is how nobody caught on to the plot of Bernbaum and Coulter to destroy *Hollywoodland* and make it nearly unwatchable, to further remove Reeves' case from our minds. But then again, that may just be another conspiracy theory.

Killer Shrimps for Dinner

BY FRANK BRANCELY

Let's get together, smoke a bowl, and contemplate the best way to make a movie that will confuse and repulse audiences, all the while creating the illusion that what we've produced is something artsy, unique, and worth watching.

This must be the conversation that took place when Italian-director Piero Golia, who lives in Los Angeles and is considered by many as one of the more interesting young artists, outlined his ideas for *Killer Shrimps* with co-writer Adriano D'Angio. Golia, whose work has been exhibited in museums and galleries throughout the world, has in *Killer Shrimps* explored a concept of loose boundaries between reality and fiction – a not entirely new premise in modern film, but a compelling approach nonetheless. Golia said that, "instead of the traditional reproduction of reality with the use of convincing sets or a lifelike shooting style, we decided to execute this movie by forcing reality to become fiction, by pushing the actual to become similar to what ought to be considered artificial." There's no doubt that Golia achieved his objective, but is the outcome enjoyable?

At a ranch-style house in the Hollywood area of Los Angeles, two filmmakers, Golia and a fictional director meant to resemble him, film a documentary on yet another young filmmaker from London whose own film consists of zombies, hallucinations, spectacularly horrendous spe-



Killer Shrimps Director
Piero Golia

cial effects, and plain bad acting – if it can be called 'acting' at all. Not making sense? It's really not supposed to. In this realm, lines are to be blurred, headaches to be had. The two directors and their sets eventually become one when, after a particularly nasty pizza delivery, the cast and crew become zombies, leading to an especially stomach-churning gore-fest. One audience member remarked after the credits, "I'm not sure our stomachs could have taken it much longer."

The outcome of this chaos is by no means pleasant. At what point do questions about the abstract dimensions of a film stop becoming intriguing and start to antagonize the viewer? The answer? About thirty minutes after being seated you will quickly find that this movie about a documentary about a blood-and-guts zombie movie is too convoluted to be appreciated, too surreal a parody of fake and non-fake reality to recommend to any random moviegoer or film enthusiast. Trust me when I say that urges to walk-out will surely be in abundance.

Don't get me wrong: Golia, who not only shot the movie daily with his home as the set, but drew influence from much of his own doubt and hesitation as a source for material, has offered the artistic community something technically astute and worth investigating. To any other casual film aficionado however, I'd advise to be-

ware and stay clear of *Killer Shrimps*. *Killer Shrimps* was screened at Weiss Cinema, Sunday, September 10th as the final event in concurrence with the summer exhibition of the Uncertain States of America at the Center for Curatorial Studies, which closed on Sept 10th.

dipping nancy boys. Timidly, he asked Cletus, "Cletus, is this here pond really fulla leeches?" Cletus scrunched his face and tipped his hat up (he had a hat that I forgot to mention; it was straw), replying "Naw, it's just a name to scare off skinny-dipping nancy boys." So? What do you think? It's coming out as soon as I'm done writing articles about mediocre videogames.

In any case, *Yakuza* is less entertaining than my story about rustic homophobia and pond history. If you still need reasons as to why you probably should not buy this game, I will be ready to rattle some off for you in person. Honestly, if you catch me in Kline, just take me aside and ask about its shoddy camera angles or repetitive enemy attacks. Otherwise, I have a story to tell. It's about two men, four cold feet, and the special water between them. Unlike my book, *Yakuza* has nothing to tell you about manhood, nor boyhood, nor even their subtly sensual intersection. Fuck that noise.

WESTON, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

own to take you through the game. I would break down the intricate mechanics of the action, except, it isn't particularly intricate. As Kazuma, you punch, kick, and sometimes hit people with objects that aren't usually intended as bludgeons. Add a "gritty" electronic soundtrack and you have the entire game. My imagination could do more art-

In any case, Yakuza is less entertaining than my story about homophobia and pond history.

ful, engaging gaming, but you don't see anyone paying it millions of dollars to sensationalize Japanese criminality.

Now that I have basically broken down the entire game for you, let me provide you with something more entertaining, an excerpt from my latest novel, *Beyond the Pale*. It begins on a ranch:

He quivered some, toes touching the frigid water, while Cletus rocked his head skyward in hoarse laughter. Landon's heart raced at the speed of a cat on fire. This would be his first wade in Leech's Pond. He wondered if it was actually filled with leeches or if that was just a name to scare off skinny-

On Campus Screenings

<p>Thur 9.21 Avery 7pm OCTOBER (1927) –Sergei Eisenstein THE KILLER (1989) –John Woo</p> <p>Fri 9.22 WEIS APOCALYPSE NOW: REDUX (1979) –Francis Ford Coppola TERMINATOR 2 (1991) –James Cameron</p> <p>Sun 9.24 WEIS AFFLICTION (1997) –Paul Schrader LEAVING LAS VEGAS (1995) –Mike Figgis SIDEWAYS (2004) –Alexander Payne EVERY 7pm FIFTY WONDERFUL YEARS –Optic Nerve</p> <p>Mon 9.25 EVERY 7pm FIST FIGHT/FUJI/RUBBER/ SWISS ARMY KNIFE WITH RATS AND PIGEONS/T.Z. –Robert Breer</p> <p>Tue 9.26 EVERY 7pm LA PASSION DE JEANNE D'ARC (1928) –Carl Dreyer ELEPHANT (2003) –Gus Van Sant OLIN 102 LOS OLVIDADOS (w/o SUB-TITLES) (1950) –Luis Bunuel</p> <p>Wed 9.27 Avery 7pm THE RINK (1915) –Charlie Chaplin BALLET MECANIQUE (1924) –Fernand Leger H2O (1929) –Ralph Steiner COLOUR BOX/TRADE TATOO –Len Lye A MOVIE (1958) –Bruce Connor FUJI (1976) –Robert Breer</p>	<p>September 21-- October 4</p> <p>Thur 9.28 Avery 7pm A MAN ESCAPED (1956) –Robert Bresson THE CONVERSATION (1974) –Francis Ford Coppola</p> <p>Fri 9.29 WEIS THE LIVING END (1992) TOTALLY FUCKED UP (1993) DOOM GENERATION (1995) –Gregg Araki</p> <p>Sun 10.1 WEIS FOLLOWING (1998) –Christopher Nolan PUBLIC ACCESS (1993) –Bryan Singer SEX, LIES, AND VIDEOTAPE (1989) –Steven Soderbergh</p> <p>Mon 10.2 EVERY 7pm MAHAGONNEY –Harry Smith</p> <p>Tue 10.3 EVERY 7pm BATTLESHIP POTEMKIN (1925) –Sergei Eisenstein THE KILLER (1989) –John Woo OLIN 102 BELLE DE JOUR (1967) –Luis Bunuel</p> <p>Wed 10.4 Avery 7pm ENTHUSIASM (1931) –Dziga Vertov M (1931) –Fritz Lang</p>
---	---

The Observer

Contributing Writers. Bridget Behrmann, Meghan Black, Frank Brancely, Kirianna Buteau, Grace Dwyer, Eri Kurshan, Rachel Meade, Kevin Powell, Brenda Rowe, Omer Shah, Oliver Traldi, Julia Wentzel, Noah Weston

Contributing Photographers. Fernando Garcia, Sarah Perkins

Assistant Editors. Kaye Cain-Nielsen, Elvia Pyburn-Wilk, Ted Quinlan

Special Thanks: Tess Hall

Editor-in-Chief. Michael Brown
Commentary. Michael Newton
Comics Page. Will Kwok

A.E. Tom Houseman
Associate Editor. Hannah Sheehan
Special Projects: Noah Weston

The opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect reality or the semblance of rational thought. All conflicts and/or moral dilemmas are predigested for your intellectual convenience. The Bard Observer--Copyright 2006.