

# Touching base with Tenny

by Megan Krigbaum

With the onset of Board weekend in the near future, Elissa Tenny, new Provost and Dean of the College, was booked solid with meetings and planning sessions. Her first months here have been spent trying to become acclimated with the place and to understand her role in the way Bennington, as a whole, functions.

Previously, the Dean of the College was purely responsible for the faculty. With the added title of Provost, Tenny's position is Chief Academic Officer, which now oversees all aspects of academic life. This includes the library, academic computing, the BA/MAT program, the MFA programs and the Early Childhood Center. While each of these areas have their own director who is in charge of running day to day programming, Tenny is involved in facilitating the connections between each of these areas under the Bennington College umbrella.

Acknowledging that this is a large job, she is still in the process of getting a grasp on what her job entails in order to eventually realize who within her office can take care of some of the issues.

"I'm still very much the new one. I don't want to give other people responsibilities before I fully understand what needs to be done," said Tenny.

She has regular meetings scheduled with faculty to gather from them what the goals of the college are, involving "a lot of

intense gathering of information," in order to answer basic questions such as: What do we have now? What do we need? What are our priorities? The growth of Bennington College and its effects on the curriculum and class sizes is very much in her mind.

At this point it seems that "communication is our biggest challenge. For a small place communication is tough here. I'm not quite sure why that is."

To address this, she meets regularly with Heidi Sulzdorf, Head of SEPC, and the Talking Heads so she can gather information from the student body and present it to her constituency. "These linkages are very, very important."

Tenny is excited about the students and the distinct sense of how important it is for them to be involved in their education.

"There are lots of [college] students who are less engaged in their education...Everyone here is excited about the challenge of it. This is a place that values that challenge and its students are demanding. They are not simply inquisitive, but are on a quest," she observed.

Elissa Tenny comes to Bennington from The New School in New York City where she served as Vice Dean and was part of the school for many years. She is not the only administrator who comes to us from The New School; President Elizabeth Coleman was once a dean there.

The transition from The New School to Bennington makes

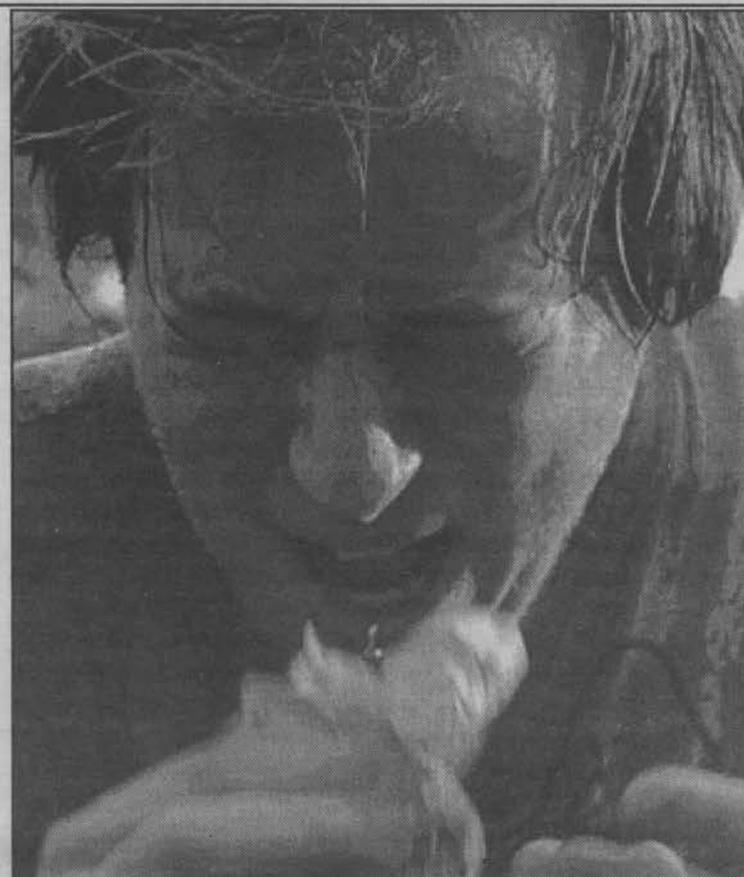
sense to Tenny in that there exists a substantial connection between the two schools, as the core values of each are quite similar. Both emphasize the importance of teacher practitioners and allow students to design their own programs. The differences lie in the student body, in that Bennington is basically composed of "traditional aged students," whereas students at the New School were primarily adults with families and jobs, as well as the setting, urban versus rural.

Coming to rural Vermont from big city New York has brought many changes to Tenny's life, the most noticeable of which is that she has to drive everywhere.

"Everything takes a drive. There's no more leisurely walk from place to place."

To maintain her sanity, this former city woman fills her half hour car ride to work and back home with books on tape. Recently completed was *The Impressionist*, by Hari Kunzru. Somehow, in the middle of all of this change, Tenny manages to lead a fairly normal life. She has two daughters who keep her busy in her time spent away from the college. She also finds time to run everyday and reads often. Tenny is participating in a faculty reading group and just finished reading *Master of Senate* by Robert Caro and April Bernard's *Swan Electric*. Last winter, she took up downhill skiing and is looking forward to improving this winter.

Even with all of this work, and all of this family, and all of this self-improvement, Tenny still wants to have students in her office, getting to know her, and making her aware of their needs. "Come by! We need to use the modes of communication that are already in place. Don't let things go," Tenny said.



## The Spice of Life

by Stephen Bruckert

"It feels like your face is being eaten by ten thousand ants."

Jessica smiles up at me from her plate of brown-pink-grey sludge. I ask her if that's true, if she knows firsthand. She tells me that she doesn't know for sure, someone she knows said so.

A friend, Rebecca, received some pepper spray in the mail from kids back home with a note saying the firey juice should be useful in fighting off randy east coasters. We, those east-coasters in question, are notoriously hateful, snobby and cold in comparison to our brothers and sisters in the west. Though flattered by suggestions that surly New Yorkers and uppity Bostonians can lose self-control, I wondered if the pepper spray she received in the mail would be enough to curb the passions of a normally mellow Vermonter gone wild.

I asked the Internet what would happen if I caught a blast of the stuff in the face. The University of California, Berkeley's Public Safety website

told me that I may "lose balance," that I will feel a "burning sensation," and that I will find myself "coughing, retching, and gasping for air." So I won't be able to stand up, I'll hurt all over, I'll spit up, and I'll have trouble breathing. I was unimpressed by the list of effects. It sounded like no big deal. If I were a rapist or a mugger, would pepper spray stop me? Cops always seem to have the inside track on pain and suffering, so I looked up some testimonials from our men in blue.

According to one officer from Wisconsin, the stuff can put down "a paranoid schizophrenic large male off his medication." One of Louisiana's Finest claims he was being assaulted by a part-Rottweiler. He sprayed the dog in mid-chase. "I think the skid marks are still in the grass," he reports. Another cop, also apparently interested in some first-hand pepper spraying excitement, was "surprised at the intensity and manner in which [his]

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# PRÉCIS

## What's in a play?

by Bibi Deitz

It happens every day. There are different levels: the loitering and aimless – the raucous fights and drug busts. Involved in these levels are kids from dysfunctional families with nothing better to do and no motivation to avoid trouble.

Aware of this, five Bennington College students have armed themselves with drama of the stage variety. Senior Marcos Barbery has organized students Jake Bandman, Daniel Trigg, Josiah Weiss and Mariah Angele in a makeshift theatre company that has potential to morph into a substantial program for teenagers in the Bennington area, or an "education mentorship project," in Barbery's words.

Whether or not this project flies is somewhat dependent on a 100-plus-page grant written primarily by Marianne Kennedy, director of the Center for Restorative Justice, a nonprofit organization in Bennington. The grant was submitted to the Vermont Department of Health and the verdict will be announced on December 15, 2002. Until then, those involved are holding their proverbial breaths – and pushing on without funding, rehearsing four times per week and planning to perform their first play, *What's in School?*, on December 13 and 14, 2002 at 8pm in Bennington College's D207.

Recruited from various social services programs and

directly off the turf of narrow Bennington sidewalks, an average of five kids ages 15 to 18 meet in the First United Methodist Church recreation room in Bennington to act, write, direct and produce a loaded drama – covering the gamut from drug and alcohol problems to teen pregnancy. It was written through a process in which teenagers told stories about their own lives and then used those ideas to form a script. Many of these budding performers are in the custody of the State of Vermont or on probation.

Eventually, the vision for the theatre group includes room for branching out to include any and all Vermont teens interested, and training the mentees to be mentors, creating the possibility for multiple programs to emerge.

"Young people can really excel and express themselves through the arts. It gives them a voice," Kennedy commented. "With arts, we are saying, 'bring it in, we want it here!'" she said, referring to the typically charged emotions these teens carry with them to rehearsal.

"I find it really interesting," on young actor remarked, while another simultaneously exclaimed, "It's fun!" More thoughtful, a third girl added after a few seconds, "We get to keep expressing ourselves and get our point across about what's going on with the teenagers."

"Last June, the Center commissioned me to write a play that would give voices to the different

kids," Barbery said. This play was the springboard for the current project; it was presented to an audience including the Board of Directors for the Center for Restorative Justice on September 20, 2002. The nine-member Board is led by Marge Freed, wife of Vermont House of Representatives speaker Walter Freed, who also attended the meeting. Also present were Bennington College faculty members Dina Janis and Janis Young.

Janis and Young have both agreed to participate in the process of creating and fine-tuning *What's In School?* "This is the thing: no one has ever done this before," Young remarked. "I am aware that people use theatre to help others realize their potential. What I have not ever been aware of is any state or nonprofit organization within a state going out onto the streets and working with young, at-risk people in terms of theatre."

Barbery has already seen a change in his mentees. He observes them feeling good about themselves and speaking up more. "We teach them a healthy way of getting high," he commented.

If the grant does not come through, Kennedy and Barbery agree that they plan to find other sources of funding and resort to more volunteering to preserve the theatre troupe. "I won't let it go away," Kenny stated. Presently, all expenses such as gas and food are out-of-pocket.

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"...air passages and the ability to open [his] eyes were impacted."

I didn't know what it was like to have my face eaten by a colony of ants, Berkeley's list of symptoms were vague (how hard would I cough and what kind of retching would I do?), and, as for the police testimonials, I'm not on any medication and I'm not even part-part-Rottweiler. I talked to Rebecca and she agreed: I would be pepper sprayed. But if I was to experience an allegedly incredible level of pain, I felt that it was my civic duty to have this done in public; as many people as possible must know what it is to have one's face be made spicy. I knew in my heart that if a large number of people were to cheer, clap, and scream as I writhed around in agony, it would send a message to all potential rapists on campus: everyone laughs at someone dumb enough to catch a face full of liquid hot.

The notice went out and spectators lined up against the balcony of Commons. Others were on the ground level, awaiting the battle between man and personal defense products. I waved to the crowd and took my position on the field. I closed my eyes and waited. I felt wetness, a little moisture around my forehead that spread down to my eyes, cheeks, nose, mouth, and chin. It dribbled down to my neck. Nothing happened. I opened my eyes and looked to the crowd. I was about to raise my arms and shout "It's okay, folks! Pepper spray is no big

deal!" when I was slapped across the face with a sockful of quarters soaked in boiling water. My only perception was molten lead pouring down my face, scorching the skin away. I spat, trying to get the heat out of my mouth, trying to clear my throat enough to breathe. I choked out the word "water." The pain slid away with the water that was poured down my face but flared up when the flow stopped. I read that keeping one's eyes open will speed along the recovery process. I tried to force my eyelids apart. I opened my eyes enough to see a watery light when red-hot fishing hooks scraped across, along, into my eyes. I shut them fast and screamed again.

Later that night, after I had been to class and had fully recovered, my girlfriend kissed my neck. She pulled away and smiled. Her lips burned, she told me. "You're spicy!" Maybe I'll start using pepper spray for cologne.

A lot of people have asked me why I did it. A hundred people cheering and clapping amid one or two screams that someone kick me in the nuts would be a pretty big incentive to anyone. However, the driving force behind my torture was not a recommendation of testicular trauma. The truth is what I have told those who asked: I wanted to know what it felt like. Under my closed eyes and burning skin, I felt alive. I can't in seven hundred and fifty words, not a thousand, not ten thousand, make you feel what I felt.

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## A Note From Snap

*Snap* aims to provide Bennington College with a newspaper. As we gain experience, the project will expand and improve. It may not be released on a daily or even weekly basis, but we hope to tackle issues students feel are worthwhile. Our goal is not to impose a voice on the campus, hoping instead to function as a venue for others to speak. Opinions expressed by our contributors are theirs alone, and not necessarily those of *Snap* as a whole.

To those who helped us along the way, thank you. Steven Bach for your endorsement and leadership from the start; April Bernard for your advice, humor and support; David Rees for being David Rees; Paul Renzi for the tools we needed; Student Council for money to print with; Dennis and Charlotte for tech support; Saumya Shrestha; Alex Dorman; Junio Anthes-Moody for your cleverness with computers; and the *Snap* staff for your patience and hard work.

As *Snap* is a collaborative effort, we encourage all members of the Bennington College community to contribute their thoughts and words to this journal. Be it a news article, editorial or art, all submissions are welcome.

~Corrina & Dan

# Listening to some peoples Journal of A world called A plateau

by Wythe Marschall

"Is good," he'd say. Gokcen Ergene goes by "Gekko" and plays a barber in his latest production, a dramatic adaptation of Robert Walser's existentialist novel, *Jakob Von Gunten*. Gekko and his people call their musically-driven version, *Institute Benjamenta*, "a journal of listening to a plateau which some people call the world." When asked nightly about the show's progress Gekko never revealed more than, "Is good. You should come."

The second showing, November 1, was not the best, according to the actors. They more lauded Saturday's performance. They didn't want Sunday to happen at all, though it did. But it hasn't, happened yet. Tonight is Friday, the first of November, the night after All Hallow's Eve.

To the world of *Institute Benjamenta* this is probably not insignificant. To an observer of that world, it is as if everything possible is significant, but no one knows why or how. Every element of the production is an exaggeration. Insanely turgid movements build suspense and punctuate with silences the play's later fits of fervid motion. Spartan dialogues and equivocal relationships add enigma. But none of this reinforces the plot, ostensibly a visual and auditory diary of young Jakob Von Gunten's attempt to penetrate and merge with the world of the *Institute*, a school for loser-servants of the lowest common denomination. Jakob fails to save his instructor, Anna Vieira's Fraulein Benjamenta, or her brother, the Herr. The audience is not sure why.

Because no details of idea plainly exist behind the incredible details of the work's surface, forcibly shrink-wrapping narrative form over the Surreal fugues and wafting songs of the play results in failure. It is hard to say with accuracy what happens.

This is what happens: A

wall of windows and hidden doors and more windows accelerates up from the black floor, cross-hatched by white tape, to greet the in-walking audience. The wall meets a void-like ceiling stung by light after light after light, all in use at some moment, all dancing from spot to spot to find a newer, more stylized, more beyond-accurate mood. The play has not commenced, but it may as well have. The front row is five feet from the first actor. He sits, like the others, at a desk, with a book. It is unsettling to see and hear school from the outside. Generally, life has not such an unnerving soundtrack.

They bang down the books; the lights shatter the dark, end waiting; the music swells to a beam, focusing tension into attention and anxiety into anxiousness. Jakob moves. He is here James Zanolokin; soon he is himself, drinking and dancing with life and pain and utter belief. Sometimes he is a center of attention without doing anything, sometimes because he does nothing. He is the one natural, chaotic element in the cast. He is the one un-rigid student who will not bend and read and turn a page and bend and read and turn a page in time to the beat, who will not follow Kraus's lead.

Kraus, as lived through John Boyd, exemplifies trust in the *Institute* and thus trust in the world to dictate one's life. He moves with uncanny patience, a statue who slides from point A to point B with hypnotic precision. He observes Jakob with a hare-lusted falcon's eyes. The two exchange glances. Words, brief and indirect. The entire play, in memory, is a dream of just-lost subtleties and missed enlightenment, though entertaining and perfectly executed.

Susan Sgorbati's choreography has the room of interchangeably dull and broken students reading with a banging, lifting, banging pattern loud enough to wake the dead and shut down *Stomp*. This frenzy of literature,

a physical manifestation of pointlessness and the ability of students to literally avoid interaction with the world in which they dwell, drives itself to a stunning crescendo as Jakob's freedom catalyzes the students' ennui. The game is chess, the action is immediate. Pieces slam to boards, faster, harder, until wood cracks and Lawson Wulsin's Schacht throws his minimalist pawns and knights and rooks and world to the audience members' feet. The board follows directly, nearly injuring onlookers. It's gripping.

Thusly does *Institute's* treatment of motion, set, and direction simplify life to a single, fairy-tale wave. Disproportionately-sized objects, bland furniture, stacked and un-stacked books all help, most of all the non-gate at the school's front, made of less metal than some desk lamps. This is a "once upon a time," told by Albert Camus.

But *Institute's* fairy-tale nature does not make it straightforward. Emotions are tangled, like real life, and the audience sees scenes with little linking them besides an attempt to do so. It is like watching a famous opera in another language performed expertly by Martians. Even the pantomime is vague in a fantastic way, most notably when Fraulein and Jakob dance to the One Blue Light, the only nigh-spiritual element in a humanistic tale about when to serve and when to learn and when to live and when to leave. Time runs on.

The close does not come too soon, neither does it particularly illustrate anything. We do not have Jakob nor Kraus nor Herr nor Fraulein Benjamenta nor whomever as heroes. We have an empty set, scattered with broken game pieces. The story was the production, and the point was beautifully hinted-at. We will, those who wondered at it, remember the *Institute* in dreams, and that is a tribute to Gekko and his mutterings. "Is good."

## The Roots the Roots the Roots are on FIRE

by Wythe Marschall

Music moves inexorably towards the electronic, the studio-produced, the re-re-re-mixed and mastered. Shows become videos, lights, special effects, fogs, guests, and surprises, not acoustic perfection. Even in the realm of hip hop, where artists spawn rhymes from the street up, a profusion of turntables and computers encroaches upon solid lyrical ability and conviction of voice and drum.

The Roots wouldn't know. This Philadelphia-based army of musicians and sonic legends never ceases to bring an almost unparalleled vitality to tour stops and rap-jams. November 17, 2002, Roots emissaries Scratch, Black Thought, ?uestlove (pronounced "Questlove"), Kamal, and Hub descend on Dartmouth College along with a percussionist of mumbled name and celebrated Rage Against the Machine guitarist Tom Morello. The result is a three-hour orgy of classic Philly rap, piano, funk-bass, guitar and vocal scratching, seventies rock, freestyling, and frenzy-inducing energy.

This potency, along with a trademark diversity of tunes and length of concert, is the root of the Roots' singularity among rap groups. From "human DJ/vocal turntablist" Scratch to bassist Hub, not one of the performers slows or misses a beat. Even if the words remain largely and unintelligibly gansta, they have no end. Beyond this, each Root performs a solo of no mean duration and complexity.

The first of these belongs to the drummer, ?uestlove. Until his turn in the spotlight arrives, he sits and keeps time and wears the drooping face of an old dog. When the other Roots step back, however, he taps out stranger rhythms, faster and more elegant than earlier ones, and invites the percussionist, primarily a bongo player, to emerge from a water-break and find drumsticks. The two descend on one set, building louder, fiercer cadences. Then Tom Morello appears, guitar absent, sticks in hand.

The ensuing three-person percussive rape involves a rotat-

ing walk-around-the-kit which produces a visual blur of euphonic artistry. It's hard to believe, for any fan of the man named the greatest guitarist of the nineties by music journals dedicated to both rap and rock. Tom Morello's actually here. Playing drums with the Roots. His current super-group stint with former Soundgarden singer Chris Cornell aside, Morello's performing with the Roots is a thing of surrealness and rarity and invented nostalgia.

Despite its variety, nothing in the Roots' drawn-out, rap-heavy set matches Morello's thirty-minute guitar solo. Swinging from AC/DC covers to Rage riffs to straight hip hop twang, the "skinny pimp," as emcee Black Thought calls him, invents ways to make new noise from an old instrument. He bridges the harder pop genres like Hendrix might've if he'd toured with Pink Floyd. The crowd oohs, aahs, then stops dancing to watch a guy who, from his clothes, might be a mechanic manipulate a red stick and some strings into a studio.

Even without Morello's genius, the Roots showcase innovation in DJ-ing - Scratch and always-absent "human beatbox" Rahzel assure this - and rap in general. Songs bounce and feature harmonizing between Scratch and Black Thought, and hooks amount to driving pairs of couplets instructing listeners to jump or throw up hands or represent or watch out. Sudden pauses mix with changing guitar and piano melodies to smooth it out, blending breathless tracts of Philadelphia-loving verse into one hip hop-fugue.

Thus the Dartmouth convergence makes a strong case for investigating the Roots' latest album, *Phrenology*, but it also reminds those jaded by synthesizers and drum loops to enjoy the sounds of the physically present and the skilled. The Roots amaze because they play with a virility so frenetic and awesome you know you couldn't match it if you tried for a billion years. And you don't have to, so long as the Roots and Tom Morello decide to keep music live.

# Two Out of Three Ain't Half Bad

## P O T A N D P E Z

by Stephen Bruckert

The door to Mark Jude Poirier's dark office swings open and light from the hallway reflects off strange mucousy bumps that cling to his wall. Before he turns the light on, the bulbous shapes could be giant insects nesting or some strange piece of postmodern art. When the fluorescent tubes overhead chirp and fill the room with light, the answer is revealed to be a strange combination of the two: plastic bubbles containing Pez dispensers.

There is a crate of Pez dispensers and strange plastic knickknacks on the floor, each dispenser and oddity individually Ziploc-ed. On the desk is a telephone, dispensers in factory-sealed packaging, and still more of the little sandwich baggies filled with strange heads atop unadorned plastic totems. Behind me are Mark's bookshelves. The top two house statues of large cartoon characters and pop-culture icons ranging from Frankenstein to Top Cat. One of the strange dolls has a tag around its neck that reads, "bubble bath." The rest of his bookshelves proudly display Pez; Mario is here, as well as all of the most popular Warner Brothers cartoon characters. The most famous of all nuclear families, the Simpsons, take most of the top row of a set of clear plastic Pez bleachers. Luke Skywalker, Princess Leia, and Chewbacca are in attendance, "But I've never been able to find R-2 D-2," Mark says sadly.

Pez is everywhere. In fact, since his dispensers are on parade all over his bookshelves, I wonder where his books are. I look around and see three books: *Hook Man Speaks* by Matt Clark, *The Half-Mammals of Dixie* by George Singleton, and *Unsung Heroes of American Industry* by himself.

"I can teach you all about Pez," he says, and beams.

He explains that you can approximate the date of a dispenser by a few key features. Pez started adding feet to their dispensers in the 80's. In the late 90's, heads started getting bigger. The most recent manufacturing convention is making the heads out of one solid piece. In the bygone days, the famous Disney dog Pluto would have ears that were molded separately, or in the case of an old stewardess Pez, a hat.

"This stewardess Pez, if she had her hat, would be worth a hundred dollars. But... why?"

It reminds him of a great line in *Ghost World*, he says, smiling and laughing, about people filling the void in their lives with junk.

A white box next to his desk contains ten, maybe fifteen, little Barbie doll heads - no bodies. A close look reveals that something is wrong. The jaws are too broad and the skin is too tan. This is no Barbie I've ever seen. Mark notices my curiosity and tells me that his friend, as a joke, sent him a box of Farrah Fawcett heads.

"Uh, Mark? You don't have any books in your

office."

Mark on recreation: "I don't think Professors and students should mingle in the sauna."

... on aesthetics: "If it's ugly, I really like it."

... on being 'out': "Why waste your brain wondering if your professor is gay?"

... on tinseltown: "Hollywood isn't all evil. They're not all stupid."

For the second half of my interview, I walk up to Mark's apartment in Woolley. The door is hidden in the corner of the building by an obstacle course of pillars, bike racks and trash cans. Inside the living room of his apartment, there is no couch, no decorations. The furnishings are two chairs, a desk slid against the window, and a plain vanilla rug half-covered by a suitcase and its emptied contents. There are letters and bills, both opened and unopened, and a stack of framed pictures. One is of him raising a glass half-full of dark liquid, five or ten people behind him, most of whom are men.

"That was my writing community at Iowa. We all went to the same bar. It's nice to be around a lot of people with the same goals as you."

In another frame are Mark and his boyfriend, "a Cuban financial analyst... or, uh, financial analyst from Cuba," on two separate photographs. It's symbolic: the financial analyst lives in Boston. I say that it must be hard to live far away from your loved one.

"He's coming up this weekend," Mark says, and smiles.

The walls of Mark's apartment are recessed to make bookshelves, which are all neatly stuffed. As I look over the titles and authors, I realize that he doesn't keep his books in his office because there isn't space. Every volume stands straight; there are no bookends, nor is there room for any. On the bottom rows of a free-standing bookshelf are books that have his name on them: *Naked Pueblo*, *Goats*, and *Unsung Heroes of American Industry*.

*Goats*, Mark's first novel, is about two militant potheads: one, a teenaged prep school kid, and the other, a 40-year-old pool cleaner. The book won over readers that were disappointed upon meeting him at signings. "Everyone expected me to show up wearing a Phish shirt because I got their lifestyle right. But it's not hard to imagine what it would be like to be stoned all the time." Some fans sent letters that seemed to miss the point of the novel. "I would get letters that said things like, 'Dude, I loved your book. I had a bowl going the whole time.'"

So when was the last time Mark had a bowl going? Not in ten or fifteen years.

"I like writing a lot more than I like being stoned."

## A chat with Christopher

by Charlotte Silver

"You always look back at your former self, looking for evidence of future genius," says new literature professor Christopher Miller. "Unfortunately, when I was in seventh grade I was reading seventh-grade books. You know, those young-adult books about the new kid at school who prevails through sheer pluck. My mother used to give me those books, and after a while I thought, 'Mom, are you trying to tell me something?'"

Miller is, as this anecdote suggests, a modest man with a dry sense of humor. Although he came from a verbal family - "lots of punning at the dinner table" - he says he never thought of himself as a writer until he was in his mid-twenties. As an undergraduate at Columbia University, he failed to complete long pieces: "I'd spend the whole semester obsessing over three pages." This year he published his first novel *Simon Silber, Notes for Solo Piano*. He was pleased with the response to the book, but said that the cover, showing a photograph of Simon's face, disappointed him. "It's hard to see a picture of one of your characters after carrying them around in your head, for so long," he says.

"It's like when they animate cartoons. You've been reading them for years and then all of a sudden you hear Garfield's voice."

Miller likes to juggle several projects at one time. Right now, he is working on a book-length essay about dreams (one of his courses is called *The Dream as Literary Genre and Scientific Document*) and two short novels. One of the novels is about a small town in which everyone is obsessed with food. He describes his second novel, also set in a small town, as "a novelization of a non-existent David Lynch movie." He also lists *Scooby Doo* as an influence, adding, "But I thought David Lynch sounded like a more ennobling reference."

Until he taught at Bennington, Miller himself had never lived in a small town. (He grew up in Cleveland.) So far, he likes the college. "It's different than any other place in the world." Have there been any surprises? "No, nothing," he says. "Nothing as startling as Garfield's voice."

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# t r o u b a d o r

## Two Wednesdays

I.  
By Wednesday, I had only recently become aware that I had misplaced my shadow.

II.  
Now it is today.

I am standing outside a phone booth waiting for the man inside to end his call as I see my shadow cross the street on fire.

People scatter – as if they, too, were on fire – as others holler for water, which the shop owners supply with their hoses.

I admire their shadows rushing about.

Sirens wail. But the fire engines don't turn the corner – only police cars in pursuit.

Someone hollers that my shadow has a knife!

It escapes to a building, and the police follow. A crowd gathers. An hour passes.

The officers walk out of the building, point my way, and put me in hand cuffs.

The camera flashes are bright!

I am standing in a puddle of my blood.

My shoes are charred.

~peter pan

## Memories of a Bastard Dancing

Startling to think of it now, the glossy, all-night subway rides the token Asian girlfriends with delftware features made fragile by the cold.

We were young and cynical then, relating where we were when we heard the news of the shopliffin' young starlets heartbreaking indictment.

Friend, there is a hole in your argyle sock, exposing the toe of wisdom, the middle one, the yardstick by which superstitious old women measure knowledge. Drink your gin from the tumbler.

If you need me I'll be boogying in the kitchen.

I'm the one with the paisley lampshade on his head. If the phone rings and it's someone looking for me, say you haven't seen that I just left, or me.

~Andrew Hughes

## Disposable

Morning glory muffins walk the sun-drenched streets

Waiting for small birds to mistake them for home

~buffalo bill

## Because I Cannot Tell You

It's taking too long, this shift of season. Winter doesn't want to come fast enough. Still the leaves fall like the feel of your breath against my cheek, mouth. Inside my ears I hear your autumn whispering

Snow. Snow.

Why is it that God has blessed me so? Your love came unexpected, electric, singing my body like Whitman. Are you as close as I'll ever get to the sun? Your eyes, brown and blazing. Your touch, the fever from which I gladly die over and over. . .

Like the magician spreading her Houdini magic everywhere, everything the color of fire.

~Jaamil Olawale Kosoko

## Talking Dirty to Mary Oliver

I see you  
Mary.

Shaking that thing.

~for Russell Dillon

~Andrew Hughes

# My barbaric yawlp: a word on poetry

*Things are not all so comprehensible and expressible as one would mostly have us believe; most events are inexpressible, taking place in a realm which no word has ever entered, and more inexpressible than all else are works of art, mysterious existences, the life of which, while ours passes away, endures.*

~Rilke

I have been asked to write a "short blurb about poetry." I'll begin then with someone else's words. Jim Harrison is a contemporary American poet whose work I've always enjoyed and know plenty more than I do. He writes, "Poetry, at its best, is the language your soul would speak, if you could teach your soul to speak." Harrison also writes, "If you have to ask what poetry is good for, it will never be any good for you." However (against my better judgment), I'm going to ask the question anyway. *What is poetry good for?*

Poetry, "at its best," removes us from our own immediate lives and idiosyncrasies, and allows us the chance to see how someone else pays attention to the world. We learn to ask ourselves, *How do I address the world?* Poetry, when it's damn good, is what happens when the writer has taken in the world and given it back clearly, simply, the way he sees it. I can't count the number of times I have returned to Rilke's *Letter to A Young Poet* and found comfort in his clarity, his ability to take up the rather chaotic human condition, shake it loose from all that is noisy and unnecessary, leaving only the simplest truths. Kafka, to paraphrase, believed that when we read we chip away at the hard ice of the soul. Better yet, Harrison again (feeding off John Muir's idea about grizzly bears, that they exist "for their own magnificent selfness"), thinks that poetry exists in and of itself and needs

no reason. I think he's right.

Perhaps the biggest mistake I've made so far as a reader of poetry was believing that it had all the answers. I've learned, with more than a little difficulty and a lot of arguing with Rilke in my sleep, that the real joy in poetry is learning to love the questions themselves. I've been asked again and again, *Why do you write poetry?* The same reason I read it – I love the discovery. There's nothing more satisfying than finishing a piece of work and feeling in the final product that something quite amazing has happened. Something you didn't know you knew appears, and it makes some sense. And because, "A poem is better than a bloody turkey foot in the mailbox." (Harrison. Right.)

~Jaimien Delp

# Features

## AN INTERVIEW WITH THE PRESIDENT

### PART 1

by Elizabeth McComiskey

Finding that one is going to be a reporter on the staff of any newspaper is a thrilling experience. Surely, visions of Barbara Walters and Dan Rather flash through one's mind, while trying to think up a good catch phrase for the moment glory comes pounding on the door. And tonight on 20/20, Elizabeth McComiskey, the famous personality who got her start writing for the Bennington College newspaper, Snap, discusses her fame and how she handles it with such grace.

However, daydreams soon fade, and one starts to really think about getting out in the field and doing some hardheaded interviews. The first assignment: sit down and have a friendly chat with college president, Liz Coleman. This task is simple, yet destined for greatness. The idea is to have the setting be someplace amiable, where students frequent and are likely to be present. Perhaps dinner with Liz Coleman in the Dining Hall. Maybe an evening in the Upstairs Café, eating nachos and talking about the well being of the College. However, before any of this is to happen, one must first get in touch with her.

The procedure for speaking with Liz Coleman seemed simple enough. Go to the President's office, explain purpose to secretary, and schedule a suitable time and place for it to occur. This could not be farther from what actually happened. First I spoke with a secretary, then an Assistant to the President. Next, I was sent to Communications, which this would-be interviewer found confusing. Why should a student who wants to have a conversation with the President, have to go through external communications? My trudge to the Communications office brought me to a room where not an employee was in sight, with the exception of a tired-looking student at a computer. Phone calls

were placed to people who never seemed to be at their desks, and some phone calls placed were never returned. Discouraged but still determined to speak with Liz, I called the other staff writer working on this article. Unfortunately, this occurrence is anything but uncommon at Bennington.

Speaking to students about their experiences in communication with the administration, it was discovered that many students have found themselves in similar situations, greeted by empty offices or sent from place to place without result. One student told of her failed attempt at getting a Federal Work Study job. She was offered a job by the organizer of Spanish Education at the Early Childhood Center, and concurrently told by employees of the FWS office that the job was not available under the guidelines of FWS. At the same time, the ECC was saying that teaching Spanish was an FWS job, and that students had done it before.

The most confounding example of the procedures involved in trying to find someone to talk to in the Administration comes from a young man who was told he should speak to Financial Aid counselors regarding a problem he had. The Financial Aid office then sent him to Student Life, believing that his troubles had more to do with Student Life than Financial Aid. Upon reaching Student Life, he was sent to the Field Work Term office, which then told him he had to see the Dean of Studies. He finally reached her, but was again told he didn't really belong there, either. Finally, disgusted, he gave up.

Perhaps students and faculty would be better served if administrative offices were given precise guidelines as to their specific functions so everyone could be aware of which office is appropriate to address for any particular reason. One tends to think that an institution with a population of less than 1,000 (including all faculty and staff) should have the

ability to communicate within its own walls easily. It would seem that confusion is a new facet to the Bennington College Experience, and one that shall be addressed.

### PART 2

by Elizabeth McComiskey & Julieanne Smolinski

Bennington College President Elizabeth Coleman is much like a Bennington student. Her eagerness to discuss projects and her inability to sit still for very long show her to be a fine match for this college.

Finally getting through our difficulties in trying to contact the President, a meeting was set up for Tuesday, October 8<sup>th</sup>, 2002. Many topics were planned for discussion, ranging from opinions on the school's growing population to the new Art History Lecture Series. An almost innate terror of speaking to the most powerful person at Bennington College was quickly set to rest by her easy nature and willingness to respond to our questions.

The idea that Bennington is an exceptional community of students, faculty and staff came up many times. From Coleman's thoughts on a student newspaper ("What interests me even more than abstractly why it's important is what it is, . . . what it might be here.") to her ideas on the Art History project ("We've got this great party and, and what we're looking at are beautiful things,"), she exudes passion for the institution and its principles. To Coleman, what Bennington advocates is head-and-shoulders above what other colleges stand for. She spoke of the Ivy League and its static position, whereas "Bennington is about a much more dynamic idea." She sees Bennington as incredibly vibrant, where people of all kinds come together. Through their diversity and interests a fantastic web of passions is created - what Coleman calls a "pedagogy of making."



Of the many topics discussed, Coleman spoke compellingly on a project begun this year that she hopes will blossom into a magnificent success for Bennington. The campus-wide desire for an Art History program led to the creation of a student questionnaire last year. It was decided that a program should be created that would fit nicely into Bennington's belief system. The idea is to have a series of lectures and presentations, surrounding the history of art that students from all disciplines can participate in and enjoy.

Students have voiced concern at the increasing population of the school, and how housing will be affected if numbers continue to increase. In response to the apprehension, Coleman laughed and said, "Don't worry, you're not going to be in the street." She also pointed out that the college is not growing as rapidly as gossip claims. In fact, this year's freshman class is actually smaller than last year's. So, officially, the rumors that next year students will be pitching tents, are just that - rumors.

Coleman also addressed talk among students about class size, and how classes are getting to be larger. She explained that it must be taken into consideration the

passion Bennington students have for their work, and upon finding a professor with the same passion, they choose to continue working with that professor. Though this is appropriate, when fifty students study a certain subject and want to work with the same professor, classes naturally become larger than those courses for students studying less popular subjects.

Talk of the school expanding leads one to think of transformations Bennington College has experienced, which leads us to the Symposium. Whether or not one believes these early-nineties transitions helped the institution, one has to admit that the school is looking as healthy as ever before, if not more so. "I love where we are now compared to where we were ten years ago," Coleman said. At one point, she said, the lack of student body was enough to give one the "heebie-jeebies" walking through campus, and the last thing she is interested in is, "presiding over a Bennington that loses its energy."

Coleman hopes to get back to teaching soon, which she "really love[s] to do." In answer to whether or not she can picture herself presiding over any other college, she laughs and gives a definitive, "no."

# PROFILES

## CERTAINLY MABEY: AN INTERVIEW

by Sophie Ohara

It is eight o'clock at night and the metal gate leading up to the dining hall is pulled shut. Gregg Mabey enters downstairs Commons looking like a new man. Jumping on board this term as the new head of the dining hall, Mabey's approachability and friendly nature easily make him one of the nicest people on campus.

Having stepped out of his standard oxford shirt and black slacks for the night, Mabey looks hip. He swings a black sports bag and carries a plain black organizer that looks impeccably ordered and neat as he approaches the table. He wears a casual olive sweater with silk threads that shine. His smile has not weakened since he entered the room, and as he places his elbows on the table and raises his hands to his chin, he is ready to attack this

interview with the vigor of a football coach during playoff season.

Mabey's plan in life was to become center fielder for the Brooklyn Dodgers. If he had the talent, he admits that he would probably dedicate his life to baseball. However, becoming a supreme athlete had its limitations and he traded in a life in the major leagues for his other interest: food. At the age of twelve, Mabey became interested in cooking due to his close relationship with his mom whom he would assist with meals. At fifteen he held his first job working at a local country club in his hometown of Albany as a bus boy, which offered him his first glimpse at the demanding working conditions and the long hours of restaurant life. Yet the restaurant business enticed Mabey enough to earn him a Bachelor's Degree in hotel restaurant management in foods and nutrition

from Michigan State University. Originally, he trained as a cook and spent junior and senior years at the Hilton International in Tel Aviv where he trained with European chefs and learned what he calls, "the finer details." Continuing his study at Michigan State University, Mabey went on to earn his Master's Degree in Science Administration—a far cry from playing center field for the Dodgers.

Before coming to Bennington College, Mabey was working in Eastern Tennessee and at one point he lived in Orange County, California. The restaurant business's tendency to make people move around led Mabey's family to relocate quite often. What attracted him to Bennington College was the location. The town of Bennington is calm and familiar to him, having grown up in Albany. When pitted against dining halls at other

colleges, Mabey says that Bennington is highly selective and fortunate. The high number of vegetarians and vegans on campus has played a significant role in keeping specialty food and drink such as soy and five combinations of granola in the dining hall. Mabey says that some students decide on Bennington partly because of the high selectivity of its foods. Take the entrée selection, for instance. Unlike most colleges that offer meat and vegetarian entrées, Bennington acknowledges the vegan contingent on campus and includes a suitable entrée for them as well. "At most colleges," Mabey explains, "there is more demand for hamburgers and french fries. You are simply not getting the quality offered here. We even have flavored water."

What is unique to Bennington is the presence of napkin notes and it can be noted

that Mabey puts diligent effort in responding to them. He attaches white forms to the bottom of each note and responds in careful handwriting and with the utmost assiduity. Sometimes, there are Internet printouts attached to a note. When thinking of notes that stand out, Mabey smiles. "Ooh, there are good ones. The napkins with artistic abilities are no doubt the best as I am a visual person." Then his head tilts to one side and he adds, "the misspellings are concerning. When they spell 'our,' 'a-r-e,' that freaks me out a little bit. I expect that stuff at a state university but not here."

What are the perks of a career as head of dining hall services? Mabey tips his head back and looks at the ceiling for a moment. "Getting to work with the students. You see new faces—it is an exciting profession."

## A Night with Bill, the Enforcer

by Rebecca Hoyt

Just about every student on this campus knows the Bennington College security guard William Reynolds. We call him Bill. We see him walking around campus, through hallways, cruising in the Rav, and, if you're unlucky, you've seen Bill standing in your doorway and realize you've been busted. Bill is one of the most well-known security guards on campus, whether students love him or... not. What many of us don't realize is how much he cares about the students of Bennington College.

Bill was born in Baltimore, Maryland, and raised in Greenwich, New York. He has been married four times and is the father of

seven boys. His marriage with his present wife, who drives the shuttle for the college, has lasted for over thirty years. Now sixty years old, Bill has been working at Bennington College for three years. Previously he worked at Syracuse University, was a volunteer firefighter, a police officer in Hoosick Falls, and a security guard at St. Mary's Hospital.

Many students seem to think that Security's role on campus is to write students up for smoking and alcohol violations, but that is only a small part of what Security does. They handle key give-outs, parking and speeding violations, medical emergencies, and campus building checks. Patrol of the campus includes off-campus housing and

extends as far as the President's house.

Bill's job is one of the most underrated campus occupations. There are only eight security guards for about six hundred students. These officers are working overtime and double time in addition to their forty-hour weeks and are the lowest paid employees on campus. Bill and the other security guards also come in on days off to appear at judicial hearings and other functions.

In answer to the question, 'does security harass or protect?' Bill laughs. "We protect," he says, "we have sent more students to the hospital for alcohol poisoning this year than I've seen in three years." Bill explained how so much time goes in to writing reports

and following them up with judicial that one can't imagine security would simply give violations for the sake of harassment. He simply states, "It's our job... nobody wants to write these kids up, I don't want to write them up. It takes time out of my night." It is not the hope of campus security officers to get any one in trouble, but the college must abide by state laws. In fact, Bill admits he gets emotionally attached to students who are constantly getting into trouble.

"I'm not a bad guy... but they have to learn that there are going to be rules and regulations all their lives." Bill also notes that the alcohol policy on this campus is very liberal and, while he thinks Judicial is "fabulous" and gives students an idea of what

it's like to be in court, they are not strict enough. He encourages students to protect themselves by reading the student handbook and understanding that security guards may also use their own discretion when needed. Students with questions about policy on campus are encouraged to speak to Bill, or anyone in Security.



# THE SPORTS PAGE

## Those brilliant young athletes of autumn

by Zubin Soleimany

--Brattleboro, VT

"We had a good season. I mean, not that we played well, but we had a good season," Coach Mark Kevorkian tells his team outside a Brattleboro Pizza Hut. Coach Kevorkian hesitated (reasonably) to give me his last name so from here on I will refer to him simply as K. Eight years ago K, a Bennington insurance salesman, revived the Bennington College Pioneers, a once all-girl's soccer team that plays other small Vermont schools. At first, K could hardly string a team of wimpy liberal arts students together from a student body of 300. Now, with 500 students, I guess he can.

### *SIT 1, Bennington Pioneers 1*

It was parent's weekend so I hailed a golf cart down to the soccer field to catch the Pioneers who were fresh off a 3-1 win over Marlboro for their home opener. The team warmed up, taking light practice shots and stretching while K, who has the figure and outfit of a weekend marathon runner, stood by professionally.

"Blood makes the grass grow! Win! Win! Win!" With what were probably the most martial words ever spoken on our campus the Pioneers took the field against the School for International Training, which has an older, more talented, but less cohesive team. Bennington played a strong defensive game in the first half; the ball remained mostly in our zone, but defenders allowed few shots on goal.

SIT player-coach Les Kozaczek chastised his team at halftime, "We have to use the space they're

giving us, shoot earlier, and produce." Bennington midfielder Keith Hendershot remained optimistic after a surprisingly strong half and expected more aggressive offense to materialize in the second half, saying, "Our Nepalese have got rocket feet." Maybe, but with Cold War surplus accuracy, striker Nirjan Rai sent several shots sailing over the crossbar until he finally scored off of a perfect white-gloved pass from Devin Horan at 12:32 into the second half.

SIT boosted their offense after the half but, in goal, Glen Van Brummelen surveyed and stopped shots with geometric precision. SIT also exhibited the worst acting I'd seen in Bennington until Cinema 3 screened "Rules of Attraction." After a contested foul, SIT spoiled Van Brummelen's shutout on a penalty kick with twelve minutes remaining in regulation. Bennington's push remained strong while K directed players in a frantic squawk more familiar among pedestrian-scattering cabbies: Look! He's being covered by my grandfather, for Chrissake, and he still can't get the ball! How many chances like that are you gonna get?! Bennington sent a few shots high or wide in the last ten and pulled off a lucky 1-1 tie. Regarding the SIT player who took an embellished dive and subsequent penalty kick that cost the Pioneers a shutout, K told his team, "He's foreign. They do that!"

### *Marlboro College 0, Bennington Pioneers 5*

Marlboro's van arrived late while the Pioneers took warm-up shots, directed by a peppier-than-usual

K. All right, today we're going to play with some zeal. Z-e-e-l. Um, Coach, it's z-e-a-l. "I know that," Coach says, "I'm just keeping you on your toes!" K, who was pleased to see me again and began to realize that I wasn't just there to collect one-liners for the next Bad News Bears type movie now calls me, "Intrepid Reporter." I think he just didn't know my name yet.

The Pioneers take the field with a stalwart roar of "Communism!" Later, I wonder if this cheer was meant as a slight to Romanian defector and math student Stefan Popovici. Stefan's drama of loyalty is hazy; for whatever reason he was unable or unwilling to come to the Pioneers' practices and therefore ineligible for game time so Stefan offers his services to any visiting team that will take him.

The weather played out for Marlboro like Ernest Lawrence Thayer himself arranged it. A steady drizzle followed their team through a ninety-minute Bennington onslaught that began two minutes into the game with Nirjan Rai notching his first of the day. Devin Horan, a soft-spoken striker from Worcester, MA, followed suit only minutes later while being trailed by three men. Despite their uncontested control of the field, Bennington played a much looser, fragmented game than during the previous week. Down 3-0 at the half, Marlboro's goalie-coach tried to compress basic soccer strategy and Patton-like inspiration into a one-minute spiel. By this point, his less-delusional players knew better: "we don't know how to play soccer, remember?" Regarding Popovici, Marlboro assistant coach Amy Galant said

she was a little confused by Stefan's proposal but said she'd play him in the second half.

As Popovici took the field in a borrowed green jersey, Bennington bench gossip assumed the same tone that my uncles reserve for self-hating Jews. The Pioneers are not your traditional hard-nosed college athletes, but still, Stefan seems to have offended a sense of school loyalty that is entirely lacking anywhere else on campus. The story of Stefan's betrayal as revealed through benchside gossip grew larger and more hostile by the minute: "Stefan was rude to your father? Well, he's good and he likes to hurt our players." At this point the rain blurred my notes to illegibility.

After some terse inspiration from K, Bennington escaped Marlboro's vacuum of bad play in the second half as more fluid passing came together like Tetris. One exception was Mary Jane Walsh, a tough Southern belle who bruised the Greens, brutally and obliviously toppling half the men in her path. Goals followed from Rai once more and Jeff Barnes, ending the game 5-0, followed by a mannerly dinner attended by both teams in the Green Room.

### *Pioneers 1, SIT 4*

After the hour-long van ride to Brattleboro, a soft and quiet rain fell on the Pioneers as they stretched and spat and coughed. Across the field, SIT was moving around and already looking fuller than two weeks before. It was hard for me to imagine any team having a home field advantage on their deeply-pocked mud plot, but they definitely proved them-

selves at home.

The game represented an important opportunity for Bennington to show themselves on par with SIT, that last game's tie against the league's best wasn't just a fluke. Unfortunately, the Pioneers couldn't push anything through the middle, throwing away chances in reckless shots right outside striking distance and getting lost in SIT's tightly-knit defense. In my notebook, K's plans dribbled and smudged under the rain.

SIT played an entirely different game (in fairness, a game most of them actually grew up with), seamlessly passing through a flimsy defense, giving Van Brummelen little rest in goal. SIT played a cat and mouse, eventually working their way into the goal again and again. Bennington altered their strategy at the half, playing the walls more but managing few gains, scoring a solitary late-game goal. SIT did not relent, adding third and fourth goals among a slew of wide, high, and saved shots.

I wouldn't be fair to say that this last game was just a rotten series of heartbreaks, there were plenty of physical injuries too: Glen Van Brummelen's amazing minimalist two-finger save and Will Ransom's gender-defying splits. Most notable was the knee driven into Mia Karpov's torso. Helped off the field by K, Karpov said, "I'm fine. I might not be able to have children, but I'm fine." K said, "Yeah, it's called taking one for the team." As the bruise began to rise on Karpov's torso at the final whistle, the sun set on a three-year era of undefeated play for Bennington, with the Pioneers down 4-1.