

THE BLUE AND WHITE

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SACHED!

The Millennials come of age in the era of the Millennium Project.


PLANET BUTLER

Prepare to see it as never before!

BLACK AND LIGHT BLUE

The Blue and White gets smashed with men's club rugby.

ALSO: IS 2009 THE WORST YEAR TO GRADUATE?



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TYPOGRAPHICAL NOTE

The text of *The Blue and White* is set in Bodoni Seventy Two ITC, which was based on original designs by Giambattista Bodoni of Parma (active 1765-1813). The display faces are Weiss and Cantoria.

IRIS BLUE BOOK

For all Columbians' intellectual posturing, James Franco's arrival on campus has brought our star-struck, tabloid-consuming, pop culture-worshipping id to the fore. At the faintest whispered rumor of his presence in the library, Butler's most studious are known to put down even the most enlightening polemic on post-colonial feminist theory and dart off to try to sneak a peek. Of course, Franco isn't the first star to grace fair Morningside with his charms; members of the previous generation of Columbians can still recall the names of friends who shared Lit Hum with Julia Stiles or Rider Strong. It would stand to reason then that despite all claims to our—well-earned, to be sure—more-detached-than-thou dispositions, Columbians are, for the most part, students of Perez as much as they are students of Plato.

But what happens when the spheres of academia and celebrity cross, and we are expected to reconcile a seriousness of purpose with fanatical hero worship? As Katie Reedy and Sara Vogel find out in talking to the current and lapsed disciples of Jeffrey Sachs, sometimes this requires abandoning the luminary of sustainable development who attracted them to the discipline in the first place (p. 14). Still, often escaping celebrities isn't even an option, as demonstrated by Jon Hill's charting of the six degrees of economics professor Graciela Chichilnisky (p. 12) and Tony Gong's study of Stephan Vincenzo, campus' most omnipresent party-promoting freshman (p. 9).

Some Columbians are not born celebrities, they become them. Mark Hay spends time with Res Life's most famous four-legged menaces (p. 30), while Alexandra Muhler imagines an afternoon stroll from the perspective of dogs in strollers, in particular those attention-grabbing Pekingese pups familiar to anyone who frequents Riverside Park (p. 32).

And though this year has already proven to be one for the history books, it's probably more accurate to characterize 2009 as *infamous*. Anna Phillips asks history and economics professors the question on every senior's mind: is this really the worst year to graduate? (p. 22). But if there's one thing that never devalues, even during a recession, it's the inestimable currency of celebrity. James Franco knows what he's doing after graduation. Do you?

Juli N. Weiner
Editor-in-Chief

TRANSACTIONS

ARRIVALS

A new juvenile red-tail hawk

New digs for next year, for better or worse

A classy new look for CrackDel

Chicken tender sandwiches in Café 212

Bombast, in the form of three-story posters

Dean Moody-Adams, a Quigley for the post-Quigley era

A modicum of street cred, in the form of Talib Kweli



DEPARTURES

A modicum of street cred, in the form of Vampire Weekend

Pre-calendared anxiety, thanks to the Study Day resolution

The weak, thanks to CUAssassins

A \$2 trip to anywhere in the city

Fotorush

La Negrita, and with it, the local refuge for the ID-less

South Lawn's sub-tarp hibernation

15 MILLISECONDS OF FAME

Columbia has a handful of real celebrities on campus, but it's positively overrun by people who share their names with more illustrious forebears. Keep your eyes peeled for...

Adam Smith, Law
Bobby Lee, Dental College
Christopher Brown, CUMC Dean's Chauffeur
Christopher Plummer, GSAS
David Lynch, CC
Donald King, Radiology Professor
Jackie Chan, Business
James Brown, CC
James Potter, Architecture
Jennifer Hudson, GSAS
Joe Jackson, Journalism
John Adams, Barnard Staff
John Hancock, Barnard Staff
John F. Kennedy, Architecture
John Locke, Architecture
LaToya Jackson, CUMC
Robert Altman, Surgery Resident
Robert Johnson, CUMC Professor
Samuel Johnson, CC
Seth Cohen, St. Luke's Instructor
Thomas Wolfe, Clinical Information Systems

SCIENCE! EGADS!

As usual, the *Blue and White* was spending its Friday night trolling Butler for works on phrenology (stack level 14, for those not in the know), when one tome, *An Inquiry into Discredited Pseudosciences*, splayed open to a chapter on handwriting analysis. It is an art subtle enough to penetrate the most clouded of psyches, and after nearly 45 minutes of study, we feel qualified to chart the unconscious of the obvious candidate: University President Lee C. Bollinger.



The pen nib's light, nimble touch indicates a low-intensity emotional life. Ecstatic loops offset this apparent calm, demonstrating the writer's sense of showmanship—but the flair of the performer always masks an anxious insecurity, revealed in the imbalance between the compressed middle zone of the letters and the volume of the upper and lower zones. The ecstatic inflation of the upper zone hints that the writer has a peacock personality (just check out his hair!), while the compression across the midsection betrays the author's attempt to present a moderate face to the world. Again, however, that impression weakens with the deep plunge of the G, evidence of a bottomless id.

Now if only we had his dreams to analyze.

POSTCARD FROM MORNINGSIDE



Compiled by Alexandra Muhler & Mariela Quintana
Illustration by Allison A. Half; Postcard by Stephen Davan



BLUE NOTES

When Contemporary Civilization professor Ryan Chaney is not conducting discussions on social constructs and contracts, the anthropology lecturer trades in *The Marx-Engels Reader* for his acoustic guitar and unleashes what he calls a “sonic guerilla attack” on his captive audience: the New York City subway. Donations are accepted, although he insists they’re not what lure him under ground.

Chaney says that ideally he would perform on a weekly basis, but more often than not, academic and domestic duties call. In turn, his performance schedule is erratic and tends to be driven by the occasional “spontaneous urge to just show up, open my guitar case, and start wailing.” His relatives, according to Chaney, are only slightly embarrassed. His penchant for “wailing” might also ruffle the feathers of his CC students, but he tends to avoid stations frequented by members of the Columbia community.

At a recent impromptu performance on a downtown F train platform, Chaney played a repertoire of classic covers and the occasional folksy original. After an admirable, if twangy, ditty by the Handsome Family, the scattered commuters were decidedly unenthused. Sensing their lack of interest and the rumble of the F train in the distance, Chaney seamlessly switched gears, striking out the first chords of Johnny Cash’s “Folsom Prison Blues” and singing huskily, “I hear the train a-coming, it’s rollin’ ’round the bend.” For the finale, Chaney followed his uncanny Cash cover with a rendition of M.I.A.’s “Paper Planes,” a perpetual favorite among college-aged commuters.

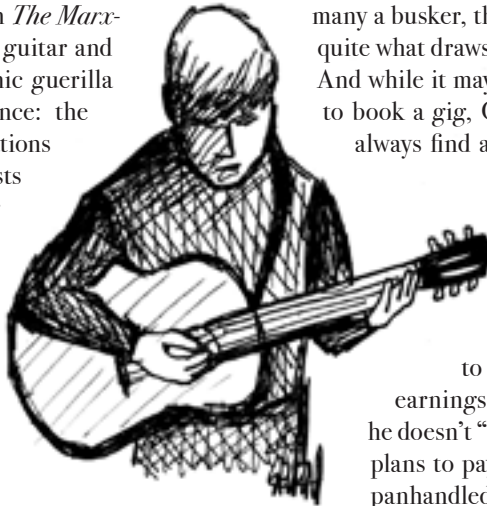
If Chaney’s repertoire departs from that of the typical busker, so does his performance ensemble. Sporting a navy blazer and casually-crumpled but-

ton-down, his style is somewhere between Oxford classic and wandering minstrel grunge.

Lacking the explicit financial objectives of many a busker, though, Chaney doesn’t know quite what draws him to the subway platform. And while it may be hard for most musicians to book a gig, Chaney knows where he can always find an audience. “The subway is the perfect venue,” he says, “It’s the perfect way to interact with people.”

Chaney has also developed relationships with his fellow buskers, to whom he gives part of his earnings—although he clarifies that he doesn’t “have karma to burn” and still plans to pay income taxes on his small, panhandled bounty.

—Menachem Kaiser



St. Mark’s Bookshop is a modish bookstore located in one of the most fashionable neighborhoods in New York, just next door to the Cooper Union dormitories and not far from NYU. Stocked with indie magazines and monographs on cultural theory, the store caters all too well to the local elite.

But those with refined literary taste, it seems, are no more ethical than their pedestrian counterparts. Toward the back of the store, there stands a shelf known by employees as the “X Case,” filled exclusively with the store’s most frequently stolen titles. Burroughs, Kerouac, Ginsberg, and Bukowski are all there. It’s a motley bunch, united only by their appeal to the college set; they have a “juvenile sensibility,” as one employee put it. This is hardly shocking—Kerouac and company have always attracted the sorts of youngsters who construe rebellious behavior as a sign of intellectualism.

Another X Case resident is Paul Auster, whose readers, it seems, are just as lawless as the fiends in his crime novels. Antonin Artaud, the 20th cen-

ture French theorist who coined the phrase “theatre of cruelty,” also makes an appearance—which seems odd until one recalls that a whole generation of young scholars discovered him through Foucault’s *Madness and Civilization*.

What is surprising, though, is that American novelists Cormac McCarthy, Henry Miller, and Thomas Pynchon are wholly absent from the X Case. McCarthy deals with the psychological effects of protracted social disorder. Miller writes the sorts of narratives that can easily charm those who’ve grown weary of Kerouac. And Pynchon, quite frankly, is just downright hip. Why is this trinity not on the shelf?

And there is one writer whose presence on the X Case is truly perplexing: Jorge Luis Borges. The 20th century Argentine author wrote short stories, essays, and poems, but it’s his stories that have made him a hero for avant-garde novelists around the world. The store’s entire Borges collection has been relegated to the shelf.

Borges doesn’t seem like the sort of author coveted by youngsters flirting with antinomianism. Borges deals with space, time, memory, perpetuity; the structure of the physical universe occupied him from early childhood. While Borges took up a number of political causes throughout his life, his stories always subordinate social questions to purely speculative ones and contain no politics, no ethics, and certainly no sensibilities. Could hipsters and vagrants secretly yearn for the mysteries of metaphysics? Their klepto predilections fueled by Kant and Pythagoras? Through their transgressions, a glimpse into the unconscious.

—Philip Petrov

Lunchtime is about over in Brownie’s, Avery’s popular basement café, and students are gradually making their way upstairs. But someone pauses, blocking traffic, to examine a series of fish tanks mounted, suspended, and strung to the back wall of the café. “What is it?” he asks.

“Life Support” is an exhibit by Graduate School



Illustrations by Shaina Rubin

of Architecture Professor Janette Kim’s visual studies class. Kim asked her class to explore the logic of self-sustenance and to question what it means to live in an enclosed ecosystem. Avery’s 11 attention-grabbing structures are the result.

Aquaponics, a method of raising fish, creates a near-perfect watery symbiosis: waste from the fish provides nutrients for the plants, which in turn filter water for the fish, eliminating the need for chemical fertilizers typically used in traditional aqua- and agri-culture.

But while self-contained, the mini-oceans exist within the larger ecology of Avery, and their creators have found various ways of melding the two. Steven Garcia and KJ Kim looked directly to Brownie’s clientele when designing their project: they created two tanks, one inside another, in which a totally glass-covered ecosystem surrounds one that has openings to the outside. Café denizens are asked to feed the fish with provided food and to feed the plants by breathing out carbon dioxide into a chamber.

Another pair, Koko Takahashi and Soon-Hyun Jung, created a tank that can be installed over a kitchen counter at eye level to provide companionship for a homemaker—there are even containers suspended within the tank that can be detached, fish and all, and taken for a “walk.”

“Koko and Soon often react in horror when I suggest that the housewife might eat their fish, insisting that it’s a pet, not dinner,” Kim told the *Blue and White*. Yet more installments are aimed at city-dwellers, for example, the tank that can be mounted like a biological air conditioner onto the window of any New York apartment building, with access points for the resident to feed the fish and harvest the plants.

The fish have been well-received among Avery’s bipedal inhabitants—but popularity can kill. Kim’s class originally left containers of fish food by the tanks so that students could feed the fish themselves, but after several died from overeating, signs have been posted asking passersby to cease and desist. Apparently, some relationships can be *too* symbiotic.

—Adam Kuerbitz

Campus Characters

You might not know the following figures—but you should. In *Campus Characters*, THE BLUE AND WHITE introduces you to a handful of Columbians who are up to interesting and extraordinary things, and whose stories beg to be shared. If you'd like to suggest a Campus Character, send us an e-mail at editors@theblueandwhite.org.

CAROLINE ROBERTSON

“How about you be the autistic child,” says Caroline Robertson, CC '09, as she begins to explain the neural disorder. Curled on a couch over tea, she motions with one gracile arm, putting us both in an imaginary box with an imaginary orange. If she were to leave the box and the orange were to be removed in her absence, the autistic child wouldn't understand why Robertson didn't know where it went—understanding, even for a non-scientist like me, hit quickly.

Robertson should be good at this sort of thing. A neuroscience major, she spent last summer researching autism at Cambridge, and will return there after graduation on a Gates scholarship. But for now, she's concentrating on Kierkegaard, the subject of a thesis she's writing for her other major, religion. Robertson herself is deeply faithful—Presbyterian.

Science and religion? Doesn't that ever get, you know, *problematic*?

Robertson, who is pale and almost frail-looking, just throws her head back in an ever-present, trilling laugh. “Yeah, I always get that.” Her extracurricular interests are even more eclectic:

The Joy of Cooking sits next to Derrida on her bookshelf.

She has tried to find the location of Atlantis and roadtripped to Maine to visit the only remaining Shaker village. She also writes poetry and plays the oboe.

Those who know her very well, though, say that Robertson's multifarious contradictions

all fit together, like a jigsaw puzzle. “There's nothing that is an outlier in the trajectory of her life,” says Ori Sosnik, CC '09. “It's always exciting and new, but it's never unexpected.”

Born to a family of Episcopal ministers outside Houston, religion was a family affair. Yet Robertson grew up in one of the most irreligious places in America: the University of Chicago campus, where her mother is a medieval musicologist. Now, every Sunday, she journeys solo to a Presbyterian church on 91st and Park that she selected for its minister. “I like really fatherly ministers who give 45-minute long theses on some *topic*,” she explains.

The summer before last, she took off alone for Tibet. Traveling illegally, she was ultimately arrested and escorted out of the region, but her trip wasn't about politics. “I'm not a ‘Free Tibet’ person,” she clarifies. “I was craving a place where religion wasn't just something people did on Sundays in a church, but was the entirety of life... I wanted to feel that. It was a bit of a pilgrimage.”

One doesn't need to spend much time with Robertson to join her circle. Housemate Nellie Bowles, CC '10, describes her as the “den mother” of Potluck House. At the Hungarian Pastry Shop, she's been known to invite characters she finds interesting to the House's weekly public dinner. She distributes cheesy country music to whomever will sing along, and freshman year, she slept naked on a table in Hamilton after a marathon Lit Hum study session.

Much of Robertson isn't quite so public. She has had off-campus boyfriends since freshman year; the last one was a student at Deep Springs College in eastern California (a circle of barbed wire from the ranch, which hangs on her wall, is the only visible memento of the relationship), and her current beau is a tenured professor whom she met at Cambridge. Sometimes, in the middle of the night, she'll be called away to one of ten hospitals in upper Manhattan and Queens, where she's trained to be a rape crisis counselor—she doesn't talk about it much, and her housemates don't usually realize she's gone. Practicing her



oboe, which she likens to a Buddhist or Hindu prayer, is another private refuge.

And occasionally, she escapes to her family's cabin in Wyoming, far from the scrum of the city. "I love seeing where the sky meets the ground," Robertson says. "And you can never see that here."

—Lydia DePillis

STEPHAN VINCENZO

Stephan Vincenzo, né Jose Stephan Perez, CC '12, learned about Carman Hall in the sixth grade. Touring Columbia with his great uncle, he glimpsed his future: "It's not the prettiest dorm, but if you want good times, live in Carman," his sibyllic uncle told him. Later, while tending to his great uncle on his deathbed, Vincenzo swore to him that he would someday attend Columbia. Carman has been on his mind ever since.

Vincenzo takes dorm living seriously, as evidenced by the name of his party production company: 11th Floor Entertainment. Before he had even moved in, he became notorious for coordinating an orientation week party at a club downtown, for which 1,400 guests confirmed their attendance on Facebook—perhaps lured by his promise of "Open bar!!! srry no alcohol." For such a bold move, Vincenzo achieved instant fame. His imposing social presence has already spawned caricatures in *The Fed* and is the inspiration for the character "Vincent Stephanzo" in this year's Varsity Show.

Vincenzo's 6'2" stature, mid-back length brown hair, and penchant for oversize beaded necklaces enhance his eccentric image, but the most enduring expression of his originality is his adopted name. "Jose Perez is the Spanish equivalent of John Smith," he explains. "I don't know anybody with the name Stephan." (He added "Vincenzo" as an homage to Al Capone's brother, James.)

Vincenzo is proud of his name and the cult of personality that he's inspired, but not all of his classmates have been as supportive. After the Bwog posted updates about his infamous "Open bar" bash, the half-Colombian, half-Mexican Vincenzo read comments on the site that characterized him as an "affirmative action case." "I'm from the South, so I'm used to racism... but [the Bwog comments] broke my heart. I've been discriminated against, but I'm not gonna lie, it still hurts just as much as the first time," he says.

The monarch of social butterflies, Stephan is an intense communicator: he interacts with nearly everyone he comes across, grilling acquaintances with a

million questions a minute about their various goings on, all while never breaking eye contact. Though fans sometimes ask him for pictures, few have recognized him for his loftier pursuits—for example, his poetry, which has been published in the *Columbia Daily Spectator*. "Even though you're in the midst of all these people knowing your name... you can be really lonely," he observes.

Indeed, the prevailing view of Vincenzo as a party animal has hindered his social savvy where it may matter most: with girls. He says that the Columbia women who catch his eye believe they "know all about" him as a "player," and that the ladies who frequent the night-life scene aren't the ones he's interested in anyway. "You can find a quality girl at a church, in a library, studying, Barnes & Noble—not at a club. Beautiful, glamorous club chicks, there's a thousand of them. For a moment they're cool, but I like individuals that I can engage with intellectually."

According to Vincenzo, his cerebral tendencies made him something of an anomaly in his hometown of Atlanta. "A lot of my friends got involved heavily with drugs, a lot of my friends dropped out of school, ended up in jail, ended up in gangs." During his first semester at Columbia, he struggled with both his "really humble upbringing" and his campus infamy. "I didn't participate in class. It was intimidating as hell," he recalls. "I just thought, 'Oh my God, these people are just waiting for me to say something stupid.'"

And yet Vincenzo has no regrets. "If I could go back, I would throw the same party. I would've still done the same thing," he says. "That's just the price you pay."

—Tony Gong

Illustrations by
Maxine Keyes



Should You Introduce Yourself?



NEGATIVE

By Will Snider

Just stand still and don't say anything. No introductions necessary. All I need to do is stare at you and try to stay awake.

You sure do talk a lot. It seems that your mouth hardly ever stops moving. Please, just be quiet for a minute and drink the Long Island I bought for you? You have nice teeth, though. I like that in a girl.

Oh, a psych major. Interesting. You're convinced we had a lecture together last semester? I e-mailed you the day before the final to "compare notes"? Fascinating. Wait. Did you say "psych major"? I wonder if you're trying to read my mind. You better not be trying to read my mind. That would be freaky if psych majors could read minds. Maybe they can. Maybe that's why girls major in psych.

I'd better stop thinking.

You know, I would introduce myself. I would tell you that my name is Will and that I grew up in Maryland with a loving family and two dogs and a sprinkler. I would tell you I was an all-star Little League pitcher who ate hot dogs and played the violin and drank lots of milk because Michael Jordan told me to. I would tell you I read the entire *Redwall* series with a flashlight after my mom told me to go to bed, that I played Warhammer in my basement. But the thing is, you'd rather I didn't. You want me brooding and mysterious. You want to take me back to your room, sexile your mousy roommate, and listen to me talk about my goddamn poetry. I don't even have any poetry. But I can pretend.

What's your name again? I like your hair. Maybe

I'll start to pet it. Maybe you'll like that. I need an activity to help focus my energy so I don't fall over.

Oh damn. It looks like I've spilled my drink on your pants. Hm.

Wait—I meant to do it. Yeah, I meant to spill my beer on you, because you like being disrespected. (Didn't *The Game* say something about that?) I can so do this. And then maybe if I slowly lean toward your face, we'll start making out. Here goes.

Nope. Spilled again.

Now you look kind of mad, but I'll just smile and laugh to defuse the awkwardness. At least you've stopped talking for a second.

I wonder if you secretly want to know my name. Maybe you do. Maybe if I tell you my name, you'll go ahead and kiss me, and we can go buy plane tickets to Mexico and sit on the beach and make love in a hammock and never go to Butler again. But maybe you'll think I'm lame. I'll just be some skinny white kid with a Brooklyn Lager and an above average SAT score looking to lock lips and hips for a few early morning hours. If I don't tell you my name, I could be anyone. I could be a shipping heir. I could be a war journalist. *I could be an NYU student.* You like these fantasies. I know you do.

In the end, though, I won't introduce myself because self-introduction is self-defeating. People worth knowing know other people worth knowing; they are always introduced. Besides—if I have to start talking, I'll start sounding like the played-out econ major that I am. And then I won't ever get to say I hooked up with Lauren Glover.



AFFIRMATIVE

By Lauren Glover

Hi. I'm Lauren Glover. What's your name? I remember you from last semester. Weren't we in—what? Where are you going? Come back! Come back here right now, young man!

I'm sorry. Was I too forward just then? Are we not on a last name basis yet? I'm sorry...it's just, there are *so many* Laurens. And we're all brunette and 5'4" and were born in the mid- to late 1980s, so I always...

Hey, what's your problem? You look like you're going to vomit into your beer. No? You're fine? Then quit staring at me like I'm playing my guitar on the steps. Did you really just write me off because I introduced myself to you at a party?

Listen, buddy. I know your game. For you, words are for after you're drunk enough to spill your drink on a girl and you need to apologize, in addition to helping her wipe off her pants. Introductions are for the walk back to your dorm, and then again, the next morning. And then again, when you realize she's in two of your classes. And one last time, at the paternity trial.

You say you're not that sleazy? So, you must be following a more elegant stratagem: the subtle, yet straightforward tactic of never introducing yourself to anyone, ever. If you're introduced *to* someone, it's never your doing, right? And it's usually a mistake. She's trying to talk to the guy behind you, ouch! You're *awkward*. You're *so awkward*. And you secretly love being *so awkward*, don't you?

Oh my God, I hate you.

Though, you know, I used to be like that. I never wanted to go through the trouble of speaking to or looking at a guy if he was going to turn out to be unforgivably weird, or in a relationship. So I would carefully select a few informants, then conspire with

my best friend, the Internet, and cull enough information to fill out a brief pre-introduction questionnaire. It went a little something like this:

1. Is he single?
2. Is he passably articulate?
3. Legally-speaking, would he be considered mentally stable?
4. But is he still neurotic enough to be interesting?
5. Does he have a minimum of the following: bitter ex-girlfriends, drug habits, and Facebook applications?

Any single "no" on the questionnaire was a deal-breaker for a potential introduction. Too many risks. Mission aborted. Then, back to the drawing board, namely Butler.

So, yeah, I used to be like you. I used to be like you until I realized that, on the off chance that the rest of the world isn't as socially stunted as the Columbia student population, I should probably start practicing actual social engagement with my peers. Now, here I am, desperately trying to chat with a stranger at a party, getting nothing but scorn in return.

But I don't really blame you. Life here forces us into physically intimate situations all the time; I have gotten closer with strangers while navigating 1020 on a Friday night than I have been with any number of ex-boyfriends. We believe that survival in this cramped environment requires donning a prickly protective carapace. But would it really hurt us to make eye contact on occasion, a few more spontaneous introductions at parties? What's the worst that could happen? Anything a little mace couldn't dispatch?

Anyway, sorry to moralize your ear off. I've got to go clean the booze off my pants. Nice to finally meet you, Will.

Six Degrees of Graciela Chichilnisky

Untangling the threads of an academic web

BY JON HILL

Rod Steiger is the most connected actor in Hollywood. During his 52-year-long career, he starred in movies like *In the Heat of the Night* and *On the Waterfront*, Steiger worked with the likes of Marlon Brando, Sharon Stone, Denzel Washington, and countless others. Indeed, Steiger played alongside so many actors that, if one were to draw lines between him and each of his costars, a veritable spider web of connections would emerge.

This phenomenon is actually quite common within large groups of people. Called “collaboration networks” by researchers, many associations—everything from Facebook users’ friending habits to sexual coupling—form these complex chains when viewed on a grand scale. The Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon functions on this premise; though not as wide-ranging as Steiger’s network, Bacon’s acting associations have been spread out far enough to inspire a party game.

Academics, inspired by the Bacon model, have created their own versions of the Six Degrees game. Mathematicians frequently try to connect themselves to the late, great math theorist Paul Erdős via the papers they have written with his colleagues. Law professors play the same game, but using legal scholar Cass Sunstein as their Kevin Bacon.

In fact, most fields of study can demonstrate these expansive networks. Connect the co-authors in a stack of *Econometricas* and the result will appear nearly indistinguishable from Steiger’s web of film

stars. The high volume of publication demanded by many universities means that this collaboration happens all the more frequently, so an individual scholar’s group of connections can grow exponentially every year. Professors looking to co-author are also more likely to work with professors who already have a history of co-authoring—this behavior, known as preferential attachment, often links together newly-minted professors with their more senior, renowned peers, and in doing so accelerates network formation.

From these dense, seemingly random webs appears a surprising amount of order. Those scholars who are closer to the center of the web—that is, those whose collaboration links them to a wider range of authors—are the *nodes* of the network; they are the Rod Steigers of academic publishing and they give shape to the overall network structure.

Beyond them, any connected author is called a *vertex* and the connections between them are measured in degrees. A professor who has coauthored with only one other professor has a degree of 1, a professor who has written with two other authors has a degree of 2, and so on.

Collaboration networks obey certain properties that make

nodes extremely rare. What moves a professor from being simply another vertex on the network to becoming a node? How does one get to be the Kevin Bacon of academia? To answer this question, it would help to meet a node.

Enter Graciela Chichilnisky, a tenured professor in Columbia University’s economics department. She



Illustration by Adela Yawitz

has earned international recognition for her work in mathematics and economics, particularly her study of resource use in economic development. Chichilnisky was the first person to propose trading environmental credits globally to curb greenhouse gas emissions, which made her a celebrity in academic circles.

With more than 200 published works to her name, Chichilnisky fulfills the first requirement for becoming a node: productivity. Scholars who publish more frequently have more opportunity to co-author and thus raise their degrees.

Chichilnisky's productivity enables her to fulfill the second requirement for becoming a node: diversity. In order to connect to the most scholars, it helps to work outside one's own field. Collaboration across fields and formats ties together large clusters of professors who would otherwise never associate, pushing an author toward the center of the network. Graciela Chichilnisky has published works in three academic fields—economics, statistics, and mathematics—bridging a range of mini-networks of authors and strengthening her status as a node.

The fact that Chichilnisky began publishing as a young academic and has remained active for nearly 40 years allows her to fulfill the third and final requirement for becoming a node: longevity. Without a substantial number of years behind them, professors have

not had the time to meet the other two node requirements; without a substantial number of years ahead of them, professors will slowly slip out of the center of the network as they are supplanted by their younger, more active peers. Now in her early 60s, Chichilnisky could remain productive for several more decades, adding new connections to her node all the while.

Though not the subject of an official study, analysis of Chichilnisky's CV reinforces her status as a node. In her immediate circle are 39 co-authors; this group of scholars has worked directly with Chichilnisky and often more than once. Comprehensive searches of online journal indexes and academic databases reveal that Chichilnisky's co-authors boast a collective 1,228 further co-authors, raising the number of scholars within two degrees of her by a practically exponential factor.

Though the dynamics of these collaborative networks are in constant flux as new scholars join and old scholars retire, the strength and sheer number of Chichilnisky's connections to fellow professors are matched by few in American economics departments today. She is close to the center in a web of thousands—how this status affects her continuing scholarship may not be apparent for years to come, but if the past is any guide, she stands to remain a node of the academic world for quite some time. ♦



Sached!

The Millennials come of age in the era of the Millennium Project.

BY KATIE REEDY & SARA VOGEL

Seven years ago, University President Lee Bollinger decided it was time for Columbia to claim its rightful place as a “Global University.” As part of his project, he pursued one of the most famous global economists on the scene—Dr. Jeffrey Sachs of Harvard University. Acquiring Nobel Prize-winning economist Joseph Stiglitz that same year, Bollinger wooed Sachs with the promise of his own institute flush with research money, the resources of a fledgling Global University, and as reported in the *Columbia Spectator*, an \$8 million brownstone fit to host international dignitaries on the Upper West Side.

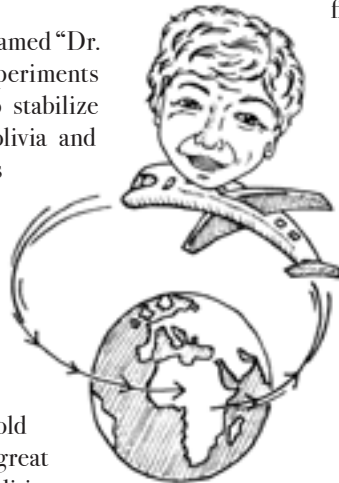
In the 1990s, Sachs was nicknamed “Dr. Shock” in response to his experiments rapidly deregulating markets to stabilize currencies in countries like Bolivia and Russia. A wunderkind minted as an economics professor while he was still earning his PhD, Sachs directed the Center for International Development within the Kennedy School of Government until 2002. But his hire was not a lateral trade: Under Sachs, the nine-year-old Earth Institute was to make the great leap into the 21st century. In addition, by coming to New York, Sachs became closer to his work at the United Nations, where he acted as Special Advisor to the UN Secretary General.

Sachs quickly shed his Dr. Shock reputation; he presented a more charitable approach to world economic development, packaged in the eight Millennium Development Goals—including halving extreme world poverty and establishing universal primary education by 2015—which debuted in their final form that same year. He had also staked a claim for status as the world’s most glamorous economist. By the fall of 2005, he was on MTV for the feature pro-

gram, “The Diary of Angelina Jolie and Dr. Jeffrey Sachs in Africa,” and found a sidekick in U2’s Bono, who introduced a Sachs keynote speech at New York University by facetiously proclaiming his jealousy of Sachs’ privileged place by Jolie’s side.

Upon arriving at Columbia, Sachs had it all: funding, institutional support, and the power to determine development objectives for billions of people. But over time, the ironies and complexities of his fame and vision became apparent to those who had turned to him first to inform their ideas about poverty, development, and the world itself: the first students to take his undergraduate course in 2005.

Undergraduates necessarily develop more complex ideas as they move through college and regularly become disillusioned with their professors. But few are forced to come to terms with a larger-than-life professor whose popular success is so flagrant. Today, one senior summarized his first-year infatuation with Sachs’ ideas with an “Oops.”



“As a freshman, I knew I would be an econ major, but within that, I didn’t know,” said Jisung Park, CC ’09, who won the Rhodes Scholarship this year to study environmental policy. “I came out of the first class like, ‘Wow, I really need to take this course.’ The way he was able to cite statistics off the top of his head to answer questions... It might have been a sort of freshman thing for me to be impressed by that, but I remember saying to myself, ‘I wish I could do that.’”

Sachs’ undergraduate course, the Challenges of Sustainable Development, boasted a syllabus based on his bestselling book *The End of Poverty*, also published in 2005. Undergraduates aware of Sachs’ message and fame pored over *The End of Poverty*

in feverish anticipation of the economist's entrée into their intellectual lives. First-years—this year's seniors—were especially susceptible to the Sachs hysteria; they packed the lecture hall at 8:45 a.m. on the first day of class, crouching on windowsills and in aisles to catch a glimpse of the man whom *TIME* deemed “The People’s Economist”—“a pioneer of the mud-hut school of thought”—as part of its annual list of 100 influential people.

This “mud-hut school of thought” is premised on the idea that providing aid to poor countries lifts them onto the first rung of the “ladder of development,” which they can continue to climb until they’re ready to join the international open market. Meanwhile, Sachs’ on-the-ground operations with the Millennium Villages Project aim to produce a scalable blueprint for impoverished regions. Sachs’ supplements his philanthropic approach with a more radical prescription of debt relief, diverging from conventional free-market policy. Fundamentally, Sachs preaches rationality: apply reason, he tells believers, and the rest follows. “For every problem you have, there is a solution! We want to help you find that solution!” Sachs exhorted a crowd in Uganda, according to a 2007 *Vanity Fair* profile.

Sachs could even find solutions to Columbia’s bureaucracy—and his first undergraduate students loved him for it. When the first-years in Challenges learned they had been kicked out of the class due to over-enrollment, they rallied behind a Facebook group, “I Was Sached by Sustainable Development,” and circulated a petition demanding to be let back in. The self-appointed spokesman of the angry band, Brendan Ballou, CC ’09, wrote a profoundly earnest letter to Sachs underscoring the devotion students felt to the famous economist. “Undergrads are different than grad students, and freshmen different than upperclassmen,” he wrote. “But that doesn’t mean we aren’t capable of taking the same classes. On the contrary, doing so... is a sign of our dedication and interest in sustainable development.”

As if by magic, first-years found themselves in a cushy lecture hall in the Business School. Sachs had muscled his way into prime lecture space and secured his hold on the hearts of his followers. Within weeks,

“Sustainable Development is Sexy,” “Jeff Sachs is My Homeboy,” and “Debt: Drop it Like It’s Hot” t-shirts were flying off tables set up on the sundial and in the lobby of the School of International and Public Affairs.



But few students who took Challenges four years ago still consider Sachs their Christ-like homeboy. Looking back, Ballou reflects that, “Since freshman year, I’ve probably thought about Jeff Sachs less than 10 times.”

The students who thrilled to Sachs’ theories—who thought they had learned the Answer and were proud of their precocity—received their own shock therapy when they continued their studies. In classes across disciplines, from history and sociology to earth science and economics, they listened as professors criticized Sachs’ simple assumptions. In Macroeconomics, professor Xavier Sala-i-Martin told them that Sachs’ “poverty traps” don’t actually exist. In Major Debates in the Study of Africa, Mahmood Mamdani focused on Africa’s colonial history, rather than its geography, as a source of its troubles. Even history professor Anders Stephanson harps on Sachs’ days as “Dr. Shock,” likening him to a foolish turn-of-the-century financier.

Ellen Kessel, CC ’09, an economics student, said she took Sachs’ class at the same time as Sala-i-Martin’s class, and the results were disorienting. “I’d have to write the criticism of Jeffrey Sachs’ framework on one test and then remember that his framework was the right answer on another,” she said.

Taking an economics course with Sanjay Reddy, students heard direct attacks on “technofixes” like wide distribution of the iconic bed-nets to ward off mosquitoes and disease—strategies that seem intuitive, but may be more complex than at first glance. An August 2008 study published in *Malaria Journal* found 16 percent of bed-nets in six villages around Lake Victoria, Kenya were being used to dry fish, with most villagers citing that “fish dried faster and bed nets were cheap or free.”

Columbia’s skeptics are part of a larger group of academics who criticize Sachs’ ideas. Supreme

Within weeks, “Jeff Sachs is My Homeboy” t-shirts were flying off tables set up on the sundial.

among them is William Easterly, an economist at New York University. “Some of his ideas are ones that are rejected by most of the academic community – the big push as the solution to world poverty... [and] the volume of money being the crucial point stopping us from making progress,” he said in an interview with the *Blue and White*.

Easterly is most famous for his argument that throwing money at African countries wrecks havoc on their economies and forces them into dependence on Western capital. “We’ve been trying [aid] for 60 years. If it’s so easy, why didn’t it happen already?” he added.

Some remain skeptical because they cannot forget his 1990s reputation. A January 2009 article in the *Lancet* medical journal found the rapid economic shift brought on by policies Sachs endorsed may have increased male mortality rates by 12.8 percent in Russia. Columbia sociology professor and member of the Committee on Global Thought, Saskia Sassen—who just returned from her own 20-city speaking tour—respects Sachs’ pragmatism and the fact that his work improves lives, but argues he incorrectly assumes capitalism can cure itself. “We’ve legitimated enormous inequality,” she said. “We’ve existed in the last 20 years thinking that the market knows best.”

Critics also take this argument one step further, finding it hypocritical to look to those who benefit the most from the system—the world’s wealthy—to correct its ills. In a June 2008 article in the *Third World Quarterly*, a pair of scholars took issue with the star-studded (RED) campaign for socially responsible consumption, the proceeds of which go to Sach’s Global Fund to fight HIV/AIDS. “RED unapologetically promotes status, capitalism and conspicuous consumption in the name of ‘helping,’” wrote Lisa Ann Richey and Stefano Ponte of the Danish Institute of International Studies. “Relations of inequality are inherent in donor–recipient exchanges.”



Criticism ringing in their ears, students formulated their own critiques of Sachs’ work.

Akua Nketia, CC ’10, an editor of *Idaya* magazine, a new campus journal of contemporary politics

from an African perspective, said she thinks Sachs ignores colonialism and history in formulating theories of African underdevelopment. “The thing about the colonial legacy is that they didn’t just rob us of economic wealth and resources, but instilled an inferiority complex,” she said.

Mena Odu, CC ’10, and an editor with *Idaya* who read *The End of Poverty* before attending Columbia, said it took her until a class with Mahmood Mamdani to realize the book’s flaws. Now, she thinks Sachs’ is wrong to assume there’s a uniform solution to Africa’s problems. “We want to have pride in our countries, and his methods deny... the complexity of people.”

Economics major Victoria Ruiz, CC ’09, arrived at Columbia as an admirer of Sachs and his work.

“You come in thinking that a book called *The End of Poverty* must have some revolutionary teeth,” Ruiz said. She spent the next four years getting involved with local activism concerning gentrification and the Manhattanville expansion. This, to Ruiz, offered the “history” that was lacking from Sachs and his worldview. Similar to the senior who characterized

“We’ve been trying
[aid] for 60 years. If it’s
so easy, why didn’t it
happen already?”

his disillusionment with an “oops,” Ruiz also felt “let down.” She laughs when she says, “Maybe Jeffrey Sachs isn’t as sexy as we thought freshmen year.”

Students such as Geoff Aung, CC ’08, who went on to study anthropology and critical theory, found their own toolbox to disassemble Sachs’ vision. “It’s this white burden aspect of [his] work that really gets to me,” he wrote in an email from Thailand, where he is studying on a Fulbright scholarship. “It can be hard not to see it as a new version of civilizational proselytizing.”

With his theories torn to pieces, students questioned whether Sachs’ rock-star status was deserved. “Angelina Jolie cites him as one most intelligent people in the world. Really? Maybe when it’s Nelson Mandela you can come talk to me,” Odu said. “It’s almost like Jeffrey Sachs can do no wrong.”



Those students that do support Sachs see his fame as a vehicle for good. By popularizing concepts like sustainable development, Sachs is able to

obtain funding, attention, and support for the Earth Institute and its causes.

People tend to conflate Sachs with his institute. “When we speak about Sachs, we’re really speaking about hundreds of people,” said Jeff Shrader, CC ’08, one of the founding editors of *Consilience*, the undergraduate journal of sustainable development.

“We have public faces that create a shield for us to be able to respond to things on the ground,” said Colin Felsman, CC ’09, who took Challenges of Sustainable Development as a freshman. “The Earth Institute wants to be critiqued on its work,” he added. Felsman spent the past three years working for the Earth Institute in its communications department and will work with the brand-new Millennium Cities project after graduation.

“Having a well-known academic figure who can really bring rigor to the NGO world, which often times is highly inefficient and not so quantitative, is definitely a nice draw to donors,” said Max Fraden, CC ’08, on Skype from Rwanda, where he works for the Millennium Villages Project. “[Sachs] is an incredibly convincing person.”

Fraden said the resources provided funneled through Sachs’ Global Fund allow the Earth Institute to focus on implementation of policy. To Fraden, debates about theory dissolve on the ground. “We’re talking about, are you going to deliver these chickens to that farmer, or instead use the car to transport a patient to the hospital, or do both? The devil is in the details,” Fraden said.

Sachs also has the connections to bring academics together. According to Geoffrey Heal, an environmental economics professor who was on the hiring committee that brought Sachs to Columbia, Sachs’ larger-than-life persona is useful for encouraging interdisciplinary studies.

“The Earth Institute is a complex entity including the physical sciences, biology, and social sciences. Jeff seemed to be genuinely interested in the diverse range,” said Heal. He added that Sachs brings fame and outreach that has broadened the Earth Institute’s educational sway.

Groups such as Engineers Without Borders also see the Earth Institute as an invaluable resource for their projects. Hannah Moore, SEAS’10, the current EWB president and a SEAS representative to the Earth Institute, said that Sachs’ organization provides information and human resources to undergrads involved in development work.

“[Engineers Without Borders] use a lot of the same tools. The main difference is scale,” she said, noting that engineering professors such as Vijay Modi, Upmanu Lall, and Patricia Culligan consciously link their work to the Earth Institute. With 45% of its budget going to research programs, the Earth Institute places academic work as its central mission. Each grant that Sachs can pull into the institute means more graduate students, undergraduates, and professors at Columbia hit the field—even if their figurehead’s approach is bitterly contested.



No matter how disillusioned his former acolytes, Jeffrey Sachs is here to stay. He jets around the world winning over donors and celebrities with his PowerPoint slides and his bestselling books—according to press representatives his busy travel schedule prevented him from commenting for this article. In fall of 2008 he hosted five Latin American presidents and pop-star Shakira at an event in Lerner Hall. On March 31, 2009, Sachs had a chat with media mogul Ted Turner in the Low Library rotunda to mark the opening of the Columbia Climate Center, which will coordinate the work

of the University’s disparate institutes and researchers on global warming.

The event, like others, was a mix of pandering to the celebrity guest in attendance and reasserting the “essential moment of the history of our time,” according to Sachs.

Polite audience members laughed warmly at Sachs’ and Turner’s lively banter—“Everyone should have at least one baseball team,” Turner joked. Present in the crowd, though silent, were also some eye-rollers and head-shakers, who knew there was a moment when they too would have laughed along. ♦



Illustrations by Wendan Li

Black and Light Blue

The Blue and White gets smashed with men's club rugby.

BY SAM SCHUBE

“Do not drop the fucking ball!” yelled coach Sean Horan. “That is our motto. Do not drop the fucking ball!”

Coach Horan's barked command leaves the members of the Columbia men's club rugby team with limited options: one can move the ball by running with it, kicking it, or passing it laterally or backwards to a teammate. The forward pass, that civilizing innovation of American football, is forbidden (the glossary below may shed a little light on the game's Brittanian terminology). Each side has 15 players of varying sizes and speeds, all working to move the ball to the in-goal area. After this point, mechanical laws fail to explain their motion, though it typically involves large, moving piles of large, moving men.

Large men seem to gravitate naturally towards the rugby team. The roster includes several ex-football players, a few all-around athletes, and a veteran whose high school happened to offer the sport. Coach Horan is a lifelong rugby devotee and tries his best to convey his savvy with highlights reels and whiteboards, but for the most part, his team's acumen extends not far beyond the basics.

The rugby team is very welcoming, which it advertises with flyers scattered around campus. No tryouts or auditions are required; “interested ruggers,” no matter how green, need only attend an informational session on a well-air conditioned squash court in Dodge to join up. With my reasonable high-school sports resume, I didn't feel out of

place stopping by.

At the initial summit meeting, prospective players have a chance to meet team members, and vice versa. Not knowing quite what to say when I stood to introduce myself, I piped up by telling everyone that I was there to write an article about being on the team. The players shot a few quizzical looks my way, and an awkward silence fell.

“...But I fully expect to get my ass kicked, too!” I sputtered. They hooted in approval.

Most of the team members can be described as “stocky.” This spring's recruits were welcomed by the solid-looking Ben Cheslak, who has a reputation as both curmudgeonly and impish, which he has earned both from the indeterminate duration of his senior standing and from his habit of hiding the ball underneath his shirt whenever it goes out of bounds during practice. “I was here before all of you fucks and I'll be here after you leave,” he announced, by way of introduction. A balding, hard-living Teacher's College student known as Farmer John is also short and stout, his thickness accentuated by orange suspenders. Olof Matti, the team's resident Swede and a former competitive downhill skier, calls himself *Liten Pansarvagn*, or “the little tank.” Zach Bull, like a character from a bad first novel, boasts of a branding iron tattoo on his chest.

Cheslak, Farmer John, *Pansarvagn* and the rest of the team practice twice a week at the Baker Field Athletic Complex, located on the 218th Street wind

DROP KICK: A player drops the ball for a single bounce before kicking it toward the goalpost. If the goalpost is hit, the team earns three points.

MAUL: A player holding a ball is swarmed—but not tackled—but by players from the opposing team.

RUCK: A swarm of players converging on a ball in an attempt to secure it.

SCRUM: Much like football's line of scrimmage, this is the face-off formation of players from the two rugby teams. The ball is rolled between the lines of opposing players as a hooker tries to

pass the ball with his feet to the back row of his team. The ball is then considered in play.

SIN BIN: The penalty box behind the goal area where offending players are sent by referees. The team then continues with a reduced number of players until the penalty is complete.

TRY: The basic unit of scoring in rugby. Worth five points, a try is earned when one team touches down the rugby ball in the opposing team's in-goal area.

TRY LINE: The dividing border that separates the field from a team's in-goal area.

tunnel created by the adjacent Hudson and East Rivers. Gusts buffet the players as they perform shuttle sprints and suicides three times a week, two hours at a time. Practices are typically violent, intemperate, and, at least for Saturday's 10:30 a.m. session, populated by the hung-over. There's no locker room—players throw on sweats or shorts on the sidelines—but the locker room culture lives on in O'Connell's, the sweaty dive just off-campus, a favorite among fraternity brothers and the women who love them.

The rugby team wears its love for O'Connell's on its sleeve; the bar is the team's official sponsor, so their uniforms sport the O'Connell's shamrock. It's a relatively glamorous patronage, at least compared to the Columbia Business School rugby team's Bear Stearns-logoed silks. The rugby boys decamp to O'Connell's regularly, often heading straight from Baker Field to the bar. O'Connell's teems with masculinity and the celebration thereof; when the team isn't racing each other in beer-drinking relay races, the players purchase pints for one another and regale the bar with bawdy, rugby-themed ditties. "Jesus can't play rugby 'cause his best friend got him hammered" is one of the less offensive lines of a traditional six-verse doggerel.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, these impromptu recitals are often conducted to the chagrin of O'Connell's less sportsmanlike patrons, including the occasional squad of New York City police. They once misinterpreted Farmer John's naturally menacing

expression as a genuine threat, and, believing (correctly) that he carried drugs on his person, searched him.

The team's hard-drinking, hard-partying habits don't take a vacation for spring break—the team just takes them on the road. Each March, they travel for a week, on an alumni-subsidized junket, in some far-off, exotic locale, where they punish their livers and play international teams. The night before their annual "Tour," the team prepared for its five-hour flight by pounding pints until 4:15 a.m., when their bus was scheduled to depart for the airport. Details from the Trinidad expedition are scant, as the team has seized upon the dictum, "What happens in Trinidad, stays in Trinidad." Except what comes back to America—like one player's nickname of "Bukkake", an ancient Japanese form of psychosexual torture—for better or for worse, remains in America.

These close-knit bonds among the players are steeped in testosterone. They partake in stereotypically manly barroom antics and share a remarkably high tolerance for Bud Light. But the team's masculinity is also clear in its players' attitudes toward injury. Bones are broken and ligaments sprain in nearly every match, but pads are an after-thought, at best. "Well, when you've got to get down and get someone's knee in your soft face, you wish you

wore a helmet, I guess,"

observes team captain Phil Kemp, a kind-hearted giant who speaks with a slight lisp. When injury does visit the team during a match—as this *Blue and White* reporter discovered after breaking his collarbone on a goalpost collision—sidelined

ruggers only rage at the loss of valuable playing time. For physical wounds, there's always O'Connell's—or a batch of Farmer John's pot brownies, which were given to your correspondent—to help numb the pain. ♦



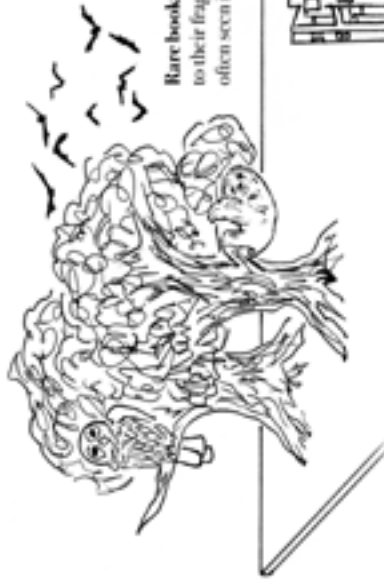
Illustration by Sonia Tycko

PLANET BUTLER

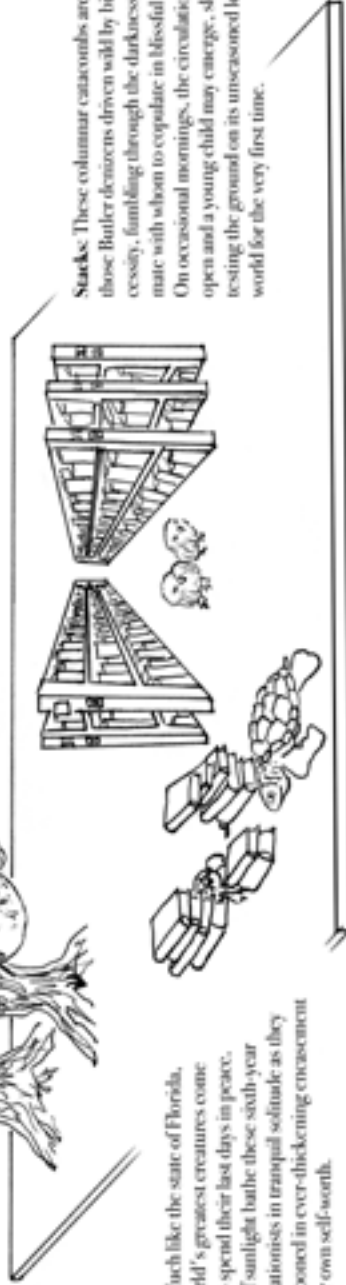
THE BLUE AND WHITE
APRIL 2009

Illustration by *Allison Haff*
Narration by *Nick Kelly &
Ben Heller; Brendan Ballou
& Eric Rosenblum* also
contributed.

Today, over six billion people crowd our fragile planet. But even so, some places remain barely touched by humanity. This series will take you to the last wildernesses and show you the planet and its wildlife as you have never seen it before. Welcome... to Butler Library.



Bare books: Here nocturnal cave-dwellers tend to their fragile charges with a meticulousness not often seen in this savage environment.



Stacks: These rotundlar catacombs are a haven for those Butler denizens driven wild by biological necessity, funneling through the darkness for a willing mate with whom to copulate in blissful anonymity. On occasional mornings, the circulation door will open and a young child may cawage, sleepy-eyed and testing the ground on its unseasoned legs, seeing the world for the very first time.

606: Much like the state of Florida, the world's greatest creatures come here to spend their last days in peace. Rays of sunlight bathe these sixth-year dissertations in tranquil solitude as they sit cocooned in ever-thickening encasement of their own self-worth.



5th floor: scionists have yet to chart the deserted vastness of the fifth floor



403: Pollution has ravished this delicate ecosystem's once flourishing reef structure. Yet this refuse now breeds new life and new hope: from the remains of half-priced Berto boxes spring protean life forms capable only of sleep, study, and Sudoku.

303: One of the most highly contested of spaces, 303 is home to Butler's ultimate predators, who fiercely police their territory and den up in its protected alcoves to hibernate for the long, harsh exam season. These fighters will often run in tight-knit family groups for maximum security, and pounce on unsuspecting newcomers ensnared in the room's inviting embrace.

209: Each year the migratory patterns of Butler's inhabitants carry them through this vast savannah. As lumbering varsity giants stride across well-beaten paths, resident peacocks clack and preen, regarding each other with suspicion.

Media room: In this dim realm, rodents with atrophied limbs and bulging eyes sit laced to their terminals with thin but very strong tendrils, in an unbreakable symbiosis.

Reserves desk: A vent from the stacks, emitting knowledge in gaseous form, which Butler denizens must periodically inhale for their general vitality.

Cafe: The crossroads of the Butler kingdom, this universal watering hole occupies only 3% of Butler Library, yet plays host to 98% of its species. The bearded limpets permanently affixed to sticky benches occasionally vocalize in harsh squawks: Zuek! Nietzsche! Kierkegaard! One of Butler's greatest marvels is the ability of a single living organism to sustain thousands of smaller creatures: whole colonies of co-eds depend on James Franco for food, shelter, and the occasional downcast frown.

4th floor group study rooms: Here range troops of howler monkeys.

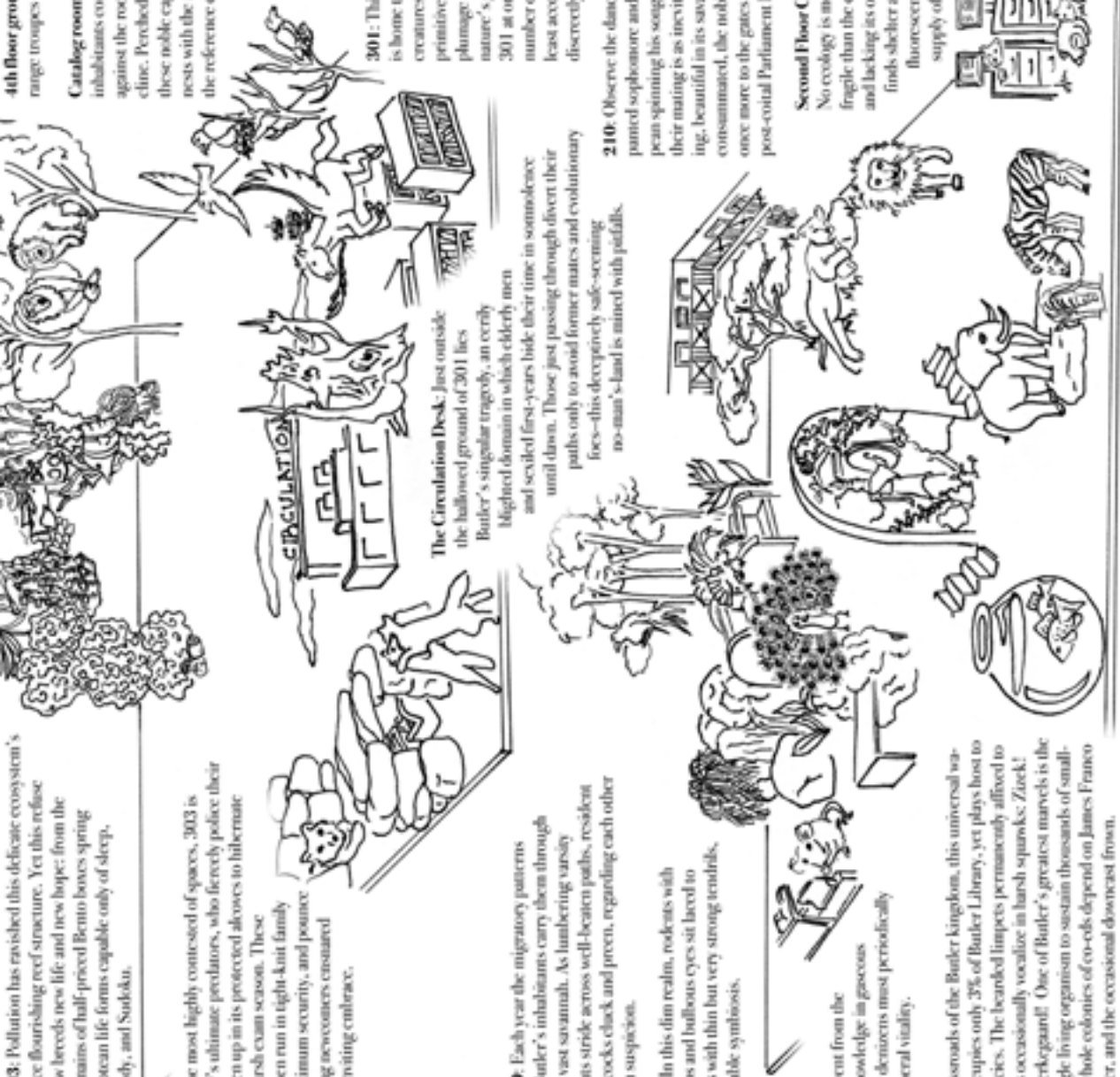
Catalog room: This room's avian inhabitants continue to hold out against the room's inevitable decline. Perched in their lofty cyrils, these noble eagles feather their nests with the abandoned cards of the reference catalogs below.

301: This candle-lit city of lights is home to Butler's most celestial creatures, set apart from the more primitive realms below by designer plumage and a regal bearing. One of nature's greatest injustices, Butler 301 at once contains the greatest number of heavenly bodies and the least accommodating acoustics for discreetly photographing them.

210: Observe the dance between the sweat-painted sophomore and the bearded Franco-pan spinning his song outside stairwell Z; their mating is as inevitable as it is distracting, beautiful in its savage way. Their love consummated, the noble sophomore returns once more to the gates of Butler to burn a post-coital Parliament Light.

Second Floor Computer Lab:

No ecology is more necessary or more fragile than the computer lab. Set adrift and lacking its own nest, the CS student finds shelter and comfort in the lab's fluorescence, but by depleting its supply of paper and staples, these orphans of the Butler kingdom unwittingly destroy the very environment on which they depend.



Is 2009 the Worst Year to Graduate?

Maybe not, but it sure feels like it.

BY ANNA PHILLIPS

“When you graduate it will totally suck,” says Columbia professor of economics Brendan O’Flaherty, choosing his words for maximum impact. “On the other hand, the fact that you had your heart set on going to Wall Street and making a million bucks at a hedge fund by the time you were 26...well, grow up. That wasn’t real,” he finishes.

The burden of telling a generation of twentysomethings that they’ve been deluded is not fun, and O’Flaherty rips the news off quickly, like a Band-Aid. Others—namely, op-ed writers in the nation’s broadsheets, tend to linger. Either way, it hurts—maybe because we weren’t being facetious when we said we loved the ’90s. Or maybe because, as a demographic, soon-to-be college graduates are not the focus of economists’ and policy analysts’ anxiety or empathy. Most of us don’t have children or own homes, let alone homes underwater, and we’ve never been laid off. We’ve never even been hired. We do have debilitating student loans, but as long as we remain unemployed, hardship deferments can keep the creditors at bay.

Usually, there’s nothing like historical context to make modern times seem like a sweet deal. We regularly congratulate ourselves for inventing the Internet, improving birth control, and taking lead out of gasoline, or doing anything that seems to fit cozily into a narrative of progress. But when you compare all the significant U.S. economic downturns of the 20th century with this one using unemployment rates and quality of life indicators, the result isn’t so comforting. In early March, the National Association for Colleges and Employers found that of the companies surveyed, 44 percent said they planned to hire fewer recent graduates this year, and 22 percent said they weren’t hiring anyone. So far, this is shaping up to be

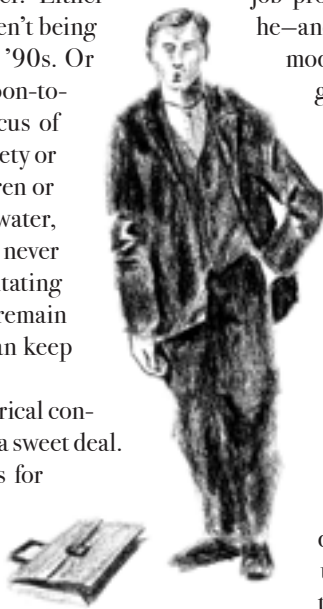
the worst year to graduate from college since 1945.

Why since 1945? Because most historians and economists agree that, when it comes to unemployment and economic devastation in 20th century America, nothing beats the Great Depression and the downturn that immediately followed World War II. In 1945, unemployment reared its ugly head when the GIs came home, the munitions factories shut down, and a peacetime economy struggled to find its footing. When it finally did, unemployment went down.

We don’t know much about a college grad’s job prospects during the Depression because he—and it was usually a he—was a rare commodity. Asked to take a highly educated guess, Columbia historian and author Alan Brinkley said perhaps 10 percent of twentysomethings went to college back then. “In the 1930s, college graduates probably did OK because there were so few of them. Though I’m sure not everybody did well,” Brinkley said. Today, somewhere between 50 and 55 percent of high school graduates go to college, though the number that graduate is smaller.

Many of the college-bound men of the 30s lived comfortably on the upper crust: they went to Exeter or Hotchkiss, dropped into Harvard or Princeton and, upon graduation, were placed in jobs through family connections. Often, they became bankers on Wall Street.

As usual, this portrait of the genteel Ivy League didn’t include Columbia. In the 1930s, about half of Columbia’s student body was commuters from the metropolitan area, noted Robert McCaughey, a scholar of Columbia’s history. “They were coming to Columbia and living at home and the explanation for that fairly likely turned on their finances.” Often the first in their family to attend college, these men



graduated into an environment worse than what seniors are seeing today. The country's unemployment rate hovered around 25 percent and most of the jobs created by the New Deal went to working class Americans, not men with college diplomas.

Some found their way into jobs with the Federal Writers Project but, for many, time froze. If they found jobs, they didn't advance in them, and they were often underemployed.

The main difference between you and this former Columbian does not come down to your small Latin and less Greek. Rather, it's that unlike him, you have a sizable cushion waiting to prop you up.

"Whatever students' own prospects, there are many, many more students now who, on graduation, could if they needed to, go home—and will," said Professor Alice Kessler-Harris, who specializes in American labor history. Generation Y was keen on the old homestead before the recession began—in 2007, over half of college grads moved back in with their parents—but now that the economic downturn is fully underway, more are likely to follow that route, even if one parent has lost their job and the other is postponing retirement.

This is the grandfather school of historical context: the model that says, Suck it up kid, I lived on pickled thistles and survived Iwo Jima, and you've got nothing on me. There's comfort in knowing that, at the moment, you're looking at a national unemployment rate of 8.1 percent and rising, but he's seen much worse. That comfort dissipates when you look at the recession of the 1980s.

Between 1981 and 1983, the U.S. unemployment rate climbed from roughly 8 percent to 10.8, and then slowly fell. It's possible that the current recession could follow a similar trajectory. But even if the present downturn ends within the next two years, there will be one major difference: in the 1980s the country's central financial institutions did not fail.

As a result, students didn't land jobs with ease, but their immediate career paths weren't radically diverted. All of the college professors interviewed for this piece said that students rarely discussed the 1980s recession or expressed real anxiety about its

effect on their lives.

Other possible reasons for this comparatively lax attitude include the fact that grads didn't have debilitating levels of debt that forced them to find lucrative work immediately after school. Another theory has it that greed hadn't reached its current stratospheric levels. In the 1980s, a quarter of Columbia's senior class wasn't applying for jobs in finance, as they did in 2005, according to a study contacted by the Center for Career Education. The conversion of top tier colleges into training camps for Wall Street firms didn't begin until the '90s and accelerated in the 2000s, spawning dreams of making so much money that you could simultaneously pay off your student debt while making a down payment on a condo.

As in the 1920s, children of the '90s grew up believing in prosperity without exception, in boom without bust. "What's hitting people hard now, is the sense that world is gone," Kessler-Harris said. "You might get a job and you might work for a living, but it's not going to be in the millions, if you're lucky it'll be in the hundreds of thousands.

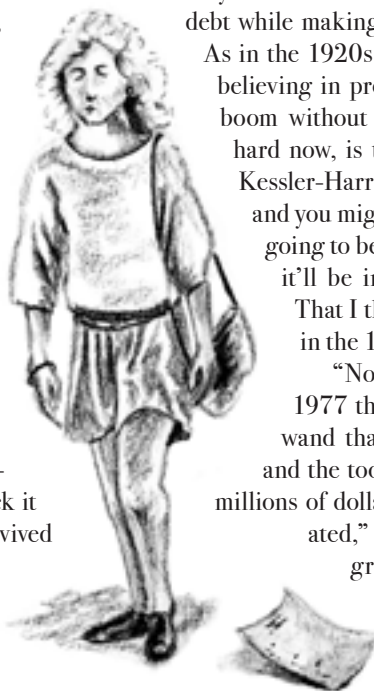
That I think hits kids harder now than in the 1980s."

"Nobody entered Columbia in 1977 thinking that there was a magic wand that was going to wave on them and the tooth fairy would come and pour millions of dollars on them when they graduated," O'Flaherty said. "People who graduated Columbia in 1981 graduated with their eyes open and they entered with their eyes open."

Now that the path to Wall Street has turned into a virtual dead end, today's college

grads are brushing off the ambitions of previous generations. Teach for America is wary of linking changes in the overall economy to the size of their applicant pool, but the numbers are revealing. According to TFA's Columbia recruitment director, David Stanley, in 2008 100 Columbia seniors applied, along with 28 Barnard seniors. This year, 207 Columbia seniors and 79 Barnard seniors have applied.

If there is a glimmer of hope, it relies on *schadenfreude*. This year may not be the worst year to graduate since 1945 because chances are, that's next year. ♦



Illustrations by Sonia Tycko

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TOLD BETWEEN PUFFS

Verily Veritas Has a Cold.

*A*choo! Verily pawed about his bedside abric-a-brac for a jaundiced page of *The New Masses*, which he had no choice but to promote from its previous occupation, where it rested beneath the leg of a malformed bureau after his roommate, Brandon, had disappeared all the dormitory's tissues. (Your hero, already nauseated like a 19th century novel's female protagonist aboard the *Pequod*, will spare you further speculation about the fate of the Kleenex, but will point out that yesterday there was a full box of tissues and no plastic box labeled *The Dreamers* sitting atop Brandon's personal computer. Verily will tell you that much.)



Darkling shapes crept westward across the pale window shade and taunted Verily with their regularity. Verily had taken ill, and had been for some time; judging by the shadows, V.V. surmised it must be between 5:30 p.m. and 5:30 a.m., meaning your hero had not arisen from bed in 24 to 36 hours. Yes, it must have been nearly two sunrises ago when Verily had made an exodus from his Reference Womb for the orgiastic bacchanal of Butler CCIX. Your hero had no sooner begun to resume his project of shading in the spaces within the Os in Butler's every copy of Lippman-era *New Republics*—Verily was a Bourne-again vandal, it seems—than a multitude of be-booted and glossy-lipped young things crouched beside his recliner. “Gather ye earplugs...” V.V. intoned just under his breath, rolling his eyes upwards towards the gods; his new cohabitants rolled their eyes upwards towards their bangs.

“There. He. Is!” squeaked one, predatorily. The backside of her hooded portmanteau featured her name, which was apparently Dawn. Three others—they self-identified as “Brynn,” “Jessica,” and “Chloe”—leaned in and peered over Dawn's shoulder.

Verily glanced in the direction of their pheromones; a scruff-covered, strikingly symmetrical man crouched over some dog-eared volume of *Baby's First Foucault*, or some such. His sad, reddened eyes caught Verily's.

V.V. merely huffed and slammed down his *TNR* on Dawn's rosy fingertips and made his exit. In the time that Verily had dwelled within Butler, the arrant Morningside air had, like a certain desirous caliber of wine or woman, dampened and cooled. But your hero threw the portentous moisture of the wind to the wind, and so sat Verily with his Gauloise Friday. For nearly three hours he sat, and when he peeled his ash-frosted corduroys off the cold stone bench he felt a tickle in the back of his throat. Only later did Verily's aperçu correctly identify this as the *aperflu*.

He had made the perfunctory rounds about the entrails of John Jay, where he was shuffled from the Amsterdam Group to the Broadway Group to Broadway and 110th, at the Duane Reade that completes the Columbia Health Services tautology of decay. Feverish, your hero arrived at the pharmaceutical counter. “Nyquil?” hoped the employee. “Laudanum?” Verily countered. V.V. left D.R. with Robitussin and a box of Peeps, an impulse purchase that he had indulged only after recalling his great aunt Vespasia's aphorism, “Starve a cold. Feed a fever. Add Armagnac and Triple Sec to a hangover.”

The Robitussin looked and tasted like Lucifer's colonic. It had banished nary a symptom of Verily's. His swollen sinūs had rendered his Peeps utterly tasteless, and so he had left them to melt and molt on Brandon's already-destroyed box-set of *The Dreamers*.

Retaining his purer pursuits was of the utmost significance. V.V. cast aside the soiled, rotten pages of *The New Masses* and picked up his smudged copy of *The Waste Land*, determined to complete his close-reading in time for his biweekly T.S. Eliot salon with the toned, limber minds of the men's junior varsity lacrosse team. And just then, Verily felt another sneeze coming on...

Shantih shantih shantachoo!—*Verily Veritas*

The Narrators

After distinguished careers in journalism, Max Frankel and Richard C. Wald, both CC '52, have returned to Alma to team-teach one lucky section of Contemporary Civilization. Frankel, the former executive editor of the New York Times, won a Pulitzer Prize in 1973 for his coverage of Richard Nixon's trip to China; Wald, the Fred Friendly Professor of Journalism at Columbia, formerly served as head of NBC News and senior vice president at ABC News. Blue and White Senior Editor Hannah Lepow, also a student in their class, sat down with them to talk about the media, politics, and why Columbians shouldn't hesitate to deploy the Core at cocktail parties.

The Blue and White: So, what led you back to Columbia?

Richard C. Wald: I've always had a connection with Columbia; I've been the chairman of the *Spectator* for the last 40 years. I joined the Journalism faculty 10 years ago, when I left ABC News. If you live in New York, and you work in any kind of intellectual or pseudo-intellectual enterprise, Columbia is a piece of your landscape.

Max Frankel: I was not as intimately involved. I moved around a lot more during my professional years, but as an alumnus I was always interested in what was going on here. But my main motive for returning is that, in retirement, what I missed most was the stimulation of young people which I had in the office and which I did not find elsewhere. And so I tried various venues for teaching and the happiest experience I have had has been with undergraduates, Columbia-type undergraduates. So I lobbied for the chance to do this course.

B&W: On the first day of class you told us that CC was the course that stuck with you. Were you being serious or just trying to get us to pay attention?

MF: I was being dead serious. Not in terms of I had remembered much of what I had read; the more I read the texts now, the more I realize how much I didn't understand. But I do remember being greatly stimulated by the chance to engage in ideas. What is equality? What is democracy? It was a very thrilling course and when you meet alumni anywhere, they think back on CC.

RCW: When I look back on my education here, I am equally excited by Lit Hum and CC. They informed how I began to think. When we began re-reading, I began to wonder whether I had read any of this stuff before—not because I couldn't remember the details, but because I couldn't remember any of it! But nonetheless

the form of thinking that it engendered stayed with me. It's like knowing how to add. You may not remember any of the specific numbers, but if someone puts it in front of you, you can do it again.

B&W: Have you ever used any of your Core knowledge at a cocktail party?

MF: Yes. All the time. If I can beat somebody down with an erudite citation from any of our readings I don't hesitate.

B&W: That's my hope in life, you realize.

RCW: My answer is slightly different. Very firmly “yes” for the first five or so years after college, when I was spouting it all the time, and my answer has been “yes” very heavily in the last year, when I was able to bring to discussions erudite comments about Aristotle and Plato that just absolutely shut up the people I don't like.

B&W: Enough of the Core. There's been a lot of criticism of the liberal media elite in the last decade or so. What's your response?

MF: Most of the people in the media tilt towards the liberal side because the reason they're in the media is that they think society can use improvement. So that tends to be their orientation, not unlike academics.

B&W: So is that a valid criticism?

MF: Criticism is whether it distorts what they do. In some cases it does, and in some cases it doesn't.

RCW: Objectivity is often confused with having no opinion. The point of objectivity, a point much discussed in traditional journalism, is to construct a story on the basis that here is a story, these are the points in its favor and here are the points against it. It doesn't

mean you don't have an idea and it doesn't mean equal time. It merely means you treat it as an object. A story has many parts. Don't leave out the parts that contradict other parts. But don't overemphasize them, and don't make them equal because you have to. Make them appropriate because you should.

B&W: Do you think people are getting objective news?

RCW: Oh I do, yeah, for the most part. I think that there are obviously all the time unconscious biases. You live in a society in which people tend to internalize political correctness. It's hard to say something's objective or not objective because it depends on the viewpoint of the person who gets the story. But in general, as long as the attempt is made, the result is usually good.

MF: The media tend to reflect the major biases of the community they assert. There are national prejudices. An American correspondent who goes to Iran or Moscow or wherever is going to see it through American

eyes and he's going to reflect by and large the prejudices of the community he's addressing.

For example, in Vietnam, most of the American press supported the war at the beginning. And it's not until public opinion began to turn and weary of the war that the press became increasingly critical.

RCW: Vietnam was a really interesting case. For half the war there was an unquestioning acceptance of our involvement in Vietnam in this country in the press. There may have been questions, but they were minor and nobody heard them.

MF: The questions were only that the war wasn't being fought well—it was like Iraq at the beginning.

RCW: But then the spin machine got a little too spin-y.

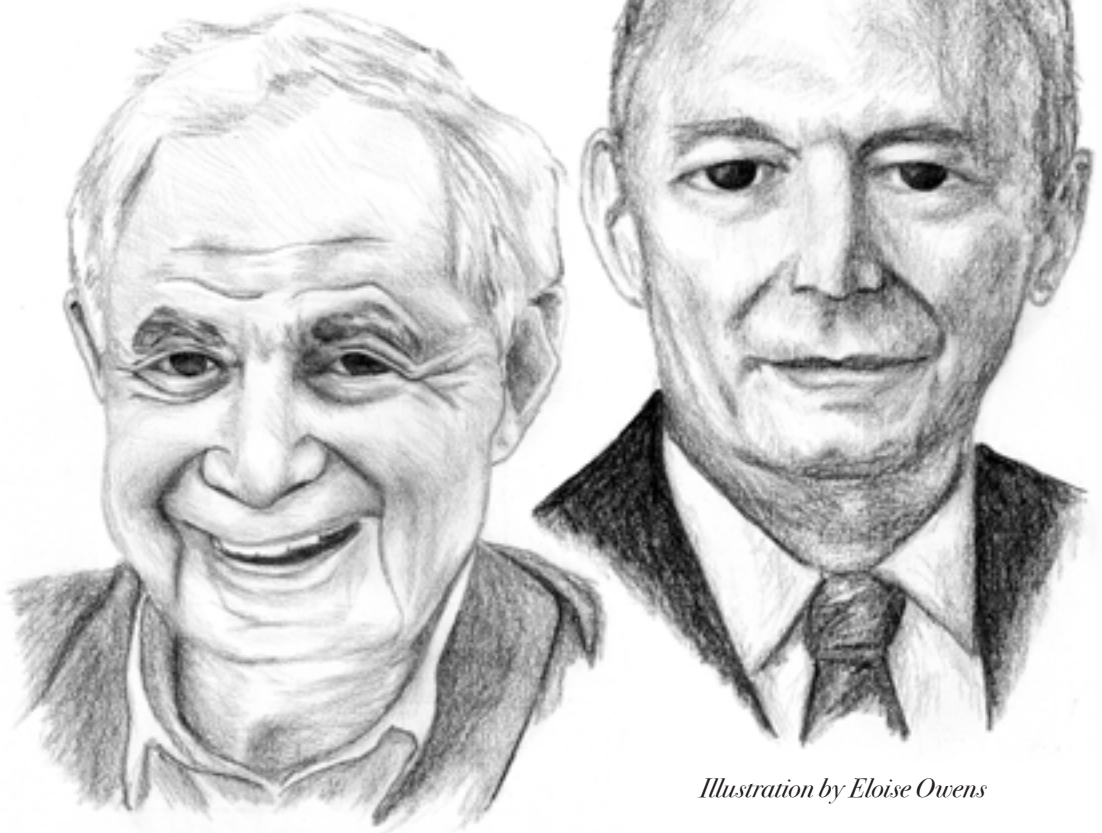


Illustration by Eloise Owens

In the ordinary course of reporting, reporters on the scene were beginning to say, “They’re telling you ‘A’ but it’s really ‘Z.’” That started to change opinion in the country, and as it changed opinion in the country the press reflected that.

MF: I can get this idea across to people in terms of sports coverage. If you read the *New York Times*, a great objective newspaper day in and day out, it is covering the Mets and the Yankees as home teams, and from the point of view of how are they doing, and if they’re losing why are they losing. They’re rah-rah for their home teams. They’re playing into the prejudice of their readers. Now what happens when the Mets play the Yankees? The coverage turns neutral because they now have to appease two competing camps.

Readers don’t understand what a great degree they influence the coverage that they blame for influencing them.

B&W: How do you see print journalism and television changing with the digital age?

MF: On paper, journalism will change in a generation largely to one or another form of electronic distribution. It’s just much more efficient; it’s much cheaper. The business model to do so does not yet exist, but it will come. What the technology is, I can’t imagine, but the idea of chopping down trees in Canada and trucking them into the US and pouring ink all over them, that’s doomed.

RCW: I don’t agree with Professor Frankel. I don’t see anything ever disappearing. Nothing disappears. If you start with Homer, you’ve still got people doing poetry slams. It is not in the nature of our kind of civilization that we lose media of communication.

On the other hand, they get a smaller space in the spectrum. The print piece of the information spectrum will become very, very small, but it will still exist.

Television has a different life. It presents to you experience and emotion. That’s much more easily transferable to the Internet. It’s hard to read print on the Internet; it’s easy to see pictures. One of the things that will happen to broadcast television is that it will get

enriched. It is possible, and therefore it will happen, that you can imbed in video alternate forms of information. You’re watching a ball game, you press a key, and you can see what a player’s batting average is or you can see what the alternate coach’s strategies are.

MF: There’s one other thing that I think is very profound but I can’t define it. [My generation] came from an era in which we all read, and, especially on television, saw the same thing at more or less the same time. That’s radically being changed. We had one kind of community, and now we’re going to create our own communities. We’re going to relate to people in different ways. And whether that’s good or bad or what it does to our political system I don’t have a clue, but I feel that there’s a very big change in the works, and it’s technology driven.

B&W: What do you say to people who are turning to newer media outlets, like the Huffington Post? Do you think traditional newspapers and broadcast journalism have something to worry about?

MF: The Huffington Post is not remotely a challenge to something like *The Wall Street Journal*. It feeds off *The Wall Street Journal*.

“Start out the way we did: expect to be poor.”

RCW: It can’t exist without it. Everybody says to me that Jon Stewart is the new way of doing news. But Jon Stewart can’t exist without the news as it is. It’s a derivative.

B&W: There is a group of people who just depend on these derivatives, who only read the Huffington Post or only watch Jon Stewart.

MF: And they will be ignorant.

B&W: Well that feeds into my next question, about ethics. Professor Wald, what was your job as the “ethics czar” of ABC News?

RCW: I would speak to correspondents, read scripts, look at pictures, and talk to people in the community who had complaints. I would see that in general the overall policies and procedures of the place where I worked tended toward those things that were good in a journalistic sense: being relatively good, relatively ob-

jective, and, every once in a while, relatively intelligent.

B&W: Do you see the same attention being paid to journalistic integrity today?

RCW: There's a variety of answers to that. The first is yes. The second is less and less of American journalism is edited in the way it used to be. There used to be two or three editors before a piece was published. Now there's one, sometimes two. There used to be a very clear adherence to stylebooks. Now a lot more is allowable. On the other hand, there used to be a general acceptance that reporters were operating in good faith and generally correct in what they said and that they were a part of a respectable enterprise. Now the blogosphere is looking for errors. The political sense will argue with choice, rather than detail, and a general public is less enchanted.

You have to take that in a historical perspective. For most of its life, journalism was partisan and looked down on. The basic sense of the value and impartiality of the press stems from World War II, because prior to that there were a few quality newspapers and then the general press. There used to be a song, "If he's working for a newspaper, he's probably a drunk."

B&W: That sounds catchy.

RCW: It was true. But during the War the press brought the country news that it eagerly devoured, which brought the papers money and gave them a sense of value. Newspapers began to pay more, unions regularized employment, and there was a general sense that this was a respectable operation.

MF: There's an element in this that goes back to your first question. Newspapers used to find their audiences along partisan lines, and they were willing to be defined that way. Then came World War II, and after the War there came the decline of newspapers, for various reasons. And the ones that survived tended to have monopolies. And becoming monopolies reinforced their need to be "objective" or "non-partisan," because their audience was the whole. It was the Yankees playing the Mets.

Now that everything is being dispersed again, people are looking for partisan followings because most people like to read things they agree with.

B&W: With that recent splintering in mind, what do you think about how the news media portrayed the past election? Was the coverage traditional, or somehow new?

RCW: I think as far as the election went, the tone of things always goes toward the winner or the perceived winner, so when everything began Obama was an interesting anomaly and Mrs. Clinton was the center of attention. Later, as Obama began to be more successful, he began to be an interesting exception and then he became a hero. The reporting on Obama followed traditional patterns with an untraditional person.

B&W: How about the criticism that the press was biased towards Obama?

MF: Obama was brilliant in his use of the media, and his opponent was abysmal. It was relatively easy to look biased because they created their own bias.

RCW: And there's a relatively new perception that a way to deal with any candidate's shortcoming is to attack person who reports on it. It

began, I believe, in Vietnam, when Lyndon Johnson felt quite strongly that if, you questioned the government's spin, you were unpatriotic. It wasn't that you were a bad reporter, it was you're either with me or against me, and if you're against me I represent the nation, and you represent chaos.

MF: Dean Rusk said it. He said you don't win Pulitzer Prizes by supporting the government.

B&W: You've both seen the media landscape change a lot in the last half-century. Do you have any advice to people who are just starting out?

RCW: Yeah, get a job.

MF: Start the way we did: expect to be poor.

This interview was edited for clarity and length.

Animal Collective

You most likely already know that Housing & Dining strictly forbids pets. In theory, pet owners lose their right to guaranteed housing unless they relocate their animal off-campus. Fortunately, the army that is charged with pet-detection—including many RAs, maintenance staff, and Public Safety officers—often turns a blind eye to reasonably well-behaved animals. Some RAs (all in the name of community-building, we assume) have even raised hamsters in their floors' lounges. So if the nights have gotten too lonely and your disposition remains "awkward," it may be worth the risk to smuggle in a domesticated friend. To aid you in your selection of a species are stories from a few brave (albeit pseudonymous) pet owners.

CANIS LUPIS FAMILIARIS

As a first-year, "Quincy," a SEAS student, tried his hand at pet-smuggling. Adjusting a mid-size backpack on his shoulders, Quincy nonchalantly stepped up to the security desk of Hartley, his living contraband out of sight. He knew the consequences of his actions, but he also knew others who had committed the same crime and walked away scot-free. Quincy's first few tries were uneventful, but one day, as he approached the Hartley desk, his backpack "started fidgeting and moving all over the place," he recalled. In a panic, Quincy began to jerk and twist in sync with his backpack. "The security guard gave me some pretty weird looks," he said, but the officer asked no questions and made no moves. Relieved, Quincy made it back to his dorm room without arousing further suspicions. He had just smuggled in a terrier—not for the first time, and not for the last.

He hardly had a choice in the matter. Quincy's older sister had dumped the dog with him when she moved away. It was the shelter or his Hartley single. The terrier, let's call him "Rover," was small—small enough to fit in a mid-size backpack—but still, Quincy's room proved too tiny. The dog would "always want to dart out the door whenever it was opened," he said. "Then he would scratch the door." Luckily (and atypically) Rover never barked, so Quincy managed to sneak the dog out of the dorms twice a week for a two-hour walk.

On one of these walks, Quincy and Rover were spotted by a security guard who was often stationed in Hartley. Quincy trespassed through Wallach just the once and then continued to enter through Hartley.

Another day, an RA on duty caught Rover galivanting in the suite and reported the infraction to

Quincy's RA. However, Quincy's suitemates and RA were already in on the secret. Their gossip brought Quincy all kinds of new friends. More bluntly, it brought him pet groupies. But the bonds of affection Rover helped build were not quite enough to warrant the dog's sad imprisonment. Quincy gave him up after two months, as soon as he found Rover a suitable home with a married postdoctoral student.

FELIS CATUS

"Anita" is a motherly type. When she found a stray cat crying in Greenwich Village, she couldn't help but bring it home. Home was John Jay, where Anita was the RA.

Though her room was larger than those of her floormates, she knew the cat wouldn't last long in the dormitory. At first, she gave little thought to a pet owner's many attendant responsibilities. She even called the cat by her own name to keep herself from bonding too seriously with it. She did not cat-proof her bedroom until she realized the feline Anita would hide for weeks in her radiator, soiling it in the nervous terror common to former strays.

Another cat owner, "Penelope," noticed that her cat did not fare well being cooped up, either. A week after a relative fobbed the cat off on her, "the little guy got so sullen that it just didn't seem right," she said. She decided he was better off in a shelter.

Still, as onerous as it was for Anita and Penelope to keep their cats locked in, it was positively terrifying to bring them past the security desk. For mandatory trips to the veterinarian, the cats had to be stuffed into boxes or disguised kitty carriers. The poor beasts would cry from the motion and the enclosure,

which raised the specter of detection by the guard.

But unlike Quincy, Anita didn't get to relax once she got past the lobby of her building. On her floor, her first-year charges grew curious about little Anita's water dispenser, which big Anita conspicuously refilled in the floor bathroom. When one stepped up and asked what it was, Anita paused, at a loss for an explanation. Another piped up. "Is that a footbath?" asked the student.

"Erm, yeah, that's right," Anita replied.

LAGOMORPHA LEPIRODAE

For some small pets, dorm life is positively ritzy. "Maurecia" adopted a shelter rabbit who had been litterbox-trained, then left it free to wander in her bedroom. The bunny, she said, "didn't need any more space than a cage and it had the luxury of a whole room."

Rabbits are docile, which keeps the authorities at bay, and fuzzy, which attracts pet groupies. Maurecia's RA never found out about the rabbit until she moved out, but Maurecia's friends happily helped with the animal's care. None of the rabbit's fans could agree on a name for it, so, in the spirit of simplicity, it was called Bunny.

For a certain kind of person, caring for a rabbit is half the fun. "Actually," another campus rabbit owner mused, having a rabbit "might have helped me keep my room tidier and my schedule a little more regular." Maurecia insisted that Bunny's smell was negligible when well-managed. Bunny was quiet, too. The only noise it made was a light and rhythmic munching sound at nighttime, which Maurecia found rather therapeutic.

ATELEREIX ALBIVENTRIS

For the past two years, "Kathy" has been the proud owner of a small, hypoallergenic pet. "Sonic," a hedgehog, is silent and scentless as long as Kathy regularly changes his bedding and tightens the screws on his exercise wheel. (Arguably, some Columbia pets sleep in newly-made beds more often than some Columbia students do.)

Kathy manages to keep Sonic a secret from her RA, though on occasion, she has had to throw a

sheet over his cage and pass it off as furniture. Other hedgehogs have come closer to detection.

Kathy's roommate described a close call during a furniture inventory search. An official from Housing & Dining opened the door, only to find himself staring straight at the illicit pet. "The only thing the guy said was, a bit nervously, 'Oh, is that a cat?'" recalled the student. "'It's not gonna bite me, right?'" After this, he about-faced and not another word was heard on the matter.



Illustration by Chloe Eichler

VERDICT

A dog may gain you friends, but dorm life will leave it depressed, and very, very few things are sadder than a sad dog. Cats, especially former strays, will probably destroy your nervous system, so have mercy on yourself and take the cat to a shelter. A rabbit is probably not a bad idea, and the low-maintenance hedgehog carries the thrill of the exotic. Still, the mouse may be the best furry dorm companion: it is, without doubt, small and easy to feed—and, since you're probably hosting one already, it may be the only pet that Housing won't evict.

—Mark Hay

SISSY AND MAGNUS

Sissy and Magnus, two Pekingese in a pram, were being taken up Broadway on their early morning stroll. Mrs. O_____ Zh_____, born in Novosibirsk but lately of West End Avenue, crouched to the buggy's side when the blanket fluttered out from beneath the dogs' plump flanks, but otherwise she pushed the stroller blindly, insensible to the animals' dialogue.

"Sissy," inquired Magnus, "Sissy, do you remember the male dancer in the third act? Weren't his feet a little too willy-nilly?" Mrs. Zh_____ had invited the Pekingese to the ballet last night, but Sissy had dozed off before the virgin sacrifice that completed Act Two. Magnus had conked out just afterwards—he always found sexual subjects rather off-putting. Nevertheless, the two dogs had been debating the merits of Act Three all morning.

"Hallelujah, Hallelujah!" cried a man of low rank and rank smell. "Love Jesus! Love Jesus!"

"Someone hose that rabble down," grumbled Sissy in her tobacco smoker's rasp. "This street gets worse by the minute."

"He's here every day," replied Magnus, archly. "I don't know how you manage to forget a thing you see every day. You really have no idea what a bother it is to live with you."

"You may return to the Russian Tea Room at any time you wish, Magnus. Don't think I've forgotten *that!*" Sissy hacked a bit from exertion, then regained her strength. "They had you trotting out blins on a silver tray until your back went out, and then they put you to work in the *coat check*."

Mrs. Zh_____ rolled the Pekingese west into Riverside Park, where an assembly of tai chi practitioners broke their moment of focus to crowd around the buggy.

"Oh, look, doggies, friends from back home," announced Mrs. Zh_____ absentmindedly.

"狮子狗," spoke a voice from amid the scrum of sweatsuits.

It had been many years since Sissy and Magnus had abandoned the Middle Kingdom, so they pretended not to understand. Magnus turned to Sissy.

"I don't know when this health craze started," he lamented. "Oh, I bet they drink bottled water, too. When did everybody get so *thirsty*?"

The dog run was rutted and uneven, but for some reason, Mrs. Zh_____ insisted on forcing the stroller across the rocks and branches to where the Pekingese could watch other dogs gambole. Perry and Mitch Bollinger, two blunt-skulled labradors, were retrieving tennis balls tossed by their hired dog walker. With each fetch, they wrenched their heads around, their faces marked by the anxiety common to Connecticut prep school boys searching for their banker father in the bleachers on field day.

Soon, a nimble dachshund entered the off-leash run. An orange top hat was strapped under his chin, and he tipped his head to each of the

dogs at play, each of whom paid him their respects in turn.

Last of all, he ambled over to Sissy and Magnus.

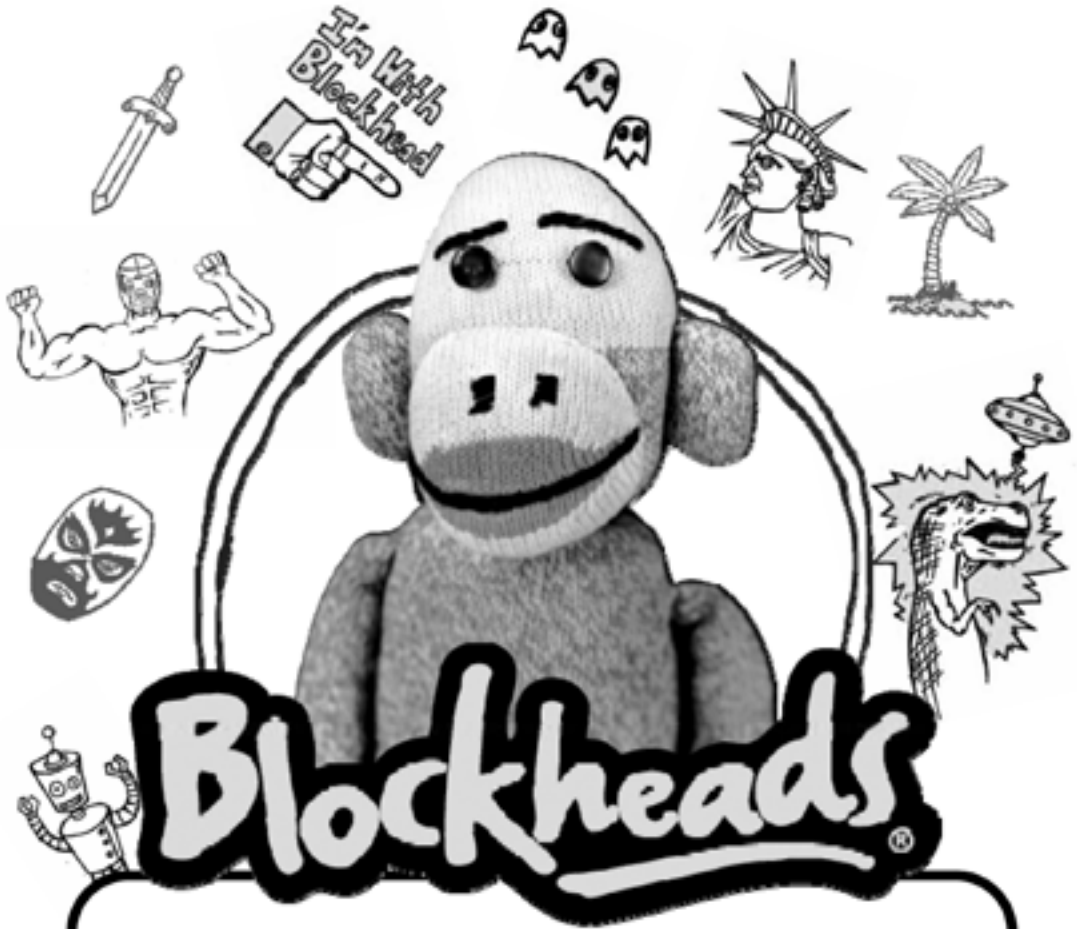
"Magnus, my good man," he said gravely. "And Cixi," he continued, using the formal name Sissy had dropped long ago, "always a pleasure." Magnus attempted a vigorous "*good day* to you, Prince," but his flat face (a sign of good breeding, he always reminded himself) perplexed his breath, and he choked on his words. Sissy feigned deafness. She and Prince had had a thing—but that was *years* ago, and why on earth did he still bother with that silly top hat? Prince had always been such a *showboat*.

Just then, a ray of sunlight pierced the canopy of Riverside Park and a glare erupted from Magnus's two bright green exposed corneal stromata, products of his vicious eye ulcers. The hawk in the branches above did not miss the glint, and before Sissy could mutter "damn *showboat*" under her breath, the raptor had plunged and swooped and seized the 20-pound toy. Shocked, but not crushed by the talons' grip, Magnus was plopped, still breathing, in the hawk's nest, whereupon a wee eyas gazed upon him lovingly and whined, "Mama, can I *keep* it?"

—Alexandra Muhler



Illustration by Allison Halfp



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MEASURE FOR MEASURE

THE DROMEDARY

Has his own alphabet
Of splayed characters,

Meter packed with sand,
Syntax of hoarded water,

And long spells of dark.
Here is a mirage, here an oasis

Here a string of letters all the same.
His eyelids are tipped with saffron.

He will lead you down his lines.
They might be footprints, you'll say.

I think I see my name
But you can't drink your own name.

At night it is cold and all the mountains move.
When you wake, there will be no sign of yesterday's words.

You will settle on his back,
Between two hills of resinous hide,

He will part your legs
As the sun parts dunes.

Let your feet dangle, let your hands grow gummy
With the oil from his long nape.

At first it will be uncomfortable
But soon you will be glad you are not walking.

—Lizzy Straus

SON — NET

I live today on wine, fast rides and under-
statements. First I arrived, meditative at seven-
teen, drowning for the church. But now I, turn-
able, will no longer clench my sorrows, blear-
eyed, as kittens staked in heaven's fear-
some tongue prey so they may live. For man-
hood was not born to weep and, weeping, kill but learn

that such skill in priesthood is a lie. Not near-
sighted anymore, but far, far from abiding friend-
ships in briars, snagged in my hair!—I return fresh, buck-
led, as God my barman will, not rob my plea-
sure, that earthlight bound for truth, if I must land-
scape long desires. Escaping pubs for God's luck-
less house: we would wait on one bended knee.

—*Nicholas Wong*





DIGITALIA COLUMBIANA

These excerpts were culled from documents left on Columbia's lab computers. We encourage our readers to submit their own digitalia finds to us, via e-mail, at editors@theblueandwhite.org.

University Writing, a course designed around its student's ability to continuously produce numerous essay drafts, presented the greatest challenge to my ability in handling the course assignments and my mental well-being, in general.



No one short of the Hulk was going to get through the throng of people, I very much doubted that Dr. Bruce Banner was going to leave a trail of geriatric destruction in order to see the works of Bach and Beethoven. I was confronted with the single variable I had failed to take into account: the retired, the elderly, all the nannas and pep-peps of the world.



It's the end of yet another school day. You pass by familiar faces (some you like and some you don't) as you slowly make your way down the hallway to your locker. On your way you see Amy, surrounded by nearly a dozen ambitious guys, like seagulls- flocking and fighting over a piece of leftover sandwich on a beach.



Taking a break from the conga line, I found one of my campers sobbing in corner of the room. With a bit of prodding and the drying of tears, I learned that this camper was fearful of abrupt changes in the schedule.



There are immortal questions. That, is questions that every generation asks, questions that have haunted humanity from the beginning of its existence. Amongst these questions: who am I? what am I doing here? And of

course what is the nature of humans? These questions have been addressed by every single society in the world at many different times. Needless to say China has not been the exception.



We would certainly invite Walt Whitman to join us, if he was not already committed to a night at the opera or the theater. Then we would descend the stairs into the parlor room to mingle with the other guests until we were called to dinner. Walt would go to Seabury's bedroom where he would deposit his coat onto the bed, brush off his boots, straighten himself out and then join everyone in the parlor



Have you ever seen that one kid in class who insists on sitting in the farthest seat away from all the students and Professors, as if everyone in the room besides them has got the plague? You might notice how they look pale and panic-stricken, like they've seen a ghost. Not to mention they're sweating bullets. Gross. Well I can definitely sympathize with those poor, poor souls because well, that's pretty much the spitting image of me!



I jumped at the opportunity to pull a fast one (albeit a very mundane, entirely non-fast one) on the higher cultural classes. "I'm a student," I reconciled. And for a period, I blithely believed that no one else would be attending



Grand Central is a glorious space, but it's also vast and impersonal, teeming with solitary commuters rath-

er than one's own kin and kind. Might some people not come away from such a place feeling profoundly estranged? Like they hadn't a friend in the world? They could. But in the sunshiny, low-crime New York of 2008, Grand Central feels much more like a village green than the melancholy nowhere of Sondheim's vision (or worse, Travis Bickle's open-air asylum).



I was the champion of forgive, forget,
But I can't find a way to forgive you yet,
And though I know that you and I are through,
All my thoughts are lines converging in on you,

I wish sometimes the mind were blind,
To see, what can't be seen,
To feel, what can't be real,
To know, what's done is done,
It goes on and on.

I am the victim of a persistent vision
It tracks me down with its precision



Two men stand in a dark alley over the body of their corrupted friend. One of the men is disguised in black. He arrived after defeating his sworn enemy, Joker. Despite all that he has done, he makes one more sacrifice for the city of Gotham as he takes the blame for Dent's crime.



In the end, the animals are out food, whether they were happy or not. Why waste thousands of dollars making sure their happy and squander away valuable land when we can just maintain the status quo? The system we have, even though a bit crude, works. Eating meat is not bad and most likely will never be.



The idea that even in the 19th and 20th centuries, perhaps even still, English gentlemen arise on "beautiful mornings" and get the urge to go hunting sort of amuses me. Perhaps the killing of an actual fox might not be so funny, but the idea that a gentleman might only just inquire, "what are we going to kill today?" is a really interesting association of the aesthetics of wealthy England and a sunny regal morning with an ancient social convention. If only verbal, I don't find these words

abusive, as Leach might. If animals cannot feel this lyric threat, it is just as anthro-centric to criticize the "upper class" for using "abusive" language to maintain their hierarchy (criticizing them in order to place oneself in on morally higher ground perhaps) as it is to dole out the poetic threats themselves. I don't think animals give a hoot (EXCEPT OWLS!) about language.



L'ordinateur est utile aussi pour aller plus vite quand il faut qu'on écrive une rédaction pour la classe du français. Entre ça et l'e-mail, on peut gagner beaucoup du temps. On peut utiliser ceux temps pour jouer dans un match de foot ou quelque chose amusant comme ça. Mais quelques fois l'ordinateur devient votre ennemi, car il s'arrête de fonctionner quand on est en train d'écrire une rédaction pour le lendemain. Alors on ne peut pas compter cent percent sur l'ordinateur, parce qu'il est seulement une machine - et les machines, ils se cassent. J'espère que demain mon ordinateur marchera bien.

[Translation, with corrections to grammar: The computer is also useful for going faster when one has to write an essay for French class. Between that and email, one can save a lot of time. One can use this time to play in a soccer game or something else fun like that. But sometimes the computer becomes your enemy, because it stops functioning while one is writing an essay due tomorrow. So one cannot count 100 percent on the computer, because it is only a machine—and machines, they break. I hope that tomorrow my computer works well. -Ed.]



[Redacted] is deeply concerned about being branded as a child abuser not only for reasons relating to self-esteem and stigma but also because she has wanted to be an RN for years and fears that the label will prohibit her from entering the profession.



A former professor of mine used to say that he wished all of his clients were YAVIS (Young- Attractive- Verbal- Intelligent- Successful), since it would make his job more easy and he would feel very effective.



****Destiny's Action Plan 03.16.09****

Goals[...]

1-2pm Develop action plan

Oh, the Humanities!

When Gulliver traveled to the Land of the Yahoos, he was confronted by a species of animals that were physically identical to humans, but lacked their capacity for reason and language. Gulliver, himself fully rational, is forced to confront “the double sense of himself as Yahoo and not-Yahoo,” and in doing so actually begins to question his own humanity.

In *Breeding: A Partial History of the Eighteenth Century*, Columbia English professor Jenny Davidson invokes Gulliver’s existential crisis as well as an impressive array of other 18th century texts to discuss how writers, philosophers and theorists talk and think about what it means to be human. What a reader will gain from her survey largely depends on the depth and breadth of his or her engagement with Davidson’s bibliography. For example, from *Gulliver’s Travels*, we quickly jump from Thomas Moore’s *Utopia*, Timothy Nourse’s arcane treatise on mating entitled *Discourse Upon the Nature and Faculties of Man*, and various 21st century texts concerning human mating and the morals of controlled breeding.

While balancing the diverse literature at hand, Davidson succeeds at pointing out common linguistic anachronisms that often stifle contemporary discussions about certain topics, like eugenics. Davidson understands that readers have been trained to automatically flinch at that word—“eugenics”—because of its Nazi implications, and helpfully frames the debate, and others like it, using the 18th century vocabulary from which they were born. In her discussion of cross-breeding, for instance, she mentions that the notion of heredity was not fully conceptualized until the 19th century. Therefore, “the terminology available to eighteenth-century writers made it difficult to be precise about hereditary elements.”

Davidson points to this as a reason why many

Enlightenment writers, notably the philosophers David Hume and Claude Helvétius, tried to locate definitions of what it means to be a human being in the physical, not the philosophical. She cites Montesquieu’s fascination with climate’s influence on human knowledge as an instance of this shift.

The author’s interjections provide keen and necessary insights into her textual analyses. Davidson employs a compelling and complete source list, skillfully demonstrating how these sometimes technically anachronistic and arcane topics still affect how things like nature vs. nurture are discussed today.

Nevertheless, she doesn’t sufficiently explain why understanding the origins of our modern discourse are so central to the stakes of the debate. She rarely makes a claim to what she’s arguing for or against—which is a shame, since her thoroughly impressive grasp of the book’s expansive bibliography is so consistently demonstrated.

With ease and a clear mastery of the material, *Breeding* maps how this infamous binary was conceived and how it was then co-opted to discuss sociopolitical and religious issues—for instance, how education shapes human morality and societal function. Unfortunately, her pleasant and conversational tone—a welcome

contrast to her source materials’ occasionally technological jargon—tends to fade at times. Davidson’s command of intricate philosophical and biological issues is formidable, but her mistake lies in assuming the same of her audience.

Nonetheless, readers of all familiarities with 18th century intellectual history can follow and appreciate her observations on the changing perceptions of human nature. What Davidson provides is a fresh guide to a question that haunted Enlightenment thinkers and their intellectual heirs. Gulliver would be proud.

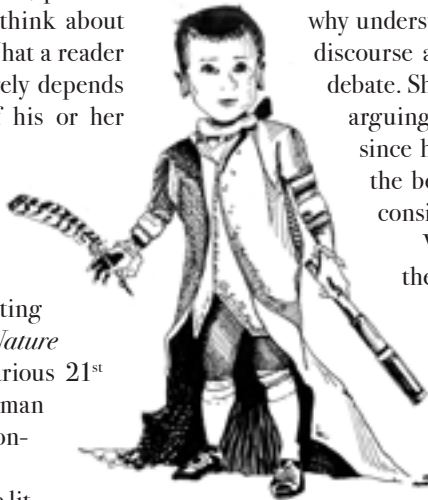


Illustration by Chloe Eichler

—Samuel Kerbel



CAMPUS GOSSIP

THE WHITE LADY LOVES YOU MORE

On March 25th, the RAs of Plimpton hosted a job hunting seminar, which they promised would be “a night of hors d’oeuvres, drinks (non-alcoholic of course), and information on how to search for your ideal internship/job.” In keeping with the list’s second promise, the evening was called “Careers and Coketails.” Kudos to whoever thought once—and only once—and changed the scandalous “cocktail” to “coketail.”



Overheard at Fairway at 74th and Broadway, 11:30 p.m.

Comedian Tracy Morgan, lately of *30 Rock* was talking to a group of friends while his groceries were being scanned. He commented on the topics of our time: “Rihanna’s 21 and she got her first ass whuppin’. She pushed him, you know she pushed him.”

It’s somehow less funny when Dot Com and Grizz aren’t there to roll their eyes in mock disapproval.



LASCIATE OGNI SPERANZA, VOI CH’INTRATE

Overheard on Frat Row:

Brother: “I’m just a guy who happens to be better at the humanities and shit like that, but I’m not artsy.”



A student recently stepped into a downtown pet shop with one thing on her mind: guinea pigs. A lover of

small animals all her life, this student was entertaining the possibility of purchasing the Andean rodents for her new apartment, and a particularly cuddly pig resting in the corner of the shop’s cage had caught her eye. “Might I hold that guinea pig?” she asked the store manager.

The manager obliged, wrestling the cage lid off and scooping up the animal.

“Why isn’t it moving?” she wondered aloud. Frowning, the manager turned the pig over a few times in his hands.

“Huh,” he observed casually. “It seems to be—it seems to be dead. You probably don’t want this one.”



From a lecture for Solid Earth Systems

Professor Sidney Hemming: “When the water percolates between the cracks in the rocks, then freezes, it nudges the rock apart. Like when you forget your beer and leave it in the freezer.”

Student: [*Gravelly*] “I would never forget about beer in the freezer.”

Hemming: “No, I suppose not. Now would be a good time for a beer, wouldn’t it?”



Outside Ricky’s Emporium of Tackiness:

Girl, to a friend: “It’s a front for a dry-cleaning operation.”

Because more lipsticked collars are good for Bon French.



Overheard outside Lerner:

Preschool teacher: "Do you want to go to college here one day?"

Toddlers, in unison: "No!"



BRING YOUR OWN



Overheard on the 1 train:

Dude: "Yeah, I live in Potluck House. It's cool. People sit around and like hang out and talk and stuff. The people are really funny, like, there are lots of lesbians."

Girl: "Oh my god! I love lesbians!"

Dude: "Yeah, and like, some vegans. Lots of weird people like that. Some seriously Northern Californian pot-smokers."



GHOSTS OF FRIDAY NIGHTS FUTURE

A boisterous group of alumni was observed being ejected from the Black Box theater at Friday night's showing of *Little Shop of Horrors*. The group of one woman and three men—all in their late 20s, mostly clad in Gap, and half-balding—shuffled into an elevator to reflect on their sudden change of evening plans.

"Man, that's pitiful. Kicked out of the Black Box," one observed.

"And for being drunk, too," replied another.

"Let's go back to my apartment and do shots!" offered a third.

A small cheer went up, and the foursome vanished into the night.



Tourists are shocked at today's exchange rate for traffic:

An older British couple, standing in the checkout line at Duane Reade and wearing matching windbreakers, had just purchased New York maps with crisp, freshly exchanged \$20 bills.

Husband: "You said it would take 15 minutes to get

here from Penn Station. And look! We're half an hour late now!"

Wife: "Don't get cheeky with me, how am I supposed to know New York buses?"

Husband: "This never would have happened in London."

Wife: "Now, we're not in London, are we?"

Husband: "Well, I'm sure New Yorkers aren't all half an hour late."



Two socially conscious Westside Market shoppers are carrying reusable bags and discussing ethics.

Shopper 1: "If someone was writhing on the floor in front of me, and I helped, I obviously wouldn't charge them."

Shopper 2: "Obviously."

Looks like someone has been paying attention in Challenges of Sustainable Development



ART HUM VS. THE FASCISTS

GS student: "I missed the Goya class. What did he do?"

CC student: "Oh, he was one of the first to turn away from the classical style. He worked with political subjects."

GS: "Huh, so he was doing, like, the Spanish-American War?"

CC: [Pause] "Well, he has these paintings called the 2nd of May and the 3rd of May. There's a guy up front with a firing squad..."

GS: "Woo, tough times. Glad I wasn't around then."



Overheard at Strokos:

Woman: "Excuse me, sir, how much is the spinach and cheese kwish?"

This is all the evidence ABC needs to slash funding to the Columbia Quiche Alliance's education program.



Sue Yang... it's inevitable!