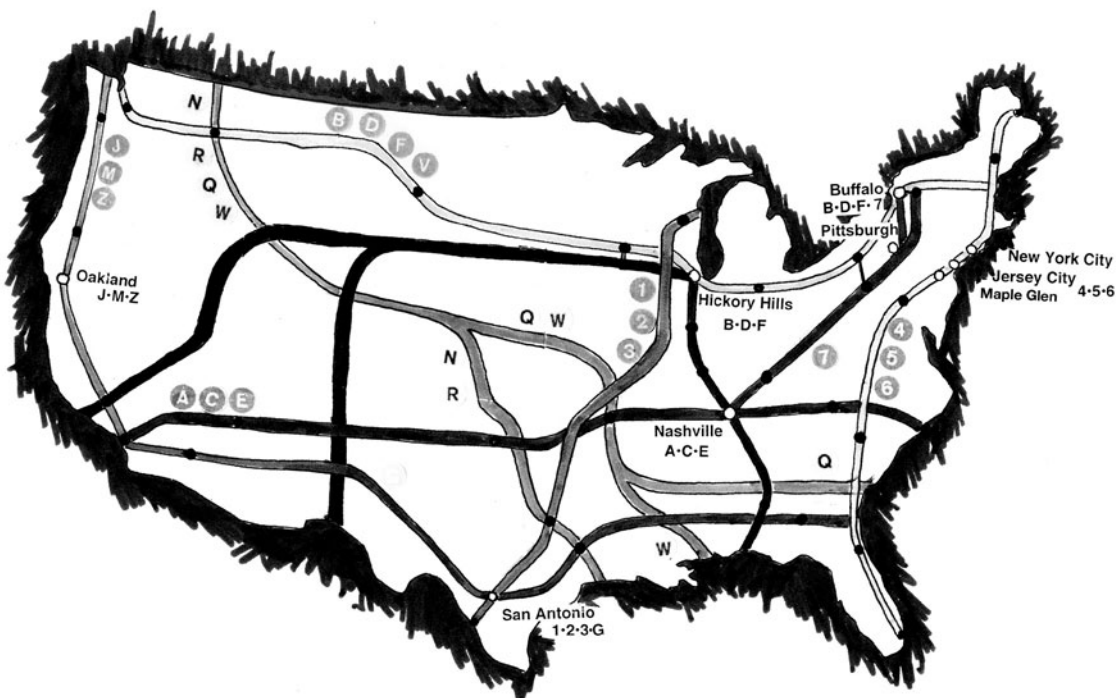


# THE BLUE AND WHITE

Vol. XV No. V

February/March 2009



## **NOSTALGIA: UNLEASHED!**


Whoever Said You Can't Go Home Again?

## **MISADVENTURE CAPITAL**

The Sisyphean struggle of Columbia's would-be Zuckerbergs.

## **ONLY IN THE *BLUE AND WHITE*: BUREAUCRAT FAN FICTION**

ALSO: MARK BITTMAN, STAFF PERSONALS, AND ST. MARY'S CHURCH



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# THE BLUE AND WHITE

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Vol. XV

FAMAM EXTENDIMUS FACTIS

No. V

## COLUMNS

- 4 BLUEBOOK
- 10 CAMPUS CHARACTERS
- 13 VERILY VERITAS
- 32 DIGITALIA COLUMBIANA
- 34 MEASURE FOR MEASURE
- 39 CAMPUS GOSSIP

## FEATURES

- Sara Vogel* 12 LOVE, EVENTUALLY  
*A Columbia dating coach on the Xs and Os of XOXO.*
- B&W Contributors 14 NOSTALGIA: UNLEASHED!  
*The Blue and White insists you can go home again.*
- Anna Phillips* 18 GRACE UNDER PRESSURE  
*The profile of a parish in transition.*
- Hannah Goldfield* 20 THE SIMPLIFIER  
*A conversation with Mark Bittman.*
- B&W Staff 24 STAFF PERSONALS  
*Because even magazine writers need to find love.*
- Alexandra Muhler* 26 STAGED RUSH  
*The church social in the digital age.*
- Lydia DePillis* 28 MISADVENTURE CAPITAL  
*The Sisyphean struggle of Columbia's would-be Zuckerbergs.*

## CRITICISM

- Brendan Ballou & Rob Trump* 10 AT TWO SWORDS' LENGTH  
*A look at Lionel Trilling's abandoned novel.*
- James Downie* 36 LINCOLN MEMORIALS  
*Eric Foner teams up with the NYPL for Lincoln's big 2-0-0*
- Mariela Quintana* 37 LOOSE CANON  
*A review of A Great Idea at the Time: The Rise, Fall, and Curious Afterlife of the Great Books*

## 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.

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# BLUE BOOK

As the saying goes, all stories are about one of two things: a stranger comes to town or someone takes a trip. The story of the *Blue and White*—and the stories within this month's *Blue and White*—certainly falls within the bounds of this declaration. Ushered in amid blustery climes, a new staff has ascended and assumed its editorial sway and swagger. And with this arrival, the *Blue and White* continues its evolution from endearingly solipsistic little magazine to something else entirely.

But such a journey does not insist upon rootlessness; with a nod and a finger-joust in the direction our forebears, we've brought back—for good—the timeless *tête-à-tête*, At Two Swords' Length, in which Brendan Ballou and Rob Trump argue both sides of the Ph.D polemic (p. 10). Sara Vogel reintroduces love, too often a stranger to Columbia's hypo-amorous fret-set, which has assumed the guise of the University's most renowned former-Porsche-dealer-turned-dating-coach (p. 12), and later, between the puns of the staff's annual personal ads (p. 24).

The hopeful whiz kids of the dotcom bubble 2.0 have arrived and are already planting flags throughout the four corners of the Internet. Lydia DePillis unearths this cadre of student start-ups and examines why they all seem to fail (p. 28). Meanwhile, Alexandra Muhler brings us the tale of Columbia's most intrepid fictional bureaucrat, and her machinations to win the War on Fun from the inside out (p. 26).

Indulge your nostalgia for destinations familiar yet strange, as the wanderlust of *Blue and White* contributors leads them right back where they started: home (p. 14). Anna Phillips travels northward to St. Mary's Church, a Morningside institution that's managed to stay radical since 1823 (p. 18), while Hannah Goldfield makes a pilgrimage to the mecca of minimalism: Mark Bittman's Upper West Side kitchen (p. 20).

If you're coming to this issue of the *Blue and White* as a stranger or as a word-weary wanderer, the February/March issue includes stories for all seasons.

Juli Weiner  
Editor-in-Chief

## BY THE NUMBERS

*Professors' Fans, by Facebook Group Size*

Xavier Sala-i-Martin (Economics), **2,815**

Simon Schama (Art History), **653**

Alan Brinkley (History), **403**

Gayatri Spivak (English and Comparative Literature), **252**

Eric Foner (History), **139**

Oliver Sacks (Psychology), **77**

Mahmood Mamdani (Anthropology), **74**

Owen Gutfreund (Urban Studies), **47**

Austin Quigley (Dean of Columbia College), **37**

Michael Golston (English and Comparative Literature), **36**

David Helfand (Astronomy), **30**

Bruce Robbins (English and Comparative Literature), **18**

Michael Taussig (Anthropology), **18**

Jack Snyder (Political Science), **14**

David Eisenbach (History), **11**

Jack McGourty (Associate Dean of the School of Engineering and Applied Science), **10**

Edward Mendelson (English and Comparative Literature), **9**

"I think Oliver Sacks looks like Papa Smurf!!!," **5**

Philip Kitcher (Philosophy), **3**

Sunil Gulati (Economics), **1**

## FROM THE MIXED-UP FILES OF MR. LEE C. BOLLINGER

*It seems of late no print publication can live in isolation from its "New Media" cousins. Never one to stray far from the popular fashions of the time, the B&W herein presents a set of "Tweets," the eloquent musings of our University president from the anonymous author(s) of his eponymous "Twitter."*

I could have all of you.

1.5 hours late for meeting, but its ok cuz im university president

turnstile in Lerner always gets me

that reminds me – need to buy Freaks and Geeks DVD

OMFG – James Franco is in front of Nussbaum. wait until the trustees hear about this

T.I. in Prison?

Accidentally took 2 train uptown to 116. I have absolutel no idea where I am

ZOMG I HAVE TRUSTEES MEETING 15 MINUTES AGO

pretending ipod touch is an iphone

Walking around midtown, hoping to get Gawker stalked

*Find more tweets at*

[http://twitter.com/lee\\_bollinger](http://twitter.com/lee_bollinger)

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## REVELATION OF THE MONTH

At Columbia, Christmas cheer has a longer legacy than the decade-old tree-lighting and Yule log ceremonies. Clement Clarke Moore, believed to be the author of 1823's "'Twas the Night Before Christmas," was a professor of Oriental and Greek literature in the College. A scholar of repute and a father of the city, the blue-blooded Moore compiled a Hebrew-English dictionary and served as trustee of the New York Institution for the Blind. His father was the City's Episcopalian bishop, and at least publicly, the son also adopted a castigating moral voice. In his acknowledged Christmas poems, he condemned indolence and fancy and avoided anapests, the comic meter associated with ribald genres like the limerick. But in "A Visit from St. Nicholas," published anonymously, he transformed the Dutch Sinterklaas, a skinny, retributive man in a horse-pulled wagon, into the plum-cheeked patron of delight we know today.

---

## POSTCARD FROM MORNINGSIDE



*Compiled by Jon Hill, Alexandra Muhler, and Katie Reedy  
Postcard by Stephen Davan*





# BLUE NOTES

On a recent magical, snowy Sunday evening, a very motley group—two dwarves, an elf, and a human—attempted to talk their way onto campus. Karl (the human), an actor by trade, tried a bluff, posing as a student who had merely misplaced his ID: “*Ich bin a student, ja?*”

The guard was implacable, even after a subsequent *drei Gelde münzen* bribe. Eventually, the band nominated Rhiw, the elf, to seduce a tipsy female student in the local tavern. All elves, inexplicably, are very talented dancers.

Welcome to Nül:n: a university town that, curiously, does not exist. The assorted creatures are all the alter-ego personae of four Columbia burghers—a mix of undergrads, grads, and even an administrator—all of whom requested strict, non-persona anonymity. The mission of this avatar alliance is the second staging of *Fantasy Roleplay Warhammer*, an old-school role-playing board game in the vein of *Dungeons & Dragons*.

Although the MEALAC department organizes the virtual game as a fun, ostensibly educational, language immersion game, *Warhammer*’s tagline warns it is “A Grim World of Perilous Adventure.” Amidst cookies and scattered steins of Hefeweizen in the administrator’s apartment, the bold adventurers commence the role-playing game in valiant attempts at German. Botched declensions aside, German’s guttural intonations, as one might suspect, are ideal for combating monsters.

The game itself is wildly expansive: characters obey strict combat protocol to progress through an original storyline concocted by the Game Master, an in-house demigod of sorts. Lacking the typical material constraints of either board game or cards, the players’ options are only limited by their creativity and the Master’s accommodations. With a decision’s

success determined by rolling three-, four-, six-, or ten-sided dice, even tactics are subject to the whims of probability.

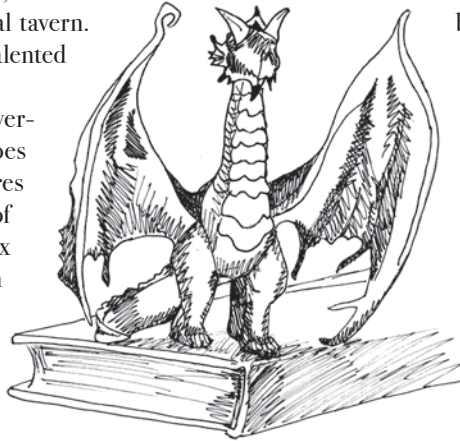
The game lacks a clear objective, at least in the traditional sense. There is a fuzzy, long-term goal, but participants have more immediate concerns, like whether, or how, to bribe or pummel, the intransigent librarian. In many ways, it is a long, enchanted brainstorming session, made longer by constant references to both the Talmudic instruction manual and a German-English dictionary. Flashcards, this is not.

Despite epic commitment it requires, Teutonic *Warhammer* is not without danger and excitement.

In search of some suspect *champignons*, Rhiw lunged at a Fen Worm with only his knuckle-duster for protection from the virtual annelid threat. He missed badly, and took a bite to the head. Fortunately, the elf had used his single Fate Point—the virtual Fen Worm had no teeth, and Rhiw escaped with a harsh but non-lethal gumming.

The experience has deterred no one, however. In a few weeks, Rhiw and Karl, along with Jan and Hein, will convene once again in this grim world for more perilous adventure—*und sprechen Deutsche und trinken Bier*.

—Menachem Kaiser



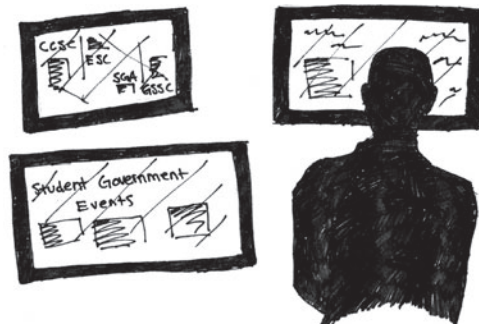
On a flatscreen TV above a Lerner elevator, the CNN feed is frozen alongside notices of student group board meetings. Now, President Obama, gesturing toward a crowd; next, “CCSC Board Meeting, 8 to 10 p.m., Satow Room.” Students can’t help but glance at the screens. “Oh yeah, what’s up with those?” asks a freshman waiting for the Lerner elevator. “I never learn anything from them.”

In the past two years, flatscreen televisions have spread through buildings on campus like crabgrass on a suburban lawn. Like any infestation, they have clustered around the most vital areas: one in Butler Library, eight in Lerner, two in Dodge, one each in the student lounges of the Business School and SIPA, and three in the Student Services hallway in Kent. At best, they are turned off, opaque rectangles with nothing to say.

The Butler manifestation has run the same library help slideshow throughout the academic year, the grad school screens play cable news, and one of the Dodge installations blares promotions for NBC programming. Lerner's flatscreens fall into four separate categories: council announcements, event listings, theater discounts, and a general info screen over the main security desk.

No one person is responsible for the sudden popularity of the flatscreens; each building's staff seems to have installed them separately. In Lerner, University Events Management Executive Director Honey Sue Fishman says that the four councils asked for their own flatscreens "as something to get their info out," while UEM itself put up the elevator screens. As for the cost, Fishman assures students that "we have a certain budget, and these screens were within it." Whether within the budget or not, a large chunk of it must have been put to use—while administrators refused to give a price, the various flatscreens (mostly Mitsubishi and NECs) retail for around \$1,500 to \$2,000 apiece.

As the freshman's earlier comment suggested, but, the popularity of the televisions may not be proportional to their usefulness. The councils' flatscreens, for instance, have remained unused almost the entire year. "In theory, they're fantastic," said CCSC President George Krebs, but "in practice, it's been difficult to load the slides onto the screens in the required format. Without being able to fluidly put up slides and take them down, the screens become less current and unimportant." Fishman concurs: "They've had a little difficulty, I think, using them."



Illustrations by Cassie Spodak

Former Movie Place owner Gary Dennis remembers the day a group of Butler Library employees came to survey his DVD collection. "Columbia's library mafia," as the wry, fast-talking Dennis called them, made a successful bid for his 24,000 DVDs.

With Kim's *fin* and Netflix two to three business days away—and the 105<sup>th</sup> Street Movie Place storefront still vacant three years after its closing—Columbia has been slowly transforming Butler Media Reserves into a makeshift Blockbuster. More than two years later, though, Movie Place's massive collection is still being processed for the purpose of offsite rental by University library patrons, and library administrators are reluctant to talk specifics.

Currently, the DVDs languish in Princeton, New Jersey, at a storage facility operated by the Research Collections and Preservation Consortium (ReCAP), a joint effort between Columbia, Princeton, and the New York Public Library.

But just getting the DVDs this far has proven a challenge: before it closed, Movie Place had one of the most extensive DVD collections in New York City, which,

according to a November 2006 *New York Times* article about the shop's closing, amounted to nearly five times the size of that of the average Blockbuster. Eventually, library staff will have their work cut out for them; just boxing up and hauling the collection took a team of movers two full days.

In fact, the collection itself may never make a complete return to Morningside Heights. Butler Library's media specialists say the discs will continue to be stored off-campus and mailed to patrons—no heavy-lifting required.

No matter how Butler formats the DVD rental process, Dennis simply hopes his old stock will be available as soon as possible. He believes his films would augment the Butler selection in a humble but vital way. "I doubt that they had *I Love Lucy*, seasons one through nine, or any *Power Rangers* episodes," said Dennis.

—James Downie

—Eliza Shapiro

# 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](mailto:editors@theblueandwhite.org).

## JEANETTE CLARK

It's Thursday night and Jeanette Clark, CC '10, would rather be learning a statistics computer program.

"I'm actually trying to teach myself MATLAB," she says solemnly. Instead, she's on the Lerner ramps, watching Glass House Rocks decorations go up while commenting on the intersection of campus life and student activism.

Laconic and muscular, Clark speaks with a gradual, self-assured pace, and her comments are mostly deadpan. Her calm disposition conceals a frenetic range of activities; she is relentless in maintaining overlapping rings of friends—from the women's rugby team, to the women's ice hockey team, to the outdoorsy COÖP kids. She was the coordinator of COROP, the COÖP canoeing arm last summer and characterized the experience as "probably the most rewarding thing I've done, so far, at Columbia."

She is best-known as the current president of the Columbia Queer Alliance. Clark said she knew she'd attend Columbia after she met a prominent male leader of the University's queer community and realized that if he could become a campus leader, then

this was a place where everyone was welcome. "Coming from where I came from"—Birmingham, Alabama and boarding school—"I kind of just wanted to be with other gay people so badly."

Although Clark attributes her former years as a premed concentrator

to some parental coaxing, she hasn't totally abandoned science. Last summer she worked at Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory and is devoted to the environmental sciences, especially oceanography, in which she plans to pursue a doctorate.

Clark maximizes her participation in each of her sectors of interest. Her love of sports and the outdoors is not new; she was a champion horse-jumper at her Birmingham high school before attending boarding school in New Jersey her junior and senior years. "Every time I go out there [to Alabama], it's so funny. I always think about what all the people I know in New York would think about that place. It's like, the *country* country."

She has kept a sort of Southern can-do spirit as well; one colleague says he can imagine her strolling down Main Street, keeping an eye on the passers-by, taking names. This is the background that informs her understanding of CQA's role on campus. "One thing that has always bothered me about Columbia is that a lot of the people who are here take for granted the community. Say, the gay community. Maybe they grew up in a more liberal environment than I did," she says. She suggests she didn't have such luck: "To me, it's something very real that I have to deal with."

That experience has shaped her attitude, which remains confident in circumstances that would shame others. As one friend relates: "On her 21<sup>st</sup> birthday, she chipped her tooth ... She pointed it out to people passing by and laughed about it for the rest of the night." This same friend added, "Basically, she's a badass."

This is the confidence that fuels her ultimate agenda as CQA president. Though she pauses and briefly sighs when asked to describe her goals, she explains, "the queer community at Columbia is so diverse. You can't expect to please everyone." But Clark is making sure the CQA stays, as she describes it, "a real political force that people care about and listen to." She is the coordinator of Q House, a new special interest housing group promoting gay issues awareness, and she continues to support the group's





identity as a “social-slash-political organization.”

Whether being president of the CQA is the end of the campus political road for Clark remains unclear. Her aim is to keep the community from being taken for granted. She cites her group’s involvement with the NROTC debates as evidence of their place on campus. The rest of it—the space requests and budgets—“is taking up space in my brain that I could be using to learn MATLAB.”

—Katie Reedy

## COLIN DRUMMOND

Current seniors, take heed: Colin Drummond, CC ’09, isn’t worried about next year, and you shouldn’t be either. “My philosophy is that things will probably work out,” he says, with almost preternatural calm. “They tend to, and you shouldn’t get too hung up on anything.” Tall and soft-spoken, Drummond, who’s graduating with only a concentration in anthropology, has made a college career of dilettantism; he would rather be everywhere than somewhere.

Drummond does have his passions, though. He’s president of Fruit Paunch, the improvisational comedy troupe he calls his “advising network,” and his current six fellow Paunchies are his closest friends. They maintain a daily 12:30 lunch regimen at Ferris Booth and christened themselves “the Plastics” after a group viewing of *Mean Girls*. Drummond usually gets the pasta.

In another manifestation of his deep but quixotic involvement with theater, Drummond also held the title of “Cupcake Czar” during last year’s Varsity Show, earning him the alias `varsity_cupcake@columbia.edu`. He got involved with the Varsity Show as a freshman, but got burned out after an intensive stint as tech director his sophomore year. The Czar job was a less stressful but still crucial position; Drummond was responsible for fetching the cast a steady supply of Buttercup Bakeshop and Magnolia confections; he prefers the latter “as long as they are fresh.” This year, the V-Show producer believes that Cupcake Czar is, in Drummond’s words, “too gimmicky” a position, and he will instead serve as Cupcake Manager of Columbia Musical Theater Society’s production of *Little Shop of Horrors*.

Drummond hit the housing jackpot this year: he is a proud member of an East Campus “Mansuite,” which now has its very own blog. (“A league of kings, a fellowship of brothers, a suite of men.”) He shares the space with five friends he made during his COÖP pre-orientation trip.

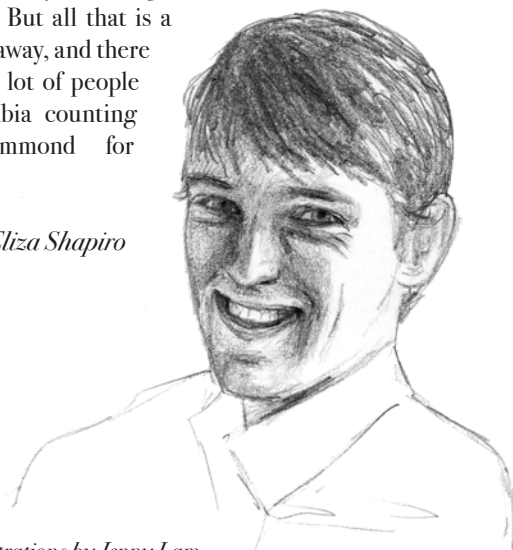
The townhouse is decorated “as if McDonald’s built a ski chalet,” and, in keeping with the arctic theme, the men make regular runs to the 125<sup>th</sup> Street Fairway, never missing an opportunity to don the store’s massive black parkas and shop in the “cold room” for meat and frozen foods.

Drummond and Co.’s zeal for the cold also explains their time spent as members of the Columbia Ski Team, trekking up to Hunter Mountain twice a week to practice and race. They hold regular “tuning parties” in the suite to prepare their ski equipment for races.

Drummond has amassed an impressive résumé of pursuits and pastimes. He is an Eagle Scout, served as his high school’s Homecoming King—a victory he attributed to a “large bloc of theater kids”—and has done “a lot of hosting and emceeing stuff” for various campus organizations. He’s a familiar face in both the Ticket Information Center booth and on YouTube, where his “There Will Be LE:MON” campaign video, created during last year’s failed run for senior class president, received over a thousand views. Drummond lost the race by a mere 33 votes, but in typical Minnesotan relaxed fashion says the class presidency’s immense time commitment makes him “sorta glad it didn’t work out.”

Life after college for Drummond is already shaping up to be a lot like life in college. Though he’d like to act in New York after graduation, he hasn’t settled on any single career path. Instead, he plans to do “fun stuff until I become famous,” including hosting trivia nights at bars, serving as a med school guinea pig, and being a “secret shopper,” a person hired by a company to evaluate their employees secretly and make sure they are doing their jobs well. But all that is a semester away, and there are still a lot of people at Columbia counting on Drummond for cupcakes.

—Eliza Shapiro



Illustrations by Jenny Lam

# Doctorate: Yea or Nay?



## AFFIRMATIVE

*By Brendan Ballou*

Remember that older man in your philosophy seminar who always made statements as if they were questions? Who said things like, “Yeah, but wasn’t this totally disproved by Wittgenstein?” Recall the woman you saw every day in the Hungarian, typing on some tiny little computer-like device called a Nobia or that guy who made advances in the library by looking up very tentatively and asking, “Hey, uh, can I borrow your, uh, highlighter?”

These Avery-scented, Bic-stained people are almost certainly Ph.D students: men and women who on the road of life said, “This is far enough,” and stayed in school forever. Maybe they hate their life choices, and maybe you do, too, but realistically speaking, if you’re ambivalent about graduating college and have a certain caliber GPA, you’re almost certain to become one of them, so you might as well learn to love them.

The standard polemic in favor of grad school—Ph.D programs in particular—typically revolves around the probably true statement that graduate students “get to be alone with their thoughts all day” and the probably false statement that “it’s great to know you’re giving back to society.” (Notice the parallels between arguments for going to grad school and arguments for going to prison.)

But a critique of these practical reasons—you can eventually get used to sly *bon mots* like these, or maybe you Kant—will reveal that most of the

congregants in the cult of higher education don’t go to grad school to be alone or to give back to society. They usually go because school is something (or the only thing) they’re good at, or because finding a job is hard, or because their parents are going to start charging rent for living in the basement.

All of this points to the real reason behind choosing a five-to-seven-or-maybe-ten-with-a-post-doc year vacation from reality: inertia. It’s a powerful force. After all, if you’re good at something, why ever, ever stop doing that same thing? Do you like looking stupid when you fail at trying something new?

Besides, if you really had a shot at becoming the next Bill Cosby or the next Pope, you would have already started down those career paths, doing whatever it is Bill Cosby or the Pope did at your age. School is what you’re good at, and right now you’re at the age when you need to start making wise choices. This is exactly what they were talking about when they told you this in fifth grade, but doesn’t it sound so much more urgent now? A Ph.D program would offer you a familiar and guaranteed career path without the hassle of a guaranteed job.

Yes, grad school isn’t perfect, and neither is your senior thesis. And in this economic collapse, you could do a lot worse—a lot worse. Law school worse. Life is full of mistakes. Why not let grad school be one of them?



## NEGATIVE

*By Rob Trump*

Graduate school is a great idea if you really like school. Here's the problem—you don't really like school. You kind of like school. You like school enough. Here are some things you like as much as you like school: *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*. Your first drunk hook-up. Coldplay.

These things are good enough, but no better than that. Now imagine a situation where you live with that hookup for 2+ years (that's 700 nights in bed with him or her), listening to nothing but Coldplay for 2+ years (that's "Clocks" 200,000 times), or watching *Button* on repeat for 2+ years (that's about twice through). Now stop, and reconsider signing up 2+ years of something that, at best, "doesn't totally suck."

You like your major, I know. I like mine, too. But I like my major—English—because I like the things that it involves: novels, stories, and poetry. But a Ph.D program in English isn't just novels, theory, and poetry; it means convincing other people that you can say things about these things that nobody else has said yet. If grad school in English was actually about the things English majors like, the following would be a fellowship-winning paper on *Ulysses*:

"Not bad. Tough to get through. Probably wouldn't read it again."

And this would be a great paper on *Dr. Strangelove*:  
"Haha! Boom!"

Grad school means that your colleagues would be grad students, who are the people in your discussion

sections that you hate. That girl who relates every film to her year in Africa is going to grad school. That guy who asks the professor to compare every novel to one she definitely hasn't read—he's going to grad school, too. Grad students are GS students without the veteran status that stops you from hating them.

Going to grad school is running away from the world. But it's not running away to a happy place—it's running away to a grinding machine that sucks you deeper and deeper into something that is more fun the more surface-level your interest. Your reward (if you last) is several years of not-professorship, then a few more of not-quite-professorship, then a couple more of professorship-but-you-could-still-get-fucked-at-any-time, then... professorship. At which point in time those annoying jerks are no longer your students but your peers. Oh, and the pay sucks.

All this is excusable if what you love is academia. But do you really love academia? Does anyone? Sure, I'll make exceptions for grad school in a science, after which you can use your Ph.D in aerospace engineering or chemistry to work on what you really love. (That's NASA disasters and dick pills, respectively.) But if you're thinking about entering grad school for the arts or for humanities—or God help you, social science—get ready to invent some worthless knowledge, then pass it on to other people, who will use it to invent some other worthless meta-knowledge. All while the real world happens around you. ♦

# Love, Eventually

A Columbia dating coach on the Xs and Os of XOXO.

By SARA VOGEL

It was Valentine's Day at the Midtown apartment of a Russian model: red leather couches, an open bar, techno music. Men stood with drinks in hand, chatting absent-mindedly, each waiting for a catch.

One of them had extra help.

"It's that guy, behind us," whispered Chris Luna, a first-year in the School of General Studies, nudging my side and signaling back with his eyes. As I looked through the crowd, I saw him, a banker of about 30, locked in conversation with a skinny blonde. "That's the client."

Men like the banker pay Luna up to \$200 for a few hours of his company at parties, bars, and other singles gathering places so he can teach them the science of wooing women. Luna's clients suffer what he calls "severe approach anxiety." After an hour of lecture and a role-play exercise, they hit parties and bars for "in-field" practice. Luna gives his students feedback such as, "It's time to lean in and kiss her—she's touching her hair."

While his clients put his theories to practice, Luna is free to mingle. In his late twenties, with wide-set eyes and tousled dark hair, Luna collects phone numbers with apparent ease. He is a firm believer in touching, or "closing the space," between two parties. Throughout the night, he playfully squeezed my waist and wrap his arm around me. I was a reporter, so I wasn't buying it, but that didn't seem to throw him off.

On his typically untypical path to GS, Luna developed the salesman's skills he trots out with women. He dropped out of California's Hartnell College to sell cars. Zigging and zagging from Porsche dealerships to local political campaigns, Luna landed in commercial finance, where a co-worker introduced him to *The Game*. The bestselling book is a dating gospel culled from the stories of the world's greatest players.

Hooked, Luna took an internship at Love Systems,

a Los Angeles-based dating seminar company. "I was dating some of the most beautiful girls on the planet—I was seeing girls from the Playboy mansion," he boasted, but added quickly, "That wasn't my goal, it just happened." After attempting

mere pick-up artistry, he became interested in how social skills inform relationships, and his game changed.

Though he still leans on *The Game's* jargon—he describes his Saturday nights at the bar as series of "attraction triggers," "indicators and interest," and "negative feedback"—he is critical of some of its precepts and says most men can't implement what they read.

Many certainly try, though—even on this supposedly PC campus. *The Game* is bathroom reading at Zeta Psi. An informal survey of six Columbia men in an East Campus suite found four of them had read at least parts of it.

But all four derided the book's techniques, especially "negging," or the subtle put-downs aimed to shift the balance of power in the man's favor during the approach.

Jason Patinkin, CC '09, admitted to reading a few chapters of *The Game*. Out of curiosity, he said, he "negged" a woman at a party one night and then instantly regretted it. "It was a cheap way to get a girl to make a cute face at you," he said. "It's unbelievably pathetic and demeaning."

"Nobody does that anymore," Luna confirmed. He believes his work gives men the confidence they need to form lasting relationships, rather than hasty hookups. Even the women Luna dates understand that his trainees "are just seeking companionship."

Before I left the party I got one more hip squeeze and a kiss on the cheek from Luna. Unfazed by the skepticism of this journalist or of any New York woman, for that matter, Luna macks on, undaunted. ♦



Illustration by Shaina Rubin

# TOLD BETWEEN PUFFS

*In which our hero meets Eros and Narcissus in the stacks below.*

Verily had been immersed in rationalist polemics, as is his wont on languid Sunday mornings. The study of ontological subjectivity was a guilty pleasure he had cultivated as an altar boy; a servant of his parents Valencia and Villicus Veritas more than a servant of “god,” Verily had revolted against his parish by cutting out pages from his Bible and inserting in their place several pamphlets on John Serle. He encouraged his fellow altar boys to follow suit, or rather, robe. The insurrection was discovered, and against our hero the faithful crusaded crying *benedicamus domino* theory, and faster than a *signum crucis*, Verily had been banished from the Church, and, according to Father Brendan, Heaven.

But no matter; your hero’s environs were the catacombs of Butler, where he had stumbled upon a copy of the *Iliad*, which had somehow wedged itself between *A Critique of Practical Reason* and its lesser known animadversion, *I am Completely in Favor of Practical Reason: Practical Reason and Me, a Love Story*. Verily, suddenly overcome with a swelling, engorged...*nostalgia*, recalled the summer before his matriculation at Columbia College, during which the epic text had arrived in a neat, white Pony Express envelope. Your hero had spent the following day maniacally parsing the book until he collapsed into his waterbed—an ill-advised purchase, admittedly—and in ecstasy shouted, “In lumine *Tuo* videbimus lumen!” He awoke soaked.

This particular *Iliad* in Butler’s nether-regions was jaundiced and tattered, which pleased our hero to no end. He opened to Book XVI: Achilles lends his armor to Patroclus. Verily noticed that the book’s previous owner had scribbled—with squirrel or vole blood, judging from its odor—in the margins. “Doubtful Achilles’ armor fits Patroclus with the same thrilling snugness as it does Achilles!” Verily read and nearly gasped. *What a penetrating observation! What erecting imagery!*

Enraptured, he located the book’s most intoxicating verse: “Does it mean nothing to you, the



unblemished thighs I worshipped and the showers of kisses you had from me?”

Achilles had wept over Patroclus’ cadaverous flesh. Verily’s eyelids fluttered as he turned his attention to the small note beside the stanza. “‘Unblemished’ *how?* More detail needed re: Patroclus’ thighs and the kisses bestowed upon them.”

There was also a medium-sized rendering of Achilles crouched down, lips pursed, poised to brush his mouth with Patroclus’ vaguely unblemished thighs. It was drawn with stunning precision and color.

Verily blanched, then rouged. “Such acute criticism!” he cried aloud.

Historically, Verily had considered Columbia pupils a rather brutish sort; certainly he didn’t fancy them capable of fathoming anything as beatific and wondrous as the friendship of two muscled, perspiring, soulful, heterosexual men. (Nor had countless now-abandoned attempts at befriending the varlets of the junior varsity lacrosse team during their post-practice steam room reprieves proven otherwise.)

In any event, Verily, now imbued with a zealous desire to uncover the identity of the note-taker, bounded towards the stairs, leaving in his wake a trail of calamus-ink and tobacco (he had dismantled the smoke detection machine by dousing it with café au lait). He approached the circulation desk, where a catlike woman of Slavic descent was typing on a word processor. Verily, momentarily unlearning everything he had been forced to internalize during multitudinous cotillions and debutante balls of his youth, slammed the book on the table, demanding of the nebbishy librarian that she reveal the identity of the Columbian who had donated the copy to the stacks below.

The woman behind the desk tapped away at her word processor, humming a vulgar melody and pausing to pick at her own cuticles. “Ah, all right, I think I’ve got it,” she said with enraging sluggishness. “It was Veritas, Verily Videlicet.”

—*Verily Veritas*



# Nostalgia: Unleashed!

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Whoever said you can't go home again?

## PITTSBURGH, PA

In October, *TIME* magazine published an article saying that my hometown, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, was “in better position to withstand [an economic] downturn than many other places.” However, it was no brilliant bit of economic planning that was saving Pittsburgh from the recession. Pittsburgh’s economy has been floundering for the 20-odd years since the collapse of the local steel industry, so when the national economy began to plummet, Pittsburgh just had a relatively small distance to fall.

We Pittsburghers loved this, and not just because it meant we were doing OK in comparison to the rest of the country. The idea that the city’s middling status was ultimately beneficial sums up how we always have felt about our hometown. Our city is not a booming metropolis, but by God, we are fiercely proud of it.

“Why?” you East Coast metropolitans may ask. “Isn’t Pittsburgh another one of those generic middle-of-the-country cities, like Cleveland?” First of all, no, and never compare us to Cleveland again. Pittsburgh is the overcast urban oasis of the Ohio River Valley. It’s the kind of place where you can run into 11 friends in three blocks. We eat french fry sandwiches, and speak in a local dialect that foreigners find totally indecipherable. If you and your friends want to go to a football game, yinz need to go dahntahn t’see dem Stillers play at Heinz Fill’d. Get it?

The Steelers, unlike French fry sandwiches, are an incontrovertible point of pride. In a city that is eager to celebrate its insular idiosyncrasies, imagine the effect of resounding, national victories. In the run-up to the Steelers’ conference championship game against the Baltimore Ravens, our mayor legally changed his last name from Ravenstahl to Steelerstahl. After the Super

Bowl, as if to one-up the mayor, the City Council temporarily renamed the entire city Sixburgh—a reference to the Steelers’ six Super Bowl wins. How could I not go home?

That Sunday night, I ran through my slushy hometown, screaming and whipping a piece of yellow terry cloth above my head, and I was not alone. Thousands of my fellow Terr’ble Tahl-wielding citizens took to the streets, beaming with the knowledge that the rest of the country would understand how great we always knew our strung-out Steel Town was—if only for one night.

—Lauren Glover

## OAKLAND, CA

Consensus is that Oakland is the least desirable among the San Francisco Bay Area’s 101 cities. Perhaps it’s because of the murder rate, which, at its zenith in the ’90s, was higher than that of any other American city. Gertrude Stein, an Oakland native,



said, “There’s no *there* there,” and, to outsiders, this has remained the city’s sardonic tagline.

Of course, any Oaklander will tell you that Gertrude Stein wasn’t speaking about the city as a whole, but merely of her childhood home, which had been demolished. Defending Oakland is the favorite hobby of its inhabitants and a product of our reactionary

pride. Oakland isn't as exclusive as San Francisco, or as loopy as Berkeley, or as vacuous as—God forbid—Los Angeles.

Still, we have more in common with these cities than we like to admit. The state of California was built as a monument against memory. The freeway interchanges that clot above old neighborhoods are revered as concrete calligraphy. But the story doesn't always end with the will of the pitiless market. The neighborhoods themselves are complicit in the amnesia.

Through the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the school district and the block associations zoned black people out of the hills. In the '60s, children of such privilege freaked out and left; but once they had made their fortunes elsewhere they retreated, to live the dream in a soft Mediterranean clime. In 1991, their homes flashed away in a great fire; the reconstruction has been so swift that people building their first houses are left with the few slopes that are still bare, which are so steep they must be shaved down to accommodate roads and foundations. Meanwhile, the ghettos that remain below churn and fulminate.

But history has never had the strongest claim here, and so we repeat our fates without feeling condemned. Our language regenerates constantly, thanks to the hip-hop movement—the style of hip-hop that stands as a religion in a city where most have forgotten their grandparents' churches. The Black Panthers are recruiting again. The young people, from the thugs on the corner to the prep school kids, are electric. They know it happened just like this 40 years ago, but somehow the millennium has come again.

—Alexandra Muhler

## NASHVILLE, TN

Nashville is a bit of a novelty city—a useful bit of personal trivia that people at parties seem to think is interesting, or at least convenient, because it provides them with several avenues of conversational trivialities. Real softballs include: country music (truly awful for decades), Elvis (Memphis, not Nashville), the Confederacy (awkward!). It's fun playing up the Southern Boy attitude and drawing a little bit extra to charm girls, but the details of coming of age in a

white neighborhood with prep school friends and prep school activities aren't actually quite so novel.

Still, there is a certain camaraderie shared by southeasterners far from home that I've never observed in people from the Tri-State area. Meeting a fellow Long Islander at a Vanderbilt bar doesn't carry the same cozy charm as making a friend in the bathroom of 1020 because of his accent.

"Is that a southern twang I hear? Where you from, boy?" asks a perfect stranger. Standard American



English, so neatly trimmed for seminar discussions, starts getting a bit messy after a few drinks. Vowels are dropped. "Y'all," a Southernism that I stubbornly cling to, is lazily extended. He is from Kentucky and, us being in a bar and all, the topic soon switches to our states' finest grain liquors.

"Jack Daniels?" he says, "Hell, my daddy'd rather I bring home a boyfriend than drink Tennessee whiskey!" I cringe a little bit, but give him a friendly chuckle.

We throw back shots of Tennessee whiskey and Kentucky bourbon and voice frustrations with "Yankees." Then, my new friend asks, "You follow basketball? You like those Memphis Tigers?" I prevaricate—I am not a basketball fan and know nothing about this team, but fear emasculation in my new comrade's eyes. Before I can respond he says, "Hah! More like Memphis Niggers!"

If you're from the South you're probably used to this word. Maybe you've never said it, but you've definitely heard it in casual conversation. You know better, but you don't say anything—well, you might chastise your friends, but never your grandparents, and certainly not casual acquaintances. All they'd really hear would be a college boy with a fancy northeastern

education talking down to them. So you just ignore it, maybe twitch a little bit, and change the topic back to Tennessee whiskey.

—Joseph Meyers

## SAN ANTONIO, TX

I was born on Texas soil. The event took place at Mount Sinai Hospital in Manhattan, but my uncle, fearing that I would be irrevocably tainted by arriving on Yankee land, gave my grandmother a bag of dirt from San Antonio to place under the hospital bed. When I was five, my parents grew concerned that their children screamed whenever they were placed barefoot on grass, and moved the family back to the homeland.

At first glance, San Antonio is just a sprawling suburb that would fit anywhere in the United States—at least until you hit the drive-through margarita store on the outskirts of downtown, or sit in on a high school government class taught by an ROTC lieutenant colonel. My uncle's truck contains a collection of pistols, automatic rifles and shotguns, and as my



visiting roommate recently discovered, shooting things is fun: Examining a can of soda torn apart by the explosion of a shotgun cartridge carries an undeniable satisfaction.

I have never desired to shoot anything living thing. When describing my family to friends at Columbia, I tend to stress my mother's job as president of Planned Parenthood and the number of my high school friends who campaigned for Obama; many of my friends even doubt the sincerity of my frequent use of the word "y'all."

But there is one story that tells me that "y'all"—and all its use implies—is my birthright. A few years ago, my

brother took up the objectionable practice of shooting at the squirrels that run through our backyard. Last year, he surprised even himself when he managed to hit one. His excitement wilted when my dad enforced one of his absolute rules: you don't waste an animal you kill. That night, my mother whipped up a marinade, my father fired up the grill, and my brother dined on squirrel.

Granted, my family is not quite country enough to make this a regular practice. But we do abide by our ancestral code: if you shoot it, you eat it.

—Allison Halfff

## MAPLE GLEN, PA

Maple Glen is best enjoyed by those who corrupt it. We natives revolted against the motherland just as we entered high school, escaping as often as possible to Philadelphia on the R5 SEPTA train. Within a couple years, and finally armed with cars, senior licenses and boundless free time, we replaced the afternoon jaunts into the city with the strange satisfactions known to all petty criminals—the sort of barely law-breaking behavior that would make us feel like rogue outlaws but not actually outsiders. It was mostly the stuff of small-time acts of vandalism, like tossing meatballs at friends' houses—an act which accounts for the etymology of the well-known Maple Glen verb "to meatball."

Besides actively bringing about the town's physical deterioration, we had other methods of rejecting home. "Maple Glen, Pennsylvania" has never been my response to the question of where I'm from. I'll usually say, "Just northwest of Philly," knowing full well that this response, to anyone familiar with southeastern Pennsylvania, suggests the Main Line—brought to the nation's attention by "The Philadelphia Story." But Maple Glen is not on the Main Line, it's a bit eastward, and no, it's not in Lower Merion either.

As a fairly low-profile high school student, I didn't make it into the *Ambler Gazette*, the town newspaper, until my sophomore year of college. Home in Maple Glen and feeling anarchistic, a gay male friend and I

submitted a wedding announcement, which boasted of our recent engagement, his flourishing (and fictional) ceramics career, and our upcoming nuptials in Tibet. There we were, savage in our smiles, our picture right next to those of real, honest-to-God engaged Maple Glenners.

All of this destruction had unintended consequences of creation. Instead of explaining the vague discontent we assumed we were supposed to feel about our suburb, the random acts of adolescence turned out to be the thing that finally made it feel like home. We had to meatball the village in order to save it.

—Julia N. Weiner

## BUFFALO, NY

If you've ever talked to a Buffalonian, you'll have heard some tall tales. "There were seven feet of snow," she'll say, "and all the trees on the street were cracked in half. Children were impaled by icy branches; people froze to death in their cars. And this was in October."

The audience stares in disbelief.

It's true that in mid-October 2006, a snowstorm hit Buffalo so hard it knocked out power for half a million people for several days. It's also true that thousands of still-leafy trees shattered under the weight of the snow, some people died of cold, and some were struck and killed by branches. But stating these facts doesn't do the catastrophe justice.

Embellishment is necessary to convey reality.

Vincent Gallo's *Buffalo '66* is often written off as improbable kitsch by disbelieving critics. But Buffalonians know better: the red-white-and-blue sweatpants (Bills colors), the motel in the middle of what seems to be a junkyard, and the college student betting money he doesn't have on the football team aren't cinematic flourishes, they're all parts of Buffalo life.

It's hard to imagine Buffalo as the once-gleaming "Queen City"—the consort of New York at the turn of the century. Although the entire Buffalo region contains 1.1 million people, the city limits

circumscribe a mere 300,000; in 1950, double that number filled the city. The net population growth since 1890 has been zero.

We wish this were not the case. We wish inept politicians hadn't squandered millions of aid dollars on a bogus subway running above ground on Main Street, shuttered as a result of the train making shopping traffic impossible. We wish that McKinley hadn't been shot here in 1901. That the Bills hadn't lost four Super Bowls in a row. That Niagara Falls wasn't a tawdry trap, at least on the American side. That redlining hadn't carved the city into ethnic and racial pockets so deep that only the Catholic Church can bridge the divides.

We wish, but most of us don't act. We move to the suburbs; we leave town. We grow tired of the cold, and the false promises, the languor and the religiosity. Those who choose to stay are rewarded with a city that grows more familiar the more it shrinks; you'll run into your doctor at a massive art party at an abandoned railroad terminus. And there are many rewards for the few who move to Buffalo: plenty of cheap space to create good things and live simply, not to mention a short drive to super-globalized Toronto, exquisite



Illustrations by Julia Alekseyeva

art galleries, unlimited fat-based delicacies, gorgeous Victorian houses, and Olmsted parks lying around like ignored nuggets of gold.

Yet whether born and bred, or moved and transplanted, every Buffalonian understands, intuitively, an underlying fact, born of desolate scenery made palatable with human warmth: the wheel of fate turns quickly. In the meantime, eat up—the wings are getting cold.

—Katie Reedy

For more staff dispatches from Hickory Hills, Jersey City and the East Village, visit [theblueandwhite.org](http://theblueandwhite.org)

# Grace Under Pressure

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The profile of a parish in transition.

BY ANNA PHILLIPS

James White had walked by St. Mary's Episcopal Church in West Harlem countless times and admired its visage, but it took an article in the *New York Times* to make him set foot inside. The article described a "wild priest," a firebrand of a man, the Rev. Robert Castle who, on a Sunday like any other, walked out of his church, planted a wooden cross in a huge pothole on 126<sup>th</sup> Street, and swore he'd send the mayor to hell if he didn't fix it.

"I thought, hey, this is a place where I could be active," White said, and in January 1995 he joined the church.

Although St. Mary's runs a Sunday school and holds regular mass, it's more of a radical community center with an altar than a religious institution with a reform agenda. Its congregants fight battles on all fronts, sparring with opponents many times their strength and size. Among them: the New York City Housing Authority, Columbia University, the criminal justice system, poverty, institutional racism, and senseless foreign wars. It seems to have a cross planted in every pothole.

From its founding in 1823, St. Mary's has been a church in transition, watching as the small village of Manhattanville first became a landscape populated by farmers and merchants, then filled with factories and immigrants speaking a dozen different languages. Later, it took notice when the Interborough Rapid Transit line arrived in 1904, then as more buildings, tenements, and the West Side viaduct grew to cast long shadows on the town below. Now, the bucolic village has completely disappeared; the church is across the street from a police station and dwarfed by two public housing projects, which ushered in the transformation of West Harlem from a white to a predominantly black and Latino neighborhood in the 1950s and '60s.

Since its inception, St. Mary's has not been a church for the comfortably well-off. In 1831, it became the first Episcopal church in the city to abolish pew rents—the fees other churches charged for seating. When, in the early 1900s, Manhattanville began to resemble more of a factory town than a pastoral village, the church tore down its original white wood frame

building and distinctive steeple and hired the ever-fashionable Carrère and Hastings—the architectural firm behind the New York Public Library and St. John the Divine—to redesign it.

A steady line of nervy, anti-establishment ministers has continued the church's legacy of championing the downtrodden. According to Manhattanville historian Eric Washington, St. Mary's second rector, James Richmond, was "restive under parochial restraints"—so much so he ran off to preach in Constantinople. Obituaries suggest most people thought he was a lunatic. After one long-term minister's congregation grew as silver-whiskered as he did, his successor, Richard Gary, had to rebuild his flock from scratch, knocking on the doors of newly built public housing projects until the formerly white church was full again—it is now 75 percent black.

As the pothole episode suggests, Castle played a significant role in redefining St. Mary's place in West Harlem as minister from 1985 to 1999. His parishioners remember him as a passionate man who took a near-delight in creating public relations nightmares for the Episcopal Bishop of New York. Though Castle and former Columbia University president George Rupp were friends from their activist days—they once spent several hours in jail together for dumping trash outside of City Hall in Jersey City—Castle took every opportunity to rail against Rupp and what he perceived as Columbia's mistreatment of Harlem. "Bob was confrontational. Bob did things and then thought about it," said Luis Barrios, an associate priest at St. Mary's. "Bob, he didn't give a shit." St. Mary's takes its slogan—"I am not afraid"—straight from Castle, who used it as the church's war cry.

But Castle's tenure in the church was not simply a prolonged shouting match between former friends; it was a highly experimental time. In the early '90s, he gave Barrios permission to use St. Mary's as a meeting place for the street gang the Latin Kings while its leader, King Tone, worked to shape the gang into a political organization. The group met regularly and peacefully—the men didn't bring guns inside the church—and Barrios tried to convince them to tone





*Illustration by Chloe Eichler*

down the homophobia, misogyny, and retaliatory violence within the group. The cops bugged the church’s microphones, Barrios said, and overheard nothing but hours of conflict resolution jargon. Now, Barrios said, the Kings are too disorganized to work with—it is a gang, after all—but he continues mediating local skirmishes between dealers over where, when, and what they sell.

Today the church upholds its mission. Of its 175 congregants, 25 percent make between \$15,000 and \$30,000 a year, and 10 percent make less than \$10,000 a year. The food pantry in the basement is in constant demand.

“We’re there for the poor,” said White, who leads a monthly bible study called “Mariam, Mark and Marx.” “For some reason wealthy people just don’t search out churches that criticize wealthy people, though our criticism is surely gentle,” he added with a laugh.

St. Mary’s draws an unusual crowd. Some come to the church on 126th Street between Broadway and Amsterdam by happenstance. They walk by the English Gothic building with its modest bell tower and wood frame parish house and are struck by its quaintness. Others are inspired by the church’s reputation for political activism and the diversity of its congregation. A handful of worshippers are the wretched refuse of other gods and faiths that couldn’t play catch-up when society presented new moral quandaries.

With some, you get the sense that there’s no place but St. Mary’s for them. This may have been particularly true in the ’80s, when the church’s choir

director was known to offer homeless men coffee on Sunday morning if they’d sing in the choir. This meant the choir was often high—and not on the words of the Lord.

By necessity, the church remains a haven for the dispossessed. On a cold Sunday morning in February, Charles Kelly, a member of the choir, sauntered over after the service and introduced himself as “a redeemer.” At first, I took this to mean he was part of a special religious subset within the church, perhaps an unofficial branch not condoned by the Episcopal diocese. Rather, Kelly collects and redeems bottles and cans for a living. His group, the New York Redeemers Coalition, demands “real change” for professional redeemers who need health insurance and more collection centers around the city.

But Kelly may soon represent the old guard of St. Mary’s congregation. Today, the church finds itself once more in transition as it stares down the dual threats of gentrification and Columbia’s expansion. They could bring St. Mary’s something it hasn’t seen for decades: a surge of middle class congregants. Kooperkamp notes this could have its benefits, but for a church that defines itself as a sanctuary for the needy, the shifting demographics could come as a shock. “If West Harlem just becomes an anonymous neighborhood where people aren’t really living together as neighbors, that will worry me,” Kooperkamp said. His parish has weathered the trials of the last century by constant reinvention, but how it will meet an assault on its village character is unclear. For now, it remains unafraid. ♦

# The Simplifier

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*Though best known for his column “The Minimalist” in the New York Times weekly Dining & Wine section, Mark Bittman is also a blogger, a television personality, and the author of many books—including the modern classic, How to Cook Everything, and his most recent effort, Food Matters: A Guide to Conscious Eating, which has earned him the titles “food historian” and “philosopher.” Champion of oatmeal and other easy, savory breakfasts, he sat down with the BLUE & WHITE for the first meal of the day, to talk about cooking, nature’s ironies, and what the new administration might do about the American food dilemma.*

*The Blue and White:* In your new book, *Food Matters*, you refer to yourself as a “decent cook.” Is that just modesty? Why are you not a great cook?

Mark Bittman: Well, I think I’m a lazy cook, so I think I’m actually an exceptionally good lazy cook. The other night, some friends came over and I had this fabulous black cod that I brought back frozen from Canada, and I marinated it in the morning in miso and soy and sake and stuff, and I broiled it—it took eight minutes. Everybody thought I was a genius because the cod was so good. Yes, I knew what I was doing. I didn’t overcook the black cod, I didn’t undercook the black cod, I marinated it the right way, I didn’t use any recipes; I’m a good cook. But, I never make, for example, lasagna, because it’s too much work. I don’t make croquettes.

*B&W:* Well, you’re The Minimalist.

MB: But I was the minimalist before I was The Minimalist. I’m a guy whose wife worked, whose kids were growing up, and who had to have dinner on the table every night at a certain time and never started until it was too late, and so I learned how to cut corners. And that’s the kind of cook I am. My friends are very impressed, and people are afraid to cook for me, and blah, blah, blah, but I know my limitations. I also know more about food than almost anyone I know, so I more accurately assess my skill level than most people do.

*B&W:* Do you think that there’s value in talking about and writing about food without a sociopolitical overtone? Food as an art form? Like what do you think of the Food Network?

MB: Well, but that’s not writing and talking about food as an art form. I think there’s huge value

in writing good, clear recipes and encouraging people to use them. I think there’s enormous value in teaching people how to cook. I think that if everybody went to the supermarket, bought ordinary ingredients, and cooked five times a week, the world would be a better place.

*B&W:* Why?

MB: Because there’d be a better use of resources, you’d automatically be using less processed food, people would be eating much less in the way of poison—additives. They’d probably be eating less meat and chicken, they might be eating less dairy. They’d start exploring the world of vegetables and grains. If people just went to the supermarket and bought ordinary ingredients and cooked with them, not bought microwaveable budget gourmet and said I’m cooking dinner tonight, put the thing in there—

*B&W:* Beep, beep.

MB: Right, yeah, but cooked, I think that would be tremendously valuable.

*B&W:* Why don’t people cook?

MB: I don’t know. I could give you a sort of historical—*[spills oatmeal on his shirt]*. Does everyone do this and I don’t see them do it? I mean, there’s no point in even buying new clothes!

*[Resumes]* It’s a long story: there was World War II, and there was a surplus of food. The food started getting frozen and the microwave was invented. People were told that food needed to be convenient, housewives were too busy. I think that this, to some extent, fed off what eventually became the women’s movement, because I don’t think they were really

too busy, I think they were too bored. By the time the '70s came around, women started joining the workforce in great numbers; there was no one left to cook. So then you had this couple of blank decades where no one cooked.

Now you can talk about the Food Network. The Food Network has a much bigger audience than the Dining section of the *New York Times*, *Gourmet* magazine, *Food & Wine*, etc., combined. Philosophically, I have problems with what they do, because they glorify weird ingredients and in some ways I think they discourage people from cooking because they make it look like it's really tricky, you have to be able to chop like this: *dutdudutududu*. I can't do that stuff.

On the plus side, they've brought a consciousness of cooking and of food—international food, especially—to the floor. So people could say, "Oh, look, there's this Thai restaurant, I really like Thai food," then they might see some of it cooked on TV, and then they realize, "Oh, maybe I can do that." Would I have rather that everybody have learned how to cook from reasonable people like me, who don't

sensationalize things? Yeah, but, so what?

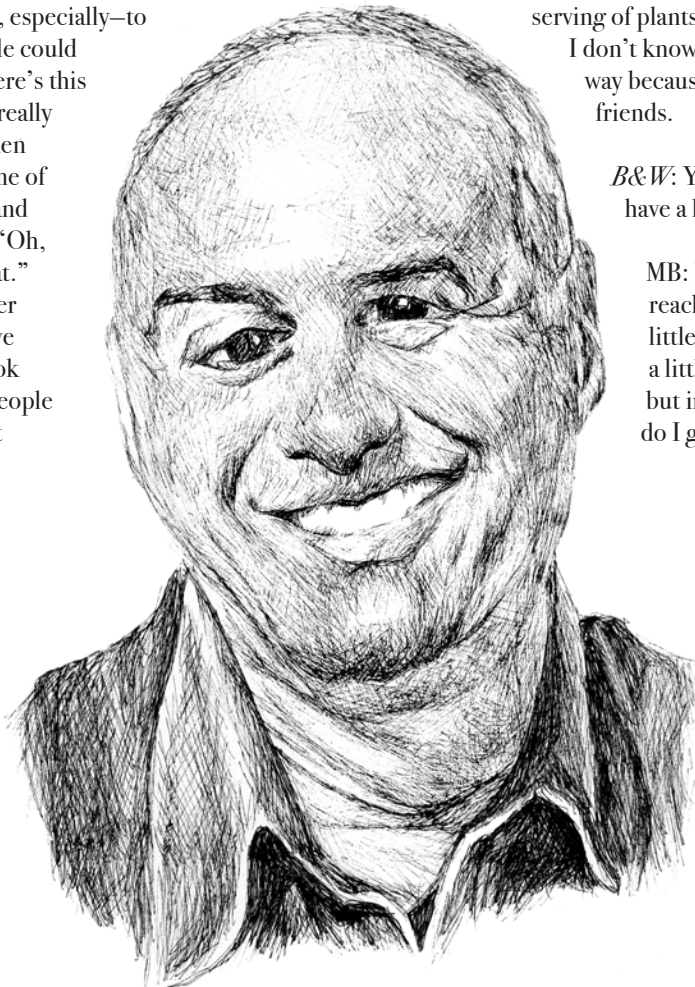
*B&W*: Who is your intended audience with *Food Matters*?

MB: My intended audience is people who shop in Wal-mart. My intended audience is people who are *not* locavores, vegetarians, into organic food, because I went on book tour and those are the people who showed up and I said, look, with all due respect... I'm preaching to the choir here. I think I can say things that are useful to vegetarians, to people who are committed to organic food and local food. I have suggestions and ways that I think that I could help those people see things straighter. They probably think they can help me see things straighter, which is fine, I don't mind the argument.

But the statistics in my book are real. I need to reach the people who are eating only one serving of plants and vegetables a day. I don't know anyone who eats that way because it's not my circle of friends.

*B&W*: You probably don't have a lot of obese friends.

MB: Right. So how do I reach those people? A little bit in the column, a little bit in the book, but in the long run, how do I get out there? I need



*Illustration by Eloise Owens*

to figure out a way to reach more of the *How to Cook Everything* audience, which is a more mass-marketed audience, I think. I'd like to do television based on *Food Matters*. Starting in May, the *Today Show*, at least, is no longer going to position me as this guy who's a whiz in the kitchen and can show you all these cool things to do fast, but more as someone who can help you figure out the right way to eat.

*B&W:* Do you think that your plan is realistic for people like that? Can somebody follow it on food stamps, say?

*MB:* Yes, absolutely, because rice, and beans, and lettuce, and stuff like that is all cheap. Frozen vegetables, which I have no problem with, are really cheap. There's a lot of inexpensive, halfway-decent food out there.

People on food stamps—and look, that's a very small percentage of the population—I'm not saying write those people off, by any means, but they need a special kind of help. Those who've had elite upbringings and are very literate—we can figure this stuff out for ourselves. But then there's like 80 percent of the population in the middle, people who drive cars, have jobs, have some money—what I want them to do is go cook a decent meal, based on this less-meat, less-processed food, less-junk food, more-plants theory. And they don't have to jump off a cliff, they don't have to go whole-hog, they could do it a little bit. I honestly believe that it would be self-reinforcing, that they'd lose weight or they'd feel better or they'd save money.

*B&W:* What should and can the Obama administration be doing about food?

*MB:* That is really out of my league; I don't want to be a fantasist. But I would like to see the beginning of very strict curbs on factory farming. I would like to see the environmental costs of raising food industrially paid by the producers.

I would like to see the true costs of food reflected

in the price of food, which would make some food cheaper, but most food more expensive, but I think that's OK. I think that if the true cost of raising livestock were reflected in the price, you'd see a big increase in the price of fast food, which would encourage people to cook.

I'd like to see food stamps be worth more or less depending on the food that you buy. For example, food stamps are worth zero if you want cigarettes. That's a good thing. Food stamps should be worth zero if you want to buy Kraft macaroni and cheese, frozen food that you pop in the microwave, potato chips, soda—soda would be first on my list. Then I'd like to see food stamps worth something more than zero for dairy and meat and viable canned goods—canned beans, canned tomatoes—and more than that for fresh vegetables, dried beans, stuff like that. And then I'd like to see that pricing structure [in place for the rest of the population].

*B&W:* How high on the priority list should food be, relative to other things?

*MB:* What matters more? I mean it's everything, it's agriculture, it's health. It's ridiculous to address whether there's universal health insurance

without addressing why this country is the world leader in so many lifestyle diseases—it's diet. People ask the question, should smokers be penalized when it comes to universal health care, because if you smoke—and it is a choice even though it's an addiction—you're costing the rest of us money. If you get 90 percent of your calories from animal products and junk food, you're more likely to get a lifestyle disease—should you be penalized for that? These are the questions that need to be addressed, and I don't see them being addressed.

*B&W:* It seems like one of nature's cruel ironies is that things that are bad for us taste so good.

*MB:* I think some of that is actually marketing, because I have to say that since I changed my diet, I have a newfound appreciation—if you give me a good apple, I really like it, I really do. It's not the same

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"I can tell the  
difference between  
a good carrot and a  
bad carrot ... between  
good oatmeal and bad  
oatmeal"

---

as it used to be. I can tell the difference between a good carrot and a bad carrot, I can tell the difference between good oatmeal and bad oatmeal. So it's not just that. But fat does have a lot of flavor.

*B&W:* Frying something makes it taste better.

*MB:* Well, and good meat contains a lot of fat and it's very, very complex, much more complex flavor than most apples, for example, and you tend to grill it, you cook it in a way that it browns it and then browning makes things even more complex. So I think that the lesson is that those things that you say are bad for you are only bad for you in large quantities. A lot of this stuff is a gift. And I'm not a religious person, but as it turns out, a lot of these gifts are things that need to be treated more respectfully and used sparingly. So, a really good apple is a gift, maple syrup is a gift—it's very hard to make, very labor intensive, only available in a small part of the world, part of the year.

A really properly raised animal, that someone took care of, treated well, and then killed and you're eating—that is a serious gift. We raise 10 billion animals a year. You've taken the specialness out of that, you've ruined it. So, the way to get it back is to say, "what's the number of animals that can be raised in a principled manner on the amount of land that we have available to use in the U.S. with a just amount of resources?" I would guess that our animal production needs to fall by 90 percent to be the right number, so that we're eating, instead of 30 chickens a year per person—which is about what our number is, half a chicken a week—maybe each family of four eats a chicken a week. That would be an interesting start.

*B&W:* How do you suggest wading through this wealth of contradictory information we have about health? You have a lot of facts and statistics in your book and I read the *New York Times* Health section pretty regularly. I read once that sprouts can give you cancer, I read the other day that you shouldn't blow your nose...

I saw that, what was that about? Of course you're gonna blow your nose, the stuff is coming out—what are you gonna do, leave it there? I don't read that stuff. Don't read it! I don't think any food is bad for you except, there are proportional issues. "A guide to conscious eating" is what this book is. I can have bacon and eggs for breakfast, it's not against my rules; I would then look very carefully at the way I ate for the rest of the day, and even for the rest of the week. But I have nothing against bacon and eggs, and I don't think there are magic bullets. I went out to Portland, and all they were talking about was hemp. And I'm like, you guys are nuts: hemp is not the answer.

*B&W:* You don't believe in super foods, and antioxidants, and all that?

*MB:* No! I don't believe in super foods and I don't believe in evil foods, either, it's just food. The question is how you balance it. So, I don't think people should be bombing McDonald's—not that anyone is. I think people should be eating there less, but I don't think people should be eating there never.

*B&W:* Do you eat there?

*MB:* I haven't in a while, but it doesn't mean I won't. You just can't make a steady diet of it because it's clearly, clearly not good for you. Especially since you don't know what's in that stuff.

*B&W:* I read in your book that sometimes cattle are fed cooked municipal garbage... God, that was the most horrifying thing.

*MB:* I think feathers, when the chicken are fed feathers.

*B&W:* But *cooked garbage*...

*MB:* Feathers.

*B&W:* Well, agree to disagree.

—Interviewed by Hannah Goldfield



# Personal Ads

## SEEKING MEN

Seattle coffee addict fiending for gulps of a more than average Joe. (2153)

Habitually late English major seeks man who comes on time. (7308)

Demure, brainy academic seeks Turkish novelist for intense, vengeful domination. (5128)

Underclassman sick of McBain seeks better view of your shaft. (7308)

Yes we did! (2068)

Former Bwog editor knows whom you can eat for free. (5211, 2153)

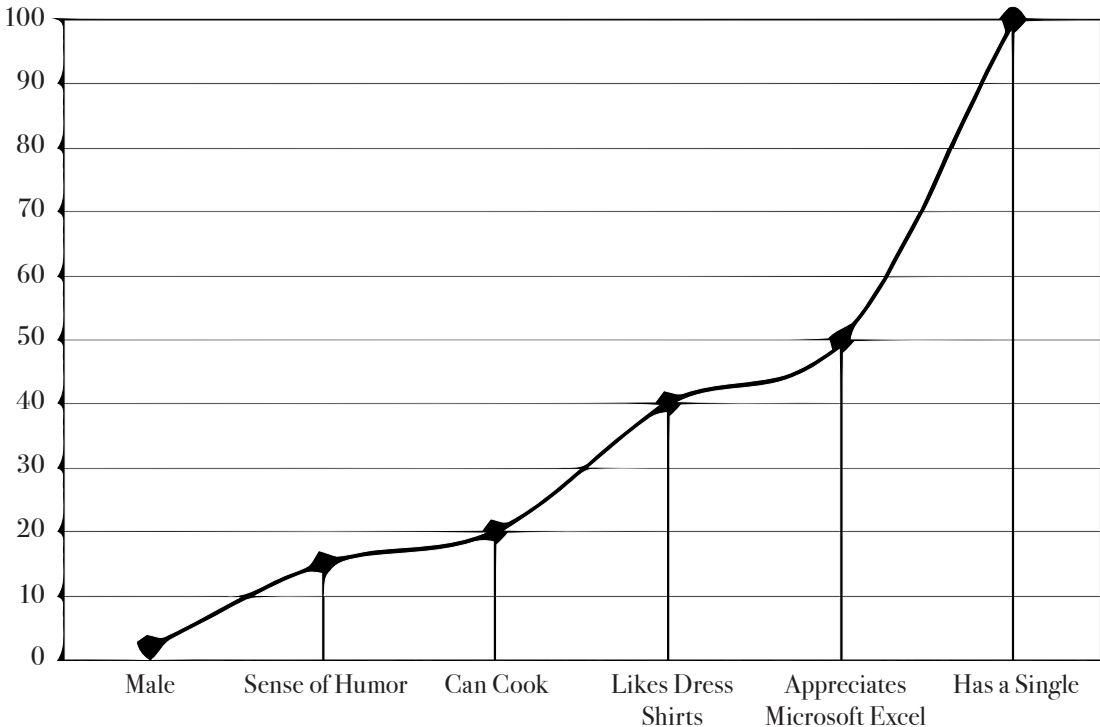
I grew up near Love Canal; I glow in the dark. (5128)

Denizen of a slumlord-managed apartment off campus seeks real man for romantic strolls through Harlem after dark, human bonding in the face of conspiring mice, hugging close in the shower when the hot water has been shut off. (4600)

I can predict the future. It's a bad scene. (5128)

I'll teach you about the birds and the bees... really. Hawks are fascinating! (2325)

## My Level of Interest in You (3025)



Captain of dying industry seeks deck chairs covered with inky newsprint to fuck on. (2491)

Dear Colin Drummond, it's Eliza... call me! (6290)

My idea of a perfect date is a moonlight picnic on Red Hook Beach. Ask me how to get there. (3231)

Me: rising editor-in-chief of campus publication. You: first-year stunned senseless by power. It's tradition! (5211)

Ask me what I can do with cinnamon, oil and butter. (1451)

You shoot it, you eat it. (2876)

Urban studies major wants to get municipally wasted. I have the passion of a thousand Staten Island incinerators. (6298)

Silent but violent. (4981)

New York, Jewish, left-wing, liberal, intellectual, Central Park West, Brandeis University, the socialist summer camps and the, the father with the Ben Shahn drawings, right, and the really, y'know, strike-oriented kind of, red diaper, stop me before I make a complete imbecile of myself. (6290)

Fuck you, homeskillet. (4600)

As long as I can keep my Snuggie™ on. (5128)

Wear down my defences and take my honour. Programme. (6290)

Speaks softly, carries a big stick. (3025)

## SEEKING WOMEN

If it were really a problem, they'd call it Asian fetish *syndrome*. (4824, 5831)

Bwog seeks to get waid. (2326)

Looking for a girl like a Class Day speaker: come to my place, work your mouth, and don't expect compensation. (3667)

I'm going to call out your name, and you're not going to see it coming. (4309)

Single white male has an extra pair of flip-flops if you think the floor is too dirty. (4064)

Just as long as you aren't sucky. Or are. I don't know how this works I'm a freshman. (7744)

I've got a great job waiting for me after graduation, so you can even tell your mom about our casual sex. (4214)

Square hipster seeks round hole for peg to get awkwardly stuck in. (2682)

You have to say my name with the back of your throat. This actually isn't an innuendo. (0893)

Shower money on me and I'll perform. It's like I'm your own personal bailout! (3231)

Cogito ergo cum. (7015)

Go ahead and touch it—it's real. The bowtie that is. (4981)

David Byrne look-a-like for talking, head. (2543)

## WHATEVER I CAN GET

Disenfranchised empty space seeks reason for existence. (c/o Lerner Hall)

The pages of *Consilience* are all stuck together. (2520)

M.F.A. stands for "movie film actor", right? (\*\*\*\*)

In which our hero was banned from Craigslist.com. (*Mailbox expired*)

What happens on sabbatical, stays on sabbatical. (4927)

NYU striker seeks something... anything. (Kimmel)

To my photographer, I've got my eye on you. Leave the camera on. (hawk@bwog.net) ♦

# STAGED RUSH

**B**ellona Bohny-Bohr, charged by the University with the prosecution of the War on Fun, was plotting. It was her second year on the job and Fun had surrendered its top hat and tails, its keg and its Solo Cup.

But Bohny-Bohr was itching for more. She was sick of answering to her supervisor, the Abject Adjunct Sub-Dean of the Residential Office of Gender Living Orientation Program (ROöGLOP). In June, her professional association [*The acronym for which is longer than a line of print, and has been omitted* –Ed.] was having a conference in Tempe, and Bohny-Bohr knew she had one chance to make her name. She was ready to go rogue.

Plan A came to her in a flash. She booted up her diabolical Dell and typed away: eBay.com. Search: Harry Potter cat. In the name of some charitable cause or other, one of the film’s felines was up for auction, and within the week, a cat-spy had arrived via FedEx.

But the spayed silver screen actress Mrs. Norris was considerably less adept than her literary counterpart. Sent on patrol, Mrs. Norris quickly found a comatose shoulder to cuddle upon. It was time for Plan B. One night, Bohny-Bohr slipped Mrs. Norris into a CUBES meeting. The mission was bogus—there was nothing but cocoa and TaB served at the gathering. But predictably, the young scientists took an experimental interest in the poor beast, and so Bohny-Bohr was free to slide on her next skin: she would go undercover as a student.

Bohny-Bohr thought she would start small. She invested in a “vintage” graphic tee and an ironic Barnard hoodie; thus outfitted, she was ready for the upcoming *Federalist Paper* party. When she arrived, she found plentiful alcohol, but no Fun. In a perfunctory style, she reported a violation, but left without reaching the high that made her job

worth the trouble.

As she retreated up the Steps, a screaming swarm engulfed her. Despite the cloudy sky and fall wind, the mob was clad in short-shorts and flip-flops. “Alcohol must be close,” she thought, and her Fun-detection sensor began to ping.

The horde’s presumptive drill sergeant climbed Alma Mater. “Who fulfills the hotness quota?” she barked. Replied the pink-limbed crowd: “Nu Iota, Nu Iota!”

Febrile with the crowd’s energy, she joined in. Madly chanting in response to the calls of the lady-sergeant, the girls—the mole now among them—jogged back to their townhouse, where much to Bohny-Bohr’s surprise, there was no alcohol in sight.

The living room was filled with card tables, each of which was topped with a timer. “Sisters, to your seats!” cried the commandante, initiating a speed-dating whirlwind.

The next day, Bohny-Bohr’s face ached from projecting a bubblyness entirely foreign to her.

What followed were museum trips, tiara soirées, and hours of bonding games—Bohny-Bohr assured herself she had won them all. But one Pinkberry trip unraveled all her hard work. Unfamiliar with the substance, Bohny-Bohr ordered a dollop of the coffee-flavored variety. When the group’s *grande dame* gazed in her putrid, khaki-colored cup, she exclaimed, “Why, have you no taste!”

At this public censure, a previously-silent rushee, empowered by the whiff of mutiny, cried out, “She’s with the administration! When I do my boyfriend’s laundry, she takes his T-shirts out of the dryer to sniff them for beer stains!”

The eyes of the alpha swelled as she raised her stick of an arm to point out the door: “Be gone, you twisted sister!” Bohny-Bohr slinked back to Wien thirsty... for revenge.

—Alexandra Muhler



Illustration by Maxine Keyes



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# Misadventure Capital

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The Sisyphean struggle of Columbia's would-be Zuckerbergs.

BY LYDIA DEPILLIS

Freshman Adam Goldberg, SEAS '06, learned back in 2003 that Columbia's computing office was developing a site designed to connect alumni with the undergraduate community. It would take, they told him, two to three years to work—an eternity in Internet time and the bulk of an undergraduate's stint at Columbia. Meanwhile, SEAS spirit remained lacking, and Goldberg thought some form of online interactivity could help. The summer after his freshman year, SEASCommunity was born.

"It's one of the most exciting things I think I've ever made," said Goldberg, who is now studying in France, with a job at Google lined up for the fall. "I get really excited talking about it." Within three weeks, Goldberg said, the majority of SEAS students had created profiles; by the end of December, the number had grown to 2,500 accounts. The experiment in social networking—rechristened CUCommunity after it expanded beyond the engineering school—was highly dependent on "journals," interactive fora, and photo posting. People became friends through the site, organized get-togethers, started relationships, and developed well-known virtual personae.

In February 2004, The Facebook launched at Harvard. By the next month, it had expanded to Columbia, Stanford, and Yale—although it penetrated Columbia more slowly. Facebook's widespread success prompted Goldberg, and his partner, Wayne Ting, CC '06, to take CUCommunity national too. Both Ting and Goldberg ran for the presidencies of their respective schools that spring; Goldberg won. Nevertheless, they decided that in order to really make their creation work, school would have to wait. That summer, they moved to Montreal and got to work.

"We just started cranking," remembered Ting. The operation was low budget. They lived in their office, blowing up a mattress every night and hiding their toothbrushes in the morning so their two employees wouldn't know they were homeless. At this point, the effort was a race: while Ting and Goldberg were launching the re-named CampusNetwork at the Big 12 conference universities, Facebook had reached over 100 schools nationwide. The Columbia boys took a

semester off for their project, but Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg had dropped out completely. At one point, he asked Goldberg to come on board; Goldberg—who describes Zuckerberg as "a good friend"—declined the offer. CampusNetwork reached a peak membership of 160,000 in December 2004. By then, Facebook had over 2 million users, and at that point, Ting and Goldberg gave up.

Ting, now an associate at Bain Capital, is philosophical about what might have been. The project started out as an initiative to knit together a fragmented campus, but by the time they started aggressively pushing a profit model, the game was already over. "It's not the idea that's powerful. It's the network," Ting explained. "We had the idea first. They had the network first. And they won."

It's hard to imagine a better place than college to start an Internet business. Basic living needs are typically not a problem, Web hosting costs \$50 a month, and the right idea can turn a campus into an instant captive market. It's no wonder a generation of hungry, Facebook-inspired Columbia entrepreneurs has followed in Ting and Goldberg's footsteps.

In part, Zuckerberg's inspiration is also a curse: it's nearly impossible for those aiming toward a college demographic to find a niche that Facebook hasn't already filled. But while places like Stanford, UCLA, Berkeley, MIT, and Harvard are teeming petri dishes of innovation, with goodies like entrepreneurship conferences and in-house venture funds, Columbia tech startups face a hidebound bureaucracy, a theory-centric computer science program, and a wall between those who can build websites and those who run them. CUCommunity is just one headstone—perhaps the largest—in a cemetery of failed dot-coms at Columbia.

Within Columbia's ivory walls, enterprising students are more likely to start a protest than start a business.



In one way, Zuckerberg still has a lesson for Columbians: the best way to launch a business may be



to abandon campus completely.

Miles Lennon followed his lead. In Lennon's junior year, he won a business plan competition in Boston, which came with \$10,000 in startup capital. Turning down a post-summer-internship job offer at Bank of America, he left school to launch his mobile phone networking business. It failed within five months, but helped get him a job at another startup, and now he's not sure he'll ever come back to get his degree.

Since then, he's also founded CollegeMogul.com, a blog about college startups all over the country that now gets 25,000 unique visitors per month. With that bird's eye view, he can see exactly how Columbia stacks up against the entrepreneurial competition. "It's pretty well known both at the Business School and the College that the Columbia venture community is really weak," said Lennon. "It's not a Silicon Valley mentality."

To understand how this works, consider the parable of campus events advertising. In 2006, Ashish Kundra, SEAS '09, and Isaac Silverman, CC '09, took a semester off to launch CampusBoxOffice.com, a site designed for student groups to post events and sell tickets. When the site was ready to launch, they proposed a deal with CUArts, which ultimately decided to go with a more established company. CampusBoxOffice folded soon after.

"Honestly, it was seeing all these young entrepreneurs doing really big things," said Kundra, explaining their mentality. "Well, I could go into finance, or I could do this startup." Kundra and Silverman, both serial start-uppers, went on to other projects. Kundra is working on

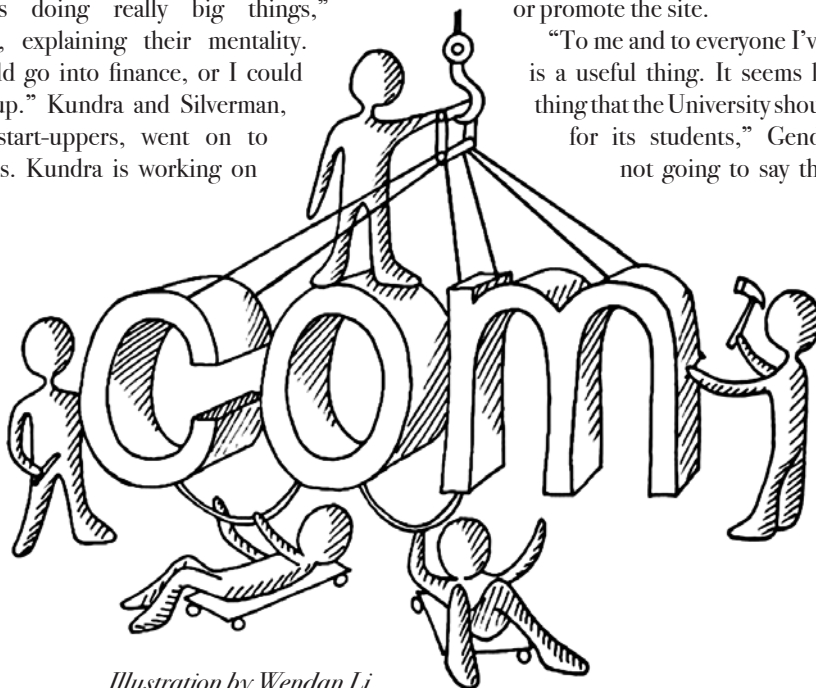
Buzzable, envisioned as a Twitter for college students. Silverman hooked up with two kids at Yale to start GoCrossCampus.com, which has since raised \$1.5 million in venture capital and landed a spot on *Inc.* magazine's list of the nine "Coolest College Startups."

"It's really cool to be able to contribute something substantive, and see that practical application of your brainchild, to actually have an idea and see other people use it," said Silverman, who recently left GoCrossCampus to write a philosophy thesis and graduate. "It's what I want to do with my life."

And though CampusBoxOffice fizzled, the idea remained. Last fall, another pair of male students launched another calendaring site: CampusPlaybook, born out of frustration over the difficulty of planning events. Dan Gendler and Dan Heyman, CC '09, both tall and easygoing, say all they want do is make students' lives easier: "No gadgets, no cheap gimmicks, we just wanted a place where a large amount of information could reside in one place," said Gendler.

CUArts gave them a grant for a few hundred dollars for Facebook ads, and the site attracted some users through word of mouth. The Columbia College Student Council seemed interested in coordinating with the startup, but ran into trouble because of legal constrictions on working with non-school-recognized entities. One high-up administrator, they say, even told the groups under his jurisdiction not to use or promote the site.

"To me and to everyone I've talked to, this is a useful thing. It seems like exactly the thing that the University should be providing for its students," Gendler said. "I'm not going to say they've hindered



*Illustration by Wendan Li*

this project, but there's been no real enthusiasm to connect the student body in this way."

Hope, for the uninitiated, springs eternal. This spring, RJ Assaly, SEAS '12, and Michael Vitrano, CC '12, announced the launch of PostAtime, which does essentially the same thing as its virtual calendar predecessors. With their unwrinkled button-downs and shiny shoes, they resemble a pair of young Ari Golds, ready to charm an investor off his feet. They hadn't heard about CampusBoxOffice or CampusPlaybook, and had no intention of trying to work with any school organ to help it take off, here or around the country. (The last time someone tried such aggressive expansion was Jonathan Pappas, CC '06, the founder of BoredatButler.com, which is still running after its third year.)

"It's definitely an inspiration in that a college student was able to do this," said Vitrano, referring to Facebook. "You can make a multibillion dollar company and start it from nothing."

"It's very *Atlas Shrugged*," added Assaly. "We're both very much capitalists."



Even students who aren't trying to turn a profit run into institutional resistance.

CUIT director David Etherton works in the bowels of Philosophy Hall, holding together a vast information apparatus with a shoestring. On his plate: replacing the rickety CourseWorks system and coming up with a new one to manage financial aid. When the economic crisis hit last October, most of those projects were put on hold; Etherton estimates it will take four years to implement Sakai, the new course management system being developed with a consortium of universities.

So when Ryan Bubinski, CC '11, approached him with ColumbiaClasses.com, a new Web site that schedules and reviews classes, Etherton was intrigued. "We were really excited about it," he said. "It's stuff that we'd really like to do, but don't have the resources." Bubinski, who also developed the *Columbia Daily Spectator's* Web site, never wanted to make any money. Despite learning to type before he could walk—his father was a computer salesman in the 1980s—he's going into biophysics research, not Web

entrepreneurship.

ColumbiaClasses is just a side project. "As soon as you mention the word 'profit,' they're [Columbia] going to drop you like a hot potato," Bubinski said. "But, you know, rightfully so."

Before getting very far with developing the site, Etherton got a call from the College. "It really hadn't been vetted through the channels that they would consider proper," he said. The professor rating system was particularly worrisome to administrators, as was the idea of students sharing their course schedules with each other online. That effectively ended the project, and all Etherton could do was give Bubinski server space—what he calls a "development sandbox"—to play with.

Thus far, the only successful Columbia Web ventures tend to be those that seek neither profit nor help from the University; CULPA and WikiCU, which started in 1998 and 2007 respectively, are not businesses at all.

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"It's very *Atlas Shrugged*," added Assaly. "We're both very much capitalists."

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For entrepreneurial types, starting a Web business is easy: you can buy one on the Internet. Sites like RentACoder.com send bids out to Web developers all over the world, who write code on spec. Both CampusBoxOffice and

CampusPlaybook outsourced to freelancers.

"The Chinese guy did e-mail," said Gendler, of his overseas hires. "The Ukrainian guy I talk to on Skype all the time. He's really nice."

Of course, there are about 600 computer science students right here at Columbia. One of the first things they get asked in job interviews, says Akiva Bamberger, SEAS '11, is what kind of team projects they've worked on. But CS classes are generally more theoretical, meaning that for something so practical as Web design, engineers are on their own. "It's kind of like if you form a band in high school," Bamberger said, speaking quickly. "There's not really band class, you know what I mean? But there's an instrument class, there's music theory. So what we're trying to do is get people together and say form your own band. Here's your amp, and here's a great store where you can buy a Fender."

Da Quan Rong, SEAS '09, and Bamberger

are respectively president and vice president of the Association for Computing Machinery, the anachronistically-named group dedicated to connecting their skills with the real world. They're planning a "development initiative" to help projects off the ground—*any* project, really.

"Ideas are a dime a dozen. There are so many things that have to be made," said Bamberger. "It's the rare ambition combined with the rare idea." Last week, he thought of an iPhone application that would function as a pedometer. Even at Columbia, there are ways—energy monitoring in dorms, he suggests, or online housing selection—that tech-savvy kids and business types can solve problems and gain experience at the same time. If only each knew the other existed.

It's a problem that hasn't gone unrecognized. When SEAS administrators asked alumni what undergrads might need most, entrepreneurship factored into their answers heavily. So, last semester, the Center for Technology, Information, and Community Engagement (CTICE) was born. The office kicked off an entrepreneurship concentration, with an inaugural class of 60 students. In early February, they held a

"Pitchfest," a kind of entrepreneurial speed-dating free-for-all in which members had two minutes to sell an idea to a crowd of hundreds.

Rebecca Rodriguez, the bubbly administrator who runs CTICE from a barren office in Mudd, spent seven years running the more paper-and-pencil-oriented Columbia Student Enterprises. From overseeing University-sanctioned businesses like Columbia Bartending and the now-defunct CUSnacks, she is now charged with knitting together Columbia's broadly defined entrepreneurial energies.

Above all, he founders of startups past advise would-be moguls to create something new. Miles Lennon recommended finding the people pioneering technologies at this university and pooling resources. Columbia has a whole office for incubating its research arms' new ideas. It's called Science and Technology Ventures, and it works with researchers to patent technologies and bring them to market.

But until these networks—students, researchers, administrators, and entrepreneurs—finally find a way to interact, it's every man for himself, and no one's winning. ♦

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# 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](mailto:editors@theblueandwhite.org).*

I am a young mathematician. Young because of my age. With only 20 years behind me, my future stands before me, unformed and uncharted. Young because of my mathematical experience. This is the first year I have ventured outside of calculus, stepping into a vast new, and at times bewildering, world. Young because this is the first year I have considered myself as a mathematician. [...] Young because I cannot give concrete goals and objectives for my summer research experience, except to say that I want to become more mature in mathematics.



Since knowledge is equivalent to power, education seems to be the key to success.



[Hamlet] assumes that it is necessary to own his actions and be the agent of his existence, an actor who scripts his own lines and plots his own destiny. But to create one has to currently exist; here lies the principle impasse.



In the film, so called 'high class or upper middle class domestic house wives,' who are categorized by their husbands' social positions, try to abandon traditional values such as domestic motherhood, saving money, and asexual.



In respect to a financial security, higher education often provides jobs with a sufficient salary, which secures the financial independence of a person. However, educa-

tion will also accomplish the personality.



Yo no creo que el mundo necesite le gobierno. Soy una anarquista. [...] Sin duda, muchas personas piensan que anarquismo y caos y violencia son los mismos. No es verdad! [I don't think that the world needs the government. I am an anarchist. Of course, many people think that anarchy and chaos and violence are the same. It's not true! -Ed.]



First off, let me just say sorry if I'm a little bit hyper right now. I drank a lot of coffee today and it was really, really hot so it melted my brain. No, I'm just kidding, because you thought I was going to talk about the caffeine, which really is what I was referring to. My brain isn't melting. I'm all intact. I thought it would be good to start off with a joke.



*The personal statement is your opportunity to let the reviewers know about you as a student and as a person and to advocate for why you should be selected as a Goldman Sachs Global Leader. [...] I am sick, I have a disease, an all-consuming obsession. It strikes me at unexpected moments and haunts me for days. I have wanderlust.*



I tallied up my stash—close to five dollars, I recall—and decided what I would do with my small fortune. I bought a kite, and my imagination soared even higher than my beautiful Chinese box-kite as to what I would

save up for next. My pop gave me a powerful push in the right direction, when it came to savings: A penny saved really was a penny earned. Unfortunately, this wasn't the case for the 1,406 people who lost much of their life savings when Superior Bank of Chicago went belly up in 2001 with over \$1 billion in insured and uninsured deposits.



I have many personalities and such, many different, clashing kinds of friends. I want us to all hold hands and skip into a rainbow, but we can't. I need to understand that I cannot have them all at the same time, or I will lose them and those outlets of my varying personae.



What it seems to me that Durkheim is trying to answer is not what causes the failure, or the trauma, and thus not what caused the death, but what are not factors that cause an individual to self-induct the trauma that will cause a failure that will cause a death. For that reason, my humble or naive opinion leads me to feel that the data fall short in proving anything as the approach is purely an inquisition of the sociological factors and not of the psychological determinants inherent to each individual who commits suicide.



By promoting my personal capabilities, the sensation of being a useless member of the society lowers and the sensation of accomplishing a goal increases.



I don't write good poetry all the time by my standards. Sometimes I just write what I sincerely think sounds cool. And I must enter again the round/ Zion of the water bead?. I don't think this is necessarily good or bad... It may sound eloquent, but I'm trying to trick them into thinking I'm some sort of mysterious, esoteric type.



In January 2007, I led a team of twelve student peers on a humanitarian trip to Niquinohomo, a small village two hours outside of the capital of Nicaragua, to construct a preschool for the children of the village

too young to walk to school in the nearby town. My parents, overlooking our team goals, were too worried about safety.



The suggestion of a "monolithic core" (or lack thereof) made even more sense to me. It's like you're just a blank canvas waiting to be painted with watercolors, or a chameleon constantly changing its appearance. In both cases, the colors wash off or fade away. Nothing permanent. The same is true for Leah-she just puts on a new skin whenever she get's her self into a new group of friends. One minute she's someone's best friend, and the next she's a backstabbing bitch with a complete new attitude.



But don't worry, guys, I've basically been preparing for a disaster of this magnitude for my whole life. And probably if you're around my age, you have too, because it's been really hip to talk about, oh, what would you do in a zombie attack? Actually, what was your plan? Because I was never really involved in those kind of conversations.



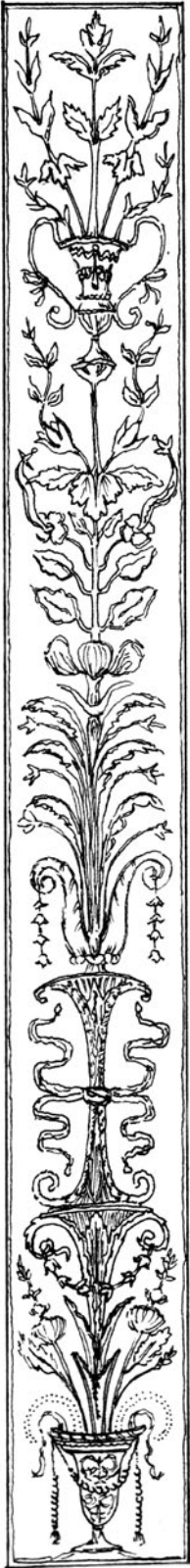
The Classical Style of music contains many aspects and principles that are similar to the primary objectives and purposes of the core curriculum at Columbia University. The Classical period was essentially born from the dissolution of the imitation theory, much like the core curricular program evolved from years of a rather mundane set of academic courses that was uniform in the national college system.



Dear 3rd floor neighbors,

This is a belated thank you for being patient and understanding (not calling the police or even complaining to me) for the amount of people I had over during the period from Dec 26th to Jan 1st. A ton of my friends were in from around the country to see our favorite band (The Disco Biscuits) play 5 out of 6 nights at the Nokia Theatre and somehow my apt. got appropriated as the place to be post show. Thanks again. If I am ever too loud or bother some just give me a call [redacted] and I will turn it down.





# MEASURE FOR MEASURE

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## A NEW DAY IN AMERICA

Know what I'm saying, Pocahontas?  
The grin of the perpetrator, the  
mode of pretzels & division, a surcharge  
on our every abominable opinion—  
that bedframe's busted. Now  
we climb a scaffolding of tickertape,  
hope at the top we are weightless  
and have been all along. We'd  
fly then, I suppose, or float  
in stasis, starve, incapable of peristalsis—  
or subsist on ambrosia, intravenous, whatever  
the divines eat, charred sacrificial flesh  
of sacred cows—we'd grow fat,  
sit high off our ass (of many checks)  
on oxygen or its deprivation, hope  
that atmospheres can't combust.

—*Billy Goldstein*

GIVING NOTICE

The form letter informs me:

with deepest and most sincere,  
she has taken her leave.

Let me tell you, she  
was really something. I mean, man—  
you should've seen her dance.

Like stomping out red  
ants in an overgrown back-country meadow.

Like running wild-armed over embers.

Or the way she'd peel  
tangerines, then chew the rind down to mush  
and spit it out.

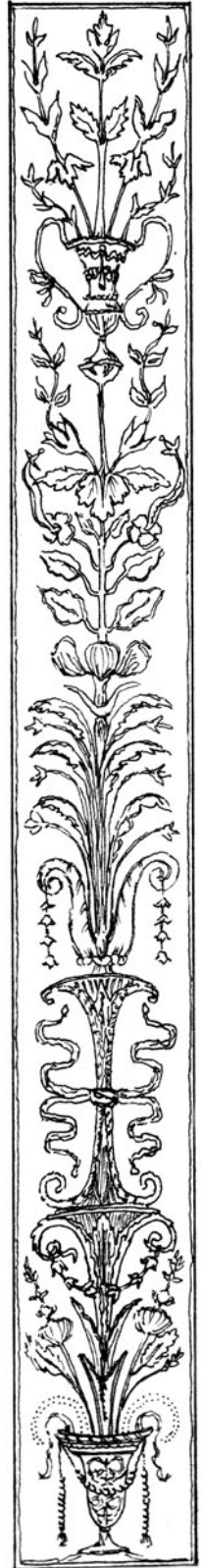
Once, I swear she spat a sentence.

Tangerine-letters, there on the ground.

In the beginning—and she stomped down,  
spat a seed in my eye and kissed me hard.

I tell you girls like that don't come around  
often. You should be so lucky. It is  
with deepest regret.

—Rebecca Evans



# Lincoln Memorials

In March of 1864, President Abraham Lincoln sat in the first row of a concert at Ford's Theater in Washington D.C. to hear the music of composer Louis M. Gottschalk. The nation had endured three war-torn years, the South remained far from defeated, and Lincoln was burdened with the atrocities of battle.

A year later, in April 1865, Lincoln attended another, more light-hearted performance at Ford's Theater. He had preserved the Union, but that night, the nation was struck with another catastrophe: Lincoln's own assassination.

This timeline of tragedy, and the legendary Lincoln-Douglas debates of 1858, were recreated in late January and early February at the New York Library for the Performing Art as part of the series, "Mystic Chords of Memory: Abraham Lincoln and the Performing Arts."

The two-month-long Lincoln-fest features a ballet based on Lincoln's life, a lecture on Aaron Copland's "Lincoln Portrait," and a reading of Lincoln's favorite speeches from Shakespeare. Despite its proximity to the latest inauguration, there's little to reinforce the much-discussed parallels between Lincoln and President Barack Obama; rather, the series shows how the content (and, to an extent, the quality) of political discourse has changed since Lincoln and Stephen O. Douglas met on the field of rhetorical battle.

Columbia's own Civil War expert, Professor Eric Foner, introduced the re-enactment of the debates, which starred veteran actors Dana Ivey and James Rebhorn, as "theatrical events." As Ivey demonstrated, an orator must do more than set his themes on the page, he or she must also match his voice and words to the audience's response and proceed by intuition. Lincoln was a master, developing a distinct style; his characteristically short speeches focused on logic rather than flourish. "Lincoln was a trial lawyer, and that helps shape his oratory ... [He] goes to the logic of his audience," Foner said in a post-performance

interview.

Lincoln's debates employed no vague threats or focus-grouped phrases, but instead questioned the substance of the slavery question, from both a moral and policy perspective—an approach not always apparent in contemporary political dialogue. During the Q&A, an audience member asked, "Why don't we have debates like this anymore?"

The series' well-chosen musical performances reflected the NYPL's extensive collection of scores. The concert began with the sonorous chords of a *legato élégie* by Paganini, played by pianist Bryan Wagorn, and also featured the music of Gottschalk, whose papers, journals, and compositions sit in the library's archives. "Concert at Washington. The President of the United States and his lady are to be there," Gottschalk wrote in his diary that evening. "Lincoln is remarkably ugly, but has an intelligent air, and his eyes have a remarkable expression of goodness and mildness."

Although a New Orleans-influenced polka, followed by Paganini's "Carnival of Venice" and a medley of patriotic battle songs, occasionally livened the performance,

the concert was remarkably melancholy overall. A Verdi aria, a Beethoven *andante*, and a German dirge on an absent father were decidedly contemplative. Gottschalk's own pieces were no cheerier: "Slumber on Baby Dear," a lullaby about a baby waiting for his lost mother, concluded the first half of the concert.

Once more, the audience was invited to draw comparisons between Lincoln's age and the present; the dark concert was an evening's big-ticket entertainment, whereas today's blockbusters seek to take viewers as far away from tragedy as possible. Even during a night out in 1864, concertgoers readily engaged themselves with tragedy. As the era of Lincoln looms large and 1929 seems less than a distant memory, the NYPL event seems to question whether we're capable of doing the same.

—James Downie



Illustration by  
Sonia Tycko

# Loose Canon

Alex Beam would like you to believe the selection process of Great Books of the Western World was a scandalous affair, full of devious masterminds and worthy of tabloid news. Agatha Christie it's not, but Beam nonetheless has written his new book, *A Great Idea at the Time: The Rise, Fall and Curious Afterlife of the Great Books*, with an ear for intrigue that even Poirot would appreciate.

In 1928, a mixed bag of University of Chicago scholars undertook the project of selecting the Great Books, and after over a decade of decidedly less than Socratic dialogue—of Rousseau it was said no one has ever written “so few fine statements set in so much crap”—the group presented a 54 volume set of primary material. It was Literature Humanities and Contemporary Civilization on steroids. Sponsored by the Encyclopædia Britannica, 443 works included in the series were meant serve both as a reaction to Harvard's all-elective curriculum and as a commercial ploy marketed to the growing middle class of the 1920s as an efficient means “to get rid of that inferiority complex.” As any student of the Core can attest, there's nothing that builds self-confidence quite like reading *City of God*.

The players in Beam's thriller are really just the usual suspects: Homer, Hobbes, Hegel and the rest of the gang. However, in Beam's account, the aforementioned dead white men play second string to another set of dead white men: Robert Hutchins, the former University of Chicago president who, much like a certain Columbia president, had natural good looks, many fans and an easy way with reporters; Mortimer Adler, a less-likable former Lit Hum professor; and William Benton, ad man extraordinaire and the driving marketing force behind the Great Books campaign. Beam, a *Boston Globe* columnist and father of former *Varsity Show* writer Chris Beam, CC '07, has as much affection for these men as they have for the Books. But

his affection is familiar and quick to tease; what could easily have become a paean is instead an irreverent account of academic reverence.

Early on, Beam posits that a Great Book, “has meaning and continues to have meaning, for a variety of people over a long period of time,” only later to question this by considering Hutchins's claim that, “a classic is a book that by definition no one reads.” As a writer and reader, Beam inserts himself into the debate as a candid observer. Speaking of the stuffy members of the Great Books Foundation of the 1950s and its contemporary reincarnation, the Veritas Fund, Beam writes, “Why haven't you finished Plato's *Symposium*?” They ask. Lord knows I tried, but I had no idea who half the characters were, and furthermore, why is Alcibiades hitting on Socrates?”

It's in moments like this that Beam's playful approach toward academia lends itself to his examination of who read the Great Books, who chose them, and who is still reading them today. Beam set out to write “a book as different from the ponderous and forbidding Great Books as it could be.” He does succeed in rendering the ponderous and forbidding as lighthearted and engaging, but the glib approach at times undercuts some of the more subtle questions and issues the Great Book committee and their work raise.

In the last chapters, Beam looks at the continuing presence of the Great Books at University of Chicago and Columbia—it turns out that “Columbia, more so than University of Chicago, has more doggedly clung to its legendary core curriculum.” Whether that's a good thing or a bad thing, Beam does not implicitly state. Nonetheless, Beam goes on to praise the academic fora of Lit Hum and CC where “a vestigial Socratism still prevails.” To any bleary-eyed freshman, this is, of course, a bit of glorification—but we'll take it.

—Mariela Quintana

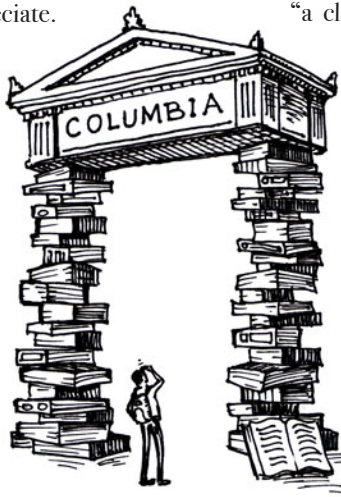


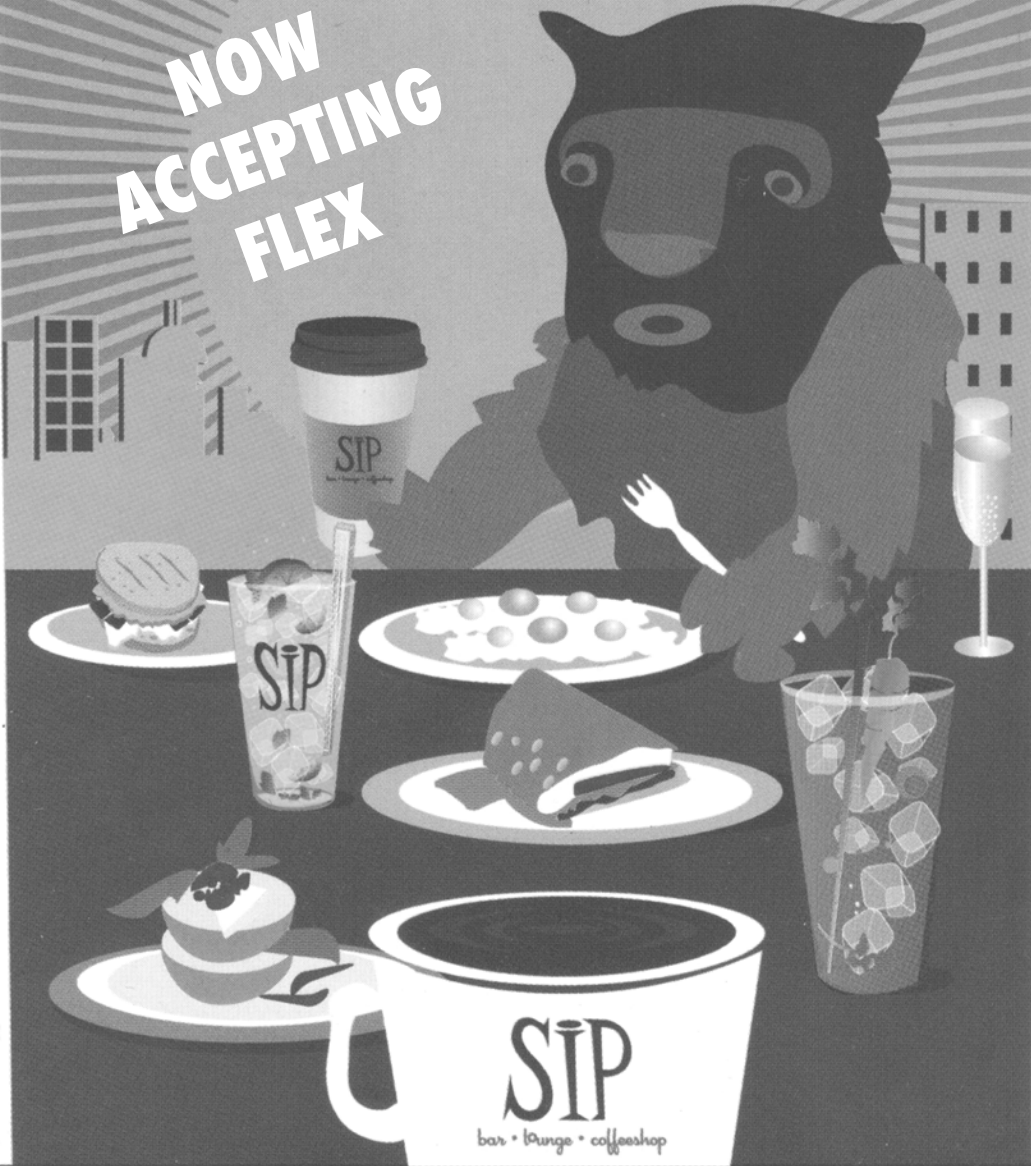
Illustration by  
Stephen Davan



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## CAMPUS GOSSIP

### COFFEE TABLE PUBLIC RELATIONS

After the final lecture for Freedom of Speech & Press, Professor PrezBo invited his students to his manse for cookies and chitchat. In his guest reception area: a coffee table book titled *Harlem: Lost and Found*, a collection of glossy photographs of the northern realm.



Professor Matthew Jones, after the auto-timer turned off the lights in the classroom:

“I don’t control the lights in my office either, so I’m often shrouded in darkness, which perfectly captures my epistemic state.”



### HIPSTER ADMISSIONS EXAM #1: FAILED

Overheard at 115th Street and Broadway:

Girl 1: “Oh hey! Are you going to the sweater party?”

Girl 2: “Ah... I don’t have a sweater.”



### A BULLIET FILES ADDENDUM:

“My first act as professor was to give an exam to a student. He failed. Then he complained and took the exam over with a different professor. He failed again. Two weeks later, he was hit by a bus and killed. [*Long pause.*] Interpret that as you will.”



Overheard on the Uptown 1:

Man 1: “Yo, do you see how they do me in school?”

Christopher Columbus discovered America? Fuck no. The Indians discovered America.”

Man 2: “Yeah, but did the Indians document their shit? Christopher Columbus, he kept a journal and wrote in that shit every day!”

After failing to achieve any kind of civil discourse, the Committee for Core Reform decided against further experiments with casual Fridays.



### MEET THE CLASS OF 2027!

Outside Pinnacle, looking at the free WiFi sign:  
Young boy, maybe 4 or 5: “Public WiFi? I love WiFi!”

Overheard on College Walk:  
Nanny: “Why don’t you like yourself? I’m always trying to get you to like yourself...”  
Four-year-old Girl: “Which I never will! I hate myself!”



Several hours into a marathon Skype session, a student’s roommate tenderly confessed the following to his long distance girlfriend:

“I love you so much. It’s like I feel this burning inside me and it’s you—you’re my disease.”

Maybe it’s just gonorrhoea.



### CAPITALISM, WHAT HAST THOU WROUGHT?

Overheard in Ferris Booth:

Sophomore: “You know, they get all, like, intellectual

and stuff, you know, like the plebeians and the opiates and shit. I hate that class.”



Overheard outside Hamilton:

Guy 1: “Are you going to First Friday?”

Guy 2: “Yeah!” [*A dejected pause*] “Well, maybe. I have to make quiche, so I don’t know.”

Guy 1: “Oh, I totally understand.”

The Columbia Quiche Alliance had chosen both an unfortunate acronym and meeting time; Quiche Awareness Month went almost entirely ignored.



A poster on the bulletin board of the Department of Creative Spelling—er, Writing:

“WANTED

Need Editor/Proofreader

I am seeking a book editor/proofreader for a 500 page urban fiction book. A great project to be apart of and it pays!!! We are on a 30 day deadline. Looking for a hard working, time management and dedicated person to complete the project.”

To be considered, candidates must be able to distinguish between homophones and catch incorrect parallelisms.



OY, VEY

Student 1: “What’s that over there?” [*She indicates a demonstration on College Walk*]

Student 2: “I think it’s a rally about the fighting in Gaza.”

Student 1: “You mean that stuff is still going on?”

Student 2: “Yeah, I think so.”

Student 1: “Really? I dunno—I’m pretty sure it’s been over for a couple of years now.”



Professor Mark Carnes, during a lecture for his course, The United States 1940-1975:

“We are on the verge of having an orgy rather than a

class.”

Granted, Prof. Carnes’s scholarly interest is that of the period from 1969 onward.



THE UNBEARABLE WEIGHT OF...WEIGHT

Overheard in front of Lerner:

Incensed girl on cell phone: “Just because I have a better-looking body than the average person doesn’t mean I’m, like, immune, from the weight of having other people talk about my body.”



Overheard one particularly chilly morning on the M60:

Little kid: “My whole body is shimmingy!”

Mom: “What?!”

Kid: “Shimmering!”

[*Mom looks skeptical*]

Kid: “Shivering! Shivering!”



CORE MELTDOWN

Overheard in Professor Francesco Benelli’s Art Hum:

Pakistani student: “I have no real experience of Western art.”

Prof. Benelli: “Lucky you.”



NEWSFEED, NEWSFED

Overseen on Facebook, the following status update:

“[Redacted] is has anyone else taken Alli and sufferd [*sic*] from ‘gas with oily spotting?’”



A group of high schoolers inexplicably walked into Ferris Booth during the noontime rush hour, picked out their meals, and filed into the many long lines to pay: High school girl: “I’m tired of this shit!”

Already?



Meningitis...it’s probably already too late!