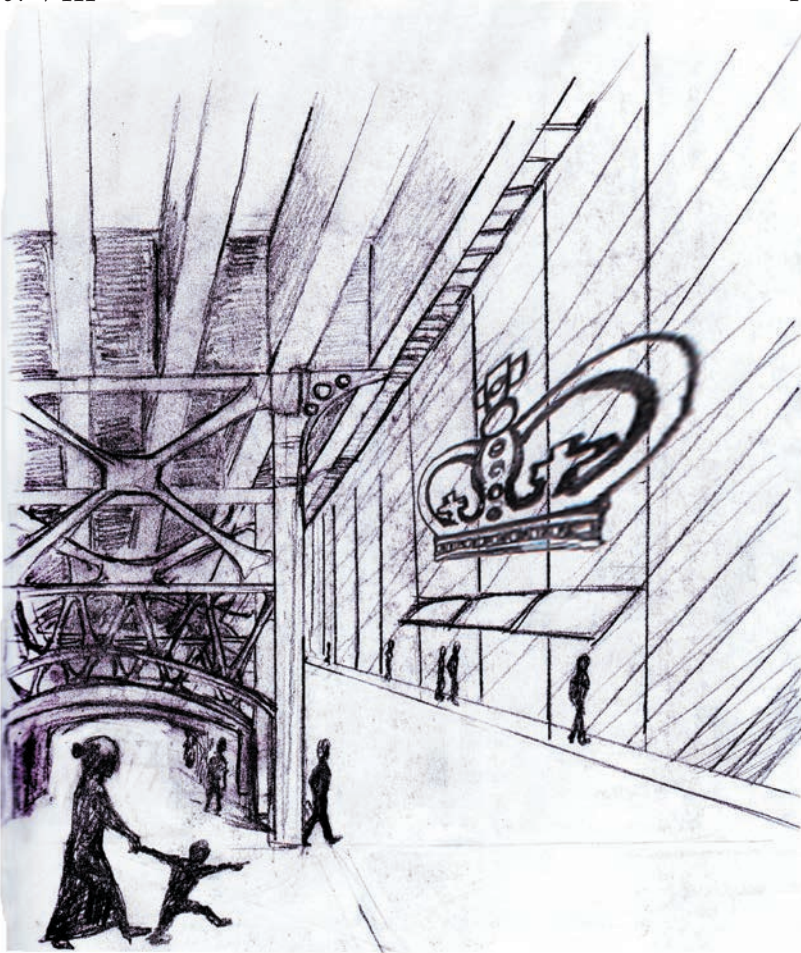


THE BLUE AND WHITE

Vol. XII No. VIII

May 2006



EXPANSION AND ITS DISCONTENTS

Getting along in the lack-of-space age.

by Amanda Erickson and Lydia Depillis


TWO HORSEMEN OF THE APOCALYPSE

How The Center for Broken Thought
can take you to the other side.

by James Williams

THE ANNEX OF BABEL The obscure languages of Columbia

ALSO: HOWL, SURVIVOR: COLUMBIA, ON HASHISH



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BLUE BOOK

Leave, Class of 2006! Avaunt, and quit our sight! Make like a tree, and get out of here! You've served your time, put in the hours, spent four years at what is, apparently, one of the world's premier institutions of higher education.

About that. Remember when you first got that acceptance email? Subject: Roar, Lion, Roar! Text: Congratulations! Columbia wants you! Columbia is truly top-notch, incredibly difficult to get into, perennially perched right near the top of the top, the Ivy League.

Now, it's four years later, and you're thinking: that school? With the tiny lawns which I can never play Frisbee on, that ridiculous glass student union...and these kids??? Ultra-amiable engineering students who pregame while doing problem sets to save time; over-achievers whose GPAs are so high, they have vertigo. Hell, we even have *THE BLUE AND WHITE*'s graduating editor emeritus, Zachary Hays Bendiner, who goes through older women like others go through razors, whose pant legs reveal the sexiest ankles on the planet, who never realized that, when Shakespeare wrote "all the world's a stage," he was being metaphorical.

Columbia seems so much smaller and less "impressive" after four years because you get to know all the people who make it up—who are Columbia. But if these kids make Columbia less "impressive," they make it far more worthwhile. Now, again, leave: and with your deeds, may you extend your fame.

Marc Tracy
Senior Editor

COMMENCEMENT SPEAKERS: A SELECTION

Brown: Two seniors
Colgate: Eliot Spitzer
Columbia: John McCain
Cornell: Martin Luther King III
Dartmouth: Not released yet
Harvard: Jim Lehrer
Johns Hopkins: Elias A. Zerhouni
Juilliard School: Wynton Marsalis
Knox College: Stephen Colbert
Lake Superior State: Jon Stewart
Liberty: John McCain
MIT: Ben Bernanke
Miss. Gulf Coast Community College
at Perkinston: George W. Bush
NYU: Anthony Kennedy
Northwestern: Barack Obama
Pennsylvania: Jodie Foster
Princeton: Bill Clinton
Stanford: Tom Brokaw
Syracuse: Billy Joel
Tufts: Lance Armstrong
Tulane: George H.W. Bush/ Bill Clinton
Quinnipiac: Ray Kelly
Vanderbilt: Laura Bush
Yale: Anderson Cooper



THE BLUE AND WHITE



COME AGAIN...?

“But it’s still going to be a beer place. It’s still going to have beer pong or whatever else you kids do.”
—Jeremy Merrin, Business ’00, new owner of The West End/Havana Central, in the *Spectator*

DIGIT TALES: GRADUATION

- 1,467: 2006 graduates of CC/SEAS
- Almost 3%: senior class with 4.0s (highest ever)
- 200+: seniors who have taken the swim test in the last two weeks
- 70%: participation in the Senior Fund (goal is 80%)
- \$90: cost of yearbook *The Columbian*
- 2: speakers who turned down Columbia’s commencement before McCain was asked (Bill Clinton, Barack Obama)



REVIEW

APRIL

- Temperatures crack 70 degrees, students shed clothes, onlookers vomit.
- Scarlett Johansson films *The Nanny Diaries* on campus. Our nanny had a mole the size of Scarlett’s sweet, sweet breasts.
- Bwog uncovers Crackergate. Come out you crumbly culprit!
- Seniors turn in theses, decide life is worth living after all.
- The Varsity Show premieres, shamelessly plugs Bwog. Did we mention we have a blog?

REVELATION OF THE MONTH

From the Libraries website *Ask Us* section:

“We welcome electronic reference questions. ...
The Libraries cannot provide legal, medical, or financial advice.”



PREVIEW

MAY

- Class of ’06 to go pro, with student debt for signing bonus.
- John McCain to deliver Class Day address—a chance to practice his concession speech.
- Students get ready to move out. Columbia staff to refurbish apartments with leftover IKEA crap.
- Grades to be released. Congrats on your A-. (Shoulda been a C and you know it.)
- Students begin summer jobs, see high school friends, consider suicide.

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 theblueandwhite@columbia.edu.

KAI ZHANG

Kai Zhang, B '09, is mad crazy. 4'11" and modestly dressed, she hardly looks it; if her round-lensed glasses had tape on the bridge, she could pass for Harry Potter's female, Asian twin. She seems like just another innocent and studious, if unusually self-secure, Columbian. She speaks simply and matter-of-factly, whether of her achievements or of her wild adventures.

And this girl has had her share.

There was the time she and her soon-to-be-boyfriend, after a night of breakdancing and clubbing, decided to stroll through Riverside Park. Alone. At 6 a.m. And then to swim across the Hudson. They splashed in and made it halfway across before New Jersey police officers fished them out and deposited them back in Manhattan. That was, she announces with a laugh, their first date.

Then there was the time—their second date—when they stole an orange construction barrier and placed it across a road to befuddle unsuspecting motorists. But a police car appeared with sirens ablaze, so they ran with guilty consciences to the nearest

subway station and, finding no train available, took the tunnel's service walkway. When a train came barreling along, they squeezed to the side and embraced as it careened past. "I was facing towards the train, and I had my eyes open," Kai says. "It was really scary. Brian, the wimp, didn't see it." She pauses. "It was really romantic."

She relates these tales with a vitality that's the result of remembering where she came from and not caring where she's going. Born in China, she's lived everywhere from a trailer park in Boulder, Colorado to her most recent home, Spanish Harlem; then, of course, there's Riverside Park and the Hudson River, as well as two-and-a-half miles above the earth, from where she jumped out of a plane. To her, all these insane adventures seem perfectly normal.

This same vitality, coupled with a poor relationship with her parents (she moved out and works to support herself), drove her to live on the streets of New York for a week as a high school sophomore. Rather than spontaneously running away, Kai left during her school's winter break, only returning home because she needed to study. She slept in a Village playground, sang on the subway for change (a good living, she says, sometimes earning \$10 per car), and befriended an old man who instructed her on the etiquette of homelessness. It was cold, she says, but survivable.

This same vitality also brought Kai to the national spotlight in the world of slam poetry. After attending the Asian American Writers' Workshop in Manhattan, she was inspired to write her own slam. Shortly thereafter, one of her poems won first place nationally, and she found herself traveling the country performing.

This same vitality, finally, led to her selection as a Centennial Scholar at Barnard, an award for independent study with which she plans to do research on "something involving hip-hop and underground activism," or maybe the learning process of children at a Chinese orphanage her aunt runs. Kai will also be an RA at Barnard next year, and given her record, she just might be the wisest one on the Quad.
—Mark Holden



JORDAN STEWART

Jordan Stewart, C'09, rarely spends time in Lerner, has walked the halls of Butler Library only once, and never eats at John Jay.

"Then what do you do all day?"

"I just plan." From a black-leather massage chair in his Carman double, Jordan brainstorms an entertainment empire.

Already entrenched in the New York City hip-hop scene, Jordan has recently "incorporated himself" to create the ominously named Intelligent Vision League. With help from "independent contractors" (his Carman 13 floormates), Jordan books his friends' bands (mostly other first-years) at venues around Morningside Heights.

Over the summer, he'll be developing the League's searchable online database of New York City's party industries (clubs, bars, security detail, promoters) to bring order to a "sloppy business" where most deals are closed with late-night drunken handshakes.

He also hopes IVL will become a music distributor and an online social network where fans can select artists according to individual tastes. "It's like creating a reality celebrity," he says, whom people can see and think, "Yo, he cheated off me in engineering, that's dope."

Jordan strategically highlights what he says people might consider disadvantages—his youth, his "urban" look—to impress potential business partners. Half Panamanian, half white, the Staten Island native said his mixed background has given him the natural ability to network like a true player. His father was a cook in a Barnard dining hall, and his mother was an eager, straight-A Barnard student. "He bagged her. That's pretty impressive for a food-serving guy from Harlem," he says. Jordan has spun a web of connections with club owners, bartenders, performing artists, DJs, and bouncers, ready for the first-names and the fist pounds that will inevitably seal each deal.

During his sophomore year of high school, Jordan spent a semester studying in Germany, where his do-rag and baggy jeans made him an instant curiosity—"I was New York City in the flesh, right in Hamburg." He began recording rap demos with a German label but could not sign a record contract because he was only 16. Back home, he played some of his recordings to his barber during a haircut. His barber was impressed, and handed the demos over to an old friend, Hot 97 Radio DJ Megatron, who became Jor-

dan's mentor in the New York hip-hop scene.

"He showed me to the world," he says. "I went to mad strip clubs and stuff, like on Monday nights till like 5:30 in the morning. I would come back, take a shower, go to school on Tuesday morning, tired as hell. People would be like, 'Where were you?' I'd be like, 'At a strip club.'"

But for the founder of the Intelligent Vision League, parties are more than entertainment. Amidst the alcohol, bumping, and grinding, Jordan engineers the strategic and symbiotic social relationships he needs to plan events at posh clubs downtown.

Disregarding the "simple equations" of mass marketers, Jordan envisions a music industry focused on the individual connoisseur rather than burgeoning demographics. He does more than talk about ego—his cell phone ringtone is a recording of one of his own raps. He argues that modern marketers (he worked for a major firm in high school) "manipulate [teenagers], study the trends, and fuckin' attack them." They divert thought from matters of the self to what he calls the "constant movement of the external." In response, Jordan seeks to mesh the Confucian ideal of introspection he learned in Colloquium on Major Texts with the egocentrism of reality television and the Facebook, to construct a hyper-profitable entertainment machine.

He also wishes Columbia had a marketing major. "I'm just a dirty hypocrite." —*Sara Vogel*



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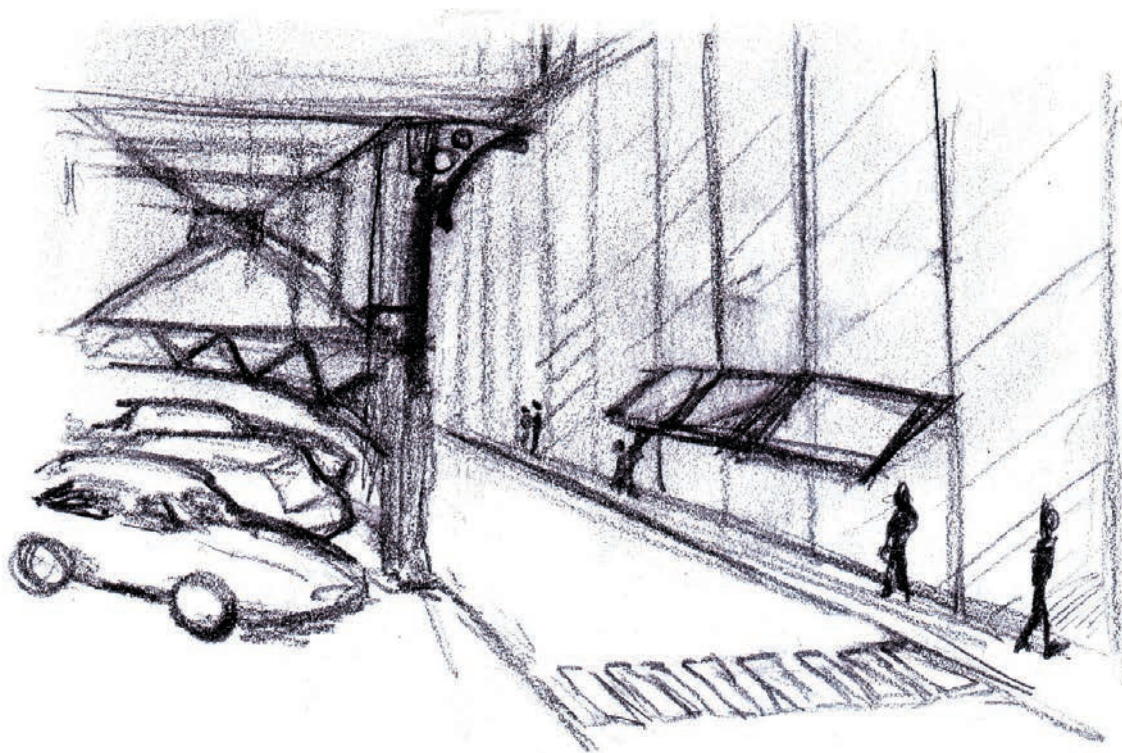


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EXPANSION AND ITS DISCONTENTS

Getting along in the lack-of-space age.

BY AMANDA ERICKSON AND LYDIA DEPILLIS

ILLUSTRATED BY JERONE HSU

From the moment President Lee C. Bollinger stepped up to the podium to deliver his inaugural address on October 3, 2002, one thing was clear: the man had a vision.

“Whether we expand on the property we already own on Morningside Heights, Manhattanville, or Washington Heights, or whether we pursue a design of multiple campuses in the city, or beyond, is one of the most important questions we will face in the years ahead,” Bollinger told the crowd, graced by Mayor Bloomberg, former mayor David Dinkins, and UN Secretary General Kofi Annan.

Though this was his third inauguration in a de-

cade, President Bollinger’s welcome at Columbia had a different twist. According to former Dean of Students Roger Lehecka, a member of the presidential search committee, the 19th president of Columbia was chosen for more than just an ability to keep the university afloat.

Columbia had largely recovered from its slump of the seventies and eighties. For its next leader, the search committee wanted someone who could launch the university to global prominence. “There was a sense that the university...needed someone who could push the university forward,” Lehecka said.

Since then, President Bollinger has dedicated himself to turning Columbia into an international academic powerhouse. In the last four years, he's secured economics icon Joseph Stiglitz and sustainable development superstar Jeffrey Sachs, whose Earth Institute now runs 437 projects across the world. He raided other economics departments to pack Columbia's, and put on a World Leaders Forum that brings presidents and prime ministers to Low Rotunda. He travels to Asia several times a year to recruit top students, and launched the loftily named Committee on Global Thought to grapple with the world's biggest problems. In an October 2003 *Wall Street Journal* op-ed Bollinger asked, "where are universities going?" His answer: "I would point to the growing internationalization of our universities."

Bollinger argues that in order to remain a top-tier university, Columbia, with only 194 square feet per student, needs access to the kind of space available to Harvard (368 square feet per student) or the University of Pennsylvania (440 square feet per student).

This is nothing new: Columbia has been looking for more space since it moved uptown 115 years ago. But expansion did take on new meaning under his leadership. Every president needs a legacy; to create his own, Bollinger needs Manhattanville.

Bollinger's grand expansion vision was only part of the square footage problem at Columbia. The University has more immediate space crunches to worry about.

Scientists in the chemistry and biology departments have said that limited lab space has made it difficult to lure top young professors to their departments. Columbia don't offer as much lab space as universities like California Institute of Technology, which just opened a new laboratory complex.

English Department associate professors share offices. Business school administrators have trouble finding space for guest lecturers. And the entire facilities department is crammed into a rabbit warren

of offices in the basement of East Campus.

Former provost and University Professor Jonathan Cole wrote in an email that he, among others, had lobbied the university to expand before Bollinger arrived, giving the Trustees a full presentation "a couple of years" before the new President reached Columbia. The expansion "is critically important for the continued greatness of Columbia University," Cole wrote. "I do strongly support President Bollinger's efforts to create a new, exciting campus, with full community involvement, at the Manhattanville site."

Columbia had outgrown its 19th-century confines, and claustrophobia forced the trustees into action. Sparsely populated and only a ten-minute walk from campus, Manhattanville—the 17-acre slice of Harlem between 125th

and 133rd street from Broadway to the Hudson—seemed like an obvious solution. In 1999, the Trustees began buying up land. Four years later Columbia owned 40 percent of the footprint, with plans to purchase 32 percent more.

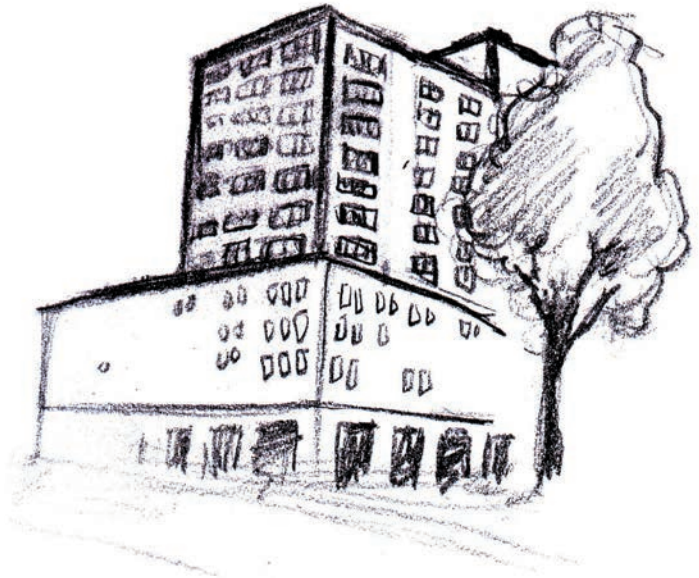
Bollinger took that start and ran with it. In the months following his hiring, Low Library assembled a crack team of current administrators and new hires dedicated to creating a strategy for expansion.

In March 2002, President-elect Bollinger created the new position of Senior Executive Vice President for Robert Kasdin, his friend and right-hand man from Michigan, who became the project's point man. Emily Lloyd, who served as previous president George Rupp's Senior Vice President for Administration (and right hand woman) for eight years, was made Vice President for Government and Community Affairs, the plan's public face. The university began working with the City Planning Commission to rezone the area and make room for a range of residential, research, and educational facilities rather than just light industry.

The land acquisition effort continued, as Columbia approached businesses and landowners in an effort to purchase their land. Building by building, Manhattanville landlords sold to Columbia. Details of this process, however, are untraceable: each

In an October 2003
Wall Street Journal op-ed Bollinger asked: "where are universities going?" His answer: "I would point to the growing internationalization of our universities."

The campus will not, as many community activists continue to allege, include a high-level biotech facility. It will also not include the 150 or so families who still call Manhattanville home.



seller signs a non-disclosure agreement, prohibiting them from divulging the selling price or terms of the contract at any time to anyone. No sale documents appear on the city's online repository of public records after 2002. For all appearances, the transactions may as well have never happened.

Some have accused Columbia of resorting to less benevolent means of persuasion. One automobile shop owner with a lease in a Columbia-owned building said the university threatened shut to off the elevator he uses to move cars up and down for repairs. Without it, the business couldn't operate. Columbia said the decision to turn off the elevator was based solely on their assessment of safety within the building. "The elevator was in poor condition," a university spokesperson said, noting that the university was committed to ensuring the safety of each resident and tenant.

Columbia currently owns about 80 percent of the land it needs, and still has one more tool at its disposal: eminent domain, the state's power to forcibly take private property for public use. A 2005 *Spectator* Freedom of Information Act request revealed that Columbia had paid the Empire State Development Corporation, a semi-public entity, \$300,000 to research the use of legal land appropriation in Manhattanville. The University said it will not take eminent domain off the table, but that it will only use it as a last resort.

With land acquisition proceeding briskly, the

university began to conceptualize how to get and spend the seven billion dollars—the projected cost of the new campus (and three billion more than the university's current endowment). In February 2003, Bollinger retained the 1998 Pritzker Architecture Prize winner Renzo Piano, who has designed projects from Italy to Australia, to put his vision on paper.

In fine Modernist form, his campus resembles Lerner Hall on speed: 14 new buildings constructed around an open courtyard, an extravaganza of glass and steel that stands in stark contrast to the surrounding architecture. It will house the new, \$200 million Center for Mind, Brain, and Behavior headed by Nobel Prize winners Robert Axel and Eric Kandel, as well as the School of the Arts, faculty and student housing, and additional space for other departments. It will not, as many community activists continue to allege, include a high-level biotech facility. Though the level three center will include research on live HIV and other deadly diseases, the procedures will be similar to those performed at NYU's hospital downtown. It will also not include the 150 or so families who still call Manhattanville home.

With the land in its sights and a design in to match, the expansion team now needed to convince the community that Manhattanville is a Good Idea. On April 20, 2004, Bollinger and a group of administrators strode down to Community Board Nine,

one of the 12 local representative bodies around the city that deal with issues ranging from potholes to renters rights, to make its case for becoming Manhattanville's primary resident. "Our area of Manhattanville is better off for Columbia being here," Bollinger said at the meeting. "This is our home, this is where we want to be. We want to grow with the communities in this area."

Bollinger has said that he will only expand if he can have everything. "If we cannot really have the opportunity to develop the entire site, then we won't do it at all. It's really that important I think," he told *Spectator* two years ago—and the business-oriented Mayor's office seemed inclined to give it to him.

But despite the posters and PowerPoint, Columbia failed to sell the community board's 39 members on its project. Community members, skeptical and often angry, complained about building height, size, and the potential for design blunders. A central concern emerged: the expansion might be good for Columbia, and maybe even for the world—but what would it do for Manhattanville?

A ripple of trouble surfaced when Lloyd, well liked by residents but rumored to have been increasingly marginalized in the Columbia boardroom, retired in June 2004. In February 2005, she was appointed commissioner of New York City's Department of Environmental Protection. Her departure marked the end of an era of trust within the neighborhood. "Emily Lloyd had gained the confidence of the community," said Jordi Reyes-Montblanc, chair of Community Board 9, at the time. "for the last year or so, the whole system undermined what Emily Lloyd did."

Fourteen months later, after her replacement

Loretta Ucelli jumped ship to become a Senior Vice President of Corporate Communications at Pfizer, the university found its new face in Maxine Griffith. Her resumé seemed written for the job: African American, Harlem born and raised, and a former Executive Director of the Philadelphia Planning Commission, Griffith would be the perfect ambassador.

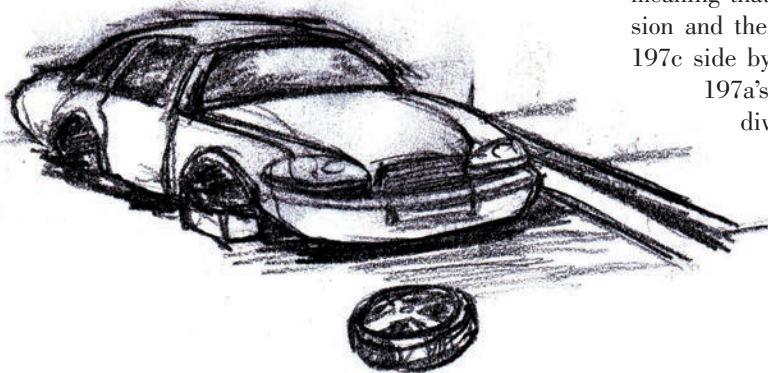
Griffith would need every skill she had gained over a life spent in public service and community planning to reassure the neighborhood. Several groups had been created to oppose the expansion. And, on top of the public nervousness created by eminent domain, fear of a biotech center quickly made enemies out of those on the fence.

Soon after Columbia's announcement, CB9 released and unanimously approved an alternate proposal: the 197a plan. The body had been working on a development plan for 14 years, but with the support of the Pratt Center for Community Development and an infusion of cash from the city, it finished the 98-page document six months after Columbia revealed its designs. The 197a plan, which covers the area from 110th Street to 155th Street west of Morningside Drive and St. Nicholas Park, has little in common with Columbia's plan (197c). It consists of broad recommendations for the entire district (not just Manhattanville), and calls for more sports fields, farmer's markets, historically preserved buildings, and improved public transportation. Should its zoning recommendations be adopted, Renzo Piano's glassy, steely vision would be impossible; the Manhattanville campus would resemble something more like the low profile of New York University, with affordable housing and local businesses interspersed between academic buildings.

CB9's 197a plan passed the City Planning Commission's "threshold review" in late October 2005, meaning that in future deliberations the Commission and the city council will consider 197a and 197c side by side, giving CB9 a fighting chance.

197a's success has given Manhattanville's diverse constituencies a basis for collective action.

With a handful of businesses refusing to sell, Low Library's determination had engendered more distrust than anticipation.



As one of the last remaining areas zoned for light industry in the city, Manhattanville at first appears to consist of little more than a few industrial plants. Unlike Morningside Heights, the area has few residents and harbors factories and autoshops instead of cafés and boutiques. In several public statements, Bollinger has cast Manhattanville as dormant and unproductive: “There are very few people who live there,” Bollinger told a meeting of the Columbia College Student Council in December 2005. “It is a very distressed community in many ways.”

People who work there say they couldn’t do business anywhere else. Anne Whitman, owner of Hudson Moving and Storage, has been in the neighborhood for the past 30 years, ever since she learned the business from her father. The nearby Harlem Piers allow her easy access to all five boroughs, an asset to her clientele (mostly artists transporting work). Having so far weathered Columbia’s onslaught of land purchasing, she says the location is a key to her success, and has no intention of giving it up.

The autoshops need space and proximity to major roadways. Amrik Singh, who manages a car wash and gas station on 125th and Riverside, says his boss bought the land soon after he first started the business in 1971, and isn’t planning on moving. “Columbia bought a lot of places. So many people over here now, they no like to sell, but we tell so many times, we no like to sell,” he said. Singh has been working at the car wash for the last ten years, along with six other employees. “This place give food to a lot of people,” he said, his meaning crystal clear despite his stilted English.

Maritta Dunn, former chair of CB9 and current head of the Manhattan Area Consortium of Businesses, is something of a spokesperson for Manhattanville’s holdouts: she’s attacked Columbia’s expansion in the *New York Times*, the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, and numerous smaller publications. For Dunn, who works with area businesses, coordinating within the community is very much about protecting against the most immediate threat:

“There are very few people who live there,” said Bollinger in November 2005. “It is a very distressed community in many ways.”

eminent domain, which would render all objections moot. “Every property owner has the right to sell or stay [but the government] should not take someone’s property to give it to a private entity,” she said firmly. “That is the way they joined, that is the way it should remain.”

For residents, the stakes are equally high. In the case of eminent domain, the city is required to provide relocation benefits, and Columbia has promised to help residents regardless. Some may very well choose to take the cash and leave for better opportunities—but since the city keeps no records on those who leave condemned areas, there’s no way of knowing how they fare. Certainly, leaving a long-term rent-controlled apartment for the open market bodes ill for these potential urban refugees.

And to those who’ve gotten used to the geography of a neighborhood, the shift can prove difficult. “The disruption in peoples’ lives is not quantifiable in terms of financial benefits,” said Hunter College City Planning Professor Tom Angotti. “They [developers] can take out a checkbook and write a check, but they’re not necessarily covering the social cost.”

Assuming they are not just holding out for a high enough offer, Whitman and her coalition may prove the true obstacle to expansion. Bollinger’s vision, contingent on having free reign to rebuild, is vulnerable to a few stubborn outposts. “I’m suspicious of anyone who purports to represent any whole community,” cautioned longtime neighborhood resident and local historian Eric Washington, who noted that Manhattanville has always been a neighborhood of diverse concerns, “never predominantly anything.”

For some expansion opponents, the story begins, like all good tales of anti-Columbia activism, with 1968—the year that students locked themselves in Low and barricaded Hamilton Hall until the university agreed not to build a gym in Morningside Park.

Tom Kappner, C ’66, an immigrant from Peru, fell in love with Morningside Heights when he came



to Columbia in 1962. After graduating, he decided to rent an apartment on 123rd Street off Broadway. When the university tried to take over his building a couple years later, he organized his block to fight the prospective landlord. And he won, thanks in a large part to the protests.

Kappner said he has been protecting himself and his friends from Columbia ever since. With the help of fellow community activist Tom DeMott, he stepped up his efforts and formed the anti-expansion Coalition to Preserve Community in 2003.

There is no typical member of the 150-person strong CPC. Some are residents and businessowners in Manhattanville. Others live in Morningside Heights. Meetings are filled with middle-class white professionals, immigrants working construction jobs, and errant children. Every speech is interrupted periodically for Spanish translations.

Like CB9, they support the 197a plan, and for Columbia to take eminent domain off the table and provide affordable housing. But the CPC stakes out more ground than its municipal counterpart. They're frustrated with Columbia's tactics, cold exterior, and inability to be a good neighbor. The university is "creating their own world there, and that world will keep us out, that world will keep us excluded," De Mott boomed at a recent meeting.

Nellie Bailey, president of the Harlem Tenants Council and member of the CPC, is defensive about her opposition to Columbia. "It isn't that we are against the university," she said. "We understand

Columbia has needs...but I don't accept that they have to expand here."

Dhiren Patel, the white-coated owner of Hamilton Pharmacy at Broadway and 133rd, wants the same thing: a good neighbor. He opened his business two years ago, serves a mostly Hispanic clientele, and employs five local residents. He knows that his landlord has been propositioned by Columbia, but doesn't lose sleep over it: he holds a ten-year lease, which he thinks will protect him from university encroachment. "It's about our survival," he said. "As long as Columbia is not putting pressure on the business community, it's no problem."

Patel doesn't mind Columbia itself. He mused that some development might even be good for business, and living next door to an Ivy League university does have its perks. Columbia provides free health care in five neighborhood public schools, offers legal aid programs, recently opened an employment information center on 125th Street, supports arts organizations...the list goes on. And while community members suspect that some of these efforts are just PR moves—like the new science magnet school slated for the Manhattanville campus, which will serve faculty children as well as some from the neighborhood—the benefits are real.

If anyone could be an effective lobby against expansion, it's students: they do pay the bills, after all. At Columbia, where everyone is at least a little bit liberal, the Student Coalition on Expansion and Gentrification—founded two years ago to lobby for inclusion of the community's plan—shouldn't have too hard a time finding a sympathetic audience.

But though SCEG leaders turn up at every meeting and obsessively follow the administration's actions, they have been unable to craft a resonant message. A *Spectator* poll of 400 undergraduates conducted in September 2005 reported that 51 percent of students support Bollinger's claim that the university needs "significantly more space" in order to remain a world-class institution.

It's a difficult agenda to sell. Students are only here for four years. While on campus, they would like the academics to be top-notch. After they graduate, they'd like their degrees to have some value, which means that they'd like Columbia to be mentioned in the same breath as Stanford and Yale. If

the university needs more space to stay on that list, it's hard to oppose expansion.

Most students don't even know what Manhattanville is about—many haven't even ventured above 125th Street. The same *Spectator* poll revealed a telling ignorance: 70 percent said they know “nothing” or “a little” about Columbia's expansion plans; 51 percent hadn't heard of eminent domain.

SCEG's lackluster appeal may be the result of a disconnect between theory and real-world pragmatism. For these college activists, the storyline of a corporate behemoth oppressing poor minorities motivates action. They tie Columbia's desire to build in West Harlem to campus issues like the slow response to hate crimes and an underfunded ethnic studies department. It's a global struggle, and they would fight it anywhere. Right now, it just happens to be playing out on the streets of Manhattanville.

“Myths we tell ourselves, these hegemonic myths...‘capitalism and the free market are going to take care of everything,’” said SCEG leader Nell Geiser, C '06, who has been fighting expansion since she was a first-year. “If we're not being willing to take apart those stories, then we don't know how to engage with the world.”

Even with education, there's no guarantee that students will fall in line with SCEG. Martha Norrick, B '07, who was recently appointed to a two-year term on CB9 as the body's only university student, is still undecided on the expansion. “The more I learn about this, the more I learn that what I don't know outweighs what I do know,” said Norrick, noting that the university has not done a very good job of disseminating information.

“The truth is always in the middle. There has to be some sort of compromise,” she finished. “I don't feel that I have a platform, that I can stand up and say, this is what I think.”

By December 2005, the university had taken firm steps towards a rezone that would allow for construction of a new campus. In November, officials released an Environmental Impact Statement providing a detailed analysis of what po-

tential problems may arise from the zoning changes. They hope to push the plan through the Uniform Land Use Review Process by the end of this year. ULURP allows different public officials and agencies of the city government can evaluate and comment on Columbia's proposal. If all goes according to plan, the University will completely develop its new campus within 30 years.

Finally, Columbia and a local development corporation formed by the community will wrangle over a Community Benefits Agreement, which would bind Columbia into providing certain perks, like affordable housing and programming in neighborhood public schools.

Columbia now has very little else to do but wait: for

ULURP, for the Environmental Impact Statement, for the city to determine which plan is better: 197a or 197c.

Columbia's plans are perhaps most remarkable not for what they include, but for what they leave out. Though professors have pledged to end poverty by 2025, cure Alzheimer's, and stop global warming, Columbia has yet to convince the community that their move uptown will make life better for the community.

Community members have highlighted the challenge of Columbia's message. A recent protest outside the Broadway gates in late April drew upwards of 50 students and community members sporting biohazard t-shirts, chanting and waving signs. Their slogans left no room for interpretation. *Fuera Columbia*, one read, in big red letters. Get out, Columbia.

Flanked by police, the flock of protesters moved up to Low steps, and Nellie Bailey took the microphone. “We have had a successful day!” she cried to the crowd. “Today represents just the beginning of the days of opposition and the days of rage!”

She built into a crescendo, tying Columbia's rhetoric to her personal experience. “You want to end AIDS in Africa? It defines your compassion and your liberalism. But we want you to show your liberalism and compassion to your fellow community that lives five blocks away from you!” ❖

“We have had a successful day!” Nellie Bailey cried to the crowd.
 “Today represents just the beginning of the days of opposition and the days of rage!”

Two Horsemen of the Apocalypse

How The Center for Broken Thought Can Take You to the Other Side

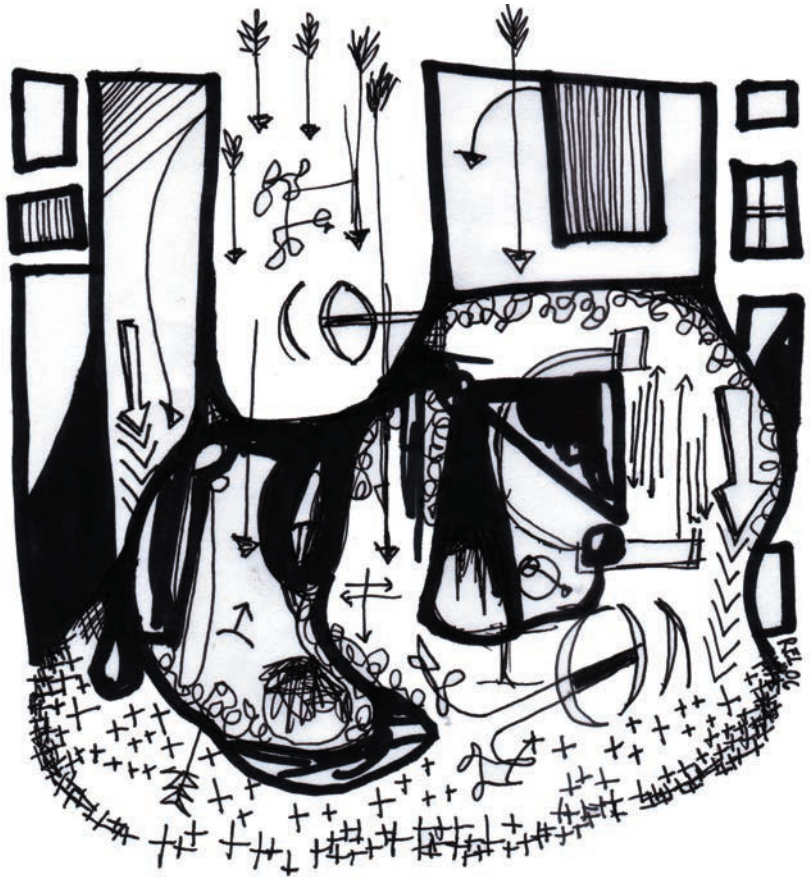
BY JAMES WILLIAMS with illustrations by Rachel Lindsay

We entitle ourselves to aggression against the real, to proliferate distortion and deception, to will illusion, to betray all that stands.

The Center for Broken Thought will fuck you up, but Jason Mohaghegh and Dean Lukic, the Center's two founders, look anything but dangerous. Mohaghegh, an assistant professor in the Middle Eastern Languages and Culture Department who attended Columbia for both college and grad school, can be found wandering around campus in his standard non-descript jeans, untucked white dress shirt, and navy blue blazer. He has made a name for himself as one of the most captivating instructors on campus; his classes tend to be infused with an energy that jaded undergrads appreciate as a change from the tedium of everyday coursework. Lukic, an instructor in the Anthropology Department, is often seen at Mohaghegh's side done up in hipster chic: tight T-shirt, impeccable footwear, black-framed glasses, and expensive accessories. Exuding a confidence that combines intellectual prowess with an undeniable sexual energy, he is

the source of a fair bit of commentary from his intrigued, admiring students. Even after casually meeting these two, you might not suspect anything, but get into a conversation with either of them and you'll soon find out—these guys are intense.

Unsatisfied with the intellectual and



...we are approaching the coasts, the formlessness of the outerworlds, pure elusivity...

philosophical offerings of academia, Mohagheh and Lukic created the Center for Broken Thought in September 2005. The Center, a “space of experimental initiatives” that is currently based at Columbia, strives to proliferate the ideas of a new philosophical movement called “The Breaking.” With its ambitions to explore all realms of creative expression, the Center has been generating quite a bit of excitement amongst Columbia’s intensely creative and creatively intense. Loyal participants in the movement claim to “live and die” by its ideas, which aim to create an alliance between destruction, violence, experience, and the creative act. “This movement,” according to the Center’s website, “elevates force, illusion, abandonment, chaos, and becoming above all else...We have turned our thoughts into flesh and movement, bound here by the single imperative that fuels the moment: to set fire.” The primary work of the Center, according to Lukic, is “the production of concepts that can be used in different domains of creative production and enlightenment.” In fact, he describes the Center as a “Concept Machine.”

Through exploration of these “concepts,” which include Annihilation, the Inhuman, and Shadow-Becoming, among many others, followers of Broken Thought are able to escape the limitations of the “real world” and traverse into “phantom territories.” “A concept for us,” says Mohagheh, “is a gateway, a passage out of the constraints of a known reality and into a more unknown province of speculation, of experience, of desire. It’s experimental and experiential. This is our trade. We are architects of the other side.”

In the simplest of terms, the Center for Broken Thought represents a new twist on the idea that, when it’s done right, art can transport you to unknown realms, that words have the power to change you. In Broken Thought, however, there is no separation between art and experience. To them, contemporary art, with its insistence on this separation, is safe and, by extension, boring. Those who ally themselves with Broken Thought aren’t content to let someone else experience their “becoming” for them. Instead, with the help of their concepts, they create their own becoming in a “will to power” that is completely intertwined with the creative act. “This isn’t just poetry for us,” says Mohagheh on the written work that the Center has produced. “It’s lived. It’s a part of our breath, our rhythms, our bodies—the way we tread across everything.”

In other words, Broken Thought will help you cross into the otherworldly, will allow you to experience the unreal. But, unlike with some traditional “extremist” forms of expression, the art is not what gets you there: you have to do the work yourself. The result, if you’ve fully committed to the act and allowed yourself the intensity of experience, is the emergence of a worthwhile piece of art—a document of the breaking.

Confused? Don’t worry—so is nearly everyone else. “Most people don’t understand,” says Lukic, “but that’s perfectly fine. If there’s a certain attraction to what we do, then that’s enough.”

Though the Center is always open to gaining new allies, this is not a movement for the many. In fact, only recently have outsid-

TACTICS OF BROKEN IMAGE: CRUELTY

An excerpt from Broken Thought Anthology I

The breaking of the image implies cruelty. It is the tearing of every reproduction, which includes yourself, until only a skeleton is left. Getting rid of all the rubble, primarily of a psychological nature. What remains is bones and veins and skin. All of them have hollow passages, or tiny pores, which are open for the exchange of affects. The image here is divested of its imagination; stripped away. As contours of an apparition, a sighting that is impermanent and fleeting, and irrevocable. Cruelty denotes a severe physicality that twists and turns and floats in the distress without trauma. The medium thus becomes obsolete and the sense of urgency obliterates any distancing. The passion of the image comes through coldness; anticipation, then execution without sentimentality.

—DL

ers—those who do not personally know one of the founders or key group members—been invited to share the experience. Broken Thought has existed in some form for nearly a decade, but until the fall of 2005, it was entirely a private venture, existing only in Lukic and Mohaghegh's personal work, conversations, and actions. Last September, with the creation of the Center, Lukic and Mohaghegh gave their work a name and allowed others to join them "in the trenches." Since then, they have launched a website, become a recognized non-profit corporation that accepts and solicits tax-deductible donations, hosted events in order to expose their ideas to the relative masses, and inaugurated a seminar series that serves to explain the fine points of the movement to newcomers.

Of course, one of the natural by-products of increased public awareness is increased public scrutiny, and The Center for Broken Thought has certainly been the recipient of its fair share. Some is of a serious intellectual nature and raises issues about alleged contradictions in the Movement's principles. For example: how can proponents of the Movement claim that they "live and die by the concepts" they promote while still existing within the confines of

what they consider to be "the perceived reality" of the everyday? Aren't they selling out by following the rules of the so-called "real world" if, as they claim, they have no respect for that world, and are not content to accept its limits?

Much of the public opinion surrounding the Center, however, is more openly dismissive. After only one on-campus event and a few months of existence, the Center has already developed a reputation among a number of Columbia students as a bizarre movement that is not to be taken seriously. Ask the average student with a mild knowledge of the Center what he thinks of Broken Thought, and his response will most likely include one of the following words: ridiculous, crazy, arrogant, fucked-up, elitist, frightening, masturbatory, or—the most common—pretentious.

This outright dismissal of Broken Thought has become something of a fashionable opinion among those members of the snarky intelligentsia who know of the Center's existence. At last month's "The Opening Night of the Breaking," the Center's inaugural event in Avery Hall, audience members sitting towards the back of the packed auditorium openly mocked Mohaghegh and Lukic as they spoke about



...an awakening of the bones...

Rage, Counter-Life, and the Inhuman. Certain spectators laughed throughout the event; others left after ten or 15 minutes. At “The New Weapon,” the Center’s second event, held downtown at the Whitebox Gallery, the woman seated next to me—a complete stranger—asked if I was writing a piece on the Center for a magazine when she saw me taking notes. When I told her that I was, she responded, “Good. This is bullshit, and I think that people should know.”

It seems only natural that the movement should be met with such resistance: after all, what these people do is more than a bit out-there. Their ideas are radical. Their language, an

odd mixture of lofty and common, is difficult to decipher and borders on inaccessible. Their words are often words of violence. They write in sentence fragments and frequently ignore the rules of proper grammar. They will challenge every notion you have about what can and can’t be done with words, and then they will look you in the eye and tell you, “We consider ourselves to be some of the best writers walking the earth.” It’s hard not to be suspicious.

But no matter what form your critique takes—in intellectual or underhanded—the allied forces of the Center for Broken Thought do not care what you think, and they will not listen to your criticisms. “Critiques for us are always born from fear,” says Mohaghegh. “It’s very easy to try and dismantle something or find flaws in it. We have no patience for that kind of negativity. What we do is so multidimensional that if someone can’t find something seductive, alluring, or powerful within it, then really they are, for us, condemned. We’re not saying only one thing. We’re not producing only one vision. We produce heights that go from ecstasy to stillness, from silence to scream in the course of a second. If somebody can’t find themselves within that con-

tinuum, then what is there for us to do?”

Despite Mohaghegh’s assertion that the continuum is wide, the number of people who have chosen to get involved with the Center remains relatively small. Mohaghegh and Lukic say that not everyone is cut out for it. “Very quickly you know where one stands,” says Mohaghegh. “Very quickly you can perceive if they possess the instinct that will allow them to traverse to the other side—whether they are willing to exhaust themselves, to challenge themselves, to trespass beyond the borders of what is easy.”

What Mohaghegh and Lukic are not keen to admit, however, is the very real

possibility that they are driving people away—even those who have the desire and the mettle to participate. Both have an uncanny knack for exuding intellectual superiority, whether they mean to or not, and the subtext of the center—that anyone else is inferior by comparison—is not conducive to attracting new participants. In our interviews, whenever I raised a concern or asked a question that they didn’t like, their response was often accompanied by the comment that I was boring them, or that they were disappointed that I had brought up such an ordinary point—couldn’t I do better? With that subtle sophistry, my concerns were automatically invalidated.

Another possibility is that the Center for Broken Thought, simply speaking, scares people. For reasons that I still do not completely understand, more than half of those whom I asked for interviews in connection with this article declined; others asked to see the piece before it went to print if they were to be quoted, citing a desire to avoid offending those involved with the Center. This desire, I believe, stems from the fact that when you offend Lukic or Mohaghegh, they don’t get angry—they look down on you. They become disappointed in you, you are

Project: Warfare

The sharpening, the shadow-becoming, the rage...

The scream, the shards, the blade-delirium...

The chasm, the inquisition, the threat...

The midnight, the inhuman, the apocalypse...

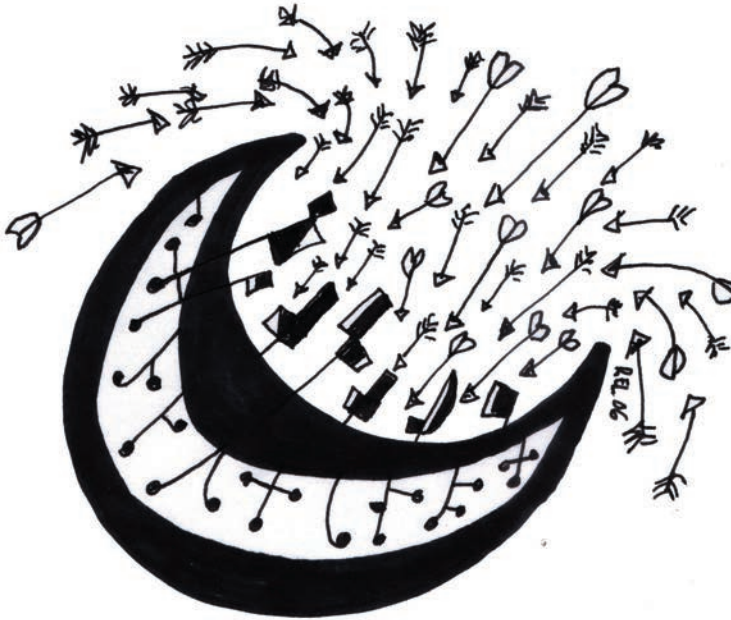
The chaos, the hate, the burning...

The illusion, the empire, the fatality...

This: a death-sentence, once fulfilled...

This: the criminal ecstasy of infliction, a will turned fire...

—JM



...the enveloping of force, of intensity, of power, of vitalism...

accused of betrayal or banality, and it hurts. No one wants to be made to feel inferior, especially not by these two men, who, in certain circles, are intellectual giants.

Those people whom the Center has managed to attract and retain, however, are fiercely committed to the venture. They believe in it wholeheartedly and assert that it constitutes a staggering, frightening, and life-changing experience in which they are instinctually compelled to participate. “I couldn’t not do this,” says Alisa Frohman, C ’06 and the Center’s Public Relations and Administrative Supervisor. “It’s a constant restlessness, a thirst for challenge. For me, the challenge is beyond seductive—it’s imperative.” Lars Dabney, C ’07, the Center’s Theater Arts Projects supervisor, shares a similar excitement. He has been doing his own writing under Mohaghegh’s guidance for almost two years, but plans to branch into theater in the near future. Get him talking about how he wants to incorporate the elements of Broken Thought into performance, and he could go on for hours.

In addition to the student followers, the Center for Broken Thought is supported by a small core group of “extremely generous” donors—usually contacts that Mohaghegh and Lukic have made throughout the years—who invest both financially and intellectually. “We don’t have any donors who

are seeing this as purely a business venture,” says Frohman. “All of them want to come closer to the ideas.” As such, these figures constantly engage in dialogue and artistic creation, right alongside the core members of the Center. Furthermore, many of the donors invest because they see in The Center for Broken Thought the potential for intellectual significance—an opportunity to do genuinely important creative work.

And so, members of the Center for Broken Thought continue to create, to experience, to become. New texts are constantly being written, and the Center has recently announced intentions to extend its work into music, theater, film, and the visual arts.

It’s impossible to know what these eventual projects will look like, but you can be certain that they will be developed with the same passionate urgency that lies at the core of everything Broken Thought produces. Rageful music, chaotic imagery, words of existential warfare—for the Center, just a few more ways to cause worlds to come crashing beautifully down. As for Mohaghegh and Lukic, they wouldn’t have it any other way. “We strive to create the in-consumable,” says Mohaghegh, “to infuse the world with things it is not ready for, will never be ready for. When we do, wonderful things will happen. You’ll have to trust us on that one.”❖

NOETRY

BY ALEXANDRA DE LEÓN

Earlier this spring, 25 student groups vied for official recognition from the Activities Board at Columbia. Nineteen of them were turned down, including Columbia New Poetry, founded by Chris Westcott, C '08, to connect and inspire young poets. ABC explained that it wasn't sure the group "filled a new niche on campus." Among the lucky six that did make the cut: the Dance Dance Revolution Club.

Once, poetry occupied a central place in Columbia's culture, according to Professor Michael Golston, a CULPA "gold nugget" who has taught Postmodern Poetries and 20th Century Poetry. Langston Hughes, Federico García Lorca, Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac, and noted professors like Paul Violi and Kenneth Koch, who began the New York School of Poets, have all called Columbia home, he said. Golston himself arrived from Stanford about three years ago as the English Department tried to expand its poetry offerings, and he has since been an astute observer of the university's poetry scene.

He talks of the "completely forgotten" Modernist poet Louis Zukofsky, who graduated from Columbia College in 1925. "He is neglected but he is the greatest poet to come out of Columbia," Golston insisted. A co-founder of the Objectivist group of poets, Zukofsky began writing here, joined the college literary society, and published poems in student magazines. Rediscovered by the Beats in the 1960s and 1970s, Zukofsky became a major influence on many of the L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poets. But his neglect has proven the rule, the Beats' success the exception.

Although there are the various open mic nights, like those of the Philolexian Society, Alpha Delta Phi, and the "Dupee-Koch Poetry of the American Avant-Garde Reading Series" organized by Golston, Columbia's poetry scene is in the middle of a diffi-



Illustrated by Lydia Depillis

cult dialogue. One cause is the long-standing rift between the English and Creative Writing Departments—the former favors avant-garde, the latter traditional poetry. It began in the 1920s, and in the last 25 years has escalated into what Golston calls a "poetry war."

Yet, Golston said, "there's an incredible appetite for poetry." It's just hard to gather all those who are interested in satisfying their poetic hunger. As Golston said, "Columbia is not a coherent campus." We have the city to distract and to fragment us, and the

New York poetry scene of the moment centers on spoken word, which the academy often dismisses.

Chris Westcott thinks there's hope. He recognizes that creative writing classes (which emphasize fiction) and publications like *Tablet* (which is still in transition from its *Asian Journal* days) and the sputtering *Columbia Review* are not sufficient venues for poetry here. There's no "figurehead," Westcott said, and poets on campus are marginalized. That's exactly why he created Columbia New Poetry—to focus on difficult and neglected forms of poetry and to "fill a void and to connect with other poets." The problem is that ABC didn't recognize the void. Despite the ruling, Westcott's organization has built a membership of over 40, written a constitution, and launched a snazzy website.

Students go to the Nuyorican Poets Café to hear the voices of poets—the rhythm of their words buzzing in their minds, mouths, and papers. We go to indulge our ears and hearts and to see the city's poets gather and share. But let's remember that we could do a little more of that on our own campus. ABC could help a lot too, by recognizing Westcott's group. By doing so, ABC would not only be supporting Columbia New Poetry—it would also be helping to give voice to a culture that seeks solidarity and desires to make our campus a bit more cohesive through an art form that is universally accessible. ❖

The Annex of Babel

Always wanted to brush up on your Serbo-Croatian, Thai, Finnish, or Ancient Egyptian? Here's your chance. BY DAVID PLOTZ

Rousseau. Cervantes. Dante. Dostoevsky. Homer. Nietzsche. Yahweh. Allah. The Core Curriculum mandates that we read all of them in translation, and it also ensures that most of us will be able to struggle through at least one in the original before graduation. Those of us not lucky or talented or sober enough to pass a proficiency exam during orientation must fulfill a four-semester foreign language requirement. Thankfully, Columbia has among the best French, Italian, Spanish, Germanic languages, Slavic languages, Classics, Middle Eastern languages, and East Asian languages departments in the country.

Then there are what administrators call “less-commonly studied” languages. Columbia offers as many as 40 or 50 foreign languages in any given year. “Any school offers the big four: French, German, Italian, and Spanish,” says Stéphane Charitos, Director of the Language Resource Center (LRC), “but students rarely take advantage of the opportunities Columbia provides.”

Less-commonly studied languages—those with no more than 10 students enrolled at all levels—fall into five categories:

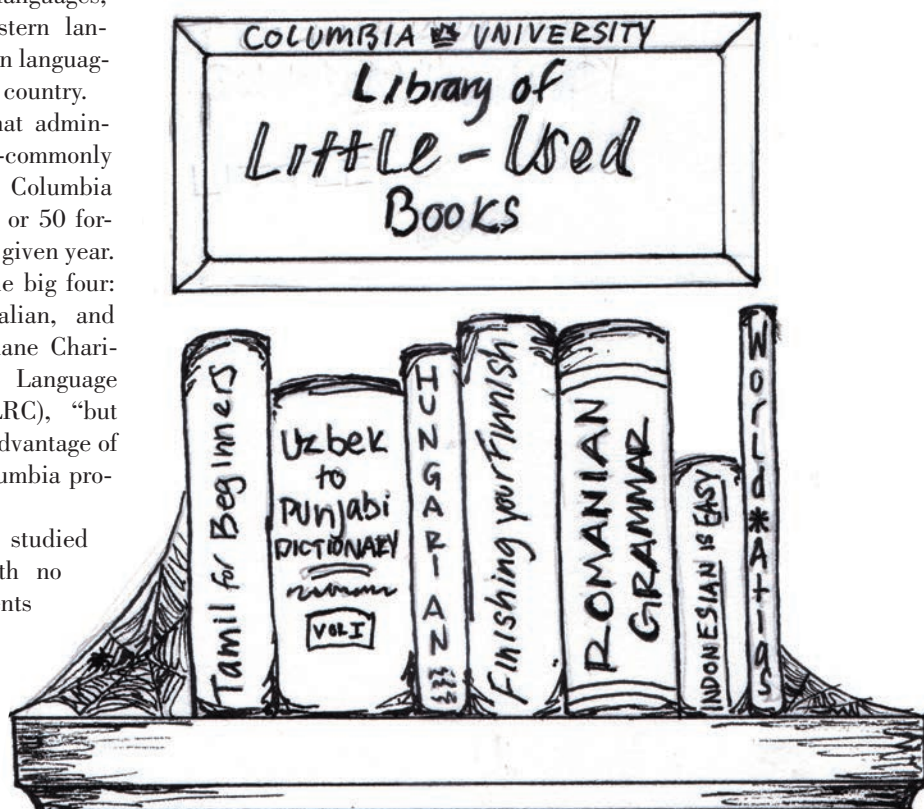
- Those languages (such as Armenian, Serbo-Croatian, and Hungarian) that

are offered by a pre-existing department and can be used toward a major.

- Languages like Indonesian, Punjabi, and Pulaar that don't have spots in any department and are collectively grouped under the umbrella of the nine-year-old LRC.

- 15 languages (including Irish, Cantonese, and Ancient Egyptian) that are offered only at NYU, but still accepted for credit at Columbia.

- Several languages (Nepali, Hausa, Geor-



Illustrated by Sasha de Vogel

gian) that aren't offered anymore, because the one person qualified to teach them became unavailable.

- Finally, many languages (Quechua, Thai, Burmese) that have never been offered, despite some minor demand from students.

Before researching this article, I knew nothing about the LRC. I vaguely recalled visiting the basement of Lewisohn to listen to a recording of Lena and Vova discussing their dog, Belka, for Introductory Russian in 2002. Lewisohn is actually just an adjunct of a sprawling but mostly empty complex under East Campus, hidden away at the bottom of a staircase behind the ladies' room in the International Affairs building. It's on the third floor, just like Lehman Library, but remember you can't access it from Lehman without going back up to the fourth floor and then

down again...you get the picture. For those who survive the journey, the LRC offers several dozen shiny new unoccupied flatscreen Mac G4s. It also offers one classroom, where as many as three students can be found practicing their Tamil or Wolof.

The LRC is one of Columbia's great secrets—an administrative unit designed to protect and promote the language programs that lack departmental support. But money is scarce. "The LRC is a zero-sum game," says Charitos, "and we can only support so many language programs."

A language program has two basic requirements: a qualified instructor and a tiny handful of interested students, who may be undergraduates or graduate students. New York City is not a bad place to locate native speakers, but, as Charitos notes, "just because someone can speak doesn't mean they can teach." As for students, it's basically up to instructors to find them, usually by putting up ads and praying that they don't get torn down. There is, however, a third, softer requirement: if the language cannot be at least tangentially connected to some other area of study at Columbia, the LRC will not support it. All that said, Charitos admitted to me that there are several languages preserved at Columbia out of respect for the instructors, the lack of

students notwithstanding.

Despite the crunch, the LRC continues to add more languages than it drops. The administration has a strong interest in developing language programs, although some areas have attracted more interest than others. Right now, African languages—especially Swahili—are genuinely popular, as are the languages of South and Southeast Asia. But there is not a single language indigenous to

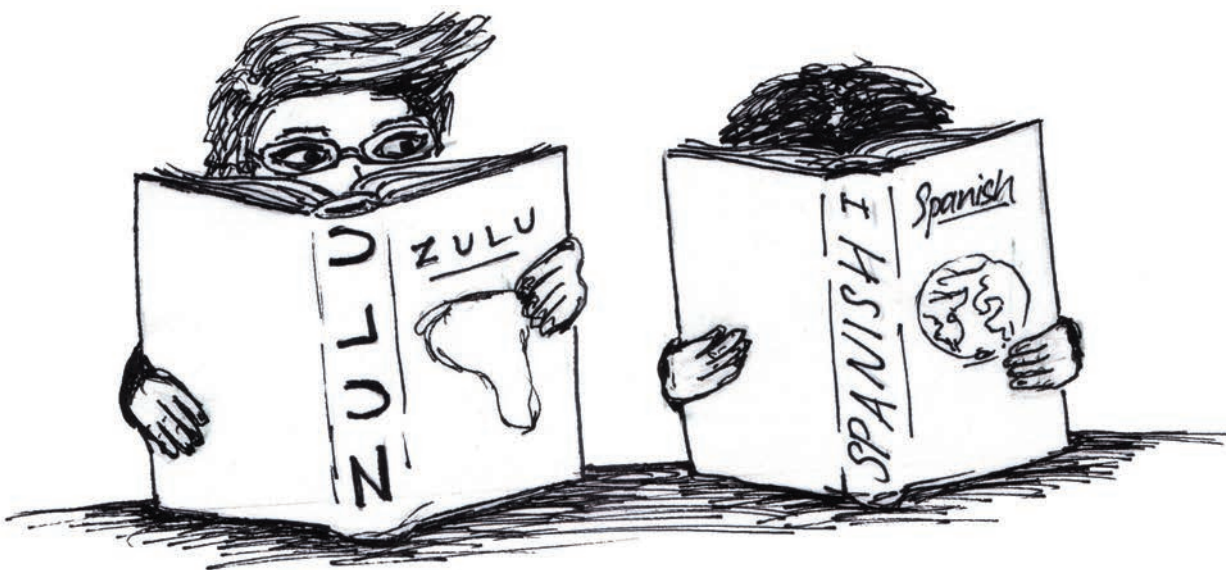
the Western Hemisphere offered at Columbia, and there is little chance that this will change. Native American languages tend to be studied where there are large concentrations of Native Americans, and New York, for all its diversity, is not one of those places.

Part of the problem is that passive demand for more foreign languages far exceeds active demand. For instance, it kind of bothers me that Co-

lumbia doesn't offer Nahuatl (an indigenous tongue of Mexico), even though I would never dream of actually studying it. "Sometimes someone will suggest that we teach a new language, like Vietnamese, and they'll send us a petition with thirty or forty student signatures," says Charitos. "Then we actually start a Vietnamese program, and two students show up."

Another difficulty is the perceived unreliability of certain language programs. Neither Indonesian nor Vietnamese were offered during my first year, although I had considered studying both. Uzbek instructor Muhtor Adashev is leaving this year, which means that soon Columbia may not offer any non-Slavic former Soviet languages besides Armenian; Kazakh, Tajik, Georgian, and Lithuanian have all come and gone. Tagalog (also called Filipino) is offered only at NYU, and its enrollment is low. The Spring 2006 enrollment figures and class times on the LRC's website rarely match reality. Mariame Sy, who teaches the West African languages Wolof and Pulaar, could not be reached before press time due to the near impossibility of finding her e-mail address on Columbia's website. I would never have known that Irish was available at NYU if I hadn't seen it listed on a bulletin board hidden in a corner

"It bothers me that
Columbia doesn't offer
Nahuatl, even though I
would never dream of
actually studying it."



Illustrated by Sasha de Vogel

of the LRC, which, it bears repeating, I would never have discovered if I hadn't researched this article. No wonder students just opt for French.

Meanwhile, the less-commonly studied languages with departmental support enjoy significantly more perks, even though their reasons for inclusion in a given department are not always clear. Take Hungarian and Finnish. These two languages are distantly related to each other, but totally unrelated to nearly every other European language. Because of their extreme complexity (Finnish has 15 cases, and Hungarian has between 23 and 27), both were originally offered by Columbia's vaunted linguistics department. However, as Lucie Kroening detailed in the December 2005 issue of *THE BLUE AND WHITE*, the Linguistics Department no longer exists. Finnish found a new home in the Germanic languages department (it is not remotely Germanic), and Hungarian relocated to the Italian department (no one can explain this).

Romanian, by contrast, is a Romance language resembling Italian with a Slavic influence, yet no department supports it; the Romanian ministry of education helps fund instructors. Some abandoned languages, like Indonesian and Uzbek, get help from the Institute of International Education. Punjabi, like Classical Tibetan, was previously supported by the Religion Department, but is now assisted by various international Sikh organizations.

Often, instructors rely on heritage speakers to provide a core of interested students. In the intermediate Indonesian class I visited, two of the three students had spent time living in Indonesia, which obtusely qualifies them as heritage speakers. Tamil, a language spoken in southern India and Sri Lanka, has little obvious use to people without roots in those areas. Most of the rest of the students are future Peace Corps workers, businessmen or regional specialists. Asked how he would convince more students—there are currently four enrolled—to take Uzbek, Adashev replied, "Well, I wouldn't."

But some language instructors promote specific and unexpected cultural advantages. The Finnish epic *Kalevala*, according to instructor Aili Flint, is a major inspiration of *The Lord of the Rings*. And some languages just sound good. Zulu instructor Elson Khambule claims that, "The trap to fall in love with the language that has such a beautiful cadence, and of course click sounds, is just inescapable."

A common theme among the less-commonly taught languages is that their popularity is tied to current events. During the 1990s, Serbo-Croatian seemed like a smart choice, as it allowed firsthand access to the various Balkan conflicts of that decade. Now, its practical value

TAKE MY CLASS!

THE BLUE AND WHITE asked nine instructors to provide a sample of their respective language by translating the sentence, “I wish more students would take my class.” Romanian is definitely the easiest.

Finnish: “Toivoisin, että useimmat opiskelisivat suomea.”

Hungarian: “Szeretném, ha többen tanulnának magyarul.”

Indonesian: “Semoga akan banyak mahasiswa yang belajar Bahasa Indonesia.”

Punjabi: “Main chahunda hor Vidyarthi meri class lain.”

Romanian: “As dori sa participe mai multi studenti la cursul de limba romana.”

Tamil: “NiRaiya mAAnavargal Tamil pa-diKKa VAEndum enDru virumbukiRaen.”

Uzbek: “O‘zbek tilini ko‘proq talaba o‘rganishini istardim.”

Vietnamese: “Toi mong nhieu sinh vien hon se hoc lop (tieng Viet) cua toi.”

Zulu: “Ngifisa sengathi banganda abafundi abafunda IsiZulu.”

is much less obvious. Several of the instructors whom I surveyed tried to make the case that their languages are rising in global importance, notably Romanian, Vietnamese, and Zulu. Although any foreign language is a window into another culture (or future market), it is a stretch to say that these languages are equally important to business and diplomacy as favorites like Arabic, Farsi, Chinese, Russian, or Korean.

Then there is a simpler, important problem: most less-commonly studied languages—Romanian is the main exception—are really hard. Aside from its plethora of cases, Hungarian possesses “sepa-

rate verb conjugations depending on the presence or absence of definite direct objects; a free(ish) topic-comment structure word order that reflects discourse priorities; postpositions instead of prepositions; vowel harmony—a phonologic feature that requires certain phonetic qualities of vowels to be maintained throughout the word; and derivational opportunities to blow your mind!” in the words of instructor Carol Rounds.

Vietnamese, like Chinese, is tonal and can only be properly expressed in print with diacritic marks (except in our sidebar); as instructor James Lap explains, the word “ma” can mean “ghost,” “cheek,” “but,” “tomb,” “horse,” or “young rice seedling,” depending on its tone.

Zulu has three distinct click sounds, although its cousin Xhosa has many more.

Indonesian, despite having no gender (“pacar” = “boyfriend” or “girlfriend”), no tenses, no conjugations, no cases, and a neat feature wherein words are pluralized by repetition (“buku” = “book,” “buku-buku” = “books”), nevertheless contains a complex system of prefixes and suffixes.

Finnish, which I had the opportunity to sit in on for an advanced class (population: two), can express nuanced distinctions of motion with the alteration of a single letter. For example, the word “kilisee” means “jingling,” “kalisee” means “chattering,” and “kolisee” means “banging woody things around,” in Flint’s immortal phrase.

Although I asked every language instructor I could find how to say, “I wish more students would take my class” in their respective languages (see sidebar), not all of them actually feel that way. As Flint notes, “The framework of small classes can give students a comfortable sense of community.” Flint and the two students in her Finnish class clearly share a bond, and I found none of the boredom and apathy usually associated with foreign language instruction. The same was true of Indonesian: instructor Petrus Ari Santoso and his three pupils seemed almost proud of their isolation in a windowless room decorated with a map of Indonesia and some Balinese shadow puppets. While they discussed Jakartan slang, I was struck by the realization that more than 200 million Indonesians share a common culture that most of us will never begin to understand. For some students, that idea is sexy enough to justify forgoing Spanish or Chinese. ❖

CU SNACKS: OVERNIGHT

BY IAN SOLSKY

Deep in the bowels of Wien, Columbia students gather nightly for their battle against Hunger. One Wednesday night (9 p.m. to 3 a.m.), I was a CU Snacks sidekick, testing my hypothesis: customers are lazy, overweight or, as manager Brandon Arbiter, C '06, said, “may or may not have been playing around with recreational pharmaceuticals.”

Before entering the “Snack Shack,” I needed to see the “Board Room.” Walking to the Center for Career Education, I was impressed by Brandon’s corporate jargon.

The Board Room is a tiny space crammed with six chairs, a table, and filing cabinets. When asked what constitutes a good night, Brandon replied, “If we get 35 orders, I won’t be mad.” This night, Brandon would celebrate 38 orders. But now, to the Snack Shack!

Stuffed in here with three employees, food shelves, and a drink-filled refrigerator, I grew anxious and asked to hear their war stories. Brandon once delivered to a girl just wearing her skivvies. Another “delivery specialist” has a repeat customer who always seems to be having sex when her food arrives. But they agreed that besides the “shitload of high customers,” most students are busy studying when they order.

CHA-CHING! The computer sound effect interrupted our conversation and signaled that Hunger was again on the loose, along with his apparent accomplice Menstruation. These first orders included cookies, grilled cheese, and tampons. After throwing frozen cookie dough into a toaster oven and preparing the grilled cheese in a sandwich maker with I Can’t Believe It’s Not Butter spray, organic cheese, and garlic, one of the delivery people boarded one of the two snack mobiles (a third

bicycle was stolen).

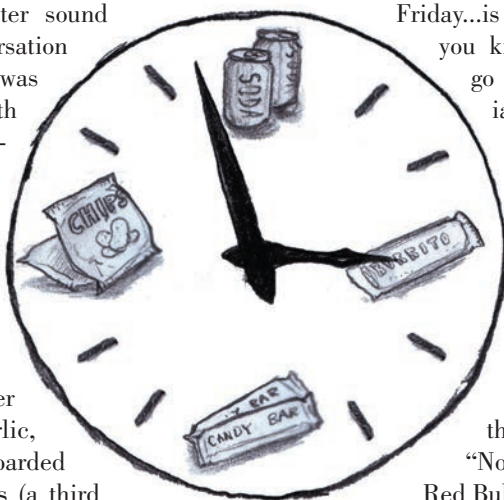
Grabbing the next two orders, Brandon first led me to Butler Library. I could barely keep up as he touted CU Snacks’ average delivery time—12 minutes. Expecting to meet the customer outside, I was surprised when we delivered ice cream directly to a girl in a fourth-floor reading room. First-time patron Melissa Stemig, C '08, said that “it took forever to get here;” she thought the service was something of a joke.

We then went to Carman, where I found three first-year girls infatuated with CU Snacks and the bearded Brandon. Jackie Klatsky declared, “My night is incomplete without CU Snacks.” Lauren Olsen clarified, “We are the laziest people on earth.” Then the three girls wondered if Brandon was single. “I’d probably like to marry him and his pseudo-management,” said Emma Mintz.

As we approached 3 a.m., business slowed to a trickle. One employee took this time to study Russian. Brandon and another night manager mostly talked about inventory. Crisis one: “Do you know where the kettle chips are?...Shit, we ran out.” Another dilemma: “How do you distinguish which [pita bread] is white and which is whole wheat?”

I was bored. As my eyes wandered aimlessly around the Snack Shack, I saw a quote from *Office Space* posted on the wall: “Oh and next Friday...is Hawaiian shirt day...so you know if you want you can go ahead and wear a Hawaiian shirt and jeans.” And I realized that these are not superheroes, but merely mortal men who supply provisions.

The Snack Shack may not excite, but at least I learned a lesson. All procrastinators should adopt Brandon’s ethic so that they too can toast with him, “Nothing like kicking back a Red Bull, doing some work.”❖



Illustrated by Jerone Hsu

BIRTHDAY SUITS

BY ANNA CORKE

Although Columbia touts a long list of impressive teachers with equally impressive accomplishments, most students are unaware that one of the most ubiquitous of all creative feats was the work of a Columbia faculty member. Around 1893, Patty Smith Hill, who spent 30 years teaching at Teachers' College, wrote the six note, six word "Good Morning to All," with her sister Mildred. That song became the tune to "Happy Birthday to You." And every time you sing it, you're technically obligated to pay royalties.

Yes, "Happy Birthday" is copyrighted. And, when Patty Smith Hill died, the copyright was sold to Time Warner. The song brings in about two million dollars in royalties each year.

Some restaurants, all of which are in technical violation of copyright when they perform the song for customers, purchase licenses, while others teach alternate birthday songs to waiters—such is the case at most chain restaurants.

But 25-year-old Benjamin Mako Hill (no relation to Patty), a software developer from an undisclosed New York location, has decided to fight back. His website, unhappybirthday.com, protests the fact that Time Warner's copyright is "out of synch with reality." Where some argue that copyright law gives artists incentive to create, Hill thinks the posthumous portion of the law is "absurd." And, he says, big corporations selectively enforce the HBTY copyright to make a profit.

The copyright law protecting HBTY has changed several times during the last century. Currently, the law releases HBTY from copyright in 2030, a full 84 years after Patty Smith Hill's death in 1946. But that date may be extended due to a recent Supreme Court case, *Eldred v. Ashcroft*, which upheld a decision to allow copyright holders to apply for extensions.

Hill's website treats the issue with satire: "There is an overwhelming amount of copyright infringement of 'Happy Birthday.' Let's right the balance

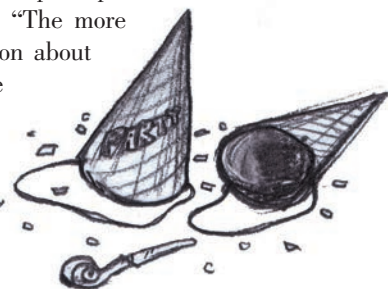


and tell ASCAP about every one of these violations!" (ASCAP, the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers, enforces HBTY copyright infringement for Time Warner.) The site includes a template "infringement report" that do-gooders can use

to contact ASCAP when they've witnessed an act of HBTY copyright infringement. Many have used Hill's template to report HBTY copyright violations. Some even received responses from ASCAP. One such response asked the correspondent to reveal where he was getting his information about the song because the company had received so much mail about HBTY lately.

Unhappybirthday.com has caused uproar among fans and detractors of the song alike. A German television station broadcast a news piece about it. Blogs link to it everyday. Hill receives hundreds of e-mails—most from people who don't understand his approach and think the website is a serious attempt to enforce copyright law. Others write to Hill thanking him because they hate the song so much. One angry e-mail asked Hill to "please drop the witch-hunt and get a life.... Volunteer in your community! Save the world instead of wanting to prosecute it!" Hill responds to this type of e-mail by redirecting the citizen's complaint to ASCAP and his senators.

Hill tries to spread the word however he can: his tactics include confronting birthday partiers in parks and selling t-shirts through his website that depict a skull and crossbones superimposed on a birthday cake. "The more accessible information about copyright law is, the better," Hill says. In the Internet, this century-old song may have finally met its match. ❖



Illustrated by Jerone Hsu



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 theblueandwhite@columbia.edu.

Chiarra had enjoyed broiled lobster tails with a Hennessy, straight. She had peeled 15 broiled shrimp for JR. He had looked her in the eyes when she fed him the first one and told her sweetly, "they taste better when you do that for me." JR had his cornball moments but they simply melted Chiarra. The country white folk looked on in disgust as this beautiful white woman fed some black hoodlum hand to mouth. Chiarra met each of one of their hateful, yet curious gazes now and again with a genuine smile as if she might not realize these bar regular's disgust. But JR egged their ignorance on, for his own self enjoyment. "Which car do I have again? Did I hand you the right keys Shorts? You have Porsche or the Range Rover keys?" His smile revealed to Chiarra he was doing all this on purpose. He was on a stage.



While Ragged Dick considered self-improvement as the basis and motivation for his rise in social status...



There is a great problem with this: it makes Obi-Wan only $48 + X$ years old in Episode IV, where X is the number of years between Episode 3 and 4. This strikes me as not nearly old enough for the character in 4 unless X is somewhere in the teens, which it really doesn't seem to be. If Anakin is 19 in Episode 2, does he really seem like he's in his 30s in Episode 3? Hardly. Going back to the idea of parallels: Obi-Wan, Anakin, and Luke all share similar critical moments where they must show uncommon heroism and make difficult decisions which will determine their destinies in Episodes 1, 3, and 6 respectively. I believe it makes sense for these moments to come at the same age for each of them.



The second of five children, Wordsworth was born in Cockermouth.

I'm okay, but I just can't bring myself to poop in a hold in the ground! That's part of the reason I'm glad we're headed to Bombay. I heard it's a very modern city. I hope the toilets are modern, too.



Telling you how I will refute this would take serious pleasure out of the draft that comes next week, so after that is finished it is with the conclusion that I will end this paper.



As of now, with my preconceived ideas, I intend to present masturbation (and by extension abolitionism of familial institutions) as ill-conceived.



If you keep being angry for an hour, you make toxin which can kill almost 80 people.



Indeed, the "blameless" Ragged Dick is granted with a lucky opportunity to drastically enhance his current financial situation because of his honest lifestyle and virtuous nature. His chance for success is well deserved and leaves the reader with a sentiment of satisfaction and relief.



The two card players are Han Solo and Lando Calrissian. They should both be about 11 years old. The boys should have a conversation in which certain details should be revealed regarding a not so happy family life for both of them. They are proverbial bad kids. Han wins the card game.



By comparing works that I see to other ones that we have studied in Art Hum, I'll be able to have some sort of grasp on the meaning of the work.

Essentially, whereas the “I” became “us” in the camps (as shall be soon discussed), in the town, “I” was only “us” when it could be used to prove mythico-historical legitimacy. With regard to current-day personal aspirations, however, the “us” became expendable



you know, the rules at columbia are much more strict than the rules here, so you won't be able to have sex and smoke pot every night. and no more cocaine on weekends! gosh, how many times have I covered for you, telling Dawn that we were just eating lots of giant pixie sticks and were on a sugar high. some close calls there.



An understatement in itself, the Bible comprised of the Old Testament of the Jews and the New Testament of Christians, along with the Qur'an and other holy books of Judeo-Christian denominations have collectively sold mass quantities such as the contemporary world cannot compare nor repeat. These texts, reproducing at quantities that put both Mao Tse-tung and J.K. Rowling to shame, would unanimously make God the biggest literary top liner of all time – no contest!



Mongols did not carry boats around with them.



But excess drinking at the family reunion hosted by my fortunate parents when I was ten was not what I remembered best in my youthful and sober mind. Nor was it the drama of seeing my aunt Conna smoking cigarettes in her bikini and cut-offs with a beer balanced on her six-month pregnant belly. No, my most vivid memory of the first, last, and only family reunion was the pig.



I think that animals are much better communicators than humans. First of all, animals have never required a world war to communicate their messages.



I was worried that the trains would be overcrowded with smelly men pressing their penises on me and people riding on top of the cars. That's what American television always wanted me to think, but this isn't like that at all.

For me, Strong Independent Woman, Rosie the Riveter-style, is a defense for my vulnerability and loneliness. But I've never even seen my best friend cry. When Denise ended up with a boyfriend for the first time a few months ago, the question on her newly-kissed lips was where does our weakness for boys fit into what we've become? True, our relationships have the teamwork and equality of monomorphic birds, like the loons we saw this morning, wailing and yodeling, fishing, and making homes. But when Denise's father asked her why she wanted a boyfriend, she couldn't answer him. We don't need men.



After such accusative remarks about lack of plausibility, much clarity is owed.



He destroys an extremely impressive number of droids (think Legolas in Lord of the Rings) It should also be noted that Anakin shows a great deal of compassion for others, as well as a clear headedness and warmth that we did not see so much in Episode 2. He seems to have greatly matured. We should like him. He should be shown interacting with and helping one other young Jedi in particular, let's call him Joebi-Wan Schmoebi, who should be a couple years younger than Anakin.

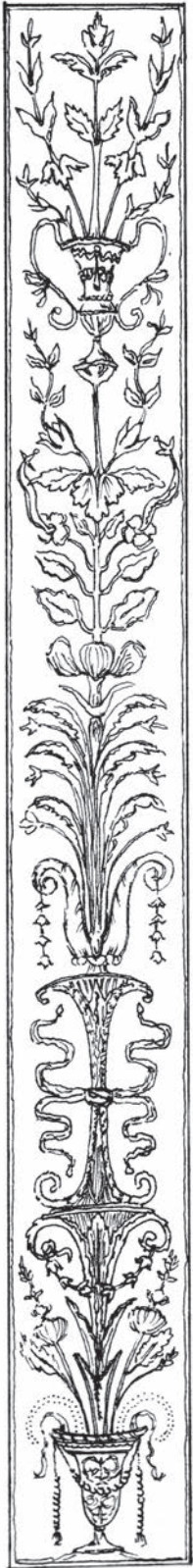


The American Civil War was 4 years, World War 1 was 4 years, the War between the US and Japan was 4 years, etc. I think 11 is a good age for Anakin to be in Episode 1, as it makes him old enough not to be too annoying. I moved from Eugene to St. Louis when I was 11. I know what that felt like at that age and what place it had in my life. I think Anakin should experience something akin to that in Episode 1. 21 years between Episode III and IV makes everything seem to work out the way it should. I believe I have justified my position on this.



profound thoughts for the night:

-your foot is touching my ass
-the most important thing in life is to be happy
-surround yourself with people you like
-time is cyclic



MEASURE FOR MEASURE

Note: In 1998, Poppa Neutrino, his family, a few friends, and his two dogs crossed the Atlantic in a large raft called the *Son of Town Hall*, made entirely of garbage (as chronicled in *The New Yorker*).

THE SON OF TOWN HALL

Can I tell you how quickly I built her?
How I sawed her, roped her,
gathered, gnawed, and held taut,
spent mornings in the map room
at the Public Library,
five blocks from my *Town Hall*
floating on the Hudson?

“*SOTH* will hold together,
whatever the water’s got to give
if I can steer her.”

Heat-wracked
and my blistered wife,
stuck in the mud in the Sargasso Sea.
“This is a man who has weathered
many storms”: salt-shorn beard,
self-reliance.

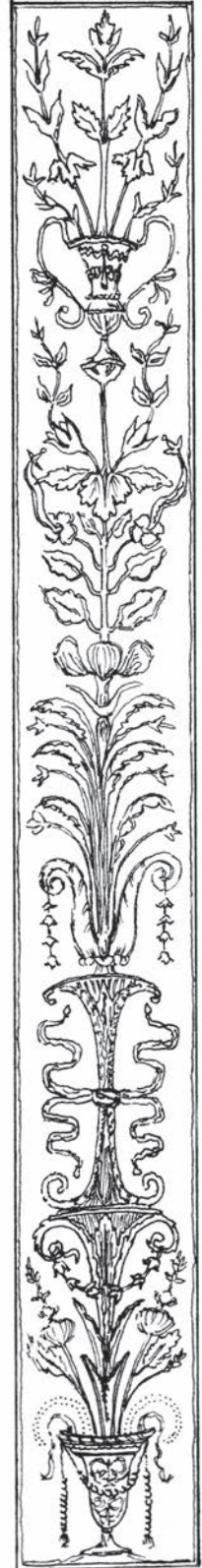
“The children are very well read”,
raised on the road
across continents,

and now mud-moored at sea
like cockatiels,
millipedes, or rats
trapped on a primordial land-raft,
pulled toward the New World,
all eating moss
and fat, sun-caked buds
or defecating over the sides.

Two weeks to Scottish shore.
But now,
October sail-swarm:
a salmon-pink ground
with white spots and five
eye-loops.
Cynthia cardui,
wet feet and wingtips –
the thin black proboscises
in Neutrino crates
looking for wooly burdock leaf.

Cynthias,
the “painted ladies”,
beat back to north in early summer
for burdock, thistle,
and monoecious buddleja.
Buddleja!
the butterfly-bush.

—Peter Hall



Damming White Privilege

Kara Walker at the Met: “After the Deluge”
The Metropolitan Museum of Art
1000 Fifth Avenue (at 82nd Street)
Through July 30, 2006

I watch as a group of confused museum-goers wanders into the tiny gallery featuring Kara Walker's show “After the Deluge.” They quickly look around, realize that this is not the café they were searching for, and stumble off again. I almost feel bad for them—they don't know what they're missing.

“After the Deluge” is crammed in a small mezzanine with Victorian miniatures, oil paintings from the 19th Century, an African icon, and a Hieronymus Bosch-style vision of hell, all there to complement a large selection of Walker's own works from the last few years. Almost every inch of wall space is filled, and the paper cutouts that made Walker famous rub shoulders with an account of the Amistad mutiny from 1840. But at the foot of a staircase in the Modern Wing, a pitstop for Picasso-seeking tourists, Walker's exhibition doesn't get the attention it deserves.

Walker's work is moving, and disturbing—images of minstrels, legless men, pregnant women, and reptilian children are all facelessly cut from black paper. She skillfully exploits the Victorian pastime of silhouette-cutting to make incisive commentary on the long-term effects of slavery on black and white America. The images from Walker's “American Primitives” series paint an unabashed and dismal picture of race relations in the United States; “Big House” shows a scene of either rape or murder, while “They Say Water Represents the Subconscious in Dreams” places three surreal characters in the path of a white riverboat.

Beyond the inclusion of Walker's evocative work, this show is unique in that, for the first time, the Met has allowed an artist to curate her own exhibit. The museum's whole collection was

open to Walker, a thirty-five-year-old winner of a MacArthur Achievement Award and a faculty member of Columbia's MFA program. As she was assembling pieces, Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans, suddenly turning the racial themes her art confronts into prime time news.

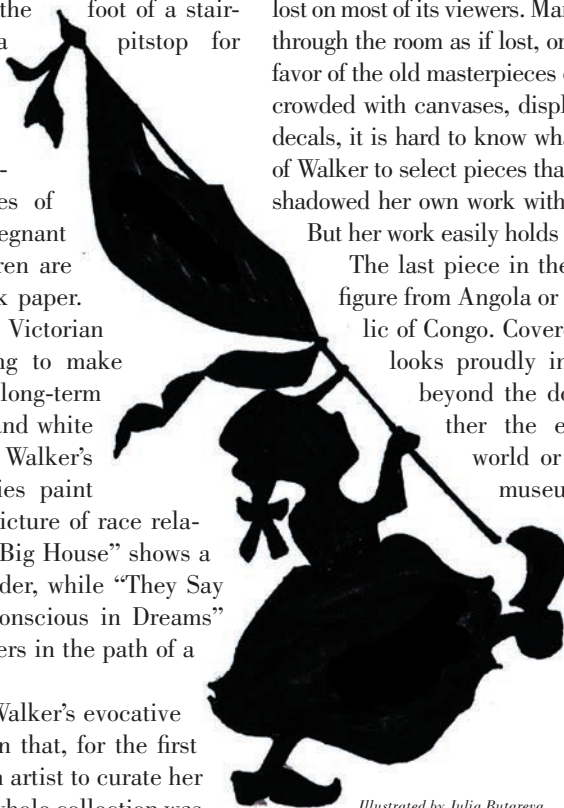
The result is more than a just a sample from a legendary art collection; it puts forward a thesis about the entanglement of floods, water, race, and, as Walker puts it, “the failure of containment.” Her works are contrasted with Victorian silhouettes, columnar and stiff where hers are full of vitality. Winslow Homer's “The Gulf Stream,” with a single black man apparently peacefully adrift in a dangerous sea of sharks, takes on a morbid tone when placed across the room from the despair and exhaustion of Joshua Shaw's “The Deluge Towards Its Close.”

I have a sneaking suspicion that the fascinating commentary and careful curation of “After the Deluge” is lost on most of its viewers. Many people seemed to drift through the room as if lost, or ignore Walker's work in favor of the old masterpieces of the show. In a room so crowded with canvases, display cases, and even wall decals, it is hard to know what to look at. It was bold of Walker to select pieces that could have easily overshadowed her own work with celebrity, size, or color.

But her work easily holds its own.

The last piece in the show is a male power figure from Angola or the Democratic Republic of Congo. Covered with metal spikes, it looks proudly into the modern gallery beyond the doorway, announcing either the entrance into Walker's world or the exit back into the museum's reality. It's one of the more unusual pieces on display, especially against this montage of European art. A little girl tugged her grandmother right past it, yelling, “Look Grandma, a picture of water!”

—Sasha de Vogel



Illustrated by Julia Butareva

Starving Hysterical Obsolete

*The Poem That Changed America:
“Howl” Fifty Years Later*

Edited by Jason Shinder
Farrar, Straus and Giroux
336 pages, \$30.00

In 1945, Allen Ginsberg scrawled “Fuck the Jews” and “Butler has no balls” in his Columbia dorm room to piss off his anti-Semitic maid. Last month, 61 years later, Jason Shinder and friends published *The Poem That Changed America* celebrating *Howl*. Its 26 essays look back on a glorious era of innovation and decay that extended from Ginsberg’s Columbia days right up to the publication of Shinder’s essays, which have helped to kill it.

The collection of essays, quotes, and poems seems innocent enough at first glance. Endearing anecdotes of encounters with Ginsberg. Coming-of-age stories about reading *Howl* for the first time. Chatty analyses of the poem’s effects on literature and politics. Ginsberg’s dad, Bob Dylan, and a former president of Czechoslovakia are quoted. The book celebrates poem and poet from every angle: homosexual, psychic, beatnik, but most importantly “a Jewish Mowgli of the concrete jungles...prophet of the outpouring.”

Yet the book is a Möbius strip of perspectives, looping around but ultimately one-sided: Ginsberg was “a dream of human kindness,” his poem “a hand grenade that bounced into the house of formalism.” The romanticization of Ginsberg’s persona gushes alongside equally effusive, line-by-line praise for the poem.

Tucked in the din is the only essay that checks reality: Phillip Lopate’s “Howl and Me”. Once a Columbia student himself (C’64), Lopate questions the greatness of the Beats: “And what entitled them to this accolade? That they ran naked through the negro streets, smoked dope on rooftops, dropped out of the academy—in other words, that they made a mess of their lives?” For Lopate, *Howl* has not created a new world, but deformed an already misshapen one. The

poem is “cautionary” at best, a “whole buttload of sensitive bullshit” at worst.

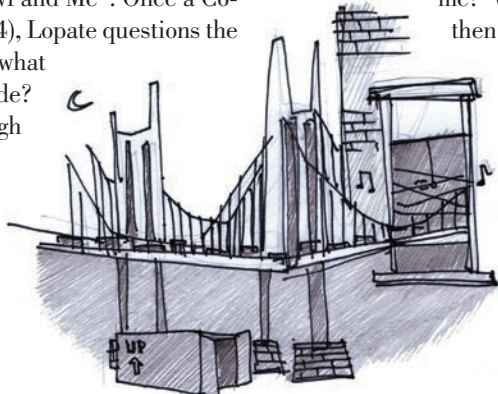
Whether one agrees with Lopate or not, his essay hints at what *The Poem That Changed America* could have been. Robert Pinsky points out that “if *Howl* were published for the first time tomorrow, it would be sensational and challenging: a critique maybe not only of a world where Moloch now claims Jesus as his best friend but also, implicitly, of our postmodern cool.” But now *Howl*, like Bob Dylan albums, the East Village, and bellbottoms, has become part of the commercial retro revival, the “Ginsbergian search for kicks upon kicks.” The writers in Shinder’s collection overlook its troubling place in American culture today and dwell on how Ginsberg and his poem made them feel warm and fuzzy inside. It amounts to Shinder hosting a silly cocktail party.

Besides, the poem hardly retains the capacity to shock. Over are the days when young readers experienced a clandestine thrill while reading of “gaunt waitresses” and “flashing buttocks under barns and the last gyzym of consciousness.” Over are the days when protesters against that “sphinx of cement and aluminum” took themselves seriously.

Shinder, Lopate, Rick Moody, and others gathered at Miller Theater on April 17 for a discussion. During the talk, an organization called the Underground Literary Agency, led by a clown, interrupted the essayists’ dreary readings with obscene shouts. When Jason Shinder asked the clown to wait until the question-and-answer session, the clown marched on stage, quoted Ginsberg, pulled a mouse trap out of his pocket, and yelled, “Do you want to silence me? Well, I’ll silence myself!” He then snapped the mousetrap onto his tongue and was led out by security guards.

The talk ended with a book signing. When I asked Shinder how *Howl* had changed America, he replied, “The title of the book is probably more provocative than based in reality.” My thoughts exactly.

—Anna Corke



Illustrated by Ben Grohsgal

In Search of Lost Parties

Proust at the Majestic : The Last Days of the Author Whose Book Changed Paris

Richard Davenport-Hines

Bloomsbury USA

400 pages, \$24.95

A parlor game: James Joyce, Pablo Picasso, Igor Stravinsky, Serge Diaghilev, and Marcel Proust all meet for dinner. What happens? Maybe Stravinsky would explain to the ballet patron Diaghilev the way Cubism influenced *The Rite of Spring*. Or perhaps Joyce and Proust would dissect each other's uses of consciousness and time. Surely Picasso and Joyce would stage a drinking contest. In any case, the party would certainly be one of the most dazzling artistic gatherings in history.

And on May 18, 1922, at the Hotel Majestic in Paris, it actually happened. The occasion was the premiere of Stravinsky's *Le Renard*, performed by Diaghilev's troupe and decorated by Picasso. Sydney Schiff, the party's host, invited Proust and Joyce to join them. But as Richard Davenport-Hines records in his new book, *A Night at the Majestic*, the party was not a success. It was a total flop.

To compensate for his natural shyness, Joyce arrived several hours late and drunk: according to Clive Bell, another of the guests, "he was in no mood for supper. But a chair was set for him on our host's right, and there he remained speechless with his head in his hands and a glass of champagne in front of him." Joyce soon passed out and began snoring.

Proust did not show up until after 2:00 a.m. He was sick from swallowing a dose of pure adrenalin two weeks before and had spent the fortnight surviving on beer and ice cream. Though Proust, unlike Joyce, was in the mood for conversation, his attempt at

small talk with Stravinsky collapsed. "Doubtless you admire Beethoven," Proust offered. Stravinsky snapped back: "I detest Beethoven."

So Proust turned to Joyce, who had by this time woken up. Joyce later told a friend, "Our talk consisted solely of the word 'No.' Proust asked me if I knew the Duc de so-and-so. I said, 'No.' Our hostess asked Proust if he had read such and such a piece of *Ulysses*. Proust said, 'No.' And so on." Proust ended the night by ditching Joyce and taking their hosts back to his apartment. Joyce took a cab home.

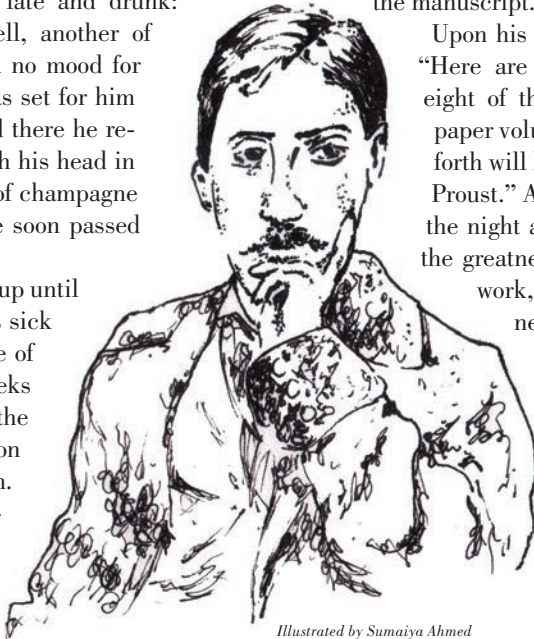
Why did this great Modernist gathering end in such disaster? Davenport-Hines believes the answer lies in the participants' histories, and so when the party ends, *A Night at the Majestic* becomes a biography of Marcel Proust. Though it neglects the other four *éminences*, it gives some insight into why the party failed.

"The artist who gives up an hour of work to converse for that time with a friend knows that he is sacrificing reality to an illusion," Proust once wrote. He practiced what he preached, sacrificing his friends and health to write the 4,000-page, seven-volume novel *In Search of Lost Time*. He died six months after the Majestic party while making final proofs of the manuscript.

Upon his death, one eulogizer explained, "Here are the paper volumes...seven or eight of them, distinguished-looking, yet paper volumes all the same, which henceforth will be what most people call Marcel Proust." And so, argues Davenport-Hines, the night at the Majestic flopped because the greatness of Marcel Proust was in the work, not the man. Everything that needed to be said between him and the other guests could already be found in his works.

This conclusion is good news for those of us born too late to know Picasso, Proust, or Joyce. To experience their genius we need never meet them at all.

—Brendan Ballou



Illustrated by Sumaiya Ahmed

Smoking Up with Walter Benjamin

On Hashish
Walter Benjamin
Belknap Press
208 pages, \$14.95

American youths are fond of phrases like, “Man, I am sooooo messed up!” or, “Dude, do you realize how messed up I am? Whooooo!” German philosophers, it turns out, have expressed similar sentiments while in an altered state: “Such a peculiar mingling of emotions—as though I were simultaneously suffering martyrdom and living the good life...I’d like to be transformed into a mouse mountain.” Far out!

Yes, getting fucked up transcends time and place, though it sometimes differs in intellectual rigor (although I’ve heard several compelling discourses on existential motifs in *The Dark Side of the Moon*). When his philosopher buddies put him up to testing hashish in the late 1920s and early 1930s, Walter Benjamin did what any fun-loving German Jewish Marxist would do—he took meticulous notes. For the edification of all, Belknap, a subsidiary of Harvard University Press, has gathered Benjamin’s drug-induced rambles in the adorable little book *On Hashish*.

Unlike last year’s diminutive academic-ish best-seller, *On Bullshit*, this volume makes no argument per se, but simply documents 12 of Benjamin’s madcap hashish sessions. Along the way, we learn a bit about what it means to be a hashish enthusiast and scientist:

IMPROVED VISION. “Oven turns into cat.”

INTIMACY WITH INANIMATE OBJECTS. “Subject notices a crumpled piece of paper lying next to a bottle on a little table, and in a delighted tone he designates it ‘little monkey’ and also ‘stereoscope monkey,’ ‘little stereoscope.’”



Illustrated by Jerone Hsu

INTIMACY WITH HISTORY. “I experience the feeling that in the next room events such as the coronation of Charlemagne, the assassination of Henri IV, the signing of the Treaty of Verdun, and the murder of Egmont might have taken place.” *Bill and Ted Adorno’s Excellent Adventure!*

GRANDEUR. “Versailles, for one who has taken hashish, is not too large, or eternity too long.” While on hashish, you can have your cake and eat it too, which leads us to...

MAD MUNCHIES. Benjamin is especially fond of Oysters, pâté de Lyon, and multiple dinners.

THE HUMAN MIND. “If Freud were to do a psychoanalysis of creation, the fjords would come off badly.”

STRENGTHENED FRIENDSHIPS. “Bloch wanted to touch my knee gently. I could feel the contact long before it actually reached me.”

What is to be done? Hashish, clearly.

“One is very much struck by how long one’s sentences are,” Benjamin remarks at one point. This is a significant statement for a German to make. Still, Benjamin’s *On Hashish*, at least in translation, maintains a brisk pace, though it can tend toward repetition. Eat hashish. Wander along the docks talking to yourself. Smoke hashish. Wander around the House of Public Health talking to yourself. “Strange feeling, once again, of being on the sea”—a sea “filled with fruit cradles.” Predominantly berries.

All in all, as with Benjamin’s literary criticism, you come away from his musings on hashish trips with a knowledge at once comprehensive and idiosyncratic: “You follow the same paths of thought as before. Only, they appear strewn with roses.”

—Zachary Bendiner

Survivor: Columbia

If Manhattan is an island (literally), then Columbia must be a desert island (figuratively). The great poet John Donne once noted (figuratively), “No man is an island” to mitigate the sad biological fact that we are (literally) alone. But enough scholarship—what are the four crucial objects that all future Columbians need to survive on the desert isle of Morningside Heights? To find out, we asked graduating BLUE AND WHITE staffers. Heed their words or perish!

Zachary Hays Bendiner, *Editor-in-Chief Emeritus*

- 1) Aesthetics—for me.
- 2) Short dress slacks – for my ankles.
- 3) Persian poetry – for my gentle ears.
- 4) Unreasonably high standards – for her.

Kathy Gilsinan, *Senior Writer*

- 1) A razor—for him.
- 2) A miniskirt—for him.
- 3) Lube—for me. And for me.
- 4) Low standards—just for me.

C. Mason Wells, *Senior Writer*

- 1) Low tolerance—for Thursday nights.
- 2) High tolerance—for your suitemates.
- 3) Zero tolerance—for finals week.
- 4) Fake tolerance—for SHOCC meetings

Hector Chavez, *Publisher Emeritus, Electrical Engineer*

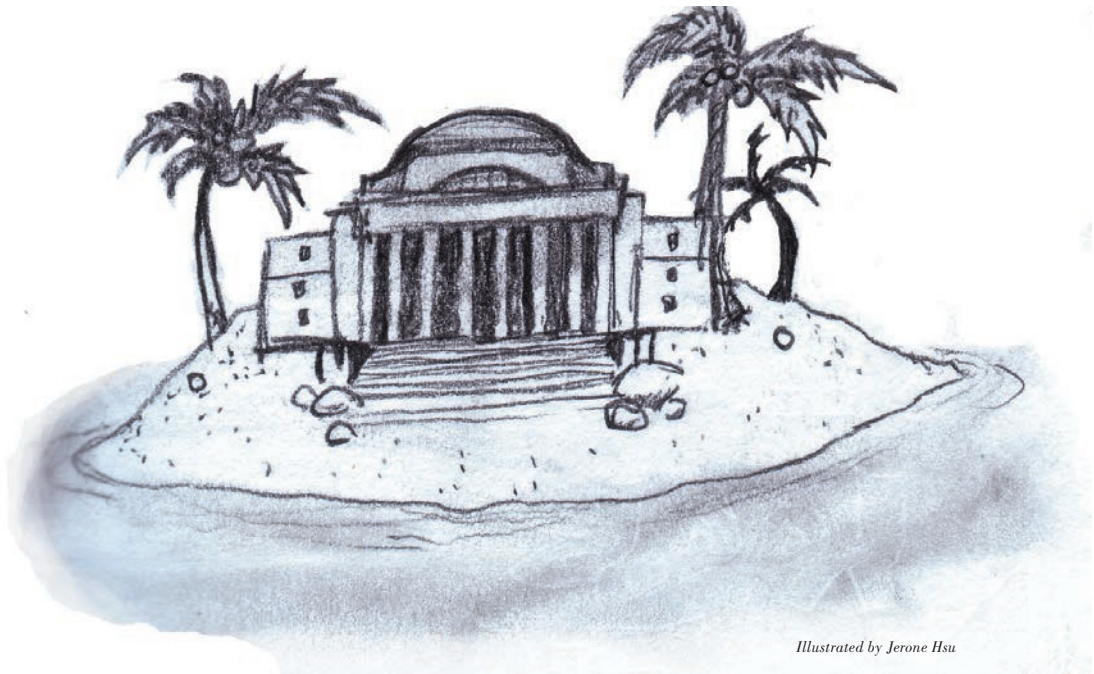
- 1) My beloved TI-89—for single-digit multiplication.
- 2) Guilt—for Him.
- 3) Deadlines—for me. To not meet.
- 4) Low standards—for Zachary Hays Bendiner

David Plotz, *Senior Writer*

- 1) Intestinal fortitude—for my borscht.
- 2) Sense of self-worth—for me.
- 3) Will to live—for my next of kin.
- 4) Lava lamp—for my opium den.

Chris Beam, *Senior Editor*

- 1) Positive message—for the kids
- 2) Detailed answers to the question, “How are



Illustrated by Jerone Hsu

- you?”—for figuring out who really cares
3) Food scavenged from campus events—for free
4) Columbia Hot Bagels—forever

Beth Milton, *Bwog co-editor*

- 1) Seven best friends from high school—for lonely me.
- 2) Name-brand condoms—for the sad fact the free ones in my dorm come from companies that end in “co.”
- 3) A subscription to *The New Yorker*—for my subway cred.
- 4) Low standards—for boys who still read *Harper’s*.

Paul Mazzilli, *writer*

- 1) An extra \$5—for decent seats at the Varsity Show. Thank you 112th V-Show for bringing class struggle and elitism to this university tradition!
- 2) An Apple iBook—so you can look hip while checking the Bwog in Butler.
- 3) A pair of shoes—to wear, so you won’t have to walk around barefoot.
- 4) Ink cartridges—for your fountain pen.

Paul Fileri, *writer*

- 1) Starch—for keeping my virile collar erect.

- 2) Teddy bear—for warding off loneliness.
- 3) Sloth—for warding off jobs.
- 4) Low standards—for all of Hollywood.

Gautam Hans, *Writer*

- 1) My secret entrance to Lerner—for avoiding people.
- 2) A wad of one dollar bills—for my unsatiable thirst for Koronets.
- 3) A supply of Bubble Tea—for me and NO ONE ELSE, GET YOUR OWN.
- 4) A cell phone—for not answering.

Karl Gunderson, *Business associate*

- 1) Toulouse-Latrec poster—for them.
- 2) John Belushi “College” poster—for a different them.
- 3) Edward Gorey poster—for the first them.
- 4) Painful desire for acceptance—for me. Hopefully.



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CAMPUS GOSSIP

Overheard in Lerner Lobby:

Guy 1: I shouldn't be forced to sit through diversity training as a freshman—it's my right to be bigoted if I want to!

Guy 2: Yeah, *they* know about the Core, they don't have to come here!

Guy 1: It's a total First Amendment issue!

Hard to say what President Bollinger would be more proud of: discussing free speech issues, or ignoring SHOCC.



Security guard to people checking IDs and issuing wristbands for South Beach on South Lawn on Wednesday April 26:

"Everyone needs an ID. Oh one thing: be very clear to the GS students that they can't bring their kids."

Hey, at least the JTS kids were allowed to bring their funny hats!



During the Q and A session that followed a speech by the Pakistani Prime Minister in IAB, a girl got up to ask a question. She proceeded to tell the crowd her name and her GPA (3.75) before she switched into an incoherent slam-poetry-style monologue that jumbled the names of various Columbia sororities, alluded in passing to the Catholic Church and Kashmir, all in a long, rhyming string of words. This went on until the moderator angrily demanded that the girl ask a question or sit down. The girl replied, "I'm finished with my question," and sat down.

Aziz was pleased.

Professor Eric Foner, on the origins of the Women's History discipline:

"It's not that we just found a bunch of boxes in an attic and realized: 'Hey! There were women back then!'"

The boxes were actually in the living room, underneath the sofa, with 37 cents and a stale Dorito.



TOO BAD COLUMBIA STUDENTS DON'T OWN CARS

Boy: "Oh my God, he is so cute. You just want to kidnap him and put him in a trunk."



From the SHOCC listserv:

"sorry to abuse the list, but has anyone seen the multi-colored mexican blanket that we used for the freedom school? i miss it."

No, but we do have some stylin' burlap shawls you may be interested in purchasing.



WHY ACADEMICS HATE THE FREE MARKET

Professor Alfred MacAdam on grade inflation in his Latin American Humanities class:

"Let me tell you a little thing about tenure. I've had tenure for so long, I don't even know what it's like not to have tenure. You can't do anything to me!"



Poster in a Carman elevator:

“To the douchebag who stole my wallet:
Enjoy my money. It won’t pay for people not to hate you. But PLEASE give me back my CUID, driver’s license, and most importantly my fake—none of which are of ANY USE TO YOU unless you are my evil twin or are planning some probably much-needed cosmetic surgery. Just toss them on the floor of Carman 10 when no one’s around, or get creative. I need them, and you’re an asshole.

Seriously, don’t ruin my life. I need my fake.”



A “reply-all” to an announcement on the Scrabble Club’s listserv:

“Dear Scrabble lovers,
Sorry I am unable to make it tomorrow, but I am glad to be a part of the Scrabble club.
Chaplain Davis”

Use all seven letters to spell J-E-H-O-V-A-H for a 50-point bonus! (Or a-w-k-w-a-r-d.)

Professor Paige West’s end-of-year speech to her Interpretations of Cultures anthropology class:

“If there’s anything I hope this class has taught you, it’s that difference is made. The essence of self is made. There’s a historical trajectory to difference. If you can chart and track difference, you can dismantle it. Personhood is the confluence of social relationships. Once you understand the political economy, you can deconstruct it and change it.

Girls, fight the power.

Two more things. One of them is sex. Use condoms. Condoms, condoms, condoms. AIDS is a scary disease.

The other is drugs. We’ve mentioned cocaine twice in this class. Don’t do it. Just don’t do it. Or meth. They are bad drugs.”

Resolved: Barnard’s academic advising is amazing.



The Class of 2006...it’s gratuitous!

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