

THE BLUE AND WHITE

Vol. XIV No. VII

April/May 2008



THE DISILLUSIONED EMPLOYEE'S GUIDE


When it comes to occupational malaise,
graduates know best.

SPRING BOOKS

Reviews of Spivak & Butler, *Rhythm and Race*, Gessen, and more

L'EPICURE: A conversation with chef Jacques Pépin

ALSO: IN DEFENSE OF BAD DYLAN, FREUD AND HIS DISCONTENTS



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BLUEBOOK

Dear graduating class of 2008,

Put down your pencils and pens, close your bluebooks, and will the last person out please shut off the lights and lower the blinds? Your time is up.

Oh, do not misunderstand us, we are not forcibly expelling you. Absolutment non! We prefer that you go willingly, discreetly and quietly, though this has not exactly been your style. As you know, these are difficult times in the higher education business: the economy is receding faster than Provost Brinkley's hairline, and Columbia's need to compete as a global university has made it unprofitable to retain you in the lifestyle you've become accustomed to.

So we are relocating you off campus. Based on preliminary investigation results, it appears that your replacements are younger, their test scores are higher, and the Board of Trustees prefers their hairstyles (with the exception of the Catholic redhead this publication is so sad to lose). We believe you are no match for them and so we are offering you a one-time voluntary separation opportunity.

We are not announcing the number of senior eliminations, but I will say this: it will be significant. In the words of Louis Menand, college is "a sleepover with grades," and you are the curve. However, you have trained your successors well—too well. All reports indicate that you have been made redundant. In recognition of this there will be a brief, ten-minute reception in Café 212, where cake and coffee will be served, and where you will be forced to fabricate your future plans.

What, you say, you're already out the door? You've been trying to leave for years? Well, then, be gone! Pay your library fines and flee this scene. Take your perilous confidence and newfound cheer with you. Columbia University thanks you for your loyalty and service, and we wish you the best in all your future endeavors.

Anna Phillips
Editor-in-Chief

COMMENCEMENT SPEAKERS: A SELECTION

- Barnard:** David Remnick, Michael
Bloomberg, Billie Jean King, Thelma
Davidson
College of Saint Rose: Gov. David Paterson
Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory: Oliver
Sacks
Cornell: Maya Angelou
Furman: George W. Bush
Gettysburg: Sandra Day O'Connor
Harvard: J.K. Rowling, Ben Bernanke
Indiana University: Will Shortz
Kenyon: Anna Quindlen
MIT: Muhammad Yunus
Northwestern Law School: Jerry Springer
Oberlin: Fareed Zakaria
Simmons College: Bianca Jagger
Stanford: Oprah Winfrey
Syracuse: Bob Woodruff
UPenn: Michael Bloomberg
Williams: Richard Serra, LeVar Burton



*Compiled by Anna Corke and Katie Reedy
Illustrations by Maxine Keyes*

REVELATION OF THE MONTH

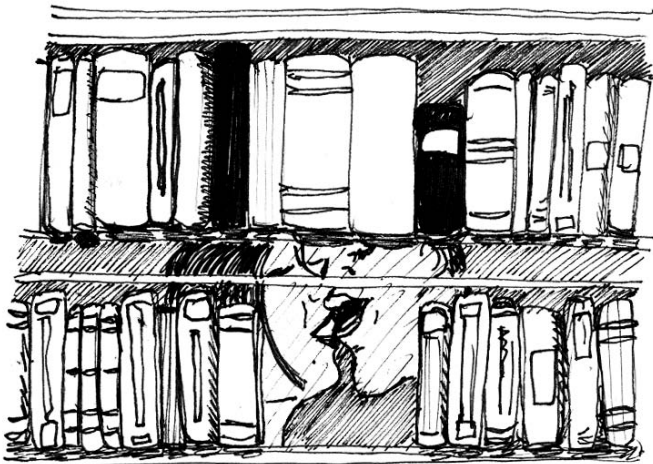
Nostalgia was rampant in April as the 40th anniversary of the riots of '68 came and went with institutional fanfare. While idealistic pre-frosh and shiny-eyed Manhattanville protesters seemed enamored of the rakish lads and barricade-rushers of yore, the fresh scrutiny trained on the episode revealed a sad fact: Behind all the hype, the protesters were just Columbia dorks.

In the *New York Times*, writer Paul Auster claimed his involvement was incidental: "I wanted to read my books, write my poems and drink with my friends at the West End bar."

The student newsreels that were filmed inside the occupied buildings look like YouTube videos of a Ruggles party. Stoned kids in Low do the twist in pairs without touching, Barnard girls fetch provisions, and all doubt themselves constantly.

Says another: "This is the first time I've felt comfortable on this campus."

Apart from the hundreds of bloody arrests, not much has changed.



LOGIC GAME

"Remembering Columbia"

Four friends, Judith, Alan, Lee, and Alma, spend their graduation pre-game week reminiscing about their undergraduate years. Each of them experienced something great (studied abroad, attended Barnard Potluck, led "Stop Injustice!" campaign, had sex in Butler) and something awful (rejected from medical school in Puerto Vallarta, got written up on JuicyCampus, dated an NYU alcoholic, got locked in Lehman Library). Determine the full name of each friend (last names: Cervantes, Rousseau, Boccaccio, Darwin) and the worst thing and the best thing that happened to them.

1. Judith didn't study abroad and have an authentic experience. Alan didn't discover Barnard Potluck.
2. The four friends are Ms. Rousseau, Mr. Cervantes, the woman who began the "Stop Injustice!" campaign and the male who got rejected from medical school at Puerto Vallarta.
3. Ms. Darwin was written up on JuicyCampus for TA-related antics and she didn't get to have sex in Butler. Lee didn't get rejected from Puerto Vallarta.
4. Lee didn't end up in group therapy with a boozier NYU significant other or manage to unfurl the "Stop Injustice!" banner from Butler.
5. Mr. Cervantes changed his Activities on Facebook to "Two words: Barnard Potluck."
6. Alma had sex in Butler. Mr. Boccaccio didn't get locked into Lehman one night without a cell phone.

BACK TO THE FUTURE

SPRING 2007

- Bacchanal features Blackalicious and Del tha Funkee Homosapien on Low Steps. A Bwog commenter opines: "Could we do a poll and figure out, shit, most people listen to rock/punk/alternative, which usually consists of a band. No fuckin' bands come? Seriously? All hip-hop, all the time?"
- Barnard president Judith Shapiro announces an end to her "marathon tenure," a 14-year run in which the school endowment more than doubled and applications increased dramatically.
- Jeffrey Sachs writes an editorial for *Time*, appears on "Charlie Rose," gets profiled in *Vanity Fair*, offers platitudes.

SPRING 2008

- The National and Grizzly Bear perform during Bacchanal in Roone Arledge. A Bwog commenter opines: "What's up with the really shitty bands playing at Columbia concerts? I wish less emo kids were picking the music the rest of Columbia has to listen to."
- Judith Shapiro cements her final legacy at Barnard as The Nexus gives way to a new wave of full-frontal feminism in the form of the Vagelos Center. Amid the fireworks, Barnard Joke Jerry cackles in the night.
- Jeffrey Sachs is a guest on "The Daily Show," offers platitudes, has a marketing team paper the campus with posters for *Common Wealth*. Shock therapy, indeed.

BLUE NOTES

It's Saturday morning, and a flashcard bearing this message is pasted on a door in a Riverside Drive apartment building: "Enter, bards of Homer! The door is open."

This is the weekly Homer Reading Group, and this is the apartment of Stephen Daitz, CUNY Professor of Classical Languages Emeritus, and founder of the Society for the Oral Reading of Greek and Latin Literature.

Daitz has made a career out of trying to recite classical poetry as its original performers did. "98% of the questions are answered," he said—most of the useful evidence comes from ancient grammarians. Ancient Greek, like Mandarin and Swahili, is a tonal language, and when Daitz reads Homer, it is sing-songy, intense, melancholy, and quite unlike anything you've heard. His pupils, who follow Daitz's own five-stage rhapsodic method, warm up with the first five lines of the *Odyssey*. Evangelos, a Columbia undergrad, Stage 2, goes first. "*Andra moi ennepe moussa...*"

"Yuh, yuh," Professor Daitz nodded, in an FDR-inspired American accent you don't hear much anymore, "But watch the ictus."

Nat, a Stage 5 high school classics teacher who has been a member of the group "since the towers were still up," chimed in: "I got my ear-drums busted with all the *ictus* reading at the contest last week."

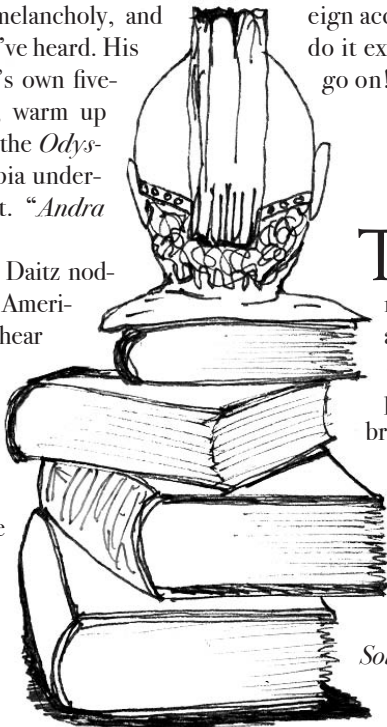
An *ictus* is a stressed

syllable, one of the big mistakes you can make in Homer reading. Unlike in English prosody, in which syllables are stressed or unstressed, in Greek they are either short or long—it's not the emphasis you put on a syllable, it's how long you hold it that matters.

The contest Nat referred to is the annual Oral Reading Contest, held at the New York Classical Club, where hopeful rhapsodes recite snatches of Homer and Vergil for cash prizes. Nat's students have perennially done well, and Daitz is one of the judges.

If Daitz and his band could travel back in time, I asked, what would the Ancient Greeks make of them, these people from another time and place trying to reconstruct their language and their poetry? "I think I would be like someone with a foreign accent. I think they would say, 'Well, we don't do it exactly this way, but we understand you, so... go on!'"

—Paul Barnet



Illustrations by Maxine Keyes

The Indian Café, a dark, endearingly musty restaurant at 108th Street and Broadway, is not known for its crowds. But every Sunday afternoon at 4 p.m., the Red Harlem Readers, a loose-knit group of New York City playwrights, poets and actors, fill its seats and bring it to life.

They come from all five boroughs to sip spiced tea and watch while actors, perched on tall stools, give readings. They perform a variety of works: everything from Greek tragedies to hot-off-the-press plays.

On a recent afternoon, actors read from *Soiled Wings*, a play by Michael A. Jones about a young couple whose marriage disintegrates when the wife has an affair with a female

neighbor. The performance was intense—occasionally, an actor’s fevered exclamation caused curious waiters to sneak a glance from behind the bar. As the drama unfolded, the audience sat back. Older gentlemen in berets quaffed martinis while others nibbled vegetable pakoras.

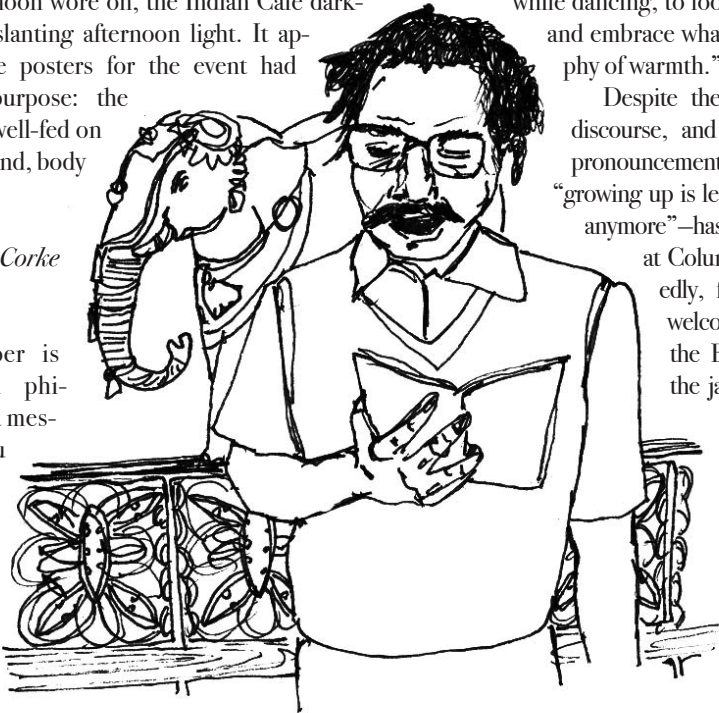
When the readers finished, a moderator invited the audience to give a critique. The conversation that followed—a debate that treated love, stereotypes, community, religion and theater—was a crucial part of the process. The Red Harlem Readers aren’t simply a group of folks who love theater, they’re artists who are committed to collaboration. The all-ages, mostly black group represents the diversity of New York’s performing arts and literary scene: some have worked on Broadway, others on “Law & Order.”

The readings vary each week. “I read a piece I wrote on racism,” said one audience member, brushing back her hennaed hair. And at Christmas, the group reads Dickens, said Ronald Wycke, one of the organizers. Wycke, who is a member of the Uptown Writers Workshop in Harlem and the author of a one-man show, explained that the group has a progressive ethos. That agenda is even reflected in the groups’ name. “Red Harlem” refers to a once sizable Native American population in Harlem. “It’s just a nod to them,” he said.

As the afternoon wore on, the Indian Café darkened with the slanting afternoon light. It appeared that the posters for the event had served their purpose: the crowd seemed well-fed on “food for the mind, body and soul.”

—Anna Louise Corke

Jonah Gropper is a vagabond philosopher with a message, but you won’t find it in a book. “Philosophy has a short reach,” he complained recently.



“There aren’t that many people who will read it.” Instead, he lives it. And dances it. And proselytizes about it on College Walk.

During his month-long stay in New York, Gropper has made it his mission to share his beliefs with Columbia’s philosophy-literate campus. Maybe you’ve seen him, grinning in an orange hibiscus-print shirt. Maybe you’ve grabbed one of his flyers, passed him your email address or phone number—some do, despite his warning-sign plaid women’s pants, persuaded perhaps by his out-of-place jolliness—and learned all about his hippie tribe, the Berkeley Bunny Society (known in this city as Columbia Kittens).

Though cats and rabbits are nowhere to be found at the Society’s weekly gatherings in Central Park, Gropper often refers to other animals, like Grateful Dead-style dancing bears and werewolves, to explain the enlightened future he hopes will follow the “dark age” of the present era. His arguments are peppered with a hodgepodge of references to 1960s pop culture and Continental Philosophy—whether this is endearing or nauseating rests on your policy towards orange hibiscus-print shirts.

Gropper prefers the perspectives of outcasts like Neal Cassady, Randle Patrick McMurphy, and Friedrich Nietzsche. His project is to dismantle our social inhibitions, to get us to make eye contact while dancing, to loosen up about coolness and embrace what he calls his “philosophy of warmth.”

Despite the volume of Gropper’s discourse, and the catchiness of his pronouncements, his argument—that “growing up is learning how not to grow anymore”—hasn’t attracted a following at Columbia. He will, undoubtedly, find his musings more welcome this summer, when the Bunny Society hops on the jam band festival circuit.

There, perhaps, Gropper’s dream for us just might be fulfilled. “I think we’re going to become a bunch of dancing bears,” he said. “It’s going to be fun.”

—Alexandra Muhler

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.

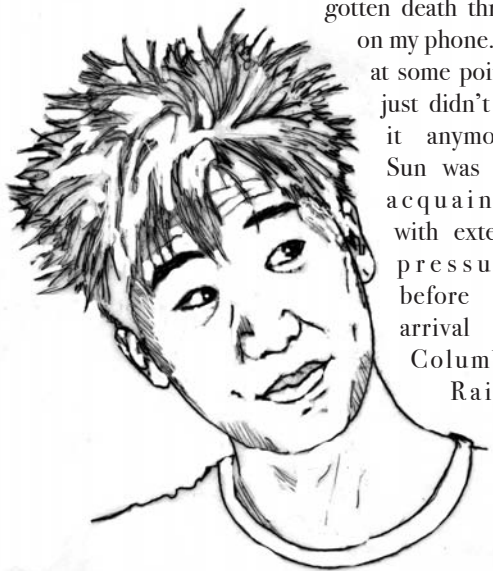
CALVIN SUN

When Calvin Sun, C '08, needs to get something done, he gets it done—and quickly.

"The trick is not how much you do or how little you do – it's *how fast you do it*. To work productively, I get at least seven to eight hours of sleep every night," he said. Sun is good at telling people what he does, and he's good at doing a hell of a lot. He balances his time between working as Vice President of the Class of 2008, chairing the Asian American Alliance, hip-hop dancing, filmmaking, MTV VJing, twenty hours a week of biochemistry research, and teaching bartending. His Facebook profile, with two thousand photos and sixteen hundred friends, will eagerly advertise the rest—as will Sun himself.

This tendency towards self-promotion hasn't always endeared him to his peers. On agreeing to be interviewed, his first statement was, "You have no idea the crap I'm going to get for this." So why does he do it? Although Sun is well aware of the criticism he garners whenever people hear him talking about himself, he pays it no mind.

"I know about my hate video," he says. "I've even gotten death threats on my phone. But at some point, I just didn't feel it anymore." Sun was well acquainted with external pressures before his arrival at Columbia. Raised by



first-generation, Asian American parents in a family brimming with medical professionals, he was born with a pre-med concentration. His father named him after Dr. Melvin Calvin, namesake of the Calvin cycle.

Two years ago, his father unexpectedly passed away from a heart attack, and his mother was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease, eventually leading to her paralysis. Sun saw this as a pivotal moment, not only in the trajectory of his life, also in terms of his spirituality. "After my dad passed away, I became more agnostic. I wanted to figure it out on my own." Since then, Sun has thought exhaustively about how much credence he should give to others' ceaseless, and often catty, criticism. He speaks frequently about "society," and is persistently suspicious of it. "Right now as an Asian American male, society wants me to be quiet, emasculated—a model minority. I'm not telling you that I want to be an arrogant, cocky man, but society should let me be."

But the Sun who most people know—the one who recently dyed tufts of his hair red, who forms break-dancing circles at parties, who recalls his sexual conquests by their building and floor numbers (e.g. "Carman 13"), and is the center of his own universe—was not always so. "I used to be such a scared kid. I was scared of sand and water, so I didn't take off my shoes. I didn't talk to other people." All of this changed freshman year when he morphed from an "antisocial Asian geek" into "a ridiculous character." To "get rid of that nervousness, I'd force myself to break-dance in front of large groups of people," he said. "Now, I don't give a shit. People know I can."

Perhaps Sun is just a misunderstood product of his noble fight against society, or maybe he's as cocky and arrogant as he doesn't want us to believe. Either way, he'll continue talking, mostly about himself. "My friends say I could be a good actor. I can isolate my facial muscles well." As if on cue, he launches into a presentation, flexing various facial muscles and winking at me.

— Tony Gong

REMI COKER

In her Facebook profile mugshot, Remi Coker, B'08, has a black eye, a sliced cheek, and blood running down her chin. "I got kicked in the face," she explains in a deep, no-nonsense voice. "Twice." Coker's injuries, and her intimidating athletic physique, can be chocked up to four years on the women's ruby team. And unlike many of the team's players, Coker doesn't want to break any bones. Consider her Facebook status: "Remi Coker hopes you aren't all scared by the new profile photo!"

Still, I approached our interview with caution. When Coker, who serves as Barnard's senior class president, invited me to meet her in person at an SGA meeting, I decided to bring my Take Back the Night whistle. Just in case.

Coker plays eightman and flanker for the rugby team and describes the sport as a much-needed outlet from the stress of her many extracurriculars. "It's what keeps me sane," she says. "I don't have to be 'Remi Coker, class president,' just 'Remi Coker, girl who hits really hard.'" And how hard does she hit? A teammate explained it this way: "When she tackled the girls from the Women's Army Rugby team, you could hear it...it was a low, heavy sound like... bears."

There is something bear-like about Coker. In fact, she's played one. During her freshman year, she secretly assumed the role of Millie, the Barnard mascot. Her guise was revealed, most unfortunately, during a Midnight Mania basketball contest against Roarec, the Columbia lion.

"I wasn't familiar with being the mascot and how to put on the stuff particularly well, and my head fell off between doing lay-ups in front of I don't know how many people," she remembers. "I still beat the lion."

But off the rugby field, dressed in the brightly-colored, girlish tops she's partial to, Coker's intensity manifests itself in friendliness. "I was always that loud kid that everybody knew," she explains. "Still the same way." Before you have a chance to spot her robust figure and tight black ponytail, Coker will probably have already found you. As a friend explains, "She's very careful to be acquainted with everyone... people are just drawn to Remi."

Born to a father from Nigeria and a mother from Australia, Coker grew up in an international household that was, at times, trying, and inspired her to focus her attentions elsewhere—namely, on other people's problems. This, in turn, sparked a genuine interest in student government and in her current major, psychology.

Coker loves people. She's known for wrapping

complete strangers in bear hugs, with mixed results. She knows her friends' and advisor's UNIs by heart. And she is a staple at campus events (she counts Big Sub and the Nexus Topping-Off Ceremony among her favorite memories of college). But her smile grows largest when recalling Sexhibition, the annual sex-positive consent fair. "Last year we had actual pictures of vagi-



Illustrations by Maxine Keyes

nas up on Lehman walk, and these little kids were walking by!" Her laughter subsides as she drops to her power tone. "It's my favorite day."

After graduation, Coker plans to take a year off to apply to forensic psychology programs. Though she still has one pre-graduation goal: "Having more friends!"

—*Matthew Shields*

EHIZOJE AZEKE

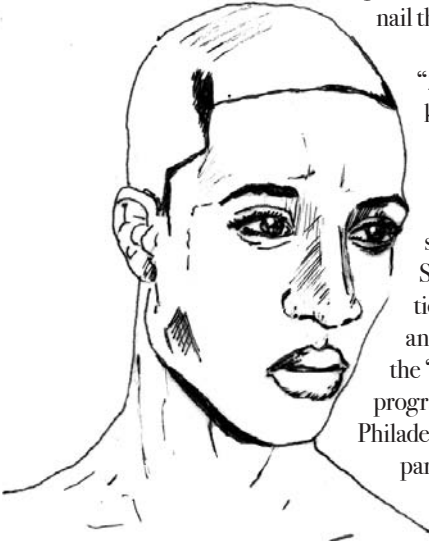
When Ehizoje Azeke, C'08, enters the room, you can try to miss him. Succeed, and you'll be the first. You might admire the precise control he exerts over his 6'1" model's body. You might wish you had his skill in credibly pulling off a herringbone vest. If neither of those works, his personality will grab your attention. "I guess I would describe myself as fun, outgoing, and ambitious," he says, or guesses. If you're aware of campus or pop culture, you've surely seen him. Azeke has performed in a Carrie Underwood music video, appeared on "The View" and MTV's "Dances from the Hood," is a panelist on mtvU's "The Freshmen," and has been involved with Raw Elementz, CCSC, Glass House Rocks, Earl Jam and Orchesis. And those are just the things he can remember.

Azeke is the golden boy of Columbia dance. His greatest contribution has been the hip-hop dance group Onyx, which he co-founded. "We needed a group for people who wanted to be professional dancers. Other organizations did it from more of a club perspective." Azeke enjoys a cult of celebrity, but he insists that the gaggle of devoted fans that follow him from event to

event are more than “groupies” or “hangers-on,” as some claim. He says they’re just interested in dance. “I think we brought something new to campus,” he says. He spends six days a week working on his various dance productions, but he does not obsess too much over each piece – “a lot of times it’s best to just have it done and convey what you’re dancing.” His friends say that he can

skip the rehearsals and still nail the performance.

But Azeke, or “Zoje,” as he is known, does more than dance. He has run the Lunar Gala fashion show, served as the Black Student Organization’s social chair, and volunteered for the “America Reads” program. Born in Philadelphia to Nigerian parents, Zoje moved to Chicago and then Virginia Beach before coming



to Columbia. He credits his flamboyant fashion sense to his eclectic background. “I think that, since I’ve been so many places, I have a wider area to draw from.” At first, he wanted to be a doctor, but New York changed his perspective. “My goals were not so much about what I loved, but what was ‘success,’” he says while making quotation marks in the air. “Since then, I’ve learned that if you pursue what you love to do, and you’re serious about it, you can and will be successful.” When Zoje talks, it’s with his full body. He leans slightly forward as he hears the questions, and eagerly launches into each answer with a “Yeah, yeah, absolutely” or “Yeah, definitely.”

When Azeke, who is majoring in psychology, graduates, he’ll have time to focus on his burgeoning modeling and dancing career. “I have lots of auditions and castings coming up, and I’ll be balancing work and school for these final weeks,” he said. “It’s a notoriously competitive industry, but it’s really motivating because you have to stay determined to stay competitive.” He has already signed with a modeling agency and two different dance agencies, including the famous Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. “Four years ago, there’s no way in hell I would have considered being a professional dancer,” he said. “In New York, I’ve gotten to love what I do.”

— James Downie

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TOLD BETWEEN PUFFS

In which our hero waves a hand-kerchief for the departing

The end of another ignominious era: two hundred and fifty classes, and Verily Veritas has seen nearly half of them through the door. Around the first massing of the sweaty, pulsing bodies and their hookah pipes on the steps of Low, a fit of giddiness—they'll be gone soon! May's melancholy comes when Verily realizes that next year's bunch will be indubitably, inevitably even worse, more vapid, bug-eyed, and newfangled.

This wending downward slide... what to make of it, in light of the empirical evidence? Verily opens the papers to find that Columbia is supposedly more elitist than ever; eight of every hundred admitted! Dubious. What plankton-eating, dull-witted scrotes must those other ninety-two be! VV shivers a tiny shiver, and pulls his shutters a little tighter.

Verily, of course, is not making it to the podium. Thanks to a Columbian flirtation with "tuition control" in the wake of post-WWI rent control laws, his yearly tuition has remained a rather affordable \$82.50, and he quite likes it here, thank you very much. Could he possibly be jealous of the pitiable folk who year in and year out toil and achieve their way to gold tassels and glorified secretarial posts and six-figure debts? And commodified lifetimes as strained, prolifically breeding estate tax lawyers and money massagers and, now, computing/Inter-Net specialists? And as geriatrics bumbling through purgatorial lunacy, draining the last of meager savings on pills and ointments, their final words uttered—"I'm cold...where's my medicine?"—as they lose bowel control one final time?

Verily would no doubt go out like Beethoven, a titanic, tectonic career, recognition as a singular genius, capped one stormy May afternoon in bed—he would rise from the covers like a lightning bolt, raise his first to the heavens, and expire, his legacy already reverberating through the æons—*ahem*—if he chose to graduate, that is.

Oh, all right, there is something about that May after-



noon, the pomp and powder-blue robes, the hugs and the pride and the diplomas, one of the few places you'll ever see (non-Pig) Latin in the real world—Verily always watches from his perch, clutching his windowsill like a gargoyle. Is this jealousy? Pah! Nonsense—what a medieval place the real world is, and even Verily Veritas is not old-fashioned enough.

But VV is beginning to feel a tad like Peter Pan, the creation of a wistful, asexual man-child, or Bart Simpson, endlessly repeating the fourth grade. How long can he sustain it? If Verily's merely a player on the world-stage, what is his motivation?

Ah, yes, his port. At least he still has his port—he buys new vintages, leaves them in a corner, and abides. In a few short decades, he has the finest drink known to man, ambrosia on earth; it is what keeps him going. Another fiscal benefit, along with the aforementioned tuition control, of being an ageless, spectral waif. He digs deep into his reserves. Time for a dram...guahahaha! Verily is pawing at his smarting tongue with hand-kerchief. How old is this bottle? 1893?! All acid and sediment; it has been for many years.

Verily slumps against the wall, his eyes drawn, his mouth stained—he has been here a long time. But there's no leaving now, is there? No, it's too late for him, Verily gasps, clutching his port-poisoned throat. He'll make you a deal, reader. Go out in the world: breed, think, and be miserable. He'll be here, remembering what, after stamped ambitions and the over-all callousness of the world, you'll consider your finest years: drug-addled promiscuity, unfortunate facial hair, foolish idealism or foolish irony, as the case may be.

Verily Veritas will be here, on the shores of the Hudson, waving his hand-kerchief, in pity and in envy, as your boats bear you ceaselessly into the future.

—Verily Veritas, who is P.B., and has been M.T., I.C., C.S., M.M., C.V., A.V., and B.D.I., but who is forever.

The Disillusioned Employee's Guide

In the spirit of graduation, four poor souls have imparted their frustration, bile, and, yes, disillusionment about their chosen occupations. For those about to abscond, herein lies your future:

PARALEGAL

THE SCENE: A midtown high-rise. Two months in. A partner and I just finished a call with a Fortune 500 CEO about an international banking dispute.

“Get me a chainsaw.”

When you're a paralegal, you make things happen. You buy chainsaws. You work 60 hours straight with no sleep. You fly to Frankfurt to rendezvous with Russians named Tatiana. And then you return to cubicle No. 7057.

When you leave, you participate in a “Running of the Paralegal.” There is a “Chariots of Fire” soundtrack. All attorneys stand in their doorways with their arms raised for a high five. One lap followed by champagne and unemployment.

THE PAY: With overtime, the pay is pretty good for a first job. As there's no free time to spend any money, so you end up saving quite a bit.

THE PERKS: You may become a marksman. The firm has its holiday party at a gun club. Getting paid to fly first class is a sweet deal, especially when you score Lufthansa First Class pajamas. Free food abounds.

THE PEOPLE: Bright. Socially awkward. Not much different than Columbia.

COMPUTER PROGRAMMER

You are the best computer programmer you know. You can reverse a linked list with your eyes closed. You're the king of your computer science class, and you think you're ready to join the tech industry, maybe ready to start the next Google.

But then you start hunting for jobs. Looking at your range of opportunities, it quickly becomes clear that you can either apply for a position at Google (where nobody will hire you), Microsoft (where nobody will like you), or a financial services company doing IT (where nobody will respect you). Of course, there's always Apple, where Steve Jobs will spit on you every day as he passes your cubicle.

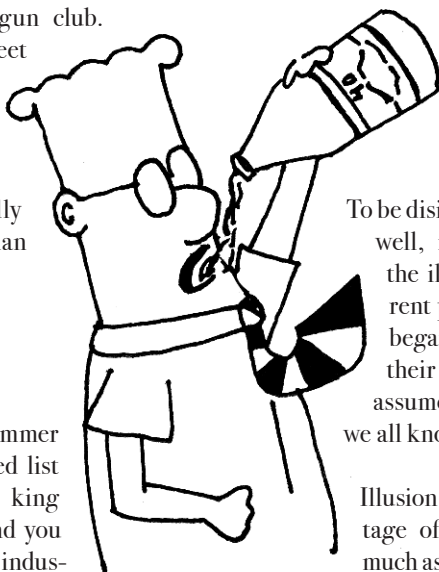
But maybe, if you're lucky, you manage to remember the finer points of all the concepts you were taught during your freshman year when a prospective boss asks them in your interview. And maybe, during your lunch interview, you remember not to put salt on your fries before tasting them, thus impressing your interviewer and convincing him (and in computer science, it is always a “him”) to extend you an offer.

Now that you're in the real world, all the theory you've learned isn't good for a thing. Your focus—your only goal—is to please “the client,” a faceless taskmaster that demands that everything “just work.” Never-ending meetings filled with long discussions of “where the button should go” generally yield the conclusion, “anywhere but where you put it.” It doesn't matter where you put it.

JOURNALIST

To be disillusioned is to have been once, well, illusioned. So let's examine the illusions I held before my current period of gainful employment began, and then compare them to their “dises”—a prefix I can only assume comes from the word that, as we all know, Dante used for “Hell.”

Illusion #1: I will start taking advantage of happy hours. First, a rule: much as you should divide the number of girls a guy has said he's slept with



by three, to be realistic you should multiply by three the number of drinks to which you preemptively limit yourself whenever beers are \$3 a pop. Still, happy hours ultimately kill your night: tipsiness precedes nausea precedes headache, and it's still only like 9:30 p.m.. Better to walk around, cook dinner, read a book, and catch up on email until it's bedtime anyway. And then start drinking.

Illusion #2: I will make extra money on the side. Freelance fees are a joke, and that's when you get them; selling drugs is probably lucrative, but much too dangerous for my taste. I secretly wish I could manufacture devices related to cultivating drugs, thereby tapping into that market while technically staying inside the law. But I don't have time, because I go to work for a living. Also, I was an English major.

Illusion #3: Dilbert will become not just understandable but actually funny. In fact, I do now totally get Dilbert. However, it remains unfunny. I guess that's actually depressing-er?

Illusion #4: I will become a morning person. Not only that, but I will meet my fellow rat-racers for pre-work breakfasts, wean myself off caffeine, and read the paper leisurely. Instead, I time my commute so that I arrive somewhere between five and ten minutes late, request \$.95 add-shots at Starbucks, and read most of the paper over coffee and the rest somewhere between five and fifteen minutes after I finish my coffee.

Illusion #5: I'll finally be a professional writer! B&W editors: please make checks payable to Aladdin's Lamp: Fine Products For Home-Growing Tobacco, Inc.

BLOGGER

I am not disillusioned with my job – I don't want to be, God damn it, nor does it make me bitter.

Heck, I love America. Strike that: I mean I love my desk in Northern Virginia.

My work in the field of applied humanities—or, as

they now call it, covering the Democratic primary—roils forward, an endless bull session on race, class, and gender. All moderated by the kindly professors at Fox News.

Is Barack Obama a shade of grey? Do working class Americans “cling” to their guns, or can a lint brush separate them? Did Hillary—a Brazilian soccer star, the last name is silent—find her voice among New Hampshire women?

Race, class, and gender. Smack an American flag pin on my lapel and you can add “nationalism” to the syllabus.

History is being made this cycle, and I see it in my inbox every morning. The dregs of press releases, links, counter-claims, research dumps, and one-line emails asking if you've posted yet mean that you've got 100 messages to read by noon. Then there's the RSS feeds, the cable televisions, the 5,000 fancy magazine words asking what-does-it-all-mean and —hey!—what's John McCain up to today? Superdelegates! Exit polls! Demographic warfare!

Then there are the “issues.” Everyone cares about the “issues,” and then you'll see that they don't get page views. This is considered an issue.

Melting ice, insurgents, China, subprime, the rise of corporate power and the collapse of the American worker, birth control, healthcare prices, collapsing pension system, and I'm sure I missed something here which someone will kindly point out IN ALL CAPS in the comments section and then I'll note it so you don't email my editor, then try some reporting, and then pick up my phone because I've got a conference call coming up where the campaign spokesmen mute and unmute the nagging scribes one by one so we can try to wrench out answers.



More death, more taxes, and a new poll mashing your weirdo opinions into a digestible series of binary boxes.

Six months to go. Four until the convention.

Sent from my Blackberry wireless

Illustrations by Maxine Keyes

Junior Confusion

BY HANNAH GOLDFIELD

I am not graduating this year. This fact seems negligible; I am a junior, and approximately seventy-five percent of my fellow Columbia undergrads are in the same boat. But I'm finding the prospect of another year of enrollment particularly daunting. So daunting, in fact, that I've decided to spend half of the next school year on a continent to which thousands of lost souls and Nazi war criminals before me have fled: South America.

I entered Columbia College in the fall of 2004 with the class of 2008. After a freshman year defined by the little-fish-in-a-big-sea phenomenon and humiliation surrounding the fact that I'd nearly failed a class called Intro to Computers—to *computers*, not even *computer science*—I was traumatized. Halfway through the following summer, I came to the conclusion that I simply couldn't go back, and so I decided to take a sabbatical. I interned for a literary magazine, I lived in Brooklyn, I tried to find myself.

My friends were confused and somewhat perturbed by my sudden departure—particularly the gay male with whom I had conspired to trick Housing. By way of some simple room switches in a Ruggles suite, we had planned to pull one over on the heteronormative bureaucrats in Hartley so that we could share a double. When I failed to materialize in the fall, Housing was quick to replace me—with a married SEAS female who was none too pleased about bunking with my guy friend.

A year later, I returned to Columbia, and quickly eased back into my freshman social circle. But my old classmates' acceptance has left me in a strange position. The vast majority of my friends and acquaintances are now seniors, so everybody's graduating—except me. Though many of them are quite partial to Columbia, and they are all a bit

nervous about being spit into the work force, they've seemed to be collectively sighing in relief these past few months. *We made it*, their newly relaxed faces convey as they throw back frothy beers during Senior Night at Havana Central. *Four years and look how far we've come.*

I keep finding myself sharing in their high spirits—until I remember that I had to sneak into 40 Days and swallow my dignity by emailing the CC Senior Dinner organizers to ask if I might attend this year, instead of sitting by my lonesome next year. I feel like a kid who just found out she was adopted, grasping for identity, unsure of my place in the world and in future issues of *Columbia College Today*. Am I a junior, or a senior? To which class's fund do I donate that penny I've been saving?

And here we have arrived at my fix-all solution. As soon as the semester ends, before I can visit anyone's new six-people-in-two-bedrooms off-campus apartments or feign excitement at their boring entry level jobs, I am cutting out, headed down to where the sun shines a little brighter, to travel and then study abroad for the first semester of my senior year. Some might say I'm in denial; I like to think of myself as delightfully adventurous and dizzy with wanderlust.

So what that after Commencement I will have no friends on campus and more than 30 miserable credits to go? None of that is going to matter when I'm at the discotheque at three a.m. in Buenos Aires, drunk off copious amounts of red wine and red meat, tangoing with some guy named Ernesto. I'll just close my eyes and sway to the music, "remembering" how high I threw my cap into the blue, blue sky during Class Day, the proud look on Bollinger's face and all that money I got from my grandparents for earning an incredibly useful B.A. If that's not the real world, then I don't care to join it. ♦

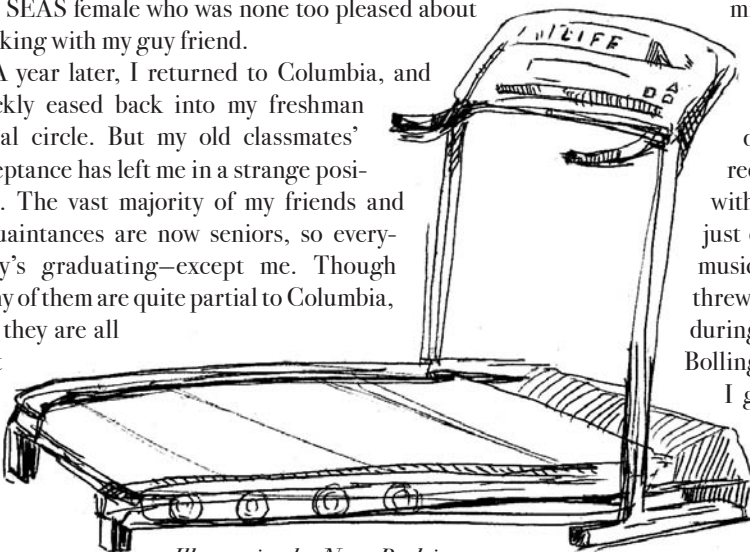


Illustration by Nora Rodriguez

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 THE BLUE AND WHITE staffers. Heed their words or perish!

Taylor Marie Walsh, *Editor-in-Chief Emeritus*

- 1) a weakness—for serial monogamy
- 2) an affinity—for American art of the 1980s
- 3) a preference—for studying on an incline
- 4) diet coke—for nutrients

Zachary van Schouwen, *Web Master*

- 1) Craigslist—for locating couches, textbooks, women, and apartments
- 2) Fabric softener—for touchable softness
- 3) A panini press—for making a single chicken pesto, then quietly rusting in the corner
- 4) A book—for reading. That is what books are for.

Paul Barndt, *Culture Editor*

- 1) bottle service at Lotus—for me and my crew
- 2) Pert Plus—for my hair
- 3) wall of John Paul II posters—for the ladies
- 4) Dance Dance Revolution—for my calves, i.e., for the ladies

Andrew McKay Flynn, *Features Editor*

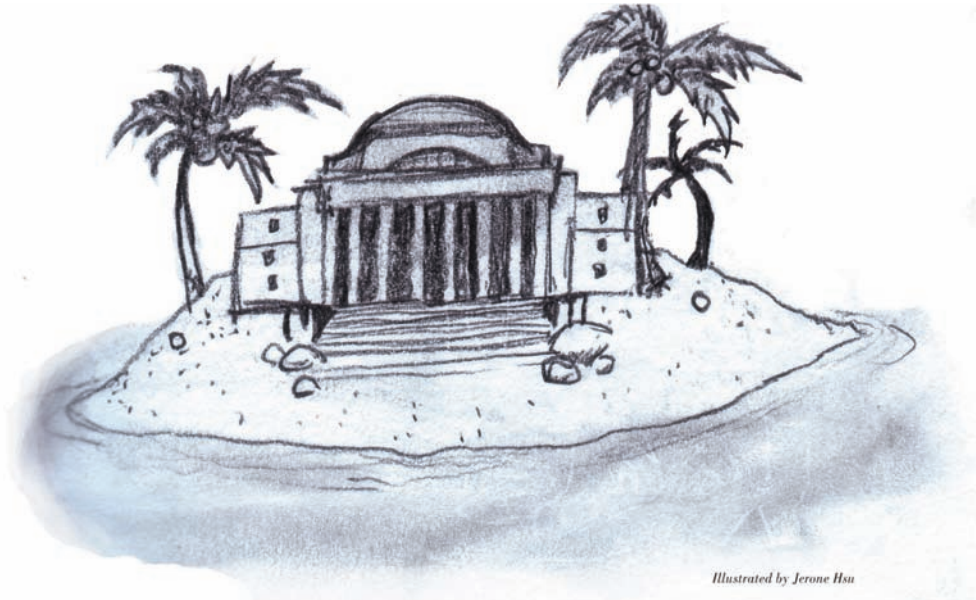
- 1) Sleep—for my mind and body
- 2) Manhattan Specials—for my mind and not my body
- 3) My bust of Thomas Jefferson—for the record, I have a bust of Thomas Jefferson
- 4) Win one—for the Gipper

Kate Linthicum, *Senior Editor*

- 1) A 6 a.m. wbar show—for your mother, your grandmother, and nobody else to listen to.
- 2) A job at the bartending agency—for a glimpse of the riches that will never be yours.
- 3) Privilege—to deny.
- 4) Scruples—to neglect.

Merrell Hambleton, *Writer*

- 1) Pinkberry—for... don't you?
- 2) Tom's—for Seinfeld.
- 3) Silver Moon—for Saturdays.
- 4) Taqueria—for ever.



Illustrated by Jerone Hsu

Freud and His Discontents

The Rejection and Reappropriation of Psychoanalysis

BY JULI WEINER

"The only time Freud's name comes up in discussion is when we talk about slips of the tongue," shrugged Columbia psychology professor Robert Krauss. "Every time you say 'unconscious motivation,' you don't cite Freud, just like any time you say 'gravity,' you don't cite Newton."

While Freud and Newton may personify their respective fields to comparable degrees, Krauss's analogy presupposes that the two currently have equal standing in the academy. The Physics Department may be explicitly grounded in Newton's scholarship, but the Psychology Department has had a significantly more fraught relationship with its ideological father figure. Most psychology professors and neuroscientists today tend to regard Freud as a character trapped within the confines of the history of science—brilliant for his time, but a modern anachronism. "Freud is really a historic figure," said Krauss, who teaches a class in the Psychology Department called Communication Theory. "He's a figure in the history of the field who made a certain contribution, and I think to a certain extent the field has assimilated these contributions and moved on," he said.

Rebecca Abbott, C'08, a religion and neuroscience double-major, agrees with Krauss that references to Freud's theories—if they are made at all—omit their Freudian origins. Professors "would never say 'Here's Freud's theory of denial,'" she said, "but they would talk about things like cognitive dissonance that can relate to his theory." Nonetheless, Abbott believes that students of psychology would benefit from a direct discussion of Freud and the influence of his work on the field. "I kind of wish that there was a little bit more psychoanalysis because I do think that it's valid," Abbott continued. "The only discussion that I can remember about Freud has been in my CC class."

Over the years, Freud's theories—and their episte-

mological and practical considerations—have receded deeper and deeper into the psychology faculty's collective unconscious. But they've been reappearing in various theoretical forms in humanities courses—curiously, with the scientific texts lately supplanting the more philosophical writings—and like all repressed traumas and desires, their manifestations are often distorted.



Professor Barbara Woike, chair of Psychology at Barnard, identified herself as one of a handful of professors in her department willing to teach Freud. Woike explained that while most professors will make general allusions to Freud in an introductory class, their view is that his arguments are not scientifically verifiable, and therefore not deserving of further analysis. "A lot of professors and students erroneously thought that his theories aren't of value because they're obsolete, because it's like comparing what we know now with what he knew one hundred years ago about psychology," she explained. "We don't want to criticize his theories based on what we know today, but to think of them as radical ideas."

Echoing this view is Dr. Jules Kerman, a practicing psychiatrist who teaches a graduate course in the Psychiatry Department entitled Sigmund Freud: Thinking and Theorizing. He admitted that while psychoanalysis is no longer embraced by academic psychology, it commanded considerable theoretical attention for the first half of the twentieth century. There was a sea-change in the 1960s with the advent of modern neuroscience, eventually leading to a steady decline in the study of Freud's theories of psychoanalysis in both the Barnard and Columbia psychology departments.

Kerman's own class is a microcosm of this phenomenon: the Thinking and Theorizing class is officially taught at the Columbia University Center for Psychoanalytic Training and Research, which is a subdivision of the Department of Psychiatry. "Tension is putting it mildly," he said of the attitude of the Psychiatry Department toward the inclusion of psychoanalysis. Out of a love for the material and a strong belief in its validity and importance, Kerman teaches the yearlong course free of charge to pre-professional analysts willing to go the extra mile—literally—to the Medical School on 168th Street.

He attributes the decline of instruction in psychoanalysis to the introduction of psychotropic medications—drugs like painkillers, antidepressants, and mood stabilizers—and the demand that they inspired for analysis-free quick fixes. He also cites economic conditions' contribution to the rejection, and eventual vilification, of psychoanalysis: many insurance companies refuse to pay for treatment, which understandably leads doctors and patients to the conclusion that the field has been invalidated. Moreover, the drop-off in analysis (with its emphasis on individualized patient care and the talking cure) has resulted in what Kerman described as physicians "coming out of psychiatry residences much less able to listen to patients and respond to them the way patients deserve to be responded to."



If students want a serious, thorough study of Freud's work, they're going to have to leave Schermerhorn's psychology labs in favor of Hamilton Hall seminars. But the treatment of Freud in history, art, and literature classes is an instrumental one. It's not often a face-value reading of Freud, but an effort to apply his theories of sexuality, human development, and

brain function in the service of a variety of pedagogical aims.

Many modern art history classes will read Rosalind Krauss' Freudian reading of artist Donald Judd's work. Twentieth-century art history classes frequently use theories of psychoanalysis to inform their interpretations of surrealist, feminist, and minimalist works. The Middle East and Asian Languages and Cultures department is currently offering a class that pairs Freud's readings with those of French philosopher Jacques Derrida, but the class is more an exercise in Derrida's practice of deconstruction than in understanding Freud's theories or beliefs. Across Broadway, castration anxiety and the Oedipal complex have become staple catchphrases in Margaret Vandenburg's Modernism class.

The study of Freud can also be found in the basement of Barnard's Lehman Hall, in a European history course called Vienna and the Birth of the Modern. The course dedicates an entire meeting to a discussion of selections from Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams*. The class, taught by Associate Professor Deborah Coen, has not been tasked with determining the validity of any of Freud's theories themselves—though Coen does admit that she's "sympathetic to the charge that [Freud's theories] are not scientific."

To inform a reading of *Interpretation of Dreams*, the class turned to its primary text, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna* by Carl Schorske. Students in the class were quick to point out how Schorske invoked his subject's methods, contextualizing Freud by psychoanalyzing him.

Schorske postulated that the reasons for Freud's theories may have been his insecurity as a Jew in turn-of-the-century Vienna or his belief that he was a disappointment to his father.

In fact, Schorske

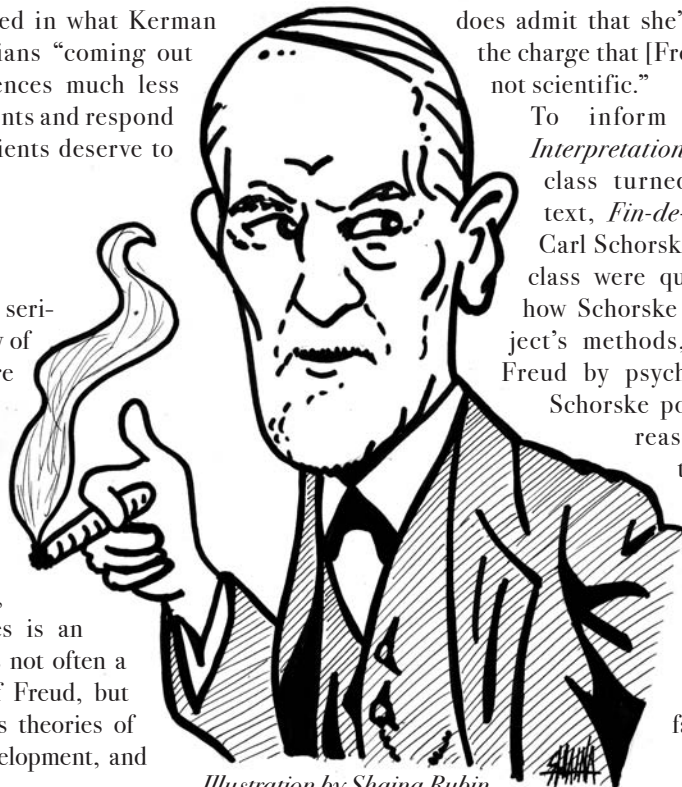


Illustration by Shaina Rubin

used the term “psychological defense” to attempt to draw a coherent narrative of Freud’s work and life choices. Mirroring Freud’s reading of the Oedipus myth as a statement about the universality of childhood sexuality and the taboo of incest, Schorske compared Freud to Hannibal to trace Freud’s personal and political motivations. His essay reduced Freud to a paradigmatic character in human history from whom conclusions could be drawn about the Viennese cultural elite, just as Oedipus was to Freud an icon for the development of humanity, both as a species and individually. But it was agreed that Schorske’s book, though certainly a successful catalyst for class discussion, did not employ modern historians’ practices. The application of Freud’s theories was as alien to them as it would have been to Freud.



Freud’s work has been in the Core for years, and it has been included to further CC’s mission—to illustrate the organization of social, political, and religious communities—rather than as a freestanding text to be read on its own. “I ask my students to treat reading Freud like they would the Bible or the Koran,” said Professor Michael Stanislawski, the Chair of Contemporary Civilization. It was a sunny Tuesday, and professors had assembled in the Core Curriculum conference room to discuss pedagogical approaches to the works of Freud in the CC classroom. Stanislawski sat at the head of a long conference table, around which there were at least twelve chairs, but many of his professors, like students in a seminar who hadn’t quite finished the reading, chose the chairs clustered against the wall.

“Controversially, I suggest that we give ourselves permission to do what we did with Kant: That is, not to attempt to—what seems like a grave sin in CC—understand every word of the text. At some point they’re almost impossible to understand. But get the main point; get a good sense of the argument and overarching theory. I, as the chair of CC, give you permission.” Nods of understanding and muffled laughter spread

through the crowd.

Stanislawski suggested that Contemporary Civilization professors start their in-class discussions on Freud with three caveats: first, an acknowledgment that Freud, like Plato, believed that males were the paradigms of human beings and of human sexuality; second, that Freud considered himself an empirical scientist whose ideas were subject to revision, unlike modern neuroscientists; and lastly, that it is not the aim of the class to evaluate the scientific merit of any theory.

This year marks a significant change on the Core Curriculum syllabus: CC classes have begun reading Freud’s more scientifically explicit, less philosophical texts: *Civilization and Its Discontents*, deemed “low Freud,” “too Nietzschean” and unpopular with students, was thrown out of the syllabus in favor of *The Libido Theory, Formulations Regarding the Two Principles in Mental Functioning*, and *On Narcissism*. The last of which, Professor Stanislawski said with a smile, “is a hugely important discussion at a place like Columbia University.”

The book-swap might seem like just a typical shift in the CC syllabus, an event that everyone in line for the Hamilton elevator occasionally witnesses. But in the context of the goal of CC—understanding oneself in terms of one’s position in a community—turning inwards to understand the self through psychoanalysis is a fairly substantial change. The syllabus will, of course, return to a discussion about broader social functioning in the following week (when students read W.E.B. DuBois’ *The Souls of Black Folk*), but students will enter it armed with self-awareness gleaned from technical, jargon-heavy books about psychoanalysis.

Meanwhile, whether it realizes it or not—and because we’re discussing Freud, it’s safe to assume the latter—the id of CC is signaling a desire to return to teaching Freud for Freud’s sake, a desire to study the material without context and without a historical subtext. What would Freud have thought? Although no one can know for sure, psychoanalysis would most likely reveal that it’s what he would have wanted, too. ♦

“I ask my students to treat reading Freud like they would the Bible or the Koran.”

The Sound and the Theory

BY J. JOSEPH VLASITS

Beneath the clashing plates, the clinking silverware and the yells in John Jay dining hall there is a whirr, a buzz, a drone emanating from the machinery that sustains the food factory—from heaters and coolers, lights and vents. No matter how loud the white noise is in 207 Mathematics, you manage to put it into the back of your mind, focusing instead on the unintelligible mumbling of your Linear Algebra professor. But the notes and harmonies produced by these drones unconsciously set the tone of conversations—and test scores.

White noise harmonies are everywhere, and while few will ever stop to ponder their significance, their effects have been the subject of debate since the beginning of Western thought, when Plato condemned all but the Phrygian and Dorian modes as dangerous to public health. More recently, the 1950s witnessed musicologist Deryck Cooke's classic attempt to provide a systematic account of the relationship between music and the emotions. As anyone who has spent finals season wading through the sea of campers in Butler knows, Columbia is not famous for fostering a high level of mental health. But, could sound be the reason behind this? Were the dissonances lurking in the white noise the reason for Primal Screams and Butler breakdowns? Armed with a pitch pipe and a copy Cooke's *Language of Music*, I set about campus, desperate for the ideal study space.

My search began in the behemoth of glass and steel that is our student center. Trekking up to Tasti D-Lite Lounge seemed like a logical choice for pouring over Contemporary Civilizations's deep philosophical treatises. But alas! A dissonant war between the Coca-Cola and Pepsi-Cola vending machines had broken out, producing a most excruciating augmented fourth, or, as a medieval composer would call it, *Diabolus in Musica*, an interval so reviled that no

one would use it for fear of divine retribution.

So, fearing the eternal, harmful effects of this dissonance on my well-tuned corpus, I retreated down the ramps to Café 212 in hopes of finding peace. It was late, so all of the kiosks had closed up and all that I could hear was a dominant seventh produced by the dormant refrigerators and the ceiling vents, which evoked the feeling that Cooke correctly identified as mourning and loss. These dirge-like tones reminded me of 602 Hamilton Hall, where two buzzes from the vent and one whine from the fluorescent lighting created an inversion of the dominant seventh chord, like the heartbreaking twang of Robert Johnson's *Crossroad Blues*—the perfect atmosphere for *Civilization and its Discontents*.



Illustration by Shaina Rubin

Solace was not to be found in the titanic, industrial building that is Pupin Physics Laboratories, which exuded Cooke's "stoic" variety of depression. The Physics Library, sitting far above the Manhattan Project's forgotten beginnings, seemed to resonate

only a monotonous A. Upon close inspection, however, the bowels of the building emanated a deep pulsing C, creating a minor third, which any student of Music Hum knows means sad, sad, sad.

Fed up with gloom, I turned to the names engraved on Butler's frieze. Certainly, Plato's name would only appear on a building of dazzling resonance. Once inside, I decided to take on the computer lab, despite fears that the plethora of tones would result in the same sort of discord; I proceeded cautiously. But, the three tones I heard—between the humming of the vents, the whirring of the computers, the beeping of the smoker detectors—formed that perfect interval, the deep consonance of stacked fifths, that the theologian would have identified with the Holy Trinity. Some students tapped out their essays, others labored diligently over problem sets and computer programs, and I knew that in the most unlikely of places, I found eternal harmony and the ideal study space. ♦

Speak, Institutional Memory

David Sidorsky on Everyone He Knew

BY ANDREW FLYNN

Columbia Philosophy Professor David Sidorsky is skeptical about revisionist history. He wonders, “whether revisionism represents correction history, or whether it represents simply what the fashions in the academy come up with.” I told him that I thought it could be both, and he looked off into the distance. “In theory it’s both,” he shook his head, “in practice, I don’t know if there ever is revisionist history based on reexamining the data and coming up with a contrary hypothesis.”

Sidorsky’s office, like the others on the seventh floor of Philosophy Hall, is old and the color of the walls has faded, but heavy wooden molding and inset bookcases convey the gravitas reminding visitors that the paint was once fresh and Jacques Barzun was once provost. Sidorsky remembers the gravitas—when an air of aristocracy and noblesse oblige pervaded the university and Columbia College was wary of letting professors trained in Europe teach its courses. For 49 years, Sidorsky has taught political philosophy, history of philosophy, and literary theory. He smiles slyly, and often appears lost in thought, but when he speaks, sentences on every subject pour forth fully-formed, without the ums and likes of less refined thinkers.

Sidorsky has a story for every occasion, and he remembers the Lionel Trilling-Jacques Barzun era in minute detail. “Well, I knew Barzun and Trilling very slightly,” he told me, “Our department had a chip on its shoulder against Barzun, I think unjustly. They felt he shouldn’t be interfering in our business.” At the time, General Studies, Columbia College, Barnard, and the graduate school were all rigidly separated—Sidorsky taught in GS before receiving his Ph.D., and hardcore CC partisans like Trilling would only teach the College—and the College would not allow GS to grant a B.A.. “GS gave a Bachelor of Science—even to people who majored in English” Sidorsky said. “The college had a very fine esprit de corps. There was no sense then of the need to go co-ed. But, when it happened it improved the

academic standing of the college.”

Sidorsky’s own education at New York University and the New School brought him into contact with some of the premier European thinkers of the era. He befriended German-American political philosopher Hannah Arendt, who lived in Morningside Heights, and he has the distinction of having studied—albeit briefly—with the pre-Straussian Leo Strauss. Sidorsky recalled Strauss’s teaching style: “Hobbes he taught straight—he didn’t teach the esoteric. Spinoza he taught fairly straight. Rousseau he taught very straight... He didn’t really become Straussian, and have all those conservative students, until he went to Chicago.”

Then, Sidorsky came to Columbia. A story: sometime in the late nineteen-teens, Frank Tannenbaum, a young Austrian anarchist, let some homeless people into a church, breaking open the door and criminally trespassing. He went to jail, but the penal system and the judge liked him, so they sent him to Columbia. The dean at the time wanted to make sure that Tannenbaum didn’t get in trouble—he was, after all, an ex-convict and the student body was mostly WASPs. Undergraduate Albert Redpath, of the financial brokerage firm Auchincloss, Parker, Redpath, was called in by this dean who said: “There’s this fellow Frank Tannenbaum, and I want you to go to lunch with him and some other fellows to see that everything is going straight, that he’s happy and getting educated. I’ll pay for the lunch.”

“But who should I take?” asked young Albert.

“Take some straightforward kids,” the dean told him. Redpath happened to be enrolled in a philosophy course in which alphabetized seating was required, and so he sat next to one John Herman Randall, Jr. (When Randall was in his twenties he would write *The Origins of the Western Mind*, which would form the basis of Contemporary Civilization.) Randall’s father was pastor of the liberal Community Church, and Randall was a very bright kid. So, Redpath thought, I’ll take Randall to lunch. Randall, in

turn, knew other philosophy students—Horace Friess, whose father was the principal of Randall’s high school, and James Guttman. So, they all had lunch at the Faculty House every Thursday. In fact, those four had lunch together from 1918 until—give or take—1970.

“Our department was very collegial,” Sidorsky remembered. He worked with them all: Randall, Guttman, Friess—all heirs to that other famous Columbian, John Dewey—and opponents of Sidney Hook, Communist-cum-Trotskyite-cum-neoconservative, and Sidorsky’s former teacher. (Incidentally, Sidorsky gave the keynote address at the Hook centennial, when prominent conservatives like Irving Kristol and Hilton Kramer dropped out, disagreeing with Cornel West’s appearance at the event. “West was grateful,” Sidorsky chuckled.)

He can also point out the building on Broadway where Dewey cheated on his first wife, Alice, and was acquainted with his second wife, Roberta. He particularly remembers one lunch he had with Roberta, right around the time Ernest Nagel, Columbia philosopher of science and *not* a pragmatist, argued that Dewey knew little about the hard sciences. “I once was having lunch with Roberta Dewey,” Sidorsky said. “She was a very good cook, and she cooked some really good gefilte fish, really good gefilte fish-balls. And she said to me, very aggressively, ‘How does Ernest Nagel say that [Dewey] doesn’t really know science?’ And, I said, ‘Well, he meant technical physics, he didn’t mean he doesn’t know science.’ But, she said ‘No, no!’ We spent vacations in the Bay of Fundy in Nova Scotia, and there was a general store there with a little quiz and you had to answer five questions and you’d get the prize. And there were five scientific questions, and Dewey would knock them off like nothing—every time there were new questions, five questions—BOOM! All five, get the prize. How does Nagel say he doesn’t know science?’”

As Sidorsky took another breath to continue his story, the clanging of a fire

bell interrupted his near-monologue. For several minutes, he was content to scream above the din, but soon began a slow descent from the top of Philosophy Hall. Along the way, he recounted the story of his friend Charles Frankel, who was the last in line of Columbia Deweyans to have studied directly with the man. “Charlie Frankel was a hard-headed liberal Democrat who became Assistant Secretary of State for Cultural Affairs and is the father of the National Endowment for the Humanities,” Sidorsky told me. “Tragically, there was a time when this neighborhood was not so good, [and] Frankel decided to move up to Bedford. Frankel spoke for the General Education Conference and a very interesting thing happened. At the end of his speech, Quentin Anderson, who is one of the great professors of American literature at Columbia, said to Charles Frankel, whose Ph.D. thesis was on the French Enlightenment, ‘Charlie, you still believe in optimism about human nature, you still don’t recognize the evil in human nature.’ And he said, ‘Yes I do! I’ve just been speaking about human rights and what the good parts are about human rights, and the bad parts. I’ve always recognized evil.’ And he pointed at me and said, ‘Don’t you agree David?’ And I said, ‘No Charlie, I agree with Quentin. You and Deweyan optimism don’t recognize evil implicit in human nature.’

“About a month later, for some crazy reason, a group of Rastafarians drove up to Bedford, killed the woman in the house next door to Frankel and then murdered Frankel and his wife.” Sidorsky shook his head. “Maybe he’s right! Maybe original sin is the wrong way to look at human beings. But, anyway, the story works against Charles.”♦

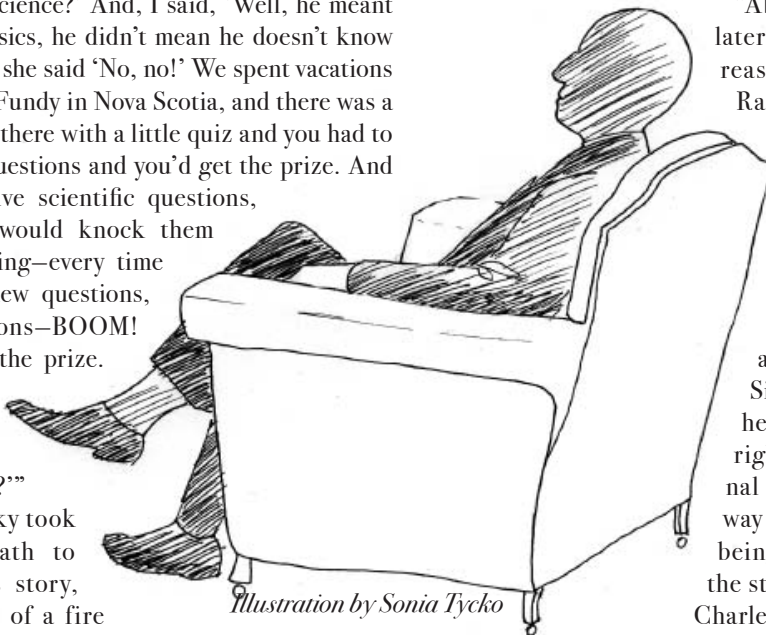


Illustration by Sonia Tycko

I'Epicure

Before Emeril Lagasse, there was Jacques Pépin: French chef, author of over 25 books and columns in The New York Times and Food and Wine magazine, host of nine public television shows, and Columbia graduate. Pépin was one of America's very first culinary personalities and is as warm and engaging in person as he is in writing and on TV. I sat down with him in his modest office at Manhattan's French Culinary Institute, where he has served as a dean since 1988.

THE BLUE AND WHITE: You graduated from Columbia's General Studies program—what year was that?

Jacques Pépin: I think I graduated in '69 or '70, because I graduated from the graduate school in '72.

B&W: You went to graduate school at Columbia as well?

JP: Yes, I was scheduled for a PhD and I acquired a master's along the way, and basically I finished all my requirements for the PhD but never wrote my thesis because they didn't accept the idea of my dissertation. Interestingly enough, because now they would be very happy with it. It was a history of French food—context, civilization and literature—and in 1970, or whatever, they said, "Food, are you crazy?" Now I've been teaching at Boston University for 23 or 24 years and we have a class in the graduate school at BU on the history of food—context, civilization and literature—which I started maybe twelve, fifteen years ago, with Julia Child. So it's interesting the way things come around.

B&W: So food is now considered an intellectual endeavor?

JP: Certainly, yes. We have had a bunch of dissertations at BU in the last eight, ten years and certainly there have been some very serious studies, especially in anthropology, sociology, and history, on food. I mean political decisions decide the flow of food in the world and who is going to die of hunger and who is going to eat. You have

people like Lévi-Strauss, a famous anthropologist, discussing food at great length. Of course for me I came from the other end, having been a cook all my life, since I left home when I was 13 years old to go into apprenticeship.

B&W: In France?

JP: In France, yes. And I came into studying after I came here. I went to Columbia for—forever, practically! I came to this country in September 1959 and three weeks later I was enrolled at Columbia.

B&W: So you went here for almost 15 years, then?

JP: Oh yeah. I'm very stubborn. I went on the student boat, which picked up people in Le Havre, in France, and those were all American students who spent the summer in Europe, so we were, I don't know, a thousand students. It was a chartered cruise boat—there were barely planes at the time, remember. All of those students were from all over the country. So I asked someone, a professor who was on board, I said, "I'm going to New York"—we spoke French because I didn't speak English. I said, "What is the best school there?" He said, "Well, it's Columbia University." I said, great, I'd never heard of it; I went to Columbia. Two weeks after I was here I went into an office in General Studies, and I eventually found someone who spoke French and I said I want to enroll in the class and that's what I did. It cost \$30 a credit at the time.

B&W: Did you like Columbia?

JP: I loved Columbia! It was my second home.

B&W: Do you remember 1968? Were you involved at all?

JP: Well, I was yelling like everyone else, walking around. It coincided with the whole upheaval of the students in 1968 in Paris, and I think it still was during De Gaulle and since I used to work for De Gaulle, I was interested.

B&W: What did you do for De Gaulle?

JP: I was the chef of De Gaulle in France.

B&W: His personal chef?

JP: Of three presidents, yes, before I got here. I was 20 years old, 21.

B&W: So you reached success fairly quickly—you'd already been cooking for seven years.

JP: At the time, the cook was at the lower hand of the social ladder. Now we are geniuses, I don't know what happened. But at that time any good mother wanted her child to be a lawyer, a doctor, not a cook.

B&W: Did your mother want you to be a cook?

JP: Not really, no. But my mother had a restaurant.

B&W: So you were born into it.

JP: Well, sort of. We had blinders because my father was a cabinetmaker and my mother was in the restaurant business. I never thought that I could be a doctor or a professor or anything like that. See we didn't have

television and there was barely any radio so I didn't know I could become famous in 30 minutes.

B&W: What do you think inspired that change, where all a sudden this obsession with food and eating and cooking developed?

JP: This is not something new for Europe, you're born with that. In Italy, in France, the family cooks, you sit down for dinner, food is an integral part of your life, in communication and in being together. And you are defined often by your culinary identity. In America, there was never a cuisine that dominated; we are part of a country that is made of ethnic groups. But after the war all those G.I.s came back from Europe, and then people went back on vacation, so all of a sudden everything started changing. And people started turning away from the TV dinner of the 50s—they

wanted to re-discover their roots and all that. And the women's liberation of

the 60s: women wanted to get out of the kitchen, so they became professional chefs, and men went into the kitchen to invade the domain.

There was a type of crisscrossing current. In the 60s, you know, organic gardening and health and so forth, all of that was part of a movement, and *nouvelle cuisine* in the 70s. And after that, the explosion. All of a sudden people were concerned about what they were putting in their mouths.

B&W: There's sort of this reputation that people in France eat so differently than they do in America.

JP: There is actually much more similarity than there was 50 years ago. In France

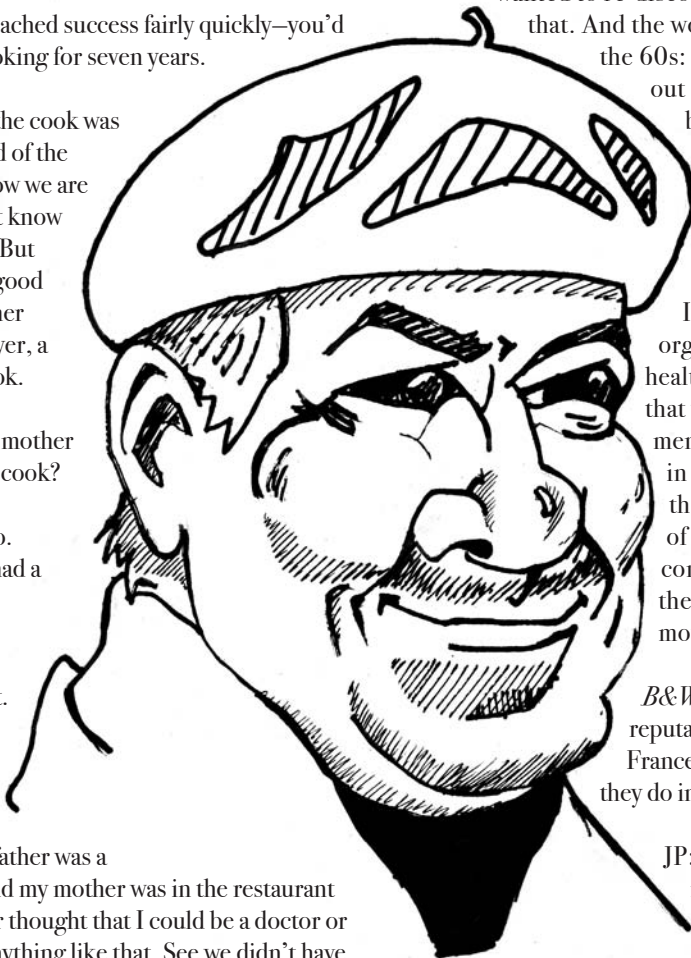


Illustration by Julia Butareva

the kids are getting fatter, they eat between meals, which we never did. They eat a lot of candy and stuff that we never did when I was a kid, we never drank soda. There was no soda anyway! It didn't exist! We drank water. And then by the time we were five they put a little bit of wine in your water, like off a teaspoon, so that you would be part of it too. And conversely, in America, people are getting very much into organic food.

B&W: Are you one of those people who subscribes to the idea of the meal as a sanctuary? Or do you think you can eat while you're doing something else?

JP: Well, both, certainly. You go to the ballpark and eat a hotdog looking at whatever. That's fine! But certainly, in almost 43 years of marriage, I can't think of anytime that my wife and I would be at home and we didn't sit down, open a bottle of wine, sometimes two, and eat. That's a ritual we've had going for over 40 years. I can't ever think of anytime we eat standing over the sink.

B&W: I've read about the organic movement and how much better it is to eat organic but I'm a student, sometimes I can't afford organic produce and products, so how do you get around that, what do you say to people—

JP: Well, so you won't die in good health!

B&W: That's it?

JP: It's kind of a joke in many ways for me. When I came here, and when Alice Waters opened the restaurant in 1971, Chez Panisse in Berkeley, and the whole movement started, and people said organic, I said, "What's the big deal?" My mother was an organic gardener—of course, she never heard the word organic. We didn't have any artificial fertilizer; we used to go to a farm and get cow manure or horse manure or whatever. Everyone was an organic gardener whether they liked it or not! But now the movement gets crazy, with vegetarianism and vegan and so forth.

B&W: What do you think about vegans and veg-

etarians?

JP: Well, for me it doesn't really make much sense. If people want to be this way, fine with me. But when they become militant against you...then you know, that's terrorism in another way. They can be this way if they want, don't ask me to be this way. The people who know animals the best of all are the farmers, who live in communion with animals in the context of nature, who would never mistreat an animal. I'm not talking about those enormous feedlot farms, I'm talking about a farmer who has a couple of cows and chickens. I've never met a farmer who was a vegetarian.

B&W: But those kinds of farmers are disappearing, no?

JP: Yeah, unfortunately. They're coming back in some other ways but it's pretty disheartening what we've done in the last 20, 30 years to the soil, to everything. It's terrible, so it's time to go back to organic farming, which we can do!

B&W: Do think that's it important to have an academic education to be a chef?

JP: Yeah, to be anything. When I was a young man in Paris, and you met a girl and she said what do you do, you said, I'm a cook and by the time she heard that, well, that didn't rate very well. So I went to Columbia and at some point I thought that I would even teach. But then I went back to cooking because that's really what I know the best, what I love the best, but I came back with another psychological outlook. I don't have a complex because I have an education. If you don't have an education you are in terrible danger of taking educated people seriously. That's quite true, probably Oscar Wilde who said that.

B&W: Do you have any guilty pleasure foods, like pre-packaged foods? Do you eat Oreos, or something like that?

JP: Nothing is guilty for me, if I feel like eating it. I love Oreos! I don't eat them very often, but yes, I love Oreos.

B&W: So you don't have any strict rules for yourself

about food?

JP: No. I've never really followed a diet in my life, which I probably should—I drink way too much wine. But the point is that anything in nature cooked simply in small portions with some wine, it's not going to hurt you. Following the season is very important, I think, much more than people realize. That anticipation—you know, you're in January and you see those raspberries and they may be good, I mean your eye may believe it's raspberry, but your palate doesn't really believe it.

B&W: A couple years ago I heard you speak at the International Festival of Arts and Ideas in New Haven, Connecticut. I remember you saying that your favorite food as a child was a baguette and dark chocolate.

JP: Oh yeah, and even now people say, what is the greatest food in the world you can think of? I say, if you really have an extraordinary bread—baguette—and if you have extraordinary butter—to beat bread and butter, it's very hard.

B&W: This a broad question, but what do you think food says about a society?

JP: Well, it's an interesting thing, if you look through the tribulations of French food, the chef came to the top as we are now and then back to the bottom and so forth. But it seems when the cooking comes to the greatest apex, there is always some type of cataclysm to follow. We had the apex of French cooking just prior to the French Revolution. Then we had it during the Belle Epoque, just prior to the first World War, and so forth.

B&W: Maybe it's a sign of too much comfort, and indulgence.

JP: Probably, just like the cooking during the Roman Empire. A level of sophistication, and more sophis-

tication, from eating pearl to eating the brain of red flamingo, to whatever it was. I guess we're getting there here.

B&W: Uh-oh, the apocalypse is coming.

JP: Apocalypse now. Or later, rather. Yes, but what has happened in America in the last—certainly my time, 40 years or so—has been nothing short of miraculous, you know, in the food, and then in the wine, and now in the cheese, and bread-making and so forth. The sophistication of people is just amazing compared to what it was. It has changed a great deal. And for me that's very important. This is an expression of civilization,

"I say, if you really
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it's very hard"

around the table. I couldn't define cuisine better than I think Lévi-Strauss, who said that cooking is the process by which nature is transformed to culture. And it's true, the difference between our far, far away ancestors eating raw meat and all that...by the time the fire was discovered, and cooking, and then all of the elements, all the tradition, all the culture and all the rituals

of the table coming out, whether it's for a baptism or a Bar Mitzvah or a marriage, bring the people together, and those different rituals in different countries are what civilization is all about.

Louis XVIII in France at the Congress of Vienna in 1823 talked to Talleyrand—Talleyrand was his foreign minister and a great epicurean and hedonist. The King said, I have to give you more advisors. He said, no, I need more pots and more cooks. This is what politics is. And deals are decided around the table. I mean for me—I do a new book, first thing my editor invites me to a good restaurant in New York to discuss an idea.

B&W: And the wine brings out the ideas, right?

JP: Exactly. That's how a man seduces a woman, too, with food and wine, right? Partly, you know?

—Hannah Goldfield

Taking a GAP SEMESTER

by RACHEL



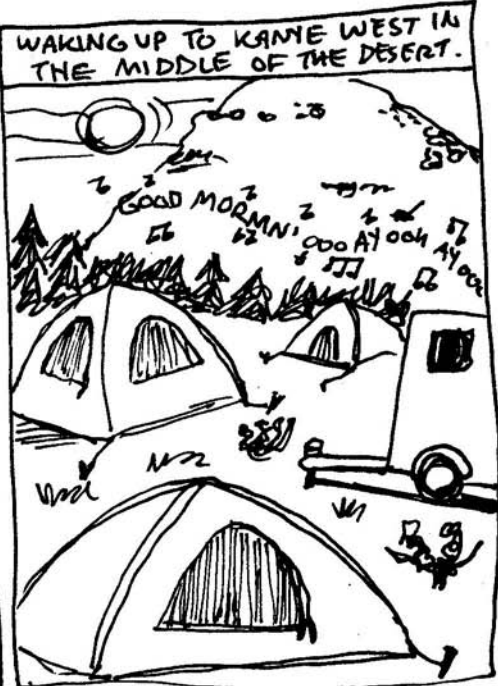


Illustration by Rachel Lindsay

We Give Up: Who?

Who Sings the Nation-State?

Gayatri Spivak and Judith Butler

Seagull Books, 2007

120 pages, \$19.95

Who Sings the Nation-State? is a substantial book, but ultimately it is less a legitimate work of theory than a product designed to appeal to students at the Book Culture check-out counter in the same way the new John Grisham book appeals to someone at the Wal-Mart register. The book's central conceit lies more in its brand—Judith Butler and Gayatri Spivak, the Lennon and McCartney of postmodern theory—than in its actual content. And that's a shame, because the book's refreshingly accessible subject holds such potential.

The book is structured as a conversation between the two with no introduction, no context, and no explanation of when, where, and why this conversation is taking place. The text suggests that the conversation began prior to the first page, as a few sentences later Spivak refers to a statement by Butler that appears nowhere in the book. And in the final pages, there are anonymous questions that seem to be from an academic audience, yet previously there has been no indication that this is a public conversation. This is either lazy editing or an ill-founded stylistic choice. In the case of a book whose main strands of thought center on the performative aspects of power, context is vital.

The title refers to the problem of a national anthem. Who is entitled to sing it, and in what language are they allowed to do so? Butler says that when illegal immigrants sing the national anthem in California, they are staking a claim to inclusion and equality. Spivak, on the other hand, points to India, where the national anthem is only sung in Hindi, even

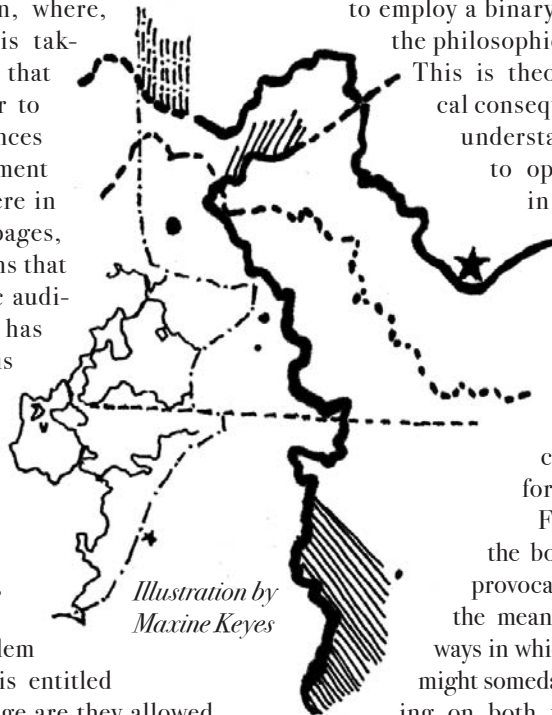
though it's written in Bengali. In each country, real power is exercised through language, and the ways in which power is negotiated via language calls for close analysis.

Unfortunately, the book does not live up to its promise because it never sets the conditions for its own argument. Butler begins with a discourse on the meaning of "state" and how we should understand those who are effectively "stateless" and yet still under the control of state power. She gestures to those currently imprisoned in Guantanamo Bay and also to the Palestinians in Gaza, among others. She suggests that we might pause and consider states first simply as "the conditions in which we find ourselves" before moving on to a more juridico-political conception. "What kind of state are we in when we start to think about the state?" she asks.

In answering Butler's question, Spivak refuses to employ a binary opposition between the philosophical and the practical. This is theory aimed at practical consequence, specifically at understanding what it means to oppose a nation-state in which minorities are refused certain rights and to oppose a global capital order that has no interest in, among other things, providing clean drinking water for the poor.

For all of its problems, the book does raise several provocative questions about the meaning of states and the ways in which post-national states might someday be organized, drawing on both the European Union model and on what Spivak calls "critical regionalisms." It's worth a quick read, and it's short enough to stomach in one sitting.

—Glover Wright



Pseudoscience and Poetry

Rhythm and Race in Modernist Poetry and Science

Michael Golston

Columbia University Press, 2007

296 pages, \$50.00

The obvious challenge of good academic writing is to find something interesting to say. Michael Golston tries to meet it with *Rhythm and Race in Modernist Poetry and Science* by choosing an intrinsically interesting subject. The enduring fascination with such studies as physiognomy (the pseudo-science of determining personality from physical features) is clear even in Columbia classrooms—does anyone else remember that lecture in *Frontiers*?

But that was a science course—what does this stuff mean to a professor of English? *Rhythm and Race* fails most where it asks—but fails to fully answer—precisely that question. Above all, Golston is an English scholar. And he tackles intellectual historical, scientific, and anthropological issues as only an English scholar would: with close readings and lots of quotations.

Rhythm and Race is mostly about the poetry and poetics of the Modernist poets Ezra Pound and William Butler Yeats. In the final chapter on William Carlos Williams (included, of course, only to “indicate directions for future investigation”), Golston summarizes his thesis: Pound and Yeats “considered innovations in rhythm critical to the creation of a modern poetry, and both derived their ideas of rhythm in part from contemporary theories of Rhythmics, which generally regarded rhythm as a fundamental and organic periodicity linking the human body, language, history, landscape, and culture.” Golston writes mostly about the critical status of rhythm in the creation of Modernist poetry; he is less concerned with its derivation from Rhythmics, and he scarcely more than mentions the contemporaneous scientific examination of rhythm as an “organic periodicity,” despite the promise of the book’s title.

Which is really too bad—some

of these sciences are really, really weird. Golston seems to include them not because they are fascinating in themselves, but because he will need them for his poetry analysis. He quickly sketches a conception of America as a curious racial experiment, where the march-like rhythms of Europeans are polluted by the jungle beats of slaves and the primordial tribal rhythms of the native inhabitants. Another great pseudo-science is “Vorticism”: “Will and consciousness are our VORTEX,” declared the first Vortex manifesto. Most of these “sciences” seem remarkably like literary theory: carefully crafted and aesthetically motivated. Undoubtedly this is part of what made them compelling to the poets whose work is examined here, but this is the sort of direct historical statement that Golston cautiously avoids.

Perhaps Golston aims to show that there is a poetical reading of, for example, Jacques-Dalcroze’s science of Eurythmics, which aimed to develop a racially informed regimen of dance and movement to develop a healthy and physiologically appropriate relationship between body and mind (and which inspired an 80s duo with one really catchy song). But despite his extremely careful and astute readings, he does not prove that the “absolute, primal” rhythm in Pound’s *Pisan Cantos* or Yeats’ belief that prosodic ability lies in the blood would have been substantially different *without* weird science.

The book’s chapter titles are key. Who wouldn’t want to read about “Amphibious Centaurs?” How about “Bad breath and Ghost Limbs?” Readers more familiar with Yeats might be interested

in exactly what he meant when he said that using blank verse gave him “bad breath.” And it’s disappointing that the chapter on “A sort of Eugenic Paganism” has nothing to do with Eugenics or Paganism and everything to do with Walter Benjamin. Like the book generally, the idea may be insightful, even profound, but it somehow doesn’t deliver on an exciting but ultimately false promise.

—Alexander Statman

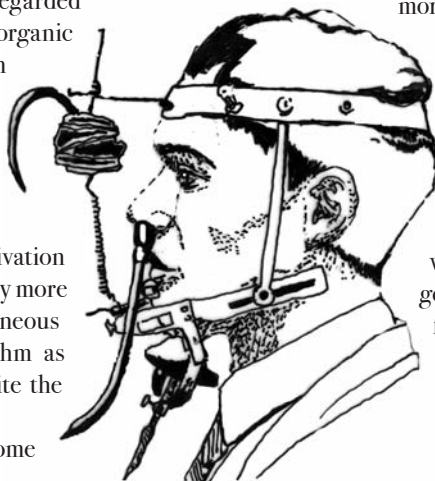


Illustration by Maxine Keyes

Portrait of the Author

Dressed to the nines in a button-down vest and bow tie, a baby-faced Truman Capote lounges on a futon, gazing into the camera with soft lips and a come-hither stare. In the dust jacket of his first published novel, *Other Voices, Other Rooms*, the author looks more like an underage callboy than an up-and-coming writer. As early as 1947, Capote fetishized himself in an inherently fetishistic medium: the author photo.

Columbia Professor Robert Krauss, a psychologist specializing in gesture communication and a sometime photographer himself, has his own thoughts on dust jacket photos. “Photographs are a version of our self,” he said. “The real question is, what is the self that [the authors] are trying to project?”

Highly stylized and idiosyncratic, Tom Wolfe’s author photographs rival even Capote’s in affectation. In Wolfe’s photos (and in real life), the author is a modern-day dandy—he wears his trademark white three-piece suit with a stiff patterned tie, a breast pocket handkerchief, and a perpetual smirk.

But cultivating the aesthetic of a Southern plantation owner can alienate even the most avid literary fan. “I hate that guy. He looks like a total douchebag,” said David Patterson, manager of Book Culture and GS ’10. “Showmanship seems anathema to literature. Or at least serious literature,” he added.

A quick glance at new books shows a trend toward the non-noteworthy. In an unscientific tally, 19 of 35 recent fiction works at Book Culture featured a banal author portrait.

The Brooklyn Writers—a cabal of earnest literary wunderkinds—are the modern counterparts to Capote and Wolfe’s affected personas. Preferences include black-rimmed glasses and post-modernism (though the latter doesn’t appear in photographs). Members are Jonathan Safran Foer, Nicole Krauss (who happens to be Safran Foer’s wife), and honorary members Benjamin

Kunkel (from Manhattan) and Miranda July (from Los Angeles). But unlike Capote and Wolfe, none of these authors’ photos suggest an obvious showmanship. Rather, their photos suggest a studied casualness—contrived in its anti-showmanship.

Joshua Ferris leads the pack with his recent debut, *Then We Came to The End*, a novel that explores the nuances of cubicle life in a Chicago ad agency. In his heavily Photoshopped picture, Ferris looks like a hipster lost in corporate America: he peeks out of a cubicle with messy hair and plastic glasses. Benjamin Kunkel, author of *Indecision* and a founding editor of literary criticism magazine *n+1*, is pictured in flip flops, squatting on a damp street. He stares out of the photo absentmindedly as though he can’t summon the energy to meet your eyes.

“These are examples of the informal departing from the norm of a conventional studio background and suit jacket. They are all attempts to differentiate themselves,” says Professor Krauss.

These anti-establishment author photos are “too precious,” Patterson agrees. “Their photos are too premeditated and staged, too self-conscious. It almost detracts from the virtue of their writing.”

However, oftentimes the author’s dust jacket image is out of his control. James Shapiro, Professor of English and author of *1599: A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare*, wound up with two different author photos. For the U.S. edition, the publisher insisted that he use its photographer, Jerry Bauer, who has immortalized everyone from Jack Kerouac to Jhumpa Lahiri. But the UK edition features a less Photoshopped version. “I look five or ten years older in this one, and craggier,” he says.

“People care deeply,” Shapiro adds. “Somebody’s circulating thousands of copies of your face.”

—Yelena Shuster

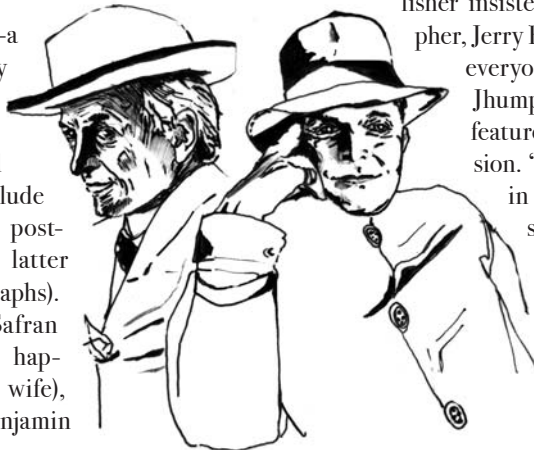


Illustration by Maxine Keyes

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N Minus 1

Keith Gessen writes the sort of book he's always hated.

All the Sad Young Literary Men

Keith Gessen

Viking, 2008

242 pages, \$24.95

Shortly after the publication last month of *All the Sad Young Literary Men*, its prologue was posted on the *n+1* website as an enticement to potential readers. In a refreshing burst of honesty, it bore the tags “cosmopolitanism,” “nostalgia,” “solidarity,” and “money.” With the possible exception of “solidarity,” these would be equally valid descriptions of author Keith Gessen’s career. Formal analysis of the work is made more difficult because Gessen, editor-in-chief of the aforementioned literary journal, rests so much of his academic street-cred on what he is *not*. From its first issue in 2004, *n+1* defined its intellectual merit in relation to its contemporaries, positioning itself as a publication diametrically opposed to the beliefs of its generation.

This generation has been defined by a set of authors, typified by the McSweeney’s publishing clique and its founder Dave Eggers, who claimed that, on some level, *everyone* should write—a point of view that was, in the view of *n+1*, needlessly egalitarian. “Sub-literary,” sniffed *n+1* in an early appraisal of the body of work that emerged from these high-concept, optimistic theories, and Gessen and his colleagues have spent the four years since the magazine’s launch upholding an unapologetically elitist point of view with relentless barrages of criticism issued from on high.

Do McSweeney’s writers title their novels with

exclamation points and leave whole pages blank as displays of youthful vim? Such semi-juvenile literary devices to reinvigorate the medium are “regressive,” snapped Gessen and his gang of Ivy Leaguers. McSweeney’s books are marked with a kind of boundless enthusiasm for bending the literary form; scattered throughout are illustrations, digressions, and characters that break the fourth wall to discuss the merits of the book directly with the reader. The response was predictable: “To wear credulity as one’s badge of intellect is not to be a thinker as such.”

As a result of Gessen’s persistent assault on the McSweeney’s style, his ideology has, to some degree, overshadowed any other element of his public persona. And since his book is so firmly rooted in its milieu—the introduction uses the phrase “it was 1998” five times and has a similarly obsessive sense of place, citing street names and specific Park Slope intersections—it’s hard to read it as anything less than a statement of the author’s personal priorities in literature and in life, if the two can even be safely separated.

But snark is cheap—and for all his ambition, Gessen somehow manages to fall into the trap of McSweeney’s-esque gimmickry with an unself-consciousness that his own literary alter-ego would probably condemn. He’s packed the first chapter of his new book with blurred pictures of email inboxes, Monica Lewinsky, and a chart comparing two of the main characters. No drawing of a stapler had been found at press time, although it’s

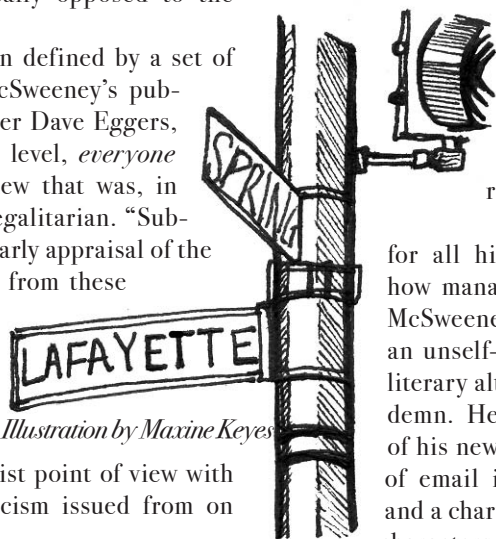


Illustration by Maxine Keyes

possible that the pages of our review copy weren't properly cut. In a particularly striking moment of déjà vu, Gessen's neurotic character Sam worries obsessively that a sex columnist will publish details of their tryst in her weekly output—a scenario that can also be found (substituting a sexologist for a sex columnist) on page 335 of Eggers's *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius*.

Shadowing Gessen's own life closely, the book's characters are fairly well-off, very well-educated intellectuals; one was born in Russia (as he was), attended Harvard (as he did) and got an MFA at Syracuse (as he did); one of them is even named "Keith" (as he is). All are sexually and intellectually frustrated and flounder in their attempts to overcome their discontent with overambitious academic and libidinal pursuits. If the book were longer, it would be safe to guess that they would go on to start a hyper-aggressive lit-crit journal. Gessen weaves together the lives of his three main characters—Sam, Keith, Mark—to grant us some insight into the lives of over-educated

Ivy League graduates who spend their days shotgunning a half-dozen beers and passing out on strange couches, self-made outcasts who are alienated from the world because it doesn't recognize their genius in the way that the academy had led them to believe it would.

Ironically, Gessen's novel has touched a popular chord. McSweeney's sets out to appeal to the pre-collegiate set, but it's *All the Sad Young Literary Men* that is currently ranked #31 on Amazon's "Teens" list (compare to #94 in "Literature"). And although the novel tries to eke out a distinctive narrative style, broad swaths of it are cringe-worthy ("Sorrow touched me; I was touched, on East 80th Street, by sorrow") or bank heavily on cliché: "She was going to med school, and I—I was going to write." The burden of actually sitting down and producing a quality work, as it turns out, is a little heavier than the stones that Gessen periodically hurls in the general direction of his ideological targets.

This is not to discredit the novel's very genuine angst, nor to say that it doesn't have some

very strong points to make. Gessen reserves his eloquence for the times when his protagonists persevere against remarkable odds or gain a better understanding of how to move forward and improve upon the lives that they find so deeply unpleasant. The problem is that, upon uncovering these larger life truths, the eponymous sad young literary men feel compelled to relate them as incompetently as possible; they trip over their words to explain a new philosophy to an attractive young co-ed before dousing her in vodka and their prominent sexual failings. Aggravating this is the fact that the only thread linking the main characters of the book, aside from

They trip over their
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a general angst and similar, constantly harped-upon academic backgrounds, is that they've slept with the same three women. All of the women are full-lipped and desirable but intellectually inferior in Gessen's telling—and therefore easily swayed by the protagonists' powers of persuasion.

The shallowness of these portraits of the artists as young men emphasize the book's central problem: Despite all of Gessen's cries for serious, intellectual writing in the pages of his critical journal, *All The Sad Young Literary Men* doesn't feel like an attempt to write a serious novel. While the book has some real points of clarity, they're hard to find amidst the postering and self-indulgence. When a critic whose broadsides are as widely-read as Gessen's opts to descend from his lofty perch, he's likely to find the nature of his debt to the reading public has shifted; the fans demand something truly remarkable, and not just lazy navel-gazing. As James Wood pointed out while attacking *n+1* in its own pages, "it is easier to criticize than to propose." It's incumbent upon Gessen to one-up his generational adversaries, and to substitute meaningful commentary for the idealism and open-mindedness that his clique maligns. Fortunately for his detractors, the book is, as Dave Eggers described his own first novel, "pretty uneven."

—Zach van Schouwen



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.

harm whoever sez it like medusa?
Lover prefers a different kind of conquest



By adopting the techniques and language of landscape-painting, Tolstoy ultimately flattens the entire three dimensional worlds into two dimensions and forces the reader to acknowledge both their own limitations as readers and Tolstoy's limitations as writer to get beyond dichotomy and binary codes.



The fatal shot splits through Kennedy's blonde head, launching cranial ejecta into the Dallas afternoon sky. The film stops, rewinds, and begins replaying the final frames of Kennedy's life. His skull tears open. Stop. Rewind. His skull tears open. Stop. Rewind. His skull tears open.]

[Fade to text saying, "Are you sure you'd like a SILVER BULLET today?"]

[Long pause.]

[Fade into the BUD LIGHT logo.]



Imagine this: a great Hunnic conqueror dies from a simple nosebleed during his marriage feast.



I've never cooked something so complicated before. Normally I would not have the attention span. Sometimes I do not have the attention span for boiling. What kept me focused for the hours of cutting and cubing and mea-

suring and stirring was imagining myself as the person who went through all those steps for us.



By the end of the day in the stone chambers, everything we wanted to find was inside each other, and we landed on each other's chest with a triumphant index finger.



Only a few seconds pass when Karen angrily directs him again and tells him to go sit on the rug. Tyler hastily scrambles the book closed and shuffles over to the rug. Upon his arrival, Karen confronts him and in a condescending tone says, "Tyler, are you deaf? Did you no hear me the first time? When I say put away your book, you need to listen. Do you listen your parents at home?" With his head bent low and his eyes peering across the room, Tyler meekly shakes his head 'yes.' Karen huffs away and proceeds to use a loud voice instructing the class as the rest of the students arrive at the community rug.



TECHNICIAN: It seems that there is something wrong with the core.

PLANT MANAGER: The CORE'S bad? How do you know?

TECHNICIAN [*points to huge array of lights*] : Well, these lights monitor all the power CORES in this plant. See right here? This CORE'S LIGHT is weak and unfulfilling! It flat out stinks! Our city needs to replace these CORES with something more substantial!

PLANT MANAGER: You mean our big disaster was caused by this CORE'S LIGHT? *[Turns, winks at camera]*

TECHNICIAN: Yes.

PLANT MANAGER: Argh, I am visibly angry!



watch as the melonated score plays itself out from favelas in brasil to the ghettos of arkansas

she feels the joyous cooling water of the ocean tides moving her until all she can say is

yes

yes

yes

it's cool if aunt jackie never does the dutty wine as long as she don't get down with uncle tom

we swallowed our drums
and now be-box on corners



Lionel Trilling (Columbia College 1925, Ph.D. 1938, Faculty 1927-74) was one of the most public of the twentieth century's public intellectuals.



Chained by the wrists to a rock, she has nowhere to go. She can only watch as the sea monster splashes from the coast, as she dreads her impending death.



WARN ALL FEMALES E.G. WIVES,
DAUGHTERS, GIRL FRIENDS ETC..

Bottled water in your car...very dangerous, woman!!!!
This is how Sheryl Crow got breast cancer. She was on the Ellen show and said this same exact thing. This has been identified as the most common cause of the high levels in breast cancer, especially in Australia ..

A friend whose mother was recently diagnosed with breast cancer. The Doctor told her: women should not drink bottled water that has been left in a car.

The doctor said that the heat and the plastic of the bottle have certain chemicals that can lead to breast cancer. So

please be careful and do not drink bottled water that has been left in a car, and, pass this on to all the women in your life. This information is the kind we need to know and be aware and just might save us!!!! The heat causes toxins from the plastic to leak into the water and they have found these toxins in breast tissue. Use a stainless steel Canteen or a glass bottle when you can!!!



3. Most important, I think my sense of humor will keep me afloat, as it always does. I expect that showing that sense of humor will be a challenge, however, without the ease of communicating in a language I know – Molly herself noted at one point in her blog that it took a little bit of time before she could joke in Spanish with her host family, which allowed her personality to come through better.



4. I've never lived in a developing country and although I've lived in areas less well off than Morningside Heights in Manhattan, I've never lived in an area impoverished in the way I understand Xela to be. As I've mentioned a few times already, I have lived in foreign countries with amenities different than those available to me as a student at Columbia. Of course I understand the situation in Xela will probably be more extreme than these situations, but I'm certainly not a posh upper class, spoiled rich kid who needs her Starbucks every day. Better answer?



7. I've cleaned my room before; that's manual labor if there ever was such a thing as manual labor. In seriousness though, I've never participated in a program where there's manual labor involved in the way that its involved in the Somos Hermanos summer immersion program. But I am an active person and in a big way love using my hands and body for productive use. I've painted my room on my own many times, I love to work out, I'm crafty and enjoy things like ceramics, drawing, and oil painting. I'm one of those odd people who dreads my week of the bathroom cleaning rotation, but then finds myself actually enjoying cleaning the bathroom (and also being done cleaning the bathroom).



2. Fishcakes: creates breaks, continuities from different angles, and in doing so embeds temporal space within new spaces

In Defense of Bad Dylan

One of our culture's favorite lies is that Bob Dylan started to suck in the late 1970s, or even, some say, at the end of the previous decade. The motorcycle crash, the retreat into obscurity—it was all so concise and clear. How could Dylan hope to top *Blonde on Blonde*? There is no need to take these people seriously when a more cunning and dangerous breed exists: the 70s apologists, who point to the great albums of that decade—*Blood on the Tracks* and *Desire*—as evidence that Dylan hit his prime while all of the cool kids were hanging around in discotheques. But I am a wholesale revisionist. I think that Dylan started getting good right around 1978.

The foundation of what I lovingly dub “Bad Dylan” is *Street Legal*, the 1978 halfway house between the acceptable Dylan of the 1970s and the *persona non grata* that emerged in the 1980s. “Changing of the Guards,” the opening track and my all-time favorite Dylan song, took typically opaque lyrics (the song is vaguely about lost love and religious conversion, but largely about witches, dog soldiers, renegade priests, and a captain who falls in love with a black maiden) and added something that was revolutionary for Dylan: female backup singers. These singers would come to define the following years—the much-maligned Jesus period. Songs in which Dylan describes the future time when “men will beg God to kill them, and they won’t be able to die” should give the essence of the era’s underlying attitude. And, yet to watch a concert from the period is to understand how fully Dylan came to live inside that idiom; his solo recording of “When He Returns” is one of his best recorded performances to date.

Still, Bad Dylan’s apex didn’t emerge from his yen for Gospel music, but from his ability to make that generic 80s pop sound (drum machines!) the Bad Dylan 80s Sound. For this, look no further than 1985’s “Tight Connection to My Heart (Has Anybody Seen My Love?),” which is also the source of Dylan’s greatest foray into that most-80s of media, the music video. Directed by Paul Schrader, the video features a bare-chested Dylan in a leather jacket, massive amounts

of footage of a Slinky descending stairs, and frighteningly literal interpretations of lyrics like “they’re beating the devil out of a guy who’s wearing a powder-blue wig.”

Post-Jesus Dylan also returned to writing straightforward protest songs that matched the biting, visionary quality of his classic 60s work with a half-baked insanity and lyrical clumsiness that would prove inspirational for opponents of globalization and space travel alike. *Oh Mercy*’s “Disease of Conceit” taught us that conceit would “turn you into a piece of meat” and *Infidels*’ “License to Kill” reminded us that “they” (the man? the system?) would sell listeners’ bodies “like they do used cars.” Late Bad Dylan marked the most radical departure of all, when he stopped writing his own songs and fans reaped the benefits of collaborations with Kris Kristofferson and Sam Shepherd, as well as Dylan’s own guttural slogs through standards like “Shenandoah.”

Like any good rock star, Bad Dylan went down in flames. Dylan had Newport and Royal Albert Hall, but Bad Dylan had Stuttgart—a disastrous combination of *Under the Red Sky* (Dylan’s indigestible children’s album) and post-divorce depression. A plastered Dylan opened the show by playing nothing but chords on his keyboard for four minutes, while glancing aimlessly around the stage. This was the best part of the concert, which included unrecognizable versions of old favorites as well as some new stuff. “This is from my new album,” he said in an introduction to the unfortunately titled “Wiggle Wiggle,” “It’s sold a bunch and hopefully its gonna sell some more.” It didn’t.

My love of Bad Dylan is not ironic—though it started out that way. But the honesty of the misbegotten lyrics, the abortive attempts at originality that occasionally succeed and often fail splendidly, caused me—in Dylan’s words about Jesus—to “change my way of thinking.” If you take the plunge, I assure you that you will too. “Every day of the year’s like playin’ Russian roulette,” Dylan crooned in ’78, “true love, true love, true love tends to forget.”

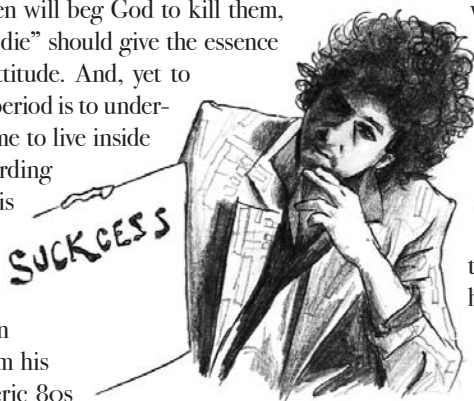


Illustration by Jenny Lam

—Andrew Flynn

A Series of Fortunate Events

Onstage in Boone Arledge Auditorium, Matt Beringer from The National calls out to the crowd: “I heard Harvard got Kanye.” I laugh, but I’m not sure how to respond. I love both The National and Kanye, but I dislike Harvard on principle—should I boo? What if I love Kanye more than The National, but understand the financial constraints of booking bands at Columbia—should I burn a checkbook while wearing futuristic shades? What if I tear my ears off so that I won’t have to think about it—how much would the reconstructive surgery cost? Would it cost more than Kanye? Would it cost more than Kanye’s sunglasses?

I don’t know the price. And I don’t *think* Harvard got Kanye—apparently Arizona State shelled out something like \$500,000 for a Kanye show in April (which is definitely a lot more than Columbia paid to get him five years ago). I do know that The National put on a hell of a show in Lerner Hall, and that the sound and lighting were fantastic, especially considering that stage’s dubious history and acoustics. They played a long set and held nothing back in song selection or intensity. Sometimes, there were even people shouting along and jumping up and down. I felt an honest-to-God sense of community and camaraderie, especially when Beringer screamed, “I won’t fuck us over, I’m Mr. November.”

Students love to complain about Columbia Concerts, but the school has booked fantastic rock bands every year of my undergraduate career. In the fall of 2006, the Hold Steady played in Boone Arledge under less than ideal circumstances (a hasty rescheduling, courtesy of rain). A distressingly small group of students managed to find the show, but those who did saw the band at its best. The Hold Steady played a preview of almost all of Boys and Girls in America, the album that was released to wide critical acclaim a

month later. The band even returned for a two-song encore. The Hold Steady, with their tales of misspent youth and constant intoxication, may be the perfect college band, and they wisely took the opportunity to conduct a balls-out rehearsal in Boone for their subsequent 13-month world tour.

The fall of 2005 brought Yo La Tengo, who played on the steps on an unusually nice day. The highlights included an extended version of their cover of Sun Ra’s “Nuclear War” and a breezy rendition of “Stockholm Syndrome.” Yo La Tengo, long considered the official band of music geeks (and immortalized forever in *The Onion*’s headline “37 Record Store Clerks Feared Dead in Yo La Tengo Concert Disaster”), played a charming and unpretentious set, full of jangly pop tunes and noisy guitar jams.

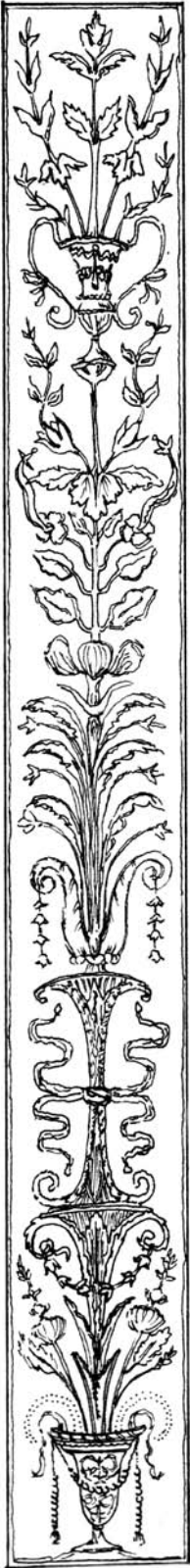
At my freshman year orientation, Columbia booked The Walkmen. Although my memory of the concert has grown hazy, I’ll never forget hearing the song “The Rat” for the first time. I think that those four years of rock bands, taken together, would trump any other school’s lineup. Besides, we’ve also hosted Common, Ghostface, and the Clipse, all of whom performed immediately before releasing

enthusiastically received albums. (And we had unlimited access to Vampire Weekend for a year and a half before they headed down the path to fame and riches (and, probably, a catastrophic breakdown at some future date)). Columbia has consistently chosen acts with momentum, instead of simply the most popular bands it could afford, and they’ve been pretty prescient. Would people have been happier with Avril or Fall Out Boy? We’ve had many great bands in their prime, or bands on the cusp of something great, and I find that hard to complain about.

—Andrew Martin

Illustration by Maxine Keyes





MEASURE FOR MEASURE

FOR PATRICK

I'd rather tell you about your father wilting in
Smelling like beer and pine and kissing your mother,

Or watercress up to our knees three paces from your horse's grave
Or the sparrow hawks we found abandoned in the caves

And fed road-kill until they could fly.
I'd rather tell you about the field of chest high grass

And walking to the reservoir, the path corrugated
Root and dirt and leaves rotting in their marinade,

That wet paper bag and cinnamon smell,
Monarch chrysalises in every mason jar.

I'd rather tell you about your mother teaching us to waltz,
The bobbins we unraveled, running, and the kites,

Throwing eggs at the pigs and peeling birch bark,
Change in a coffee tin and once, a kiss.

But all I remember is shooting you in the neck
With a pellet gun as you moved out of sight

And your mother rushing out of the house
Pulling you into the car, and you not even crying yet

But bleeding, and me lying in the driveway
On my stomach, still looking down the barrel at the can.

—Lizzy Straus

THREE PRINCESS TALES

1.

Once upon a time there was a princess trapped in a tower guarded by a fire-breathing dragon. Many valiant young princes attempted to save her, but each was burnt to a crisp by the dragon. Eventually the princes stopped coming and the princess lived alone in the tower. In her abundant free time, however, she made many important contributions to topology and number theory. The dragon allowed her to leave the tower to attend the Illinois Number Theory Fest, where her research was received with great acclaim. She ran away with a cryptologist and the dragon died of a broken heart.

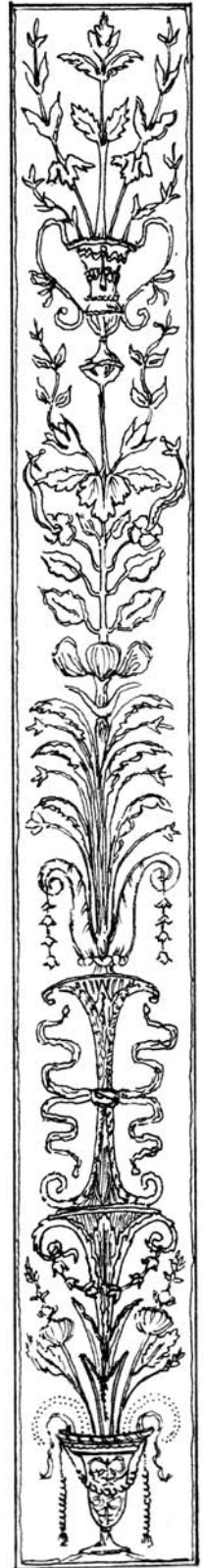
2.

Once upon time there was a princess who was the most beautiful princess in all the land. A jealous enchantress turned the princess into a statue and hid her in a garden surrounded by a perilous forest. A brave and handsome prince hacked through the man-eating trees, leaped over the poison rosebeds, and muted the howling topiary. He finally found the stone princess trapped in writhing iron ivy. He chopped away at the ivy furiously, at last reaching the princess, but in his haste he cut off her nose. He kissed the stony lips and she fell, soft and warm and breathing and noseless, into his strong arms. He took her back to her parents, the king and queen, on his white stallion. They were overjoyed to see their daughter and offered the prince her hand in marriage. He bowed graciously and admitted that, though she was still very beautiful, he could not marry a princess without a nose.

3.

Once upon a time there was a princess who was born in perfectly ordinary circumstances and grew up to be rather ordinary looking. She had no fairy godmother or evil stepmother; she had no curses or special powers. She tried to prick her fingers on spindles and eat poisoned apples and get captured by forest creatures, but she only ended up with mild infections and stomach pains and poison ivy. When she was of age she was married off to a very nice prince who was prematurely balding but excellent in bed. Their rule was just and compassionate, and they lived happily ever after for six and a half decades. Years after her death everyone spoke of her fondly but no one could remember her name.

—Julia Kalow



Band of Super Smash Brothers

Games and gamers mature together, sort of.

Super Smash Bros. Brawl

Nintendo, Inc

For Wii, \$49.99

Different men have different theories about the origins of the modern sausagefest—prehistoric hunting parties, Athenian symposia, and surreptitious post-work outings to “watch the game” at 1960s strip clubs all come to mind. But all could surely agree on their objectives: to blow off steam after suffering the trappings of work; to engender a spirit of platonic yet masculine love; to embody, in short, the dictum “bros before hos.” And what better way to do this than through video games? Specifically, the Nintendo classic *Super Smash Brothers*.

In retrospect, the 1999 Nintendo 64 version – old, clunky, with primitive graphics that nevertheless caused the processor to creak and groan – seems antiquated, but back in the day it was not only more addictive than its successors could ever be (for what else was there to do then?); it was also novel. In a fan-service tour-de-force, Nintendo brought together its best-known heroes and villains to fight one another atop ships, castles, and Poké-metropolises in absurdist head-to-head combat. *Smash* was, in essence, a giant meta-joke, juxtaposing characters from different Nintendo universes against nonsensical backdrops, with a result not dissimilar to college basketball mascot fights. Pikachu vs. Mario, Link vs. Samus Aran, Kirby vs. Jigglypuff: the Achilles vs. Hector of a later generation.

For the laymen: the end goal of any *Smash* match

is to hit your opponents off the stage before they do the same to you. Games generally last about five minutes and the ability to react quickly is of the highest importance, as is an inherent “feel” for the game. Back in 1999, few ten year olds had either. Occasionally, the fates would intervene and Donkey Kong – my lousy, preferred character – would prevail, but my friends were far better than I was, and a hierarchy of skill and social standing soon asserted itself; *Smash*, we thought, was a better way of evaluating one’s worth than grades or girls.

When the next incarnation of the series, *Super Smash Bros. Melee*, appeared for GameCube, in 2001, it instantly supplanted its predecessor as the game of choice – really, the activity of choice. Our purchasing power buoyed by allowances that increased in concert with our ages, we bought seven million copies of the new *Smash*, outstripping the original and making *Melee* the best-selling GameCube game of all time. There were more characters, more stages, more permutations of ridiculousness that occupied the teen-age mind and aroused its spirit.

Melee remained a fixture of post-prepubescent existence.

It solved decisively the age-old debate between going outside or staying indoors, and, later in life, the debate between “going out” or “staying in.” We remember the exhortations of our friends’ mothers: “do something with our lives”; “stop wasting away in front of the TV”; and we remember the old T.S. Eliot rejoinder which was your mantra: “time you enjoy wasting, is not time wasted.” When we dispersed to schools across the Eastern seaboard, our new effortless, collegiate

O Donkey Kong, thee monkey spawn!
 Thy form all brawn and polygon;
 Descend from ether to the firm,
 Alight! And make thy foes so squirm;
 A throw, a toss, and in the air,
 A headbutt serves to lay them bare.
 A mighty slap, a muscled punch,
 A creatine banana lunch.
 The flurried fists, the pound of ground,
 The sound of apes once clashed and crowned.
 When vanquished foes fall off the course,
 Thy hands go up, thy roar is hoarse;
 The tie that splits thy bulging chest,
 Evokes the might of who’s the best.

O Donkey Kong, thee monkey spawn,
 Thy form all brawn and polygon!

—Christopher Morris-Lent

social lives didn't quash the phenomenon; they inflated it. Far more than abortive forays into the outer boroughs, *Smash* gave floormates some common ground, a shared pastime. At the end of an evening of drinking, *Melee* provided a comforting coda to even the most awkward of outings.

We would still be playing *Melee* today had not a new version, *Super Smash Bros. Brawl*, been released for the Wii this March. *Brawl* ingeniously both refines and expands upon the mechanics of *Melee*. It is not only a gaming triumph but also a viable alternative to a night of the inexorable strike-out at 1020.

As soon as it was released, *Brawl* redefined and reconstructed social groups and dissolved social boundaries, at least for a time; men who scarcely knew one another reveled in the brotherhood of skipping class for meaningless fun, and old friends from freshman dorm floors reconvened for hours of inane gratification. Thousands found their latent love for video games revived as *Brawl* instantly burrowed its way into the collective unconscious of campus. What really titillated addicts above all else, though, was the inclusion of online play: for the first time ever, it was possible to

compete against members of our high school diaspora, to reconnect from afar with old video-game buddies.

Unfortunately, the online play is disappointing for two reasons. One is the lag (the split-second gap between your pressing a button and your character reacting), a regrettable deficiency in Internet technology; neither side can be on its A-game. Two is that there's no voice chat: aside from a well-timed taunt, in-game communication with friends is impossible; it's just you, them, the game, and the silent indifference of the universe.

The new game introduces a number of innovations: the concept of a "Final Smash," which is a one-time deal activated through whacking a floating ball in the midst of combat, for which all competitors vie; Samus' laser, which obliterates everything in its path, including its shooter's clothes; Kirby's cauldron, which sucks up opponents and regurgitates deadly chili. More important, though, is the fact that *Brawl*, a decade later, presents yet another opportunity to reunite with scattered friends and lost traditions, if only over the Internet.

—Christopher Morris-Lent



Illustration by Lorraine White



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CAMPUS GOSSIP

THE AUDACITY OF HOPE

Overhead in the Dodge women's locker room:

"I just watch *The L Word* and hope for the best."



As final exam season gets into swing, we offer the following anecdote from one of our embedded Butler correspondents:

"Two grown men were fighting over a seat in 402 Butler Saturday night. Saddest thing I've ever seen. It was really only verbal, although one did grab the other at one point. There was some yelling and disruption. Security was called.

One guy had his stuff at a desk and left and while he was gone, the other man sat down at the desk. When the guy came back he got super pissed and refused to take his stuff or leave or let it go."

Starting May 15th, the staff of *THE BLUE AND WHITE* will be ringing a gong for all those deceased in similar altercations.



Two girls wearing skinny jeans are sitting near the sundial. One plays her guitar and sings the following ditty:

"You drink so much PBR,
While playing your bass guitar.
You take the L train everyday,
I still don't know if you are gay."

A crowd of young men wearing cardigans and colorful

sneakers had formed a crowd around the pair. "Are they talking about us?" asked one, taking a drag of his hand-rolled cigarette. "No, probably some hipsters," said another.



From an e-mail sent by Professor Matthew Jones to his Renaissance history class:

"I fear that I must cancel all of my appointments and the lecture tonight. I had to go to the ER yesterday and still have, alas, a raging infection and high fever. It is beyond lame, as a famous bard once put it."

Marlowe would have proffered "totes wack," while Spenser preferred "bereft of kickass-ness."



LA RECHERCHE DU THESES PERDU

English Department adviser Michael Mallick sent the following stern message to senior honors applicants:

"It seem quite a number of you—this year's senior essayists—did not follow the instructions clearly set out with regard to the distribution of your final essay... In the past couple of days, as many as half of the essay sponsors arrived in 602 telling us they never received a copy of their sponsee's essay... I urge you to act immediately. I further urge you not to email me—I am merely relaying a message on behalf of a number of perplexed faculty. I do not have the time to respond to individual protestations, rationalizations, fantastic explanations, and the like... I am acting solely now as a messenger, not a judge, nor am I an arbitrator... I'd save the breath and act fast instead."

THAT WARM, FAMILY FEELING

Overheard, women’s bathroom on the ground floor of Butler:

A girl is in the stall, on the phone with one of her parents:
“Yeah, I’ll do it when I come home for Passover. Yeah.”
[*She starts to pee, loudly.*]
“No, I’m not peeing! I wouldn’t do that on the phone with you!” [Laughs nervously.]

[*Another bathroom occupant turns on the faucet.*]
“Yeah, that’s the sink. I’m... in the kitchen. Of my suite... I’m washing a carrot.”



GAYS ON CAMPUS

Overheard, Days on Campus activities fair:

Women’s basketball coach, setting up her own table, glances down the row to the rainbow-festooned display of the Columbia Queer Alliance. She exclaims with enthusiasm,

“We’re pretty gay here too!”



Overheard near West Side Market:
Girl clinging to her boyfriend: “This is pretty nice for Harlem!”



A girl and her father are talking on Broadway in heavy upper class English accents.

Girl: “Daddy, stop! I’ll *consider* coming to Columbia if you buy me a sweatshirt with a lion on it.”



PRE-MED VS. PRE-GAME

One Thursday night, during an 8:15 p.m. Deborah

Mowshowitz biology class, 50 frantic students were taking an exam in a classrooms in Math.

Teaching Assistant: “Excuse me, may I have your attention please. We’re going to need to move the exam to another room.”

Another TA: “Yes, this room was reserved for the Bartending Agency. We’re moving to Havemeyer.”

Student: “What the hell? Why can’t they go to Havemeyer since we’re already here and taking a test!?”

TA: “Apparently they have a *lot* of alcohol.”

And the exam-taking biology students were ushered 100 feet away to Havemeyer, passing through a gauntlet of giddy, heckling bartending students waiting to enter the Math classroom.



Barnard French professor to academic:

“The catastrophe of Bordieu was that they marketed him. So all these people said, look here’s this French guy who’s a philosopher and an intellectual—he must be right!”

No, Simon Schama is *British*.



A group of pre-schoolers are walking down 115th towards Riverside with two caretakers. One little boy points to a sign on a brownstone.

Little boy: What does that say?

Caretaker: Korean Methodist Church and Institute.

Little boy: Oh, so it’s a Chinese church?

Caretaker: Yup.



Barnard Class Day... it’s the 1927 Yankees!