THE ART OF VOYEURISM
by Archibald Montgomery, III & Sebastian Coronado

CAVEAT EQUIPMENTOR
by B. Biddy Rumfold

A NEW KIND OF WATERING HOLE
by MephisCotcheles
CONTENTS.

Columns
133 Introduction
139 Told Between Puffs
140 Blue J
144 Booze Humanities
148 Curio Columbiana
154 Lecture Notes
160 Campus Gossip

Features
134 Thomas Hunt Morgan
137 Caveat Equipmentor
142 Safire Satire
143 Mai
146 A Room With a View
147 To Catch a Peek
149 In Exile
150 That Useless Time Machine
152 Understanding Lerner Hall
156 News From the West Bank
149 Housing Lottery

On the Cover:
“Rite of Spring” by Clare H. Ridley.

Typographical Note
The text of The Blue and White is set in Bodoni Old Face, which was revived by Günter Gerhard Lange based on original designs by Giambattista Bodoni of Parma (active 1765–1813). The display faces are Weiss and Cantoria.
In a matter of days, the next volume of our lives will open. Or rather this one will close. We find ourselves finishing the year frantically, rushing to complete papers and exams, to return books, pay fines and endure swimming tests. In between, we try to take off as much of our clothing as possible, whether on the steps or in the safety of our singles, doubles and triples. After all, clothing is a hindrance, and homework is a fire hazard, even in fire-proof Columbia dorms.

Rest will come soon.

When it does, curl up with this issue on the lawn. Bask in the sun, and look back fondly on a semester well finished—and if not well finished, at least finished. Let The B&W, Calgon-like, take you away to grassy Van Am Quad or that funny little concrete bunker hangout around the corner from St. Paul’s. Breathe in the (cleaner) air of wherever you happen to be and welcome the amusement, mirth, reflection and delight of the pages hereafter.

Those of us who leave the City for the summer will be delivered from visits to Lerner Hall, but we can only comprehend the magnitude of this salvation after reading D.S. Immerwahr’s “Understanding Lerner.” A guest appearance by William Safire of New York Times fame graces our pages this issue as well. The return of Booze Humanities, now written by Mephiscotcheles, makes for a promising new column in The Blue and White, too.

Fitting it is that a volume of The Blue and White should close with the year. The magazine has enjoyed a delightful year as a quasi-monthly voyeur on life at Columbia, and looks forward to many more semesters of peeping in perpetuity.

We love you! (Yes, we were the ones who sent you anonymous notes from www.12DateMe.com).
When future historians turn to examine the major intellectual accomplishments of the twentieth century, they will undoubtedly give a special place to the extraordinary achievements in biology, achievements that have revolutionized our understanding of life’s processes and of disease. Important intimations of what was to happen in biology were already apparent in the second half of the nineteenth century. Darwin had delineated the evolution of animal species, Mendel had discovered some basic rules about inheritance, and Weissman, Roux, Driesch, de Vries, and other embryologists were beginning to decipher how an organism develops from a single cell. What was lacking at the end of the nineteenth century, however, was an overarching sense of how these bold advances were related to one another.

The insight that unified these three fields—heredity, evolution, and development—and set biology on the course toward its current success came only at the beginning of the twentieth century. It derived from the discovery that the gene, localized to specific positions on the chromosome, was at once the unit of Mendelian heredity, the driving force for Darwinian evolution, and the control switch for development. This remarkable discovery can be traced directly to one person and to one institution: Thomas Hunt Morgan and Columbia University. Much as Darwin’s insights into the evolution of animal species first gave coherence to a descriptive science, Morgan’s findings about genes and their location on chromosomes helped transform biology into an experimental science.

Morgan and the Mechanisms of Mendelian Heredity

Thomas Hunt Morgan was born in Kentucky in 1866 to a distinguished southern family whose members included Francis Scott Key. Morgan was trained as a developmental biologist, receiving his Ph.D. in 1890 from Johns Hopkins University for work on the development of sea spiders, a specialized group of invertebrate animals, and in 1891 he accepted a teaching post at Bryn Mawr College.

In 1904 Columbia University announced the establishment of a new chair in experimental zoology and offered it to Morgan. Arriving on campus, he came under the influence of his long-term friend and colleague, the zoology department’s chairman, Edwin Wilson, one of the eminent cytologists of his time and a founder of the field of cell biology. Wilson convinced Morgan that the key to understanding development—how one cell, the egg, gives rise to the animal—is to understand heredity, since it provides the means by which the egg and the sperm carry the properties of individuals from one generation to another. Later findings proved Wilson correct.

The modern concepts of heredity and the existence of alternative (allelic) forms of genes had been discovered in 1865 by Gregor Mendel, a teacher and monk of the Augustinian monastery in Brno, then part of the Austro-Hungarian empire. Mendel carried out breeding experiments with plants, especially garden peas, and identified hereditary traits in them. These traits, later called factors, were found by Mendel to account for such features as whether peas were wrinkled or smooth and for the differences between dominant and recessive alleles (copies of a gene found on each pair of chromosomes). He did not know, however, where these traits were located or what they were. Mendel’s findings were published in the Proceedings of the Natural Science Society of Brno in 1866, only to be ignored until the turn of the century. His work was rediscovered in 1900, just before Morgan arrived at Columbia.

In taking up his own inquiries, Morgan turned from Mendel’s plants to the study of animals, but soon found that the rats and mice he was using reproduced so slowly as to be
impractical for studying heredity. His search for a more suitable organism led him to Drosophila melanogaster, known as the fruit fly because it feeds on decaying fruit. Drosophila is small, about 3 mm long, and easy to raise in the laboratory—a thousand can be collected in a one-quart glass milk bottle. Moreover, it is fertile all year long and very prolific, producing a new generation every twelve days, or thirty generations per year. Not only are male and female offspring easy to distinguish, but embryonic development occurs outside the body, making it a simple matter to study the effects of mutations on development. Finally, Drosophila has only four pairs of chromosomes.

Morgan began working seriously with Drosophila in 1907, with the intention of breeding many generations of flies, and perhaps producing one that looked different from the rest. In short, he hoped to find an occasional fly that had undergone a mutation, sudden change in body form, a phenomenon that had recently been discovered in plants by the Dutch biologist Hugo de Vries. But despite much effort and the breeding of successive generations, Morgan initially failed to detect a single mutation. “Two years work wasted,” he lamented to one visitor to his laboratory. “I have been breeding those flies for all that time and I’ve got nothing out of it.”

**Year of Discovery**

But Morgan persisted, and in April 1910 he suddenly had a breakthrough. In one of his bottles filled with Drosophila was a male fly with white eyes rather than the normal red eyes. Morgan realized the implications of this immediately; the birth of this single spontaneous mutant—this one male fly with white eyes—allowed him to begin addressing some key questions in heredity: How did this white eye color originate? What determines eye color?

As the next step, Morgan bred this white-eyed (mutant) male to a red-eyed (wild-type) virgin sister and found that white-colored eyes are inherited in a special way. In the first generation of brother-sister mating, labeled F1, there were only red-eyed offsprings, suggesting that red eye color is dominant and that white eye color is recessive. To prove this idea Morgan carried out brother-sister matings with the next generation (F2) and found that the offspring followed the expected Mendelian ratio for a recessive trait: three red-eyed flies to every one white-eyed fly. With these experiments Morgan started a tradition, which continues to this day, whereby he named the gene “white” by the result of its mutation. But then came a surprise. He had expected there would be an equal number of males and females with white eyes, but it turned out that all the female flies had red eyes; only males had white eyes, and, even more, only some of them displayed the trait. Morgan realized that white eye color is not only recessive but is also linked in some way to sex. The subsequent appearance of two other spontaneous mutations (rudimentary wings and yellow body color) also linked to sex further suggested to Morgan that these three genes might be carried on the same chromosome and that this chromosome is the sex chromosome.

When Morgan turned to examining the fruit fly’s chromosomes under the microscope, he immediately appreciated that not all four pairs of chromosomes were always identical. In particular, whereas female flies had two identical-looking X chromosomes, in the male...
the X chromosome was paired with a Y chromosome, which looks different and is never present in the female.

Morgan deduced that a male must inherit the X chromosome from his mother and Y from his father, and he immediately spotted a correlation between these sex-linked chromosomes and the segregation of the factors determining eye color. When the mother was homozygous and had two copies of the gene for red eyes, the male offspring invariably had red eyes, even if the father had white eyes. But when the mother had white eyes, the male offspring did too, even if the father’s eyes were red. In contrast, a female fly gets one X chromosome from each parent, and if one passed along an X chromosome with a gene for red eyes, the offspring had red eyes because the color is dominant over white. Only when both parents gave her an X chromosome with a gene for white eyes did she display the recessive trait. From these observations, Morgan concluded that the allele-producing eye color must lie on the X chromosome that governs sex. This provided the first correlation between a specific trait and a specific chromosome.

A Legacy of Accomplishment

As early as 1911, Morgan had redirected his research in an attempt to provide additional information about the chromosome theory of heredity, and before long he achieved another major conceptual breakthrough. Since chromosomes are contiguous assemblages of genes, those traits (mutations in some of the genes) mapping to one particular chromosome naturally tended to segregate together. But on occasion Morgan noted that these “linked” traits would separate, even while other traits on the same chromosome showed little or even no detectable linkage.

From this evidence, Morgan inferred the process of chromosome recombination: he postulated that the two paired chromosomes could “exchange” or “crossover” between each other, and he further proposed that the frequency of recombination is a function of the distance between genes on the chromosome. The nearer two relevant genes lie on a chromosome, the greater their chance of being inherited together, while the farther away they are from each other, the more chance of their being separated by the process of crossing over. In short, Morgan suggested that the strength of linkage between genes depended on the distance between them on the chromosome.

In recognition of his work on chromosomes, Morgan was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine in 1933. He shared the prize money with Calvin Bridges ’12C ’16GSAS and Alfred Henry Sturtevant ’12C ’14GSAS, two students who worked with him and further developed his ideas. The Nobel Prize recognized Morgan’s two fundamental scientific contributions: the development of the chromosome theory of heredity, a theory of the gene that proved to be the driving biological concept of the twentieth century, and the creation of a new biology based on a rigorous experimental method.

The Columbia Environment: The Fly Room

Morgan also made another contribution, a sociological one that helped introduce at Columbia and into American science as a whole a set of sweeping institutional changes. Until the start of the twentieth century, the leading American research universities—Harvard, Johns Hopkins, Columbia, and Chicago—had all been inspired by the model of the German research university, in which the Geheimrat, the great scientific leader, ordered the hierarchy of his subordinates. Morgan, however, based laboratory governance on democratic principles of merit rather than seniority. If one were to ask scientists around the world what is unique about America, they point to the university, and to this day foreign scientists are amazed that students working in a laboratory call professors by their first names.

Morgan surrounded himself with a brilliant group of undergraduate and graduate students. Together they set up the Drosophila laboratory in Schermerhorn Hall, Room 613, known worldwide as the Fly Room. In retrospect, the Fly Room seems surprisingly small, measuring only 16 x 23 feet and containing

Morgan continued on page 159
Upon returning from Spring Break, frequenters of Levien Gym may have been first shocked, then saddened, then finally angry, and possibly a little hungry, to find that many of the upper level’s Tectrix-brand stationary bicycles have been relocated.

Prior to Spring Break, the first five stationary cycles were positioned side-by-side in a line, each facing inward toward the curved wooden wall of the indoor track. This time-tested arrangement provided a large degree of seclusion for the cyclists, who were shielded to the front by the track’s partition and protected on the flanks by fellow cyclers or by large load-bearing columns. This was good enough for our olden-time ancestors who rode their stationary bicycles in Dodge Fitness Center, and so it was good enough for me, and I thought things would always be like that: five bikes, in a straight line. But six days in March changed all that, changed the world, changed me, and changed a generation.

The current stationary bicycle situation is this: the conventional line organization has been totally abandoned. The bicycles now stand staggered in a half-hearted semblance of two rows (possibly three—who can say?) no better organized then a flock of Canada geese, hopped-up on commercial airline jet fumes and looking to score. And I’m telling you, once the junk hits their blood stream, those birds are as randy as the Democratic National Committee on prom night, and is that the sort of message we want to send to all the unsupervised little children using gym equipment?

No, friends. I don’t think so.

However, it seems that there is no longer any place in this Modern World for modest, God-fearing placement of exercise equipment. Just like the flesh-eating dragons that used to rule the earth, I’m afraid Common Decency is on the highway to extinction.

Even more scandalous yet, within this liberal flock formation, each of the five bicycles has been rotated nearly 90 degrees, so that each now stands parallel to the track’s wall, turned outward for the silent inspection and wonton observation of an entire floor of hulking strength trainers.

Oblivious to the virtues of discretion and privacy, the brusque hand of Dodge Fitness Center radicalism has drawn stationary cyclers, a sensitive and reticent species, out into the open rubber-slat floor and completely stripped them of their dignity. And for what? The cheap thrill of innovation? The glassy-eyed, sweaty-thighed, thumping, grinding Oktoberfest of vainglory that comes from the high of moderate experimentation? Well, Kitty Reese, DFC Equipment Manager, did you get what you wanted? Was it all worth it?

This disposal of our forefathers’ wisdom comes not merely at the price of cyclers’ self-respect, but at a price far greater. That’s right, Ms. Reese: the cost. You, ma’am, are on the verge of losing my patronage. I say it here before Jesus and his father, God, that if cyclers continue to be denigrated in your House of Shame, I fear that I will no longer be able to pay the hourly twenty-five dollar user’s fee in good conscience. If you combine that with the sixty-dollar daily towel tax, I think you’ll find that the numbers quickly add up. And they add up to eighty-five dollars, which is eighty-five dollars a day you won’t see again as long as you choose to bask in the carcinogenic light of cyclist exploitation one second longer.

So, Ms. Reese. What’s it gonna be?
UNIVERSITY RESIDENCE HALLS UPDATE

Out, damned student! Check out, I say!

Check-Out (non-seniors) Saturday, May 12 by Noon.
Check-Out (seniors) Thursday, May 17 by 4:00 p.m.

For complete Check-Out information and the specific check-out location for your particular residence hall, please visit our website:

www.columbia.edu/reshalls/checkout

Check Out the Important Reminders:

• Make an appointment with your RA to check your room and complete the Room Condition Report (RCR).
• Fill out a mail-forwarding card with the Lerner Mail Center.
• Return all optional phone equipment (data phones, power packs, and model 624 phones) to the Communication Services stockroom next to 115 Computer Center.
• Clean your room and dispose of trash early! Please!
• Return your keys and display the yellow copy of your RCR at the appropriate Check-Out location.
• Looking ahead: Check-In for returning students is Thursday, August 30.
• Make plane reservations now.
• Have a great summer!

Director of Residence Halls
Ross Fraser, 102 Wallach Hall, x42777

Housing Services
125 Wallach Hall, x42775
Rob Lutomski, Assistant Director

Administrative Services
118 Hartley Hall, x44994
Joyce Jackson, Assistant Director

www.columbia.edu/cu/reshalls

THE BLUE AND WHITE
Verily Veritas has heard rumors (false, one hopes) that J.J’s Place will close at the end of the year. The difficulty is that the space will then undergo, like so much of Morningside Heights, not only a physical but a spiritual renovation. There will be no more J.J.’s fries made the fatty way, as if twenty years of dietary progress had never been, and as if the oil had been around for that long, too. Neither chicken fingers, chicken sandwich, nor chicken parm will be available, say the jokesters of the Varsity Show, in a rare moment of melancholy. “A large woman is majestic,” said Lorenzo Da Ponte, and for years, J.J.’s cooking followed the philosophy of creating as many large women as possible, but now J.J.’s stands poised to enter our health-conscious dark age. The menu will be updated, and so will the people. The fryers may even get thrown out. It is a matter of what the Marxists used to call historical inevitability. J.J.’s has an extraordinary staff, including the zany short-order virtuosi who will deep-fry, as well as smoke, anything. When the doors close, our latter-day grease cowboys will not stay in town waiting for their jobs back. The old J.J.’s will ride off into the sunset.

The playwright David Ives once remarked that he got his start at a theater where the material had to be good because the bathrooms never worked. At J.J.’s, the conversation, the camaraderie, and the giddy new sensations of freshman year in college had to be transportive, since the fish fillet special wouldn’t be. Verily remembers when he was a freshman, long ago. How new it all was, and how sweet it tasted! Freedom-fruit smoothies—a seemingly limitless fund of intellectually curious, physically nubile, freshly liberated female first-years all presented themselves to his eager eye.

The smoothies may have been overpriced, and none of the ladies took to young Verily, who had glasses and liked to reminisce about Southern home cooking and Soviet economic policy, but those were still heady times. Suspended on wires of prepaid dining dollars, Verily felt like the food was free; soaked in Nicholas Murray Butler’s own frying oil, the food tasted delicious. Upstairs from J.J.’s, there used to be a delicious lunch spread at John Jay Dining Hall, made all the more magical by its contrast to the three-week-old warmed-over Alpo served in the same spot for dinner, but no more.

Verily embraces change. Just the other day, he switched to a new French roast with hallucinogenic caffeine levels, and, after a single mug, Verily turned on the TV and promptly found uproarious a Fox News report on Belgium. “Or,” declared VV, “as it is properly known, the Spanish Netherlands.” Then the Absolut Vodka poster on the wall began to sing a song. What Verily refuses to accept is the passing of time. Instead, he wields remembrance as his weapon against the anti-sentimentalists and the renovators. They can tear down J.J.’s and its temple to la grande heartburn. They can stick in its place a sanitized, sterile space, full of portobello. But the old J.J.’s will live on for VV. In his head, alongside thoughts of Offenbach’s Paris and the tragic cancellation of the Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour, among the domains of the empire of memory, there is a place for the greasy spoons that define a youth. Places where the food underscored, repulsively to the stomach, just how much it was the people that mattered. The meals when each of the 165 grams of fat called out the message that life has a divine design, and that no kiss can be without meaning. In the cheeseburgers to come, wherever he finds them, Verily will remember, and be young again.

—Verily Veritas

MAY 2001
BLUE J.

And They Shall Beat Their Shacks into Playgrounds: A Better Use For the Lion’s Court Space

Blue J. always relishes her return to northern climes after spending the winter down in Florida with the party-birds; the beach life is just not her style. There is nothing lovelier than spring in Morningside Heights, and Blue J. likes to spend the warm, sunny, but not-too-hot days soaring around campus and taking in the sights and smells of blooming flowers and cool fountains. Her classmates succumb to spring fever by basking on the steps of Low, tossing a frisbee on South Field, or kicking a hackey sack just about anywhere. But for a feathered, armless, and taloned Columbian, these activities just don’t have the same appeal. Blue J. even suspects there may be non-avian students out there who would welcome an alternative to such warm-weather collegiate staples as people-watching and pick-up sports with assorted projectiles. What’s a fun-loving bird to do when she simply must leave her nest behind and get some fresh air?

Sometimes only a bird’s eye view of a situation can bring things into focus, and from her tree-top perch high above Van Am quad, Blue J. had a revelation: what this campus needs is a playground. And where better to put it than the soon-to-be-vacated plot of land currently occupied by an overgrown corrugated-metal shoebox? Blue J. will be relieved to see Lion’s Court folded up and packed away; she never did like the association with enormous cats, for they give birds the shudders.

Clearly there is no better use for this prized patch of ground than a playground complete with swings, slides, a jungle-gym, monkey bars, and perhaps a see-saw. Blue J. would be quite content with the basics—a classic playground like those of her youth. There’s no need for a high-tech-Fathom.com-esque adventure park. And if Blue J. can visit it without swiping, things would be grand indeed. She even promises to take turns with the newly-hatched birds that frequent our campus—in fact, could there be a better way to promote inter-generational mingling and strengthen our ties to the community? Blue J. thinks not.

In a recent referendum, Columbians were asked to vote on their preferences for filling the void soon to be left by Lion’s Court. A basketball court, tennis court, picnic tables, and even an oh-so-tempting brick plaza were among the choices. But Blue J’s feathers were ruffled, she was simply aghast: how could the CCSC have omitted a playground from the ballot? Never failing to make her chirpy voice heard, Blue J. wrote in “playground” herself. She invites all Columbians, avian or not, to join the playground campaign by e-mailing theblueandwhite@columbia.edu.

The Blue and White Staff extends hearty congratulations and best wishes to

Emily S. Clark, Hilary E. Feldstein, Kevin Y. Kim, Matthew Z. Rascoff
Members of the Graduating Class of 2001

Faithful editors, loyal friends, already missed.
Ad multis annos!

THE BLUE AND WHITE
Blue J. has always felt that there is nothing quite like the pomp and circumstance of a commencement ceremony to bring about a quiet moment of reflection. Another graduation reminds him of the persistent passage of time: seasons change, the verdant meadows the J. delights in today were frozen tundra just weeks ago, and as Blue J.’s derriere has defrosted, so has his outlook. May beckons, bearing along with infinite promise a shiny, new message: everything is fine, after all!

It is with a certain pride that Blue J. watches his peers fly confidently into the world, but also with sorrow, as he is reminded that he too will soon have to roost elsewhere. And so it is with egg on his face that the J. has come to an embarrassing realization: perhaps his penchant for quailing and crowing has ruffled a few feathers at fair Columbia. Assuredly, Blue J. is not one to shy away from making a piquant criticism here, or a wry remark there, but these tendencies are evidence of his devotion to his alma mater, not lack thereof!

Morningside Heights in mid-May is idyllic; blue sky and green grass abound, constantly reminding Blue J. to relish every moment at dear Columbia! Thus, it is with great gusto that he usually approaches the late spring rituals of life at Columbia – the summer job search, the housing lottery, and registration. But despite his chirpy outlook, and the delightful atmosphere that has embraced the campus, the J. could not help but notice a few minor problems. They are so insignificant that he hesitates to mention them.

Blue J. considers his education a full-time job, which means that come May 11, he is frightfully unemployed! His IPO having gone the way of the birds, the J. recently turned to JOBTRAK, in search of gainful employment. Alas, his major in Comparative Avian Literature has left him woefully unqualified for the bulk of the jobs, which will go to his friends of a more financial feather. There is always that unpaid internship at the Audubon Society, Blue J. supposes...

Then there is the matter of housing. Being the sophisticated city bird that he is, the J. has long foregone the custom of building his own nest – besides, he finds the one that URH provides much cushier! Unfortunately, his hopes of a perch at Broadway have been scrambled like so many eggs, due to his abysmal fortune in the housing lottery. Another year in Wien has been weighing heavily upon Blue J.’s psyche, and the chicken burritos downstairs at Taco Bell have smelled strangely enticing of late...

Of course, there is nothing that sets Blue J. atwitter with excitement more than thoughts of registration. But sadly, his enthusiasm was not enough to win him a coveted spot in any of the seminars he so wanted to take. It seems that the J. missed the pre-registration extravaganza at the English department. Next year, this plucky bird will be ready with writing sample, registration card, family tree, and proof of immunization.

But enough of these reveries. Blue J. has always been one to appreciate the finer things in life, and he knows that this much is fine in his life: it is May; he is in New York City; and he is at Columbia! So, before the sun sets upon his good fortune, he is headed outside to enjoy it all. Besides, the J. sees some chicks on the Low steps...
On Language: “On Language”  
by William Safire

The following article was cut from a recent issue of The New York Times Magazine because of “senile traits,” according to an editor’s note at the top of one draft. Fortunately, the B&W’s Tom Mosher was able to salvage the said draft from a dump behind the Times’s office building in Manhattan, in order to release it for the enjoyment of Columbia’s Safire fans.

Undoubtedly, all people who live anywhere in America—from New York’s cosmopolitan avenues, to the top research universities and think-tanks—have noticed the impossibility of avoiding the phrase “on language.”

Exhibit A: Last Friday on PBS, I watched Noam Chomsky ascend to the podium at an international conference for linguists, introducing his lecture as “a brief discussion on language and the brain.” Exhibit B: A day later, the Department of Education learned the president’s own views on language, from Bush himself: “Thinking on language is the basics for all learning.”

I rest my case. Stroll down the promenade or flip open your favorite fly-fishing journal, or just listen to your own dam self; the phrase is everywhere. “On language” is on our minds. But while “on language” is clearly a gem of expressive virtuosity, to whose brilliance do we owe the fortune of its inception?

Let’s give credit where credit is due, people; I coined it. Who has written a column in the New York Times Magazine for 21 years called “On Language”? Me. Who, in fact, has written more articles on language than you, your best friend, or your mother? This gangster right here, fools, and for the benefit of you etymologists out there, I can prove how “on language” came about.

It all started in the sixties, when I was still writing speeches for then-candidate Nixon. Dick, Spiro, and I spent weeks driving along the coast of California in a Volkswagen Microbus, all painted with pink and yellow sunflowers (they brought us mystical strength). We called it “campaigning,” though I have to be perfectly honest here—we were following the Dead.

What psychedelic euphoria overwhelmed my senses each night, as Jerry Garcia and his grateful cohorts teased the sweetest aural delights out of those guitars! What bliss! We had missed the summer of love by a year, but Nixon refused to believe that the party had passed us by. Sometimes he would steal my brownies and run off for days with his friends “Agrippina,” “Attila the One,” and “Mrs. Butterworth”—what a crowd!

Well, early August in San-Fran, Spiro and I met up with Ken Kesey and the Merry Pranksters. Most of that first evening—okay, most of the month—remains a blur to me, but I do remember one conversation Ken and I had down at the wharf. Our eyes met across the pier; we ran toward each other and embraced warmly. Then, after taking one look at me Ken asked, “You look like you’re on something wicked tonight man. What are you on, cat?”

For a second I didn’t know what to say. “... something wicked ...”

Then, the world melted in front of my eyes. I transformed into a snake and slithered down a deep black hole, and I became the silence.

“... what ... are ... you on? ...”

The chaos became a lake of maroon syrup, and all the letters of the alphabet appeared, floating in the goo like perfect orthographic lily pads.

“... what ... did you take, Willy ... what ... are you on?”

Fifty-five nanoseconds later I awoke as though reborn. My teeth and lips slowly began to part.

I lifted my hand and touched Ken Kesey on his stubby cheek, and I whispered, “I’m on...”
language, man. I'm on language.” And that's when I knew I had changed the world.

For the rest of the summer we stayed “on language” pretty much all the time, at least, whenever we could afford it. At the Dead's final show of the season, Dick Nixon somehow found us and rejoined the campaign. He changed his mind, and decided to attend the Republican Convention after all—apparently, “Mrs. Butterworth” had turned out to be anything but a “Mrs.” But one thing stuck with Nixon forever: the peace sign. He loved making that sign to his friends, to crowds, to everybody—both hands at once.

We won the White House, we partied for a few years, we got busted.

The seventies rolled around. But disco just didn’t work for us Deadheads, so I cleaned myself up a bit, joined the Times in '73, and in '79 I began my column “On Language”—a memorial to that night in California, to the sixties, to days gone by.

Illustration by Christian Brownrigg

May 2000

Mai

The may the lovely may on the Rhine for a ride
From the mountain-top ladies watched us on our way
How lovely you are but the boat sails away
Who then has left weeping these willows by the riverside

So the flowering orchards froze to the rear
May’s cherry-tree’s petals which gently fell
Are the nails of the one who I loved so well
In the withered petals her eyelids appear

On the path on the river’s bank slowly with care
A bear a monkey a dog by gypsies led
Followed a caravan with a donkey ahead
While away in the Rhenish vines faded
On a far-off fife a regimental air

The may the lovely may has made over the tombs
With ivy rose-bushes and with virgin vine
The willow-trees shake in the wind of the Rhine
Like the gossiping reeds and the vines’ nude blooms

—Translated from Apollinaire by Jeff Soules
At last! The Morningside Heights/mid-priced/pseudo-hip/poorly-lit/light-bistro-fare-offering/anthropological-interest/after-hours-club market has been cornered! The opening of Post-Orbital Bar adds yet another gem to the crown of the Columbia bar circuit. I happened upon this cozy watering hole one recent spring evening, nestled in its new location adjacent to the nascent Columbia K-8 School at 105th and Broadway. I was pleasantly surprised by its unassuming exterior—so unlike many of the new so-called “theme bars” that have opened of late in Manhattan—but I was puzzled by the odd name. I asked Post-Orbital Bar proprietor Philbert Leaky about the intriguing, yet baffling moniker. “The post-orbital bar,” he explained (with some impatience), “is the bony ridge that protects the lateral and posterior sides of the eye in primates. It is one of the defining characteristics of the primate order. If you didn’t have one, I’d guess you were some sort of pouched marsupial.”

With my newfound understanding of cranial anatomy, I surveyed the bar’s paleo-ritz décor, which could be described as a tasteful blend of faux-postindustrial and sub-Saharan rainforest (très Rock Bottom Grill meets African Queen!). The walls are lined with the tasteful skulls of numerous extinct species, such as the robust *Australopithecus aethiopicus* and the ugly-chic *Homo rudolfensis*. The booths are decorated with a variety of Middle-Pleistocene ferns, the maintenance of which requires a constant temperature of ninety degrees and enough humidity to keep your wire-rimmed glasses well fogged.

Such eyewear is ubiquitous at the lounge. The clientele is mainly composed of Ph.D. students in anthropology. On hiatus from their toils in sundry jungles and lowlands, miles away from the monkeys that so freely fling fluids, their pith helmets in storage, these erudite scholars take some time to study the contents of a much-needed highball. The drinks, which are ample, and modestly priced ($5 for standard drinks and pints), help to amiabley defuse heated arguments over the savanna hypothesis of bipedalism. Make sure to try the specialty of the house, the Missing Drink, which will add a little Pleistocene pizzazz to any thrill-seeker’s evening. The Missing Drink requires a bit of explanation: in 1998, physical anthropologists, utilizing advanced carbon dating and biostratigraphy techniques, determined the ingredients of a cocktail commonly served at the dinner parties of *Homo habilis* in the Olduvai Gorge. The bartender was more than happy to give me the recipe, faithfully reproduced below. Whether you’re a member of a fledgling genus avoiding sleek predators, or an Upper West Side socialite, this little number is sure to win praise at your next soirée.

**INTERESTED IN A DATE? URH HAS SEVEN.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Check-Out (non-seniors)</td>
<td>Saturday, May 12 by Noon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Check-Out (seniors)</td>
<td>Thursday, May 17 by 4:00 p.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer Session I Housing Begins</td>
<td>Sunday, May 20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Summer Session I Housing Ends</td>
<td>Saturday, June 30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Summer Session II Housing Begins</td>
<td>Sunday, July 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Summer Session II Housing Ends</td>
<td>Saturday, August 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Returning Student Check-In</td>
<td>Thursday, August 30</td>
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</tbody>
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University Residence Halls
This cocktail is a bit more expensive than conventional beverages ($11.50, as there are few gazelles around in New York, and the Central Park Zoo has a security force renowned for both vigilance and brutality). However, if money is a concern, you might want to swing by on a Thursday night, also known as Neanderthal Night. If you believe yourself to be a Neanderthal, and can pass through a series of cranial measurements, a body-fat percentage test, a behavioral questionnaire, and a rigorous interview with Columbia Professor Jill Shapiro, then you may purchase unlimited pints of Miller Light for only $2. Oh happy you!

Unfortunate readers of the Homo sapiens persuasion, do not fret. Although you may have a slightly higher bill, you may also have an opportunity to participate in the evolutionarily crucial process of sexual selection (a process somewhat confused in the human species due to the preponderance of alcohol in social situations). In discussion section, that pale, encyclopedic TA of yours may seem like nothing to write home about—but have a few drinks at Post-Orbital Bar, and you may find yourself with an unprecedented A++ in Nomadic Australopithecines of the South Pacific: The Politics of Meat.

-Mephiscotcheles

The Missing Drink
1. Fashion a lowball glass from the trunk of a sapling by hollowing out one end with a tool you have crafted via bi-facial flaking.
2. Add 2 oz. well-fermented gazelle blood.
3. Add 1 oz. stagnant pool-water.
4. Stir vigorously with opposable thumb.
5. Enjoy!

Illustration by Craig Hollander
In Mathew Lewis' sublime 1796 gothic novel, *The Monk*, the dark clergyman Ambrosio gazes into a demonic mirror which shows him images of his beloved young obsession prepping for her bath, her bare leg extending into the hot water below, beading with water from the steam as she lightly caresses her own breast. The observer in the story is called to damnation by the wiles of this image, this dark window into perversion, and the reader, also turned voyeur, follows him. I can't help but think of this when I look at Barnard 616 across the alley.

There are nights when, alone in my room like many a northern Schapiro lad, I turn my gaze on the girls' dorm and let the wiles of these images seduce me. My sin, my soul, my window, this is what you show me:

There is a girl with her young gentleman caller, the windows open, the lights on, and they, wrapped in *flagrante delicto* call out into the night. One cannot help but stare. So this is what I do. And so do the people in the rooms next to me, and below me, and below that. They all stare. Two hours pass. She of the couple is wailing like Homer's sirens, like Heine's Lorelei, like Mick Jagger. They change positions several times, and though I do not want to look, my curiosity, like cruel hounds, ever more pursues me. I must check again, to see what they are doing now. I cannot read— I hear her moaning even with my window closed. I cannot sleep. I know how little sleep occurs across the alley. I can do nothing but try to catch them out of the corner of my eye and tell myself I'm not really looking. There are other reasons to look out the window and perhaps I am engaged with the night sky or the water towers on the rooftops, when I just happen to see the lovers across the way.

Hours later they are done. The lad, who must be admired for his stamina and skill—one could not help but hearing—is now asleep. The girl, still glowing I see, has just woken up and comes to her window to look out. Maintenance is in my room; the repairman, who does not seem affected by my impulse to equate this with what Freud said about a child seeing his parents making love for the first time, looks out the window and says, laughing: "There's a girl across the way, naked." I shrug. "You should get your camera, make some money on the internet."

The man leaves laughing and I am plagued. I do not want to look again. There must be other places to cast my gaze. Down some flights, aha! People reading. Just reading. Barnard nymphettes exploring the works of Anne Radcliffe, or perhaps dreaming of summer days lying on the lawn, their feet playing in the spray of the sprinkler perhaps, standing 4'10" in one sock. I can't help to watch the reading. Like the monk, Schedoni, who Radcliffe fills with such guilt in *The Italian*, I grab at Snapple as though it were poison to ease my bad conscience. My eyes return, over the rim of the bottle, past the peach-colored label, and through my demonic looking-glass window, to the girl across the way. She leans out of her own window, so much more innocent than mine, as the windows of all girls' dorms in the universe must be. I don't have my glasses on, but I notice she is in her pale white bra. Thank God, a little modesty. Repression comes easier now, as I think of the time I walked in on my sister trying on bras. The girl and I make eye contact across the way. I wave, nervous that this fourth wall has been shattered, trying both to think and not think of my sister. She quickly slips back into her lair and closes the shade. My neighbors come by.

"Dude, did you see that across the alley?"

"No, what?"

"This girl leaned out the window, topless."

I notice my neighbor has his glasses on. The poor girl across the way needs more sun. I chuckle for the boys and they leave my room. With the door closed, I go to the window—to look at the sky or perhaps the water towers on the rooftops, and I wait, sitting on my glasses.
In my salad days, I used to spend time hanging about a none-too-prestigious university in suburban Atlanta. As I took my crepuscular stroll, I could often see above me the lighted windows of one of the dormitories. Although still quite innocent, I had a vague notion of what wondrous sights might offer themselves to me, if only I had a view from one of the other dormitories. I knew one thing: whatever libidinous bacchanalia my young mind could imagine, the truth must be even better. I looked forward to my own then-distant college days, when I too would have a room with a view.

Alas, the fates were less than kind to me. My freshman year, I moved into a room on the quad, with a scenic vista of Butler Library, hardly the collegiate brothel I was hoping for. To make matters worse, a young co-ed in my dorm seemed to be putting on quite a show for the gentle chaps in Wallach, whose faces I would watch; I could only guess what carnal delights they were witnessing in the room next door to mine. Even my RA, whose room also faced the quad, got an eyeful one night as she saw into a room two stories down, featuring a virtuostic solo exhibition by a man whom we later came to know as “Jack.”

Sophomore year brought similar tidings. I would awake every morning in Schapiro, only to look out the window upon a sea of faces—construction workers watching the roommates in the room next door go through their morning ablutions (which apparently took at least an hour, judging by the workers’ rapt attention). I had the sole voyeuristic pleasure of watching surreptitious nose-pickers in the Kraft Center.

Having resigned myself to my lot, I was not surprised when, the next year, I got room looking the Lion’s Court. Not only was I deprived of the wild displays of fecundity that were my right as a college student but I was face to face with one of the ugliest buildings on God’s green earth, second only to Tschumi’s exorbitant collision of glass, brick, and ego. My closest brush with voyeurism came when, one night while making an amorous call to a young Mädchen in another hall, I looked up and realized that I could see straight into one of the windows across the way. A young man sat in the room, very still, looking straight at me through the window. He was waiting for me to continue, for the show to go on. Our eyes met, but he did not turn away. I waved, and then closed the shade; some things are better appreciated.
CURIO COLUMBIANA

Along with playing croquet in the snow and sponsoring the Annual Joyce Kilmer Memorial Bad Poetry Contest, the Philolexian Society (Columbia's oldest established club) does indeed sponsor weekly debates on questions not likely to be posed by Tim Russert. (They're also the promulgators of the Ad Hoc Facial Hair Licensing Committee). Herewith, the Blue and White's resident Philo has culled a best-of Surgam.

Resolved: Any indignity can be solved with the promise of free pizza.
Resolved: Of all the major religious figures, Buddha would have made the best DJ.
Resolved: Replace the administration with baboons.
Resolved: The path to Enlightenment leads directly to the Doritos aisle.
Resolved: Nothin' beats tension like killing your neighbors.
Resolved: If you took an infinite amount of monkeys with an infinite amount of typewriters for an infinite amount of time, you would probably be wasting your time.
Resolved: Dammit, we should be learning about dead white males!
Resolved: Would you like fries with that?
Resolved: Plagiarism should be encouraged as another form of recycling.
Resolved: Get Canada before they get us.
Resolved: Stalking is the sincerest form of flattery.
Resolved: Are you there God, it's me Margaret.
Resolved: Turn Lerner into the world's wackiest bowling alley.
Resolved: The proposed increase in class size will destroy the College.

(Dates from '96, the flyers read: More students. Same faculty. You decide.)
Resolved: We are not alone.
Resolved: No.
Resolved: Viagra, Viagra, for my soul! Viagra, Viagra for Bob Dole!
Resolved: If you love somebody, set them on fire.
Resolved: Then again, maybe I won't.
Resolved: Why is this night different from all other nights?
Resolved: A waffle is better than a moron.
Resolved: I'm with stupid.
Resolved: We should all aspire to die like Alexander Hamilton.
Resolved: Homework is a Repressive State Apparatus.
Resolved: Why are there so many songs about rainbows?
Resolved: Okay, I love you, buh-bye.
live in exile. Born into this Morningside Heights community as a freshman, still in nonage, I lived in Hartley Hall. It was beautiful. I remember when the RA would come through the suite with cookies or fruit to relieve us from our studies of the stoic virtues in Virgil. I remember when parties would take up floors and chickens would roam free over the new carpeting. Life was precious in this place. We had space enough for all, with and without campus views and no one applied to live there. There were no acronyms for Hartley-Wallach at that time. I lived there the next year, high atop the building, in what one German major who wandered up there while fleeing a prolonged reading of Nietzsche called “the roof of the world.” He taught us much about life in other parts of campus, such as the little kitchens in McBain and the grimy sinks in Wien. Noises from below did not bother us so high on the tenth floor and our view was the green-capped roofs of Hamilton and Furnald in the distance. Many came to our glorious suite for drinks or guidance in matters of building events or magazine publication. It was truly the seat of enlightenment. We were, of course, wary of outsiders. To get into our Thursday night poker games, gifts were brought in homage, making goods plentiful for our small population in this abundance of space. But power was growing very close to us. The offices of URH, below us in Wallach and Hartley on the ground floors, were churning out five year plans, acronymizing, and plotting a new order. It was the spring and, in the spirit of the times, we had a festival. Others were invited. It was a rare time when outsiders were welcomed and all was peace. The building CPA, who lived with us in our holy city, was care-free and happy. This is my last memory of Hartley 10. He raised a martini glass and toasted to our prosperity and the prosperity of Hartley 10. He smiled and looked out the skylight in his room. And then it ended.

The LLC was instituted. Mass emails were sent. All non-LLC applicants were unable to live as citizens of Hartley-Wallach. We could not believe it. We lived in denial. No one would apply, we thought. They won’t get enough applicants and they will beg us to return. The balance of power had shifted. We had been so long cultivating our happy and mindful way of life, publishing scholarly works and imbibing joyously, that it was easy to catch us off guard and cast us into exile. We, the ones of Hartley 10 and her many other children on lower floors who would not assimilate, who would not apply, we were cast into exile in Schapiro and other distant lands. This same power took Furnald from us, where we thought we might flee. I watched for a long time as my people were uprooted, moved across Broadway and across 114th. It was horrible to see boxes and orange carts and single unit stereos, poster tubes containing French advertisement reproductions, all moving from Hartley-Wallach, never to return.

I live now in exile. Members of the LLC occupy my old rooms and corridors, throwing LLC events and using their powerful LLC budget to sway the people in their favor. Campus is not for my people any longer. We are all Hartley’s children, cast across the streets, in all directions. As an upperclassman, as a campus figure, I work with many groups, many younger people, and I try to act as the spiritual and temporal leader of my lost people, speaking of the days when Hartley-Wallach and Furnald Hall were free and open to all in the lottery, letting chance, not year or application status, dictate one’s homeland. I, and my many people inside and out of the Living and Learning Center, will work, through education and peaceful resistance, or wage earning to become trustees, until our children or their children or the children of other trustees can return to the peaceful and ancient homeland, which I will forever call Hartley-Wallach, seat of Enlightenment, roof of the world.

May 2001
That Useless Time Machine
by Achille Varzi & Luciano Coen

Dear Review Committee:

It is not our practice to raise complaints against a negative review report. We believe in peer refereeing and we respect it, whatever its content and consequences. However, in the case of our latest grant application (project #X45 entitled “The Time Machine”) we find it necessary to express our astonishment at the motivations with which our request for funding was turned down. Your main objection appears to be that our project is “philosophically interesting” but “practically useless”, by which you mean that the project “has no potential for applications.” We do not quite think that the main criterion for judging the scientific value of a project should be its practical usefulness, but never mind that. Let us agree that usefulness is a relevant criterion, especially when large amounts of money are involved. Why should that be a reason to turn down our project? Quite frankly, we cannot think of a project with better application potential than ours. Some examples:

- Cultural tourism: one could send herds of history fans back in time to witness the crucial episodes of the French Revolution, or to watch the Egyptians construct the pyramids, or to videotape Socrates’ lectures.
- Exotic safaris: we have already received several applications for dinosaur hunting expeditions (they got extinct anyway).
- Error detection: we could take a closer look at our past mistakes and learn to avoid them in the future.
- Historic documentaries: think of the huge saving in set design, costumes, special effects, etc. (How much did Gladiator cost?)
- We could solve the great enigmas of the past, find out about Aristotle’s Poetics, discover the truth behind the giant stones of Stonehenge.

And so on and so forth. Honestly, can you think of a project with better prospects for useful and thrilling applications?

Sincerely Yours,
The “Time Machine” Research Group

Dear “Time Machine” Research Group:

Thank you for your letter. We agree that it would be interesting to exploit a time machine for the uses that you suggest. It would also be nice if we could use it to prevent all sorts of horrible crimes that happened in the past. It would be nice, for instance, to be able to go back to Dallas and prevent Lee Harvey Oswald from assassinating John Kennedy, or to go back to 1900 Germany and look after a little boy called Adolf Hitler to make sure he gets diverted from his cruel plans (we could persuade him to pursue an honest artistic career instead). It would be nice indeed to be able to do such things. However, suppose your project were to be successful. Suppose you will manage to construct a time machine. Then why didn’t you do any of those things? Why is it that our past history is still full of horrible crimes? Either this means that your project is doomed to fail and you will never manage to construct a time machine; or it means that the project will succeed but that you are not going to use your time machine for those good purposes. In the first case, logic shows it would be pointless to support your project. In the second case, ethics dictates that it would be a mistake. Either way, you must concede that the reasons against your project are overwhelming.

Cordially Yours,
The Review Committee
Dear Committee:

Certainly you have noticed that our suggestions for practical applications of the time machine did not include any political or military uses that could result in an alteration of the natural course of history. As a matter of fact, we believe that no such alteration is logically possible. According to our project, it is logically possible to visit the past but not to modify the past. No time traveler can undo what has been done or do what has not been done. So the logic is safe. This does not mean that the time traveler will be ineffectual during her stay in the past, of course; it simply means that what she is going to do is something that she has already done. An accurate catalogue of all the past events would include an account of the arrival of the Time Machine from the sky as well as an account of all the actions and reactions that followed. And ethics is safe too. For, if indeed we managed to go back to Dallas, then we could perhaps find out whether Oswald actually killed Kennedy or why he did it. But we could not stop Oswald from doing what he did. Nobody would be able to stop Oswald because nobody was able to stop him (and nobody was able to stop Oswald because nobody will ever be able to do so, even if they came from the future). Alas, the past is full of horrible crimes but there is nothing that we can do about that.

Respectfully Yours,
The “Time Machine” Research Group

Dear “Time Machine” Research Group:

Many thanks for your letter of clarification. We appreciate the distinction between changing the past (impossible) and affecting the past (possible). However, this simply reinforces our initial impression: your project has no practical value. If in order to travel to the past one has to have been there already, and if one can only do what has already been done, then à quoi bon l’effort? Why should we invest in a “Time Machine” at all? We are afraid that our decision is now final.

Yours with best wishes,
The Committee
Last year, the Columbia student body received, with much fuss and to-do, a new student center. This year, that same student body can read about this project in a book recently published by Lerner Hall’s architect, and Dean of the Graduate School of Architecture, one Mr. Bernard Tschumi. As architectural fluff books go, *Event-Cities 2*, Tschumi’s 692-page brick/book, is rather cheap, although I suspect that its hefty price tag ($35) puts it out of the reach of much of the student body. This is unfortunate, as one of the chapters of the work is dedicated to Lerner Hall, a significant building in the lives of many Columbians. *Event-Cities 2* is Tschumi’s attempt to pitch his work to his fellow architects and architectural critics, as well as to future clients.

In an attempt to respond to (or, better put, dismiss) critics of the building, Tschumi offers this: “This project is about a building that was alternatively praised and attacked for the wrong reasons. For example, ‘conservatives’ derided its large expanse of glass as heresy within the historical context, while some ‘progressives’ said its use of ‘mimetic’ granite, bricks, and cornice was a disgrace to the ideas of progress, newness, and creativity.” Regardless of whether or not we buy into Tschumi’s very reductive reading of the architectural criticism of his work (which lets him position himself comfortably as the smiling iconoclast), it is worth pointing out that there is another source of criticism that is completely ignored: that of the actual occupants of Lerner Hall.

The lack of concern for the students (and staff, administrators, guests, etc.) for whom this student center was designed runs throughout Tschumi’s commentary on his work. To whatever degree the people using the building figure into Tschumi’s conception, they are “forces” whose movements are molded into patterns that are as much a part of the architecture as the building itself. As Tschumi writes, Lerner is “not about forms, but about forces”—a thought one should keep in mind when navigating the poorly-planned aggregation of ramps and stairs that are required simply to get to one’s mailbox.

We can take comfort in the knowledge that, at night, our bodies on the ramps form a sort of “silent shadow theater” for those in the know.
These sort of comments from Tschumi should lead us to question the motives that drove the design of Lemer Hall. For whom was it built? Clearly, Tschumi was interested in producing something that could function as a thought-provoking and exciting architectural project. This is why, for Tschumi, the “critics” are the architectural cognoscenti, the kind of people who could, with some semblance of a straight face, call Lerner’s glass wall “heresy.” However, we must remember that Tschumi was contracted to build a student center, not a vanity project. We should ask why the stage is so ill-suited to performance pieces (the dance group Orchesis entitled last year’s show “Zero Degrees” in reference to the lack of incline in either the stage or the seating). We should ask why the administrative area of the building, conspicuously unmentioned in Event-Cities 2, is such a labyrinth. We should ask why we needed a “softening committee” to mediate between the students and the sterile building when Lerner was first opened. We should ask why, in a university that has had so much trouble relating to the neighborhood it occupies, the Broadway façade of Lerner takes on the look of a fortress.

Of all the questions we might ask, perhaps the most important one is about Lerner’s price tag. From an administration that is quick to inform us that the expansion of teaching staff or of much-needed classroom space is not on the immediate agenda, $85 million is an almost ludicrous sum to spend on a semi-functional collage of glass and brick. To a certain degree, we should be invested in the kind of aesthetic statements our architecture is making, but is this a priority worth $85 million? How much are we getting out of Tschumi’s gigantic glass wall, made of 800-pound sheets of specially-fabricated glass? How much do we need clusters of expensive leather chairs at the end of every ramp? While I realize that much of the money for Lerner Hall has been raised specifically for the project, including from Mr. Alfred Lerner himself, who coughed up a cool $25 million, was this the best aim of our university’s fundraising efforts? What about scholarships, neighborhood initiatives, funding for student events, or even pay raises for our overworked junior faculty and teaching assistants?

With so much at stake in a building of these proportions, we are justified in demanding an explanation for some of the choices that directed the Lerner Hall project, and this is just what is lacking, both in Event-Cities 2 and in all of Tschumi’s public statements that I’ve come across about the project. This lack of public response is especially jarring when one considers that Tschumi, who associates himself very closely with the French student uprisings of 1968, “les evenements du mai,” seems to have, while still talking the talk, walked right on over to the other side. Lerner, more so than the buildings of the McKim, Mead and White plan, exerts a top-down control on its inhabitants. The ramps are uncomfortable, and rather than encouraging a “contamination of activities,” as Tschumi suggests, they force students into awkward circulation patterns, and often remain totally empty. Notre lutte continue.

Lerner Hall, and Event-Cities 2, are both done deals. As time passes, and as the quickly-changing college population forgets the construction of Lerner, it will also forget that there were other possibilities. Just as students on this campus do not gripe about the imperialist architecture of the original McKim, Mead and White plan, they will soon learn to accept Lerner Hall as just another piece of the unchangeable landscape. Thus, with a nod to the inevitable, we tip our hat to Tschumi, he has foisted another one on us. He can go back to his work on Event-Cities 3: My Life as a Rebel, and we can go back to the unfeeling structure that is our student center, and wait for a storm. ★

MAY 2000

153
On February 18, 1965 Malcolm X Shabazz gave his last public speech at Barnard’s LeFrak Gymnasium. Three days later he was assassinated at the Audubon Ballroom in Harlem. In order to honor Malcolm X, commemorate the event, and celebrate Black Heritage Month, Barnard invited Attallah Shabazz, one of Malcolm’s six daughters to speak on the same date in the same place 36 years later.

Ms. Shabazz portrayed her father as living a life dedicated to people. While the rest of the world only saw Malcolm speak at the podium, his family saw him preparing his speeches and returning home after he had spoke. Despite his devotion to the fight against racial injustice, Malcolm still had time to play a role in his children’s lives. Ms. Shabazz recounted many ice-cream confessionals, when she and her father would sit at the table over ice cream discussing something that was bothering her or her own misbehavior. She felt that her father had a skill of easing her into the point where she felt like she could tell him anything.

Ms. Shabazz also debunked some of the myths about Malcolm X that arose from the depiction of his character in Spike Lee’s 1992 eponymous movie. Malcolm did not teach himself in prison by reading the dictionary. He was an honor-roll student and president of his seventh-grade class. Ms. Shabazz asked the audience why the movie had failed to portray her father’s eloquence and why it couldn’t show him as triumphant child who became a triumphant adult.

By portraying Malcolm in this way, the movie deprived him of his family’s rich heritage. Malcolm was one of ten children whose parents were ardent Marcus Garvey supporters. His father was an influential Baptist minister, who was killed by white racists connected to the Ku Klux Klan when Malcolm was six.

Perhaps due to the enormous tragedies that struck her family, Ms. Shabazz attached a great importance to respecting one’s elders. She said that the voices and whisperings of her ancestors, which never die down, allow her to come to life. She also spoke eloquently about how the younger generation should not forsake the elder. Even if your grandmother has told you the same story numerous times you still owe her respect and should listen intently as if you were hearing it for the first time.

When it came to discussing multiculturalism and the multiracial people, Ms. Shabazz, held progressive views. She descends from the mixed-race black Cherokees who did not go on the Trail of Tears and believes that a mixed-race person is 100% of each race, not half and half. She also tried to impress upon the audience how multicultural our world is now and insisted that we should all be at least bi or trilingual.

Throughout her speech, Ms. Shabazz captivated the audience and by the end she had brought many people to tears. The combination of her voice, her delivery, and the poignancy of the occasion created an atmosphere filled with emotion. This ability to move an audience is a skill that clearly runs in the Shabazz family.

As was pointed by Professor Manning Marable, one of the speakers who preceded Ms. Shabazz on the podium, scholars have paid little attention to Malcolm X. There are reams of documents to pore over. Some of them may even identify Malcolm X’s assassin(s). But there has been no concerted effort to unearth the history. However, this lack of scholarly attention is all about to change. Columbia’s Institute for Research in African-American Studies is embarking on an in-depth study and compilation of the documentary and oral-historical sources pertaining to Malcolm X.

—Jonathan Fox
alumni@columbia

A graduation present: your Columbia e-mail address!

With alumni@columbia, the University's e-mail forwarding service, you keep your Columbia e-mail address for receiving mail. E-mail is forwarded automatically to any other e-mail address you have registered, for as long as you choose. When you change jobs or Internet Service Providers, please be sure to provide us with a new forwarding address.

May 2001 graduates will be eligible to join after July 4.

To learn more, visit the development and alumni relations Web site:

www.columbia.edu/cu/alumni/forward
Still In One Piece

To: theblueandwhite@columbia.edu
From: Ariel Meyerstien <am731@columbia.edu>

Jerusalem, Israel
March 28, 2001

Dear Friends,

Please excuse the macabre title of this letter; I suppose living in Jerusalem in these “interesting” times begins to affect one’s humor. I am just writing to let all who may have been concerned know that I am fine and unharmed by the recent barrage of attacks, particularly the two in Jerusalem yesterday morning, which struck very close to home. The one in French Hill is less than five minutes from Hebrew University’s campus, where I am studying. In fact, I was arriving on another bus from the city around the same time of the explosion. The other attack occurred in Talpiyot, a district about 20 minutes from my apartment, which I visit sometimes (only at night when attacks have never occurred) for movies, etc.

Needless to say, these events give me pause. They occurred in areas usually considered quite safe, well within the municipality of Jerusalem. I am taking precautions (taxis for now), but there is only so much one can do in the face of widespread violence. I do not, however, regret for one moment my decision to come here at this time—this land and this city continue to intrigue me and demand that I discover them for myself.

I hope everyone is well in “boring” America. My studies here continue to be rewarding and interesting, and are supplemented by interesting cultural experiences and some volunteer work in a museum on Conflict Resolution. Next week I travel to Moscow to celebrate Passover with the Jewish community there—it should prove to be a fascinating experience.

Take care and let’s all pray that cooler heads preside in the coming months.

B’Shalom (in Peace),
Ariel

Illustration by Christian Broenrigg

156
Having alighted to Texas for Spring Break in search of a week of blissful indolence, a close friend and I sat in the very back corner of one Golden Chick Fried Chicken Restaurant, debating the merits of said restaurant’s offerings. Golden Chick, as my friend would have it, was the zenith of gastronomic pleasure. Indeed, an acquaintance of his had been firmly deposited in the annals of his high school’s lore by dint of dining at Golden Chick seventeen straight lunch periods in a row. The feat, I concurred, was worthy of immense admiration. The chicken was not: it was merely good, not golden. This comment elicited a shocked cry from my friend, and he resolutely pressed his case. The debate intensified, voices rose, rhetoric escalated. We argued at length, eventually reaching an impasse. Neither willing to accede, we fell to attacking the chicken instead of one another.

Our momentary silence was intruded upon by the noisome cries of the television mounted directly above us. We could not see the screen, but the tone and content of the voices made it clear that a soap opera was in progress. Our reaction was swift and inhumane: a torrent of contemptuous Columbian vitriol spewed forth as we mercilessly ridiculed the plot, characters, and dialogue of this all-American daytime television fare. Life, after all, isn’t nearly as dramatic, absurd, and irrational (not to mention, buxom) as the soap opera would have it.

Or is it? Whilst I was in Texas wrangling steers and concocting award-winning barbe- cue sauces, an ominous computer was whirring away back in Morningside Heights, determining the final plot twists of a soap opera familiar to all Columbians—the housing lottery. A few moments of reflection prove that art, if you want to call a soap opera that, really does mirror life.

Take the cast of characters, for instance. Any self-respecting soap opera will have: two to three peppery-haired scions, a handful of arrivistes with checkered backgrounds and striped suits, the requisite midget or dwarf, an amnesiac beauty queen and a Latin lover, as well as a miscellany of grotesques thrown in for good measure. Columbia’s housing lottery is possessed of a similarly interesting and “diverse” cast of characters: there is the enigmatic Assistant Director of Residence Halls Rob Lutomski, whose name is whispered in connexion with so many dark and fantastical tales; students returning from studies abroad; the impoverished mass of rising sophomores, about which clings a palpable scent of fear of being banished to Wien; the rising juniors and seniors; and of course, there is the Barnard contingent.

The politics involved in assembling a suite or avoiding being swallowed up by one are equally soap operatic. Indeed, the kidnappings and affairs and bad jewelry of a soap opera pale in comparison to the carnage I have witnessed in my time at this bastion of the educated and elite. This faithful author shudders to think of the harrowing tales that could be related of
Machiavellian ousters and midnight purges, of backstabbing and nail-biting, of sophisticated machinations and political maneuvering.

Yes, Columbia’s housing process really is our own little soap opera, and not without its own moral lessons and educational value. What better way for sophomore to apply the truths they have just grasped in CC than by applying them to their housing decision? What, one might ask, would Kant do if his penchant for pork rinds precipitated an argument with a potential suitemate? Ah, the wonders of the Categorical Imperative!

All of which leads this author to a rather surprising realization: Perhaps the housing process is actually a secret part of our sacred Core Curriculum, which after all, is intended to make not only better scholars but also better citizens of us. And isn’t that what soap operas are all about? 

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Morgan continued from page 136

eight desks. Yet, it housed a stream of Columbia students as well as foreign visitors and soon received wide recognition, not only for the remarkable quality and clarity of its science but also for the democratic nature of its social interaction. Morgan encouraged the free exchange of ideas in an atmosphere that was at once friendly, yet self-critical.

The atmosphere in the Fly Room was described by Sturtevant, one of the youngest in the group. He wrote:

"This group worked as a unit. Each carried on his own experiments, but each knew exactly what the others were doing, and each new result was freely discussed. There was little attention paid to priority or to the source of new ideas or new interpretations. What mattered was to get ahead with the work. There was much to be done; there were many new ideas to be tested, and many new experimental techniques to be developed. There can have been few times and places in scientific laboratories with such an atmosphere of excitement and with such a record of sustained enthusiasm. This was due in part to Morgan’s own attitude, compounded with enthusiasm combined with a strong critical sense, generosity, open-mindedness, and a remarkable sense of humor."

Although this idyllic view was not shared by all, the Fly Room nevertheless characterized science at its best and continues to provide a prototype for how research should be done, at Columbia and elsewhere. In terms of the work conducted there, the science that began at Columbia spread to laboratories all over the world as Morgan, the members of his group, and the scientists they trained helped to shape the course of biology during the decades that followed. Of the people who worked with Morgan directly or who worked with one of his students, five went on to win their own Nobel Prize: Hermann J. Muller, George Beadle, Joshua Lederberg, and Edward B. Lewis. Another student, Theodosius Dobzhansky, went on to place evolution into a modern biological context. Impelled by their achievements, the center of influence in biology shifted from Europe to the United States, making the twentieth century an American Century in biology.

At the same time, the open, critical, yet fully democratic and egalitarian atmosphere that was evident in the Fly Room soon came to characterize the distinctively American atmosphere of university research—an especially significant development as American graduate education increasingly became the model for graduate education throughout the world.

IF YOU BOX IT, THEY WILL COME.

URH is again sponsoring off-site storage service for students—WOOHOO! The early registration deadline has passed. Worry not: you can still register calling Package Express, the URH selected vendor: (718) 244-8727—before May 7. If not, that’s OK: they will be on campus May 7-11. They will also be offering shipping service during Check-Out Week from several campus locations. See the Check-Out Guide on the URH website for more details.

University Residence Halls

MAY 2001
CAMPUS GOSSIP

Those Columbians who remained on campus for Spring Break had the great pleasure of witnessing the arrival of spring with Columbia’s Annual LolitaFest, an influx of nubile high schoolers from around the nation. Traveling in packs, these oh-so-postpubescent fleshlings of questionable moral intent brought vibrancy, midriffs, and thousands of large white name tags to our fair campus. Whether clogging the Lerner entrances, posing for pictures on Alma’s lap, or just wandering the campus looking for “the big green building, you know, it’s green,” they were glorious sight for all to behold. This editor heartily looks forward to their return next spring.

FOR COLUMBIA’S WAYWARD SOULS, the web offers two new hotspots for the spiritual guidance you need. www.ask-imam.com, “the online fatwa resource,” features Ask the Imam with Mufti Ebrahim Desai. And Jewish students wishing to explore a major ninth century fundamentalist schismatic group can e-mail ask_the_karaite@karaite-korner.org!

Anonymous Head of an Oxford College: “What are you reading as an undergraduate?”
Columbian on Spring Break in that Green and Pleasant Land: “Classics, at Columbia.”
AHoaOG: “Oh, Columbia? That’s a fine school. But you know in England we just laugh at American degrees?”
CoSBitGaPL: “May I have some more sherry please?”

Al Gore, political candidate and news-media expert, recently received arousing welcome from the Columbia University Marching Band. Though the former Vice President’s tardiness pushed the limits of the prepared portions of the CUMB repertoire, the crowd gathered on Furnald Lawn proved whose is the greater share of respect on campus. Despite the ill-starred decision to welcome the former Presidential hopeful with such standards as “Sweet Dreams” and “Final Countdown,” the sleek political animal was pleased to give a brief responding wave and smile to the Band’s gleeful unison cries of “Hi Al Gore!” and a good time was, we are certain, had by all, with the possible exception of the chilled—nay, frostbitten—hands of a certain Columbia University Marching Band bassist.

I’m Sorry, Lindsey, You Marked “A” on question 49.

But Professor Gore, I meant “B.”

Cartoon by Craig Hollander
Frequenters of Aris Beauty Salon (unisex, no appointment necessary) on Amsterdam may be interested to know that Mr. Aris' real name is Aristode. While you won't find Platonic dialogues in session while your hair is being cut, you will find a pleasant staff, prompt service, and the cheapest coif-cut this side of Nicoletti's in East Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania. Tell them the Blue and White sent you.

Prof. Stephanson's comments about E.P. Thompson's classic history, The Making of the English Working Class, in his Historian's Craft seminar: Stephanson: "Whenever I read this, I always think of Hilary Clinton."

Students, tutti, after an uncomfortably long pause: "Why?"

Stephanson, nodding his head in agreement with himself: "She's a STERN Methodist."
The students await further scraps of wisdom to drop from on high. The gnomic Stephanson remains Columbia's prime source of solemn speculation on detestable sports metaphors, the opening and closing of windows, and all matters pertaining to the MLA Handbook, "a fascist document."

"In the theatre, there were brawls between gangs favouring rival ballet-dancers. Nero converted these disorders into serious warfare."

--Tacitus, Annals, Chapter 11

Perusing the Columbia Marching Band script for the 1998 football game against Yale on www.cumb.org, a Blue and White reader observes some uncanny clairvoyance. The band commented on Columbia recieving more applications than Yale, "for the first time in 244 tries" and triumphantly yelled "Ha ha ha! Now all the pretty young actresses will come to our school!" After a false start, in which both Claire Danes and Christina Ricci were admitted to and turned down Columbia in favor of Other educational plans and consistently bad movies, this year's freshman class has provided a bumper crop. They're consistently more talented and better-looking, to boot! Who knew?

CAMBRIDGE NOTEBOOK: The Blue and White's man about the Atlantic seaboard recently tried his luck at pilfering Harvard dining services. Not only was he successful, but he discovered, to his flabbergasted delight, that the Harvard Sunday brunch offers all-you-can-eat smoked salmon. He found it adequately delicious and deliciously free. Quel luxe de luxe! The B&W hopes Alma will consider an aggressive new smoked salmon policy to maintain her competitive position among the Ivies.

Trying to rouse his Modern Poetry I class from their complacent Wednesday afternoon stupor, Kenneth Koch offered 25 cents to whomever could identify "Pavlova" in Ezra Pound's "The Garret":

Dawn enters with little feet like a gilded Pavlova, And I am near my desire.

As the class pondered the riddle with furrowed brows, one eager go-getter shot his hand into the air. "You know who it was?" Prof. Koch asked. "It was Pavlov's dog!" the young scholar answered.

Prof. Koch spent the next ten minutes elucidating the differences between the real Pavlova—a world-renowned Russian ballerina—and Pavlov's salivating mutt. Occasionally, he paused in his outrage to chuckle helplessly at the idea of Pound singing the praises of four little canine feet tiptoeing, gilded, like the dawn.

"As soon as the Romans were corrupted, their desires became immense. This can be judged by the price they put on things. A jug of Falernian wine sold for one hundred Roman deniers; a barrel of salt meat from the Black Sea cost four hundred deniers; a good cook, four talents. Young boys were priceless."

--Montesquieu, The Spirit of Laws

"A 17th-century Mastercard credit card commercial!" comments Elaine Shen, C'01.
Overheard in George Kolombatovich's fencing class:
“Ever hear of Furtwangler? Toscanini? Leonard Bernstein? They all moved their arms like that. And you know what? They’re all DEAD. You move like that and YOU’RE DEAD TOO.”

ABC News Chairman, Lerner Auditorium namesake and University Trustee Roone Arledge, C'52, was back in the national spotlight recently when “Roone” was the answer to “TV exec Arledge,” 25 across, for the February 25th Sunday crossword of the Boston Globe magazine. The Blue and White, while handily inking in answers to 78 across, “Yak territory,” and 83 down, “Sledge-O-Matic wielder,” observed smugly that Mr. Arledge was the only human Ivy League entrant in the Sunday puzzle, the most difficult and prestigious of each week’s crosswords. In fairness, 79 across was “Harvard quadrangle,” a four letter word. Somehow, all the choices that sprang to mind seemed equally appropriate.

The B&W applauds the wondrous grammarian who penned a sign hanging in Butler's East Elevators: “This elevator ascends only to the eleventh floor.” Mellifluous!

Professor Robert A. M. Thurman, noted Buddhist scholar and possessor of two middle names, made a revelation in class the other day. “Gene Rodenberry is my Bodhisatva,” said Professor Thurman, honoring the spiritual seeker and ‘Star Trek’ creator.

Saji’s Kitchen of Japan: hidden between B'way and Am'dam on 109th, it’s tiny and stupendous!

Existential Haiku
Food poisoning during
Midterms, nearly throwing up
in Twentieth Century Art

Overheard in the Lerner East Elevator:
Unknown Lerner Administrator: I mean, look at the vacuum situation!
Dara Falco, Lerner Hall Associate Director of Student Services: What’s the vacuum situation?
Unknown Lerner Administrator: We’re missing $1600 in vacuum cleaners.
Hearer holds back a gasp. Rest of elevator audience undisturbed.
Dara Falco shocked: How could that be?
Unknown Lerner Administrator: Because no one’s keeping track of them!

Apropos of a lecture on political content in Seljuk numismatic titulature, Professor Richard Bulliet delivered a brief diatribe against contemporary Turkish linguistic nationalism and commented fondly on the wild extent of inflections in the Turkish language. “My favorite is an old Coca Cola slogan,” said Professor Bulliet. “En iyi ser[j][et][ci][dir], ‘it cools the best. En iyi means ‘the best,’ -ser’ means cool. -in is the passive voice, ‘being cool.’ -et is agent formation, ‘causing to be cool.’ I have no recollection what the -i means, -ci is the one who performs the action of making cool. And -dir is just a full stop, showing that you’ve successfully gotten to the end of the word.” Professor Bulliet: heartily recommended.