THE DECLINE AND FALL OF ROLM
by Christopher Beam

THE RETURN OF BATHROBE BOY
by David Plotz

WAR OF THE WANKERS
by Marc Tracy
Readers, have you ever lost a Scrabble match? To your peg-legged grandmother? Have you ever stolen her leg? Do you remember the howl that put a damper on your sweet revenge? That pang in your gut, dear friends, is not a eulogy, nor an elegy, but a lamentation. It is in that varicose vein that THE BLUE AND WHITE offers you its Lamentations issue. Cry on our shoulder and maybe you’ll get our number. For only in moments of lamentation can we know the depths of love.

There are some things Columbia has lost. Civic responsibility. Youthful innocence. Three-way conference calls. The tale of the ROLM phone system has been one of imperial hubris and cord over-extension. The five students still socially naive enough to connect their phones are unlikely to receive a call from anyone besides THE BLUE AND WHITE’s own Christopher Beam, who chronicles the collapse of a pre-millennial empire in his majestic “The Decline and Fall of ROLM.” Ah, the 1990s, Whoomp, there it is.

The lonely echo of a fading dial tone, one can suppose, is not so bad as having one’s school under water. Such is the plight of the curiously attractive Tulane interlopers, spending a semester at C. Who knew beer pong was so integral to southern charm? Who didn’t expect Columbia students to be so snarky about unimaginable tragedy? See “Refugee Campus” on p. 28 for an anthropological exploration.

Yet let us not dwell on others’ misfortune, but rather cheaply lament our own figurative thundering typhoon, the death of Columbia Hot Bagels. Yes, when the building on 110th reopens, it shall no longer house that esteemed 24-hour purveyor of dreams, bagels, and fine forty-ounce beverages. Columbia without CoBag is like a beautiful woman with one eye. See p. 30.

O Columbia, lament! Lament all that hath come and gone, and left you with nothing but a soulless job and an STD! ❗

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OCTOBER 2005  3
CARLA BLOOMBERG

Exactly forty-nine minutes after I e-mailed Carla Bloomberg, C’07, informing her that she had been chosen to be a Campus Character, she e-mailed back a list of friends I could contact for more information. She included not just names and e-mail addresses, but brief, annotated descriptions: one friend “has proclaimed on numerous occasions that I [sic] freak him out,” while another was a “summer roommate... hum... tension of sorts...” Blunt and self-aware, Carla is a provocateur, whether or not she wants to be one. If there is one image that many Columbians (and college students from around the country) may have of Carla, it is her photograph on the Facebook. The current image shows her topless, in mid-air, her dark brown curly hair tossed upwards, with the words “HA HA HA” shielding her breasts from the censoring eyes of Mark Zuckerberg. “This whole being naked stuff is not directed at anyone specific,” Carla claims. “I still know that I’m gonna garner some reactions that I can’t control. But it’s not for them.”

Yet for all the personal liberation that comes with nudity, Carla’s motivations may be a bit more political. Aside from her participation in Students for Environmental and Economic Justice and Students for Choice, last year Carla became involved with television. “I used to do a show for CTV called ‘Jilling Off’ about sexual empowerment,” she says. “The idea for the show came about when I was talking to my RA, and she said she didn’t know where her clitoris was, so we had one episode which dealt with masturbation because a lot of women have trouble orgasming.” Although she only shot one episode, she hopes to do more. For now, her media dominance is limited to chairing the world music section of WKCR and hosting the channel’s “In All Languages” and “Morning Ragas” programs.

But perhaps Carla’s greatest notoriety lies in her so-called naked parties. So-called, since “ideally I’d call them nude parties, because naked means that you’re without, in contrast to being clothed, whereas being nude, that is how you are. Nude is a positive, whereas naked is a negative.” The only requirement for entrance is the removal of clothing. These parties perfectly represent Carla’s ability to approach an idea both intellectually and offhandedly. “The idea came out,” she says, “because in this consumer culture, we’re creating this image through our clothing, instead of clothing being an accessory.” But right after she utters this quasi-manifesto, she admits, “besides all this political stuff, [it’s about] just chilling out and doing what you want to do. If I want to walk around naked, I should be able to do it.”

Might this elegant nonchalance, though, belie a more serious, self-righteous side to Carla? “Whenever I see injustice and prejudice, I’m the first one to speak up,” she declares. “A lot of people hold against me that I’m argumentative and confrontational.” But that’s not exactly how her annotated friends describe it. “I only hope she realizes how ridiculous she is,” says the one Carla claims to have freaked out. And, in an eerily similar statement, her summer roommate calls her “an unapologetic self-parody.”

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.
Maybe so. But with Carla, it is impossible to fully separate the political, the personal, the exhibitionist, and the simply absurd. I asked Carla if it would be accurate to describe her as a culture warrior. “Is it really being a culture warrior to call a guy out when he’s calling a woman a bitch? That’s not a culture warrior,” she explains, “that’s just my duty as a citizen.” -MK

MICHAEL STEVEN DELA CRUZ

If the term “medievalist” conjures up in your mind an image of a monkish scholar blabbering in ecclesiastical Latin, you’re in for quite a shock. Michael S. Dela Cruz, C’07, perhaps Columbia’s first ever medievalist-in-residence, is as cute as a button, from the tips of his Sonic the Hedgehog-esque ‘do to the soles of his lime-green suede loafers. Technically a junior at Stanford, Michael is studying at Columbia this semester under the auspices of the Visiting Students Program, since he “maxed out all the medieval classes at Stanford.” Interestingly enough, Michael originally intended to major in math—until, that is, he received a rude awakening in the form of “Linear Algebra and Differential Calculus for Separable Variables,” the required class for all aspiring math majors. “On a good day, I’d manage a D,” he says. “I was very, very humbled by that experience.”

On a whim, he took a course entitled “Medieval Women: Faith, Love, and Learning,” and the rest is (medieval) history. He became enthralled with the world of 12th- to 14th-century English Arthurian romance, presumably a vestige from his schoolboy days when he would watch Disney’s The Sword in the Stone obsessively. Several classes in Old English and medieval literature later, he declared himself an English major with a concentration in medieval studies. But since Stanford’s Medieval English literature department was rather small, Michael decided to burst out of the “Stanford bubble” for a semester at another school with a bigger “med-lit” program. Before long, he was installed in his Broadway double and taking Paul Strohm’s Chaucer seminar along with an eclectic bevy of other medieval classes.

Coming to Columbia is a homecoming of sorts for Michael: he grew up only forty-five minutes outside of Manhattan, in the idyllic suburb of Old Tappan, New Jersey. The baby in a Filipino-American family, his two elder sisters attended NYU and the University of Chicago. When it came time for him to decide where to go to college, he continued the migration that his sisters began by going way out west to Palo Alto. And Stanford—with its palm trees and bubbling fountains and terra cotta buildings—was very much the academic Camelot that Michael had envisioned.

Indeed, whenever he talks about Stanford, his eyes brighten: “Coming here made me reflect on things I have at Stanford that I don’t have anywhere else.” Specifically, those are his a cappella group, “Talisman,” and the Filipino-American Student Union, in which he serves as historian, a role that fits nicely with his desire to observe the world “from the outside looking in”—much like his love for the long-ago era of courtly knights and ladies. “I’ve come to know more about my relationship with Stanford,” he added, “by being separated from it in both space and time.”

When asked how he felt so far about being at Columbia, Michael recounted a comment from his good friend John: “He said, ‘I’ve decided that you’re going to hate it for the first two weeks, and then you’re going to love it.’ It’s true that I was kind of uncomfortable at first—people here smile less, and I forgot about how different the east coast pace is.”

Michael plans on getting a Ph.D. in Medieval English literature. Oxford and Yale are mentioned, but not without a tinge of worry, “especially since my field is so narrow.” He himself might be small, but like little Arthur, he’s out to claim his academic kingdom, one school at a time. -JHH
A bit of historical context: the last time Verily Veritas sat through an English lecture, awake, the seats were a sea of tweed, the pipes in every pocket in the room were filled with tobacco, and the halls of Hamilton still rang with regular homages to Hazlitt.

I cannot explain what compelled Verily, after years of limited enrollment and even more limited attendance, to recently register for a lecture entitled [course title omitted—Ed.], taught by an unassuming, untenured junior member of the war-torn English faculty. Nor yet can I account for Verily’s scrupulous attendance at the so-called “mandatory” “discussion” “section,” another modishly nouveau phenomenon, bespeaking an enlightened, participatory ethos apparently at odds with the egotism and megalomania sacred to English departments everywhere. No one knows better than Verily Veritas that strife, or ennui, or both, can lead to desperate measures—this must account for both the section itself and Verily’s attendance therein.

“Let’s begin by introducing ourselves. Give your name and college, and why you’re interested in the poetry of George Herbert. I’ll start. My name is Hedda Finglesweert-Golthwait [name changed—Ed.], I’m a third year grad student in the English Department, and my field is primarily a New Historicist-slash-Brechtian approach to female British mystics of the sixteenth and seventeenth century. I also like Lacan.”

“I’m Dave. Who’s Lacan?”

“Does anyone want to field that one? English Majors? No? Well, we’ll come back to it.”

“I’m Sarah, I’m a Junior in the College, I’m an English Major. I haven’t really read any Lacan.”

“And... your interest in George Herbert?”

“I haven’t really read any George Herbert.”

“Um...”

“I’m Dave too. I’m in GS. I could have graduated in the seventies, but I didn’t, and so here I am. And I’m interested in George Herbert because I have some interest in the sculptural programs of early Protestant churches, and I understand he’s got some stuff about that.”

“Um, thank you. Next?”

“Veritas. Verily. I first read George Herbert aboard a merchantman in the Indian Ocean. We had been out fourteen months with nary a soul in sight, and even the cabins were reduced to hardtack and grog. There was a young boy on board, a scullery lad of some sort, of the most appalling physical and genital hygiene, who nevertheless had what I perceived was rather a refined intellect and sensibility. It was to him, in the weariness of the late, silent watch, that I first read Herbert aloud. I don’t believe either of us fully grasped the matter, but the manner was certainly sympathetic in that heady seclusion.”

“What’s hardtack?”

“English Majors? Who can explain hardtack? No one? Verily? Verily? Well, aren’t we cozy? I’m sorry, do you have a nickname of some sort that you prefer?”

“Hardtack is some kind of beef jerky, I think.”

“Very good, thank you, uh, Sarah. Sarah, right? Thank you. You’re wrong. It’s a type of biscuit or cracker. But this illustrates an interesting point, which is that language is dependent upon context. Aboard ship, one’s audience has a set of conventional assumptions about the meaning of words, like ‘larboard’ or ‘hardtack’ or ‘ship’s boy,’ which may be wholly different from the assumptions we have on land, or four centuries later. And on land. Does anyone want to tie this back to Herbert? Yeah, Verily.”

“The vagaries of taste are wild, and Providence shines on poets through the ages with the fickleness of a Baby Editor at Random House.”

“Um, good. That’s wrong. Anyone else?”

“Didn’t the professor say that no one can try to read like the poet’s original audience, and that the response within the reader—even a modern reader—is a lot more critically important than some sort of perverse attempt to reconstruct a set of infinitely complicated cultural and historical assumptions?”

“Yes. Thank you Dave. And I think what this class is about is challenging that statement. Would anyone care to put pressure on what Dave just said?”

“Is this going to be on the final?”

“Anyone care to respond to Dave’s summary of the professor’s position? Anyone? No one?”

“In Paris, once, it was winter, and I met Chekhov at the salon of [name omitted—Ed.]. He and I engaged in a little friendly literary rapport, and he commented in passing that there was only one way to resolve most critical debates about literature.”

“I’m afraid we’re out of time this week. Have an excellent weekend, everyone, and feel free to see me after class if you have any questions.” —Verily Veritas
This past summer, in the midst of my travels around the former Austro-Hungarian Empire, I chanced upon a most curious encounter. My companion and I had had our fill of cheap wine, cigarettes, jelly-filled pastries and existential chatter at Vienna’s famed Cafe Hawelka, and we wobbled out onto Graben Singer Strasse. As we strolled past the same gelato stands and ATMs once frequented by Habsburg royalty and neurotic fin-de-siècle academics, an American voice called out to us: “Hey! Columbia!” We turned. Did we know this girl? She looked vaguely familiar. “I know you! You’re the Bathrobe Boy!”

My God, I thought. The world is flat. I can cross an ocean, but I can never escape what I’ve become...

Some explanation is in order. Flash back to my first semester at Columbia in the autumn of 2002, when I had still never tried a cigarette or read so much as a single book about the Habsburgs. In between skimming the SparkNotes on Cicero, chatting incessantly with my girlfriend from high school, and regurgitating a plethora of unfamiliar liquids, I found little time for basic social niceties like getting dressed in the morning. Fortunately, my navy blue bathrobe provided a reasonable facsimile of clothing, and very often I would wander campus clad in it and little else. In retrospect, this was probably the most memorable thing I did my freshman year. It feels so strange to write that.

A lot of people didn’t accept me. The security guards reluctantly let me into Butler, but later had to kick me out after someone complained. Once in a while someone would call out something obnoxious. But most of the time, I just received stares. I catalogued them. There was the disapproving glance, the chuckle, the double take, and my favorite, the deliberate attempt to look at something or someone else, as if I were a leper. I could always swear I heard laughter somewhere around me, but perhaps I was imagining it.

But I shouldn’t dwell on such trivialities. The truth is that the bathrobe did me considerably more good than harm. Passers-by started conversations with me, always bemused but rarely antagonistic. People who had written me off as just another Jewish guy during orientation suddenly had a way to remember me. Sometimes strangers would recognize me and introduce themselves even...
The Decline and Fall of ROLM

How a landline empire more powerful than the combined forces of Facebook, e-mail, and AIM, crumbled into the dust of history. By Christopher Beam

ROLM. R-O-L-M. Blinking light of my life, fire of my landlines. My sin, my soul, my ROLM.

Today, such adoration for an inanimate object seems at best trite, and at worst pathological. But for a certain generation of Columbia students—those who graduated between the years of, say, 1990 and 1995—that innocuous gray box known as the ROLM phone once offered an irresistible creative outlet. It was that rare marriage of technology with the idle imagination of youth. In other words, the Facebook of its day.

“I don’t think you can exaggerate the effect it had on the Columbia experience,” Danny Franklin, C’93, said. “It was the social tool on campus—the way you connected with your peers.”

Columbia converted to ROLM, then owned by IBM, in 1988 after soliciting applications from numerous telecommunications firms. One of the first university-wide data networks, it connected students and administrators to each other in a way that the previous analog voice system never could.

But since then, ROLM has fallen and shows no signs of getting up.

After recent focus groups found that 90% of students never use their ROLM phones, Lisa Hogarty, Vice President for Student Services, said ROLM’s days are numbered.

“Just look at the marketplace: it’s going through a dramatic change,” Hogarty said. “Ebay is buying Skype. In three years, do we actually have a handset? Or is it Voice-over-Internet Protocol? We’re just starting that conversation.”

Last year the Barnard Student Government Association felt the people’s indifference when it launched a campaign to “raise awareness” about the ROLM system. The lobbying effort featured instructional flyers, tutorials, and “ROLM parties”—an idea that in 1988 might have sparked genuine enthusiasm, but which in 2004 died on arrival.

Corrine Hoch, Deputy Director of Information Technology and the “ROLM phone lady” who supplies the voice for university announcements, said ROLM would be thriving if only students knew how to use it.

“Students don’t seem to avail themselves of our training sessions,” she said in her unmistakable voice.

If the fall of ROLM has paralleled that of Rome, then the personal embodiment of its zenith—its Caesar Augustus—would have to be the
Little Mermaid.

One day in 1989, Fred Schultz, C'90, had agreed to wait by his ROLM phone while his mother attempted to track down an old notebook for him. For whatever reason, Fred failed to hold up his half of the bargain, and after four rings his mother was put through to the answering machine.

Fred was and still is a diehard Little Mermaid fan. So when the voicemail came on, Fred's mother had to listen through Fred's sing-along rendition of "Part of That World," followed by his instruction to "leave a message for me and the Little Mermaid."

Mrs. Schultz's message was clear: "You and the Little Mermaid can go fuck yourselves. I told you to stay near the phone. I can't find those books, you have other books here, it must be in La Jolla, call me back, I'm not gonna stay up all night for you. Goodbye."

With a mixture of pride and embarrassment, Fred forwarded the message on to his friend Jeff, who in turn forwarded it to his friends, and so on until every Columbia student's mailbox was full. Fred and his mother became overnight celebrities as students regaled each other with their own impressions and interpretations of Mrs. Schultz's growly monologue. Soon a dance remix appeared, and at the year's end the Varsity Show choreographed a number based on the message, complete with a kick line of Columbia men in sequined mermaid outfits.

The story of the Little Mermaid message circulated within the Columbia community for years. In 2002, NPR's This American Life dedicated a 20-minute segment to the message and its aftermath.

As Schultz tells it, the message's fame was a classic case of right place, right time. "Nobody wanted the ROLM system," he told me. "Everyone thought this was Big Brother coming into our rooms. These were electronic phones, they could use them to tap us."

But once students discovered ROLM's message-forwarding capabilities, it sparked a campus-wide game of one-upsmanship.

"When that message came out, I don’t think the system had been hooked up for more than a few days or weeks," Schultz said. "It was like, 'Oh, we have this new toy.'"

Eric Roston, C'93, who was a freshman at the time, remembers a flurry of messages prior to the Little Mermaid. But when that legendary message shot around campus, the rest shrunk in its shadow. "That [message] was the tipping point," he said. "There were three or four that didn't achieve epic status, but got plenty of air time."

The furor soon died down as ROLM became an integral part of students' academic, social, and psychological lives.

"Conference calling was hugely important," Franklin recalled. "There were these three-, four-hour party lines – floating conference calls that would go on for hours and hours."

The iconography of ROLM took on emotional meanings, too. The phone's blinking light was as life-affirming then as "You've got mail" is today.

"That flashing message light was everything to you," Franklin said. "If that light wasn't blinking, it just ruined your day."

This nostalgia is all well and good, but it raises a nagging question: What happened to ROLM? How does a piece of technology turn from "the backbone of the Columbia social structure," in the words of one graduate, into a neglected antique?

Perhaps the Age of ROLM is best thought of as a transitional period between the Stone Age of analog communication and the New Age of wireless. But considering the ROLM system's unique capabilities – message forwarding, conference calls, "camping" (see ROLM Handbook for details) – its heyday proved surprisingly short-lived.

In an attempt to assess just how far ROLM has fallen, I conducted a controlled experiment. The objective? To recreate the Little Mermaid fad.

I first needed a message that any listener would immediately forward to all his or her friends. The beauty of the Little Mermaid message lay in both its timing and shock value, but also in the fact that it was real. Unlike Schultz, however, I couldn't wait around for my mother to call up.

Instead I had a friend call my ROLM and perform an old prank call routine we used in high school. The caller, speaking in his dandiest British accent, announces himself as Mr. Nigel Burgess, executor of the estate of "your late great uncle Roderick," who after an untimely death "has left you a sizable amount of his vast personal fortune."

"As you know," he continues, "your uncle made
much of his fortune in the adult novelty industry, and, due to his lack of confidence in the money markets, had most of his wealth converted into, well … diamond-encrusted, um, anal beads.” He spits out the words with distaste tempered by respect for the dead. “I know this is not a good time for you, as I’m sure you’re grieving, but we need to be in contact about how I can best ship you the, um – well, the beads, really … my number is …” and so on.

I forwarded the message to twenty friends with my own introduction, calling it “the most amazing wrong number I’ve ever heard,” and went to sleep assuming that by morning the Varsity Show number would be choreographed and a new legend would be born.

Needless to say, I’m still waiting. Most of my friends, I later learned, don’t even know how to plug in a ROLM phone, let alone navigate its interface and forward messages. My expectation that this message would resurrect ROLM and all its creative possibilities was doomed from the start.

The Little Mermaid story has survived not so much for its hilarity but for the way it captures a time and place in Columbia history. Students at that time grew up in the limbo between the advent of digital voice recording and the Internet boom (Columbia installed Ethernet ports in 1994). As my experiment indicated, a phenomenon like the Little Mermaid could never catch on today, if only because e-mail has transformed the habits of message forwarding.

“Stuff gets forwarded around so much that in a culture like today’s, the Little Mermaid might have gotten lost as spam,” Roston said.

Shultz, who now lives with a friend in Venice Beach, is currently pursuing a career as a rabbi-lawyer-painter-musician – “and don’t forget stand-up,” he said. In recent years he has gone broke three times in online trading, run for president as “the only homeless candidate,” and helped start a rabbinical school. The Little Mermaid story has trailed him throughout.

“People still talk about it at our class reunions,” he said. “And then when NPR called me, it was the whole thing over again.”

When I told Shultz that most students today don’t touch their ROLM phones, he reacted with sad surprise. “You mean you don’t send messages on to other people?” he asked incredulously.

Those students who do use ROLM, myself included, do so with a deliberation that belies the technology’s transience, like parents who make a point of composing letters on typewriters. And in that sense, ROLM is already a memory.

But for many years the familiar sound of a ROLM phone ringing was music to a Columbia student’s ears. Nowadays, it resembles a death rattle.

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**LETTER TO THE EDITOR**

To the Editor:

Marc Tracy’s piece on the disappearance of fiction from this nation’s magazines (“Serial Killers,” September 2005) was a piece of solid reporting. Clearly, he has been trained well. More interestingly, Tracy was either highly untimely or wildly influential. On September 18, only days after the publication of Tracy’s critique, *The New York Times Magazine* began the serial publication of a novella by Elmore Leonard. I doubt that the editors off Times Square were Houdinis capable of hiding news of the impending unveiling from our young sleuth, and so if this new forum for short stories stimulates a rejuvenation of American fiction, we will have Tracy and *THE BLUE AND WHITE* to thank.

Ohad Barkan, C’06

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BOOK REVIEW

A Wickett Smart Novel

_Wickett’s Remedy_
Myla Goldberg
Doubleday Books
336 pages, $24.95

High school students are supposed to learn that there are three possible types of conflict in a story: man versus man, man versus nature, and man versus self. In Myla Goldberg’s first award-winning novel, _Bee Season_, the main conflict seems to be man versus self: each family member struggles to become a more spiritual individual, be it by studying Torah or joining a cult. In her second novel, _Wickett’s Remedy_, the emphasis is on man versus nature, or, rather, microbe: a plucky heroine trying to survive the Flu Epidemic of 1918.

Despite its encouraging premise, Goldberg’s novel does not find a direction until it is almost (but not entirely) too late. She effectively recreates the setting by inserting alternatively morbid and blithe newspaper clips from the period. She has clearly done her research, but the story wanders. The first two-thirds of the novel have their delightful moments, the most memorable being the courtship of Lydia by wealthy medical student Henry Wickett, whom Goldberg promptly kills off. The title comes from an elixir that Henry created to heal the sick, which is then stolen and turned into a soda by his crooked business partner. This mild parody of commercialism does not get enough page-time to merit further discussion.

The novel is dominated by Goldberg’s use of side-notes. These notes are at first puzzling but eventually prove to be memories and statements of the dead. Goldberg told _USA Today_ that these notes are “marginal voices... a footnote-type thing” and that she is “asking readers to do something they’re not used to doing.” Visually, the notes weren’t much of a nuisance, but many lacked purpose. A woman may have been unimpressed with Lydia’s party dress, but a note pointing this out only slows down the plot. Admittedly, not all of them are gratuitous—when Henry titillates his wife using Latin phrases, the note serves not as a gimmick but a deepening of an already fleshed-out character.

_Wickett’s Remedy_ finally improves when Lydia realizes that it is her calling to be a nurse, and she volunteers to work on Gallups Island, where government-sponsored research on the flu vaccine is being done. Complications arise when Lydia finds out that the human guinea pigs are healthy criminals and army deserters, and finally our protagonist has a moral issue to struggle over. When one subject asks a doctor at Gallups: “Are we stuck here until one of us gets it?” the tension in this quarantined area only increases. Only now does Lydia face the “man versus self” dilemma that Goldberg delineates so well: should she ally herself with the men being tested or the colleagues whom she is trying to impress? Goldberg even draws a beautifully subtle romance—one perhaps even more interesting than the one between Henry and Lydia—between Lydia and a patient on the island. This is the moment that Goldberg wanted to get to, or should have—the question is, why couldn’t she have gotten there sooner?

For all its merits, most of the book serves as a vehicle for the author to show off her knowledge about the time period, giving short shrift to plot and characters—which, of course, even the most historical of historical fiction should put first. —Annie Berke
It was odd for me to imagine not being able to eat in public but being able to defecate.

Not discarding the 19th and 20th century b/c of racism, but greco-roman was just an incredible time when everything was exploding.

Get job, chanting, practicing, wet paint! elevate! Beth Olive Garden awkward dates, the crosses on the door in San Antonio, news from New York, Wilson meeting Beth, high five circle ringing the bell, Spencer sitting down in the bushes, naked person answering the door, problem with mustard on burger, old Jewish man, telling Josh I am quitting, just thought you were really cut out for the business.

Seth,

You may not know who I am, but I'd like to think that you do. I passed you coming across the quad and our eyes met, it was amazing! It would break your heart to know how much trouble it was to find out your name, but I believe that we are destined to be together. I think that we would be able to really understand one another, and only a woman like myself could appreciate your roguish looks and suave, gentlemanly charm. I'm not very experienced in these matters. It is unorthodox for women to openly proposition men. I'm too embarrassed to openly tell you my name or the unspeakable things I want to do to your delicious body, but hopefully you will let me foster my affections from afar.

As the works began to pervade my being, I began to lose sincerity in my speech, utterly impressed with how smart I could be (look, rather) whilst not having any emotional investment in what I was saying. I was becoming, essentially, an asshole.

Ancient Greeks are known not for “winged words” from the Iliad, but for togas and philanderous gods (Iliad 1.201). Romans, similarly, are associated with legionnaire helmets, gladiators, and the letter V.

Jenny had a bottom that could command a room. From its steering post on her hips, it bounded and bounced through space, bobbling and babbling like a balloon fighting a fan. It gave orders to gentlemen and ladies alike to open doors and pull out chairs for it to rest upon. This bottom orbited around tables and aisles like a planet around the sun, huge and hypnotic, graceful and glorious in its enormity. Benevolent as a Confucian scholar, it brought out the best in everyone around it, spreading smiles and gaiety to the masses. However, unlike her bottom, Jenny was a little behind.

Take, for example, the efforts of Penelope, who manages to keep an entire houseful of drunken suitors off her back for three years. [...] Now, granted, anyone who hangs around someone’s house for three years trying to score a date isn’t exactly the brightest candle in the church, but still, that’s impressive.

I entered Interdis a year older than my classmates, the result of taking time off immediately after highschool. I'd worked for a Buddhist ex-con restauranteur, I'd been raised Swedenborgian, I'd had four sisters and a brother adopted into my family and I was fairly certain I'd already asked most of the worthwhile questions.

I didn't believe in the Eskimo until I stepped inside his igloo. It's not often that an Eskimo appears on my front lawn; in fact, it's not often that one finds an Eskimo at all in Los Angeles. But he beckoned me inside, and I went, to experience the burning cold.
Gerard Barrett proposes that a new group named “Exceptionally Excellent” be given recognition as an official group at Columbia University by the ABC Executive Board.

For another, when the ancient Greeks weren’t trading women around like stocks or Pokémon cards, they were making them perform menial labors.

For the first time since I was 12, I can’t even masturbate.

Did the manicurist paint a nine-striped American flag on her nails because they were too short or because the Korean school system did not teach her about the American flag? How many carrots would she have to eat before she turned orange? Jenny would put these questions to her cats and the small Rwandan child that she adopted, but they were all equally unresponsive, as the Rwandan boy did not speak English and seemed to enjoy eating huddled the corner more than conversing, anyway.

One of the most popular practices amongst students at my high school was insulting Iowans.

The seven habits of highly effective people can move cheese.

Here I could quote the words of numerous others to fortify the integrity of my own understanding, as has become the style and defense of the modern thinker, but here I will refrain from confusing contexts with contexts in the way that the postmodern epiphany has discovered as problematic.

In this argument, the author concludes that-----. This conclusion is based on the assumption (fact) that-----.

(To support the conclusion, the author points out-----)

In addition, the author asserts that----. At first glance, the author’s argument appears to be somewhat convincing, but further reflection reveals how groundless the conclusion is. In general, the argument omits some important concerns that should be addressed to substantiate the conclusion.

When I was in high school I was a member of the Philadelphia Youth Orchestra, one of the better youth orchestras in the country, and as you can guess, in a good youth orchestra, there are good violin players, and most good violin players are Asian, and even further they are Asian Christians.

Life is too short to worry when you come in an assortment of twenty mouth-watering flavors. You might think there is a better chance of survival for the misnomer flavors; the ones that don’t make any sense. There isn’t. Take Rainbow for instance. This is not a flavor. Nobody has ever eaten a rainbow and imagining what one could taste like must surely be among the most taxing of mental endeavors. Still it doesn’t matter. This mild absence of logic isn’t about to thwart the 280 lb tangle of muscle, gold chains, and curly, black hair ascending the stairs from the sand below. The only question is whether he will pounce on the sadly vulnerable cart of gastric consumerism before that lanky fifteen year old, ecstatic from winning a carton of cigarettes by knocking down carefully stacked milk bottles with a baseball.

The inelegant appearance of the adverb “fully,” twice in the space of two successive sentences (p.22), might be quietly corrected. I am especially fond of the robust verb “defang” (p.4).

This is why I came to Texas! There were opportunities here, opportunities unavailable in the hierarchal nepotism infested bureaucracy of New York. I was a creative person. Indeed, I was a Creative Writing major.

I asked the guy at the Drive-Thru window if I could have duck sauce for my french fries. He furrowed his brow, and the paper crown slipped over his eyes.

I wander out of the broom-closet, dazed, sore, and proudly a man. I’ll never forget those days; I’ll never forget Sally, and the broom closet of my freshman year. I can’t; I still have the scars from the stitches they put in my ass.
The most interesting duels often take place between two strikingly similar foes. So it was with George Galloway, the antiwar Respect Party MP for Bethnal Green and Bow, and Christopher Hitchens, the hawkish polemicist. Both brought to their September 14th debate at Baruch College similarly leftist politics and caustic British wit, but also uncompromising hatred for the other. “The March 2003 War in Iraq was necessary and just,” read the resolution, which Hitchens defended and Galloway opposed. But what ensued was a weary, stale, flat discussion, unprofitable to all but its stars.

The first thing to understand about the debate is that, when Galloway called Hitchens an “ex-Trotskyist,” “ex-” marked the insult. Indeed, the production was sponsored by The Nation, the National Council of Arab Americans, and the publisher of the International Socialist Review. Hitchens’s U-turn (though he wouldn’t call it that) is well-known: formerly a Nation columnist, since 9/11 Hitchens has urged unrelenting warfare against Islamic fundamentalism and defended President Bush’s foreign policy with the zeal of the converted. Galloway, meanwhile, epitomizes the stridently antiwar camp that dominates much of Western Europe and has begun to make headway stateside.

But if Hitchens has betrayed his progressive past, Galloway has done a greater disservice to his “progressive” present: as Hitchens pointed out, this summer Galloway openly praised Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. It may be grating to hear Hitchens gleefully hammer this in, but he’s correct: if the Left is associated with a dictator whose governing ideology is explicitly modeled after Stalinism, it has strayed far indeed.

I am often taken by Hitchens’s unique combination of arrogant intelligence and arid wit. But Hitchens writes with the surety that his side possesses the monopoly on the truth, and while this approach has worked wonders tipping such unsacred cows as Henry Kissinger, Mel Gibson, and Michael Moore, it has failed to address the genuine complexity of the Iraq War. True to form, before the debate Hitchens personally handed out flyers containing some of Galloway’s more offensive statements. Galloway,
perhaps eager to render the flyer out-of-date, termed this stunt “Goebbelian.” But I can see how the MP’s whirlwind “Mr. Galloway Goes to Washington” tour of the US has gained the steam it has. If he lacks Hitchens’ aristocratic dryness, he makes up for it with scrappy Scottish cleverness, and he knows which buttons to push.

When, ten minutes into the debate, Hitchens accused Galloway of employing “vile, cheap, guttersnipe abuse,” it became obvious that the evening would be dominated by just that. “If you knew how you looked and sounded, comrades,” Hitchens told the jeering crowd, with pointed emphasis on the last word. Hitchens furthermore charged Galloway with “criminal connections” involving the UN oil-for-food scandal. Galloway returned the compliments: “You are covered in the stuff you like to smear on others!” Or: “This is a level of self-delusion which borders on racist!” Both men delivered epigrams ably, but neither offered much beyond them. Admittedly, Hitchens’s argument was acrobatic, drawing on both reason and passion, and appealing, in its way, to traditional leftist values. He argued that Iraq had sacrificed its sovereignty in violating the genocide convention; playing host to “international gangsters, jihadists, terrorists;” and brutalizing its own people. One senses he is fighting for them, and he was happy to note that their politics tend to the left. “We take our side with the Iraqi secular Left against fascism,” he declared. But the unmistakable implication in Hitchens’s argument, rhetoric, and tone, that anyone who opposed the war was an appeaser or even supporter of fascism, was distinctly off-putting. This is not the way to encourage liberal debate.

Galloway’s rhetoric, meanwhile, stuck to antiwar orthodoxy: there were no WMD, there was no al-Qaeda connection, and therefore there should have been no war. In blaming the entire crisis on the US, the UK, and Israel, though, he disturbingly recalled the region’s despots. And with statements like, “Our two countries are the biggest rogue states in the world today,” he made himself seem as dated as a Soviet tank in Prague.

Indeed, the evening’s fatal flaw was that its premise—that one can take two polar opposites, bash them against each other, and truth will emerge from the chaos—is the same old dialectical fantasy to which Hitchens, Galloway, and much of the crowd swear allegiance. Both men may be foreign born, but they were foreigners in another, more important way, too: neither accepts the liberal assumptions of Western democracy. Our means of seeking truth grants each side a legitimate stake in the debate. It requires less argument and more discussion, less art and more matter. Liberalism had no place that night, and two glorified showmen filled the vacuum. Meanwhile, the war continued.❖
Zero Degrees Columbia
By Christopher Beam and C. Mason Wells

A Columbia diploma is the Holy Grail of academic documents. Hanging in temp office cubicles across the country, this sacred piece of paper ensures its recipient success, happiness, and financial security for the rest of his life. Yet, with over ten-percent of our student body currently failing to graduate in four years, what happens to the college dropouts, those who—as Kanye West puts it—“got something better than school?” In hopes of convincing our classmates that “quitters never win” and to “be cool” and “stay in school,” THE BLUE AND WHITE offers the following cautionary tales. With them, we explore the depressing lives of Columbia alumni who, after prematurely kissing Alma Mater good-bye, all faced financial ruin, professional failure, and eventual death.

Amelia Earhart
1920 Dropout
Failed Stewardess

Reasons for Quitting: Earhart's first year in General Studies, 1919, was also the first year of Prohibition. With the area bars even lamer than usual, Earhart—ever the intrepid traveler—ventured into a territory unknown to most Columbia students: downtown. But while searching for the trendy speakeasies of the Lower East Side, her poor sense of direction often led her astray. Earhart didn’t officially drop out, but instead took the 3 train past 96th St. and never found campus again.

Post Columbia “Career”: The perfect example of a Columbia student crashing and burning after leaving the school, Earhart would go on to disappear into obscurity never to be heard from again. Because she didn’t pass Columbia’s swim test, she would eventually fail God’s swim test in the Pacific Ocean.

Jake Gyllenhaal
2002 Dropout
Failed Actor

Reasons for Quitting: Already living in the shadow of his far more talented and attractive sister Maggie—a proud Columbia graduate herself—Jake had a difficult time getting acclimated to Morningside. He was especially upset that his talents never matched those of the Columbia performing arts scene. To wit, he was rejected by CMTS, Nomads, The Varsity Show, King’s Crown, Orchesis, and every single a cappella group on campus. He did land a part in a single student production, but most audiences found his Vagina Monologue to be “uninformed.”

Post Columbia “Career”: Bubble Boy.
The Day After Tomorrow.
That gay cowboy movie.

Langston Hughes
1922 Dropout
Failed Poet

Reasons for Quitting: Often blacklisted by his Columbia contemporaries, Hughes found himself in the minority on campus. A quiet fellow who loved the outdoors, Hughes spent his afternoons doing homework on the Steps, which several other students angrily assumed to be protests. Facing persecution from groups like the Kolumbia Krackers Klub—now known as Pike—he decided to move to a bastion of safety five blocks uptown.

Post Columbia “Career”: After a failed attempt to start the “Morningside Heights Renaissance,”
Hughes—unlike nearly all of his graduating peers from the College—would never go on to publish a book. Without sufficient training from the qualified professionals in the Creative Writing program, Hughes’s dream of becoming an important author would be, sadly, unfulfilled.

**ALEXANDER HAMILTON**

**1774 DROPOUT**

**FAILED POLITICIAN**

Reasons for Quitting: Hamilton submitted the Federalist Papers as a Contemporary Civilizations take-home midterm, but his instructor—a Marxist nearly fifty years before Marx was born—gave him a B-minus, with such thoughtful criticisms as “bad transitions,” “word choice,” and “?” Angered by the situation, Hamilton vented his frustration by founding a satirical publication, *The Federalist*, which allowed him to rant about the virtues of a constitution and tell penis jokes. Unsuccessful in class and at humor, he formed a group for lonely, unfunny students like himself. And while Hamilton left King’s College soon after, the Philolexian Society survives to this day.

**POST COLUMBIA “Career”:** Hamilton’s inability to complete his fencing class would cost him dearly, as his rusty dueling skills would prove no match against those of fellow Ivy Leaguer Aaron Burr. Hamilton did get off a single shot in that tragic two-man battle, but it deflected off of Burr’s chest. The reason? In Burr’s breast-pocket was the most protective and powerful item imaginable: his Princeton diploma, a document that can stop bullets and open doors in equal measure.

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*Bathrobe continued from page 7*  

...when I was fully clothed. I made several friendships in this manner. I attended Russian class in my bathrobe and learned how to say "bathrobe" in Russian (khalat). I went to check my mail on the fourth floor of Lerner and realized how weird it must feel to walk up all those stairs in a skirt.

Soon, the harsh Manhattan winter set in, and I was resigned to wearing my bathrobe only in Carman, and sometimes even there I would wear clothes. Months passed. Then years. I learned the fundamentals of Western civilization, while my poor bathrobe was reduced to a sort of full-body towel for use in transit between the showers and my room. Meanwhile, the legend of my freshman exploits spread. It spread throughout the Slavic Languages Department. Every so often, someone new would approach me with the same question: “Weren’t you that guy...?”

But that last encounter in Vienna made me realize something. For a legend to endure, it must be nurtured. I had almost forgotten that wave of euphoria that comes with having a reputation that precedes oneself. With only one year of Columbia to go, I made a resolution: Bathrobe Boy would return.

I knew I had to move quickly, before it got too cold outside. As soon as I had worked out my schedule and fought off my annual September congestion, I donned the bathrobe and set out across campus to revisit my old haunts. As I soon discovered, some things have changed in the past three years. The security guards have evidently gotten more casual, as I don’t think a single one noticed me. Not only did no one try to kick me out of Butler, I was even able to check out two books for my thesis research without anyone so much as blinking. No one insulted me or complained about me. The most frequent question I received was not why I was wearing a bathrobe, but whether I was wearing anything else below it. One girl even tried to check. But I fought her off.

Yet as much as Columbia has changed, I realize that I’ve changed even more. Though my overall reception was better than it used to be, I found myself glancing around nervously, lest I accidentally stumble into the vision of a professor whose recommendation I may need or a girl I just Facebooked. What was this new emotion, completely removed from my experience three years ago? Was this... shame? Was it possible that Columbia had made me contemptuous of my former self? No one else seemed to care, but I cared, and this vexed me. If Bathrobe Boy is not for himself, who will be for him? And if not now, when? After I’ve graduated? I hope the legend can survive that long.

Anyways, yeah. I’m that guy.
The Best and the Whitest

The scandalous career of St. A’s, Columbia’s highest society.

BY KATHY GILSINAN

Stately and inviolably alone she stands, smirking with cool insolence over the Hudson and New Jersey, which seem to claw like so many desperate plebeians yearning to unearth her secrets. She has stood with the same sangfroid on 28th Street, on 64th before that, her reticence bedeviling all who seek to understand her. Rumors of her callousness abound; documentation is scarce. But there is some.

At a creaking wooden table not ten yards from the chair in which DeWitt Clinton retired—and, ultimately, expired—one can comb the thin file, housed deep in the Columbia archives, that marks the faint fingerprint St. Anthony Hall has deigned to impress upon New York’s public consciousness. Nothing else remains. At least, nothing public.

The society provokes the myriad wild speculations of the type typically surrounding secret societies such as the Illuminati and the Knights Templar, but bears in addition the distinct and demonstrable advantage of being real. Yet as far back as 1877, a newspaperman describing the St. Anthony clubhouse then located at East 64th Street noted that “the rules of the society of privacy and exclusiveness are suggested by the latch key required for admission.” Typifying the extant privacy concerns, current St. A’s affiliates decline even to comment on whether said clubhouse still exists.

The current domicile of St. Anthony Hall (known too, though not widely, as Delta Psi) is kept locked most of the time as well, and on the occasional Thursday nights when its wooden and glass plated doors are thrown open to the general public—provided said public bedizens itself in black-tie attire—a hired bouncer inspects aspiring incomers for proper threads and ushers them, if acceptable, past velvet ropes, or else gruffly instructs the reject to return home and consult Vogue.

But the contents of Anthony’s eponymous edifice on Riverside, if one is privileged to pass the imposing façade to inspect them, are not reminiscent of early reports describing the St. An-

Illustrated by Elizabeth Ferguson
Anthony Hall clubhouse that may or may not still exist on 64th Street. Absent are the cigar box and registry book in the front office; absent, too, is a front office. And one is scarcely reminded, in these plush surroundings, of the ascetic life of the saint who lent his name to them. The 64th Street clubhouse at least gave a nod, with expensive engravings, to the temptations of the saint, who, according to his Life, was plied with pressures by a demon endeavoring to lure him from the monastic life. (Saint Anthony demurred.)

The society housed in the Riverside cloister, though, is a bit more flexible than its patron. The first national chapter was founded at Columbia in 1847, and its house, embellishing the landscape of the Columbia University then located at Madison and 29th, was designed by one James Remnick, whose other architectural feats included St. Patrick’s Cathedral. When the clubhouse, along with the university, moved to midtown, it donned a designer shroud of mystery even before its own members.

To be sure, undergraduates could use the state-rooms, but the suite reserved for club or alumni functions was protected from the prying eyes of young Delta Psis by a shadowy vestibule. The New York Daily Tribune, in 1899, caught a glimpse of the new society house at 464 Riverside Drive, where it stands today: it was built of brick, trimmed with Indiana limestone “in the style of Henry IV,” and construction costs were expected weigh in at a cool $100,000 when the project was concluded. The house had “all the features of a modern building,” the reporter noted, “except a mortgage.” Since 1960, Delta Psi chapter houses nationwide have also featured female members in lieu of cigar boxes.

The most recent occasion on which a reporter got past the defensive hauteur that has come to characterize the building thus situated was in the 1980s, when an enterprising (read: busty) reporter from The New York Daily News was plucky enough to evince quotes that ruined the Delta Psi career of her interlocutor. Peter McCall, who tendered his resignation from the Hall after the damning Daily News article appeared, reportedly described the society as containing a member “of decidedly Polish extraction” as well as “several black members, whom I wouldn’t say are tokens so much as preppie boogies.” Pressed to clarify his remarks, he described the foregoing as “black guys who wear Gucci loafers.” But “ours,” he added, “are really terrific.”

Asked by Spectator reporters Pete Brown and Stuart Karle a few days later how such a lapse in security could have occurred, St. A’s president Peter Dawson shrugged that leggy News reporter Jennifer Allen simply “charmed us.” She did so to the point of being served lunch in the Hall by a servant she described as a “reedy black man.”

St. Anthony’s stellar record of racial insensitivity is not, however, entirely unblemished. Though Delta Psi received official censure in 1964 for the national chapter’s reluctance to sign a declaration of nondiscrimination—one that would empower the Columbia chapter to “initiate anyone whom it deems worthy regardless of race, creed, or color”—it would only be eleven years before Delta Psi played host to an exercise in ethnic philanthropy when it threw a Vietnamese bazaar-themed party in 1975 to benefit the Vietnamese victims of war. The Hall was offered as a free venue for this fundraiser, and young Vietnamese children were permitted to romp through the state-rooms much the way fancied-up proles can on select Thursday nights to this very day.

And though it took some time for the Hall to recover from the sordid, though quaint, Chain Letter Scandal of 1963—during which Hall members disseminated a $10 letter reputed to generate a $320 return on the original investment—it has otherwise remained conspicuously out of the public eye. While all societies must hide common secrets to foster community by thoroughly excluding the uninitiated, St. A’s seeks even to exclude the fraternity milieu of which it is a part by its eschewal of its Greek letters, its curiously inapt and anachronistic moniker of “literary society,” and its wariness of all things hoi polloi.
Interview with Charbel el-Khoury
On Lebanon, Syria, and the Secret Police

Charbel el-Khoury is a political exile from Lebanon, He teaches Arabic at Columbia College, and as a private tutor. But much of his time is devoted to writing for international press bureaus in French and in Arabic, as well as the Lebanese Press Syndicate. While in Lebanon in 1974 and 1975, he covered local news before moving to Iran to work on magazines in Tehran, covering the Lebanese Civil War from an international perspective. Syria’s military withdrawal from Lebanon last year has by no means slowed his efforts. He is currently planning an Arabic-English publication to address religious and ethnic relations in the region.

*The Blue and White*: When did you leave Lebanon, and what were your reasons at the time?

**Charbel el-Khoury**: I left Lebanon in 2001, for political reasons. It would not have been safe to stay there. In fact, because I used to lecture and write articles against the Syrian occupation, they took me to jail several times. The last time, they threatened and tortured me. I received a lot of threats on my cellphone, which I believe were from Hezbollah, claiming that I was a foreign agent of some secret service—which is not true. If I was, I would work for them—not for Columbia University! But everyone who was against the Syrian occupation would be called agents of Israel, agents of Mossad, because in the Arab world this is the easiest way to discredit someone. If you are a competitor in politics, in any field, they would call you an agent of Israel and make you disappear from this world. Most of these people never have a connection to any of these agencies, but they are taken to prison.

*B&*W*: What do you feel were the root causes of the Lebanese Civil War?

**CK**: In Lebanon, there are Christians and Muslims. They used to live together, but the Muslims had a way of life and the Christians also had theirs, which was very European, very Western. Historically, the Christians built Lebanon, not the Muslims. This is not a fanatical opinion. But the two existed in parallel. However, when the Palestinians moved from Jordan after 1970, they moved to Lebanon. That is to say that the Fedayeen and the Syrians let them move through their land, pushed them to go to Lebanon because they had prepared a plan to collapse the Lebanese state, because there were, in history, a lot of problems between Syria and Lebanon.

The war began because the Palestinians wanted to make trouble, and to make war against Israel from the south, along the border. During this time, we didn’t want to have problems with Israel. From 1948 to 1970, there was no trouble between Lebanon and Israel. But when the Palestinians came, the problems began. This was the reason for the war. The Christians began to defend themselves when they felt that the Palestinians and the Syrians wanted to destroy the government, the economy, everything in Lebanon. During the war, they used to collect people from Bangladesh.

Illustrated by Jerone Hsu
and send them to Lebanon, told them “You are going to fight Israel,” and they fought in Lebanon—against the Christians! Really, they want to destroy Christianity as a way of life. I’m not a fanatic, but they’re going to destroy it in the Middle East. I think that only in Lebanon and Israel can you find a Western way of life.

B&W: So, do you place the fault of the civil war on the Syrian government, or on the Palestinian refugees in the country?

CK: If you know [former Syrian President] ‘Assad, if you have an idea about him, he was a devil, or evil—I don’t know what you prefer in politics. He established a secret service in Syria that was worse than the regime in Iraq under Saddam Hussein. He wanted to be the leader of the entire Middle East, so the Syrians began to prepare for the war in 1969. In 1972, there were some problems between the Palestinian forces and the Lebanese army. When the Lebanese army surrounded the Palestinian military base, ‘Assad closed the border between Syria and Lebanon, which is very important to the Lebanese economy. He said to the President of Lebanon, “If you don’t withdraw from this place, I will never reopen the border.”

B&W: The protests against Syrian occupation last year got a lot of attention in the U.S. press, and the general population here seems to believe that Syria has completely left Lebanon. Would you say that the situation is as simple as that?

CK: Well, the army withdrew from Lebanon. But, in fact, the Mukhabarat, the secret service, is operating inside Lebanon. Recently, they found out that there was a theft of a more than two hundred Lebanese diplomatic passports by the Syrian secret service. And one week ago, there was a meeting in Beirut for the Maronite church for all of the bishops, worldwide. The patriarch and the bishops published a communiqué stating that the Syrians were still operating in the country. So I completely believe that they have withdrawn their visible forces, but are still acting in Lebanon.

B&W: There were very large protests last year, both in favor of and against Syria. Who do you think is favored by the Lebanese public?

CK: No, no, no. Listen. The Lebanese people don’t want Syria in Lebanon. Who wants Syria to stay in Lebanon? Hezbollah, because they are an agent of Syria. When ‘Assad wants to create trouble with Israel, attack Israel, he cannot do this. He asks Hezbollah, so they work as agents to the Syrians and the Iranians. They support Hezbollah because they have a political and military interest in using the group against Israel. The members of Hezbollah engaged in kidnapping; they hijacked a TWA plane and killed a passenger because he was American. When a real government is formed in Lebanon, they must declare [banging on table] Hezbollah a terrorist group.

B&W: How have these tensions played out historically?

CK: Islam began the first war against Lebanon during the Islamic conquest. In the Qur’an, it says that when they have the power, they must push others out if they refuse to convert. Before, Greater Syria was Christian and Jewish. When Islam came, there was a bloodbath. They have a plan to make all people Muslim. In France, they’re beginning to ask some radical Muslims to leave. There are millions of Muslims there, one million illegally, and they have families of between six and eight members, when the French don’t have many children. This is their plan. The same thing happened in Lebanon, but in Lebanon, we don’t have civil law, only religious law. If you’re Muslim, you can marry multiple wives. If you’re Christian, you can’t divorce. The average size of a Muslim family there is six to nine, but for Christians it is much lower. The risk of Islamic fanaticism is now international.

B&W: We understand that you’re planning to publish a magazine on the subject.

CK: I hope that we can establish a media, my kind of media, to prepare people, both the Lebanese and the other people, for peace. We must live in the area peacefully. Why must we always be scared of Israel? Why does the Arab media have to implant the idea that Israel is taking everything, attacking everything? I want to have a mediator accept the future of peace between Israel and the people of the area. But you have Syria and Lebanon in the way. I hope that very soon I can publish an Arabic- and English-language magazine on the subject.

—Interview by Brendan Ballou and Zach van Schouwen
NEW LAND

Let’s take a day to contemplate graves
or paintings, spines of books, trees—
anything to keep our minds off the move.
Before that time,
I had held several hard, clear things to myself,
cupped them in my palms and pressed them
to my chest while the movers bustled. I had
packed them away meticulously, polished them like bones
before we left but they were left
behind— And who handles them now?
or lost— And, tell me, are they ruined?

The wind which whistled hotly like breath
across the shore I used to call home
scattered what I had held and moved me to this place
where I watch waves unfurling
like curls of glass.

—Katherine E. Reedy
SONNET

Pull taut the ties, the geometric cords,
The tension balanced, elegant, just so—
The whole machine wants nothing but to go,
Release the weight, its burden, no care towards
What improbable ramparts—And how could words
Be fast enough to stop the sudden flow
Of energy from P to K, the show
Of sudden force, against first gods, then lords
(First sky, then wall)?

But oh, the wind of flight!
(Pull taut the ties—the tension balanced so)
Released from stillness into startled air,
The stagnant burden now released of care,
And learn from air what air would have us know
(My weight at your command turned quick, and light).

—Cody Owen Stine
Six Hours in Woodside

Ah, Woodside, whispered in certain young and bawdy circles as the fresh-off-the-boat Irish pub neighborhood of blissful drunkards and puking St. John’s students. Is WoSo the next SoHo, NoHo? The answer to the Bronx’s SoBro? Absolutely not. Does it have a certain charm? Absolutely. As found art so boldly attests, charm can be found in toilet seats and decaying cows.

Woodside is near the end of the 7 line (61st and Woodside), bearing the classic architecture and décor that remind uptown Dorothies that they aren’t in Manhattan anymore. There’s quite a lot of sky. Sandwiched between Flushing and Jackson Heights, it extends from roughly the 40s streets to the late 60s, claiming anything notable along the borders. Known as a Little Ireland, the 108th precinct is in fact among the most ethnically diverse in the city. Koreans and Indians spill in from the rest of Queens to make up a community with the Irish and Latinos.

Other than the occasional Woodside festival, the most notable thing about Woodside is that 58th and Queen’s Boulevard is the geographic center of NYC, and there’s a roofing company with a funky tin-man statue on top.

7:00 pm: Donavan’s Pub (59th and Woodside), voted best burger in the city by TimeOut in 2004, is one of only two Irish-American establishments in Woodside (the other, across the street, is Casey Moore’s). Inside it’s warm and friendly, with Dali prints on the walls and baseball on the television. The regulars are diehard and bartender Chris Santangelo will buy any burger if you don’t like it. This doesn’t happen too often. Even vegetarians will lose their beef virginity to a thick juicy patty covered in cheese and onions. At $7.25 a pop with fries, it alone might be worth the trip to Queens.

8:00 pm: Shane’s Bakery and Café (61st) is nestled below the imposing train tracks and claims that Shane “makes his mum’s food.” Cozy and friendly and all those other words, cute women with brogues serve decent cappuccinos ($2.95). During the day you can get sandwiches, soups and breakfast and yummy cheap pastries are available until close. The superlative word in Woodside is cheap.

9:00 pm: Evenings start early. Saints and Sinners (61st) is a traditional bar—no accents, a guy singing that Violent Femmes song, “Blister in the Sun,” and men and women dressed like they want to get laid. Drinks are relatively cheap at $5.00 a shot or beer. Drinking always makes things more interesting.
10:00 pm: Sean Og’s (Woodside) is supposedly the rowdiest and best of the many Woodside pubs. And the bouncer is quite meticulous about checking for proper identification.

10:05 pm: The Cuckoo’s Nest (Woodside) is decidedly fresh-off-the-boat. It is painted bright red and accented with dark wood. The bar is mirrored and decorated with a football (real football) schedule, deer heads, and ambiguous trophies. It is usually packed and nearly everyone has a brogue. The Guinness flows freely and affordably ($5.00 like everywhere else) and there is usually live music. Most notable is The Crey and Dempsey Experience. They are incomprehensible, crass and specialize in the kind of jigs that are really great for singing while inebriated. Every now and then they break into a jolly beatbox.

11:00 pm: The Station Inn Café (61st and Woodside) was Ray’s Food Shop in the 1920s and the Stop In Café in the 1970s. Now it is an sterile pale blue and white diner complete with grumpy waitresses and stools at the bar. The menu includes such great Irish classics as broiled liver, London broil and chicken marsala. Coffee is also a dollar a cup. Supposedly this is the spot for character collecting, which means old women in basketball jerseys and with jeweled butterflies in their hair and creepy guys with long hair and serial killer glasses.

12:00 am: Time for clubbing! No, not really. Stay on the island if strobe lights and DJs are what you long for. Late at night, this is the land of pubs. The Garden Grove is a thirty-year-old bar owned by Richie Hill, a retired fireman. According to a frequent patron, Frank Viel, “he knows more people than you could ever know.” Richie is the local guru, the keeper of the keys to Woodside’s diverse and fantastic history.

1:00 am: The Garden Grove is apparently not located at 51st and 37th as promised. An inspection of the area and a query to a few late night revelers reveals that there must be a secret path to the magical place. As Frank Viel explained the importance and necessity of Richie Hill, “There are so many great stories of this area, but no one ever put them on paper.” Unfortunately they are still in this great man’s mind, until you, dear adventurer, find him and put them down yourself.

–Oriana Magnera
How to be a Cosmopolitan
From poseur to dilettante in ten easy steps. BY IGGY CORTEZ

Some time last semester, my best friend at Yale was invited to a party hosted by an American girl she knew vaguely before college (they both attended the same French school in Rome). The party had generated its share of buzz, and was being termed a “European” party—a concept about as absurd as a “North American” barbeque. Predictably, the party amounted to nothing more than several Yalies exaggerating their tenuous ties with Europe by smoking arduously, pretending to know what they were drinking, and enjoying unremarkable music for the sole reason that it was in French. The other guests, mostly girls with asymmetrical haircuts and floppy-haired boys with hoods dangling outside their blazers, observed and thought that this was the life of the cosmopolitan, distilled that evening in an average-sized suite in Timothy Dwight College, which they had the enormous privilege to witness.

Needless to say, they were partaking in nothing but a sham. Such a stereotyped party speaks for cosmopolites as much as Mama Mexico speaks for Mexicans: both are not so much lies as they are overblown and over-simplified for the sake of lassoing customers and admirers, for being known to be cool and different with the effect of being neither. The party represents an inauthentic—yet prevalent—image of cosmopolitanism in collegiate environments because a) the cosmopolitan is understood purely in terms of the sensibilities with which he or she is associated—namely for fine wines and elegant clothing and other trivialities that mean close to nothing; and b) the scarcity of authentic cosmopolitans to point out “fake” cosmopolitans in our midst.

These notes are written with the self-righteousness of someone who considers himself an authority on the subject, with fondness I have for “my people.” It is also a way to point out that the emperor is, in fact, naked.
1. **Cosmopolitanism is not a form of snobbery but a form of elitism;** it is not concerned with exclusion but with the inclusion of people who share a specific set of experiences—namely, being “diplobrats,” having taken the IB, having attended an international high school, having traveled and been displaced constantly. This is not due to a desire to assert a class, but is rather a form of nationalism in lieu of not actually having a country.

2. At Columbia, a cosmopolitan tends to be an international student, although an international student is not necessarily a cosmopolitan. A **cosmopolitan cannot have a national identity; he just has several passports.**

3. **The looseness of the cosmopolitan’s cultural ties is not a cause of despair but of joy.** A true cosmopolitan would never construct a sentimental sob-story out of his lack of a true country—unless, that is, she were penning an essay for University Writing.

4. A cosmopolitan would never remark that the actual word is “cosmopolite.” The misguided arrogance that arises from speaking four to five languages gives the cosmopolitan a sense of infinite poetic license. In fact, cosmopolitans often translate idiomatic expression that only work in specific foreign tongues into English to create something like an esoteric code by which to recognize and amuse themselves. For instance, “break a leg” is transformed into “up the ass of the whale” for the Roman cosmopolite, to which one must dutifully reply “let’s hope it does not shit.”

5. Summer internships and high school extra-curriculars are a form of science fiction for cosmopolitans, who spend all their time either smoking and drinking coffee in outdoor cafes or, especially on Friday nights, debating where to go without actually going anywhere. **In short, the cosmopolitan is an artist of indolence.**

6. **There is death before decaf, instant, or Starbucks coffee.**

7. International high schools tend to be too small for specific subgroups to emerge, but inevitably for anything remotely resembling a community, a sense of caste hierarchy is in place. **For the cosmopolitans there are only two castes—those who matter and those who do not**—the criteria being the extent to which you have made your public persona a temple to your own individuality, which leads to…

8. The importance of pretence. **Being pretentious is not an option;** it is a prerequisite for life.

9. **At the age of twenty, the cosmopolitan decides to quit smoking after six years of unlimited nicotine.**

10. **I will end with a spirit to which the cosmopolitan has a particular aversion: sentimentality.** The crooked streets the cosmopolitan has walked in solitude have marked his life as much, if not more, than the women and the men with whom he has fallen in love.❖
There are 162 undergraduates at Columbia who are not Columbians. They are interlopers, refugees. The angry, swirling eye of Katrina filled their sunken city with water, and, stranded on the roofs of their watery university, they looked north for salvation. Perched atop the dry heights of Morningside, Columbia noticed. As the poor and supremely unlucky suffered through days in a sordid dome, Columbia beckoned frantic students into her dry nest.

In the English department, a wild-eyed woman with a young man in tow strode through the double doors. “Is there someone we can speak to about enrolling for classes this semester?”

As I started to tell her that registration was over for the semester, she suddenly burst out, “We’re from Tulane.” My eyes widened in shock. I jumped up and summoned the department administrator. “Um, he’s here from Tulane…wants to know about classes?” As the young man went into her office, the mother stayed out with me.

What to say? “Wow, it’s just terrible what happened down there…,” I murmured, trailing off. “Yeah,” she said, “we’re just lucky that we got out and didn’t lose anything.” Time passed. I glanced uncomfortably at the article I had been reading.

“So,” she peered down at me, “are there any good professors here?” I wasn’t sure what to say. Was she kidding me?

“Well, yes, actually, I am an English major, and there are a lot of good professors here. We have a great department.” My eyes communicated snobbishly: “Where do you think you are, anyways?”

She peered down at me, and asked doubtfully, “Do you like it here?” I assured her that I liked it a great deal, and that, again, Columbia professors are some of the best and the brightest. I squelched the indignant responses that bubbled up inside of me. They were, after all, victims, and victims must always be excused.

Sitting down to my first philosophy class—Rational Choice—the lecture was brightened by the amusing remarks of one boy. The class roused from a state of hallucinatory dozing upon hearing him proclaim that he was from Tulane. So they are here! We thought. The class eyed him with interest. Red baseball cap, basic tee shirt. I noted the absence of Mardi Gras beads. Looks like a normal student.

Along with most of my fellows, I was proud of Columbia. We are benevolent, we welcome you, O hurricane-soaked
victims. Yet I can’t deny that these golden feelings edged towards something more unkind. Catastrophe is a complex thing. For those who were caught in the hurricane winds, it was their bodies, their possessions, their school years on the line. New Orleanians must necessarily be mentally filed under “luckless victims of nature.” It’s a difficult category of person.

As most of these students hail from New York and New Jersey, we might wonder why they would ever leave. I came here from California to experience the center of the America—nay, the World! Could their urge have been some kind of inversion of my own? Maybe so. Or maybe it was something different. I racked my brain for possible reasons one might not choose to attend a prestigious, selective, cold, inveterate Ivy League School.

Maybe these students were after something else, something many Columbians have relegated to second, even third on their list of priorities. Maybe they were after a different kind of education. An education involving swamps, alligators, bayous, mossy trees and mild winters—a land where sub-zero is never felt! Perhaps these kids, (mostly born in the tri-state area) lusted for the mysticism and color of a rich, complex culture that involves things most Columbians don’t even dream of, things like Zydeco, Creole, Voodoo, and arguably the biggest, wildest celebration in the country—Mardi Gras!—that infamous festival of parades, nudity, and debauchery!

I asked Steven Levine (T ’08) “What’s the main difference between Columbia students and Tulane students?” Answer: “They don’t get drunk as much.”

While playing Beirut (known as “beer pong” to the neophyte) at the West End, a student was heard to remark, “Columbia kids hear that I’m from Tulane and they look at me like I’m retarded.”

“I Still Go To Tulane.”

At Tulane, Levine told me, “there are tremendous house parties. Mad kegs. There’s never just a keg.”

Strange! Here in New York City there’s a strict don’t-ask-don’t-tell-brown-bag-policy in effect. But there it was encouraged? Images of Mardi Gras popped into my mind. Isn’t that just one day a year, though? What kind of crazy party land was New Orleans?

Tulaners were rumored to be utterly dominating Columbians at Beirut. Yes, they are better than us. Thinking on it, I had to admit to myself that I wasn’t surprised. We Columbians have a couple of sore spots: athletics and parties. This piece of news was a splash of bourbon in both wounds.

“What else do you notice?” I asked Levine.

“People actually go to class,” he said. “Tulane is…like, this wasteland of a… city, with public drinking encouraged.”

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The Lament of CoBag

Whatever happened to my bagels and malt liquor at 3 a.m.?

BY J.J.V. NEUN

I’m not sure if I ever went there while the sun was up. I guess that doesn’t really matter. I also can’t say with certainty that I even bought a bagel there. That doesn’t matter either.

What I do know for sure is that Columbia Hot Bagels, that fluorescent outpost of deliciousness, is gone for good.

For decades, CoBag was a staple of the late-night drunken eating circuit. It was the home of the “Upper West Side Happy Meal,” a bagel and a forty in the wee hours of the morning. But news of the store’s passing has been decidedly low-key—surprising when you look at the fuss made over CoBag’s larger next-door neighbor, West Side Market. During the zoning war waged over the condo tower now rising on the ruins of CoBag, our local state assemblyman, Danny O’Donnell, stated time and again that the safe and speedy return of West Side was his top priority. Mourning Morningsiders even went so far as to construct an impromptu memorial on the plywood that shuttered the grocery store last spring, mixing memories of everything from an engagement in the cheese aisle to the unsurpassed quality of the produce.

But where were the tears for CoBag? I was surprised when during a job interview an alum remarked not about the serious issues discussed in most of my clips, but on the 110 tower and the death of a neighborhood institution.

“My God, how will you drink?” she asked.
“I… I don’t know,” I mustered. It got me thinking. Remembering.

There was the hapless prospective student who accompanied me on a late-night run from John Jay.

“Why are the labels on this Olde English ripped?”

The counter man just smiled. I explained price gouging, something he would never learn in Principles of Econ; Gulati, Desai, or O’Flaherty (although maybe Stiglitz…) He bought his bottle and an everything bagel for good measure and we were on our way. He even gave the change to one of the homeless men who gathered outside.

There were the nights we played cat and mouse. They say you can find the best eatery in a neighborhood by looking for police cars parked outside. The NYPD might as well have opened a satellite precinct at CoBag, as students whose mothers would kill them if they were ever seen puffing on anything awkwardly took drags on bummed cigarettes, trying not to look so awkward waiting for New York’s finest to complete their purchases so they could jet in to grab some Colt .45 before the next squad car arrived.

There were the existential all-nighters, where you stumbled out of Butler at 3 a.m. and wandered the streets in search of authenticity, only to find the rare combination of smiling faces and cheap prices. The all-Butler crowd mixed with the early rising all-American athletes. And with the guy from 108th getting a dozen for his family. Who nodded at the grad student searching for a cheap lunch. All day. Every day.

I don’t miss the bagels, and I can buy the malt liquor elsewhere. But CoBag was something more. It seems that in New York, even in our sheltered ivory tower of a neighborhood, change is the only constant. First Koronet’s upped its slice price. Then we lost AmCaf. Now, Columbia Bagels. The owner got bought out, and chose to throw in the towel rather than sign a new lease. A simple little bagel shop. An owner plus a half dozen (no baker’s bonus here) other employees. They knew the regulars by name. They were part of the soul of an increasingly transient city that becomes more stratified by class and dominated by national chains every week.

So mourn for CoBag. Do it when you walk through the slightly-more-spacious aisles of an expanded West Side Market. Do it while you’re trekking the extra block to a bodega on Amsterdam that has the same lackadaisical regard for blue laws and the drinking age. Do it when you’re paying more for a smaller version of the same bagel at Nussbaum.

Or do it the next time you play Edward 40 Hands.

T H E  B L U E  A N D  W H I T E
When a freshman first enters his dormitory, does he want to see the smiling visage of Uncle Joe Stalin? Or some whack-ass banner welcoming him to Camp Carman? One of the few opportunities for community at Columbia is a dormitory theme. Thus, we were shocked and chagrined when reactionary forces in Res Life voted down the following particularly engaging schemes. For shame!

Carman Sutra: Each floor assumes a position.

Carmanism: A different Communist state for each floor, with each name tag prefaced by “Comrade.”


A girl was spotted walking through campus, explaining to a friend, “She wants me to decide what kind of birth control is right for her or whatever.”

In unrelated news, a flyer for a recent Students for Choice events promised potential attendees a treat of “milk (soy & 2%), cookies, updates, & discussion,” courageously upholding a woman’s right to choose 2%.

A B&W staffer accidentally wandered into a Barnard Macroeconomics course. The professor, describing a hypothetical situation in which a factory was dumping toxic waste into a river, asked, “What can the government do to prevent this?”

Student A: Can’t they, like, tax people who drive SUVs?

Student B: In my state, Massachusetts, they sometimes have tax-free weekends. Maybe that would work.

Student C: Maybe they should have a law limiting the number of SUVs on the road.

Student D: Could the government pass laws that prevented that specific company from making SUVs?

Student E: Maybe they could pass a law making it illegal to dump toxic waste in the river.

Professor: What’s your name?

A student walks into Kent Hall’s ID Center. “Hi, I just found out my CUID has spelled my name wrong for the past year. Can I get this changed?”

A student leaves Kent Hall’s ID Center. He is Keyser Soze.

A visiting Yalie was heard declaring on a Friday night, “At Yale no one has a sense of humor. Everyone is just depressed and posturing. I wish I had gone to Columbia.”

The throng of students puffing clove cigarettes outside Butler could not be reached for comment.

Overheard at IAB:

“When I went to health services for an HIV test, the guy was asking me all these weird questions about my sexual positions for some reason.”

“He was probably asking about the different orifices.”

“Wait, isn’t that the dance group on campus?”

Yes, alongside student groups such as Cock Trial, The Erectator, The Mobius Strip Tease, Jizz Bowl, and Raw Elementz.
Recently, four dozen politically precocious first years squared off in the CCSC First-Year Elections Candidate Forum. A B&W staffer attending the event was intrigued by the Hamiltonians Party and its compelling theory for the rise in campus crime:

“So how do you feel about Columbia University being an imperialist force in Harlem and expanding all over the neighborhood?”

Vice Presidential Candidate: “Well, let’s just say I’m from New York and—I’m not kidding—there used to be this crack den next to my house, but then Columbia just imported the crackheads and now they just roam the campus at night...crackheads, guys! Like, I am not even kidding.”

Professor Manduchehr Kasheff, on why hell is like 76 virgins getting touched for the very first time:

“In heaven, there are Pope John and Ayatollah Khomenei. Why would I go there? They’re always praying up there. I’m going to hell. You’ll never catch cold. And Madonna will be there. I don’t have to touch her. She’ll just dance for me.”

Bollinger’s hair...it’s a mullet!