THE BLUE AND WHITE

BACK TO SCHOOL SPECIAL
The Bureaucrobats, mapping Columbia life, and more

THE DECLINE OF CONTEMPORARY CIVILIZATION
Has the Core been hollowed out?
by Brendan Pierson

ALSO: ONWARD AND BRONXWARD WITH THE ARTS, BEN STEIN
THE BLUE AND WHITE

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www.theblueandwhite.org © COVER: “Orientation” by Alish Erman

September 2006
While reading Susan Sontag’s “Notes on ‘Camp’” this summer, I came across her declaration, “The two pioneering forces of modern sensibility are Jewish moral seriousness and homosexual aestheticism and irony.” I liked the line, so I emailed it to a couple friends. One of them, a gay Filipino expatriate who lives in Rome, responded that today it would be more accurate to say that the two pioneering forces are Jewish moral irony and homosexual aestheticism and seriousness.

And that is everything you need to know—or probably have learned over the past three years—about Columbia life. An obnoxious offhand reference, a friend with a biography that reads like a movie pitch, and a witty inversion that buries opinion under a self-aware joke. Some will wish the analysis were more rigorous, others will want—they always want—more references to God and the troops, many will player-hate on all that pretentious shit and challenge the writer to a case race. Admirers will make a facebook group. Those that fail to respond are too busy re-watching “Boiler Room.”

If you are Jewish or homosexual, you possibly wondered for a second if the first comment should have offended you. If you are neither, you probably thought the comment was offensive, mainly because you agreed with it. Well, because no one likes homophobia, and most don’t like anti-Semitism, let none of us be caught discouraging your indignation. Feel aggrieved! Fight indoctrination! And welcome—welcome back—to Columbia!

Avi Zvi Zenilman
Editor-in-Chief

TRANSACTIONS
ARRIVALS
Vaclav Havel, the first president of the Czech Republic, now Columbia’s fall artist-in-residence
New School anthropologist Claudio Lomnitz, to head up the Center for the Study of Ethnicity and Race
After a nationwide search, UPenn’s Associate Director of Asian American Studies Dr. Ajay Nair as the Associate Dean of Student Affairs/Office of Multicultural Affairs for CC and SEAS
Norries Wilson, Columbia’s new football coach—and the first African-American to coach the sport in the Ivy League

DEPARTURES
Mailman School of Public Health Dean and 20-year Columbia vet Allan Rosenfield
Robin Kelley, former director of the Center for the Study of Ethnicity and Race
Arthur Levine, president of Teachers College
Columbia’s old plan for expansion, bringing its newest idea closer to the 197-a plan proposed by Community Board 9
“Columbia takes a chance on people.”
—Bernie Goldman, 80, C ’46, E ’47, J ’48, and 2006 Alumni Medalist, in the Rocky Mountain News

DIGIT TALES: ORIENTATION

Class of 2010

Incoming CC students: 1,017
Admission rate: 9.7%
Early decision: 44.6%
CC yield: 61%
Admitted off waitlist: 6

Incoming SEAS students: 315
Admission rate: 23.5%
Early decision: 40.9%
SEAS yield: 50%
Admitted off waitlist: 20

Middle 50% of admitted students SAT:
1380 to 1530

REVELATION OF THE MONTH

According to the 2007 Princeton Review Best 361 Colleges rankings:

Best College Town
Columbia University - Columbia College: #3
Barnard College: #2

CALENDAR

September 13, 7:00 p.m., September 15, 16, 8:00 p.m., Miller Theatre
An event co-sponsored by Works and Process at the Guggenheim highlighting the work of three young ballet dancer-choreographers: Tom Gold, Edwaard Liand, and Brian Reeder. Catch this $35 event for $7 with a CUID.

September 19, 7:00 p.m., Columbia Bookstore
J-School dean Nicholas Lemann will discuss and sign copies of Redemption: The Last Battle of the Civil War. A Southerner himself, Lemann focuses on reconstruction.

September 25, 6:15 p.m., President’s Room, Faculty House
Rub elbows with the literati in a posthumous book launch for Edward Said. Co-sponsored by Knopf, the event will celebrate On Late Style.

September 16, 23, 12:30 p.m., September 30, 1:30 p.m.
Spend an afternoon at Baker Field to see if the Lions can improve on last year’s 2-7 record. They face Fordham on the 16th, Georgetown on the 23rd, and Princeton on the 30th. Show up early to tailgate and get your four free beers.
Buckets of paint. Cardboard boxes. Old pallets. No fruit. When you walk by the former home of Westside Market, the wares don’t look all that appetizing.

Students have been sniffing dust and dodging scaffolding at 110th and Broadway for a little over two years after a quixotic zoning battle, the demolition of the old building, and the rise of yet another condo tower. But once the new building reaches completion, Westside Market will return to the ground floor.

The store’s owners, speaking from the West Village, said it should be open again by Christmas. Bigger than ever—at the expense of the Chinese restaurant Dynasty and the legendary Columbia Hot Bagels—Westside will once again be open 24 hours.

And so the Great Grocery Store Crisis of 2004 has finally abated. First went the raffish charm of the old University Food Market. D’Agostino was shuttered, and Morningside shoppers were torn between Gristedes on 107th Street (now Garden of Eden) and either Apple Tree or C-Town uptown on Amsterdam. When Westside closed at the age of 30, the Times and Spec ran obituaries, and concerned citizens wrote messages on the plywood that boarded up the building.

But the hipper D’Ag market replaced D’Agostino, and after a takeover and an interior design cue from Lerner, UFM became the fluorescent iridescence known as Morton Williams, open ‘round the clock a half-block from Schapiro.

It’s unclear whether Westside’s devotees have patiently waited for a resurrection or changed allegiances for good. Will an expanded facility retain its neighborhood feel, or will it be as chainy (and pricy) as D’Ag? Will it be worth the extra walk past Morton? And most importantly, will it still offer bagels for 25 cents?

—J.J.V. Neun

Is Frontiers of Science, the bastard child of the esteemed core curriculum, a waste of time (two hours a week) and money (millions of dollars in grants)?

The self-admittedly “not content driven” course is required of all first-year students, in order to instill “scientific habits of mind” and make science seem really, really cool by teaching the most exciting material first.

Each semester is like a new episode of “Columbia’s Wide World of Science”, quickly skimming
over four hot scientific issues, like biodiversity and global warming. At one semester, it’s too short to make a significant impact on a student’s academic development but long enough to elicit some serious whining.

Frontiers started off in Fall 2003 as an optional class for incoming first-years; unfortunately, Columbia scheduled the weekly lecture at 9 AM on Fridays. It was made mandatory the following year, but was plagued by widespread cheating. Two years later, it has no credibility among science/math majors, who scoff at their relatively easy A, and little respect—not even the grudging kind—among the lit-driven humanities majors who chafe from all the busywork.

Ranging from relative indifference to outright insolence, students take advantage of the huge lecture auditorium and dim lighting to sleep, catch up on LitHum reading, and make out in the back.

Even though Frontiers of Science Fellow Kerry Brown says he’s happy to help teach the course in its 3rd year, he is not oblivious to its problems, and mentioned more changes ahead for the ever-evolving curriculum.

In the fall, there will be a midterm to go with the traditional final, and both will be more content-driven. “The auditorium is very impersonal—it feels anonymous, and the students feel they could do whatever the hell they want without being called out,” he says. “If we emphasize content, they’ll be forced to focus on the lecture, instead of IMing and watching DVDs.”

—Yelena Shuster

“Do you have a girlfriend/boyfriend?”

“Yeah, it’s metaphysical.”

“Cool. Where is she/he?”

“A senior at our high school/at a state school back home. But we’re going to text each other every night and make it work.”

Or something like that. Be prepared to hear this conversation—or similar riffs on the theme—roughly 600 times over the next week (unless you can duck the first-year swarm). According to Dr. Gregory Guldner, director of the Center for the Study of Long Distance Relationships (longdistancerelationships.net), up to 50% of first year students are in an ominously termed “LDR.”

In a period defined by “replacement”—new friends for old, floormates for siblings, no one for parents—half of Carman is unwilling to let those memories remain in their families’ station wagons. Guldner claims that as many as 78% of college students will experience an LDR. So you’re not alone now, and don’t feel alone when your high-school sweetheart stops calling your ROLM phone: 74% of LDRs don’t make it past their first year.

Will Berlin, C ’10, plans to fight the odds with stamps. “I’m a big fan of letters,” adding that he and his girlfriend (who is still attending high school in Illinois) keep homemade letterboxes in their rooms. “Now we’re making new boxes because, uh…the other ones are full.” Guldner recommends handwritten letters, saying, “Scenting these letters with a particular cologne or perfume also can have a profound effect for some couples.”

But still, what about that whole distance thing? “She’ll be doing the same things I did last year, so I can relate,” Berlin said.

Guldner is less sanguine. “I sometimes compare intimacy to a rope that holds two people together,” he muses. “The inner core of the rope is the sharing of emotions between one another. But around this core are thousands of tiny fibers made up of each seemingly mundane exchange or experience that occurs between a couple. While no one fiber is terribly important, as a whole they create the true strength of the bond”.

Can Berlin take on the nay-sayers? “I’d say ‘You’re entitled to your opinion, but I disagree because I’m gonna make mine work.’”

—Andrew Flynn

Illustrations by Jerone Hsu
Campus Characters

You might not know the following figures—but you should. In Campus Characters, The Blue and White introduces you to a handful of Columbians who are up to interesting and extraordinary things, and whose stories beg to be shared. If you’d like to suggest a Campus Character, send us an e-mail at theblueandwhite@columbia.edu.

Caroline McCandless

When Columbians run into Caroline McCandless, G’08, they usually notice her looks, her style, and the concerted effort that goes into her tan. They usually do not notice her right ring finger, where the word “ambition” is tattooed around its circumference in ornate cursive.

In 2004, when a violent crime at an Atlanta nightclub led the city to change the closing time for bars from 4 a.m. to 3, most people were idly angry. McCandless, on the other hand, saw an opportunity. If the elite of Atlanta’s nightlife had nowhere to go come 3 a.m., she thought, why not just have them over to her place?

She started by finding a sponsor—an established high roller who hand-delivered the initial $10,000 investment in cash bound together with multi-colored rubber bands. With that money in hand, she paid her roommate to move out, renovated her three-bedroom apartment with new lighting and a sound system, hired attractive female promoters, and named the place 400 Code. For seven glorious months, it was Atlanta’s premier after-hours party destination.

“Nobody had done this in Atlanta on the level that I was trying to do it,” she says. “People still tell me that this was the flyest shit.” The guest lists frequently included rappers, NFL players, hustlers, and anybody else who could afford the $100 cover charge. McCandless, who was only 20 at the time, used her iron fist at the door to keep the business profitable. “As long as you have integrity, you can be a bitch when you need to be,” she says. “You’re not getting into my party for free. If you really own a club like you say you do, then give me a hundred dollars. You can afford it. And if you can’t, then you’re broke, and I’m just gonna laugh at you.”

Getting work done was often a challenge. “It’s hard to be a woman in the club industry without having everybody trying to fuck you all the time.” And seven months of constant partying can take its toll. “I drank champagne every night. I got dressed up to be a diva every night. It was fun, but you get tired of that shit.”

So McCandless started looking elsewhere for fulfillment. She began selling her paintings—11 so far, fetching prices above $1,000. Her new style website, Urbancouture.com, is set to launch in October. She was offered a reality TV show, which she gracefully declined. She’s writing a novel that deals with modern manifestations of racism—the only way to have any real effect, she says, “because it’s a lot easier to fall in love with a story than it is to love fact.” And now she’s getting a Columbia education, determined to graduate because a friend bet her that she couldn’t.

Eventually, people learn not to bet against McCandless. As she says: “I’m not afraid to go all the way to the top.”

—James Williams
DAVID CHAIT

Senior class president David Chait, C ’07, Most Likely To Succeed among those most likely to succeed, is a study in modesty.

He was “lucky enough to get in” to Columbia. He was “fortunate enough to win” the class presidency, and has been “fortunate enough to get re-elected” three times since. He was “fortunate” to grow up with two married parents and one successful older sister in the utterly livable town of Edison, New Jersey. It’s “flattering” to be called a student leader and to be chosen as a B&W campus character. He consistently refers to the need for “hard work.”

Baby-faced with tiny tendril curls, Chait speaks so earnestly about his student council efforts that it’s hard to believe he spent the summer in consulting rather than installing water pumps in rural Bolivia.

But then, after a lengthy and entirely uncontroversial conversation, one starts to wonder whether he’s a natural born politician who is too bland to be true. Before Chait was ’07’s philosopher king, after all, he led his high school class for four years. But maybe, sometimes, good guys do finish first.

I first met Chait while he was “DVD Dave,” a Carman floormate happy to lend selections from his immense DVD collection to his 80 new best friends. When a suitemate faced a crumbling love life, I immediately thought, “What about David from down the hall?” He has memorized the crucial details of my life: my boyfriend’s name, my burgeoning journalism career; yet we speak only a couple times per year, and only in passing. His skill lies in putting people at ease and making them feel like the center of his attention while he plays a discrete but critical second fiddle. He’s like a Best Supporting Actor in the leading man’s role.

Associate Dean of Student Affairs Kathryn Wittner has observed the trajectories of dozens of student leaders over the years. Last fall, as she considered the upcoming race for the Columbia College Student Council, Wittner asked Chait, “So, my friend, will you be running for Council president?” Chait replied immediately, “Absolutely not. I am interested in being class president.” And it’s this sort of genuine devotion to the class of ’07, more than monthly study breaks, his revamped Casino Night, or the networking events with the grandfather class of ’57, which has defined Chait’s presidency.

For Chait, being class president has always been more about how he could help his class than about using the class as a platform for himself, Wittner said. In recent years, other campus leaders have become such caricatures as to be known by only one name, like sexpot pop stars—and be taken just as seriously. “There’s not a lot of BS about David,” Wittner said.

He is so successful, no doubt, not because he wows alumni, administrators, and the rest of us with tales from his own life, but because he seems so interested in ours. He began our interview with, “How’s your summer going?” I wanted to shake him and say, “You’re supposed to be delirious with power!”

But he’s absolutely un-delirious, un-exciting, un-gossip-worthy. So when he talks about how lucky he is to be able to spend 20 hours a week on student council work, and about his great work-study job in the Language Research Center, and about his love of the History Channel, the conversation is gripping not for what he says but because it gives us all the hope that the cowboy dressed in white can ride off into the sunset with the girl, leaving bad guys strewn in his modest wake.

—Josie Swindler
To the Editor:

With every article written on the university’s expansion into West Harlem, I hold out hope that student reporters will bring fresh perspectives to the conversation. I keep being disappointed.

“Expansion And Its Discontents,” (Vol. XII, No. 8–May 2006), for the most part, simply parroted the university’s position on the expansion, doing little the actually inform students of what’s going on. Instead, DePillis and Erickson suggest that the value of our degrees rests on expansion and that expansion can only occur through Columbia’s all-or-nothing approach. Furthermore, they paint the community’s 197a plan with petty considerations like “more sports fields, farmers’ markets, historically preserved buildings, and improved public transportation,” while ignoring larger issues and entirely leaving out the dangers of secondary displacement. By belittling the community’s concerns, the article misses the point of what the fight around Columbia’s expansion is all about.

Despite the bureaucratic complications surrounding city council processes, the issue is pretty simple: we can either have an expansion that steamrolls a neighborhood of working class people or one that collaborates with the community and includes basic things like affordable housing, secure jobs, environmental and health protections, and preservation of neighborhood character. Columbia will get space either way—the struggle is over how they will choose to do it.

Almost all major decisions concerning Columbia’s expansion will take place within the next year and a half. As students at Columbia, we have an obligation not to remain complicit with the university’s moral failures, but rather ensure that any expansion that occurs is in a manner consistent with our values and stands accountable to the community.

Brett Murphy
BC ’07
Last semester I took a class with the unusual title “Nobility and Civility II.” The syllabus ranged from Chaucer to the Tamil poet Ilanko Atikal—and that was in a single class session. It was jointly taught by five teachers and consisted of about 15 students. The idea that you can read works from Europe, India, Japan, Syria, China, and elsewhere, written centuries apart in time, in search of common human concerns and values appealed to me. In practice, I found it in some ways frustrating (though not having taken the first half of the class, my experience is admittedly incomplete). Considered on its own, the class appears hopelessly broad. But to its proponents, classes like it could be the future of the Core Curriculum.

The Core has been hailed as a great success of general education in an increasingly fragmented and specialized academy. Over time, it has changed dramatically to reflect a continued rethinking of what general education ought to do. For example, though Literature Humanities, Contemporary Civilization, and their antecedents have always been the centerpiece of the Core, the most significant recent change to the curriculum has been the addition of the required first-year class Frontiers of Science—now in the third year of its five-year pilot
run. This change bespeaks a continued willingness to adapt the curriculum, at least in some ways, to contemporary concerns.

Yet the Core has been a political battlefield. In the spring of 2004, after a series of racially charged incidents on campus, a large contingent of students protested that the Columbia administration had failed to provide the necessary resources and support for minority students. Last spring, largely in response to another incident in which two students vandalized a Ruggles door with racist and homophobic graffiti, the group Stop Hate on Columbia’s Campus (SHOCC) reiterated those stipulations. “We demand changes in Columbia’s Core Curriculum and Barnard’s requirements, including syllabus revision, and mandatory workshops for faculty and preceptors to make current texts more inclusive,” SHOCC wrote. “Courses must be diversified, with a less western, eurocentric focus. Columbia and Barnard must create a classroom environment where all students feel valued by staff, other students, and faculty.”

There are two obvious defenses against SHOCC’s criticisms of the Core. One is to reaffirm boldly that the Core represents, in poet Matthew Arnold’s famous phrase, “the best that has been thought and said in the world”—that the works on the syllabus are absolutely superior to others, and that Western culture is more important than other cultures to understanding our own. But rarely is this view expressed without a filter of caveats. East Asian Languages and Culture professor and Provost Emeritus William Theodore de Bary, C ’41, who was instrumental in bringing the study of non-Western cultures to the Core in the late 1940s, held perhaps the most “conservative” view of the professors I talked to. Writing about the Core in the summer issue of Columbia magazine, he noted, “The point was never to define a canon.”

The second defense is to say that the content of the Core’s courses hardly matters at all—rather, that its value lies in its structure and in the habits of thought it encourages. This is the view of MEALAC Professor Richard Bulliet, who told me “the texts become a skeleton that can be articulated in many different ways.” When Bulliet came to Columbia from Harvard in 1976, he was actively hostile toward the Core, which struck him as “a way of indoctrinating students into certain works of Western civilization,” works which he deemed “overrated.” But English Professor Michael Rosenthal convinced him that he should try teaching it before dismissing it, and Bulliet found that “this seemingly conservative curriculum is actually a very radical curriculum.” Its radicalism, for Bulliet, comes from the fact that it approaches its material without lectures from experts or secondary texts, under the direction of non-expert instructors left to their own devices.

What would become the Core began in 1919, in the aftermath of World War I. With young men returning from the war, the faculty of the College resolved to create a class in “peace issues,” intended to introduce students to the problems of the modern world and the tools with which to analyze them. The class, required for all first-years, held perhaps the most “conservative” view of the professors I talked to. Writing about the Core in the summer issue of Columbia magazine, he noted, “The point was never to define a canon.”

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But ignoring the Core’s subject matter won’t make it go away, and people will keep asking why we study the particular works that we do. Does this curriculum, in theory and in practice, remain radical, or even vital, in today’s instant, multicultural, globalized world? Can the Core actually constitute the core of a sufficient undergraduate education?
on various subjects. Though the course had something of a historical trajectory, moving from the end of the Middle Ages through the twentieth century, it was not intended as comprehensive intellectual history, and it focused not on the works read in class, but on the themes they discussed.

Though Columbia had introduced a “Great Books” class at around the same time as CC as an exclusive two-year honors seminar, it was not until 1937 that such a class became required for all first-years. Called Humanities A, its students read one book a week and discussed it in small seminars, held four times a week. The underlying model remains more or less unchanged, although it’s now called Literature Humanities, but it was radical then for the same reason that Bulliet considers it radical now: it presumed that students, under the guidance of non-specialist teachers who often had little more experience with the texts than they did, could engage directly with canonical works. And unlike CC, which focused on themes, it was explicitly canonical, consciously seeking out the best of the Western literary tradition.

The first attempt to incorporate non-Western material came in 1947, with the creation of an Oriental Humanities seminar modeled after Lit Hum. It never became required, or particularly popular, but it continues to the present day in the form of the Colloquia on Major Texts of Asia. The course embodied a fundamentally liberal impulse—the recognition of the intrinsic intellectual value of non-Western cultures. At the same time, it relied, like Lit Hum, on a fixed canon: de Bary pointed out to me that texts for Asian Humanities are selected according to their importance as recognized in Asian cultures, reflecting their enduring value.

The ’50s, by all accounts, were the golden age of the Core. Columbia’s star professors—including Lionel Trilling, Mark Van Doren, and Jacques Barzun—not only taught it but advocated for it passionately. That prestige would not last. The cultural unrest of the ’60s and ’70s, including the Columbia student uprisings of 1968, began to rumble the traditional Core’s foundation—but the student body remained all male, and mostly white. Serious political critiques of the Core would wait until the ’80s, when women were first admitted to the College and onto its reading lists.

Also in the 1980s, Robert Pollack, a chemistry professor and former dean of the College, called attention to the deficiency of science education in the Core in an article in Columbia College Today. “No student, including the science major, is exposed to a systematic, searching examination of the premises of the scientific method, to the linguistic makeup of the sciences, or to the process by which a set of observations becomes, for a lesser or greater time, a ‘fact,’” Pollack noted. Just as the end of World War I presented new challenges in dealing with a changed world order, the increasing importance of science and technology in twentieth-century life prompted a need for deeper understanding. Noting this parallel, Pollack proposed a class called Science in Society, “modeled on CC,” which would “confront directly the central issues of modern science.”

This plan has been realized by Frontiers of Science. Professor David Helfand, chair of that course (and B&W contributor: see page 42), said the class “has brought this major intellectual domain, which is absolutely necessary to function in the 21st century, into the Core.” Unlike Lit Hum
and CC, the class relies on weekly lectures from experts—the nature of science making it difficult to teach entirely thorough seminars. But it is also premised on the conviction that students are capable of engaging with complex ideas on their own, and that teaching them to do so has intrinsic social value; in this respect, it shares much with Lit Hum and CC.

Since then, Core reform has, if anything, stagnated. The staffs of Lit Hum and CC meet every other year to discuss possible changes to the curriculum. Each course has its own steering committee, consisting of committed junior and senior faculty as well as graduate student preceptors, who work to produce alternative curricula for their course. Deborah Martinsen, associate dean of the Core, said some change was common. Some attempt has been made to add non-Western perspectives—the Qu’ran here, Fanon there—but most changes have been driven by purely practical pedagogical concerns. This year, for example, students will read Euripides’ *Bacchae* rather than *Medea*, as well as new translations of Herodotus and *Don Quixote*. “Tradition holds a lot, but not always,” said Martinsen. “It’s more of a kind of gradual progressive thing.”

When it comes to reforming Lit Hum and CC, most Columbia faculty fall into a vague, if moderate, camp. They try to explore some of the uncomfortable undertones of Western texts, if perhaps not to the extent activists would like, but they also defend the texts as inherently interesting and valuable. “If a student says that body of work [the Lit Hum and CC curricula] doesn’t speak to them, I think that student has a closed mind,” said Johnston, the political science professor. English Assistant Professor Amanda Claybaugh, who has taught Lit Hum, similarly stressed, “These are interesting texts,” even if “we can talk about the contradictions in them.”

Many welcome changes to the Core that would expand its intellectual horizons, but they worry about tokenism—adding authors as symbols of inclusiveness without incorporating them meaningfully into the curriculum. Bulliet, a scholar of medieval Islamic history, sees the Qu’ran, a text that he believes resists any kind of serious study in the space of two hours, as an inappropriate and token insertion. Johnston similarly pointed to Mary Wollstonecraft (now optional): “Frankly, I think people feel, with some good reason, that she’s just not as sophisticated a thinker.” While Austen, Claybaugh told me, is “a brilliant technician,” students often perceive *Pride and Prejudice* as out of place in a Lit Hum syllabus usually unconcerned with literary technique.

At the same time, they acknowledge that issues of race and gender, power and oppression are important—not for political reasons, but because

Clark described the Core’s narrative to me as “a nice triumphal liberal assimilation story”—in which the Enlightenment values of John Stuart Mill deliver Europeans from the darkness of religion and superstition, with little attention to the darker, imperialist, and colonialist side of the modern West.
any serious treatment of the texts requires them. “When teaching Aristotle, there should be a huge discussion of gender,” Clark said. The text itself requires it; it’s central to Aristotle’s conception of citizenship and virtue. This is equally true in Lit Hum: no scrupulous reader can see the Iliad as merely a paean to the glory of battle, or Crime and Punishment as a ringing affirmation of Christianity. The best Western texts complicate themselves, to the point where, Claybaugh said, “I’m not sure there’s anything coherently Western.”

It’s possible, though, that the syllabus still doesn’t offer enough space for such critique. More than being merely Eurocentric, the Core is structured to tell a very particular story. My own CC teacher, Shannan Clark, would complain of this. Now a history lecturer at Princeton, Clark described the Core’s narrative to me as “a nice triumphal liberal assimilation story”—in which the Enlightenment values of John Stuart Mill deliver Europeans from the darkness of religion and superstition, with little attention to the darker, imperialist, and colonialist side of the modern West.

Political Science professor David Johnston, who has taught CC since he came to Columbia in 1986, and served as its director from 1996 to 1999, agreed that “there’s still a kind of Hegelian, teleological story to the way the syllabus is constructed.” In other words, the course conditions its students to perceive Western history as a series of intellectual events that have continually built on one another, such that we now reside in the best of all possible worlds. It’s a rather quaint notion, and if CC propagates it, that’s problematic—if nothing else, it would mean that CC did not learn the lessons of its parent-event, World War I.

SHOCC and its supporters—like all participants in the debate—have not introduced a detailed proposal for reforming the Core, but their tack is clearly different from that of the more moderate ones. They call for a two-pronged approach: changing the content of the syllabus, and, more significantly changing the way the existing syllabus is taught. Their stated goals do not challenge the Core as primarily about the West. They want, rather, to change the way we look at the West. They believe it should be seen as a broad and diverse heritage that is worth making the effort to own.

According to Tasha Amezcua, C ’07, a SHOCC member, SHOCC’s emphasis is not so much on adding “this book or that book” as on making the classroom environment more inclusive through anti-oppression training. Though the works taught in Lit Hum and CC are sometimes caricatured as the leavings of “dead white males,” Amezcua, who is none of these, insisted, “Each of these texts has a lot to offer...this is my literature, too.” The problem, she said, is that the texts aren’t taught that way. The mandatory orientation for graduate student instructors already includes some training, but SHOCC would like to see it made more rigorous and required for all Core teachers, up to tenured professors. This plan, and the anti-oppression training in general, has tended to arouse suspicion in some students and faculty who assume that the training consists, in Amezcua’s words, of “lining up all the white people and yelling at them.”

Meanwhile, if you ask de Bary how to make the Core, he will point first to classes like the Asian Humanities, which study the canons of non-Western cultures, and then to classes like Nobility and Civility, which adopt the theme-driven structure of CC. These classes are a clear improvement on the scattershot Major Cultures requirement—though they are unlikely to satisfy critics who would like to see Core classes ask questions about how and why canons are constructed in the first place.

De Bary will also point to something else entirely: the dissolution of the Faculty of the College. The College Faculty had been a single unified body until the beginning of the ’90s; it then merged with the graduate faculties to form the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. The Faculty of the College had been responsible for conferring degrees on undergraduates and generally overseeing their education. Ac-
According to de Bary, the dissolution of the College faculty created a situation in which no one felt responsible for the Core.

No one else interviewed for this article felt as strongly as de Bary did on this point, though several conceded that the unification of Arts and Sciences likely had a negative impact on the teaching of the Core. For the last ten years, only about twenty percent of tenured faculty have taught it. It is worth noting, however, that the Core has never been able to employ mostly senior faculty: there simply have never been enough willing to teach it. Even in its first years, graduate preceptors and junior faculty were called on to teach many sections. And even during the Golden Age of the 1950s, many faculty remained uninterested in it.

With Core classes dominated by graduate student preceptors—whose investment in the university often lasts only as long as their degree programs—and junior faculty on the mandatory slope towards tenure, the quality of instruction can’t help but be wildly uneven. Inevitably, among bad teachers there will be insensitive teachers, which contributes to the problems that concern SHOCC. But more importantly, no cohesive Core faculty means no obvious place for SHOCC to begin a dialogue. Johnston offered a tentative suggestion to remedy this situation: the directors of Lit Hum and CC could begin a series of open meetings of the Core teachers designed to build a sense of shared responsibility, and to invite students to bring their views to the table. He acknowledged that there has been little movement in this direction. SHOCC members have begun speaking with Philosophy Professor Philip Kitcher, the current chair of CC, but there is no forum in which to engage all students and faculty. For now, the first step may be just to create one, and start talking.

CUARTS.COM

YOUR PORTAL TO THE ARTS
ON AND OFF CAMPUS
Meet The Bureaucrobats!

Columbia is a perilous jungle of paperwork and deadlines, and it is very easy to lose one’s way. When red tape and regulations strike, an elite cadre of unflappable administrators is called upon to ensure party space, academic standing, and safety from cheetahs. So, dear reader, meet those whom we have deemed... The Bureaucrobats!

BOY FIXER

Real Name: Matthew Harrison, C ’05
Title: Coordinator
Special Projects, Student Services
Location: 209 Philosophy

Backstory: Harrison, who served as student government president after fixing the accounting of the Columbia College Student Council (CCSC) and Community Impact, conceived schoolwide Lerner bash Glass House Rocks and wrote his senior thesis on Lerner Hall. He then chose a job at Columbia over consulting.

Powers: Knowledge of lots of stuff, navigation, youthful ennui.

DIVINE TOLERANCE

Real Name: Jewel-nel Davis
Title: Associate Provost, University Chaplain, Director of Earl Hall
Location: Earl Hall

Backstory: Locked in an eternal battle against hate—racist cartoons, homophobic vandalism, rogue swastikas—Chaplain Davis swings into action, a one-woman forum for student concerns. Also, the point person for anyone who wants to make their house God’s house.

Powers: Conflict resolution, grant giving, faith-based initiatives.

THE TELEMOTIVATOR

Name: Doris Miller
Title: Assistant Director, College Activities Office
Location: McIntosh Hall 209
Backstory: Responsible for space in McIntosh, student programming, and generally making Barnard run smoothly, Miller is best known for her campus wide voicemail updates that invariably begin with, “Good morning my strong, beautiful Barnard women.”

Powers: Undeniable strength and beauty.

HOUSE M.C.

Real Name: Mark Chatoor, E’ 05
Title: Manager, University Residence Halls
Location: 125 Wallach
Backstory: Chatoor, who was an R.A. his junior year and worked at the hospitality desk as a student, now brings sanity, common sense, and flexibility to the chaotic, poorly-heated universe of Columbia housing.

Powers: Shelter-granting, number-crunching, room-swapping, floor plans.
LORD OF THE SEAS

Real Name: Zvi Galil
Title: Dean of the Fu Foundation School of Engineering and Applied Science and Morris A. and Alma Schapiro Professor and Julian Clarence Levi Professor of Mathematical Methods and Computer Science
Location: 510 Mudd
Backstory: Galil, ruler of engineers, is known for his great Austrian-Israeli accent, idiosyncratic personal e-mails, and the fervency with which he defends the sovereignty of the SEAS from Columbia College irredentism.
Powers: Flag-waving, mathematical modeling, mass e-mailing, anything you can do with a giant trident.

THE SOPHOMORE SOURCE

Real Name: Jay Orenduff
Title: Class Dean, First Year Sophomore Academic Advising Center (FYSAAC) Office
Location: 403 Lerner
Backstory: Orenduff helps shepherd a lucky flock of first-years and sophomores through the thickets of course registration, major declaration, and undiagnosed depression. Those who are sophomores, but not members of his flock, are blessed with his immaculately conceived weekly update.
Powers: SSOL, advising, the power of the pen (he signs forms).

DEAN DELIGHT

Name: Vivian Taylor
Title: Associate Dean of Studies
Location: 105 Milbank
Backstory: The sophomore class dean for Barnard, Taylor’s responsiveness and affection are legend. She also is known for her willingness for help students make their wildest academic projects come true.
Powers: eBear, advising, big hugs.

THE HOTLINE

Name: Maura Bairley
Title: Director, Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Program
Location: 301 Lerner
Backstory: One of main advocates for strengthening Columbia’s sexual assault policy. Bairley and her team counsel and assist victims of sexual violence and harassment.
Powers: Advocacy, compassion, confidentiality.
The Ego and the ID
Or, Forgery for Dummies
By Ian Solsky

Every fall, first-year Columbians join the ranks of identity thieves, illegal immigrants, and terrorists: they become frauds. Thrust into a sea of newfound friends with needy enthusiasm and needy cynicism in equal measure, ID forgery is merely another means of survival for the fresh arrivals in Morningside Heights.

Like many others, I followed the crowd to Greenwich Village sometime last September and dropped 80 dollars in a tattoo parlor for a counterfeit Delaware license. No, we can’t all necessarily afford it; some of us tell our parents the money went to books.

Since the ID almost always works around Columbia, I rarely question the cost of my decision, but sometimes there are questions, and these questions trouble me. Once, while comparing IDs with friends, a disheveled classmate told me that he made his own fake ID for less than two dollars, but sells them for twenty. I needed to know his method, his secrets—was he defrauding the frauds?

Instead of playing DMV by using the State ID templates available online, the disheveled classmate prefers to do it himself. He takes an actual school ID (usually from a New York City college)
and then scans it into his computer. “It’s not gonna look exactly identical,” he said, “but it’s good enough.”

He then aligns the template, fiddles around on Photoshop, and prints on gray cardstock paper. “Now, ‘legit’ fakes should be printed on Teslin, a waterproof synthetic material that works well with most printers,” he informs me, “but it’s not as easy to get or as cheap as cardstock paper, which I use.”

And what if you don’t have a snazzy color printer? “You can just e-mail the images to yourself and have the people at the copy store — which you’re going have to go to anyway to get the ID laminated — print it accurately for you.” (He insisted employees may laugh at you, but “won’t give a shit.”) After laminating, the ID is cut to its appropriate size, and the work is be complete. “It’s pretty easy, actually somewhat self-explanatory, doesn’t take too long,” he said, “And it works!”

One final piece of advice from the ID mastermind: “When making the template, the actual school IDs probably won’t have birth date on them, so you can kind of just add that. Also, on mine, I added something that said ID number and then I just put a bunch of random numbers. That’s complete bullshit, but you know you just kind of have to make the ID look legit.”

Amazed that so much could be done so cheaply, I started to regret Delaware.

Then he showed me a flimsy card with bent edges and a crude picture. It looked like an arts and craft project. The thickness was off, the dimensions looked wrong, the laminate was peeling, and the text looked blurry. Worst of all, “Born: 6-14-84” sits in the center of the card (look at your CUID and imagine how out of place this is). He assured me that his ID is just as good as mine, listing the local bars and liquor stores that serve him. I did not believe a word out of his mouth. Plus, although there are fakes sold downtown that will pass muster with the scanners all clubs are now required to use, there is no way his ID ever would.

In any case, a fake will not work unless its owner becomes one with the card (or is female and attractive). The new identity must be embraced with casual gusto. As the amateur forger told me, “When questioned on [your ID], say, ‘I’m from New York and don’t drive’ to explain why you’re not using a driver’s license. And then you can just bullshit a little about the particular school that your ID says you go to.” Confidence does matter, but so does the day, the time, the number of people you go with, the male-to-female ratio (adjust accordingly for gay bars), your clothing, and how much you are willing to pay the bouncer.

But, just like Kinko’s employees, bouncers don’t really care. Bars, clubs, and liquor stores always know if you’re underage. If they want your business, they will serve you. The poorly connected first-year can play grown-up at local bars, liquor stores, and delis, but will still likely strike out at the “trendy” clubs. Those kinds of trends still belong to the real adults (or first-years more attractive than you).
Where's PrezBo?
Mapping Columbia Life
By Rachel Lindsay
Hello! I hope, readers, you are enjoying the bright skies and smiles of a new fall semester at Columbia! Some of you are first-years and as a senior I feel it is my duty to welcome you to your new home for the next three to five. I can't say I know the best path for your journey, but I can prepare you for the choices you'll make along the way. The template below is for your letter home after your first fun weekend in Morningside. Enjoy! Complete!

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>a man's name</td>
<td>12. same as #6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>either “big” or “small”</td>
<td>13. a vowel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>opposite choice from #2</td>
<td>14. a monosyllabic grunt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>a large mammal, small European country, or type of bodily function</td>
<td>15. either “child” or “small dog”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>body part / internal organ</td>
<td>16. any expletive or curse-word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>first name of any MTV VJ, living or dead</td>
<td>17. household cleaning product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>last name of a dead U.S. President</td>
<td>18. synonym for cool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>type of marsupial, plural</td>
<td>19. same as #1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>a consonant, capitalized</td>
<td>20. dairy product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>type of fish</td>
<td>21. monosyllabic word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>a man’s name</td>
<td>22. “gay” if you’re a girl, “straight” if you’re a guy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>same as #6</td>
<td>23. either “red” or “white”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>a vowel</td>
<td>24. intellectual verb, -ing ending</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>a monosyllabic grunt</td>
<td>25. verb for a sex act other than intercourse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>either “child” or “small dog”</td>
<td>26. verb, past tense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>any expletive or curse-word</td>
<td>27. a number over eight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>household cleaning product</td>
<td>28. noun, type of relative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>synonym for cool</td>
<td>29. a surname with more than three syllables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>same as #1</td>
<td>30. noun, small object</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>dairy product</td>
<td>31. proper adjective, referring to a continent, e.g. North American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>monosyllabic word</td>
<td>32. the word “alone”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>“gay” if you’re a girl, “straight” if you’re a guy</td>
<td>33. plural noun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>either “red” or “white”</td>
<td>34. your name</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To: Parents@hometown.small

From: Sonordaughter69AZNcutie88@gmail.azn

Subject: Columbia ROX

Dear Mom and 1. ____,

I am having a great time! My room is 2. _____ but my roommate is 3. _____ hahaha! :) My roommate really likes Columbia’s high speed internet, because it means we can download lots of 4. _____ -porn, of which I was previously unaware. Also, we just got a poster of Albert Einstein sticking out his 5. _____ because who would expect him to have done stuff like that?! Also, please send me a mattress pad.

This weekend was fun! Friday, I met up with 6. _____ who loves NYU and we reminisced about the old alma mater, East 7. _____ Polytech. Go 8. _____! Haha, we went to a restaurant in the chic 9. __oho area and had 10. _____ quesadillas for forty dollars. Apparently, NYU kids see celebrities all the time.

Illustration by Julia Butareva
I said, “Well, uh, I was at the Starbucks near my school when who should walk in, none other than 11. _____ Wayans.” 12. _____ pointed out that that was not an actual Wayans brother, and I confessed I had made it up. “Nice try, boring uptown 13. __-yotch,” said my too-cool friend.

Next I got on the subway to come back to Columbia and randomly met some kids from my floor. They had just gotten rejected from the new nightclub “14. ______.” We decided to make our own party! As we got excited, a woman sitting nearby told her 15. _____ that we were “a bunch of Columbia kids being too 16. _____-ing loud.” We think she was drunk.

When we got back we drank vodka and listened to “Crazy” by Gnarls Barkley.

A kid showed up and asked me if I wanted to snort some 17. _____. I didn’t know Columbia had such a “swingin’” drug scene! I stayed calm about it and said, “Nah dude, I’m 18. _____.” I will never disappoint you, Mom and 19. _____.

Saturday I woke up late, went to John Jay, and had fried 20. _____ and “fruit on an egg.” It was International Day: yum! While in the dining hall. I met Karen, who is in my intro 21. _____-ology class. We joked about our professor; after making a point in lectures, he says, “Everything is made of peppermint!” It’s weird.

Anyway, I really liked talking to Karen. Does this make me 22. _____ now? We went on a date at Sezz Medi that night because it’s the most foreign-sounding place in Morningside and I really think Karen is worth it. I had chicken and didn’t know what kind of wine went with it. I ordered 23. _____, but deep down I think I was wrong. Anyway, we spent the whole date 24. _____ Zach Braff and Christianity. The bill was forty dollars. Afterwards, we decided to just 25. _____ each other because we didn’t want things to get weird. Afterwards I realized I’m probably gay.

Anyway, I woke up on Sunday when Karen 26. _____ out of my room. I watched some movie trailers while eating Cheerios, then remembered I left clothes in the dryer 27. ___ hours ago! I went to the basement and got out my new favorite T-shirt with its hilarious chest phrase: “Malcolm X Ate My 28. ______ in Alaska, Bitches!” So New York, right?

I’ve got to go read some more 29. _____ now, I think, but I wanted to tell you guys one last little “30. ___” Sunday night I was sitting on Low Steps when I overheard someone complaining about all the Core requirements. Then someone responded, “Yeah, but Major Cultures has choice. For instance, I’m reading about 31. _____ village patterns.” The first person replied, “That’s a bag of crap, Louis.” And then for a second I stopped feeling excited about college and its opportunities. When I think about it, all the choices now before me are really just a series of meaningless actions within the predetermined parameters of reality, a reality constructed by society and an uncaring cosmos. What “choices” I make are notable only for their novelty or their absurdity. What I do ultimately signifies nothing. Thus this newfound young adult liberty is a liberty of madness, a sort of “mad lib” in which I rove aimlessly from one instance of dehumanized mindlessness to the next, with no values to guide me, reeling through an existential hell-scape where the only truths I can be sure of are that I am powerless and 32. _____.

Also, please send me one hundred dollars for food and 33. _____.

Love and kisses,
34. __________

—Addison Anderson
My duties consisted of handling, testing, and maiming of mice. I was initially reluctant to partake in the practice of sacrificing these animals.

Forever reaching for new heights, and trying to operate on a nationwide scale. Jack In The Box Inc. has decided to merge with Nathans Famous Inc. We have finally found the shoe which fits the foot of an expanding Jack In The Box.

I love this metaphor. I really do. She told me this in response to my saying that I was lazy about sex. So its okay, isn’t it? Sometimes it is.

Chapter Three: In which Howl longs for oblivion
Characters this chapter: Howl, Sophie, Mari, Morgan
Disclaimer: I own nothing.

I also consider myself a leader, and I understand the value of taking charge when a situation calls for it. Recently I made a short mock documentary about how getting a tattoo can change a person. I was in control of the production, and I quickly learned that strict leadership was the only way to complete the project.

Both of these painting exploited the ignorance of the viewers. This is the reason I feel these paintings are frequently analyzed or interpreted by historians and art connoisseurs because they force us to recognize our faults. Whether or not one can agree on the meaning of these paintings. It is clear that they have achieved Masterpiece status through the amount of thought they provoke in the spectators.

The first reason was that Mrs. Horowitz had eyes like tempered steel and hair like a centurion’s helmet, and Evelyn was sure that that woman could look at a family of bunny rabbits and see a battle brewing.

I began the project trying to fit everyone’s suggestions into the film in order to spare feelings, but when I realized that many suggestions hindered the film I became a more forceful leader. I did not feel, unlike one actor, that fart jokes made every scene better. I made it clear that I would consider all opinions, but that my opinion was the final say. The project swiftly became more enjoyable for everyone.

How many people can you fit in a Penn Station bathroom stall? 5 bonus points for each stranger who joins you!

Luckily, the sight of Sophie’s full-length skirt lifting up and receding to a spot just above her knees brought his ruminations to a screeching halt. It was as though he had been wandering along a beach and fretting about some storm clouds gathering on the horizon, when suddenly, the tide had gone out, revealing a treasure in the sand at his feet.
July 1st, today I thought that it will be a nice day, but it didn’t.

As the details became clear, I took note: unprotected anal sex with ejaculation with partner of unknown HIV status.

“Does this mean I am gay?” he asked me.

They took turns raising me as my mother ran a farm and my father practiced Cardiovascular and Thoracic surgery.

Luckily, the sight of Sophie suddenly wearing a knee-length skirt sliced through his ruminations in the way a hot knife slices through butter, and reminded him of what he was supposed to be doing.

And so far, he had been holding to that rule, even though it took more strength than it had taken to hurl New Krypton out into space—not so much because it was difficult to respect Lois’s desire for privacy, but because it was the perfect symbol of how he was losing her.

In my writing, I still plan on capturing and expressing the everyday weirdness of life, but thanks to the humbling experience that was the Advanced Creative Writing Workshop, I will do so with careful consideration to content, as well as presentation. This class has been gasoline on the fire that is my love for writing.

I can imagine him directing the emotions of a sea of people like a great composer, having their collective sentiment sway and undulate like the rhythms of an orchestra.

Someone who begs for mercy does not want to seem like a show off, or flaunting her skills.

I had loved you ever since I saw you smile at a joke in seventh grade algebra—it was an incandescent smile, as ethereal and evanescent as the climax of a solar eclipse.

Jamie was there, too. We had come for your father’s funeral, even though he wasn’t dead when I dreamt this. I tried to apologize for losing touch with you. It was a sincere apology, born from the depths of my subconscious anxieties.

Judith is this girl from my intro bio lecture. She has thick, frothy curls that are a shade lighter than champagne, and her eyes are as blue as Neptune. She complains a lot, but her figure is as buxom as the double bass that she plays, and the sway of her breasts deafens me to half of what she says.

Hi Scarecrow,

First of all, I was wondering whether this was part of a longer piece. This seemed like the introduction to something, especially with the cliffhanger ending and the lack of apparent connection between the first and second part. If it’s not the set-up to a longer story, I don’t think it could stand on its own.

She got out a bag of semi-sweet chocolate chips, and we grabbed them up in handfuls whenever a problem stumped us. And when we started to feel tired, Judith produced another bag entirely, this one full of glistening, white powder.

All business companies do that, and now is a society of fair competition. Besides, people who smoke have the right to know if there is something new that cigarette company release.

But the sight of that towering boy banished the idea from my mind. He had olive skin and curls like black licorice twists, and the slant of his eyes made me feel like a complete idiot.

It wasn’t because Mari was hugging a pineapple—hey, in the world of a child, pineapples need love. But there was something about that pineapple that Just. Wasn’t. Quite. Right.

When I returned to my dorm room, the voice mail light was still inflamed and throbbing.
WIN BEN STEIN’S APPROVAL

In an e-mail to the publicist of actor and former presidential speechwriter Ben Stein, C ’66, B&W staff writer Brendan Ballou concluded, “P.S.- I know this isn’t much of an in, but Mr. Stein and I are both lifetime members of the Philolexian Society. It seems most Columbia alumni share a commitment to debate and bad poetry.”

A few hours later Stein personally responded saying just: “No, good poetry.”

Taking this as a good sign Mr. Ballou e-mailed back this year’s winning Joyce Kilmer poem by Everett Paterson. And a few hours later (2:33 a.m. EST), Stein e-mailed again: “Very Funny Poem.”

So in response, Mr. Ballou decided to make his interview request in rhyme:

With editors breathing down my neck
They don’t engage in idle threats

They all say “your ass is mine
If you can’t interview Ben Stein.”

So is there a time when I can call?
I promise it won’t take long at all

But surely this is a journalistic first,
To commit an interview request to verse.”

Stein, who was in Denver delivering a speech on economics to the TransAmerica Sales Conference, called to set up a time.

Illustrated by Julia Butureeva
B&W: Hi. Is this Mr. Stein?

BS: Yes.

B&W: Hi. This is the kid who wrote you the poem yesterday.

BS: Very good. I'm in a hotel right now, I'm about to give a speech.

B&W: You wrote the speech Richard Nixon didn't use on August 8th, 1974, when he announced his resignation. What did your speech say?

BS: My speech said, 'I'm sorry. I did all the things I'm alleged to have done.' I wrote a speech saying 'yes, I lied, yes, I instructed people to cover up, but let's put this in the context of what presidents do. I didn't start a war in Vietnam, I didn't invade Cuba without telling anyone, I didn't assassinate foreign leaders, I didn't bring prostitutes into the White House. I made terrible political mistakes, but they're in the context of the same kinds of mistakes and problems that we all do as presidents. We're not perfect beings and we make mistakes. Look at this in the broader picture of what I've done. I brought peace to Vietnam, I brought peace to the Middle East, I opened relations with China, I had the first strategic-arms limitations treaty with the Soviet Union. I'm a peacemaker, and if you'll just forgive my trespasses, I assure you I'm the least likely of anyone to do them again in the entire world. And I will go on to try to create a generation of peace for the world and the United States of America.' And I think it would have been a damned effective speech, but the President did not choose to give it.

B&W: Did you expect the President to deliver your speech? Did you know someone else was writing another speech simultaneously?

BS: Well, I didn't expect them to use my speech. I knew it was an extreme long shot that he would even consider using my speech. I never seriously expected him to use it.

B&W: How did you first get into the Nixon administration?

BS: Well, I had always been sympathetic to Nixon. I loved him even as a child, mostly because I was surrounded by mostly left-wing, Communist-type families out in the suburbs of Washington, and I liked to be different. But I also felt that Nixon was a kindred spirit. A smart guy who was rejected by people around him and not given really the credit he deserved for being as smart and as capable as he was, and he sort of had to work twice as hard to be liked. And I felt a little bit like that, although I have to say, I was not your typical nerd. I was a fairly popular kid. But my humble view is that Nixon and I had a lot in common. He probably didn't see it that way but I certainly did. I liked him a whole lot. When Watergate started to happen I wrote articles defending him...My father [the economist Herbert Stein] was chairman of the Council of Economic Advisors under Mr. Nixon, and without that connection it almost certainly would not have happened.

B&W: How much of your own opinions were formed by your father?

BS: I'd say they came in large part from my father but by no means entirely. I think as a youth I was far more conservative than he was, and then I became a big anti-war radical and hippie and heavy-duty dope-smoker and drug user, and some things my father would never even imagine. And I used to demonstrate very vociferously against the Vietnam War. And even as my father was in the White House, I'd be marching around the White House in a circle, saying, 'Tricky Dick, stop the war.'

B&W: Did your friends know your dad was working in the White House?

BS: It was all done with good nature. I mean, everybody in those days seemed to have a little better nature about things than people do now.

B&W: In a lot of ways you've followed in your father's footsteps.

BS: I've followed in my father's footsteps in a great, great many ways. Although I think my father was a much smarter man than I was, I'm a much harder working man than he is.
B&W: Did it take a while before you felt like you were out of his shadow?

BS: I think as soon as I came to Hollywood I felt like I was out of his shadow because he had no shadow to cast whatsoever. So once I started being a little tiny bit successful in Hollywood I was well out of his shadow. But I’m happy to be in his shadow. ‘We all have fathers,’ as President Kennedy said, and in my case I’m incredibly proud of my father. I think he accomplished an incredible amount. I think he was an extremely kind human being. A real decency, kindness, forebearance, and love. And I’m very, very happy I had him as my father.

B&W: How exactly did you make your transition to Hollywood?

BS: Well, I was writing about Hollywood for the Wall Street Journal, writing about popular culture, and the Journal was kind enough to send me out to Hollywood. I had quite a good time out there. Then they sent me to a meeting of the Aspen Institute, and I met a very wonderful man from Hollywood named Al Burton. And he really befriended me and took me around Hollywood, and then I met Joan Didion and John Gregory Dunne and they befriended me and showed me around Hollywood…. And the basic thought piece was definitely, ‘Why am I riding this un-air-conditioned subway car next to these urine-soaked derelicts, when I can be driving palm-rimmed streets in the sunshine in a Mercedes convertible?’

B&W: Was it a good decision?

BS: Oh yeah, yeah, I’m very glad I moved to Hollywood. I mean, it has a lot of problems, and I don’t feel like I’m much of a kindred spirit to anyone but a few people in Hollywood. But Hollywood has been very, very good to me, and there’s no place I would rather live…although I still have an apartment in Washington at the Watergate. I love Washington DC very much as well.

B&W: Did being a conservative in Hollywood make you an exotic, or was it even an asset to you?

BS: It might have been, it could have been, it certainly made me stand out. I certainly think it made me stand out, there’s no doubt about that. That’s a very, very good point. I think the fact that I was a conservative, the fact that I wore a necktie, the fact that I wasn’t part of the usual clique in Hollywood, I think that all made me stand out, there’s no doubt about that. That was part of my package.

B&W: There are a lot of guys who wear ties—what made you stand out?

BS: There are very few writers with ties. I think I have a certain modicum of talent, I think that made me stand out. I have an awful lot of good ideas. For a long time I earned quite a good living just selling ideas and outlines and not selling scripts at all, and I made quite a good living at it. And I think my politics partly made me stand out, and the fact that I had quite a good sized career before I even got to Hollywood made me stand out. I mean, how many people had ever been valedictorian of the class at Yale [Law], how many people had been speechwriters for two presidents and a columnist for the Wall Street Journal? Not too many.

B&W: Well, now that you’re away from Washington and Nixon and Ford are long out of office, do you think you could tell us just one state secret? Just one?

BS: I don’t know any state secrets, I never knew any. I was amazed that they gave me a security clearance at all, considering how much dope I smoked, but they did.
with your opinions about leakers. Do you really think Mark Felt is responsible for the Khmer Rouge?

BS: I absolutely do. You bet I do. I blame all the people who brought Nixon down for that. And by the way, I see you looked that up on Wikipedia. Wikipedia has a lot of things wrong with it. For example, I never said, ‘I’ve got a million dollars that there’s no Deep Throat.’ That’s not the way I talk and I’m not a betting man.

B&W: How did you land Win Ben Stein’s Money?

BS: My friend Al Burton thought up the idea. He brought it to me, and it sounded like a ridiculous idea, but I told him ‘try to sell it if you can.’ He tried to sell it and succeeded. And the next thing I knew it was on the air.

B&W: What happened to the show? It was awesome!

BS: Well thank you. We made 860 episodes and then Comedy Central made a decision.

B&W: I read on Wikipedia that they were going to repackaged the show with Ken Jennings as the host.

BS: I’ve never even heard of Ken Jennings. Oh, he’s the guy who won all the [trails off]... I think Ken Jennings knows at least as much as I do, but I don’t think he’s as funny as I am and he’s certainly not going to find anyone as funny as Jimmy Kimmel. We had our run. I never thought I’d be a TV star. I never in a million years thought I would have a show that would win seven Emmys, or six, or however many it was. I never in a million years dreamed that all these things would happen to me. If they’re going to happen to Ken Jennings now, God bless him.

B&W: I remember reading an article years ago that said you had to drink a bottle of Maalox before every show. Is that true?

BS: No it is absolutely not true, I drank a fairly large amount of Milco-bismuth.

B&W: But if performance causes that much physical pain, what draws you to it?

BS: It wasn’t physical pain, it was just colitis. My bowels would get constricted. But I wasn’t in pain. If I was in pain I would have taken Percodan, but I wasn’t taking Percodan. It was just an extremely nervous stomach.

B&W: I’m just wondering, for the first 25 years of your life you’re headed along a very academic career path, what draws you to performance?

BS: I was just asked to do it. Being an academic is being a performer, but I was just asked to do it. I was asked to be in Ferris Bueller, I didn’t audition for it.

B&W: Well, do you consider yourself a writer who is incidentally famous, or do you consider yourself a smart entertainer?

BS: I’d say, lucky, smart, entertainer. I don’t consider myself any one thing. The only one thing I am is a person. But in terms of my work I’m a writer, actor, economist, lawyer, commentator, quiz show host. I mean I’m lots of different things in terms of what I am and what I do.

B&W: One unifying part of your life seems to be faith. With your advice and self-help books, how much of your writing is informed by your Judaism?

BS: Well my whole life is about religious conviction. I’m religious and observant. I’m not observant in that I go to shul because I never go to shul, but I do pray all through the day, constantly non-stop.... I’ve always believed in God. I don’t know when exactly it started but I don’t remember a time when I didn’t believe in God. I guess I was given the gift of faith. Among the myriad of gifts God has given me was the gift of faith.

... I think I just saw my luncheon date, who was actually my roommate in college at Columbia, so I will let you let me go.

—Brendan Ballou
Measure for Measure

I. Altogether Elsewhere, Vast

The sky is glowing
as the lab glass of cloud tips sideways
into Lake Peten-Itza.
The wind takes on substance.

I call it grit. Wind grit
is touching water, darkening strips where it lands.

I think of the swimming pool in my childhood
yard with maroon ribbons and a doll.
Also in the sky: god-barks. Trueno
is the sound light makes.
True and no.
Five seconds.

My mother is dropping eggs raw into a pot of rice
soup.

She is not my real mother.
Perro cochino!
I am waiting for the rain.

—Anna Corke
Many have undoubtedly wondered what has happened to Verily Veritas, The Blue and White’s conscience and philosophical backbone. His departure was abrupt; the loss felt irrevocable, the possibilities seemed infinite. Was it his staunch refusal to debase the poetry of his prose at the Levite altar of his editor-in-chief’s irrepresible Strunkism? Always enticed by the resplendence of power, did he set ethics and postgraduate training in good taste aside for the squalid responsibilities of data entry and all the beautiful things it can buy? Sadly or fortunately (he has yet to reach a firm conclusion), his sabbatical meandered and shuttered like an extended parenthetical aside – a summer vacation stretched to become a “leave of absence”: a year for living in leisure, for rambling aimlessly as the plot, hopefully, figures itself out.

Allow me, now Verily, to take a step back… foggy-eyed from a harrowing year (bricolage takes its toll on the strongest of us), and contemptuous of the unwavering godawfulness of the surrounding architecture’s neoclassical aspirations – Verily’s ambivalence was severe. To survive acute ennui, he could only be rescued by the gift of “medical leave.” He was numb, uninspired – the buzz of his first self-conscious cigarette as a precocious freshman an all-too-distant memory; a century had passed, and rising seniority— with its deadlines and Villagian prospects— was siphoning the soul. He would head to the Continent and swan dive into the promise of decadence with Jamesian vigor; there were ambitions of Bacchic revelry in Italy, fantasies of incarnations of precocity spilling out from the lycées for the orgasmic relief of a hummed Galois, predictions of like-minded Almodovarian Spaniards, and a consuming desire for decent Moroccan food.

Life on the continent was gorgeous at first. He befriended locals everywhere, thanks to a familiar savoir faire and, although he was loath to admit, a remarkably ambiguous epidermal hue. Columbia, which he had vowed to forget, proved useful in Geneva, where Wharton-bound diplomats and Saudi princes ogled him as if he were draped in ivy. Being of vaguely Semitic extraction in Paris had its advantages, as the Parian adolescent still possesses a curiosity towards the circumcised. No longer entrapped by the Manhattan grid, Verily became an anarchist in Vienna, a photographer in Budapest, a vegan in Oslo, an imam in Rotterdam, a Catholic in Sicily. (He was not an apprentice cook in Tuscany.)

But once his novelty had worn off, his clusters of newfound friends were indefatigable in their ability to find an excuse—a single faux pas, usually—to excommunicate their stranger. Once, it was his defense of Israel, recently his sympathy for the skull of Zidane, most absurdly a Bertrand Russell book maliciously rumored to be in his possession. VV had come to occupy the periphery – no longer via the charm of anachronism, but as a pariah. He was a victim of that which he had previously so admired in Europeans - their capacity for esotericism, that talent for casual cruelty.

Humbled by his travels, he fretted about his return. He had ostensibly taken a year to unwind, but he found himself all the more anxious, all the more diminished. But a promenade around Columbia dispelled his worry—everything was strangely ripe, exquisitely fresh: the underage hipsters coughing from the sting of their first clove, the overstated sheen of Lerner glass, Butler Library announcing those names with the same heartbreaking gall of the nouveaux rich wearing fur to high tea. Effort, spilling out of every corner, imbuing all with sudden beauty and poignancy, bestowing on the banal a luster of earnest spontaneity. Verily reveled in the wide-eyed freshman impatience to experience his Island and his Heights, if only for the genuine newness of their genuine kindness, for their virginity.

—Verily Veritas
Heading North
Onward and Bronxward with the Arts
With Illustrations by Sumaiya Ahmed

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Go online to www.theblueandwhite.org to read about the Harlem Tea Room
The House of Dropping Hamiltons

Morris-Jumel Mansion
65 Jumel Terrace (between 160th and 162nd)
Take 1 to 158th or C to 163rd
$3 Admission

Washington Heights’s Morris-Jumel Mansion on 160th Street is a piece of New York history with a fantastic view of the entire city. Along the way to the oldest house in Manhattan, you’ll find really good deals on food and furniture—really good.

To get there, take the 1 train north to 158th Street (yes, the red line goes north of 116th street). Get off and walk north on Broadway. On the east side of the street you’ll find a dollar store where inflation has taken its toll: several neon signs say, ‘Everything 99 cents,’ but under each there’s a cardboard sign that says, ‘or more.’ In spite of the price hike, you can still get a lot of great kitchen, cleaning, and bathroom supplies for far cheaper than at Duane Reade, and the vendors outside sell fresh produce for a fraction of Morton Williams’s price.

Turn right on 160th street and walk east. The brownstones on this block were built in the 1890’s by white real estate developers hoping to imitate the success of the Upper West Side. When the housing market collapsed in the 1910’s, black families moved in, and helped drive the Harlem Renaissance. Today, with Harlem brownstones selling for $1.5 million, gentrification continues to change the neighborhood. All the renovators throwing out old furniture and carpet mean there are piles of free stuff lying around. If you can lug it back to Columbia, there’s a good chance you’ll get a couch out of this trip.

East of St. Nicholas Avenue is the main attraction, the Morris-Jumel Mansion. George Washington used it as his headquarters in 1776. In 1790, it hosted a meeting between Washington, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and (Columbia alum) Alexander Hamilton. In 1833, Aaron Burr (Columbia alum-killer) was married at the house to Eliza Jumel. They divorced two years later.

The mansion sits on one of the highest points on Manhattan Island. You can see the Long Island Sound, The Bronx, Queens, Shea Stadium, and, in the other direction, the Hudson River and New Jersey. The house is open Wednesday through Sunday from 10:00 to 4:00, with guided tours at noon, and admission is $3 for students. The 8,500 square foot house itself is worth the price of entry, even without the view. On its façade, classical columns stretch up to a second-floor balcony. Inside lies the drawing room, reputedly the first octagonal room in the United States. The bedrooms used by George Washington, Eliza Jumel, and Aaron Burr are each decorated in the style of a different era.

Before you leave, walk through Sylvan Terrace, east of the Morris-Jumel house. These wooden row houses have been preserved to look as they did in 1882 and the streets below are Belgian brick with imitation-oil lamps. The basements rise halfway above the ground; you have to walk up carved-wood outdoor steps to get to the first floor. They would look like the houses from How the Other Half Lives except that they are pristinely restored and graffiti-free.

As you head back to the subway, try one of the many pizzerias on Broadway. Dollar stores, free furniture, and historical sites might not interest you, but these greasy and filling (not to mention cheap) slices of pizza alone justify the trip north.

—Brendan Ballou
The Cloisters
Fort Tryon Park
Take the M4 bus to The Cloisters, or the A train to 190th Street
Free with Columbia ID

I see a couple standing in front of the 15th-century triptych by Robert Campin for half an hour, maybe more. He points out the dirt under Joseph’s nails. She notices, through the window of Joseph’s woodshop, people conducting business on the streets, another cloudy, busy day in a Dutch town. She can’t get over this juxtaposition: the miraculous—the Annunciation!—happening amid the everyday. “Everything has meaning,” says a woman behind the couple.

The Cloisters houses much of the medieval art collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art—upon entry, you get one of those familiar ‘M’ buttons in the color of the day. But unlike on Museum Mile, you don’t just observe the art. You walk through it, wonder after it, sit among (but not on) it.

Stone portals from French churches, a mid-twelfth-century apse from a chapel in Spain, corbels and lintels, and the cloisters themselves—there are two of these monastic courtyards—were transported from Europe and reassembled here on John D. Rockefeller Jr.’s dime. The result is a museum that contextualizes its art; what it houses blends seamlessly with the house itself.

The Cloisters emphasizes the vividness of its religious art. In the Campin Room, the light that filters through the iron-crusted patterns on the windows is clean and white. It falls upon “The Annunciation Triptych,” also known as “The Mérode Altarpiece,” and betrays the subtlety of its grays, browns, reds, and blues. The central panel depicts Mary, who has been reading quietly in a typical Dutch interior, surprised by the Archangel Gabriel, who informs her that she will give birth to Jesus Christ. If you look closely, towards the top left-hand corner, a baby Jesus the size of your thumb is flying towards Mary on five rays of sunlight.

My friend tugs at my arm to pull me away from the Campin Room, the couple, and the triptych.

“You’ve got to see this, Sumaiya.”

“This” is a bead the size of a walnut that opens, like a Fabergé egg, into a triptych that tells four biblical stories. The minute detail of the carving gives way to its immensity. The outside of the bead is laced with crevices that someone would finger to keep track of the number of prayers. Holding the bead must have been like holding a cathedral in the palm of your hand.

Then there are the famed Unicorn Tapestries. People try to tease narratives from the series, but the attempts always end up being slightly incoherent: the series is actually joined from two separate, incomplete collections. In every visit, among the more than 100 species of plants in the millefleur background, I try to spot the frog and the dragonfly. Even when I can’t, I still admire the pomegranate juice that drips from the tree above and stains the white mane in the final tapestry, “The Unicorn in Captivity.”

It is easy to forget time here, especially in the gardens at the center of the museum, where some of the plants featured in the tapestries grow, like Lady’s Mantle and Butcher’s Broom. It’s easy to be transfixed by the details, and everything seems awash in the serene luxury of sunlight.

—Sumaiya Ahmed
Breaking Away

Biking up the Hudson
Start on 125th Street
Bike Rentals roughly $7/hour

At Columbia, everyone needs an escape hatch. Some use controlled substances. Others watch HBO obsessively. I bike, and I’m kind of evangelical about it.

I know, those crazy enough to bike in New York City seem to fall into one of three categories: muscled messengers with chains and dreadlocks, delivery guys weaving madly through traffic, and the spandex-clad flocks that circle Central Park to avoid the fray of traffic altogether. But that taxonomy need not be exclusive—you, too, can enjoy the freedom from public transit that two wheels provide. Freedom, for the Columbia cyclist, lies along the Hudson.

The Hudson River Greenway, a narrow ribbon separating the water from the streetscape, has bordered Manhattan’s West Side since 2003. The city can be intimidating, but the five-mile stretch of bike path from 125th street to the tip of the island keeps you away from cars and offers a view no motorist could enjoy. It only takes an hour for my head to clear.

First, you need a ride. To get one for free, ask around (larceny is not encouraged). Otherwise, your best bets are Champion Bicycles on Amsterdam and 103rd or Westside Bicycles on 96th, where you can rent one for about $35 per day or $7 an hour.

Once you’ve found your wheels, pack a lunch and head uptown on Broadway. A left on 125th street will take you down to the water, but you’re not on the trail yet—you’ll have to ride on low-traffic 12th Avenue and a path behind Riverbank State Park, which will lead you onto the greenway proper. That’s the hard part. (See our map on page tk.)

After 145th, relax. The path rolls through playfields and picnic areas, which dwindle as you wind your way Bronxward. On hot days, pick your way down to the water’s edge and wonder at how clear this famously polluted river seems to the naked eye. Sit against a tree and enjoy a book or watch boats pass. But, please, if you plan on falling asleep, use your steed for a pillow: in this city, bikes disappear like cups at a frat party.

In about three miles, you’ll come to the base of the George Washington Bridge, with a diminutive red lighthouse tucked underneath. You can hop on the bridge’s bike path for a jaunt to New Jersey, if you’re so inclined. A little farther on, an access point at 181st leads to Fort Washington Road, which will take you to the Cloisters and Fort Tryon Park (see page tk). Or stay on the trail until its end, where you can either return the way you came, venture across the narrow neck of Washington Heights to Harlem River Drive—another greenway that will feed into Morningside Avenue—or take your chances riding south on Broadway.

Be careful, naturally. Wear a helmet, definitely. But really, biking in New York City isn’t that different from biking in your hometown. Except here, nobody (except for you) wears a helmet.

—Lydia DePillis
Floridita
3219 Broadway (at 126th Street)
Average entrée, roughly $8

Si te gusta la comida barata y rica, y si puedes entender estas palabras, el restaurante de tus sueños está situado cerca de la universidad. You don’t need to comprehend that sentence to appreciate Floridita, the large celery-green restaurant in south Manhattanville. It has all the elements of a consciously homey eatery like Denny’s, but it’s actually possible to eat there without feeling queasy—really, you’d be hard-pressed not to enjoy yourself.

Floridita, which draws its primary culinary influences from Dominican- and Cuban-style cooking, is one of the most instantly appealing restaurants within a fifteen-block radius. Its buttery interior (complete with wide windows and skylight) entices casual passersby, its super-low price range glues them to their chairs, and its unpretentious offerings keep them coming back for more.

Though it’s painfully clichéd to say so, I’ll go ahead: while the literal distance between Floridita and Columbia is very short, the metaphorical distance is immense. And, of course, that’s part of its appeal.

On the Saturday morning that I took the brief stroll to 126th Street, the Floridita crowd was in full gustatory swing, enjoying gobs of American breakfast foods and Dominican dishes alike. Old men in straw hats and overalls hobbled in to sit at the counter as a crowd of businesspeople speaking rapid Spanish bustled in to a conference-style table towards the back, briskly whipping out their laptops and plugging them into the wall. Blue-collar breakfasters stuffed themselves with cheap instant-energy as a girl behind the counter pressed fresh greasy bread in a foil-covered contraption and chatted up the customers.

Presiding over the same counter was a rooster lawn ornament and several cheerful palm trees. Latin music played softly in the background. While the restaurant is officially bilingual, it helps to have un poco español at your disposal, although—like at Denny’s—pointing out your selection on the menu works too.

Although our first waitress raised an eyebrow when one of my friends ordered only French toast ($4), the platter containing three big hunks that arrived widened our eyes. Low prices are fundamental at Floridita. The prices took a sharp upswing when it came to mariscos (seafood), with an arroz con langosta—lobster and yellow rice—that costs $23. But, shellfish being what it is, that's probably a good sign.

The menu offers daily lunch and dinner specials. But, if Friday’s dinner special, bacalao guisado (codfish stew), doesn’t sound appetizing, have a $3 cheeseburger.

In sum, go now, before it becomes the weekend afternoon-breakfast hangout. Just think: You’ll be free to discuss last night’s conquest in privacy, and you won’t have to worry about running into the object of your discussion while waiting for John Jay mystery meat. Or, take advantage of Floridita’s hours (they’re open daily from 9 a.m. to 2 a.m.) and go for dinner. It will be interesting to see if the metaphorical distance stays the same as, in the coming years, the literal distance gets ever smaller.

—Katie Reedy
Sax Before Marriage

St. Nick’s Jazz Pub
773 St. Nicholas Blvd. (between Broadway and 3rd) Take A/C or B/D to 145th Street
$5 Music Charge

“You don’t play like you’re married,” I told saxophonist Wayne Escoffery after a few glasses of wine at St. Nick’s, the Harlem jazz pub. He didn’t act like he was married, either.

I first went to St. Nick’s on a Monday night, a couple of friends in tow. We arrived around midnight. The music was still hot and heavy. Christmas lights and black-and-white photographs of performers past (Billie Holliday, Miles Davis) adorned the walls.

The customers ranged from rowdy musicians in suits and hats to college hipsters. A large, dignified-looking black woman leaned back in her chair and held her empty wine glass behind her. A bartender ran up to fill it. Then, he set down her towel, ran up to the mic, and began to sing.

When the saxophonist began his solo my breath caught in my throat, and it wasn’t until the music stopped that I realized my mouth was hanging open. I closed it just in time to make eye contact with the musician. A grin crept across his face, but just then the next singer grabbed the mic. “Ain’t he handsome, girls? Too bad he’s married.”

I’ve always had a thing for saxophonists. I grew up in a classical string family, but since I started singing jazz in high school I have been drawn to that distinctly warm, human sound, so similar to an anguished wail or an ecstatic moan.

After the singer wrapped up her number she walked by and I told her she was fantastic, which she was. She grabbed my cheeks with both hands and smooched me a good one. Before she pulled away I whispered in her ear, “He’s not really married is he?” She smiled coyly, as if saying, “Never hurts to try.” A couple minutes later Wayne sat down next to me and asked me where I was from.

The following Monday I came alone. A glass of Chardonnay appeared on the bar in front of me and I met Moe, a music promoter. “It’s grimy and beautiful at the same time,” he said of St. Nick’s. “It’s real Harlem.” His father, also a saxophonist, approached, and we were introduced. He went by Sterling Sax.

“Did you name your saxophone?” I asked. “Nah. I didn’t even name my wives, and I had four of them,” he replied.

“They didn’t come with names?” “They’d like you to think that.” He winked, and headed for the stage.

St. Nick’s seamlessly mixes celebrity with down-home coziness. Moe pointed out the big names—jazz composers, music-industry heavy-hitters—many undercover in baseball caps and sunglasses. But when I entered the pub for only the second time I was greeted with hugs, kisses on the cheek, glasses of wine – “courtesy of the tenor sax, miss,” “Courtesy of the trumpet,” “courtesy of that man over there, do you know who he is? He baad, he baad.” (I realized quickly this is a common adjective at St. Nick’s, used to mean “extremely talented; see: badass”). Although I brought music and intended to sing, I was soon too tipsy off of everyone’s generosity to go on stage without making a fool of myself.

St. Nick’s continued on page 40
“Are you going to play?” I asked an old black man in a white suit and hat who was crinkling his eyes at me.
“Nah, I’m a dancer!” he said. I eyed his cane.
“A dancer?”
Before I knew it the cane was on the floor and I was whirling around chanting “One, two, three, boom!” as he taught me how to swing.
Between numbers, Wayne sidled up to me, making small conversation while he fiddled with his sax. I learned he had toured with Herbie Hancock, and had dated two Columbia girls, one a freshman when he was 27 (he’s now 31). And yes, he’s a teen-sy bit married.
When the leader of the band came over to shake my hand and introduce himself (Melvin Vines), Wayne grinned and whispered in my ear that Melvin was pretending like he didn’t remember me from last week, but that they had been talking about me. That he had asked after the girl in the blue dress. “Next time you better sing,” Wayne said. “He’s the one you talk to.”
—Sara Maria Hashun

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THE BLUE AND WHITE

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Walk-in hours for the Fall 2006 semester are 3pm-4pm Monday-Thursday and 10am-12pm Friday in 407 Lerner
Helfand’s Index

by David J. Helfand

The June Harper’s Index, that essential compendium of facts masquerading as social commentary, cited the “ratio of negative portrayals of teachers on U.S. children’s television programs to positive portrayals” as 3:1. I will refrain from speculating on the ratio with which you will portray your professors after four years at Columbia. I also won’t reveal how your professors will rate you. But I was asked by the editors to provide a “Helfand’s Index” of highly pertinent facts to get you started in Frontiers of Science. All them pass Stephen Colbert’s truthiness test.

Percentage of the greenhouse gas emissions for the entire country of New Zealand that are produce by the burps and farts of cows and sheep: 40%

End-to-end length of all the DNA in all the viruses on Earth: 275 million light years (one light year is 6 trillion miles).

End-to-end length of all human DNA: 18 million km (or 0.000002 light years)—so who’s in charge here?

Number of neurons emerging up your neural tube and finding their way to specific locations in your brain each minute from the fourth to the eighth month of your mother’s pregnancy: 500,000 (So don’t be surprised if you discover at Columbia that a few of yours are in the wrong place.)

Percentage of the time a management consultant recruiter will ask you in your senior-year interview how many fax machines there are in Brooklyn: 95% (which is why we teach you how to do silly problems like this in Frontiers).

Chances of dying on the plane ride home for winter break: $5 \times 10^{-7}$
Chances of dying on the way home if your parents drove to get you instead: $130 \times 10^{-7}$
Chances that you worry about the former more than the latter: 99%

Time it would take to get to a billion of you counted 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10—ten digits every five seconds—eight hours a day, seven days a week: 47.6 yrs  
(Don’t try it; it could significantly cut into your social life, assuming you have one).

Number of atoms in a typical cell: 100 billion

Number of nerve cells in a human brain: 100 billion

Number of stars in the Milky Way galaxy: 100 billion

Number of galaxies in the visible portion of the Universe: 100 billion (and yes, it is just a coincidence).

Professor David J. Helfand is the chair of the Department of Astronomy and Co-Director of the Columbia Astrophysics Laboratory.
CAMPUS GOSSIP

ALTERNATIVE REGISTRATION
It may be too late to register, but a conference with your dean and a signed add/drop form—along with an official recommendation from The Blue and White—should ensure access to the following classes a B&W staffer found buried under all those “traditional” courses in the Columbia online bulletin. (Editorial disclaimer: all these classes actually do exist.)

For virgins:
• Fall 2006 Anatomy M5102 GROSS ANATOMY
• Fall 2006 Mechanical Engineering E4404 LUBRICATION THEORY
• Fall 2006 Women’s Studies W4320 THINKING SEXUALITY

For those tired of concrete things like “knowledge” and “facts”:
• Fall 2006 Comparative Literature and Society G6130 WHAT IS AN AUTHOR?
• Fall 2006 Interdisciplinary Correlation D7001 AREA OF CONCENTRATION
• Fall 2006 Music G6300 INTRO TO THE HISTORY OF THEORY

For the especially precocious kindergartners among us (note: CC and SEAS students may not register for any of the four Barnard seminars featured below):
• Fall 2006 Materials Science and Engineering E4250 CERAMICS & COMPOSITES
• Fall 2006 Earth and Environmental Sciences V1001 DINOSAURS AND HISTORY OF LIFE
• Fall 2006 Art History G8421 MASACCIO & HIS FRIENDS

• Fall 2006 First-Year Seminar BC1137 THE SUMMONS TO ADVENTURE
• Fall 2006 First-Year Seminar BC1166 THE ART OF BEING ONESELF
• Fall 2006 First-Year Seminar BC1175 JUNGLE BOOKS
• Fall 2006 First-Year Seminar BC1457 THE BEAUTIFUL SEA
• Fall 2006 Writing R6309 MAKING EVERY WORD COUNT
• Fall 2006 English W3770 CHILDREN’S LITERATURE

For future supporting cast members of The Sopranos:
• Fall 2006 Earth and Environmental Sciences BC3033 WASTE MANAGEMENT
• Fall 2006 Theatre BC2004 MOVEMENT FOR ACTORS

For those who have no idea what they want to take:
• Fall 2006 Anthropology W4180 PERSP ON EXPER-(ONCE)SOC WORLD
• Fall 2006 Italian G4280 GABRIELE D’ANNUNZIO: BET 2 CENT

For future intergalactic Napoleons:
• Fall 2006 Astronomy BC1753 LIFE IN THE UNIVERSE
• Fall 2006 Architecture A4443 END GAMES
• Fall 2006 Architecture A4710 UTOPIA'S GHOST
• Fall 2006 International Affairs U6915 CREATING A SUCCESSFUL MAGAZINE
COLUMBIA V. GEOGRAPHY DECLARED A DRAW

Senior Executive Vice President Robert Kasdin on the expansion into Manhattanville, to the Spectator:

“We want this area to feel like part of Harlem physically.”

“He’s like the Bobby Fischer of art bloggers.”

Overheard on Amsterdam and 116th. The Blue and White is unclear who “he” is, or if “he” deserves a movie named after him, or if “he” has denied the Holocaust and moved to the Philippines.

FUN WITH SELECTION BIAS!

Over the past few months, Columbia professors have been publicly hailed for their work in studying the prevalence of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in Vietnam veterans, solving the Poincaré Conjecture (a mathematical problem with a million dollar prize), and fighting global warming. Princeton researchers, on the other hand, have claimed that taller people are smarter.

SIGNS THAT FACEBOOK HAS JUMPED THE SHARK MORE THAN THE PHRASE “JUMPED THE SHARK”

1. Two first-year boys at convocation, submerging their feet in an inch of water on South Lawn:
   “Sandals were a bad choice.”
   “Dude! That is SO the name of the next facebook group we’re making!”

2. Two first-year girls, immediately after convocation, walking across the quad in front of Furnald:
   “Where are you going?”
   “To meet this friend I met on facebook. Then we can meet for lunch!”

3. On August 22, Microsoft was given exclusive rights to sell and provide banner advertising and sponsored links on facebook.com.

CHEN TO THE FOURTH

The Class of 2010 has two students named Chen Chen. One is CC, the other is SEAS.

BECAUSE INTERNATIONAL MAN OF MYSTERY WAS ALREADY TAKEN

This past August, EALAC Professor and Japan specialist Paul Anderer was named Vice Provost for international relations.

SACHS/SHILOH 2008?

Tired of politicians with their grand, vague promises? If you answered “maybe,” sign up for the official Jeffrey Sachs for President Draft Committee (www.sachsforpresident.org). Visitors to the site will not find out who is behind the drive—a B&W investigation revealed that the site was registered through a third party somewhere in Utah—but they will find that Professor Sachs brings Leadership, Knowledge, Experience, Integrity, and Vision to the American political scene.

Last spring, 75 juniors from 63 American colleges and universities won the prestigious Truman Scholarships, which provides $30,000 in money for graduate study. For the third year in a row, Columbia struck out. Why? Are we too busy, or are Harvard/Stanford/CUNY kids actually smarter?

Well, there may be a simpler reason: there was literally no mention of the Truman in any of the hundreds of official emails sent to the entire junior class. But, hey, at least we have Jeffrey Sachs!

WATCH YOURSELF

According to a completely unscientific survey, one out of four members of the Class of 2010 has an STD.

East Campus ... it’s pleasantly dystopian!