DENOMINATIONAL DOMINATION
Religion Reigns Supreme!
O Ye of Little Faiths, Trouble in Little China, and Control Altar Delete

TAKE TWO AND DON’T CALL ME IN THE MORNING
The Blue and White examines Health Services.

Also: Stiglitz, Trilling, and Hispanic Society Art
THE BLUE AND WHITE

Vol. XV FAMAM EXTENDIMUS FACTIS No. IV

COLUMNS
4 Bluebook
9 Verily Veritas
10 Campus Characters
15 Curio Columbiana
26 Digitalia Columbiana
30 Measure for Measure
35 Campus Gossip

FEATURES

James Downie 12 Trouble in Little China
A conflict moves from the Middle Kingdom to the Mid-Atlantic.

Alexandra Muhler 16 O Ye of Little Faiths
Meet Columbia’s smallest congregations.

Hannah Lepow 19 Control Altar Delete
The church social in the digital age.

B&W Contributors 20 Take Two and Don’t Call Me in the Morning
The Blue and White examines Health Services.

Jon Hill 22 The Fortune Teller
A conversation with Joseph Stiglitz.

CRITICISM

Philip Petrov 28 The Will to Write
A look at Lionel Trilling’s abandoned novel.

David Berke 32 Postcards from the Edge of Globalization
A review of the Hispanic Society exhibition.

TYPOGRAPHICAL NOTE
The text of The Blue and White is set in Bodoni Seventy Two ITC, which was based on original designs by Giambattista Bodoni of Parma (active 1765-1813). The display faces are Weiss and Cantoria.

theblueandwhite.org  COVER: “Separation of Church and Finals” by Allison A. Halff
Descrying that Ms. Phillips, having developed a rather terminal case of a Journalism Industrial Complex, has decided to jump ship, as it were, from the business of the written word. She looks forward to pursuing master carpentry, a skill with which she will build custom bookshelf units with her girlfriend in Park Slope;

Remembering that the Philadelphia Suburb in which she spent her formative years may as well have been the very same Philadelphia Suburb in which Ms. Weiner spent hers;

Concluding that a Regime Change is in order such that both Parties may relinquish or shoulder all responsibility for their mutual betterment;

Proclaiming triumphantly that Ms. Weiner, a heretofore Web-log editor with a penchant for the first person plural, will assume the awesome Powers of the Editor-in-Chiefship!

(Provided that the following Terms and Conditions are met.)


2. That when editing the Magazine, Ms. Weiner shall, at times, make use of Ms. Phillips’ controversial Preference for Track Changes.

3. That Ms. Phillips shall renounce so-called “shushing” Duties at Weekly Meetings, provided that Ms. Weiner shall remain prudent and judicious in her Exclamations of “Seriously guys”;

And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honour.

Anna Phillips
Editor-in-Chief
2008-2009

Juli N. Weiner
Editor-in-Chief
2009-2010

TRANSACTIONS

ARRIVALS

Boot leather soup

Faith in the eventual completion of St. John the Divine

Faith, through exorcisms

Another Rhodes for Alma

An entire presidential administration for Alma

Freedom, in the form of Gmail themes

DEPARTURES

NROTC, for now

Study week, forevermore

Saigon Grill, for real

Inequity, in the form of Harvard’s bloated endowment

Gulliver, GSSC’s purloined owl
THAT’S SO 1998

Ten years have come and gone since the resurrection of The Blue and White. To rejoice in the achievement, and to lessen our own workload in order to heighten that proud and joyous spirit, we herein present a celebratory cento: a paragraph composed entirely of sentences cribbed (and lightly edited for continuity) from the first “number”—that’s 19th century for “issue”—of the latter day B&W.

I am the whitest guy my friends know. They freely admit this to me, and they should know all about the subject, since they, for the most part, are white. We dip our goblets into the pool, toast Alma Mater, raise our cups to lips which curl in criticism now and then, and hope the blue waters taste a little like wine. We try to locate ourselves on a campus whose sundial tells no time and whose grand library hosts volumes of administrators. The only thing this school has taught us is how to sound intelligent and cut all the corners. One can easily imagine Sharod X as a cross between Huey P. Newton and Harrison Ford as the Fugitive dodging riot cops in a dark maze beneath Low steps as, up above, perfectly oblivious students sun themselves and skim *Pride and Prejudice*. This bifurcated vision is an American legacy and, always clinging to tradition, we uphold it.

REVELATION OF THE MONTH

When our sister website, the Bwog, ran a procrastination aid about humorous professor Facebook pages, the consequences were more revelatory than anyone had hoped. Not only do faculty members have Facebook accounts (this we knew), they engage in copious real-time communication—and for a minute, we were all connected. Professor Rebecca Stanton informed Professor Roosevelt Montas of the Bwog article—via his Facebook wall, of course. “Sshh, they can hear us!” she cautioned. Professor Montas replied, “Hilarious and scary,” which is pretty much what we think of professors using Facebook.

BY THE NUMBERS

Number of Columbia University dining establishments subject to inspection by the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene in 2008: 14

Average inspection score: 9.3

Average inspection score among all New York restaurants: 15

Score resulting in automatic failure of inspection: 28

John Jay Dining Hall score: 12

Best inspection scores: Blue Java (Butler), Café East (Uris), Java City (Barnard), Lenfest Café (Law School), all of which had scores of 0

Worst inspection scores: Teachers College Café (22), Carleton Lounge (22)

Compiled by Jon Hill, Alexandra Muhler, and Katie Reedy
Illustrations by Allison A. Halff
From a four-person suite high above the Living and Learning Center, Jon Bell, a boyish, cowlicked Columbia College junior, presides as the unofficial steward of Wallach Hall. Strewn about his dorm room are the tools of his trade: a plastic case of hacksaws, an assortment of screwdrivers, a hot glue gun, a set of ratchets, and some hammers. Last year, when Jon Bell—he prefers first and last name always—was a mere denizen of a single room in the LLC, Resident Advisers had taken to calling him for traps and bait when Facilities didn’t act fast enough to exterminate uninvited critters. On his bedroom door, he tacked a picture of Samuel L. Jackson’s face. Written beneath it: “We got mutha f$%&#g mice! It’s time to do something about this sh1t!”

Now the building’s Community Programming Assistant, Jon Bell falls within that small subset of people at Columbia who enjoy collecting its curios, but may be unique in that much of the ephemera piling up in his room is LLC-specific. Last year, he rescued a set of floor plans from the 1981 renovation of Hartley Hall and Wallach, then Livingston Hall, from a garbage chute. As he unrolled the tubes of yellowing, water-damaged paper, he scanned them with a mischievous smile. “You can see what a shitty job they did on all of the sockets,” he said. “A lot of the really shoddy things Facilities does are fun to look at.”

Jon Bell lives to track these shoddy things. On one of the four computers he keeps in his room, he scrolls through his Flickr online photo account—an unending chronicle of holes hastily caulked with steel wool, dead mice in glue traps, and light bulbs without covers. He’s e-mailed many of these photos to higher-ups in Columbia Facilities, and he takes them on a Canon Rebel. “Just like me,” he laughed. He also provided his own cleaning tips. “Do you have this crap in your showers?” he asked, motioning toward an image of some fiberglass. “If you use bleach, nothing happens. But if you use sandpaper, it comes right off.”

Since his daring photo expeditions last year, he’s gone native. The Associate Director of the LLC gave him the title “Student Advocate,” and he now meets with Facilities staff once every two weeks for updates on leaks, floods, and exterminations. “We no longer have the mutual desire to kill each other,” he said.

In fact, he knows the name of every custodian and most of the maintenance workers—he organized the RAs in Wallach to chip in for a Best Buy gift certificate for the porter, Marie, for the holiday season. She wants a television.

—I say!

Illustration by Cassie Spodak

If Morningside Heights has a soundtrack, it’s the hourly toll of Riverside Church bells—including the largest church bells in existence, situated in the tallest spire in the United States. Every fifteen minutes, a computer ticks off the time with a pre-arranged musical tune; directly before and after Riverside services, a computer sends the bells into a “free ring” of random, unmetered chiming. But longer streams of music often emanate from the tower, played by the carefully-trained fists of Riverside’s resident carillonneur, Dionisio Lind.
The carillonneur of Riverside Church is a quiet old man with graying hair. Hard of hearing and afflicted with a slight stutter, Lind plays the bells—properly called a carillon—every week before and after the Sunday services he attends. It takes ten minutes to climb the tower stairs to the carousel, the room from which Lind blesses the neighborhood with Bach.

But Lind is no Quasimodo, running around and tugging ropes (nor does he dress like Quasimodo, sporting instead a dapper grey suit complete with a handkerchief neatly folded in his breast pocket). His instrument closely resembles a piano or an organ. Like a piano, it has a keyboard and, like an organ, a series of pedal keys for the feet. Unlike a piano or an organ, a carillonneur plays with his fists instead of his fingers. The force required to move the heaviest bells is far greater than most people can generate with their digits—though Caroline Robertson, CC ’09, an amateur carillonneur who studied with Lind, said playing the carillon is less like boxing and more like what you would do with your hands if you were running in place, in what she described as “a very loose motion.” The heaviest bells are controlled by stepping on pedals with the feet.

Playing the instrument means standing suspended in the carousel at one of the highest points of the neighborhood. Robertson said playing the carillon is intensely spiritual: “It’s one of the most private feelings you can get in New York City. You’re floating above the city and you can see everything. You see all of these clouds around, little bells above you and big bells below. You’re in the heart of your instrument. It’s kind of angelic.”

Historically, the carillon alerted townspeople of the time and of church services. Now, it has faded into the background noise of our busy New York City lives. But with some conscious effort, we can hear this music. It’s free, every week, if we listen.

—Sara Jane Panfil

During the late 1960s, Columbia planned to build a museum. The vision ran aground on the protests of 1968, and artwork meant for the fate-stricken project found its way to an art warehouse built under the pavement of the Uris terrace. Shelves lined with sculptures and artifacts fill the huge room, and paintings rest on wire frames and stand filed along the walls in rows. There, ancient Roman metalwork, delicately painted Greek vessels, Chinese Buddha sculptures blasted out of caves by the Kuomintang, and paintings by long-graduated Colombians sit waiting for a purpose.

Once students cool to the thrill of Columbia’s Ionic columns, few continue to notice the many other works of art that grace our campus. Fewer still have seen the collection—or rather, accumulation—of works donated throughout the institution’s history. Sarah Weiner, who holds the dual title of Curator of Art Properties and Director of the Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Art Gallery, explains: “We’re a 250-year-old institution, but we never collected art. A collection is formed with purpose and resources. Our accumulation is not proactive like that, it is more reactive to what we are offered and what we obtain.”

The Department of Art Properties at Columbia is made up of just four people. A seven-member committee on Art Properties advises President Bollinger on which art to accept from donors and which art to display around campus. Members include the heads of art-related departments.

Though the practice has since been abolished, Columbia formerly claimed ownership of the thesis paintings of all students in the Master of Fine Arts program. Rows of thesis paintings from past decades rest in the warehouse, as well as most of the collection of the early Modernist artist Florine Stettheimer, whose sister donated the works upon the artist’s death on the presumption that the University would one day hang them in a proper museum. Three of Stettheimer’s best works hang in the Metropolitan Museum of Art.
The pieces aren’t supposed to sit, moldering, in the warehouse. “We wouldn’t accept a donation if we knew it would spend most of its life in storage,” Weiner said. To that end, faculty may use the works for research or even to decorate their offices. Although students are not permitted to visit the warehouse, they and their professors are allowed to use the pieces in class.

Curators hope they can one day liberate Columbia’s hidden treasures. “I would love to have an open house for art hum instructors,” Weiner said. She hopes to one day create a website for the “accumulation” to help the public learn about the art the university owns. Otherwise, she wondered, “How would people know it’s even there?”

—Amanda Pickering

On Riverside Drive between 105th and 106th Streets, sandwiched between stately townhouses, a massive, forbidding statue in a recessed yard casts long shadows under the streetlight. The statue, one of the few surviving relics of the Hiroshima bombing, is a model of Shinran Shonin, the founder of the Jodoshinshu School of Buddhism. But because of his meditative posture, passers-by just think it’s the Buddha.

The figure is the entryway to the New York Buddhist Church, a small place of worship where congregants practice Jodoshinshu Buddhism, or Pure Land Buddhism. Founded in 1938, as World War II began to loom on the horizon, the little institution took on the name “church” as a way to shield itself from anti-Japanese hysteria.

The little church is unconventional and lovely, with carpeted staircases, wood-paneled floors and a marble stoop with French doors that open out onto Riverside. The three permanent residents are Traci Yokoyama, TC ’04, her boyfriend Wynn, and their Sensei, Reverend T. Kenjitsu Nakagaki. As you might expect, the trio coexists peacefully, happily, and quietly. “I come home from work and say, ‘Hey, what’s up Sensei?’” said Yokoyama.

“It’s really quiet here,” she said, “so quiet that it seems like nothing else goes on. Sometimes it’s kind of creepy.” Aside from the Sensei’s audible morning meditation at 6:30 a.m., Yokoyama’s life on weekdays is rarely disturbed by religious goings-on.

Despite its prominent entrance, not many of the neighborhood’s residents and visitors know of the church, except its immediate congregation, which Yokoyama said numbers about a hundred. About a third of these worshippers are senior citizens, and the rest are middle-aged Upper West Siders. Sometimes on Sundays, a few stray college students taking religion classes show up and take notes.

Yokoyama said that the locals genuinely value the religion over the community, but NYBC doesn’t emphasize the spiritual at the expense of the social.

Every summer, the church hosts a festival in memory of congregants’ ancestors. It also hosts a semi-annual flea market. At one of last year’s markets, Yokoyama scored what she dubbed her “best find”—a secondhand cassette of answering machine messages, her favorite of which is “reggae themed” and asks in a heavy Jamaican accent that the caller leave their name and number.

The apartment that Yokoyama and Wynn share includes a “music room” for Wynn and his band, happyfunsmile, which performs a mix of Okinawan pop and electric folk songs, to practice. Yokoyama bragged that all the church’s elder folk know and love happyfunsmile’s songs, and those in the front row at services sing along when the band performs.

—Eliza Shapiro
TOLD BETWEEN PUFFS

A Tale of a Tub

Historically, Verily Veritas had always fancied the bubble bath. Particularly the bubble; he found rather sublime its opulent roundness, its arrant transluence. His appreciation would forever be framed by the means by which your hero was able to indulge in his salted and steamed baths. It was an estimable coup executed in VV’s intellectual infancy, back before he happened upon aged (but ageless) back-issues of *The Annual Register*, back when “theory” was just spiritless menswear.

“Twas the rosy-fingered dawn of his collegiate matriculation and your hero was livid to discover that his bubbling tub would not be permitted to accompany him to Carman 5. “I am incensed!” VV. shouted at a warbly-voiced woman of intolerant disposition. Inexplicably, she responded that Verily would be charged $100-per-candle. Verily angrily informed her he had been making use of electric lights for at least a year and hung up the Tele-Phone.

Mere seconds later, no doubt infused with the divine spirit of Ate and absinthi, your hero, on his “Roommate Request Form” so requested a one Monsieur Jacques Cousey. The goddesses of clerical oversight—their Olympia is a building called Low—smiled upon Verily that day and dear Jacques Cousey has bubbled at VV’s bedside ever since. In fact, in the days subsequent to that august July after-noon, Verily has not gone a day without this particular moist and ambrosial indulgence—and were VV’s disposition not as chivalrous as it was discreet, he would, in detail, point out that soapy waters aren’t his sole moist and ambrosial indulgence.

One particular evening was awash in sandalwood-tinged suds, and in the grand tradition of maritime adventures, your hero decided to take his nightcap in *lavabo*. Verily disrobed—notions of lapsarian shame were as foreign to VV. as VV. was to Genesis—and poured his bathtub gin martini. Verily submerged himself in the frothy tide as the steam blanched the clavicles of his crystalware. He sipped his liquor. “Oh. Oh my!” he thought. “The proportions of vermouth to essence of olive are quite hardly proportioned at all!” Verily giggled with an adolescent delight he was certain he had last seen his thirteenth summer, the hours of which he spent enraptured by illustrated medical textbooks in the St. James Room of the Royal Library. The sweaty months of self-discovery had set him back several hundred pounds in library fees.

He chased the blissful recollection with a gulp of his bathtub gin and felt the steam seducing his weariness. Eyelids a flutter, he set his nightcap atop his Hume and hummed himself to sleep, the rushing cascade of bathwater his lullaby.

“Oh my god!” shrieked a damp and mousy female. “Oh god!” she repeated. Verily bolted upright. There were several sweatshirted adolescents in his dormitory, Verily, still woozy from his liquor and always woozy from his misanthropy, did not recognize a soul. He did at once notice that the bubbles and water had spilled out overtop the walls of his bath, through his dormitory door, and into the hallway—Jacques Cousey had runneth over. “Oh l’eau,” he sighed.

“Oh finally,” that same chatty voice intoned. “CAVA’s here.”

Ça va mal!” Verily shouted. “J’ accuse—“

“It’s a Jacuzzi. You’re busted,” said a calm man in a blue jacket adorned with the letters E, M, and S. He gripped VV. beneath his shoulders and removed him from the water. His naked flesh was grotesquely wrinkled from the evening’s steamy repose—a fact he would only learn weeks later after chance to hear two passers-by discussing the incident on College Walk. “Like a raisin birthed an infant,” said the passerby.

He was placed on a stretcher, and the stretcher was placed in an ambulance, and Verily was only permitted to return to his dormitory after he lit a candle at the altar of St. Luke. *Adorate Sanctus Lucius.*

—Verily Veritas
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 bweditors@columbia.edu.

JACOB BRUNNER

Jacob Brunner, CC ’09, has one Mario Kart race to play before his campus character interview. “This is the last race,” he says, “all the marbles are in this one.” Brunner finishes the race in first place, playing as Toad, the diminutive mushroom-man of Mario land. “He identifies with the little guy,” a roommate jokes.

Brunner is a “big man”. That’s how Hendrik Hertzberg described him in a New Yorker blog post, when Brunner ran down 125th street, draped in an American flag on election night. He’s hard to miss: a towering figure with a bulging belly and a large head that, until this year, when he got a Mohawk and then gave himself a buzz cut, was adorned with a crown of light brown curly hair.

His physical presence is entwined with his outgoing, caring personality. His friends often call him “daddy” or “papa bear,” and he is blessed with, as his friend Benny Shaffer, CC ’09, described it, “an entourage of girls who like to nestle their heads into his belly.” Described as both a “hard, hard partier” and a “kind of a patriarch” who dispenses “sagely wisdom,” Brunner impacts everything around him. “Jake has influenced the way I talk more than any of my professors,” said long-time friend Ben Heller; “we could literally speak for a half hour totally in Jake Brunner-isms.”

Brunner, who speaks in a slow, unassuming deadpan, describes his impact in terms of smell and sound. “I’m very flatulent,” he said. “I feel I’ve opened people up to new senses, strange noises that weren’t previously heard by human beings.” That much is true. He has been known to recite entire song lyrics while belching, and Julie Manoharan, CC ’09, the first girl he’s ever lived with, said she was warned about his hygiene before she moved into his 20th floor East Campus high-rise. Roommates said that as messy as his room is now—it’s littered with clothes, empty beer containers, books, drums, amps, and even bottles of urine sitting on the windowsill—it’s nothing compared to junior year in Ruggles, when the members of the band Wizards of the Coast (now Raúl) turned the suite into a recording studio, and had so many cables running through the place that they were written up for a living code violation.

An open character, Brunner won’t hesitate to tell you about his slobbery. “He’s so endearing about it that it doesn’t even come off as a vice. It’s just Jake,” said Joanna Smolenski, CC ’09, a longtime friend. He’s similarly open about his drug use and his sexual quirks, particularly his fascination with squirting, the act of female ejaculation. “I want to make a squirt porno called The Life Aquatic With Jacob Brunner,” he said. “The culmination of the porno is a girl squirting into a bong and then me taking a hit of the bong with the squirt.” After chasing his dream for years, he recently copulated with a squirter, which he said, “was like finding out Santa Claus was real.”

Brunner is also always eager to talk about music and has drawn on his extensive knowledge of independent music to write reviews for campus news outlets and his own music blog—but he won’t tell you about his own prowess. “He doesn’t give himself a lot of credit for being a talented musician,” Smolenski said. A drummer for a band called Movic, as well as Raúl, Brunner also creates his own compositions. Heller said that Brunner is a “serious composer” and that before he came to Columbia, he was “a brilliant childhood classical pianist.” “There’s a very, very intellectual Jake that doesn’t pop out a lot,” he said.

By all accounts an inspired academic writer, Brunner chose to major in anthropology after growing frustrated with some of the requirements of the Columbia Music Department. “The [anthropology] professors are some of the most open minded in the university,” he said.
Brunner wants to go into teaching himself; right now he’s applying for Teach For America, where he hopes that his size will prove an advantage. “I think I’d make a good teacher because I’m big and intimidating,” he said, adding that he could “stand in front of the classroom and scowl at people” if things got out of hand.

But his friends could tell you the real reason he’d make a good teacher—unanimously, they describe him as someone who, for all his outward ridiculousness, always gives others a lot of thought. “He’s just a really caring dude,” Shaffer said.

—David Iscoe

**Adil Ahmed**

Adil Ahmed, CC ’09, is two parts aspiring politico, one part rascal. But it’s the rascal that you’re warned about first.

Do not, I am told, allow Ahmed—a tall, gangly 21-year-old with a mop of black hair that he is constantly restoring to follicle order—anywhere near my laptop while I’m signed into Facebook or Gmail. He has a habit of dashing into friends’ and suitemates’ rooms while they’re making dinner or taking a shower and initiating conversations with strangers. Although he owns dozens of pairs of shoes—in high school, he worked at a department store and he leaves, and now there’s bad blood.”

Ahmed would become the first Muslim floor. “I remember being torn between going across the street [to the fraternities] or staying in,” he said. “I realized I was on my own for the first time. I can do anything I want and no one would know.”

The question became: “Do I want to do whatever and free myself, or am I really trying to be grounded and focused?” he said. It’s still something he struggles with—he sometimes wears a *tisbah*, a string of prayer beads, around his wrist to “stay grounded,” and he prays every day. Islam strictly prohibits alcohol consumption and Ahmed has had to resist the temptation to imbibe both on campus and during the three summers he spent at internships in Washington D.C.

Although he initially had no intention of joining MSA, when the club invited Norman Finkelstein, an author and general troublemaker known for his criticism of Israel, Ahmed’s interest was piqued. “I didn’t like his politics, and I also didn’t like the reason he was being brought here,” he said. “It was just: here he is, uproar, and he leaves, and now there’s bad blood.” A year later he ran for MSA president and won.

“Adil is naturally diplomatic,” said Sherif Farrag, CC ’09, another longtime friend. Shafei nodded his head in agreement—the two of them live with Ahmed, who serves as the East Campus townhouse mediator, advice dispenser, and prankster. “He never wants a conversation to be a one sided transaction, he’s always looking to kind of pick at your brain,” Shafei added.

So it comes as no surprise to learn that Ahmed campaigned for Barack Obama, or that he’s applied—along with 300,000 others—for a job in the new administration when he graduates, and has a picture of Abraham Lincoln on his dorm room wall.

On the door of his suite, he’s posted a letter from David, the son of his hometown neighbor. David will deploy for Iraq any day now and he tells Ahmed how much his mother, who died recently, hoped that Ahmed would become the first Muslim president of the U.S. She isn’t the first person to believe this of him—a lot of people are watching to see what he’ll do next.

Meanwhile, he’s trying to remain realistic. “I think his one goal in life is to stay down to earth,” Shafei said.

—Anna Phillips
Trouble in Little China

A conflict moves from the Middle Kingdom to the Mid-Atlantic.

By James Downie

On a rainy day last April, hundreds of Chinese students gathered on Low Plaza to commemorate the life of 24-year-old graduate student Minghui Yu, who had died a few days before after being chased into the middle of Broadway traffic by a group of teenage muggers. The Columbia University Chinese Students and Scholars Association, a primarily graduate student organization for Chinese nationals, collected money for his family and organized a vigil. “I think one of CUCSSA’s functions really began to stand out—how it acts as a support network for Chinese international students who feel alienated or otherwise lonely in this country,” said an Asian-American student leader who asked to remain anonymous.

But there is another side to CUCSSA, one that surfaced two years ago, when Columbia’s Falun Dafa club—a religious group of Chinese origin—put on a panel discussion on “organ harvesting,” a practice it alleges is part of the persecution of its members in China. The night before the spring panel, Falun Dafa received an e-mail written by mechanical engineering graduate student Xu Kai, then president of CUCSSA. The e-mail, titled “Urgent call: defend mother land’s reputation, deny cult’s rumor,” concluded with the following statement: “…We will use our sanguine, five-star red flags to make an ocean, attack the aggression and arrogance of the nefarious cult, and resolutely safeguard the motherland’s honor and dignity.”

In the end, CUCSSA’s defense was more of a trickle than an ocean: some 20 protesters, carrying banners and flags, showed up at the event, according to the Columbia Daily Spectator’s article about the incident. But CUCSSA’s determination to uphold the views of the motherland—in 2004, Premier Wen Jiabao declared that the People’s Republic of China would continue a “battle against cults”—gave physical form to an alliance with China that is unusual when compared to other nationally-focused groups on Columbia’s campus.

boasts about 730 members. The Chinese presence at Columbia is significant and growing. Over the past five years, native-born Chinese enrollment at Columbia has increased by 50 percent—at more than 900 students, China now has the largest representation of any foreign country on campus. Meanwhile, the University is extending its own reach in China: In 2004, the University opened the Summer Business Chinese and Internship Program, based on the Shanghai campus of the Beijing Language University. Several Columbia departments, including the Center for Career Education and the Mailman School of Public Health, have launched projects in China as well. As the University’s relationship with China has continued to grow, so has the need for students to understand the motivations of groups such as CUCSSA. This becomes difficult because CUCSSA’s members are extremely wary of the press, whereas Falun Dafa members and other critics are not.

According to a presentation given by the outgoing president at its November elections, in its more than ten-year history, CUCSSA’s primary activities have focused on “servicing fellow students and popular Chinese culture.” It holds two kinds of events: discussions on foreign policy, often held with visiting scholars, and organized shopping trips and dinners. The group’s website features a forum and a Google group that contains listings for apartments, requests for arrangements from visiting Chinese students, and other odds and ends for CUCSSA members. To its members, CUCSSA is a home away from home.

So how did a student group mean to foster community find itself at the center of the skirmish with Falun Dafa? Timing was at least partly responsible for CUCSSA’s response, as U.S. criticism of China’s persecution of Falun Gong—the religion Falun Dafa members practice—was at a high. In the spring of 2007, the Associated Press reported that a Chinese lawyer, who practiced Falun Gong, had been convicted on subversion charges and was being treated harshly by Chinese authorities. The U.S. government publicized his claim and said it would investigate it. Less than a week later, Falun Dafa called for an awareness protest on Columbia’s campus.
Another factor that could explain the sudden flare-up is CUCSSA’s close relationship with the Chinese government and the local Chinese consulate. For instance, in 2006, when Chinese president Hu Jintao visited the city, the embassy provided buses and food to allow CUCSSA members to attend functions both at the embassy and at Yale University.

The relationship is more than merely logistical. Up until late 2007, the CUCSSA website listed among its advisers two Chinese diplomats, Counselor for Education Fanglin Ai and New York Consul Da Yao. The group’s constitution was also reviewed by the Consulate General of the People’s Republic of China in New York. “I think it’s easy then to frame the group as an arm of the Chinese government in the student body,” said a Chinese-American student, who asked to remain anonymous, citing his outside perspective. “But I think more accurately, it needs to position itself this way. These students are still very connected to the mainland.”

As a more general trend, Chinese students, including those overseas, have become more nationalistic. Professor Guobin Yang, a specialist in student movements at Columbia’s Weatherhead East Asian Institute, said that today’s students barely resemble their radical predecessors. During the Tiananmen Square protests of 1989, he said, Chinese students in the United States demonstrated against the Chinese government. Now, however, “Student culture has seen a surge of nationalism, but student activism itself is declining... This is a different generation, one that has not grown up in the Cultural Revolution.”

According to Yang, current students “are much prouder of China than their parents, and they’re sensitive to criticism.” Yang suggested that the CUCSSA protest was an example of this ideological shift, noting that political progress has contributed to this change. “This generation has grown up during reform,” he said. “The reform generation has grown up in much better economic condition.”

If the dispute between Falun Dafa and CUCSSA is a stand-in for the relationship between Falun Gong worshippers in China and the Chinese government, it took a more peaceful path. After negotiations with the two groups and public safety, the CUCSSA members were able to stand behind Falun Dafa with their posters. In photos from the event, the audience appears small.

Falun Dafa subsequently brought a complaint against CUCSSA as a group, saying that they had interrupted the event. The official results of the disciplinary procedure are unknown—Columbia protects such information under its confidentiality policy, and none of the participants are willing to comment on the record about the actual procedures. Dean Kevin Shollenberger, who was head of the Office of Student Government Advising during the Spring 2007 semester, refused to say whether an incident had even taken place. Suman Srinivasan, a Ph.D. candidate studying computer science and the president of the Falun Gong club, would confirm only that charges were brought and resulted in a disciplinary procedure. In an email, Xu of CUCSSA asserted that “the panel found that the fault lay with Falun Dafa, not with CUCSSA” and refused to answer more questions. However, as a matter of public record, no sanctions were ever placed on CUCSSA or any of its members as a result of the clash.

Less than three months later, Srinivasan and others, including members of New Tang Dynasty Television (NTDTV), a New York-based Chinese television station with sympathetic ties to Falun Gong, entered a laboratory in the Seeley W. Mudd

Illustrations by Chloe Eichler

December 2008

13
building where Xu and CUCSSA treasurer Wei Wei, another mechanical engineering graduate student, were conducting an experiment for a class. What happened next is disputed—as are most confrontations between CUCSSA and Falun Dafa—but everyone agrees that a scramble ensued, causing thousands of dollars worth of destruction. CUCSSA alleged that one of the camera crewmen with NTDTV “knocked over a delicate measuring device worth over $9,000, a key part of which was later found to be damaged,” while a Falun Dafa member, who requested anonymity, said that, Columbia Public Safety “discovered that had never happened, and I watched a video proving that, but

Columbia dismissed the charge that Xu Kai lied to the administrators against another student.”

But since these original clashes over a year ago, the groups appear to have made peace—there have been no new conflicts between CUCSSA and Falun Dafa. CUCSSA has remained generally under the radar. In spring of 2008, Falun Dafa even held a weeklong event on Low Plaza, with a banner reading “Falun Gong practitioners held in concentration camps killed for organs.” This time, there was no CUCSSA response.

Now, the members of CUCSSA who only a year ago were decrying Falun Dafa, claim to be disinterested in the group. CUCSSA’s current president, Yiping Du, a Ph.D candidate in industrial engineering and operations research, says he doesn’t “really know anything about that incident” and wasn’t interested in talking about the group. Another CUCSSA member, when interviewed, said, “I don’t want to talk about Falun Dafa—I think [people] can have their own feelings about them.”

A possible explanation for this is that, at present, Falun Gong is rarely in print headlines and CUCSSA members said they are more concerned with other attacks on China’s reputation. “What I want to talk about is the Tibet issue,” one member said, “which is always the focus [in] the Western media, while regular Westerners know almost nothing about it. No offense, that is true.” Another raised the recent specter of U.S. criticism of China’s human rights violations, brought on by the publicity surrounding the Olympic games. “I am much more offended by people attacking us for the Olympics,” the student said.

Meanwhile, the Falun Dafa club maintains a constant, though consistently small, presence at Columbia—it currently has about ten active members who attend early-morning “practices” as well as its Tuesday evening sessions. “We’re a tight-knit group,” said Srinivasan. Members seem to be attracted by healing that they claim to receive through adopting the spiritual practices—Columbia’s Falun Dafa members said that “sleeping better,” “cured headaches,” and general “improved health” were their reasons for joining.

The headache that the conflict with CUCSSA presented for them has largely dissipated, but some remain fearful. “Especially after the CSSA incident,” said one member who asked to remain anonymous, “I ask myself, ‘Am I safe?’ I used to never ask that...”

By all appearances, they are. Although Columbia’s Student Governing Board derecognized Falun Dafa last year—its undergraduate membership is too low—the group is allowed to continue its practices on campus. As the sun rises over Amsterdam Avenue each morning; a small collection of students and local residents sits silently on the grass near Low Plaza. Eyes closed, their faces pictures of pure concentration, they raise and lower their arms, serenely drifting from pose to pose.
On the fifth floor of Lerner Hall, the matriarchy of The Blue and White editrices is hibernating, suppressing vernalagnia, gaping at the snow flurries and sipping eggnog, sewing doilies and stockinets for our loved ones. Oh, haven’t you heard? Lacework is the new knitting. But we are hardly new-fashioned; our supposed neophilia is a translucent skin hanging off frames bent from trolling in shady archives. There we recovered the tract, printed in the B&W of November 30, 1892 (Vol. III, No. VIII) that inspired our age- and gender-appropriate hobby—and promptly abandoned the Amelia Bloomers we had worn to run the career track. Newly timid and supplicant, we shall remain ensconced in the SGO, spinning our oracle-bone bobbins, and wondering at our true ages—a doily for any who can guess them!

Hooray! “The sewing school of Pratt Institute has added a new stitch to its course of study. It is called ‘grafting,’ and is used to join together the raveled pieces of stockinet by reproducing perfectly the original web.” Hooray.

Now, the “college girl” has been a much maligned creature. The funny men of the country had invariably emphasized her peculiarities; they have consistently pictured her as one who refuses to mind the younger children of the family, because she has the “Eclogues” to study, who loses the family’s buttonhooks while trying to find x, and who always mistakes the laudanum for the whiskey in making the Thanksgiving mince pie, because she happens to be writing a French composition at the same time.

Now, however, all is changed. Although I should probably be unable to distinguish the new article from a Japanese doormat, or from one of those doilies which The Young Housewife gives to the subscriber guessing nearest the age of the editress, yet I feel that the publicity given the above announcement in last Sunday’s Times must be indicative of the invention’s importance. I am sure that, upon a perusal of it, whatever doubts have existed in the mind of man of the progress of her ability to reform man and humanity, and to sew buttons on straight, must be readily dispelled.

I am no optimist. But may I not safely ascribe great results in the future to the skill of Pratt Institute, as exhibited in its recent handiwork? As the invention of gunpowder marked the downfall of feudalism, and subsequently the depopulation of our great West, so will the “grafted stitch” of Pratt Institute be equally revolutionary in its tendencies. Indeed, the whole system of College life and College athletics will be undermined; and the fragments neatly worked into a glorious fabric, in which Yale will no longer hesitate to attack Harvard’s “flying wedges,” because of the fear of bursting her suspender buttons, in which no College faculty will be compelled to risk a cold in the head by sitting in the front row without a hat-band, and in which no Freshman will cry if his “Ascot puff” is disordered in a cane rush.

Hooray! All honor to Pratt Institute’s girl! May their fair fingers never grow tired! May these model Penelopes ne’er refuse us College students and suitors their “grafted pieces of raveled stockinet,” while their Ulysseses sail in steam launches down Gowanus Canal, or drink Rhein wine at Coney Island! •
While Columbia is an institution regularly accused of godlessness, our Student Governing Board allocates considerable funding to faith-oriented student groups. The four largest religions on campus have robust memberships and budgets to match: Hillel (2,000 members, $35,100 budget); Ahimsa, the Jain student group (915, $3,050); the Muslim Students Association (700, $19,500); and Columbia Catholic Undergrads (354, $10,800). The Bhakti Club, despite associations with the off-the-beaten-path hare Krishna sect, claims 170 members, making it the fifth largest campus club of faith.

Then there are the true minorities. This year, the Jehovah’s Witnesses just managed to claim its 14 members, the bare minimum for SGB recognition, and declined a request to participate in this article. Other small groups present on campus include the Seventh Day Adventists (20 members, $500 budget) and the Bahá’í (39, $2,485), who did not respond to interview requests. The Unitarian Universalists have a campus chapel but no club. There is no Scientology club, but we know you’re out there.

Below, meet a few the loneliest practitioners in Morningside.

LUTHERANS

There are nearly 11 million Lutherans in the United States. At Columbia, there are 14—that is, officially. Blake Arnold, SEAS ’11, the president of Columbia Lutherans, says he just has trouble getting them to show up. Arnold, who runs track, says two of his teammates promise every week that they will attend Sunday night services. They never do. It’s almost Monday morning, and they are busy with work.

Nationwide, the Lutherans are growing less devout, and in that sense, Columbia is no exception. It’s a quaint sort of group. The once-groundbreaking doctrine of faith before works has long been a commonplace belief of Protestantism, and Columbia Lutherans casually co-sponsor study breaks with the more numerous Episcopalians. Arnold says that most of its members are Michiganders, homesick for church potlucks and networks of Lutheran cousins. Earlier this year, the group planned a country retreat to the Catskills. The plan fell through, but Arnold is working to make it happen next semester.

Despite their size, they are not without institutional support. Much of their $975 budget goes to pay a pianist at their Sunday services, which are directed by Reverend Nicole Schwalbe, an employee of the Office of the University Chaplain who also directs their weeknight Bible studies. During her services in St. Paul’s Chapel, the eight-odd congregants truly congregate; sitting in the first row of chairs and interrupting the sermon with comments and questions. “It feels more intimate,” said Arnold.

Indeed, in small, surprising ways, Columbia has proved a fertile ground for this struggling faith. Arnold admitted that before he took Contemporary Civilization, he had never read the works of Martin Luther.

BUDDHISTS

“To be a Buddhist can be quite lonely,” said Mike Wong, TC ’09, president of the Buddhist Meditation Group, which was founded this October at Teacher’s
College and is organized through the Interschool Governing Board.

Students from most every school responded enthusiastically—at least at first. The group’s listserv has 60 subscribers, but many only stop by once, their curiosity sated or their stress busted.

Wong acknowledged that the group accommodates people who have “the mentality of picking and choosing what they find beneficial from Buddhism.” The Columbia group is not, after all, associated with any specific temple or teacher. To accommodate the nature of the demand, Wong plans on offering a more eclectic curriculum—possibly even yoga—next semester.

He estimates that there are two or three committed Buddhists in the club, and between five and ten more, who attend meetings every week. Several of these members went on a retreat together, during which they meditated five or six times a day. It wasn’t easy for some of the newer meditators. “Some people come in thinking it’s a sort of easy, nice feeling,” explained Wong. “It’s really not the case, at least not in the beginning. It’s really tough on your knees.”

That said, Wong was not born to meditate, either. Though his mother kept a Chinese Buddhist shrine in their Bronx apartment, he did not attend temple until high school, when he grew frustrated by SATs and girl trouble and became intrigued by mentions of the religion in his world history class. He continues to try to integrate his faith and his education, but for now Columbia’s Buddhist population lacks religious discipline, so Wong worships at a temple in Flushing.

Sikhs

About 20 people receive general body emails from the Sikh Student Association, and about five or six of them are Sikhs, estimates the group’s president, Rajkaran Sachdej, CC ’11. Many subscribe out of curiosity, and Sachdej gladly sends out educational notes on gurus’ birthdays. The group’s secretary, Ravi Singh, CC ’09, who was raised mostly attending his mother’s Hindu temple, is still investigating the religion. But that’s okay—a “Sikh” is, by etymology, a “learner.” The religion has a vast and flexible definition of God and relatively relaxed code of behavior.

The SSA lay dormant between 2002 and spring 2008, at which point it was revived “with really, really, really small expectations,” according to Sachdej. The club’s funds are currently frozen because the small executive board always had scheduling conflicts that prevented them from attending SGB meetings. The club does not meet regularly, though it recently co-sponsored a vigil for the victims of terrorism in Mumbai. Sachdej paid for the candles out of his own pocket.

Though the finance trouble makes co-sponsoring difficult, communication with other South Asian cultural groups is fairly simple. Sachdej works on the executive board of Club Zamana and dances with CU Bhangra. On the way home from Bhangra practice
last year, the SSA’s former president cornered him in an elevator and, quite without consulting him, tagged him as the new president.

Nevertheless, for Sachdej, this is the largest Sikh community he’s ever encountered. He was born and raised in Guam, where, he said, his extended family constituted the entire Sikh population. Determined to expand his group, Sachdej keeps an eye out for anyone wearing a turban or iron bangle.

MORMONS

The Mormons on campus use other signs to identify their fellow worshippers. Evan Johnson, GSAS ’09, encountered his first Columbia Mormon when a friend recognized he was LDS because he used the word “freakin” to avoid the more profane alternative.

But of all the small religious groups on campus, the Latter Day Saints Students Association is certainly the most visible. Jane Wilson, Law ’11, and the club’s president Alex Cheung, CC ’10, often staff a Meet the Mormons table on the Lerner ramps.

They are open to debate and friendly to questions, but also wired to convert. While I was chatting at the table, Cheung slowly and without explanation pushed his laptop toward me. On screen was a man speaking.

“Who’s that?” I asked.

“That’s a member of the Church. He’s giving his testimony,” he replied.

Perhaps it’s only habit. Most young Mormons serve a two-year mission, during which they study scripture for three hours a day and proselytize nine hours a day, often in a language they picked up in two to three months of training.

The LDSSA gathers every Tuesday—religiously—for Institute, their scripture study. While only seven people attended one meeting I visited, it must be one of the most racially diverse groups on campus. The Columbia student population is small, supplemented by missionaries doing their service in New York as well as recently converted neighborhood folk. But however disparate their origins, the Mormons are remarkably uniform in presentation. Clean and perky, they all read aloud with confidence, a skill cultivated in years of group religious study. Sharlicka Williams, who is planning on being baptized this month, stumbled while she read and bit her fingernails down to the quick. Still, it is the comfort of this kind of group that has brought her to the church.

“They talk and greet you and love you,” she explained in an email.

Evidently, the open-arms strategy has been successful. “We’ve had baptisms every few weeks, every other week lately,” said Sister Johanson a missionary from Southern California. When Mormons are on mission, they are referred to as either “Sister,” “Brother,” or “Elder.”

Chris Haueter, SEAS ’12, insists that Columbia and New York are not inhospitable to his faith. “It’s not hostile. I’ve never, ever felt any opposition to my belief,” he said. Nevertheless, it must be difficult to stand in opposition to so many of the school’s and the city’s cultural norms. Work—including homework—is not allowed on Sundays. The precept called the Word of Wisdom forbids the consumption of alcohol, cigarettes, and caffeine.

One of the potential converts, Karen, who asked that her last name not be printed, had a question about the Word of Wisdom. “I thought it extended to not being able to eat chili peppers,” she said. The Mormons were happy to clear the matter up—it did not.

“The LDS Church and the Jewish religion have one thing in common. We believe that the more educated you are, the more devout you become,” explained Cheung, paraphrasing a lecture by a Harvard professor who addressed his mission group. But the textual discussion in Institute falls short of exegesis.

“It inspires me to know that Joseph Smith was so young and so uneducated when he saw his vision,” said Cheung. Sister Diray concurred, and affirmed with a smile, “I’m so blessed.”

“I had been to so many churches before,” said Karen. “Why didn’t I come to the Church earlier?” It’s a difficult question to answer, but Wilson immediately knew where to turn. “First Nephi, 11:17.”

It turned out that Karen had a fairly clear idea of why she had come to Institute. “I saw a special on TV about Mormons and I thought, I think I’m going to join that church,” she recounted.

“That’s awesome,” replied Cheung, who admits he was so touched by the same PBS documentary that he bawled in front of the television.

The meeting was only scheduled to last an hour, but Haueter and Cheung stayed late to answer Karen’s and my questions. For their faith, they are happy to give their time. Haueter explained it best: “In every single sense, in every single way, my actions are influenced by the eternal truth.”

18
Control Altar Delete

The church social in the digital age.

By Hannah Lepow

"If were to tell someone I used a dating website, I would be embarrassed. They would say 'What's wrong with you?" said Michelle Harrison, CC '11, a member of the Adventist Christian Fellowship and the Intervarsity Christian Fellowship. "There are stereotypes against [using these sites]." Harrison, who said that finding a partner of the same religion was "top of the list", once spent an hour on ChristianCafe.com and only found one person she would consider approaching if she had an account. Thinking back on the person, though, she decided he was a fake. "He was too perfect. Attractive, had a good job, answered all the questions both humorously and spiritually. They probably put him on there to attract people to the site."

Spiritual renditions of Match.com, religion-based dating websites have developed into similar repositories of romance for people of other faiths. Christians, Jews, and Muslims have a host of options, including ChristianCafe.com, Eharmony.com, JDate.com, ArabLounge.com and Muslma.com. Shaadhi.com, which pairs people of Southeast Asian ethnicity, even has its own spin-off TV show, Shaadhi Online, where users of the website get married on television. "I find it bizarre, but it's very popular," said Zehra Hashmi, CC '11, who grew up watching the show in Pakistan.

These sites aren't your average online dating service. They are for people whose level of religiosity—or parental expectations—requires them to find a partner who shares their spiritual beliefs. In talking to various students, it became clear that almost anyone who's particularly devout experiences pressure to marry someone of the same ilk.

Religious daters know what they want, in what is perhaps a less casual way than someone looking for secular companionship does. The sites often cater to people who see wedding bells on the horizon: "Jewish Dating for Marriage” is the tagline of Frumster.com, a site that allows users to distinguish which micro-niche of Jewish Orthodoxy they practice. Many sites trumpet their success rates for vows taken (Frumster is at 1,300 and counting), while others have a “Testimonials” page where smiling brides and grooms beam out at lonely Internet surfers.

The level of college student interaction on these sites, however, is minimal. Surrounded by people their own age and given the freedom to participate in numerous religious and cultural groups, students find very little need to turn to sites they often described as "creepy," "stigmatized," and "sleazy."

"I just find them really funny," said a SEAS freshman and MSA member. "They're usually referred to as a joke, no one takes them seriously." While this student noted that matchmakers were important in Islamic society, he said that traditionally, the family plays this role—not an anonymous web entrepreneur. He believes that the Muslim figure of the matchmaker “can’t be translated online.” Hashmi said she had never heard of any Muslim dating sites.

Matchmakers, or shadchanim, have long been a part of Jewish culture as well. In fact, matchmakers helped found SawYouAtSinai.com, a Jewish dating site that combines the traditional matchmaker’s touch with the power of the internet. Users are assigned a matchmaker, who weeds through all the other profiles looking for a perfect match, or bashert.

Students who’ve tried the sites agree that they aren’t a popular option for Columbia’s unlucky-in-love. A Jewish GS senior who spent a month on JDate.com began the experiment with skepticism. “At first I didn’t trust it, it was only curiosity,” he said. “But I ended up enjoying it. I met one great girl. I was shocked.” Still, the JDate hierarchies he described don’t seem worth the schlep, given that he is convinced there’s an elite group of untouchable girls with attractive photos and a group of guys who, by proving on their profiles that they have “money, wit, and hair” are the only ones who approach them. And then there’s everyone else.
Take Two and Don’t Call Me in the Morning

Everyone has a tale of medicine gone horribly wrong at Columbia’s Health Services, a strange series of rooms located in the upper catacombs of John Jay. In this feature, undercover Blue and White correspondents have mapped out what you can expect when common collegiate ailments meet Columbia’s A-Team of nurses and doctors. These are stories to comfort you when you think things can’t get any worse. If there’s one thing we’ve learned—besides the fact that Excedrin is Health Services’ panacea—it’s that they always, always can.

I arrived at Health Services between classes with the hopes of getting my temperature taken. Health Services said that this requires an hour and three pages of paperwork. I countered that I had class, and simply wanted to have my temperature taken. Health Services reminded me that my health was a priority, but so was the paperwork. I thanked Health Services, left John Jay, and bought my own thermometer.

—98.6 Degrees with 19 credits

International insurance works everywhere on Earth—except Columbia. My plan even covered dental, something that’s not included under Health Services’ Aetna plan. Nonetheless, the same way it happens every fall, Columbia threatened to put a hold on my registration status should I choose not to pay for their insurance. I proffered a waiver, which Health Services politely declined. Aetna and I are now celebrating our four-month anniversary.

—Unhappily Betrothed

In an embarrassing basketball mishap, I fell and landed, hard, on my open palms. Fearing damage to my elbow, I came to Health Services and attempted to detail the incident. The physician responded that he needed to ask a few questions: the first regarding my level of sexual activity. “I really don’t see how this has anything to do with my elbow,” I said. The physician persisted, and finally, I gave in. The physician then asked if I, a male, had sex with other males. Head cocked and eyebrows raised, I decided to ignore the question. “My elbow really hurts when I do this,” I continued. The doctor ignored my statement and asked again. Finally, bowing to the respect for authority that years at Columbia have drilled into my brain, I responded in the negative. The doctor, apparently satisfied with my answer, now took up an interest in my elbow. I can’t even fathom what would have happened if I had injured my testes.

—Quizzed and Quizzical

After bumping my head against my dorm-room wall, I moseyed down to Health Services. Overall, treatment was fine, and the wait wasn’t too bad. For 20 minutes, I listened to a ringing telephone that the receptionist
refused to answer, and pondered why a Caffé Swish menu was mixed among the “Consent Is Sexy” fliers. Perhaps there is something I don’t know about Caffé Swish? The nurse called me over, ushering me into her office, which was about the same size as a dorm-room closet. Maneuvering to take my temperature, pulse, and blood pressure in her ten square feet of space was like acting out a slapstick medical comedy. Once the perfunctory checkup was complete, I was ushered into the doctor’s room. Despite my initial complaint of a headache, the doctor also took time to test my elevated blood pressure again, which probably was elevated from the afternoon’s earlier head bumping.

—Consent is Sushi

I entered Health Services complaining of a day-long migraine. The nurse practitioner was generally helpful, suggesting some specific steps to take during a migraine and painkillers to swallow. She also offered to set up an appointment with a doctor for a prescription if the migraines got worse. In her thoroughness, she did forget to take my blood pressure and e-mailed me about coming back in tomorrow to get it taken, a request which I kindly deferred.

—Migraine, My God

If you ever want immediate medical attention at Columbia, get skinny. During the week of NSOP, I started shedding weight faster than pre-collegiate Facebook friendships. In seven days, I lost seven pounds. My body was on metabolic overdrive, a digestive system hunger strike, fighting the crime against my body that is John Jay Dining. I received record-fast care from Health Services, leapfrogging the considerable crowd in the waiting room to see a doctor immediately. The doctors drugged me up and recommended I see a specialist. However, the drugs did enough, rebooting my bowels to fight another day.

—Weight Loss and Found

Going to Health Services can make even a routine weight check interesting. When I stepped onto the scale, though, it read 122 lbs., which would have been a 15 lb. loss. Skeptical, I asked if the nurse was sure the scale was working correctly. Sure enough, the scale was resting on its own wire and reading inaccurately. The nurse shrugged it off and mumbled that she hoped it hadn’t been doing this all day.

—Scale is Not to Scale

I was having feminine trouble. More specifically, I had a bit of itching in my nether-regions. My gynecological exam sped along, with the nurse pausing only to belittle me for the recreational marijuana usage to which I admitted. She began to put her gloves away, but I stopped her and asked about the itching. I explained that there were no bumps or lesions, but that things were pink. Very pink. She responded that it’s supposed to be pink, and assured me that I didn’t need to worry about it.

—Ichy But Informed
The Fortune Teller

Economist and University Professor Joseph Stiglitz made a splash in the academic world with his pioneering work on information asymmetry, the problem of hidden surprises faced by used car buyers, eBay bidders, and insurance policyholders alike. Stiglitz’s insights earned him the 2001 Nobel Prize in Economics, but now that information asymmetry has returned to the headlines in the form of failed banks, subprime loans, and a credit crisis, people are turning to Stiglitz for analysis and advice more than ever. The Blue and White has been among those seeking out the professor’s expertise, as our coffers are quite low.

The Blue and White: We read the headlines, we see the news stories, but from your perspective as a Nobel Laureate economist, how bad is it out there?

Joseph Stiglitz: Oh, quite. The decline in employment in the last month is symptomatic of obviously a very severe downturn, so the dynamics are extraordinarily negative.

The fact that the Bush administration seems to have checked out a little bit early before the end of the term is not very helpful, and combined with the fact that Paulson doesn’t seem to know what he’s doing, we’ve been spending money to very little effect and we’re going into the second inning, as it were, with a huge deficit. We’ve had a negative savings rate and a housing bubble. It’s a very pessimistic outlook. Investment will decline. States and localities are facing huge deficits.

The Blue and White: You’ve been warning about the dangers of giant banks and securitized mortgages since at least the early 1990s.

Joseph Stiglitz: That’s right. The paper I had written on it was published in 1992. [Ed. note—“Banks versus Markets as Mechanisms for Allocating and Coordinating Investment.”]

The Blue and White: So could we have anticipated these problems?

Joseph Stiglitz: This was all predictable. Man-made, and predictable. In my paper, I even forecasted what some of these critical errors were that they’d make, like underestimating the price declines and drops, incentive problems with securitizations … Since then, the patterns of mistakes had built up, so by 2000, it was even more easy to predict. The only thing we couldn’t predict was the recklessness with which the deregulation movement proceeded.

The Blue and White: How was it reckless?

Joseph Stiglitz: It’s hard to know where to begin. You allowed a culture of risk taking to permeate what should be conservative commercial banks that are investing other people’s money. You allowed incentive structures that encourage excessive risk taking, myopic behavior, and bad accounting practices. You allowed excessive leverage. Some of these practices have been associated historically with booms and busts over and over again. The only difference with this situation and the previous ones is that the innovations allowed us to take mistakes further than had been done in the past.

The Blue and White: Do you feel like a bit of a Cassandra, then?

Joseph Stiglitz: [Laughs] In other countries there were people who were paying attention. If you look around the world, some of those central banks didn’t allow the extremes that went on in the United States. India and Brazil had regulatory bodies that didn’t allow this. There were people in those countries encouraging the same excesses, but I was in India at the same time as Paulson and we were engaged in an active debate. And clearly what I think you saw there were forces pushing those countries in that direction, but there were others in charge who understand history and economic history, including the Indian Central Bank Governor [Yaga Venugopal] Reddy. And Arminio Fraga, the Central Bank governor of Brazil at a critical time in their history—a former student of
mine—he was aware of this excess. They understand
the dangers.

B&W: What about people listening back in
the United States, though? So far, you’ve not
been publicly offered any position in the Obama
administration. Newsweek’s Michael Hirsh wrote an
opinion piece characterizing you as being “left out
in the cold.”

JS: [Laughs]

B&W: Why do you think Obama hasn’t asked you to
join his team so far?

JS: You’ll have to ask him. There are a variety of
ways in which you get ideas into play, and
hopefully the actual team will
listen to people outside. I
know some of them are.
And I also know that
he has said he wants
to hear a diversity of
views, and I’m hopeful
that he will.

B&W: If you were
to get your own ideas into play, though, what would
they be?

JS: I think there are some areas that have broad
consensus. We need a very big stimulus. The risks of
no stimulus exceed the risks of a deficit, but because
we have deficit, we have to get the most bang for
our buck—maximize the returns—especially to the
economy. That’s why it’s important that we spend
money for research, which has a very high return.
Especially research in green technologies, which
addresses one of our major problems and makes us
competitive in the world we’re going into.
Increased spending on the military, from an
economic view, would be a very big mistake. It
doesn’t yield the long-term economic benefits. We
could get more secure with less spending
and a better economy. I think
there’s a broad agreement
on that, but there are
a lot of people in the
military-industrial
complex who would
disagree.

The second
thing I would
argue for is that

Illustration by Sonia Tycok
we have to change the incentives and behavior of the financial systems that got us into this mess. We have to have new regulatory systems and changes that aren’t just cosmetic but are deep and profound. We have to reform TARP [Troubled Assets Relief Program]. Never has so much money gone down the drain so quickly. The whole bailout was very badly managed. Given the resource constraints we face, we have think, “How do we maximize the impact on our economy?” And finally, I think we need a deeper understanding of the links between the financial sector and our economy.

*B&W:* What is the biggest mistake Obama could make as he works to pull the country out of recession?

*JS:* The biggest mistake would be a stimulus that’s too small, but that I don’t see that as a critical, likely mistake. The most serious mistake is to neglect reforming the marketplace. There will be those who go through the rhetoric about “preserving the innovative ability of our financial sector,” but the fact is, they didn’t innovate. They didn’t improve. Their social effect is probably negative. They utterly failed. They misallocated capital. I think one has to take a harsh look at what they did and think how we can correct it.

*B&W:* You alluded to military spending, and that’s a lot of what your latest book is about, *The Three Trillion Dollar War.* You say the Iraq War is depressing the American economy because of its tremendous cost, but some politicians would counter that the price is nothing when compared to the cost of future terror attacks and future loss of lives here at home. Is that $3 trillion price tag so unreasonable when viewed in such a context?

*JS:* One of the things I point out in the book is the way we have spent that money. We have probably undermined our security, if anything. Spending money to provide security is obviously a matter of extreme value, but the point is the Iraq War may make us more vulnerable. We may finally have secured that little piece of turf, but things are going badly in Afghanistan and now spreading to Pakistan. I don’t think anyone would say after six years of fighting that our country is any more secure or that the world is a safer place.

*B&W:* What about the rest of the world—and that’s another topic you’ve written on—how will this recession shape the future of globalization?

*JS:* I think it will have a profound impact. It’s not that globalization is bad; it’s the way it was managed. Capital market liberalization, finance market liberalization—these were very specific in shaping the world to the advantage of America’s financial institutions. Now that they’re failing, I think that part of the agenda will get looked at very closely in the future. A particular brand of economics has shown its weakness. Deregulation failed, and we see now from the United States that a country that doesn’t have regulated markets can cause disaster for the entire world. I think the neoliberal philosophy on globalization will be looked at with skepticism in most parts of the world. Hopefully what will emerge from this is that countries will work together and become more aware of how they affect each other.

*B&W:* Who are some of the young, rising economists whose work you’ve been reading?

*JS:* That’s really hard. There are lots of good, young economists, but most today are very technical, so they are people making contributions in very particular areas. One of the sad things, though, is that some of the prevailing paradigms in economics have shown their weaknesses in the current crisis. Many macroeconomists were pushing ideas like, “Central banks should focus on inflation to keep inflation down,” and that would be sufficient for maintaining economic stability. I think most people would recognize what a flawed strategy that is. Not surprisingly, this has been a wakeup call and many young economists who will turn to looking at these
issues more seriously.

But the unfortunate thing is that the young economists have been looking at behavioral theory and attracting a lot of attention with specialties, curios, curiosities. Economists like Steve Levitt and *Freakonomics*. They are people looking at technical issues, like game theory and irrationality, but they haven’t addressed these fundamental issues causing this current crisis.

*B&W*: Should undergrads still think about going into economics these days?

*JS*: Just like the 1930s inspired young people to get interested in economics and produce many great theories and scholarship, I think this will inspire people, too. And I didn’t mean to deride this other kind of work—about individual behavior and irrationalities. No one who looks at this past economic crisis can honestly say there wasn’t a degree of irrationality involved, and it’s very important that we understand that.

*B&W*: Speaking of irrationality, do you think a lack of understanding has helped grow the current troubles? Do you consider economic literacy—or maybe I should say, the lack of economic literacy—to be a problem in the U.S.?

*JS*: Yes, clearly. Even among some very senior politicians. [Laughs] It’s a problem because it makes it hard to have very serious policy conversations. People can’t take part in the democratic process as thoughtfully as they need to. Good politicians will engage in that education, but it’s so much better to have an education system that can do that from the start.

*B&W*: How has Americans’ economic illiteracy shaped the current crisis?

*JS*: They’re reacting symptomatically and not unreasonably. What they’re seeing is that the actions the government took haven’t worked and they’re seeing money pouring into Wall Street not working.

They’re seeing Washington refuse to bail out Main Street, and then they see the arrogance of executives with bankrupt companies walking off with huge amounts of money. Americans have to say there’s something wrong with the market economy, so it’s raising profound questions. I think that will be good in the long run.

*B&W*: You’ve branched out into film now with *Around the World With Joseph Stiglitz*. Why did you decide to explore this medium?

*JS*: You were getting at it just now. I’m not going to be able to get people to listen to a 20-hour class, a 40-hour class. I’m not going to be able to make them read *The Roaring Nineties*. I have to reach a media that most people can understand, and film is a very effective medium. I think it succeeded in posing the serious questions and providing perspective. What we tried to do in that movie was give a middle way—a balanced picture—so that people can see the problems and the strengths. In a media like that, you can’t craft careful responses, but you can at least get people thinking.

*B&W*: So if you were to boil down your economic message into a few sentences, what would it be?

*JS*: That’s difficult, but I think there are three. The positive message is that a successful society requires a balance between free markets and the government taking action, because there’s a need for collective action. There’s a need for social justice, social action, and social cohesion that many of us, I believe, feel strongly about.

The negative message is that the extremes of communism are failures, and the extremes of free market fundamentalism are failures on another hand. They both failed but in different ways. The third message is that our democratic institutions are undermined by campaign contributions, tax laws, deregulation, and lack of transparency. Our political system and financial system needs to be strengthened, and I know we can do it.

—Interviewed by Jon Hill
The child sees everything in a state of newness; he is always drunk...

The goal is close the achievement gap, and as a corps member with Teach For America, I would work tirelessly to that end.

I think, however, that I do not want to be a teacher on a permanent basis. I believe my calling is to practice medicine and effect change in the lives of people in that manner. Before I realize this dream, though, I affirm that there is nothing more significant I could be than to be a teacher with Teach For America. And even after I become a doctor, I wish to continue the work of ending educational inequity by speaking into the lives of the families with whom I will be working, and showing them that there is another way.

Velocity sedimentation does not produce absolute molecular weights, except by combination with a second transport method. It measures friction and is therefore useful for shape information. Some of us have research interests in the friction itself and do not care much about molecular properties (ahem!).

At the top of the stairs was an empty glass soda or beer bottle. As we walked and talked, I accidentally knocked the bottle over with my foot. Unlike what the official report says, I did not kick multiple bottles, only one (later the report refers to “bottle” in the singular), I did not aim to harm anyone as there was no one (besides my friend) within ten feet of me in any direction, and I did not kick the bottle, I just knocked it over with my foot. The force was light enough that the glass bottle did not break— it just rolled down the stairs—an unlikely outcome had I kicked it. The females the report mentions were at least ten feet away and down the stairs from me. I am not the kind of person who tries to hit strangers with glass.

“Language involves a hierarchy of components.” I begin in such a manner with the hopes of 1) achieving immorality and 2) attempting to take a moment and recall the last time I ever wrote a six-word sentence.

Thus, while my digressions appear Herodotean in nature - although I will not be discussing international styles of urination- I do promise to come full circle in a trapezoidal way.

Before the Merriam-Webster’s are hauled out from the bookshelf, I will admit literalphobia is not a word, but a personal construction.

Lana is still sleeping on the next pillow with her face hidden by new hair, cedar dark and soft. When Cale touches it, it falls through the spaces between her fingers like water. She brushes it with her fingertips and tries to pick out just one slender, painted highlight, light as wheat. Richie called this hair noir. It’s so dreary, he said. But Cale knows this hair is cheap and Lana is no good with the stuff that comes in a box. It is
disheartening to watch Lana cut back on the amount of blonde she can afford.

The altogether boring notion of “noise” becomes deflated when one wakes to a fixed steady and quick drumbeat as in a dream to look around and find oneself in a bus to locate that sound in the rattling of the door. And so reality-testing doesn’t even work.

The child blows into the toy to see the bubbles fly all over but the game is not over until the bubbles return to the child as he flails his arms ecstatically to recover what began with a touch of breath.

When Calc wakes up in the morning the sheets are sticking to her back and she wants a gin rickey. Calc always wants a gin rickey but she’s never yet had one. She is certain it will happen soon—a long slender glass with a slice of lime floating up near the ice.

The change of fortune should be…from good to bad. It should come about as the result not of vice, but of some great error or frailty, in a character either such as we have described, or better rather than worse.

(You may have noticed that I’ve recounted the real heart of the Magic Hour Crew’s work with suspiciously vague language. Did you really think I was going to let you in on the hot and crazy stuff? Au contraire, my friend. There is a code and this canary ain’t singing. I will use my real name when discussing life as the Other Woman, but I’m no reinsurance snitch.)

I take your picture for a photography class?” If the randomly selected subject was a man, and the randomly assigned treatment was complimenting, she walked up to him and said “Hi. You’re really handsome. Can I take your picture for my photography class?”

According to …., within English and the humanities, women’s studies promoted an “interpretive” approach to the reading and analysis of texts that challenged the more traditional ldksfjasdf—an approach that eventually gained saliency through the fields.

As shown in the above graph, velocity of chopsticks increases with practice.

Either way, my mother who paints says this melange of sound (Prokoffiev she means) is not so different from a painting. Can colour, like sound, be repeated until it becomes other?

La voz narrativa es una voz inmadura y sus críticos suenan infantiles. [The narrative voice is an immature voice and its critics sound baby-ish]—ed.

I could discuss the anguish of your blow
But who am I to say God blew me and I lived

You have fallen victim of the nonsense that algore [sic] puts out to enrich himself.

Our treatment consisted of complimenting the subjects, which we operationalized as telling them that they were beautiful if they were a woman, handsome if they were a man. In other words, if the randomly selected subject was a woman and the randomly assigned treatment was complimenting, Gabby walked up to her, and said “Hi. You’re really beautiful. Can
When, on a clear day, one catches a glimpse of the reality of human suffering, life becomes unusually painful. One discovers very quickly just how dear happiness is; one understands—and this is the kind of understanding nobody wants—that one must find a way to survive at all costs.

One way to protect oneself from suffering is to point a quivering finger at others: this is the preferred strategy of Nancy Grace. Another way to lessen the horror of suffering is to convince oneself that one is a character in a play. This is the technique pioneered by the ingenious Hamlet. There’s also a third way: one can choose to meet suffering head-on. This is the strategy of Arthur Schopenhauer, the German equivalent of The Little Engine that Could.

When he was a young man, Schopenhauer wrote The World as Will and Representation, a very long book. This book is so powerful, so terrifying, that no man has yet managed to refute it; not even the mighty Nietzsche could demolish it. In this alarming work, Schopenhauer used the language of 19th century German philosophy to show us just how agonizing human life can be. And, to make things even more dreadful, Schopenhauer devoted a whole chapter to the subject of suicide.

Suffering, Schopenhauer wrote, is caused by the will-to-live. To overcome suffering, one must renounce the will: one must recognize the futility of all desires. This can’t be accomplished through suicide, for suicide is nothing but the affirmation of the will-to-live. By committing suicide, a man expresses his desire for life; suicide is the path that the will-to-live takes when it finds itself hindered by unfavorable circumstances. Suicide can only destroy a particular manifestation of the will-to-live: the will itself remains completely untouched by death. This means that the only way to escape suffering is to live until one obtains the wisdom necessary to renounce the will-to-live.

Schopenhauer deployed all the powers at his disposal to solve the riddle of human suffering, and his
book reveals that he nearly succeeded. The fact that Schopenhauer had to prove that suicide is futile shows just how seriously he took the question of suffering.

There’s yet a fourth strategy in the struggle against suffering. This strategy was devised by Lionel Trilling, the venerable Columbia super-alumnus. Not long ago, Geraldine Murphy—a literary scholar at the City College of New York—discovered the manuscript of an unfinished novel by Trilling in a Columbia library. She titled it The Journey Abandoned.

The Journey tells the story of Vincent Hammell, an aspiring literary critic who hopes to find meaning in scholarly pursuits. The novel’s characters are virtually indistinguishable from one another, and they all seem to be manifestations of a single person. Every one of the characters, moreover, is some kind of scholar; it’s as if Trilling wanted to show us a world populated exclusively by readers of The New York Review of Books. The action of the novel begins when Hammell—whose academic career seems decidedly unpromising—makes the acquaintance of Harold Outram, an established intellectual whose fame makes him a source of envy for struggling scholars. Outram offers Hammell the chance to write a biography of a renowned scientist named Torris Buxton, and Hammell graciously accepts. With Outram’s blessing, Hammell is introduced to Buxton and begins work on the latter’s biography. Just as Hammell begins to sift through stacks of Buxton’s personal files, Trilling’s manuscript abruptly ends.

For Trilling, The Journey Abandoned was an opportunity to deal with a number of the questions that plague dissatisfied academics everywhere. Even so, it is difficult to figure out precisely where Trilling wanted to take the novel. The Journey appears to be a kind of mystery, an enigma in tweed. One wonders why Trilling decided to make all of his characters resemble each other. One also wonders—and this is where things get interesting—why Trilling couldn’t bring himself to finish a novel about the very kinds of scholars whom he must have known so well. But everything about the novel starts to make sense as soon as it becomes clear that it seems to be intended to be boring.

Trilling’s book displays a staunch refusal to describe anything exciting. At one point, Trilling describes the books in Hammell’s bedroom. With a powerful sense of purpose, Trilling points out that the books are “yellowish white volumes of the Collection Nelson, the little French classics that are printed in Edinburgh.” Trilling goes on to add that the books “were soiled with much handling” and that “their narrow margins were filled with vocabulary notes.” Clearly, Trilling is an honest writer—at no point does he try to pretend that he’s stimulated by life. Instead, he does something few writers dare to do: he tells a story in the most boring way he can. This is a brilliant move, and it sheds light on the beautiful purpose of Trilling’s novel.

In writing his novel, Trilling was devising a new strategy in the fight against suffering. “If the world wants to smite me with the pain of boredom, I’ll pay it back in kind!” he thought as he wrote The Journey. “I’ll take the things this world hands me, and I’ll give them right back—I’ll write a novel about people so bored with the world that they can barely stay awake. My novel will be more unexciting, more uninteresting, than life itself. I’ll write a book about the very boredom with which this world proclaims it can crush me! En garde!”

Schopenhauer and Trilling both learned a terrible truth about life: one can’t overcome suffering until one ceases to take it seriously. This truth is so noxious, so disgusting, that no philosopher has ever brought it up without immediately changing the subject. For upon realizing that one must learn to joke about the very things that cause sorrow, life starts to appear even more unpleasant than before. But here’s the rub: perhaps laughter, cheerful laughter, is the only way to vanquish suffering. Perhaps a man must learn not only to forgive the criminal who has injured him, but also to laugh with this criminal, to drink tea with him, to slap him across the face without hating him.

In the end, when all these things have passed, we’ll no longer need to take the problem of suffering so seriously. The world will be more comical, and philosophers will finally be able to devote all their time to playing games. In this new world, it will no longer feel good to observe the misfortunes of others, so the news industry won’t exist anymore. If I’m still around, I’ll write a story and share it with my three grandchildren. In my story, Schopenhauer will meet Trilling under an apple tree in a large open field. The two men will start a conversation. Schopenhauer will tell Trilling that he once played in a marching band with Hegel. Trilling will smile and, like the dearest of friends, the two men will walk off together through the fields.

—Philip Petrov
Measures for Measure

KREWE OF MUSES, NEW ORLEANS

Ground’s rainy sheen offers its splatterpaint of the stars, of schizoid light bulbs from the double-decked floats careening in out of potholes, off Napoleon Avenue and onto St. Charles, limbo of powerlines draped with a plastic growth of beads like cypress bearded with Spanish moss.

Troupe of flambeaux with metal torches gyrate in arabesques, toil like Christ did when he humped his crucifix up craggy Golgotha. As the flame sheds smoke the crowds toss coins across the flambeaux’ path, joining the embers’ aerial concert—aural anarchy, laissez-faire of coagulated noise, screams echo in air like flung doubloons.

Each breath choked with the stench of manure, Bud Light, tractor fuel, garbage (the only thing they’ll arrest you for is pissing in public) which blooms at the neutral ground’s edge like a surging sea; it will congest the sewers like the clogging of blood cells.

—Mark Robinson
THE FURTIVE MAP OF SOMEONE WHO SECRETLY LOVED ME

This was the map of his sadness, the one he’d been keeping in his pocket along with a glass vial that held my voice saying his name. He would take the map out, usually after meals and before sleep, hiding in the bathroom where he would stand in front of the mirror, facing it like another mirror, reflecting only himself. Carefully, he would fill the sink with water and smooth his map over the surface, creating a perfect tension. He would study the lines of the broken streets, again, knowing that he could never go anywhere or find anything, physically or symbolically, or through his blood, or through his skin, which is why he tried not to touch me. Then he would peel the map back off the water and fold it, and the next day he would unfold it and fold it again, until the creases began to create new streets and transform the pathways altogether, slowly making them whole.

—Tian Bu
Postcards from the Edge of Globalization

Derrotero
Zoe Leonard
Hispanic Society of America
November 5, 2008–April 12, 2009

It is strange to walk into an art exhibition and see what was just outside, and it is even stranger when the exhibit redefines what were, out on the street, humdrum details of daily life. In part, that’s the feel of Derrotero, a free exhibition from New York photographer Zoe Leonard, showing at the Hispanic Society of America. Most of the show’s pieces are photographs of shabby New York storefronts—mom and pop places with garish marquees and quaint charm—the same kinds of shops that line the streets just outside of the museum on Broadway and 155th St. The second part of Leonard’s exhibition is a series of maps and other cartographic documents from the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries, called derroteros, from which the exhibit gets its name.

Leonard began taking the photographs in Derrotero a decade ago, as corporate chains pushed out the local stores she photographed. Her exhibition begins at the end, with pictures of shuttered storefronts—many probably closed for good. The pieces show stores with tacky but charming names like “The Eight Ball Barbershop” and “Maferbo Clothing” and quirky, grammatically-challenged slogans like “We Pay Top Dollar’s.”

After this moribund set of pictures, Leonard takes a step back in time, exploring the idiosyncrasies of these businesses when they were up-and-running. She starts with pictures of pictures—photographs of hairstyle posters in neighborhood salons. Posted in the shabby windows of fledgling local businesses, smiling models display their perfect coiffures. The businesses may not have been the most efficient, but they had personality—lively owners, individualized service, and workers without bland uniforms. Leonard focuses on posted signs in the storefronts. Most are scribbled notices: “We Do Not Take Food Stamps, Sorry” at a grocery store, “OPEN AT 8 AM” at another.

The logical contrast to these images might be shots of Gap and CVS stores, corporate businesses gentrifying the neighborhood. However, such images are conspicuously absent from Derrotero, and the exhibit is much better for it. The show would be preachy with corporate photos, so corporatism is instead a specter, conveyed through images of the floundering family businesses. “The End is Near!” exclaims one shop window poster, unwittingly announcing what chain stores will do to the personality of the neighborhood.

As Leonard’s exhibition becomes peripatetic, the capitalist critique becomes far more direct as her camera documents the absurdities of the global market. She follows the flow of second-hand goods and unsold wares from New York shops to Uganda, Cuba, and Poland. In Uganda, posh men’s dress wear is hawked from makeshift huts. Another shop has the oppressive name “Money is Life,” and one snack shack has no name, just the incandescent Coca-Cola insignia plastered all over it.

While such forthright corporate critique would have fallen flat had the photos been taken in New York, the foreign locales make her elegy for local businesses more palatable. The photo series finishes with anonymous pictures of street vendor’s wares laid out on sidewalks. After cataloguing the flow of goods from the avenues of New York to the unpaved roads of developing countries, Leonard ensures that these photos are impossible to place. She frames the pictures so capitalism eclipses all signs of local color; “Coca-Cola” has completely replaced the locations’ identities.

The derroteros might seem an unusual compliment to Leonard’s photos, but there is a cogent flow between the photography and cartography. The maps, which Leonard selected, are obsolete—artifacts from an out-modeled vision of the globe. With her photographs, she documents a similarly disappearing landscape and she uses a medium that is inherently quaint. The importance of her medium is emphasized by her decision to name the photographic portion of the exhibit “Analogue.”

Because of these intriguing parallels between its two sections, along with Leonard’s general avoidance of anti-gentrification crusading, Derrotero is an engaging exhibition. With New York mired in financial woes, Leonard’s work is also timely, as more shuttered storefronts appear on the horizon.

—David Berke
Got a publication to print? Contact

Art Communication Systems

Printers of The Blue and White and other student publications

CONTACT RANDY REEVES
RANDYREEVES@ARTCOMSYS.COM
OR CALL 1-800-336-2522

LOOKING FOR BUSINESS? ADVERTISE WITH

THE UNDERGRADUATE MAGAZINE OF COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY, EST. 1890

THE BLUE AND WHITE

A widely read monthly publication with a market including over 60,000 faculty, staff, and students

A circulation of 5,000 issues per month, with distribution ranging from dorm rooms and campus buildings to local businesses and alumni mailboxes

Affordable advertising space for every business, with designs offered at no additional charge

CURIOUS? EMAIL US AT BWBUSINESS@COLUMBIA.EDU

DECEMBER 2008
Blockheads

951 Amsterdam Avenue
(at 106th street)
212-662-TACO (8226)

For info & other locations visit www.blockheads.com

EAT IN ~ TAKEOUT ~ DELIVERY

Weekend BRUNCH

Drink Specials

PEACE LOVE & GUACAMOLE
A conversation between a student and Professor Nadia Urbinati in a political science class proceeded as follows:

Student: “So how do our grades break down?”
Professor Urbinati: “A third each for the midterm, the paper, and the exam.”
Student: “What about participation?”
Professor Urbinati: [Deadpan] “Well, I never see you participate.”

Student turns ghostly white and begins to quake.
Professor Urbinati: “Oh, I’m just kidding. The TAs and I will get together for that, and we’ll have a drink to make sure we’re generous.”

Poli Sci Pledges ‘08: We Pre-Game Theory Harder Than You Party!

Barnard ResLife sent an email to its students, reminding them they could not return to their dorms over winter break, unless they had valid reasons to do so. To suggest some specious reasons that ResLife would not approve of, they listed a few examples. Among them, there was this gem:

“You want to attend a fabulous New Year’s Eve party in the city.”

The staff of The Blue and White would like to submit a clarifying question: What if it’s a super fabulous New Year’s Eve party?

Recently, MEALAC students were invited to a lecture with the following description:

“What Are Hymens Actually Good For? Public Debate and the 2007 Egyptian Fatwa on Hymenoraphy”

The lecturer, Thomas Eich, was described as an expert in Islamic studies, medieval European history, Iranian studies, and Islamic bioethics.

He only moonlights as an Egy-necologist.

Male SIPA student: “You’re a Republican? Oh, that’s unusual, you seem smart.”
Female SIPA student: “Um…” [Awkward giggle]
MSS: “Because I don’t have any friends who are Republicans.”
FGS: “Well, I believe in personal responsibility—”
MGS: [Interrupting] “Oh, like The Conscience of a Conservative, by Barry Atwater?” [SIC!]
FGS: “Who?”
MGS: “This is gonna sound offensive, but smart people and Ivy Leaguers are usually Democrats.

This is gonna sound judgmental, but you’re an asshole.

HEART OF DARKNESS

A fearful scribe sent us the following report:

“I write to you to report several sightings of what I believe to be a genie or some sort of mythical spirit. He/she/it takes the form of a small, middle-aged Indian woman who approaches younger men in the lobby of Butler and implores them to write papers for her. She claims it’ll only take ten minutes, but this is simply not true. It’s happened to two of my male friends, who both claimed to have wasted up to an hour and a half with her, and I’ve seen her ensnare a third unsuspecting victim. My friends and I have concluded that she must be some sort of daemon, as neither of them realized how much time was passing. Furthermore, she only approaches...
men, and apparently touches her victims’ arms and faces while telling them they’re ‘good boys’ for helping her, clear evidence of some sort of spell.”

Overheard in the Hartley computer lab:

Girl 1: “I have my Facebook language set to French. How pretentious is that?”
Girl 2: “Oh, do you know French?”
Girl 1: “Well, I can speak it... but I can’t really hear it. You know? Like if I’m watching a French movie with subtitles, I can definitely, like, imagine the words.”
Girl 2: “Yeah, totally.”

Like if I’m watching you speak, I can definitely, like, imagine what you mean. Oh wait no.

LIVE, STREAMING DIGITALIA FROM THE MOUTHS OF ART STUDENTS

Overheard, at the MFA end-of-semester show in Prenniss:

Hip Art Girl: It bugs me out, in a way that’s unacceptable. And like, when this guy, it’s like, an added form of domination, and I’m interested in the psychoanalytic kind of practice, but there needs to be a sort of reciprocal, like, thing: How many fucking body artists do we have to look at, manipulating themselves in ways that are, like, really problematic? And in the art context, it’s really kind of strange. It like, creates this bar of art-making.

LIKE SCHOOLHOUSE ROCK BUT HARDER

From a professor’s introductory email to his class, Introduction to Applied Mathematics:

“Dear APMA 2101’ers,

...APMA 2101 has its own song: ‘Anthematica’. I wrote it two years ago and an undergraduate group called ‘The Mathrigals’ has performed it for our evening career sessions. (Since its APMA 2101 debut, it has been used at professional meetings and socials in several venues in 2007; it is a general purpose tribute to quantitative reasoning.)

I will be enlisting volunteers to perform it again this year (a cappella, SATB). Of course, this has *absolutely nothing* to do with course learning or evaluation. It is just fun, as math should always be, especially if this is your last math course! You’ve got to out with a good taste in your mouth!...

Yours for quantitative empowerment,
David Keyes
Fu Foundation Professor of Applied Mathematics”

SOMEONE TELL EISENBIACH IT’S NOT OKAY

Overheard outside of Hamilton:

First girl: [Nervous, loud giggling] I’ve just never been touched like that by a professor.
Second girl: [Surprised] Really?

One rainy Friday night, a Blue and White staffer was approached by two twentysomething gentlemen on College Walk.

Gentleman 1 [in a German accent]: So veaaah’s thah paaaahty?
B&W: Um...which party?
Gentleman 2: There’s more than one?
B&W: Are you Columbia students?
Gentleman 2: Our friend is. He’s at a party but it’s too loud and we can’t hear him on the phone.
B&W: Uhh...I don’t know...
Gentleman 1: He’s getting an MBA.
B&W: Oh. Ur is that way.

As if an MBA has anything to celebrate now.

Overheard in the Morton Williams starch aisle:

“Man, shopping at Morton Williams is a waste of my time. Food in the Israeli section isn’t that expensive though. I feel like there’s some subsidization going on.”

Morton has been asserting himself.

*The Blue and White... it’s the big One O!*