ODD JOBS
Five Tales of Unusual Summer Internships

PAPER CHASERS
Craigslist and the Black Market for Academic Essays

The Blue & White visits the Rockaways, reviews Eric Foner, and talks with Nick Sprayregen
THE BLUE & WHITE

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theblueandwhite.org  COVER: “The Garden of Columbian Delights” by Stephen Davan
Whenever I return home from traveling, I must eventually breach the zippered seals on my luggage and begin to unpack. This moment is one that I have learned to look forward to despite the pangs of sadness that accompany the end of any vacation, for when my suitcase is opened, the aromas and fragrances of my trip inevitably still cling to the clothes inside. With one breath, I am instantly transported hundreds of miles back to wherever I was—back to salty ocean breezes or fusty forest leafpiles or exhaust-tinged city sidewalks—and for just a moment, I can pretend as if I had never left.

This month’s issue of The Blue & White evokes many of those same feelings in me. The staff has spent an entire summer scattered across the country, and now they and I have returned to Columbia to unpack the thoughts, stories, and ideas we have collected these past 16 weeks.

Our writing is still heavily perfumed with the scent of summer, perhaps nowhere more thickly than our collection of dispatches from five Columbia students who worked offbeat summer internships (pg. 17). But you will also find traces of sun and carefree days in Literary Editor Anna Kelner’s summer travel-honed perspectives on Columbia (pg. 21), Managing Editor Mariela Quintana’s tales of Columbia surfer-dudes (pg. 22), and Features Editor Liz Naiden’s portrait of an old New York beach town in a new monthly feature exploring the city’s subway lines (pg. 23). Contributor Michael Adame, meanwhile, recalls this summer’s World Cup frenzy—or lack thereof (pg. 7)—and Senior Editor Hannah Lepow delivers a report from her embedded position on the Shakespeare in the Park line (pg. 6).

The staff and I cannot spend too long looking back, though, for there is much on campus to be reported at the beginning of the semester, as Senior Editor Mark Hay reveals in his exploration of the seedy world of essay ghostwriters (pg. 14). In summer or in session, it seems, Columbia is too busy a place for us to slow down and reminisce for very long.

So I invite you to take a moment now and unpack from summer with The Blue & White. We are ready for the new semester, and we hope you will join us.

Jon Hill
Editor-in-Chief

THE “SOME THINGS NEVER CHANGE” EDITION

Headlines from the
Sept. 25th, 1913, New York Times

College Opening with Big Classes
Never So Many Students at Barnard, Columbia
or New York University as Now

Barnard Greets Freshman
Juniors So Hospitable That Each
One Takes Care of Two
To welcome the class of 1917, each Barnard junior was assigned to a freshman, but “there were so many that one junior had to mother two.” Many took to interior decorating and, with “festoons of berries, golden-rod and asters, transformed the bare and unwelcoming freshman study into a bower.”

A Tug of War: A Feature
Rope Parted from Extra Muscle of Columbia’s Interclass Teams
The traditional opening exercises match of “tug-of-war between freshman and sophomore classes did not amount to much, owing to the failure to select a rope sufficient to take care of the extra spirit on the event of their returning to college. After duly lockstepping on to South Field with all the cheering and belligerency and recklessness of two perfectly normal first and second year classes they took their assigned places on the long rope before the eyes of hundreds of interested upper men. One pull was enough to send the contingencies at both ends of the rope into a heap on the ground, which shook under their fall.”

No Dilettantism at NYU
“We set ourselves squarely against the dilettante ideal,” said Chancellor Brown at the university’s opening exercises. Brown went on to expound on the value of “participation in regular athletic activities” but admitted that “this side of our college has labored under serious handicaps of late.”

A Lively Class Fight
At the said opening exercises, the “freshman of New York University were treated to their first touch of college life yesterday when the sophomores drove them from the room where they were holding their first meeting, causing some to jump out of the ground floor windows. Some braver “freshies” under the leadership of the more husky ones, took a stand against the sophomores and an exciting scrimmage followed, in which ties and collars were pulled off and many nice Fall suits had a dust bath.”
### COLUMBIA CRANAGRAMS
Unscramble the answers to the following crossword clues to find common Columbia phrases, people, and places.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A.</th>
<th>B.</th>
<th>C.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Looks like a camel: __ __ __ __</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Most popular salad dressing in U.S.: __ __ __ __</td>
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<td>2. Mandible: __ __</td>
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<td>3. You, lettuce, and beer all have one: __ __ __ __</td>
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<td>2. Uses Twitter: __ __ __ __</td>
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<td>1. May be high or low in your hand: __ __ __ __</td>
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<td>2. Like some bars, bikes, and blinds: __ __ __ __</td>
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<td>3. Plays a kazoo: __ __ __ __</td>
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### POSTCARD FROM MORNINGSIDE

**Presenting...**

**The 2010 Blue Bins**

* Featuring:
  * Tenuous Stability!
  * Surprise Bodily Fluids!
  * Cigarette Butts!
  * 2-Hour Self-Destruct Return Timer!

**ACT NOW!**

ONLY WHILE SUPPLIES LAST IN HARTLEY HALL

**Sounds Great?**

**On Uneven Flagstone**

**2 Inches WIDER THAN ANY DOORWAY!**

Serrated Grip for Minimum Comfort

Compiled by B&W Staff
Postcard by Stephen Davan
The only people crazy enough to brave the outskirts of Central Park before the summer sunrise generally fall into two categories: homeless people and people who decide to leave their perfectly nice homes at 2 a.m. in a desperate attempt to get tickets to Shakespeare in the Park.

But occasionally, the two categories overlap, a lesson this reporter learned on her very first SiP jaunt. Armed with a sleeping bag, a Scrabble board, and two fellow Columbians, she decided to brave “The Line”—a human caterpillar that crawls along Central Park West, awaiting a new dawn and the chance to get free tickets to this summer’s Al Pacino-starring production of “The Merchant of Venice.”

Enduring The Line required only two virtues: patience and the ability to sit anywhere—on the ground, on the grass, on the sidewalk, and in front of a park bench. When the man awoke, he seemed less indigent than indignant; he had actually been waiting in The Line and was furious we had cut ahead of him. We were bewildered as he screamed “what’s good?” at us repeatedly, but a nearby member of The Line reassured us. “It’s okay,” she said, after the man stopped yelling. “He does that to everyone.”

Aside from these occasional dramatic outbursts, life on The Line is quiet, stationary, and highly regimented. You are not allowed to leave The Line. You may not have someone take your place on The Line. You may not be joined by anyone in The Line. It is comparable to a voluntary, temporary, and highly literate prison. Only questions from solicitors—who guaranteed a trapped audience, turn out in abundance—“Are you registered to vote in New York?” “Would you like to take this psych test?”—or from curious passers-by—“What’s this line for?”—break the monotony.

When Central Park finally opens at 6 a.m. and The Line is ushered into the park, we are over 900 strong. The first got there at 10:30 p.m. Still, The Line is worth it. While us denizens will return to our normal lives slightly sleep deprived and with sore backs, it’s a small price to pay to see Shakespeare under the stars—and Al Pacino in a red velvet cape.

—Hannah Lepow

For an archive that prides itself on sterile preservation and meticulous organization, the Rare Books and Manuscript Library is the last place you’d expect to see anything unseemly, let alone sinister, gruesome, or bizarrely bestial.

But the Library took on a decidedly grislier shade last spring when Andrew Alpern, Architecture ’64, donated a collection of over 700 works by the late, prolific, and reclusive illustrator Edward Gorey. With a deft hand and dark wit rivaling that of Charles Addams and Tim Burton, the Chicago-born Gorey worked as an illustrator for Anchor Books, an animator for PBS, and a Broadway costume designer before passing away in 2000.

Columbia’s new collection consists mostly of Gorey’s books, illustrations, and etchings, with the odd Gorey-designed necktie thrown in. The Gashlycrumb Tinies, an illustrated alphabet which narrates the demise of 26 children in verse—“M is for Maud who was swept out to sea / N is for Neville who died of ennui”—is the epitome of Gorey’s morbid humor. The collection, however, is more than simple macabre. “It’s not like some slasher movie,” says Librarian Jane Siegel. “It’s something I can handle.”

But Siegel adds, “It’s not really for children, either.” She makes a point—works like The Insect God, which Gorey billed as “An admonitory tale of Temptation, hapless Greed, Abduction, and Unspeakable Ritualistic Practices,” might not be the best bedtime story.

The library’s display of Gorey’s 1980 ephemera collection titled F.M.R.A. (say it aloud!) shows the same
macabre absurdity. An illustration of élites in black tie staring at a severed mummy’s hand clutching a jewel is displayed next to monochrome etchings of elephants rendered in his heavily crosshatched style. “They’re kind of German expressionist,” Siegel says, noting that she expects the collection to be popular with 20th-Century art specialists and researchers.

Given the sheer breadth of the collection, it’s not surprising that Seigel says the works are still being catalogued and that display designs are subject to change. But even though the organizational task at hand may be (truly!) monstrous, the librarian—true to her trade—praises Alpern’s pack-rat mentality.

“The thing about a good collector is that he really is obsessed,” she says. Drawing a pair of Gorey-patterned neckties from a long cardboard box, she adds, “and if you’re a good collector, you have to have the ties.”

— Sam Schube

When the United States exited the 2010 FIFA World Cup tournament in the first round of the knockout stage, Columbia University economics professor and U.S. Soccer Federation President Sunil Gulati admitted that the Americans’ crushing defeat at the hands of the Ghanaian team was “a missed opportunity” for all involved.

Gulati might as well have been describing the atmosphere in his home-field of Morningside Heights, where enthusiasm for the U.S. team overflowed from neighborhood bars in the early summer but quickly waned as one game followed another, and another, and another. “I think most people appreciated the World Cup kind of how they appreciate the Olympics: the world comes together to compete, but the games and results aren’t too distracting from everyday life,” said Margaret Robotham, BC ’12.

Undaunted by the apathy of Morningside’s summer bar scene, Robotham began attending pick-up games organized by intramural soccer enthusiast Mustafa Hameed, CC ’11. Hameed’s impromptu football federation constructed goals and field markers from backpacks and garbage cans at 101st and Riverside. Robotham and as many as 60 others played matches on Sunday evenings to avoid heat and, naturally, double-booking against televised Cup matches.

The success of an athletic activity as social function came as a pleasant surprise to Hameed. “How often do Columbians interact with people in Morningside outside restaurants and bars?” he asked. “We got to meet a lot of people and play a fun sport. That was my motivation and why I consider it a success. It’s what the Cup is all about.”

Of course not all Columbians frustrated by the lack of soccer nightlife opted to exercise. Some, like Catherine Chong, CC ’11, chose to explore. “We searched for alternatives nearby, but they just didn’t feel right,” said Chong, who ventured out to Fort Greene, Brooklyn, seeking an authentic South African bar to enjoy the games. Mimosa in hand, she made connections with fellow soccer fans from the neighborhood and overseas. “I realized that day...that communities do not exist as atomized entities but rather as streams that overlap,” she said. “We’re easily able to step into any stream if we just make the effort.”

In light of the casual footballers and daring city explorers among Columbia’s summer cohort, the World Cup seems a missed opportunity only for those who missed out.

—Michael Adame

Illustrations by Adela Yawitz and Stephen Davan
Patrick Blute

In the getting-to-know-you alliteration name game, Patrick Blute, CC ’12, introduces himself as “Portable Pat”—fitting for someone who’s been skydiving in New Zealand, snorkeling in Guatemala, and dog-sledding in Sweden. It might come as a surprise, then, that this well-traveled cosmopolitan hails not from a global city like New York or Los Angeles but Harwich, Massachusetts, a sleepy town on Cape Cod that still bears the traces of its agricultural past.

“I was practically raised under a rock in an idyllic neighborhood,” he recalls. “To get to my house on Idle Way, you have to go down Paradise Path and Happy Way.”

Blute first ventured out as a high school senior when he won an internship with the Student Travel Association that took him on an all-expenses-paid trip to 14 countries on four continents. Having grown up “writing [his] own adventures” in Harwich, Blute compares himself to a shaken bottle of carbonated water: his whirlwind tour unscrewed the cap.

With Blute’s craving for new creative opportunities, Columbia proved a natural ending point for his world tour. Campus productions such as XMAS and the Varsity Show attracted Blute because of their made-from-scratch origins. “It’s really about selling Columbia to the community, and nothing does that better than humor,” he says, hinting at his aspirations for a career in marketing. He has entered and placed in various video contests promoting everything from the band Pink Martini to Bridgestone tires. “When I enter a contest, I try to get in the mindset of why they’re selling this,” explains Blute, putting his psychology major to use.

Blute cuts from one scene of his life to another. “I try to live it up and think of the movie that will come after,” he says. “I think in terms of movies.” During this reporter’s two and a half hour phone conversation with Blute, he played his didgeridoo, demonstrated his Jennifer Coolidge voice, and rapped acoustically. “Everyone kind of knows some rap songs, but do they know them acoustically? Why you at the bar if you ain’t poppin’ the bottles?” he asks, deadpan, quoting Nelly’s ubiquitous nightclub jam, “Hot in Herre.”

Friends agree that Blute soaks up life with refreshing and infectious enthusiasm. “He’s the quintessential friend: kind, fun-loving, and sincere,” says Meredith Kirk, CC’12. She plans soon to join Blute on one of his trips—in this case, a wedding in Canada. According to Kirk, the betrothed couple knows Blute in a “classic Pat” way. Blute is a friend of the future bride, whom he met while travelling through Europe. The bride had hoped her then-boyfriend would join her and Blute speculated that he planned to propose at the airport upon her return. His prediction came true, and naturally, the couple invited him to their wedding.

“I’m just surprised he hasn’t found his way across the world again,” says Emily Wallen, BC ’11, a fellow founding member of the Blute’s Tuesday night Karaoke crew at the Abbey. Sure enough, Pat spontaneously declared halfway through our conversation, “That’s it, I’m going back to Australia... or New Zealand. Oceania! I’m definitely going.”

—Carolyn Ruvkun
If you are a friend of Hannah Perls, you may have been caught off guard once or twice by the shrill sound of your own name echoing up the street from several blocks away. Acquaintances, former classmates, and anyone who has ever attended a meeting of a student environmental group should also beware: to avoid being knocked over by Perls’ galloping excitement, adopt a wide stance and spread your arms to receive her high-speed hug.

Perls seeks interaction of all sorts wherever she goes. She routinely flouts the social code of the New York sidewalk—instead of headphones and a focused, declining stare, Perls demands exuberant interaction. “She cat-called me from across Broadway when I was wearing spandex!” says Todd Nelson, CC ’12, of a post jog run-in with Perls last winter. “Girl’s got no shame. But then we ended up having a nice conversation about life and checked in—she has the ability to juxtapose inappropriateness with a ‘bring her home to your mother’ quality,” he says.

Despite her overwhelming gusto and sass, other friends remark that Perls is remarkably down to earth. Quickly switching gears from a riveting tale of her semester abroad, Perls describes herself thoughtfully: “I guess I’m not the person who gets stressed out very often or goes crazy. You know, if someone has an issue they can just knock on my door. They know that it’s open.”

Compared to the average Columbia student, Perls seems surprisingly unburdened. The difficulties she encountered during semester abroad in Nepal—where she was studying the effects of El Nino on Himalayan glaciers as part of her Environmental Studies major—consistently excited rather than perturbed her. “You go off,” Perls explains, slurring her words with enthusiasm, “and it’s just you and this Nepali student who acts as a translator. We knew Nepali, but certainly not well enough to go off on our own—especially if you’re a white woman.”

An unexpected turn of events cut her research short: “We had about ten days left, and this was when the Maoists declared an indefinite national strike,” explains Perls. “Eventually the Maoists ended up using tear gas and it got slightly violent—but foreigners were never in any danger,” she assures with a foppish flip of the wrist.

Nor did frustrations with campus organizations discourage Perls, who came to Columbia with a passion for environmental activism. “I had sort of flirted with every single environmental organization my freshman year, and one of the things was there was absolutely no communication between any of them.” Perls saw the problem as a personal challenge and, in 2008, she responded with a solution: Green Umbrella, an organization she founded to coordinate communication between student environmental groups. Todd Nelson, the current head of the Columbia/Barnard EcoReps, agrees: “Last year was unarguably a big step forward for the environmental groups on campus. [Hannah] was an enormous part of this success,” he emphasizes. Her friends are quick to note that the impact of her work in environmentalism on campus hasn’t gone to her head. In Resnick’s words, “she basically carried [Green Umbrella] by herself—she’s so modest about it, I didn’t even know.”

Even after racking up experience in environmental research at the Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory and in advocacy on Capitol Hill at the Select Committee for Energy Independence and Global Warming, she says she doesn’t quite know what she wants to do after graduation. She mentions environmental health as an area she might explore, but she does have other priorities: “I have this very strange addiction to the ocean that I haven’t completely satisfied, so at some point I’d like to work on a boat,” she says.

For the moment, however, Perls is content to focus on her work, including her ambitious plans for her thesis, potentially covering the history and environmental impact of fisheries in New York City. “It’s senior year,” she remarks. “Go big or go home—in a purely non-alcoholic, studious way.”

—Gavin McGown

Illustrations by Stephen Davan
It was seventh grade, end of the year. Students poured out of every orifice of the middle school, horny for summer and the new Blink-182 album. Horny, all of them. Except for one girl.

Me, little Cindy. I watched the “cool” girls as they left math class, all glitter gloss and butt jeans. I watched them flip their crispy, straight hair; adjust their push-up bras until A became B. They sashayed into the arms of their cool boyfriends, skater boys with large penises (so I’d heard). I licked my braces and yearned for the touch of a man with frosted tips.

I wasn’t what you’d call “cool” or “freshly show - ered.” I was short, gangly, and rocked an uncomfortably large pyramid of hair. When I wasn’t asked to the spring dance, I turned to my algebra books and a cold glass of milk for support.

I stared down at my chest. Still flat. I had conquered my finals, but knew my greatest challenge would be physical, not mental; breasts, not brains.

I left for camp that summer with cotton underwear and a dream: that I’d return as something better. “Stupid,” I thought, licking my braces. On the bus, I watched the cool girls sit on the cargo shorts of cool boys, giggling. My own laugh sounded like a hyena on methamphetamine.

But that summer at camp, something changed. Some things, actually. It started with one innocuous bottle: “Boobs B-Bigg,” a breast nourishment formula. I found it on the side of the road. It was a sign.

My t-shirts started fitting better. My training bras stopped fitting at all. I was growing faster than I could finish a lanyard, morphing from concave to convex like two perky balloons inflated by a helium tank.

Boys started looking at me. Lame boys, at first. But jocks with big penises (so I’d heard) once I hit a C. My chest became my ticket in. I borrowed underwire bras and cut my shirts lower.

The breasts were just the beginning. My braces came off in late July. By September, I was the most popular girl in school. I’d spend hours straightening my hair and picking the right song lyrics to quote in my AIM profile. Other girls wore what I wore, walked the way I walked, shopped at the Wet Seal I shopped.

The change was more than physical. I became Li’l Cindy. I started doodling in my Algebra books, littering my speech with things like “ohmygod” and “shut your stupid face!” I traded in my naivete for a flask of cheap gin. I flipped off anyone I thought was lame, dumb, or a-sexual. By December I was dating a high school senior named Hammer. Hammer drove a truck and fondled my breasts in public. I liked him very much.

One day, though, Hammer found a freshman with Ds. He broke up with me and that’s when things went south. Hungry for attention and uninterested in middle school boys (who were very tiny, as it turns out), I turned to a string of different men. Mike, Chuck, Robert, Vagabond Outside Safeway... I became what many experts would call “a whore.” My skirts became shorter, my knees more calcified. I spiraled until I was a washed up druggie with more venereal diseases than friends. I had no hopes, no dreams. I lost my Social Security card in a game of strip UNO. Innocence? That was my porn name. That wasn’t who I was anymore.

I passed by a kid I went to middle school with the other day. Jeff. “Boy, have you changed Little Cindy!” he said, putting money in my g-string with his clammy hands. I said, “It’s Li’l Cindy now. Little died a long time ago.”

By Nina Pedrad
Like all children sent to middle-class preschools, I was once read the tale of “The Very Hungry Caterpillar.” Challenging Kirstie Alley at her best game, the insect gorged itself until it transformed into a poorly-drawn, geometric butterfly. Unfortunately, my own attempt at such a transformation fell flat. It was the summer before eighth grade.

“This summer’s gonna be different,” I thought as I aggressively spiked my hair with the bottle of CRUST (the gel with 85-percent ground crustacean for real hold). Seventh grade had just ended and I was eager to leave behind the horrible memories of swirlies, wet willies, and aggressive punches that knocked the Giga Pet out of my sweaty little hands.

I mean, I wasn’t a HUGE loser...there was always that fat, sweaty kid in Algebra Honors who picked his “back-ne” under his Epcot shirt. But flattering comparisons aside, I knew it was time to kick my transformation into high gear and finally leave my loser brethren in the dust.

My mom seemed thrilled when I asked her to go shopping—she was eager to replace my Pikachu shirts with more mature fare. I needed to start attracting real girls, the kind who had thick, hot-pink retainers and who wore training bras from Limited Too.

My mom and I walked confidently through the men’s department of Saks 5th Avenue to the real destination—Abercrombie & Fitch, the mecca of good-looking white guys who reek of SUCCESS. $300 later, I walked out with enough clothes embroidered with those two, sexy letters and that one curvaceous ampersand to fill a two-week stint at sleep-away camp.

And not just any sleep-away camp. THE sleep-away camp. River Way Ranch Camp. The camp where whores like that Cindy go to get away from their parents and test out their sexualities. Yes, I knew how sex worked! YES!

It’s when the guy sits down on the girl and then...

Right? That’s it right?

And then the guy touches...

You say it first.

Regardless, I walked around confidently with my hard hat of wiry spikes and my A & F wardrobe. I was a new person entirely.

That’s when I met her. Jessica. She was so beautiful, behind her headgear and eye patch. Yes, I met her at archery but that was the magic of it. I couldn’t participate because my hands were too sweaty. She couldn’t because, you know, she only had one eye.

That night, drunk off one too many Fantas, it happened. We went back to my bunk. I could tell she was kinda slutty by the way she confidently pranced into boys camp. Before I knew it, her large wet tongue was down my throat. It was aggressive. Braces touching braces. Awkward, stifled breathing filled the cabin. And then she put her hands on my pants. Until she felt it. My big, hard wookie.

We stopped making out, and she pulled the Chewbacca action figure out of my pants, putting it closer to her good eye.

“What the hell is this?” She asked. Before I could even answer, she pantsed me. Jar Jar Bink’s big yellow eyes stared back at her from my underwear.

“You’re a freak,” she said as she adjusted her eye patch and walked out the door.

I wasn’t cool. I was a loser. I’d always be a loser. It was all just a gelled facade. I took a sigh and accepted it.

At least my hands would never judge me.

By Jeff Stern

Illustrations by Stephen Davan
Ah, the beginning of Fall Term, what could be finer? Gentlemen arriving back at the University with their liveries, fresh and tan from summers spent sailing at the shore or touring on The Continent; the Barnard girls in their latest fashions, and a semester of revelry ahead.

It was with just this verve and convivial temper that old Verily donned an evening suit (the cut being in the latest Florentine fashions!) and set out from his room in search of a truly collegiate experience. Where, Old V pondered, should this young chap go to find a fresh taste of University life? Down to Greenwich Village, the haunt of all those dandies? Brooklyn, with its immigrants? No, something was telling VV that just wouldn’t do, better to stay closer afield. Where then, a veritably vexed V found himself asking, does one go? Broadway or Amsterdam? They draw such different crowds. And then it struck the roaming would-be reveler as hard and fast as an Italian when offended. Your own V would visit the fraternity houses on old 114th Street for one of their notorious beginning of the year fêtes.

Now, the reader ought to know that VV was by no means a stranger to the sorts of gentlemen’s clubs on which he had presumed that the rakes of “Frat Row” had based their brownstones. The Manhattan Club, The Maidstone Club, The Century Club, even the Dartmouth Club—Old V has frequented them all in his day. And, of course, a certain, shall we say, “private” house on Riverside Drive has repeatedly made its interest known, but none of this, none at all, could quite have prepared poor V.

So it was that, with a loosened Ascot and a naïve optimism, VV made the quick jaunt over to 114th. At first, it all seemed well enough—young men and women sharing cigarettes on stoops. Perhaps a few were seeing double, but V is verily anything but a prude. Alpha Sigma Something-or-other seemed the most lively and so the newcomer doffed his hat and mounted the steps with a sense of anticipation and excitement. Once inside however, Old V quickly found his bright-eyed enthusiasm for the whole affair replaced by disgust.

How modest the upkeep!

The reader ought to be cautioned: any sense of propriety or shame—as well as, indeed, valuables—would best be left at home should one decide to make a visit to a fraternity house at the modern American university. Dipsomania, it seems, has taken hold.

A thick, acrid, air reminiscent of a summer’s day spent in central Hong Kong, pierced poor V’s nostrils upon entry into the house, and all your wayward merrymaker could manage was to lift his shoes from the viscous faux-hardwood and march forward, quite literally, into the inferno.

It seems the coat-check must have been overrun in the chaos—articles of clothing were strewn about the place and none of the débauchés present batted an eye about it. The foyer was decorated with what might pass for the furnishings of a hotel in a dodgier bit of Naples, but the worst was yet to come as Old V descended into the cellar.

Music blared and perspiring bodies pushed against each other. Being no fool, your own VV made his way to the bar in the hopes of salvaging the evening or at least, alas, quickly forgetting it. But, oh, the horror of it! The barkeep made offer of horrendously economical beer and a sort of cocktail, both of which the horrified V declined.

Disoriented, disenchanted, and thoroughly disgusted, VV hailed a cabbie as he pushed his way out the door; the walk would have taken less time, but it also would have meant being seen.

Sometimes even old V has to admit to error. The University, it seems, is changing.

VERILY VERITAS
À La Lettre

To the Editors of The Blue & White:

Sam Schube’s “Down for the Count” from the April-May edition of The Blue & White explored “what happens when Columbia athletes throw in the towel.” Because roughly three-quarters of the article focused on my team, I feel the need to clear up a few things.

First, the number of wrestling “quitters” was inflated and unfairly included all ex-wrestlers. Most of my former teammates ended their careers due to injury-related or personal reasons—not a loss of enthusiasm for the sport, as was the case with the quoted “retiree.”

Second, wrestlers who leave the team are not shunned. In fact, most maintain excellent relationships with their former teammates that extend after graduation.

Third, the reasons that apparently drive athletes from the team—pressures to compete while injured, position challenges from backups, the insufferable holiday season malaise—were greatly exaggerated. My team hardly resembles the despondent, battered crew depicted in the article, and your magazine would do well to attempt a more representative portrait of its subjects, rather than quoting heavily from one embittered individual.

The article addressed Columbia’s admissions standards and policy on athletic scholarships. Unfortunately, it offered a limited viewpoint. Columbia’s admissions officers look for academically outstanding students with diverse backgrounds and skills. In order to encourage diversity, they consider factors alongside academics—artistic ability, geography, ethnicity, and yes, athletic accomplishments. The Blue & White should consider the incredible contributions student-athletes make to our university before citing unverified test scores and perpetuating the stereotype of the undeserving dumb athlete.

—Nick Standish, CC ’11

Mr. Standish is understandably concerned about “perpetuating the stereotype of the dumb athlete.” No one likes being called stupid, least of all on account of one’s athletic prowess.

That being the case, I took great pains in writing the article to avoid that very judgment, not perpetuate it; the piece sought to explore the life of the ex-student-athlete at Columbia, not to question the wrestling team’s academic legitimacy. Moreover, the piece casts its lot with the overburdened student-athlete: for all the wrestling team’s foibles, I think the piece also makes clear that it’s just not easy to play a sport at such an academically rigorous institution.

Mr. Standish’s charges of inaccuracy, though, ring hollow. I can only write what I hear, and the athletes with whom I spoke painted a complex picture of the ex-athlete’s time at Columbia—simply put, it’s not all rosy. And while he suggests that The Blue & White would do better than to interview “one embittered individual,” that wasn’t quite the case: a number of athletes were interviewed for the piece, and most requested anonymity, which is necessary given strict NCAA guidelines about media contact.

Frankly, I think this ordeal should force us to re-examine the absurd and reductive “Athletes are great!/Athletes are dumb!” binary that so often arises whenever students discuss athletics, as it did when my article was posted on Bwog. There’s something broken in our understanding of school spirit when Mr. Standish’s first reaction to my largely sympathetic piece is defensive, and the default non-athlete sentiment is bitter and offensive—he and all Columbia athletes shouldn’t have to justify their places here. It’s too often the case that they do find themselves in that position, though, and I hope that more dialogue about the Columbia athlete experience can begin to change this.

—Senior Editor Sam Schube

À La Lettre—September 2010—13
On any given day this past summer, a student trawling Craigslist.com would have found numerous ads for school essay writing services. This Blue & White reporter monitored the New York area’s site on 20 randomly selected days from July through August, and found on average nine to 10 ads explicitly offering to write a student’s essay from scratch—not to mention scores of posts for dubious and vague “editorial/tutoring services.”

One such apparently aboveboard ad posted by a student at NYU’s Tisch School boasted, “I tutor a various array of people from all over the world in Manhattan and Brooklyn and have helped many students to better their grades and understandings in and about writing and English in its various forms.” When asked if his or her services included full essay writing for a fee, the student responded, “Yes ... I do a lot of that.”

Combined with the broad ads masking essay services under tutoring or editing (roughly half of those opaque advertisers contacted for this piece offered to write a full essay when the service was requested), it becomes near impossible to tell how many essay writers are active at any given time. One may roughly estimate, though, that well over 100 are active just on the New York section of Craigslist.com—some recent graduates tawling for a quick buck, and a couple dozen hardened professionals who have turned this practice into a job, at times banding together in individualized essay writing firms, the latter constituting approximately 30 percent of advertisers.

The simple answer is to blame this bounty of unethical services on the wild frontier of commerce that is Craigslist.com. But much as with the escort or narcotics services advertised in stealth on the site, anonymous postings have just re-popularized ancient trades to a new market, which previously relied on word-of-mouth advertising in the years before Craigslist first extended its services to New York in 2000. We’re no more diabolous now—just more efficient.

“After graduating and while at a dead-end job, I talked to a family friend who has been doing this for 20 years. [I] figured I would give it a shot myself, advertised on Craigslist, got a few replies, got some money, and I was hooked,” said Paul in a recent e-mail interview.

Although Craigslist.com helped Paul get his start, it is hardly his lifeblood.

“Word-of-mouth is my best asset,” he said. “The people I ’meet’ off Craigslist refer me to their friends and so on.”

Jackson’s experience echoes Paul’s.

“Most of my customers are repeats due to the quality of my work and the nature of my personality,” said Jackson. “[I have] maybe 25 regulars per semester and then one or two new ones. Out of the new ones, sometimes they become regulars or I never hear from
them again.”

Keeping repeat customers necessitates regularity and quality of work—job offers stop coming if you turn in late, sloppy papers. Professionals typically receive an initial inquiry; acquire the paper topic, syllabus, and guidelines; negotiate a price; and write the paper. An amateur provider usually charges $13 to $15 per page, while old hands like Jackson can charge $25 per page for undergraduate work and $35 per page for graduate work. Open-ended papers requiring the selection of a subject or additional research may incur an additional $10 to $15 hourly research fee, and overnight deadlines can similarly merit a bump in price.

Paul, who maintains what he considers an average flow of work, will handle between two to ten papers a week, averaging five pages. “I usually do a five-page paper in an hour,” said Paul.

Assuming one cuts to the mean of his workload, charging $15 per page, Paul can make $450 in a five hour work week. This is not to mention other services Paul provides—like completing online distance education courses on behalf of customers—and the more substantial fees someone like Jackson can generate. And it’s not dreck—he, like so many others, guarantees at least B-level work, and many are more than willing to advertise their credentials as graduates of Berkeley, University of Chicago, Harvard, Princeton, and so on. One might even say that these ghostwriters represent the ideal established by basic rhetoric courses like University Writing—they have isolated the skill of essay writing and honed it to an almost factory-level precision.

“I have had some instances where the professor gave the student a bad grade, for example a C on an English paper, and I knew the reason was he/she knew the student didn’t write the paper […] but that’s rare and has only happened a few times,” said Paul.

“My clients are satisfied and will write to tell me that they received the grade they desired,” said Jackson. “When they come back unhappy, I review the comments and help them make arguments to raise the grade—many times they are successful.”

These services achieve such great success in part because they are nearly impossible to detect, if carried out correctly—these essays are “custom-tailored,” so to speak, and not lifted from easily searchable Internet sources. Jackson is not aware of any of his many clients ever having been caught, and Paul knows only of a few cases where his work was detected, but still, punishment came only via middle-of-the-road grading, not disciplinary measures.

Professors may also not be on as close a look-out for these services as they are for other, more typical forms of cheating—in other words, they have bigger fish to fry. “The most common method of plagiarism is using Internet sources without attribution,” said Scott Halvorson, Dean of Students at GS. “In most cases, a faculty member brings the complaint, sometimes with the help of plagiarism prevention services such as Turnitin,” a Web site which compares student papers to Internet materials and a database of other papers for copied elements. Jeri Henry, Senior Assistant Dean of the Office of Judicial Affairs and Community Standards for Columbia College and SEAS, is hesitant to identify what types of plagiarism are most prevalent, most detected, or most suspected, but assures all that educators are well-trained in detection methods.

With these ghostwriting services, however, a student could slip by unnoticed if only essays were assigned. Detection services will not catch them, and, as the financial model for the services depends on repeat customers, a teacher is likely to see only plagiarized work for a whole semester, thus never detecting a difference or suspecting foul play. The disparity in quality of thought, structure, and writing style between writing an essay and an in-class assignment would still make it difficult for a professor to prove plagiarism. Conceivably, a writer’s papers for other students could be floating in a database for cross-checking, but even the most advanced software cannot pin down voice as easily as copied content. And
Paul, Jackson, and their cohorts will, if asked, attempt to alter their voice or approximate their client’s style to confuse detection.

“We recognize there is no foolproof way to guarantee all instances of academic dishonesty are detected,” admitted Henry. “But even in instances of ‘creative cheating’ [the euphemism being used for essay writing in this exchange], the likelihood is that someone else—a roommate, a classmate, a teammate, a friend—is aware of the behavior. [...] It is OJA’s goal to foster a community where students hold one another accountable for responsible decisions—aademic and otherwise.”

Translation: For this sort of cheating, the University relies on informants and peer pressure to stem the tide. But as anyone who has seen On the Waterfront, Scent of a Woman, or almost any episode of The Sopranos knows, community ethos favors peer loyalty to peer monitoring. It seems a futile endeavor.

Henry’s response points to one reason why it is so easy for providers to operate—blame is heaped upon the student, not the essay provider.

“[People who know I do this] are more shocked that the students hire me, not that I write for them,” said Jackson. “That’s how they perceive them, as snotty kids.”

And while Jim*, who offers editing services, refrains from writing papers because he considers it an unethical circumvention of education, he sees it mainly as a trespass by students, rather than providers. “Most larger colleges and universities have support services [...] Using Craigslist to get the same strikes me as a little shifty,” he said.

The only obstacle for a provider of such services is conscience. But most of them have found handy rationalizations for their services beyond just the need for money.

“I went to a private Christian school that had a lot of Ethiopian kids come in. They needed help with schoolwork so I would do their homework at times,” said Paul of his origins. Henry, Halvorson and Jim all bat down these rationales as delusional, given services available to students.

“I usually respond [to such claims],” said Jackson, “that most of [my clients] do not attend ‘rich-kid’ schools where they can casually sit around a dorm with friends and then go study at their leisure. That being said, I do get college students who [go] to wealthier schools too; however, most of the time it’s people who work and have kids.”

This may account for the University’s insistence that plagiarism holds steady year-to-year and school-to-school, while Halvorson admits he has had, “conversations with frustrated [School of General Studies] students who feel that the problem is getting worse, not better.” Indeed, GS would seem to fit Jackson’s profile of a school where a sizable percentage of students hold down both a job and family life.

Setting aside ethics momentarily, the practice makes a frightening amount of economic sense for any student. Theoretically, enrolling in six classes per semester for eight semesters at Columbia, carefully selecting classes that only required take-home finals, final papers, or term papers (not a difficult task), one could graduate Columbia with a degree and decent GPA without ever lifting a finger. In fact, if one speculates that each class would entail four five-page papers, one final ten-page paper, and ten hours of research for a consummate professional charging $35 per page and $10 per research hour (something of a middle price range), one could comfortably buy a Columbia education for $55,200 in addition to tuition and fees, undetected.

Considering the man-hours one would otherwise spend on such courses, a student might easily earn back that fee by re-appropriating their time. Such is the power of the Internet and a wad of cash that a reporter might even put his name on these pages never having lifted a finger to write them, and the reader may never know. ♦
Hannah Serena Goldstein BC ’13

As the Sex and Dating intern for Time Out New York, I always had a good answer to the inevitable, “So, what are you doing this summer?” question. The title was, of course, more than just a sure-fire conversation starter and I bore it well—and perhaps a little too proudly.

Like many editorial internships, mine involved the usual copy-editing, topical writing, and as the listing promised, “limited administrative work.” But for all the generic clerical duties, I reassured myself that the time spent scouring event listings for anything with “date potential”—from stargazing nights at the High Line to “In the Flesh” sexy book readings and classes in dialogue writing at the Gotham Writers’ Workshop—would make my résumé stand out in the stack.

No question or topic was too risqué as I became a shameless and unflappable interviewer. I’d call up managers of erotic bakeries and ask in a perky voice, “Is it true that your bums are covered in fondant?” The job had its unsexy moments to be sure, but I took the raunchy with the staid and kept my spirits high, reminding myself how much I was like Carrie Bradshaw.

Late one Thursday night near the end of my internship, I found myself on-assignment with a few friends at the entrance to a make-out party at a popular adult entertainment venue downtown. This was it, my final challenge, to be faced in a metallic minidress and black pumps. Lips glossed and eyebrows cocked, I strutted towards the dimly-lit...
entrance with all the confidence of an experienced Sex and Dating intern. “You got ID?” interrupted a bouncer sharply. Caught off-guard, I stumbled backwards, met his eyes with uncertainty, opened and closed my mouth. Didn’t he know who I was? I looked sheepishly at my friends’ uneasy, underage faces. I’d blown it. Defeated, I walked away.

**Sarah Camiscoli CC ’12**

Meet Abelardo, the multicolored parrot star of *Plaza Sésamo*, Latin America’s version of *Sesame Street*. Abelardo may be just a Muppet, but he is basically my boss—as the International Research intern for *Plaza Sésamo*, I have spent countless hours this summer in support of his work educating millions of Spanish-speaking children.

He and I aren’t that different, really. Abelardo, the first and only cousin of Big Bird, is eager to solve problems and learn about new cultures, and that happens to be exactly why I took on this internship. Whether I’m selecting the most attractive images from Muppet photo shoots, researching racial tolerance in other countries, or analyzing cell phone usage surveys of Nigerian farmers, my job requires me daily to confront the challenging complexities of cultural differences as I help the staff of the Sesame Workshop to create educational programming.

Abelardo has also demonstrated for me some of the basic tenets of children’s television. For instance, all bullying must be strictly verbal, never physical. Teaching sharing should be taught by showing one child give a portion to another child. And even though Sesame Workshop champions female empowerment, most boys under the age of four still do not take female educators seriously and would rather a male Muppet explain the workings of the number “2.”

My political and sociological sensibilities could, at times, earn me a stern look, as they did when I implied that an Egyptian female Muppet donning a ponytail is promoting overtly Western values. But I tried always to channel my inner toddler and memories of those happy hours spent watching a colorful, clumsy bird stumble over the alphabet. Personal viewpoints aside, at least I now know my anthropology major and all that talk of cultural hegemony actually has an application in the real world—or at least the world of *Plaza Sésamo.*

**Dexter Thompson-Pomeroy CC ’12**

On a Tuesday morning in June, I touched down at Mother Teresa International Airport in Tirana, Albania, for my U.S. State Department internship. I knew next to nothing about the country, the State Department, or my duties pertaining to either. Jet-lagged from a long, uncomfortable flight, I found myself on my first day of work walking around the poorest suburbs of Tirana, home to Albania’s worst living conditions.

The cityscape I saw that day was riddled with shoddily constructed homes and appalling sanitary conditions. Amid coal mines and thermal energy plants—Tirana and its environs also double as Albania’s industrial center—Romanisv ported water back and forth from the Lanë, a river on the east side of town that moves slowly, thick with pollution. Two weeks later, I was put in charge of organizing the U.S. ambassador’s visit to one of these Romani refugee camps and met with embassy staff and their NGO counterparts to ensure that the visit run smoothly.
Like many former Soviet states, Albania adores pretty much every aspect of America—even those aspects most of us here don’t find so wonderful. George W. Bush Street, President Wilson Square and the “Laura Bush steak” on a local restaurant menu, for instance, are not gimmicks geared at tourists, but are what Albanians, I came to understand, see as sincere appreciation for America’s aid to the country’s refugees and the ethnic Albanians of Kosovo.

Although I devoted a lot of time to doing fieldwork and talking with Albanian people across the city, not all of the experience matched my idealized view of life in the Foreign Service, nor was Tirana quite what I expected. The city had only become the capital in 1920, and it has little cultural or historical heritage. But I looked for the best in the city’s seemingly lackluster culture, with all its bad techno and bland meat dishes. Mornings involved traditional Albanian pastries and discussions of soccer and politics with the locals at nearby café.

These pleasantries were enjoyable of course, but the work at the embassy—even if less pleasant—was far more telling of the city’s history, politics and culture. At the embassy, I read cables about ethnic violence in Kyrgyzstan and heard stories from diplomats about their military service in Turkmenistan at the time of the death of the local dictator, Turkmenbashi. I could have listened to all of Tirana’s techno and eaten all of its Laura Bush steaks and still not have gained as much a sense of the city’s sound and flavor as I got from hearing those first-hand accounts.

**Mujib Mashal, CC ’11**

On any given morning, look at the front page of any national newspaper and you’ll be sure to find at least one headline telling of the latest developments in Afghanistan. After nine years, the place remains an endless fount of news. So for me, a history major intent on getting an insider’s look at journalism, an internship with the New York Times Bureau in Kabul sounded pretty perfect.

At the Times, there was, of course, the share of usual internship chores. Every day, I split my time between browsing the Internet for recent articles on Afghanistan and translating hours of Afghani politicians’ ramblings. But for all the mindless transcribing and typing, there was, in turn, the rush of covering breaking news. Contacts were surprisingly forthcoming when I approached them for interviews and information: from political leaders to police commanders, I wasn’t denied an interview once during the whole summer. Even over controversial issues, citizens readily volunteered their statements for the record—impressive in a country where freedom of expression is still in its infancy.

But behind the thrilling news, I found stories of profound sadness. On a trip to the Western province of Herat, I stood by a photographer as he documented Afghani women burn themselves as an act of both suicide and sacrifice. The photographer spent four days with the burn victims in a hospital, and I visited the hospital several times a day, but because of my sex I was forbidden from entering the women’s rooms. I spent the day in my hotel room translating and transcribing interviews instead. But these were not like the other tapes I had worked with. Sitting at my computer, I listened to the audio file: five words of an interview, followed by long stretches of painful screams as the doctor changed...
bandages or applied medicine.

On the second day of our trip, one of the patients died. As the ambulance snaked through the crowded bazaar, verses of the Quran played from loudspeakers attached to the roof, announcing that a corpse was on board. I followed closely behind, my stomach churning. As the ambulance turned into a narrow alley of dome-shaped mud houses, a little girl who had arrived before us chased after it, calling out “Maadar.” The body and the funeral procession moved inside the house. The ambulance was paid off. I stood in the narrow alley with my driver, in silence, listening to the sounds of mourning that filled the air.

STEPHANIE ALIGBE
SEAS ’12

Most Columbia students know about the system of tunnels that course below our campus, but few can actually navigate their way around the underground network with confidence. I like to think of myself as the exception to that rule. This summer I dedicated myself to learning the subterranean system. Come September I would be able to move from Dodge to Schermerhorn with all the stealth and speed of a ninja. Or so I thought.

That can’t be done, I quickly learned. There are cameras littering most of the tunnels. But my internship with CUIT’s Network Field Services (NFS) brought me as close to a complete knowledge of the Columbia tunnels as any undergraduate can have, though without the ninja skills. Working with NFS this summer not only gave me the access to the tunnels but also gave me more than enough free time to learn that I can use the tunnels to travel from any given point on campus to the next. The cameras serve mostly to prevent theft, and as a CUIT employee, it’s expected that I would be in the tunnels where much of the phone and Ethernet wiring is located.

While tracing wiring, I once stumbled across a path between Carman and Furnald. I wound up traversing a long, dim tunnel, silent save for an intermittent thud that grew louder as I continued to explore. Although my heart was pounding as I stepped deeper and deeper into the dark, I managed to resist the urge to scream. With my mind haunted by visions of all the unsavory subterranean trolls I might encounter before I reached the light at the end of the tunnel, an ascending flight of stairs suddenly deposited me on a sun-drenched plaza outside of Furnald.

Even more shocking than Columbia’s bowels though, are the things people leave behind at the end of the year. During my rounds I found many refrigerators—some clean, most rancid—some vacuum cleaners, a Playstation 2, and a slew of power strips and textbooks. While CUIT forbids its employees from reselling these items, it would be a tremendous journalistic oversight not to mention that some people may have “profited” off these fortuitous discoveries. ...Well, really, just the PS2.

—I listened to the audio file: five words of an interview, followed by long stretches of painful screams.

—Edited by Adam Kuerbitz
After summer travel in the Old World, Literary Editor Anna Kelner reflects on Columbia’s European-style fascination with histories that never were.

The tourists at London’s Regent’s Park seem faintly shocked that they are permitted to cavort inside these veritable royal hunting grounds. Some come to lounge in lawn chairs as Kings; others to drink tea at Inn the Park, Prince Charles’ sandwich shop. Afterwards, they might journey to Oxford’s market square, the genesis of Adam Smith’s bustling merchants. Come eve, they can drink ale at a thatched-roofed pub, where modern day Toms often brawl like peasants.

It is a Marxist conundrum: visitors, largely descendants of the historic underclass, returning in droves to simulacrum of the places where their ancestors’ bosses and overlords once reigned. Sometimes, they go to places of Burkean beauty—crumbling castles with glorious woods; other times, to capitalistic candy shops selling miniaturized models of Queen Elizabeth I dipped in chocolate.

Eurotourism often boils down to the desire for collective time travel. Most visitors come not to see a place, but their history-fed notion of a place. And there are still glimmering remnants of the past to stoke their fantasy.

“I think most Americans imagine us to be butlers, you know, all old-fashioned and polite,” one University College London student observed, mingling at a picnic held in the drab courtyard of a stark brick dorm designed for middle-class students. At UCL, a city school often lauded as one of Britain’s least snobbish, vast rent disparities essentially perpetuate Ye Olde class-segregated housing.

In a place like Western Europe, which has largely cast off its classist, nationalistic tendencies, this tour-istic nostalgia and its reinforcement is a puzzling phenomenon. Tourists love the castle, but they’d be furious if Britain’s nobility were in any shape to put a moneyed lord inside.

Though our room rates may be more equitable, old-world fantasies permeate Columbian life beyond vacation. Butler and Low, modeled on the Parthenon and the Pantheon respectively, pay tribute to Greece and Rome and emulate the birthplace of western civilization for young minds. For many students, neoclassical architecture and the Core Curriculum seem a natural pair: what could be more fitting than reading Homer on Low Steps?

Appearances aside, the University’s two cornerstones make strange ideological bedfellows. While alternately lauded and criticized for its apparent Euroworship, the Core is structured to satisfy a decidedly moralistic bent. Founded in the wake of World War I as a single course on War and Peace issues, almost a century later Columbians must work their way from Homer to Mill, learning their lessons well before seeing those lessons self-destruct in the able, disillusioned hands of Marx, Freud, Woolf, and Dubois—all while living amidst McKim, Mead & White’s rose-colored facades.

Caught in limbo, the confused Columbian faces a conundrum. Each fall, underclassmen think: no philosopher-king rules Low, but surely PrezBo’s ego must be bolstered by the sheer magnitude of its columns. Each spring, they turn Marxist for a day while reading on lawns implicitly idealizing the birthplace of the Western slave class. Saddled with a course list as implacable and immovable as the campus itself, there’s only one real option: take Plato’s advice, and bang your head against a wall.
Tell the Teacher They're Surfing

THE TRIALS OF COLUMBIA’S URBAN SURFERS

BY MARIELA QUINTANA

If you want to surf in college, you go to the University of Hawaii or one of the University of California campuses. You don’t come to Columbia to ride the pipe.

But that hasn’t stopped a cohort of beach bums from making their homes in Morningside Heights. These student surfers are single-minded in their pursuit of the waves, and though their numbers are small, their passion for surfing is anything but.

“I spent every possible free second that I had at Columbia trying to surf in Long Island and New Jersey,” said Michael “Wojo” Wojcieszek, SEAS ’10 and a native of the Jersey shore.

After Wojo discovered a fellow surfer and Jersey boy in Matt Ward, SEAS ’11, the two immediately began weekly trips out to Far Rockaway, Queens—compared to Jersey, a local-enough surf spot. All things Columbia were made secondary to riding the waves: John Jay became an impromptu surf shack with boards jammed into closets and hung from ceilings. Whenever possible, Wojo would choose 9 a.m. classes to free his afternoons for shred sessions. He recounts with pride stumbling late into a chemistry final, while Ward brought his board to exams, leaving for post-test surf sessions posthaste.

The surf buddies even had hoped to turn their ocean devotion into dollars. Two years back, they took to the roof of Mudd with fiberglass molding equipment as part of a plan to launch a board sculpting business. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Columbia maintenance objected and shuttered the operation. Attempts to create a club team also fell short. “Asset Management deemed us too risky,” Wojo recounted of the Athletic department’s vetting system that evaluates proposals for new student sports groups.

Even though graduation has now ended Wojo’s time at Columbia, he and Ward still make the jaunt out to Far Rockaway with their surfboards stashed under their seats on the A train. Outer-borough commuters often give strange looks—it seems many New Yorkers have forgotten that their city is, you know, on the water. For others, the surfboard itself is a foreign object—a mystified MTA rider once stopped the two to ask why and where they were going sledding.

But the end of the line brings surf-friendly company. “Once you get off the train, there are kids on skateboards and you can smell the beach,” recalled Ashley Ellenson, SEAS ’11 and another Columbia surfer. “Then people start talking to you and you hear their Queens accents and you remember you’re still in the city.”

Although Rockaway attracts surfers from all over the city in the late summer, Wojo and Ward prefer the beach in the dead of winter. They are quite literally riders of the storm: wintry squalls form big waves ripe for carving. Ward talks of blue lips, wind chill, and “flushing”—when a wet suit takes on too much icy water. “It’s just about the worst thing that could happen to you,” he insisted. “Ever.” Whatever the conditions, Ward won’t budge: Rockaway is his beach, and he’s faithful. “Anyone who says East Coast surf is bad hasn’t really surfed the East Coast,” he said.

The Surfrider Foundation, a beach advocacy organization, would seem to disagree: the Foundation gives Rockaway and other Long Island beaches a “poor” grade for surfing quality, echoing other Columbia surfers who choose not to practice their pastime in the New York area. “To proclaim oneself a surfer in this city is more of a self-conscious posture,” said Alex Ludlum, GS ’11 and native Californian. Ellenson remains unfazed, “It’s Rockaway,” she says. “We’ll take what we can get.”

Surfing quality aside, Wojo insists one thing matters: “You need to go with a friend. All that traveling and time spent in the water isn’t worth it if you don’t have someone to share the stoke with.”
The beach is not quite “beautiful.” The calming tide and unending shore of Rockaway may appeal to the cramped spirit of a visitor escaped from Manhattan for a day, but the ocean is no sharp, stunning, turquoise. The sand is not gold. White sunlight coats the water’s surface; pale green seafoam turns beige dunes to brown, and a smooth grey boardwalk frames the scene. Absent the alien oranges, reds, and greens of umbrellas and towels in the height of summer, Rockaway Beach is like a washed-out photograph.

Two hours away from the city by subway or car, “The Rockaways” is a lonely peninsula hanging off the bitter edge of New York. The Atlantic stretches south to the horizon, and to the north the bay is wild with the desolate sandbars and forested islands of Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge. Its physical and visual isolation make Rockaway perhaps the closest thing to a small town accessible by subway.

Rockaway feels like a small town because it once was. The area first developed as the waterfront sanctuary for 19th century New York’s richest families, but as rail reached the island in the 1890’s so did middle-class vacationers and a new wave of permanent residents. Immigrants of Irish, Italian, and Jewish origin especially settled there throughout the early-century boom that turned New York into the world’s city and Rockaway into a bustling community with a notable beachfront tourism industry.

But by the 1960s the upper classes had abandoned their Rockaway villas for the Hamptons and middle-class patrons of the boardwalk, hotels, and small amusement park were leaving the city in droves. Competing Coney Island became the convenient day-trip of the working class while Rockaway’s beachfront declined. In its place rose a rigid row of more than a dozen modernist towers. Like their look-a-likes citywide, many of the towers would become low- and middle-income housing. As crime and unemployment increased in the city through the 1970s, so it did in the Rockaways.

Shuttered warehouse buildings and swaths of high grass are all that remains of the former beachfront boom. But at Far Rockaway, the wide end of the peninsula at the end of the A line, remnants of the small civic and commercial center remain. Far Rockaway has aged without becoming derelict; most buildings have been slowly run down but have never fallen out of use. The result is not the distraught ruins of urban decay, nor is it a rehabbed, redeveloped, “cool” district. Addicts of apocalyptic abandonment will find Gowanus; fashionable rediscoverers congregate in the Lower East Side. Those enthralled by neither extreme—the nostalgic historians—find Rockaway, where the former life of many outer borough neighborhoods is preserved as if sealed in a bottle.

Past Far Rockaway convenience stores and restaurants dot the main streets, but much of the space that beach-goers walk—from the subway to the water—remains barren and deserted. These empty swaths have played host to chunks of multi-unit residential development over the last two decades. An influx of new residents, attracted by new and relatively inexpensive condos, have injected a jolt of money and intrigue into a mostly forgotten place, and in 2008, the New York Times published a guide to eating, sightseeing, and apartment hunting in Rockaway.

But it may be years before the new arrivals change the character of the Rockaways and bring activity back to this sun-bleached husk of a once-vibrant area. For now, only the drone of countless jets en route to John F. Kennedy International Airport disturbs the calm.

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**Take the A to the Rockaways**

*The Blue & White visits New York’s forgotten beach town*

*By Liz Naiden*

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The beach is not quite “beautiful.” The calming tide and unending shore of Rockaway may appeal to the cramped spirit of a visitor escaped from Manhattan for a day, but the ocean is no sharp, stunning, turquoise. The sand is not gold. White sunlight coats the water’s surface; pale green seafoam turns beige dunes to brown, and a smooth grey boardwalk frames the scene. Absent the alien oranges, reds, and greens of umbrellas and towels in the height of summer, Rockaway Beach is like a washed-out photograph.

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Woof!

It’s hard to imagine how this girl’s profile will unfold. Her ear makes everything else so ugly. Knowing is instant but finding the right fit is difficult and some people never do. It’s a matter of seeing her nose. If only I might touch her feet. I must press my palm into hers. If I could pull down her tights, I would know.

She was headstrong, but she wanted to be cocksure.

Nina: Hello Darling! How was your day?
Evan: Umm good...uhh no actually great...unn never been better!
Nina: Mhmm... I don’t believe you. Something is definitely wrong.
Evan: ........................................... I LEFT A SCALPEL IN A PATIENTS BODY! (Damn it. Why the hell do I always cave in?)

*Nina’s eyes widen*

Although beauty is in the eye of the beholder, several teens feel the need for that beholder to be everyone, and so they do whatever it takes to contort their bodies into tanning and bleaching crazies!

Shouldn’t we be empowering “bougie” Muslims so they can be the role models?

The key to any gangster rap song currently is a few references to gunshots, hoes and the hood. Or is it?

The difference between Susan Sontag’s Photography and The Matrix is The Matrix shows the difference between robots and humans and what it’s like to be human. In Susan Sontag’s essay, she considers photography to be an amusement and a practice by non-professionals. The Matrix shows how humans have feeling and emotion but robots don’t.

The kitten cat ignored him, pretending not to speak. He grabbed the cat’s neck in his jaw and began to twirl her like a little girl spinning an umbrella. He then began to chew on a piece of the cat’s blood-soaked body. Sam thought it was a piece of beef.
Blue & White: When you heard the decision in June, what was your reaction?

Nick Sprayregen: We were always concerned that, if they were going to render a quick decision, they would probably go against us. And so when we heard that the decision was coming and it was only a few weeks after the hearing, I figured it was probably not going to be going our way. We were especially disappointed with the decision because it seemed that the court totally abdicated its responsibility to examine the facts in a comprehensive manner and to render a thorough decision. It’s one thing to issue a decision where there is a very lengthy review of the facts and the law. But in this case it was apparent to us that they gave virtually no consideration to the voluminous—in our opinion—evidence to buttress our case. I can only assume that what we have done over the last five or six years did not make any difference.

B&W: What do you think they overlooked specifically?

NS: There are specific requirements in the law that allow the government to take private property for use as a civic project, and the fact is that never before in New York state has private property been forcibly taken to hand over to a private university or a school. So on that basis alone, we were shocked that we didn’t prevail. The statutes don’t specifically say that a private school constitutes a civic project.

In terms of the blight issue, we were shocked also because, the fact is, this area was not blighted. Columbia bought and managed what they now call “blighted” property, and they should not be able to benefit from the work of their own dirty hands and misdeeds. Something is really unfair and wrong if the entity applying for eminent domain intentionally brings on conditions such as vacancy and disrepair and then cites those very conditions as evidence that the area is blighted. Plus, there has never been any independent blight study on Manhattanville. That is just one of numerous differences between us and Atlantic Yards. Long before [Bruce] Ratner and the [New Jersey] Nets ever came up, there were studies stating that Atlantic Yards was blighted. But here, every blight study has been done since Columbia declared its interest in the area, and by firms employed by Columbia previously.

Another interesting aspect of this is that part of the basis of the Manhattan court ruling in our favor was its reference to the most recent and important United States Supreme Court eminent domain case, which is *Kelo v. the City of New London* in 2005. In the lower court they made specific reference to that. In our papers we make numerous references to *Kelo*, yet in the State Court of Appeals’ decision, they ignore it! They ignore a United States Supreme Court decision just from a few years ago having to
do with eminent domain. It’s one thing if they take it on and come up with a position that’s counter to ours and it’s thought-out, it’s reasoned, and there’s law to back it up. But there is not one sentence on Kelo in the entire Court of Appeals decision.

B&W: You said that never before in New York state has eminent domain been used to give private land to a private school. But eminent domain has been used to give land to other private entities in the past, correct?

NS: Well certainly the most recent example is in Brooklyn. Traditionally, until about the last 50 or 60 years, eminent domain has been used for what the Constitution says is its use—in this case, for the government to build something for the public benefit. So, for example, if it were an expansion of the CUNY or SUNY system, everything would be off the table. You may not like it, but that would be “public use.” If it’s a highway, public hospital, likewise, it’s public use.

Unfortunately, what’s gone on in the last 50 or 60 years is there’s been a bastardization of that so it goes from the Constitution saying only “public use,” to “public purpose,” and then to “public benefit.” And now we’ve gone so far that any type of economic development can be used to justify eminent domain. If you have any type of business, you’re susceptible to having it taken away just because there’s a larger or more powerful entity that says, “I’ll be able to generate more tax dollars or more jobs from your property than you can.” And to me, that is an unbelievably slippery slope, totally at odds with our Constitution and totally at odds with what our country is supposed to stand for.

B&W: Do you think there are any instances where private interest can serve the public good?

NS: Yes. But anything that moves away from the clear-cut delineation in our Constitution of public use runs the hazard that it will snowball into more and more abuse because once
you start moving away from public use, there’s really no bright line anymore.

That being said, the participation of private entities in projects that use eminent domain can be acceptable. Because I think there’s no doubt that, in many instances, the private sector does a better job of doing things than the government. But it needs to be a project that is initiated and governed and controlled by the government. The fact is that the Manhattanville project only exists because of Columbia University. The government’s power of eminent domain is only being used here because Columbia couldn’t gather the land itself. Aside from that, it was Columbia’s lawyers, Columbia’s consultants, Columbia’s engineers, Columbia’s money that wrote all of the re-zoning texts, that wrote the general project plan that was a justification for the use of eminent domain and that ultimately wrote the conditions study that determined that there was blight in the neighborhood. How can it possibly be fair to use of the government’s power of eminent domain so that a private entity can say “I want my neighbor’s property and in order to justify it, first we’re going to buy up all the land that we can and let it deteriorate and then we’re going to hire a consultant to do the blight study who’ll be paid by us and who is already working for us and has been working for us for years to justify the use of eminent domain!” It’s almost comical when you take a step back and look at it conceptually.

B&W: So Columbia initiating the project is problematic, but if the state had initiated eminent domain for a public use and contracted to a private company to provide some service, it would be okay?

AS: Precisely. In Kelo, the majority voted that the use of eminent domain was justified specifically by the nature of the plan for reuse. The Kelo decision lays out five or six aspects of a legitimate eminent domain reuse. One of those was that the entire plan was laid out by the city. Another was that the identification of any private entities to be hired was not known at the time that it all took place. In this case it’s exactly opposite.

I’ve never been against the University’s expansion. The University likes to paint me as someone who’s against their expansion; that I’m someone who’s against progress. That’s not true. The fact is that I’m against the use of eminent domain for a private entity. And as you can see walking around here, this project is going to happen regardless of what happens with me. They’re already starting, alright? They even started before they got the decision overturned. It was going to happen no matter what. They said otherwise in their public announcements. They kept saying “I don’t know how we can proceed without the full basement.”

And they came up with this brilliant idea to marginalize me and the other property owners by saying to the community we won’t use eminent domain on the residents, only on the businesses. Behind the scenes—and we know this through our Freedom of Information request—Columbia had been feverishly working with the city and the various housing agencies to enter into agreements to take over the residential buildings. So yes, they’re not using eminent domain, but they’re still trying to move out the residents against their will. They also promised that the residents will stay here for another 15 years or so. Well, I got a residential building right next to me here, that’s a residential building right over there. So why is it that I’m going to have to move out maybe in the next six months from here so Columbia can have my land when they’ve already promised that they’re not going to take the land of the two buildings right next to me?

There are just such logistical holes in their argument that they must have everything. It’s outrageous and it’s especially outrageous coming from a school, an Ivy League school like Columbia! You know, I really say shame on the administration. It’s nothing but greed.

B&W: You know, of course, that a few years ago, there was a lot of student action at Columbia surrounding this. What do you think of the student involvement in the process, and what role do you think students can or should play in the future?

"As a student... I think you should be damned disheartened to see how much the university doesn't take into account the opinions of others."
NS: We did have the support of various student coalitions and groups who were terrific throughout all of this. I was very impressed with the student journalism covering all of this as if it was a significant story. When Columbia cites all of the community dialogue, it’s all window-dressing and it’s all bullshit. The fact is that when you look at the parameters of the original ’02 plan and when you look at the final plan they’re almost exactly the same! No significant changes, there was no modifications of any meaningfulness.

So I think as a student, regardless of your feelings on this one issue, I think you should be damned disheartened to see how much the university doesn’t care and doesn’t take into account the opinions of others. All of this talk of community dialogue and giving back to the community is all backed by nothing but cynicism. Whatever the administration does and what has been done is all because they think it can gain something. But other than that, they will keep on marching forward until all the other opposition is gone.

The case is going to be setting a tremendous precedent not just for others in New York state but for Columbia itself.

B&W: What’s next for you and your company?

NS: Well, we are busy preparing our brief to the United States Supreme Court, which should be ready and be submitted within the next two to three weeks. We’ll see—our chances are unfortunately very, very, very low. The United States Supreme Court takes on less than one percent of the cases that are submitted to it. I have no great hope that they will take this case. If they take the case, then we’ve still got to prevail at the eventual hearing, but in order to get that far, we have to convince them to at least take the case.

We’ll be okay, but the deck is so stacked up against everyone. The vast majority of the people, unfortunately for them, didn’t have the resources to do what I’ve done for the past six years [laughs]. And still at the end of six years we get morally bankrupt higher court of New York decision, which are basically rubber stamps for whatever Columbia and the state wants to do. To add insult to injury, we got a notice about three weeks ago that the state had applied to the same court of appeals, and the court of appeals approved their decision to force me to reimburse them $100,000 for printing costs. From what I understand, the granting of costs like that is never done when it’s in a battle between an individual and a government, and especially in a case where we might have won. It’s usually in a case where there are two private parties and one just brings on these frivolous claims and lawsuits, so to try to work to stop them you levee printing costs, legal fees and all. But to do it in this case is outrageous. I think they were trying to send a message to others in New York—don’t try to take on the state. We’re going to beat you down, you’re going to lose, and we’re going to punish you.

I really just wanted to make a difference in how eminent domain is used in New York State. If this is upheld, it will make things worse for everyone. And this whole sorry case will go into the books of what is referred to as making bad law.

B&W: If the Supreme Court were to refuse to hear the case, what would be the time frame for the Columbia’s takeover of Tuck-It-Away?

NS: Our understanding is that once we submit the case, the opposing party—New York state—has 30 days to submit their response and then by the year’s end we’ll hear one way or the other. When they make their decision it’s just a one sentence, either “we accept the case” or “we won’t accept the case.” So we could be gone less than a year from now.

B&W: Demolition is already going on in Manhattanville. What has it been like for you to watch some of the buildings around you in the neighborhood kind of...

NS: Go down? It’s remarkable, especially in the last several months. The University’s been moving very fast to demolish buildings. It’s disheartening. I’m beginning to see that if things don’t turn around and go our way, this business and everything in it will be demolished as well without a second thought.
Dear Sweetheart,

Hope things are going well there in the Big Apple. I hope you’re getting sleep in the city that never sleeps! We all miss you over here on the homefront. Jasper’s keeping me company as I write—he’s been very affected by your absence. He tinkled on your wardrobe two days ago.

Mom and I just got back from dinner at the Olive Garden. Italian food—not for me. Mom loves it though. Keeps talking about jet-setting to Rome like Julia Roberts in that movie. Forget the name...it’s about divorced white women. Cry Eat Love? Jasper’s howling; he agrees.

Got that text about your asthma. You’re on the Columbia Plan, so you’re not covered for health problems outside of pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, and headaches—no luck there, I’m afraid. I did talk to some nice gal named Maureen who said you should just pop in whenever, though.

Actually, now that I think about it, Maureen was with that writing center. The woman I spoke to at Columbia health hung up on me. Well, the first time she put me on hold and it got disconnected. The second time I asked to speak to a specialist, and she got upset because she thought I was saying she wasn’t special enough. So that solves that mystery. Next time you go in, please tell Simone I didn’t know her boyfriend called her that and I’m sorry for bringing up his memory.

The point is, you can’t take these things personally. They probably give everyone Tylenol and contraceptives when they come in, just preemptively. I think you need to march in there and tell them what’s what, just like your mother did at Olive Garden. Don’t throw glass or anything, but be direct.

Say, have you ever watched Project Runway? It’s that new show with the model and these young designers and many of them are gay. Of course I didn’t grow up with that, but now cheese comes out of a can. Times are different. Anywho I believe it just premiered. Great stuff. Your mom found it on Lifetime, which is advertised as a channel for women, but is really a channel for anyone with a heart. Mom’s always got it on, and you know how she gets when you want to change the channel. So I’ve really come around to it.

By the way honey, congratulations again on finding a job! Is President Bollinger nice? He looks nice. He looks like he’s out of a Normal Rockwell. Mom tells me you’re working with his dog in some sort of therapeutic capacity? I thought she got that wrong. She seemed adamant. I don’t know anyone else who’s got a pet therapist, but who am I to judge a benevolent leader of the people. You could even maybe ask President Bollinger to talk to Health Services. I’m sure he’d march right down there and fix everything in a jiffy. If he’s not too busy helping other students, that is.

Which reminds me, please look into on-campus housing again. I know you lost the lottery, but I hate to think you don’t have your own bed right now. Everyone here’s just reeling from the news about your apartment. I guess you have to break a few eggs to make that Manhattanville omelet. Did the landlord explain housing options after the complex got condemned? Herb’s daughter-in-law, Sheila, has a friend who lives in Staten Island. She said you’re more then welcome to stay with her. Might be worth looking into. I think there’s a two-story Olive Garden there.

Jasper’s asleep now. Your mom’s been drinking for a while, I think I’m going to join her for a nightcap. Go Lions!

We miss ya,
Dad

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Illustration by Maddy Kloss
The Lesser-Known Lincoln

A REVIEW OF THE FIERY TRIAL: ABRAHAM LINCOLN AND AMERICAN SLAVERY
BY HANNAH LEPOW

The Fiery Trial:
Abraham Lincoln and American Slavery
by Eric Foner
W.W. Norton & Company, Inc.
October 4, 2010 / $29.95

Eric Foner, distinguished Civil War and Reconstruction historian, Dewitt Clinton Professor of History, and Columbia lifer (CC ’63, CSAS ’69) prefaces his new book by admitting that there is no shortage of Lincoln biographies on bookshelves today. (A few notable ones even bear his name on their spines.) Nevertheless, come October, The Fiery Trial: Abraham Lincoln and American Slavery will join the weighted shelves of Lincoln history. Breaking the recent trend of sensationalized biographies, Foner is not interested in Lincoln’s relationship with his wife or children or his medical or mental health. Instead, he gives a close reading of the president’s policy on American slavery by evaluating Lincoln’s words and actions. The Great Emancipator emerges from Foner’s analysis a dynamic, intellectually curious leader, a man willing to fundamentally change his perspective on the South’s peculiar institution. It is in this sense that The Fiery Trial stands out from its peers.

It is important to note that The Fiery Trial is no primer. Foner has written a Lincoln book for Lincoln lovers, and dense chapters on the political makeup of the 1850s offer little explanation for those who do not already know something about the Know-Nothing party. And while Foner pays due deference to Lincoln’s rhetorical highlights, the book does not focus its close reading on the Gettysburg Address or the Second Inaugural. The strength of The Fiery Trial is in its research—quotes from major historical figures such as Massachusetts Senator Charles Sumner and columnists from the New York Times join the voices of letter-writing citizens and small, abolitionist presses to support Foner’s conclusions, painting a fuller picture of the struggles within antebellum America than simply focusing on Lincoln’s most famous words would. While this meticulous detail can at times read abstrusely, the tightly-packed narrative is informative and forward-moving. It is not necessarily a quick read, but it is a propelling one.

While Foner does not move his narrative beyond Lincoln’s words and actions (only in the epilogue does he dedicate a few pages to criticism of the president’s successor, Andrew Johnson), his analysis centers on issues remarkably similar to our own. The first abolitionists were Christian evangelicals—a group now less beloved by liberals, but still ideological radicals highly visible in the public square. And change was, and still is, the catchword of the day. Foner quotes Senator Timothy O. Howe of Wisconsin advising his nephew: “...Don’t anchor yourself to any policy. Don’t tie up to any platform. The very foundations of the government are cracking... No mere policy or platform can outlast this storm.”

As the widening divisions between left and right once again shake American politics, it is Foner’s emphasis on Lincoln’s pragmatism—a quality that President Obama often cites as a key source of inspiration—that most clearly resonates with the reader. Rather than aligning himself with any particular party or ideology, Lincoln’s “firmness in the right,” as he said in his Second Inaugural, guided his actions. The Fiery Trial’s release is timed to the 150th anniversary of Lincoln’s election in 1860, and even the title—from one of Lincoln’s messages to Congress, urging its members to realize how their actions would affect history and be remembered by it—serves as a fulcrum between past and present, emphasizing Lincoln’s continued relevance.
Global University

A review of *The Great Brain Race*

By Claire Sabel

*The Great Brain Race: How Global Universities are Reshaping the World*

By Ben Wildavsky
Princeton University Press
April 2010 / $26.95

Coming in fourth nationally, Columbia University achieved its highest ranking ever in this year’s *U.S. News and World Report* list of the nation’s best colleges and universities. The August publication of the list gave students, faculty, and administrators plenty of reason to celebrate, but the race to the top of these rankings is only one leg of a much larger, global race that is increasingly pitting American colleges and universities against their international peers.

Author Ben Wildavsky chronicles this growing globalized competition within higher education in his new book, *The Great Brain Race: How Global Universities are Reshaping the World*. Tracing key trends in education since World War II, Wildavsky argues that undergraduate and graduate institutions at home and abroad are escalating the same kind of consumer-driven race for global dominance that has characterized the corporate world for decades. Students are the new consumers, and academia is the latest commodity to be had.

The U.S. education sector is at the head of this Great Brain Race in many ways, according to Wildavsky. Elite American research universities are the most desired destinations among international students, and the U.S. attracts up to two-thirds of all the world’s graduate students. The U.S. also pumps more money into higher learning than any other country in the world, spending more than double the percentage of its GDP on post-secondary education that China, India, the European Union, and Japan do.

Columbia ought to come in near the head of the class by these measures—of the more than 2,000 U.S. colleges and universities reporting international student enrollment, Columbia ranks third in attracting the most students from abroad, and its sizable endowment enables it to finance one of the biggest annual university budgets in the nation.

But when it comes to naming the leaders of the Great Brain Race, Wildavsky skips Columbia and instead heads downtown to Washington Square Park. There, under the leadership of President John Sexton, New York University is pioneering the development of “satellite campuses,” off-shoot schools that seek to mirror in other countries the presence of the main university.

Unlike, say, Columbia’s French studies program at Reid Hall in Paris, a satellite campus is more than a single department with a branch housed overseas in a far-flung building or two. These are not simple study-abroad programs. Instead, a satellite campus is intended to be a self-contained college in its own right, operating separately in a host country while still maintaining close ties to its American counterpart. NYU’s Abu Dhabi campus, for instance, will have all “the research and creative power of a major research university” when it opens for classes this semester, the university has said. It will grant degrees indistinguishable from those of the Washington Square campus, and it will have its own faculty who can transfer to and from NYU’s main New York campus. Although
the initial student body is expected to be almost entirely from the United Arab Emirates, the satellite campus hopes eventually local students will make up as little as 40 percent of the population, along with people from the rest of the Middle East, India, and the U.S.

If this satellite campus concept sounds familiar, that might be because it has much in common with commercial chains like McDonald’s and Hilton Hotels. Like any major corporation, NYU is seeking to establish itself as a worldwide brand—the dream is a “global network university,” where students can spend several semesters in New York and several in Abu Dhabi, or at another of the future locations in Europe and Asia envisioned by NYU administrators. But this trend goes beyond NYU, and is certainly not the one-off project of an ambitious university. Wildavsky cites a report identifying 162 such branch campuses around the world, primarily offshoots of universities in the U.S., U.K., and Australia.

This bold concept of a globe-trotting undergraduate career, however, is a far cry from a Columbia education, where a highly demanding Core Curriculum can make it difficult for students to go abroad. Kathleen McDermott, director of Columbia’s Office of Global Programs, defended the Core Curriculum in an e-mail interview as a way to prime students for study abroad, claiming that its linguistic requirement and Global Core classes offer insightful preparation, adding that students can earn credit toward senior projects while abroad. In comparison to other institutions, however, she acknowledged that “Columbia has decided on an approach of leaving a small footprint” in other countries, recognizing that Columbia’s firm roots in Morningside Heights create a different kind of university that prefers to limit its financial and physical commitments to bettering its core institutions at home.

How flexible Columbia’s course of study should be is another debate, but it seems that regardless of the university’s study-abroad policies, the depth of its coffers, and the size of its international student body, Columbia is bucking the trends Wildavsky discusses rather than embracing them. Students from around the world come to study within the 116th Street gates, but they don’t have the same opportunities to leave campus and learn abroad. Could Columbia soon fall behind in the Great Brain Race, then? Following Wildavsky’s logic, perhaps so: “All of these [international] trends are hugely beneficial to the entire world,” he writes. “Increasing knowledge is not a zero-sum game.”

But McDermott dismissed the idea that Columbia is ignoring the outside world. Along with new initia-

tives to increase international faculty and students, agreements are in the works to establish joint-degree programs, similar to the one that currently exists with France’s Paris Institute of Political Science. These joint degrees differ from study-abroad, allowing students to spend significant amounts of time enrolled at multiple institutions instead of just visiting another school for a semester. McDermott also highlighted Columbia’s Global Centers—outposts in Beijing, Paris, Mumbai, and Amman—as “the perfect example of how Columbia wishes to interact with our international partners.”

These Global Centers are not to be confused with NYU’s satellite campuses, however. Vice President for Global Centers Dr. Ken Prewitt makes the distinction clear on the Global Centers Web site: “They are not satellite campuses, overseas profit centers, or operations under the umbrella of a partner institution,” he writes. Instead, they act more as points of departure for locally—based joint research and scholarship rather than an export of Morningside Heights. Columbia may not be resisting globalization, it seems, but it is resisting the transformation of education into the profit-driven, consumer commodity that Wildavsky describes.

Elsewhere, schools farther abroad than downtown Manhattan are also hoping to soon be nipping at Columbia’s heels in the Great Brain Race. Wildavsky addresses in his book the issues of creating new, world-class research universities from scratch, primarily the projects of governments in developing nations that want to compete internationally for the best research and attract the finest minds. China is a leader in this endeavor: between 1993 and 2004, the Chinese government identified 36 universities to develop into world-class institutions through immense funding and strategic development. These are massive developments in global academia on scales wholly unprecedented in the United States.

Columbia no doubt has played a crucial role in the history of American secondary education, but as Wildavsky’s book suggests, the future belongs to whoever can adapt and thrive in the increasingly globalized environment of academia. As students around the world act more and more like “intellectual shoppers” and as both governments and private companies make for-profit forays into education, Columbia will have to re-examine its own identity as an institution of higher learning to decide whether the Great Brain Race is a race worth winning. •
Measure for Measure

Bomb

A bomb went off.
An innocent spark
in a gas-filled room.
We heard it
a mile away—
over the bridge,
through the trees,
curling the grass
at our feet.

My father stood
still as the sky grew old.
He saw the smoke mix
with clouds, entangling
air. My body, free
of feeling; everything
flew to wind,
still arrested.
We pedaled, following
the sound of sirens
and worried breaths.
The driver already knew.
My father also.

John Rammelt sat
in the abandoned road, his flesh
bare. Rammelt: former
farm supply shop owner, now
lying in bed—veins pressed up
above his flesh, glistening
in clinical light, road flares
popping, crackling—
and all he could hear
were the remains
of the world
the instant before
the bomb.

—Joshua Szymanowski
DOMESTICATION

The difference between a llama and an alpaca seems to be a matter of coarseness of fur, a variation in stages of domestication, the tendency to act as a pack animal—or not.

I sink my fingers into their shaggy coats and cannot feel the difference, can think only that my heritage is on the library shelves; is in the breadbox; is a trunk full of dresses my mother made,

as I roll out crusts for rhubarb pies and a llama peers at me over the hummingbird feeder. Like black beads, his eyes roll along with my rolling pin—

He hums, perhaps dreaming of my inheritance as he draws a line in the dirt with his hoof, suggests that he is fully-fleeced and I could go without planting new cotton, could shear the tufts behind his ears and along the bottom of his belly, bring him inside the house and feed him rhubarbs.

It rains, and he sticks his head between the branches of my potted plant; the dark and heavy leaves dripping as water runs down my kitchen window, and I assure him that he is not real and could conceivably be part or all alpaca—I couldn’t say which. It’s impossible to tell a history from the dirt in an animal’s fur.

—Erica Weaver
With fewer students on campus in summer, we need your help to find Blue & White Gossip. Tear off this back page along the perforation and cut out each of the words below, collected from Columbiana, the Core, and the most popular terms on Bwog. Then, assemble these fragments into sentences and send your creations to bwstaff@columbia.edu—we'll print the best in our next issue!

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MAKE YOUR OWN CAMPUS GOSSIP