THE BLUE AND WHITE

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theblueandwhite.org  CovErs: “Cram-Dunk” by Stephen Davan
In recent weeks I have found myself pondering a passage from a letter by Epicurus: “The truly wise man is the one who can be happy with a little.”

Though I know Epicurus was writing about material wealth and luxuries, I have come to realize that he may just as well have been advising the staff of The Blue & White this semester, for the freshly printed issue you now hold in your hands, dear reader, is our final issue of the academic year. We wish the facts were otherwise, but these pages—representing only our second publication of the Spring—will have to hold us until the end of the summer months.

Given these limitations, the staff and I decided the best way to “be happy with a little” was to pack this small issue full of our finest reporting, best writing, and loveliest illustrations—and I daresay we have.

Beginning with a specially expanded “Blue Notes” section, we take a look at the treasure trove of 1020’s lost-and-found (pg. 6), Columbia’s nationally known oral history department (pg. 7), the university yearbook (pg. 8), and a custom-made, Columbia-run “Dental Van” (pg. 8) that brings oral hygiene to underprivileged New York City children. Next, Senior Editor Sam Schube tackles the issue of student-athletes who struggle to balance sports and studies (pg. 18), but before writer Sean Zimmermann examines the past and present to learn more about the future of Gateway, the freshman engineering course (pg. 22). Illustrator Maddy Kloss charts a map of where to find Morningside Height’s best-known fictional characters (pg. 20). Also, don’t forget to read Senior Editor Mark Hay’s fascinating investigation of CAVA’s never ending battle for university support (pg. 26)—it has big implications for the quality of student health services—and a thought-provoking conversation with poet-activist Bryonn Bain, CC ’95 (pg. 30).

Of course, no issue would be complete without all your regular favorites like At Two Swords’ Length and Campus Characters. They’re here, too, though we won’t be for much longer—like good Epicureans, the staff and I must soon depart for the summer, but we hope you are as happy with this little issue as we are. See you in August!

Jon Hill
Editor-in-Chief

NOW AVAILABLE TO CHAT
Professor Gchat Statuses

Gayatri Spivak: By reading stories intended to be fictive or mytho-historic, I train my imagination. A trained imagination can see the outlines and layers of what we are given to know; rather than be at the mercy of rational choice minimally defined by what sells. A trained imagination can judge, a faculty intrinsic to democracy. Why do we need to minimize the role of the imagination in everything we consume & use the word “reality” to endorse fiction (“reality”-tv, virtual “reality?”). These matters will not be discussed. I will read, and describe what I do when I read, learning rhetorical terminology as I do so.

Peter Awn: Worshipping the albino marsupial that lives in the basement of Low Library

Jenny Davidson: A sabbatical combining the acoustical elegance of the aphorism with the force and utility of the load-bearing, tractional sentence of a more or less traditional vacation: http://jennydavidson.blogspot.com/

Kenneth Jackson: Bring me a bagel, you can do my index!

Joseph Massad: Considering the Palestinian question

Dorthy Denburg: <3 Hewitt Fro-Yo!!

Sudhir Venkatesh: Underground for the week, contact Barksdale to find me

Dan O’Flaherty: http://icanhascheezburger.com/

Jeffrey Sachs: In Kenya developing millennial goals, spotty connection

Robert Thurman: Communicating

REVELATION OF THE MONTH

Columbia’s private emergency medical service — formerly known as CAVA — started with a bang. A rag-tag band of quick thinkers decided to join up after shepherding an injured SEAS faculty member to the emergency room, but afterwards CAVA spent its first ten years languishing with little university support. They proved their mettle in 1972 when a rogue student, freshly suspended and wholly disgruntled, shot—shot! with a gun!—the dean of Columbia College outside Hamilton Hall. Nascent CAVA-ers rushed to the dean’s aid, commandeering a nearby station wagon and hauling him to St. Luke’s. The organization was widely credited for the dean’s quick recovery and has enjoyed university-wide recognition since. Two years later, the SEAS staff pulled a Ghostbusters and had a van retrofitted. CAVA had its first ambulance.
**PAPER PUSHERS (HUMANIZING THE ORGANIZATION)**

Recognize some familiar inbox fodder? Match these real live human beings to the department listservs they represent.

| 1. Cynthia Cogdill   | a. Senior Associate Director Intercultural Resource Center | g. Associate Director Columbia College |
| 2. Monika Kowalczykowski | b. Director Center for Career Education | h. Undergraduate Creative Writing Columbia University |
| 3. Janine deNovais  | c. Administrative Assistant Department of English and Comparative Literature | i. Program Coordinator Office of Academic and Research Programs The Earth Institute |
| 4. Christina Rumpf | d. Program Coordinator Heyman Center for the Humanities | j. Assistant Director Office of Pre-Professional Advising |
| 5. Michael Mallick  | e. Associate Director Office of Pre-Professional Advising |
| 6. Marta Esquilin  | f. Program Coordinator Heyman Center for the Humanities |
| 7. Darleny E. Cepin | g. Associate Director Columbia College |
| 8. Niamh O'Brien  | h. Undergraduate Creative Writing Columbia University |
| 9. Nathalie Neptune | i. Program Coordinator Office of Academic and Research Programs The Earth Institute |
| 10. Jonah G. Cardillo | j. Assistant Director Office of Pre-Professional Advising |

ANSWERS: 1j, 2i, 3g, 4h, 5c, 6a, 7e, 8b, 9f,
It’s just like an Ivy League Eugene O’Neill play,” says Tim Monaghan of the trails of lost luxuries left behind weekly by Columbia students. While bartending 9 p.m. to 5 a.m., Monday to Thursday, Monaghan witnesses students leave behind everything from keys to computers after their “weekly performances of privilege and waste” at 1020.

“They leave some really nice stuff here,” explains Monaghan. “London Fog leather jackets, umbrellas you buy at Saks Fifth Avenue, expensive jewelry, oh you name it.” He spills a beer cup of keys onto the bar. “Where are they going without these?” he asks, holding up an electric car key.

“And these, these are the best,” he says, as he pulls out a stack of credit cards accumulated since New Year’s. A ring bejeweled with a diamond rose slips into his hand when he removes the rubber band-bound wad of plastic.

One of the most recurring left-behinds is the laptop -- a sure sign a Columbian was here. “They never claim them,” sighs Monaghan, “they just don’t give a shit. We just send ‘em to the Salvation Army.” If the study aids seem out of place, they aren’t the only necessities students leave behind. Bras, panties, prescription drugs, and birth control pills found in and outside the bar’s bathrooms form a collection of forbidden fruits hinting at the more passionate side of Columbia students’ weekends.

Monaghan leads the way into the back room, a veritable vault of the most treasured props left behind: a violin, a navy jacket that he insists is the sign of “a real military man,” and a pair of tennis shoes, among others. But even those pale in comparison to the back room’s pièce de résistance: “Someone forgot a friend once,” he claims. “We were cleaning up and he was asleep in the back couch. We didn’t even see him there.”

—Sarah Camiscoli
Interview by Daniella Urrutia
Illustration by Abigail Santner
Perched high up in the rafters of Butler Library, the Columbia Oral History Research Office is a resource known to few undergraduates but a Mecca for professional historians and writers. Along one wall runs a shelf of books by authors ranging from Robert Caro to Alan Brinkley, all works whose bibliographies include a reference to Columbia’s Oral History collection. According to Mary Marshall Clark, the program’s director, “everybody who’s writing on the 20th Century uses the collection.”

As well they should. The Columbia Oral History department, founded as the first of its kind in the world by Alan Nevins in 1948, houses over 7,000 transcribed interviews with notable figures, from Lauren Bacall to Malcolm X. That’s about 1.5 million pages of transcript, or 17,000 hours of tape.

Although oral history as a tradition has been around since Herodotus, the modern discipline is not interested in looking backward, like traditional history, but rather focusing on the present and informing future research. “We’re extremely aware of the present,” says Clark. “We want to find out how memories are formed.” In the wake of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, Clark spearheaded an oral history project interviewing local New Yorkers, “people the newspapers would have missed.” She hopes that when historians turn their lenses back on the tragedy their work will be enhanced by these individuals’ voices.

At least one undergraduate is taking advantage of all the department has to offer. Mujib Mashal, CC ’11, was looking for a way to share the stories of his grade school teachers in his native Kabul, Afghanistan, when he stumbled upon oral history. His project, which he is currently in the process of getting online, comprises 12 hours of video footage of four educators sharing their stories. Mashal believes oral history has a greater role in Afghan culture. “In a country that’s been in a state of war for the past 30 years it’s hard to have a stable archive,” he explains. “A factual history cannot be written yet. So how do you preserve the stories for when the time is right for it to be written?” Through oral history, he believes, “the history that will be written when the time is right will be much richer.”

—Hannah Lepow
future historians ever decide to research Columbia life in the early 21st century, it is doubtful they will have archives of the countless blog posts, tweets, and Facebook status updates that chronicle modern life today. Far more likely, they will instead turn to The Columbian, the university’s 350-page, hardcover-bound yearbook that needs no electricity and is never at risk of a hard-drive failure.

Like a time capsule, the massive tome attempts to “capture the essence of the academic year—the events, the scandals, the people, the places,” says this year’s Editor-in-Chief Cliff Massey, CC ’10, who leads a staff of a dozen in producing the yearbook out of an office in Lerner’s fifth floor Student Government Office. Planning begins in September and continues through the end of the spring semester as the staff chooses the focus and content for every page of the yearbook, a difficult task. “In athletics, the content usually remains the same from year to year,” he says, explaining that the yearbook staff often runs into trouble trying to adapt Columbia’s hanging arts, culture, and nightlife scenes for a traditional Student Life section.

But these special features are what the staff hopes can keep The Columbian relevant in a time when parties, events, and other memories can be relived instantly on the Internet through countless photos and videos. “With the advent of Facebook,” Massey admits, “I think interest in the yearbook has somewhat declined, as people feel like they can look at photos online to remember their time at Columbia.” On average, only 50 percent of the senior class elects to purchase a copy.

“My mom told me to order one,” says Alex Marchysyn, CC ’10, “But I really am ambivalent about it. She just said that if I didn’t get one, I’d wish I had.”

Still, come each May, their parents have submitted embarrassing baby photo ads and shelled out $100 for a copy, which arrives by mail several months after graduation. In addition, Massey notes, “I find that there are many recent alumni who send me e-mails asking if they can purchase their yearbook, since they didn’t order it by graduation. So it seems Facebook isn’t enough.”

And for some, nostalgia has already won out: “I figure, in 20 years, I can look back and see how goofy I was,” predicts Rich Barzaga, CC ’10, “And realize that nothing has changed.”

—Hannah Serena Goldstein

When confronted earlier this year with new accusations of steroid use, Yankees powerhouse Alex Rodriguez kept his mouth shut—an ironic move for a man whose concern for open mouths all over New York led him to donate $250,000 last July to Columbia’s Community DentCare Network. Established in 1996, Community DentCare is the College of Dentistry’s outreach program, with staff operating in Upper Manhattan and the Bronx.

The jewel in this pale-blue dental crown is a van—the “Dental Van.” This specially constructed, Winnebago-style vehicle travels to various grade schools throughout the network’s territory offering dental consultations and services at a reduced fee. Dr. Stephen Marshall, director of the network, explained that the van program has been operating for the better part of 10 years, but it was at the dedication of the program’s most recent vehicular incarnation that A-Rod announced his generous contribution.

Inside, a Disney princess shower curtain hides the driver’s seat and posters of Marvel and Disney characters line the plastic walls. “All of this,” says long-time driver and general handy-man John McCormick, “was the idea of the girls,” as he points to Grullon, another assistant, and their boss, Dr. Asma Muzaffar. “These are great kids we are serving. If they come once and are no longer afraid of the dentist, we did it. Just do it. Like Nike, you know?”

Today the van is parked at the Sisulu-Walker Charter School of Harlem, and a dental student dressed as a dental hygiene-obsessed Spiderman entertains those waiting. Laughing in her white lab coat matched with leather thigh-highs—cue grade-school swooning—Dr. Muzaffar points to the shower curtain and says, “They call me Snow White! They have to make it fun. Magical. Make it exceptional!” Third-grader Callieje Tesis confirms their success, comparing the Dental Van’s visit to one by Chris Brown the day before. “Chris Brown is not as exciting,” she says. “I got my teeth cleaned and a toy dinosaur!”

—Michael Adame
Oh, to be alive and young in the City in the Spring-time! Verily Veritas verily asks his readers, what could be better? Long promenades down the Broad Way and champagne brunches in our fine metropolis’s grand parks - apologies to Olmstead and Vaux, a distant cousin of V’s, and their ‘KEEP OFF THE LAWN’ edict but, come on, ol’ Coz, those manicured lawns are meant for gnoshing. Across the edenic meads of our McKim, Mead etc, etc campus, the cherry blossoms are in full bloom and the young flâneurs, in their signature flannel, should be out in full force on the steps of Low Library and along Riverside Drive. And yet recently Verily noted a surprising dearth of students from our fair university out on the town taking in the air. Why could this be, Old V wondered? Had they already retreated to their country houses? To their week-end homes in West Egg? (sadly, Verily only rents, humiliatingly, in West Hampton). To The Continent? By no means does Verily intend to suggest summering in Manhattan. What with the humidity and the hormones, the city becomes a cesspool of venereal disease during the vernal months. A so called staycation, a villainously violated vacation, simply will not do. But surely this is a bit early in the season to be packing one’s valise, no?

The other night, over a truly marvelous dinner at The Oak Room (Oh, Verily does love The Oak Room!), old V and a dear friend visiting from New Haven got to talking about this phenomenon, which the old Bulldog (the rascal!) had also noticed at Yale. That laughable parvenu attributed it all to the start of racing season, but Verily assured him that no one has made the old pilgrimage to Saratoga in ages. Due to a genetic predisposition of sorts that affects the entirety of the Veritas clan with heritable upturned noses - it’s a medical condition! - the smell of manure is nearly as reprehensible to V’s olfactory receptors as humidity is to his coiffure. Ever the optimist, though, Verily deems this sensitivity, which accounts for his superb viticultural and oenological aptitude and his intolerance for the race track, nothing short of a mixed blessing.

No, no, if knew anything of the weekend yens of New York’s scholarly elite, he knew that they certainly had not headed to that nebulous North Country region, best suited for the unshod, unshaven, and dare he say, un-brassiered denizens of Woodstock, Yaddo and who knows where else. Thoroughly unsatisfied with the logic of his Bridge-and-Tunnel supper date, Verily decided to conduct a bit of investigation. But had tastes possibly changed? Had Verily lost sight of the zeitgeist? Inconceivable! Had Columbia students forsaken Riverside and Alma Mater to spend their leisure time basking under the glorious Spring sun in, dare one speak the vile name, Morningside Park?

Where else, then, could Verily’s fellow academes have been? Faisant la grosse matinée? In this weather? For shame! Yet something told old Veritas that this must not be the case.

The very next day, Verily popped in to Butler Library, to speak to the archivist about venerable old Granddaddy Von Varrius’s manuscripts. And Lo! On the way to take care of this urgent piece of Veritas family business, Old V saw them! Verily had found the University! Veritas was dumbfounded. What of their social commitments? Invitations left to gather dust? It’s one thing to make one’s studies a priority, while it is quite another to drop off the social register. Why work so hard? Verily of course understands that not everyone had a post waiting at their father’s firm, but surely their fathers had friends!

Yet there they were – a veritable hive of intellectual industry; a seasonal hibernation quite different from the one Verily customarily takes in Cannes. A shocking discovery! It reminded Verily of a boar-hunting expedition he’d taken as a boy, whereupon in a moment of Romantic inspiration he overturned a stone to discover a hidden world of sun-starved maggots – all shockingly pale, but heretofore hidden from his view. And Verily has never been to Bavaria since. •
“After Buffalo, anything was going to be a step up,” says Melissa Repko, BC ’10, speaking of the summer she spent interning for the business section of The Buffalo News. “The work was great, but Buffalo is not a glamorous city.”

Despite her misgivings about Buffalo’s deficit in charm, Repko is not one for superficialities. After chasing news stories in Morningside Heights as a reporter for the Columbia Daily Spectator and serving as the paper’s Editor-In-Chief last year, Repko still maintains much of her Midwestern pragmatism, drawn from her roots in Ohio and tinged with an air of staid conscientiousness—she’s writing her thesis on the legislative presence of women in post-genocidal Rwanda.

With her short brown hair pulled back in an efficient, if unadorned, half ponytail, Repko refers to a trifecta of sacrifices to explain how she manages her duties at the Spectator and schoolwork simultaneously. When things get busy, which is just about always, “Eating, sleeping, showering are the first to go; for everyone else’s sake in the newsroom, I do my best with showering,” she laughs.

Pointing out a fundamental distinction between her own interests and commitment level and those of her fellow Speccies, Repko concedes, “a lot of people do Spec because they think it’s fun. But I’m in the minority; I had to be serious about it because I’m serious about journalism as a career.”

Early on in her tenure as EIC, Repko, concerned that her staff was getting “so caught up in the day-in, day-out logistics that we were forgetting to have fun,” organized a joint managing board-corporate board bowling excursion to Harlem Lanes. “I hadn’t really bowled since I was eight at a birthday party; I forgot the importance of having bumpers.” Repko admits, “There were a lot of gutter balls and I am pretty sure I got the lowest score!” Although Repko was made painfully aware of her imperfect hand-eye coordination that night, “it ended up being a great way to do something together besides putting out a paper, and I realized that putting out a paper was way easier for me than getting a strike!”

As the semester progressed, however, a decidedly serious, if not somber, atmosphere developed in the Spec newsroom, which Repko attributes to the economy. In the face of dwindling ad sales, the corporate board took a great deal of control. As a result, many new technological initiatives were put on the back burner. “I really was hoping to develop more multi-media and do more blogging,” explains Repko of her intentions for the Spectator website. “But we couldn’t make the kind of technological purchases I had hoped. We had to be more conservative with our budget for better or for worse, which often created resentment in the newsroom.”

“Times were tough,” says Repko’s successor, Ben Cotton, CC ’11, adding that clashes about the direction of the paper were inevitable. “This maybe led us to the October incident, as there was some sense that the organization hadn’t figured out how it was supposed to be progressing as a whole.”

“The October incident,” as Bwog reported it, refers to when “a group of managing board members, including now-former online editor Ryan Bubinski, [had] expressed unhappiness with the leadership of Repko and managing editor Elizabeth Simins and [had] been meeting to discuss changes to the managing and corporate board structures... When Repko and Simins refused to allow discussion of the proposals at a staff meeting, Bubinski decided to take the website down until the demands put forward by the managing board members were met.”

Although Cotton indicates that “there were mistakes made by many, and I’m sure Melissa has her own regrets about how the process played out,” Repko her-
self maintains that the October incident “was a learning experience for me. I don’t want to label what was really just a blip as the biggest challenge of the job. The biggest challenge is always putting out the paper, making sure that our coverage is fair, and it’s easy to read, and it’s interesting, the biggest challenge is getting people to pick up the paper, to turn to columbiaspectator.com, and to care about what we’re doing. Getting people to listen is 90 percent of the battle.”

A self-professed nostalgic person by nature, Repko says she has used this semester as time to reflect on her tenure as editor-in-chief. “By the end, you recognize your limits. Could I have done a better job? Sure. But you know what, I’m proud of my time. What I learned I’ll take with me and if I ever become an editor again, I’ll understand it better. For now, though, a year is enough.”

—Mariela Quintana

SUE YANG

After almost a full year as CCSC president, Sue Yang, CC ’10, is resigned to one thing. “I’m the ‘Two Minute Toot’ girl,” she says, referring to her brief weekly emails to her Columbia College constituency. Yang, who laughs and smiles as often as the multiple exclamation points on her e-mails would indicate, shrugs. “I guess it’s not such a bad thing to be remembered for.”

Yang, though, does much more than toot. The archetypal Columbia overachiever, she established an international exchange program with Chinese, Eastern European, and Middle Eastern universities during her tenure on the Ivy Council and served as co-president of the Economics Society. She currently teaches an entrepreneurial class to middle schoolers and is an intramural volleyball champion.

Still, she maintains a pragmatic view of her many commitments. “These are student organizations. Let’s not take it too seriously and get all dramatic,” she says, gesticulating with her fork. “At the end of the day it shouldn’t consume your life. It should be complementary to what you want to do.”

And Yang knows what she wants to do. After graduation, she’s heading to Dubai as a strategy consultant for McKinsey. “It’s kind of like the career version of liberal arts,” she explains. Following that two-year commitment, Yang has a place waiting for her at Harvard Business School.

Basically, Yang would be insufferable, if it weren’t for her humility. “Sue is the most humble person I’ve ever met,” says Melissa Im, CC ’11, who has known Yang since the two served together on the board of the Key Club International during high school. “Honestly, that girl does so much, but she doesn’t tell anyone about it.”

Im isn’t just defending her friend. Yang didn’t mention Harvard — Im did. Yang also downplayed her volleyball success, the scope of her responsibilities on the Ivy Council, and, while this denial may not be as humble as the others, her dependence on coffee.

“I just drink one cup in the morning,” Yang insists, as she sips from an innocent bottle of water. Im laughs. “Sue is obsessed with coffee. She hiked up a mountain in Panama just to take a picture with coffee beans. I have the picture – do you want to see it?”

Im, who has also lived with Yang for the past two years, occasionally leads the “put Sue to bed” campaign, as she calls it, in which the members of EC 1216 try to get Yang to sleep. “Sometimes she gets mad at us, but if she does pass out on her bed, we’ll tuck her in and turn off her phone,” Im says. “I do like a siesta,” Yang admits.

Yang’s other tastes have changed over the years. Almost four years ago, Bwog RoomHopped Yang’s John Jay single and uncovered a treasure trove of purses – 13 in total — and “a shrine to accessories.” Yang swears she’s left her shopaholic days behind. Im agrees. “When I first met Sue she was wearing white suspenders and a tie. She’s toned it down to a more professional place.”

Purses aside, Yang still makes time for fun. Born in Shanghai but raised in Detroit by Chrysler employee parents, she gushes, “I love driving. Fast driving. Racing.”

And now, on the cusp of leaving the Columbia community behind, Yang is moving full speed ahead. “It’s my goal to get to all seven continents. I only have South America and Antarctica to go. I want to go skydiving one day. My motto is Ready, Fire, Aim. It’s worked well so far.”

—Hannah Lepow

Illustrations by Wendan Li
Ommmm. It’s Monday morning and after some quick deep breathing I’m centered and ready to go. Martha Stewart got where she is on three hours of sleep a night and so will I – without that unfortunate interlude in the slammer. I’ve already landed a prime internship at Goldman Sachs, so I’m well on my way and eager to learn from the mistakes of my predecessors. As a proud feminist, I can tell you that’s what Gloria Steinem would call progress.

We’ve still got five days to go until casual Friday, so I dress to impress with dress pants and a blue v-neck. Sophisticated, flexible, and, above all, put together: before long, Goldman will give me my very own cubicle on the trading floor. My roommate came in pretty late last night, messing, no doubt, with my precariously balanced REM cycle, so I decide to leave her a note before I head out. That’s why we established “Roommate Rules” at the beginning of the year, right? So we have a code of conduct when conflicts arise. Best to plant it on her face to guarantee she’ll find it. After all, Hannah told me to tell her when she’s doing something that bothers me. And when something interrupts my precious few hours of shut-eye, it certainly bothers me.

Dear Hannah, please remember to tiptoe when you come in past 5 a.m.! I think I saw your birth control under the bed, you’ll probably need it for the rest of the week. Have a great day, or afternoon at least. And clean up bottles please!

Using Post-its is another habit I’ve cultivated at college. While juggling my many responsibilities and maintaining peace of mind to boot, it can be hard to keep track of what needs to be done and when. Time management skills are not only essential for preparing to manage hundreds, nay thousands, of future employees - simply keeping track of my day-to-day schedule at Columbia without a secretary requires serious effort. I have a personal Moleskine, a homework Moleskine, a goals and inspiration Moleskine, a grocery list Moleskine, and a BlackBerry to organize my Moleskines. Honestly, I don’t know how Hannah gets any homework done because her books always seem to be buried beneath dirty underwear and Roti leftovers.

Throwing caution to the wind and having one four-year-long Last Hurrah might seem like a blast, but it’s not healthy for body or mind, let alone your grades. In five years, I’ll be the one who’s laughing. I’ll be living in a Park Slope loft, complete with soaring views and roof access, while Hannah is struggling to make rent in Bushwick. Finishing college with a poor GPA and poorer health will leave her with problems hard to solve when she don’t have an allowance anymore.

As I get on the subway to Wall Street, I breathe in the sweet scent of subway grease and body odor and know only this: I am not just bound for success, I am success. In These Economic Times, I need to be miles ahead of the other Ivy grads, who are all trying to steal my cubicle. Leaving college with bright prospects and solid academic achievements under my belt will make it all the easier to get that corner office before I hit 30.

Later in the day when I return to the dorm and settle in for some light Turgenev, I notice that Hannah’s closet is even more of a mess than usual. The clutter of shell-bras and spaghetti straps reminds me of the bad middle school dances I was smart enough to skip even at the tender age of 13, and I simply cannot resist the urge to scrawl a reproachful Post-it. It’s for her own good. I’ll leave on her pillow, the only place she’ll be sure to find it:  

Grow up!
As I say to Claire each morning, “Turn the fucking alarm off, you bitch.”

Christ, why does she wake up so early every morning. I bet she went to bed last night at 10 p.m. or something, while I was making that last-minute run to International. (Shitty fake? Wear a low-cut shirt.) Malibu makes the best drinks. Brad... Brad, or JD? Anyway, he agreed with me. I have his phone number. And the area code is 917, so you know it’s legit. Have you ever been in the men’s bathroom of 1020? It was nice. But I don’t get why there was baby powder on the floor. Guys don’t use that, do they?

I had this great idea of how I could finance my new Parliaments thing. I go to Duane Reade, and I buy an American Express gift card with my Flex account. I tried to tell Claire about it – I know her Adderall habit is way more expensive, even though her SEAS “friend” apparently cuts her a deal – but she says it’s not responsible to use my parents’ money that way. She’s on financial aid. That’s always kind of awkward, especially when I want her to chip in on the vodka that I’m buying for our suite.

Damn it, Claire finished all her cereal. I mean, I totally can’t get enough of that flax bran stuff – she should really spring for some Frosted Flakes – but I would eat anything right now. Now I’m going to have to find quarters somewhere to get myself Poptarts in the vending machine. Luckily, Claire keeps all those rolls of quarters in her desk drawer. I don’t really know why.

I grab my bag and head out the door. I’m still wearing last night’s clothes, but whatever, I look hot in them. And anyway, I did put on a bra, I think. I hate being late to Science of Psych. I was just going to take it for my science requirement, but it actually tells you so much. The stereotype threat is totally true. I must have been conditioned to do bad in math or something. This is why I was so bad at math in high school. Thank God I took the ACTs instead.

I catch the last 30 minutes of the lecture, but I pretend to take a bunch of extra notes so I can be the last one left in the room when Justin, my hot TA, gets up to leave. We have a mind-brain connection. (And I’d love to move on to the behavioral one, if you know what I mean.) “Is there any way I can do extra credit,” I ask, tossing my hair. “I’m really into psych, but I don’t test well.”

He’s really understanding, because he’s so sensitive. Older guys just get me like that. He wants to go get iced coffee at Brownie’s to talk more about attachment theory. I have an appointment with my adviser, but I’ll blow it off. I can’t remember where her office is anyway. Freud is just so interesting. I embrace my urges. Fucking Claire should do that more often – talk about repression! I pull out my wallet to pay for my coffee and a sticky note falls out. Oh, maybe Claire left me a note. That’s so sweet. And I know she just bought a new pack of Post-its, she was raving about them the other day. That girl really needs to get a life.

Justin picks up the note and reads it aloud. “Grow up?” he asks.

“I’m not kidding,” I say. “Why would I?” I think I’m blushing a little bit.

“Why don’t I pay for your coffee,” Justin says. He pulls out his punch card and hands me my double mocha with a straw. “Let’s talk about your paper. I always like to get in deep right away.”
You wanna know how it happened, gumshoe?
It was daytime and I was late (typical). Packing those snacks for the subway always turns into AP Ziploc Baggies.

My low heels bolted down Low Steps toward a certain seven-story building on the east side of campus. Late wasn’t an option. My 417 IAB tricks wouldn’t fly in 714 Hamilton. See, in 714 Hamilton the chairs were arranged in a circle, the graduate student meant business, and late meant an F. Attendance was 100% of the grade. But to get to 714 Hamilton, you needed to bleed patience. Because unless you were a cyborg, to get to 714 Hamilton, you needed to take The Elevator.

Don’t look so scared kid, the story’s just getting started.

A stampede of brainless, walking skulls stormed out of the building just as I headed in. Snaking between canvas book bags, past the stained glass homage to Sophocles, I landed in front of The Doors. The Doors to... The Elevator.

A tiny bright dot lit the “up” button, mocking the gaggle waiting to ascend. There was the lost PhD student, perpetually confused. The skinny kid with cinna-bun headphones. The princess in pearls and loafers. The prick in loafers and cashmere. The don’t-look-at-me’s and the please-look-at-me’s, in cotton and neon, respectively. And then me. Late.

We stood, waiting. We’d all exchanged tight lipped smiles, checked our phones, checked our hair, watched each other check phones and hair. Minutes passed. Endangered species died. The Doors finally opened.

I had one foot in when a human seatbelt arm flung in front of me. “It’s going down,” said cinna-bun. “Thanks,” I say back. Sea Wolf, not bad. A ripple of sighs from the gaggle as they realized they’d been duped by the Vator.

Get used to it.

Back up to two, and this time we were playing for keeps. We filed in, until filing became crowding, and crowding became jamming, and some asshole in a popped collar flings a boat-shoed foot in to hold the door, allowing three more people into the swarm, all headed to the fourth floor. Not even the fifth, that is purgatory. The fourth. The prick’s index finger is white with the pressure – he’s hit the “door close” button so many times. And the princess is wedged between itchy neon tights and the PhD student’s weird canteen. A don’t-look-at-me runs out, whimpering. And I’m still late.

Up we go. The doors open on floor—three? The elevator rolls its collective eye. An old woman with a walker gets on. The entire elevator is going to hell. The old woman smells like garlic. This is hell. A smile intended for cinna-bun catches hold of the prick instead. He winks back. Heat rises faster than we. I contemplate cremation.

Floor four. The four Polo musketeers get off. The original gaggle breathes a sigh of relief, bonded by a common enemy.

And then the lights go out. And someone screams. ✰
This space used to be a machine shop,” says Darryl Hell, technical director and co-founder of New York-based artists’ initiative Chashama, as he walks the halls of its Morningside studio space at 461 West 126th Street. “Before that it was a brewery.” The stained bricks of 19th century industry could easily hide the studios and exhibition spaces within, but the front entrance has been painted over in vibrant colors that catch the eye. While construction crews restore the exterior, over a dozen artists fill the building with what Chashama considers some of the most innovative art now being created in the city.

Chashama (Farsi for “foresight”) has garnered both success and recognition for its innovative mission: the organization takes over temporarily unused or abandoned buildings and transforms them into studio and performance spaces, leased to artists for highly subsidized rents. Founded 13 years ago by New York artist Anita Durst in memory of deceased director and playwright Reza Abdoh, “Chashama was one of the original people before the pop-up gallery and the pop-up art space came in vogue due to the real estate crash,” says Hell. “That was always our model.”

The organization now runs 12 facilities in Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Queens, a success story Hell attributes to their willingness to renovate dormant spaces themselves. “We’re an economic solution for landowners to be able to rent their space for more money than they would otherwise get.” Now, Hell says, some landowners go out of their way to approach the organization with space offers. “Before, we were limited to a space that was beat up from the feet up.” He says of 461, before Chashama moved in, “it looked like hell.”

Inside 461, Chashama has maintained as much of the spare beauty of the original space as possible while also making it feel welcoming to the artists who use it. Rows of removable walls divvy up the ground floor into a labyrinthine gallery. Larger spaces are used for exhibitions and performances, smaller spaces act as studios. Upstairs, former offices with colored glass doors provide a few artists with private space. Hell, who manages the organization’s facilities, betrays an affection for the building’s physical structure. He takes a paternal pride especially in the imperfections of the uninsulated, unlit top floor.

Hell stresses that the mission of the organization is as devoted to supporting neighbourhoods in the five boroughs as it is to providing a much-needed break to the city’s cash-strapped artists. “Chashama works to help reinvigorate areas that used to be art hubs for the average people, for the community,” Hell says. “As opposed to, ‘We’re the art scene and we’re going to move you all out.’”

The organization’s spaces in Brooklyn and Queens highlight the diversity of the artists Chashama serves as well and its community focus. While Hell acknowledges the tension an influx of artists can cause in a community, he is quick to note that Chashama works hard to balance the spatial needs of artists and the needs of the neighborhood surrounding their studios. As a result, community development groups across the city have welcomed the organization into their locales.

Of the artists Chashama houses, Hell says, “I’d say that we pride ourselves on being multicultural, multidisciplinary, multigenerational,” and that diversity distinguishes Chashama from other artist groups in New York. Chashama also forgoes any focus on an artist’s credentials, formal training, or style. “Our main focus is the artwork,” says Hell. “What does the work say? What is the person’s vision? And as long as they have a vision, that’s all we really care about.”
F.C. Economics

Sunil Gulati’s double life
By James Downie

It’s a beautiful August day in Mexico City. The temperature is a balmy 78 degrees; the lung-choking smog is blown away by a cool breeze. In short, it’s a great day for a visit from an American.

Or it would be, if not for the 105,000 crazed fans packed inside the Estadio Azteca, the crown jewel of Mexican soccer. Millions more are packed around café televisions, all eager to see their beloved El Tri take on the hated gringoes from north of the border. And tensions are running high: a place in the 2010 World Cup is at stake. In the words of one sportswriter, “Michael Vick could crash a PETA rally and get a friendlier reception than the Americans did at Azteca.” For United States Soccer Federation President Sunil Gulati, whose suite was the target of thrown soft drinks, batteries, and other doses of hospitality, it’s a far cry from the main venue of the other half of his life – 501 Schermerhorn.

Columbia does not lack professors whose renown extends outside academia, but unlike most of these notables, Gulati’s on-campus identity is entirely separate from his off-campus self. Within the Columbia bubble, he’s a popular lecturer in the economics department. His yearly section of “Principles of Economics” routinely draws a couple hundred students to Schermerhorn’s largest lecture hall, and his closing remarks each semester set the standard for other professors. Off campus, he’s just been re-elected president of the United States Soccer Federation, the American governing body for the world’s most popular sport.

“The two lives don’t intersect very often,” Gulati says in his IAB office, surrounded by athletic memora-
"I've become the institutional memory here. At history department meetings when someone comes up with a ‘brilliant new idea,’ I'm the one who says, ‘We tried that in 1987. It didn’t work then and it won’t work now.’"

Some professors like Eric Foner—CC '63, and Ph.D. '69—have progressed from freshmen to grad students to storied intellectual giants, all in shadow of Butler Library. Foner typifies the Columbia ‘lifer’: wielding influence far beyond the department, Foner maintains friendships with classmates like Jonathan Cole, provost and dean emeritus, as well as Robert Kraft, donor of the Kraft Center. He also advises young bureaucrats on issues like the continued impact of the 1968 riots.

Indeed, administrative responses to student protests still manifest in ways only veterans perceive. Foner describes how the academic calendar was born in the wake of '68; classes used to begin in late September and adjourn in late May, but after several balmy-aired protests administrators declared that “students got more riled up in the warm months.” Rebellion also prompted more substantive change as admissions increased minority recruitment and the history department inaugurated the first course in African-American history—taught, naturally, by Foner himself. Foner presented the value of hindsight simply: “They weren’t here, I was. I saw it.”

Foner’s gravitas stems both from his long history and from his tenured status, and he has been supported emotionally, academically, and financially by the university. As budget cuts reduce tenure, Zane Mackin, GS '01, Italian Ph.D. candidate and Lit Hum instructor, foresees a future in which today’s Eric Foners will struggle to snag an adjunct position at whatever university will take them.

“We don’t have job security, they pay us peanuts, and health benefits are practically non-existent,” says Mackin. Between 1980 and now, the percentage of all university classes taught by tenured professors has dropped from 75 percent to less than 25 percent.

Mackin particularly fears the shift will adversely impact the faculty’s ability to criticize the administration without fear of repercussions, as professors like Foner do. “If we’re dedicated to inquiry, we need that freedom of speech,” Mackin emphasized. “It’s disappointing to realize the administration is open to questioning everything in the classroom, but if it threatens the Columbia brand or the financial bottom line they’re not interested in rocking the boat whatsoever.”

Lifers also promote institutional longevity. Norman Christ, professor of physics, CC '65, and Ph.D. '66, remembers darker days in the Physics department when prime candidates were scared away by the University’s humanities focus and Manhattan’s decline. “There was a deliberate change—there’s the Rabi Scholar Program that targets high school students in the sciences,” Christ reflected. “The effects of this have been breathtaking.” Having seen the alternative firsthand, Christ values the bright young physicists he works with all the more.

Victoria Rosner, CC '90, Ph.D. '99, often finds an opportunity to tell her students of her history at Columbia, so “they know that I was in their position once,” Rosner explained. “Hamilton Hall is always Hamilton Hall—although they did clean it up a bit.” Rosner finds that the common experience can bridge the gap between lecturer and student.

As more grad students flounder, the legacy of lifers may too soon vanish. “If there’s anything you’d rather do than this, even if it’s something like being a rock star or a poet, do it,” Mackin cautioned. “The odds are probably equitable to what we’re doing here.”
In the world of Columbia athletics, your word is your bond. Since the Ivy conference forbids athletic scholarships in the name of academic integrity, students are not bound by the typical Division I bargain that guarantees tuition, room, and board in exchange for performance. This opens up a curious loophole: Ivy Leaguers are free to quit at any time, and members quit with surprising regularity. On the wrestling team, which has a particularly high rate of attrition, one team member estimated that up to 15 wrestlers have quit in the last three years.

“Around Christmas, team morale just goes down the shitter,” says former wrestler Mike Pushpak, CC ’11. Athletes are forced to sacrifice Christmas dinners and long January vacations to practice, an expectation that drains team morale during the height of the season. Rather than relax their expectations, the coaches have instituted a new “100 percent or zero percent” policy in response to low energy: if wrestlers aren’t willing to walk the tightrope that is Ivy League wrestling—and succeed at it—they are quickly removed from the team roster.

Part of giving 100 percent means maintaining what the team’s coaches call a “robust” academic schedule. The wrestling team admits recruits using “the Index,” a formula amalgamating a recruit’s various academic measures such as class rank, GPA, and, most importantly, SAT scores, to meet University requirements. “We have a kid who just broke 1,000,” says one wrestler who wished to remain anonymous, necessitating the odd 2300-scoring recruit who can “carry” the team’s SAT average. While the low-scorers can certainly give the required 100 percent on the mat, they tend to be left behind in the classroom, making the athletics-academics balance that much harder to maintain.

Certain players make it their duty to keep members from falling off the tightrope. A major part of this effort is the systematic identification of flagging members. “On a team where quitting is a problem, these kids continue the problem,” says another wrestler.

Once struggling wrestlers do fall off the tightrope, they essentially become untouchables. Some are seen as a threat to the remaining team—with more free time to spend sleeping and drinking, they can easily tempt away active players, especially roommates and suite-mates. “When you live with someone who quit you are also affected,” says the same anonymous wrestler. “They are seen as potentially poisonous. I like to call them ‘Team Cancer.’” This wrestler once lived with one of these “poisonous” outsiders who, without the regimen of practice and training, soon became “a shining beacon of alcoholism.” Former wrestlers are soon alienated from a number of team traditions, “Wife-Beater Fridays” chief
among them. “We beat down the doors where we lift and wear wife-beaters,” another wrestler explained when asked about the team’s ritual. “On Fridays only, though.”

In other sports, the snubbing is less overt but just as potent. “It’s not like you’re ostracized, but it’s almost like you’re de facto ostracized,” said Greg Kremler, CC ’10, a former member of the track and cross-country teams, “because you’re not living that lifestyle anymore.” Runners often juggle three early-morning lift sessions a week, a full course-load, and four hours of practice five to six days a week. It’s no wonder that so much of their world centers on the team.

Burning out isn’t always self-generated, though, since injuries also can force an athlete off the team. Mike Pushpak tore the meniscus in his right knee during his sophomore year. That same year, his kneecap on the same knee continued to pop in and out. He suffered, in addition to his bum knee, a concussion—his second in two years—and was out for a month with debilitating headaches, which often set in as he walked up flights of stairs. Thanks to many hours spent on the mat, he developed a facial skin infection and back spasms, not to mention a mild case of cauliflower ear. But that’s just cosmetic.

With so many injuries sustained, “there was no guarantee I’d make it through a full year,” he says. Even more seriously, “30 years from now I might not be able to walk properly or throw a ball properly,” he reflects. These worries, among others, compelled Pushpak to quit—or, as he puts it, to “resign. Quitting’s such a harsh word, you know?”

Injured players face two unappealing options: sit injured on the bench and off of the coach’s radar, or get back in the game before they’re ready. After former track runner Michael Kelley-Bradford, CC ’11, was injured at the end of his sophomore year, his coach quickly lost interest in his plight. As he puts it, “I definitely wasn’t living up to expectations—theirs or mine.” Neglected, Kelley-Bradford quickly cut ties with the team. Walk-ons complicate the equation further. Since Columbia Athletics encourages academically strong athletes to apply without admissions help, the program lends itself to walk-ons who can easily replace recruits on the mend. When injured, Pushpak often worried that these walk-ons would take his spot. “In high school, the coach can’t afford to replace people,” he says. At Columbia, “there’s usually a backup around who can do the job.” These fears create an unhealthy incentive for injured athletes to push their physical limits, often worsening the injury in the process.

In the end, what may sustain many athletes more than the quest for victory is their sense of identity. Rather than be “just another student,” these students thrive on their Sisyphean struggle to both study and score, almost simultaneously. “We might not be the smartest,” Pushpak observes, but “we pride ourselves on being able to juggle what everyone else is doing along with athletics.”
1. Marco Stanley Fogg, from Paul Auster’s Moon Palace
2. Josiah “Dave” Davidson, from Madeline L’Engle’s The Young Unicorns
3. Will Truman and Grace Adler, played by Eric McCormack and Debra Messing on Will & Grace
4. Dr. Jack Shephard, played by Matthew Fox on Lost
5. Carl Luce, Holden’s RA, from J.D. Salinger’s The Catcher in the Rye
6. Willie Keith, from Herman Wouk’s The Caine Mutiny
7. Clare Quilty, from Vladimir Nabokov’s Lolita
8. Jude and Lucy Carrigan, played by Jim Sturgess & Evan Rachel Wood in Across the Universe
9. Peter Parker, played by Tobey Maguire in Spider-Man
10. David Kepesh, from Philip Roth’s The Dying Animal
11. Thomas “Babe” Levy, played by Dustin Hoffman in Marathon Man
12. Professor X, played by Patrick Stewart in X-Men
13. Ted Mosby, played by Josh Radnor on How I Met Your Mother
14. Nate Archibald, played by Chance Crawford on Gossip Girl
15. Professor Gabe, played by Woody Allen in Husbands and Wives
A Fictional Census of Morningside Heights

Illustrated by Maddy Kloss
Engineering Innovation

The politics of Gateway’s redesign
BY SEAN ZIMMERMANN

On the 12th floor of Seeley Mudd Hall is the Botwinick Multimedia Learning Laboratory, a state-of-the-art computing classroom outfitted with more than four dozen computers, two digital projectors, and 20 terabytes of networked storage space. The facility is used by a number of engineering courses and faculty, but at the moment, the classroom is under the careful instruction of Promiti Dutta, a tall, soft-spoken woman in her late twenties. Dutta is in the middle of teaching her ENGI E1102 section—the course goes by the name “Design Fundamentals Using Advanced Computer Technologies” in the official SEAS bulletin, but to every first-year engineering student at Columbia, it’s known simply as “Gateway.”

Dutta is leading her students through a round of midterm evaluations today. Unlike the vast majority of Columbia College courses, many SEAS courses offer students a chance to give instructor feedback through evaluations conducted at the semester’s midpoint. These evaluations are anonymous, but rather than entering the ether of tenure committees and departmental files, students’ private opinions get aired publicly like dirty laundry on washing day. Dutta’s role during this process is to discuss the responses with her class, acting as both moderator and public relations officer while students are given the floor to debate the merits of their previous weeks’ experience.

Tensions are running high. One student writes in an evaluation that, in a class designed for first year engineers, “the engineering feel is absent.” Another questions the group project, which allows students to work with real clients to design real projects, writing “Is Gateway really intended to implement solutions? I feel the whole international client business is just a promotional tool for Columbia University.” Though some student evaluations are positive, numerous informal student interviews echo these sentiments. Mid-way through the year, Gateway students are not just finding problems with the course—they are questioning what the purpose of Gateway actually is.

Such existential concerns are endemic among core courses. “Frontiers of Science,” for example, has had more than its fair share of detractors since its 2004 introduction to the university, and even the vaunted “Contemporary Civilizations” has endured withering criticism over the decades for its potential to leave students with only “a smattering of knowledge,” as one professor objected when the course was first established. Because of their broad nature as survey courses, required classes tend to go hand in hand with superficiality.

But Gateway was conceived of as no ordinary survey course—if anything, Gateway was designed to be the opposite, bringing first-year SEAS students and faculty together to produce meaningful projects and build lasting academic relationships.

Such goals would have been unheard of a gen-

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A TIMELINE OF THE GATEWAY COURSE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-1990</th>
<th>Early 1990s</th>
<th>1994</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No engineering before junior year</td>
<td>Columbia joins National Science Foundation coalition to start Gateway Initiative</td>
<td>First Gateway course introduced to SEAS</td>
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THE BLUE AND WHITE
eration ago, for until the course began in the early 1990s as a project of now-Vice Dean Morton Friedman, it was standard practice for engineering students to spend their entire first two years mastering the fundamentals of calculus, physics, chemistry, and other sciences. Rarely, if ever, would students actually work within their desired engineering fields or even speak to engineering professors before their junior years.

But when increasing numbers of faculty around the country began to perceive this lack of interaction as unhealthy, a reform movement emerged. Led by Dean Friedman, professors from 10 engineering schools partnered to develop the Gateway Coalition, a National Science Foundation-funded consortium with a mandate to rethink undergraduate engineering educations. For Columbia, this reform movement resulted in the 1994 introduction of the Gateway course, which exposes students to real, applied engineering as freshmen, not juniors.

Despite the growing calls for curriculum reform, the first incarnation of Gateway encountered some resistance among the SEAS faculty. Many professors scoffed at the idea that freshmen could grasp engineering concepts without at least a few semesters’ worth of rigorous grounding in the math and science. But various departments eventually did develop introductory short-courses covering their engineering sub-fields, several of which filled out the modular framework of the new Gateway class. Dean Friedman soon became concerned about the lack of coherence in the course, though, and hired applied psychology professor Jack McGourty to revamp Gateway in 1998. McGourty’s goal was to replace the old topic-specific modules with a unified program centered around service learning, and in 2003 the freshmen class became the first to team up with “clients” from the local New York community to tackle social issues using engineering solutions – designing a rooftop garden for an AIDS clinic, for example, or developing a one-handed video game controller for amputees.

“This course is an excellent example of ‘technoscience,’ the integration of multiple disciplines where the projects, not the disciplines, drive the investigation and research,” said Dean Friedman in a 2004 SEAS newsletter article explaining the genesis of the new Gateway. By giving students real-world problems to solve from the get-go, the new engineering knowledge they pick up along the way immediately finds an application in service of the project’s goal. Abstract theory gives way to concrete, tangible know-how.

Prospective SEAS students hear Gateway described in similar terms when they visit for Days on Campus, and the opportunity to interact with engineering professors, create an original design, and solve a real-world problem makes Gateway seem almost too good to be true. Current students recall being mesmerized by presentations about the course only to be disappointed when their first-year experience lived up to none of their expectations.

“Gateway was, on paper, such an appealing class that it was part of the reason I chose Columbia,” says Max Gilmore, a junior majoring in mechanical engineering. But in practice, Gilmore says, the
course was “frighteningly far” from the pitch he had received at Days on Campus. Aside from a perplexing grading system, Gilmore laments that the “service” element of Gateway faded into the background while tedious, procedural assignments took center-stage. “This class was so ineffectively done that I felt cheated out of the class I was supposed to have taken—the class in the course description,” he says.

Electrical engineering junior Natalia Baklitskaya was also taken in by the grand Gateway talk, particularly that of McGourty himself. Based on the presentation he made to admitted students at Days on Campus, Baklitskaya believed that the course would enable her and her team to “design something cool,” and even the course’s negative reviews on CULPA did not dissuade her hopes initially. But, like Gilmore, Baklitskaya ultimately feels that the project she worked on did not help anyone. She remembers how her group struggled to meet the exacting demands of their client, whom she feels was “solely in it for the publicity anyway.” Gateway did teach her how to work with a client who has no technical training, Baklitskaya admits, but she feels that lesson could have been conveyed just as well through a better-managed course and less repetitive assignments.

Dean Friedman acknowledges that student complaints about their projects’ final outcomes are not unfounded. “It’s unfair, in a way,” says Friedman. “It’s a freshman level course, and we often do exaggerate. We’ve had a lot of disappointments, where it looks exciting as you start out, then you realize, we—not the students—overlooked some things, and it’s not possible.” But, as he points out, part of the course’s mission is to expose students to real engineering projects—twists and turns included.

“Many of the projects did end up with something,” says Friedman. “But we cannot guarantee that even half of them will end up at all.”

Part of the problem may simply be the nature of first-year engineering students. “You have people from all backgrounds coming into that class and can’t assume anything,” says Dutta, whose current title is the assistant director for community-based learning programs. “I can’t assume that everyone has taken two years of calculus, so teaching anything highly technical becomes a challenge.” These knowledge gaps necessarily limit how much “real” engineering freshman can do on a project, lowering the overall chance of successful completion and forcing instructors to focus instead on holistic, big-picture themes of design, communication, and teamwork. Gateway may at times feel more like philosophy than physics, but as Dutta explains, freshmen gener-

Above are the descriptions of actual Gateway projects completed by students in the class in recent semesters.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Greenhouse</th>
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<tr>
<td>Design a low-cost greenhouse with attached rainwater-harvesting system that could be marketed and sold to rural communities in developing countries.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Hearing Aid</th>
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<tr>
<td>Develop a self-fitting hearing aid that does not require an earmold nor a computer to program the hearing aid, and runs on solar power.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Adjustable Desk</th>
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<tr>
<td>Design an easily adjustable, light-weight desk for a handicapped student in the School of General Studies.</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Irrigation System</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Create a low-cost graywater system with attached drip irrigation systems to be powered in the most appropriate, low-cost manner.</td>
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McGourty develops unified Gateway curriculum

Service learning-based community projects introduced to Gateway

2000 2003
ally get quite “frazzled” the moment as an integral appears on the blackboard.

Some faculty, however, do believe the Gateway curriculum should encompass more detailed pre-professional instruction. “There is no technical rigor to Gateway,” says electrical engineering Professor Ken Shepard, who echoes the complaints of many SEAS students that the course is light on the element they are most excited about—actual engineering. According to Shepard, most faculty share this perception, but no one thus far has stepped up to call for change. “It takes some activism on the part of the faculty to do this [change the course], and the faculty are busy and so there is a certain laziness,” says Shepard. “We have lots of other things to worry about, and, okay, so there is a problem. Somebody else will worry about it. Somebody else will fix it.”

This collective action problem is made worse by the charged atmosphere within the administrative ranks of SEAS. Professors decline to criticize the course publicly, fearing that their grievances may be perceived as personal attacks on Dean Friedman, whose legacy is intimately entwined with the creation and evolution of Gateway. He is well-respected as an administrator and highly popular among faculty, so no one wishes to “rock the boat,” as Shepard puts it. “It’s become the third rail of Columbia engineering politics,” he says. “And I just don’t understand it because the intentions here are all noble ones.”

McGourty rejects such criticisms as unfounded. “There are people [on the faculty] that have opinions but don’t know the facts,” he says. But McGourty also admits that there is almost “no mechanism for dialogue” between the faculty at-large and those who run Gateway. Shepard agrees, citing the lack of faculty oversight as “the fundamental problem” with the course.

For his part, Friedman says he welcomes suggestions and input from professors. “We’d love the faculty to get involved, but they all plead, ‘We’re busy; we don’t have time; use the TAs,’” he explains. Until the various departments within SEAS are ready to invest time and effort in revamping the course, Friedman believes it will be difficult to make meaningful improvements to the Gateway curriculum.

But the first breezes of change may be starting to blow. Shepard, Friedman, and representatives of McGourty’s staff have met at least once to discuss the state of Gateway, and it seems that the degree and depth of technical content will eventually be addressed. “I have worried from the beginning about this very issue: is there enough technical content?” says Dean Friedman. “Somehow I’ve had the sense that we don’t have enough of that. Maybe we’ve gone too far in the other direction, worrying about all these other things because it’s easier [and] worrying that the technical stuff is hard.”

And Shepard argues that more and more professors feel prepared to step up to the plate and begin reshaping Gateway. “I can find five faculty that would be willing to do this,” he says with a dash of dramatic flair. “We’re losing an opportunity with the Gateway course to provide a good technical introduction, a broad overview of all the engineering disciplines.”

Just as Gateway was created to respond to the needs of undergraduates who were kept too far away from engineering for too long, the course may adapt and evolve to stay relevant to a new generation of SEAS students. “That’s what Gateway was originally about,” says Friedman. “Maybe it’s time to change a little bit of it again.”

Promiti Dutta becomes instructor of Gateway
Students can choose their own Gateway groups and projects from proposals

2009

2010 –
Early in the fall of 2009, then-director of Columbia University Emergency Medical Services (better known as CAVA - Columbia Area Volunteer Ambulance) Krishn Khanna, SEAS '10, quietly informed prospective members of the student-run EMS crew that the organization’s standard certification course would no longer be offered. Because of financial difficulties, St. Vincent’s EMS Education Program, which CAVA used to train its staff, closed its doors. In turn, students without EMS certification who wished to join CAVA were left stranded. “We assure you that our organization suffers the most when such a course does not take place,” laments Khanna in his communiqué, “as it reduces the quantity and quality of applicants for membership.”

Any student interested in joining CAVA must attain certification in basic life support and a collection of fundamental EMS skills that the St. Vincent’s program used to teach. From an applicant pool of approximately 30 certified students, 8 to 10 are selected for probationary CAVA membership and a further semester of on-the-job training. This tiered application process generally has kept CAVA staffed in recent years with 50 to 65 active members to respond to around 700 calls per year.

Few students receive EMS training during summer breaks and even fewer have been trained before arriving at Columbia, so without an EMS education program, CAVA may soon struggle to find enough qualified personnel for membership consideration. Robbed of the ability to train consistently in-house, CAVA will be at the mercy of third-party training facilities.

Precisely this scenario has been playing out for CAVA since last fall. According to CAVA’s online registry, currently 41 active members respond to 1,000 calls a year, representing a staffing drop of more than 33 percent over a period of just a few years. Meanwhile, calls have increased more than 40 percent.

Anmol Gupta, SEAS ’12, applied for membership with CAVA just as the organization began to feel the aftershocks of losing its training program. To his understanding, the lower membership reflects an intentional choice by CAVA officials to ensure that serious and dedicated members can take regular shifts and gain vital experience.

CU EMS Director Chris Kyriakakos, SEAS ’10, corroborates Gupta’s account, adding that, although membership has dropped, “the decrease in numbers has been from people who never took shifts anyway.” But Gupta also cites the organization’s recent efforts to decrease barriers in to application, removing the requirement that students commit to four semesters of service. The number of applicants and acceptances, however, has remained flat.

Numbers aside, Gupta’s experience on staff illustrates the dangers of losing the training program. Whereas the standard course offered through St. Vincent takes three months to complete, Gupta underwent a two-week crash course which he says felt rushed, and – despite receiving full certification like everyone else – he feels that his speedy education “may have affected my confidence.” Gupta was dismissed from CAVA recently, admitting that this lack of confidence and focus was cited in CAVA’s decision.
CAVA now teams with Emergency Care Programs, another third-party training program, to offer a new, free course for those interested in joining in the future. But the memories of the last year have led some students to speculate that perhaps a more centralized training program, less susceptible to unexpected collapse than the use of a third party, would benefit the team’s cohesion, confidence, and services. Creating this program might be a pipe dream, though; CAVA has historically had trouble securing funding for even its most basic needs – a woe best exemplified in its perennial struggle for a working, modern ambulance.

Active since 1962 as an informal and untrained coalition of SEAS staff and faculty, CAVA operated until the early ’70s with no vehicle and little funding. In 1974, the university finally bestowed a retrofitted Ford van upon the volunteers, and funding spiked in 1980 when CAVA gained official recognition as a student group. Although the Columbia Public Safety department had already planned on buying an ambulance to participate in the rise of EMS programs nationwide, they decided to donate the vehicle to the newly recognized student service group instead. After these early marriages of convenience, though, funding was never so easy to come by.

In October of 1993, despite consensus across the CAVA staff that their ambulance had become unsafe, the University denied funding for a new vehicle. That November, CAVA resorted to a ten-day strike and student ire forced a University concession. Again in 2000, the University resisted calls for a new ambulance, but the CAVA staff decided to negotiate. Three-and-a-half years later, the staff managed to raise the $110,000 needed for a fully stocked vehicle from a wide range of donors. CAVA opted to purchase a larger model partially to accommodate what was at the time a robust staff – numbered above 50 for the first time in its history.

The university’s resistance to funding CAVA did not receive much attention. Neither time nor breath was wasted on financial issues in meetings, says Gupta, though he recalls observing equipment shortages. Staff say, for example, they have needed a new pulse oximeter – a device used to measure how well a person is breathing – for several months.

Yet CAVA remains prepared and functional, as their 108-page Standard Operating Procedure, containing drill instructions for every conceivable situation a medic might face, will attest to. Each CAVA crew ensures that they have all the regulation materials to handle any situation, and, Kyriakakos assures students, none of their machines are outdated.

However, while Health Services at Columbia springs for new technologies, the ambulance is a good example of how a modern machine can still require replacement – as early as the winter of 2000, the ambulance CAVA crusaded until 2003 to replace started to break down almost weekly. And, Kyriakakos mentions, “there have been no leaps and bounds in the EMS technologies we utilize in the recent past.” The equipment remains functional and perfectly efficient, then, but there remains room for improvement.

On less vital matters, the University stonewalls CAVA more blatantly. Indicative of this tendency, the University has denied funding for CAVA’s annual EMS conference, an event which promotes CAVA’s professionalism and knowledge. Kyriakakos also fears that the University will clip the budget for their end-of-the-year banquet, one of the few signs of gratitude towards an overworked, underfunded, and unpaid staff.

Kyriakakos acknowledges that the staff has been, for at least the last year, negotiating for a fifth vehicle with administrators. Given that the average life span of a functional ambulance ranges from six to seven years, the time has come for CAVA’s current ambulance, but Kyriakakos says “there is much debate and discussion that needs to take place at many university levels before a new ambulance can be purchased ... I do not know at the moment how they will pan out.” And whether they will have any support from students remains uncertain. Gupta admits that the closest thing they have to public relations are their interactions with students when pulling their inebriated peers out of a party.

This reputation plays into the common mis-
conception that CAVA is, as WikiCU purports, “the preferred mode of transportation for inebriated freshmen.” This misconception unfortunately is aggravated by the fact that, as students report, despite exhibiting and explaining clear signs of fever or appendicitis, CPS, which fields all of CAVA’s calls before passing them along to the ambulance, or CAVA volunteers only asked, “Are you drunk?”

In truth, Gupta recalls, only 20 to 25 percent of his calls, even those on the most busy nights (Thursday and Saturday, in his experience), were related to alcohol. Kyriakakos claimed that the true volume is around 15 percent alcohol calls, with the bulk of them at the start of the year. “The vast majority,” said Kyriakakos, “are calls that one would find anywhere in the city: fainting, diabetic emergencies, seizures, chest pain, vomiting, etc.”

And the cases in which CAVA cannot respond to a call are minimal, with the dispatchers recommending that the student call 911 in the interim. Student hesitation to call 911 or walk to St. Luke’s, they argue, is the main reason so many have stories of long, uncomfortable waits. But many students fear the presence and punitive actions, especially in public situations, of CPS, which often arrives with or before CAVA. And, though CPS is required to provide callers with all alternate sources of care if CAVA is unavailable, Chaitanya Medicherla, CC ’12, recalls hearing no such options. As he lay bleeding profusely from his finger, fearing he had sliced it down to the bone, his friends had to call CAVA three times before getting a crew to respond.

Although CAVA is one of the oldest and most effective nationally recognized EMS organizations, it responds three to four times faster than any other city EMS service to campus calls and is absolutely free, the organization has little means of interacting with the student body off of a stretcher. Their attempts at separating themselves from their identity in the minds of many students—changing their name from the now-verb CAVA to CU EMS in 2002—have failed to stick. Save for reporting on their Oct. 23, 2009 ambulance-traffic collision, they have garnered no University-wide attention. Kyriakakos mentioned that he wants to have more contact with the University, and claims that CAVA “will be starting a CPR training program ... that will be a cheap way for the University and students to become certified in this life-saving skill” and become more familiar with the CAVA program in the process.

All griping aside, even those who had a somewhat negative or mixed experience with CAVA ultimately appreciate the service. Medicherla mentioned that, despite the wait, CAVA fixed him up and saved his finger, “so all in all, it was a positive experience. Humorous, too,” at least in hindsight. Lives are saved and the organization is functional and worthy of praise, although many students are not aware of that fact, having never appreciated CAVA’s services themselves, or did so soberly and privately. And the stories of those who do appreciate their services often hint that there is room for improvement, highly contingent on fast
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In many ways, Bryonn Bain, CC ’95 and Harvard Law ’01, leads a charmed life. Admitted to college at 15 and president of his class for four years straight, Bain is now an award-winning slam poet, a working performance artist, and an occasional visiting professor at Columbia.

But his Ivy credentials haven’t protected Bain from being punished for what he calls “walking while black.” After two acute experiences of racial-profiling, Bain organized “Lyrics on Lockdown,” a national tour that uses poetry and performance as a platform to raise awareness about mass incarceration and racial injustice in the prison system. Bain is currently on tour performing his solo work, but The Blue & White caught him in between stops to talk about his experience, his time at Columbia, his views on the prison system, and American race relations.

Blue & White: I understand that you’ve been wrongfully arrested twice. Can you tell me about why you were arrested in Morningside Heights and why you wrote a piece in the Village Voice about that experience?

Bryonn Bain: Like most black and Latino men in this country, I’ve had multiple encounters with the police that have ranged from harassment on the street to multiple arrests and incarcerations.

In 1999, I was home for the weekend and I was coming out of the Latin Quarter, a club which at that time was on 96th.

And at this point I’m in my second year of law school, thinking I know a little something, so I tell them, “Listen, you guys are beyond your jurisdiction, and we haven’t done anything wrong, so you need to get out of our way.” So we walk around them and head to the train, and just as we’re swiping our Metrocards one cop comes down the stairs and arrests us, and it’s kind of like that scene in the second Matrix movie where the agents just keep coming, the cops just keep coming. And when we get back on the street, we look the bouncers in the face and even though they saw us do nothing wrong, they say: “Officers, they did it.”

The cops accused me of stealing the laptop I had in my bag, my nice, new Sony Vaio that I had brought with me to law school. I told them I was a law student, and they say, “Oh, where do you go to law school?” I say I go to Harvard. He says, “Oh my kid can’t afford to go there. What, are you on a ball scholarship or something?” I said, “Dude, I’m 5’9″, and what’s more, there are no ball scholarships in law school.”

So they continued to taunt us, and the more we tried to tell them that we were just law-abiding citizens, the more they antagonized us. So we spent the night in jail. At the end of the night we, were leaving the corner bodega and saw an altercation going on – there were some people on the street arguing with some people in a window above the store. As we turn to go to the subway this bouncer from the club appears and, because we happen to be the only people of color on the street at the time, they assumed that we were responsible for the problem.

Kellis Parker, who was the first black professor at Columbia Law School and who I respect very much, came and got us out. Only a week later at Harvard another fabulous professor, Lani Guinier, the first black woman to become a law professor at Harvard, asked us to write about an experience of injustice for class. So she read my story, and encouraged me to get it published, and gave me contacts at The New York Times, The New Yorker, and a couple of other places. The New Yorker never got back to me; the Times did get back to me and said the article was a little risqué for them.
I ended up contacting Don Schwartz at the *Village Voice* and they ran it as the cover story. When it came out they got flooded with responses, more responses than any other piece in the history of the *Village Voice*. It continued to snowball until the following week Mike Wallace of *60 Minutes* called me and asked if I’d like to be interviewed about my experience.

20,000 people heard the story on *60 Minutes*, so I guess in retaliation someone at the NYPD started handing out my information, because the week after the interview I started discovering identity thefts. One of those identity thefts later resulted in there being warrants out for my arrest, which I only realized after I was pulled over with a broken taillight. My alias apparently was someone who had committed a felony, and I assume someone at the NYPD had given out my information, so he used my name, my social security number and my personal info. He made bail, didn’t go to his court date, and so they issued warrants for my arrest with him as my alias. So I was incarcerated again, this time for several days and I wrote about that again in the *Village Voice*.

After that I really started to do a lot of work in prisons because I realized I had a platform to talk about these issues that a lot of folks don’t have. What really hit home for me was that soon after my arrest from someone on Death Row named Nanon Williams. His letter said, “Hey, they showed your *Village Voice* articles to a lot of the brothers on Death Row, and we’re all so glad that you’re saying what you’re saying about racism in the prison system. They won’t listen to us ‘cause we’re on Death Row. But a brother like you who has an elite education and access to these Ivy League institutions, and who can put it in the way that you put it, they’ll listen to you.” That really encouraged me, so I organized a tour around the country with artists, activists, and educators to raise awareness about the prison crisis and mass incarceration. We went to 25 states doing workshops and performances.

*B&W:* But you had been involved in prison activism before you were first arrested, correct?

*B*: My father was a Calypso singer from Trinidad and he made his way here singing about Apartheid in South Africa. So I grew up listening to those songs and those stories. In 1989, the first time that I set foot in a prison in upstate New York, I didn’t have the same objectives of reform that I have now. My brothers and I were just invited during the holidays to perform at a local prison in upstate New York. And we kept going back every year to perform for the inmates who kind of didn’t have anybody to check with them and be with them during the holidays.
And that was over 20 years ago, and I didn’t realize that 10 years later I was going to have my own situation with the police. I was familiar with prisons and performing in prison, so after I was arrested I started organizing and raising awareness to pursue the objective of decarceration because that’s really what we need to do in this country. The prison population has increased from 400,000 in the 1970s to two million people now incarcerated. The vast majority of people behind bars are in there for drug-related offenses. We have more people incarcerated with mental illnesses than we have in mental institutions in this country. And you don’t see a bunch of folks who have Ivy League educations locked up; there is a direct connection to poverty and illiteracy. So we need to realize that there is a problem in our society behind this.

B&W: What sort of activism were you involved in at Columbia? What else were you involved with here?

BB: Well, I was the first person to be president of my class for four years in a row, so I’m proud of that. I also spent a lot of time involved in student movements. You know we took over buildings on campus three out of the four years I was at Columbia. We took over Low Library.

B&W: Seriously? Took over as in ...

BB: We chained the doors, and we took over the building, and we wouldn’t let any of the administrators out of Low Library for the whole day. That day, students ran Low.

B&W: What was the purpose of that?

BB: It was because the administration was preparing to cut need-blind admissions and full-need financial aid. A big part of the reason that I went to Columbia was because it was one of the places that offered a prestigious education but where it didn’t matter if your parents were able to pay – you could still attend the institution. So we had about 800 students occupying Low Library and surrounding Low Library, and we chained the doors for most of that day in 1991.

And we managed to save the policy. The administration decided to change their minds after we got a lot of press, and the alumni heard about it and they spoke up. I did that with Ben Jealous, the current president of the NAACP.

B&W: You know he’s our class day speaker?

BB: Oh yeah, that’s right! That’s a great thing for you guys. When we took over the building, Ben was on the doors and I was on the microphone spittin’ poetry. Then we took over Hamilton Hall in my junior year to try to save the Audubon Ballroom where Malcolm X was assassinated. Ben was actually one of the people who got suspended for that, along with three or four other people.

That was one of the battles that we didn’t win, so Columbia tore down the Audubon ballroom on the corner of 168th Street and put up a biotech facility.

Ben and I were both very involved in student activism. I also worked on the Black Alumni Council and I started the Alumni of Color Outreach Program. I contributed to the Double Discovery Center, which brings Harlem students to Columbia.

I also organized a whole series of guest lectures called “More on the Core.” The idea was to challenge the idea that Europe is the only place that has seen advanced civilization in the world. So we organized speakers come to talk about other civilizations that weren’t being represented in the Core, including African civilizations that actually predated Greece and Rome and that provided inspiration for Greece and Rome.

B&W: You started something called the Blackout Arts Collective in college also?

BB: Ben and I, we started something through the Intercultural Resource Center called the Strange Fruit Cafe, after the Billie Holiday song. It was sort of a night of spoken word and hip-hop; anyway, once a month we did that in Lerner. So after I graduated Kellis Parker actually encouraged me, he said you ought to take this to other people, so we got permission to start working in public schools and then prisons, doing workshops and performing music, spoken

“We are too often and too easily appeased by having minority faces in positions of power.”
After my first incident with the police we organized the Lyrics on Lockdown national tour. Chapters like ours sprung up in ten different cities around the country. Now the idea has also morphed into the Lyrics on Lockdown course, which brings students into prisons to do these workshops. I’ve had undergrads and grad students at Columbia, NYU, and the New School who have taken the course and spent half their semester at Rikers Island prison, the largest penal colony in the world, and it’s a way for them not only to teach prisoners but to learn something themselves. The funding was recently cut at Columbia, after being on campus for 5 or 6 years. It used to run out of the African American Studies institute but that department is experiencing budget cuts. There have been conversations about bringing it back to the law school, if there is student interest and student support then it may come back, but really if it isn’t a priority for students then it won’t be a priority for the administration.

The way we took over buildings back when I was a student, writing letters and just making waves, students need to realize how much power they have to get what they want on campus. So if you don’t get anything else in this interview, make sure you get that. Students have a real power that is often unrealized. Talk about issues, talk about things you want changed, and then go do something about it.

B&W: What was it like to come back to Columbia to teach? It sounds like you enjoyed it.

BB: I did, I loved it. I tried to bring to my class the things that I always wanted as a student, so at NYU we did performances on the subway platform, because my work sort of links art and politics. At Columbia we spent half of the semester talking about pedagogy, and then the second half of the semester we went once a week to Rikers and split up into workshops working with incarcerated people. All of the students said that it was unlike any other course that they had ever taken.

The only reason I take a break from that is to pursue my art – I’ve been doing another show myself called Lyrics from Lockdown. It combines my story with the story of Nanon Williams, who’s been locked up since he was 17 years old, and now has a brand new trial because new evidence has come out showing that he did not commit the crime for which he’s been incarcerated for the last 18 years.

B&W: Do you think that police brutality and the American prison system are getting better or worse? Do you see a trend?

BB: You know a lot of people will say that America is post-race because Barack Obama is President. I have some questions for those folks – was India post-gender when Indira Ghandi came to power? Was Bolivia post-class when a working class indigenous person took over there? The answer is no. We should learn a lesson from the Clarence Thomas debacle – having a black face in a position of power doesn’t mean that conditions have changed for the masses of black people.

Now Barack Obama is a far cry from Clarence Thomas, and there’s no question that I would rather have Barack Obama as President than John McCain. But at the same time I have the same kind of educational experience as Barack Obama – I went to Columbia and I went to Harvard Law School – and the police still threw my black ass in jail.

We are too often and too easily appeased by having minority faces in positions of power, but the bottom line is that there is still a lonely pack in this country of people who are brown and black and poor, and the bottom line is more people are still incarcerated in this country than in any country in the world. Things have gotten better for certain parts of the community, but for certain parts of the community they’ve gotten markedly worse. It’s hard to say that having a black president made things much better for you, particularly if you’re someone like Nanon Williams who’s been incarcerated for 18 years for a crime he didn’t commit.
“I joined at the beginning of freshman year. I came because I thought it was the art gallery,” chuckles Galen Boone, BC ’12, head manager of Postcrypt, “but I haven’t left.” Decorated in tiny electric candles and strands of holiday lights, a storage room in the basement of St. Paul’s Chapel becomes a cozy warren for folk musicians and fans, like Boone, who seek a few hours of musical and artistic escape. The audience sits at small round tables in front of the plywood stage and latecomers stand at the bar or sit cross-legged on the floor. With people old enough to receive senior discounts nibbling on oatmeal-raisin cookies sold at the bar and students pretending to enjoy coffee The New York Times once dubbed “so awful, they should refund your dollar if you finish it,” the space remains free of ostentation.

Although some Postcrypt legends — like Ani DeFranco and Jeff Buckley — don’t stop by the chapel anymore, “We’ve got people who have been playing every year since they graduated in the ’80s,” says Boone. “We do have a stable of regular musicians who we really like and love seeing.” Musicians like Suzanne Vega, who plays a surprise show every year with no advance notice, finish their set and plop down next to someone in the audience. It’s the kind of thing you heard went on a long time ago in Greenwich Village and always hoped still existed.

In 1964, Reverend John D. Cannon and faculty member Dotty Sutherland cleaned out a storage space under the stairs in the Chapel basement and turned it over to about 100 student volunteers who ran the coffee house three nights a week. A 1965 New York Times article about nonprofit coffee houses on college campuses across the country quoted Reverend Cannon saying, “the purpose is simply to provide a place for students to have informal conversation under the stimulations of various art forms. There aren’t many places in the city where students can go just to sit and appreciate things.” Reverend Cannon was deliberate in pointing out that there were no religious intentions behind the program, saying, “There’s no hidden agenda. We’re here to serve the student body, not to preach.” The one exception to Postcrypt’s secularity is the colorful mosaic counter, secured to a closet doorway with two vises, which he and Ms. Sutherland painted and donated to the program. The program still uses the same counter, which features an image of the Last Supper and religious symbols of life and death.

Like the counter, much of the Postcrypt of 1964 is still there today. Although it now runs two nights a week and the volunteer base is a quarter of its original size, the program continues to operate out of the chapel storage room that many say is the defining feature of the institution. “In the ’90s it was pretty popular and that’s where most of our posters
inside the bar are from. That was like the heyday of
the singer-song writer that might have been its own
like neo-neo-folk revival. I’m sure there was a
hull, but I think that [with] the war actually, people
are feeling some of the things they felt in the ’60s...
You know it is political. Even if you don’t think so.”

Last winter, though, an anonymous Bwog com-
ment suggesting that minors can easily obtain alco-
hol at Postcrypt caught the attention of the admin-
istration and led to an emergency meeting between
Ginia Sweeney, CC ’10, the head manager of
Postcrypt at the time, and members of the administra-
tion. Representatives from Public Safety, University
Events Management, and the
Office of Student
Group Advising
decided that
Postcrypt would
have to return
to strict com-
pliance with
the university’s
alcohol policy
and that a pub-
lic safety offi-
cer would have
to be present
at all Postcrypt
shows.
Postcrypt had
once employed
two alcohol
proctors but had
appealed and won per-
mission from the Office of Student Group Advising
and University Event Management to employ just
one. Even though the administration assured
Sweeney that the securities fund—a fund managed
by the undergraduate student councils—would cover
Postcrypt’s new costs, the heads of the fund refused,
claiming that Postcrypt’s needs would quickly drain
the balance.

The program is still allowed to sell alcohol,
but the combined cost of two proctors, $200 each
per weekend, and a public safety officer, $400
per weekend, have made alcohol sales financially
unsustainable. Even though Postcrypt is now dry
and no proctors are required, the administration
still insists on a public safety officer’s presence, but
says it would be willing to reconsider next semester.

The administration also discovered that the storage
space was in violation of local fire code – too many
appliances were plugged into too few outlets. As a
result, Postcrypt can no longer make coffee or offer
free popcorn, another of its better-known features.
The staff currently brings cardboard Starbucks
to-go boxes, but turns only a marginal profit.
Without significant proceeds from coffee and alco-
hol sales, the program is unsustainable. “We still
need to figure out a way where we can serve coffee,”
says co-booking manager Laura Grossman, BC’12,
“It is a coffeehouse. You know, if it turns out that we
can never brew coffee in there again, we might have
to change the name. That would be ter-
rible.”

While board
members try
to remain posi-
tive, others are
more candid about
their frustration.
“I’ve been involved
with Postcrypt for
four years now and
it’s just dishearten-
ing to see these major
changes happen and
it just seems kind
of arbitrary the way
everything has hap-
pened,” says Sweeney,
“All of a sudden this is
a crisis with the alcohol. All of a
sudden the fire safety is a crisis with no warning.”

There are still reasons to be hopeful. In addition
to administrative support, Postcrypt is also working
to recognize the religious nature of their secular
program’s venue. Boone said, “To bridge that gap
we’re thinking about having a non-denominational,
devotional music night. We hear the choirs singing
in the basement when we’re having our perfor-
mances.”

Fans of the concerts are also hopeful about the
program’s future. Katia Sherman, CC ’13, speaks
of “the adoration that so many feel for Postcrypt.”
The rare affection students show at a university not
known for its school spirit suggests that this little
coffeehouse under the stairs is getting something
very right.
The Myth of History

Before the staff of The Blue & White departs for warmer climes and relaxing times, we wish to share two of the books we will be reading during our annual summer hibernation. Light and escapist these tomes are not, but we hope they might soothe any summertime nostalgia for the urban frenzy of New York that we leave behind.

by Matthew Goodman
Basic Books, 384 pp., $26.00

Historian and journalist Matthew Goodman chronicles the galactic explosion of The Sun from an obscure working-class newspaper to one of the most widely read papers in the city and, briefly, the world. Beginning in the late August of 1865, The Sun – then only two years in print – published the first of what would be a six-part series by the imaginative Richard Adams Locke, the great-great-great-grandnephew of another dreamer, John Locke. Adams Locke detailed British astronomer Sir John Herschel’s supposed “Celestial Discoveries” at the Cape of Good Hope in South Africa – to the paper’s readers, a locale as impossibly distant as the stars themselves. It’s no wonder they believed Herschel’s absurd claim: he had apparently discovered life on the moon.

In a testament to the naiveté of their bygone era, The Sun’s readers enthusiastically bought into a lie so big it eventually became known as “The Great Moon Hoax.” According to Adams Locke’s article, Herschel had used a powerful new telescope to observe a menagerie of mystical interstellar beasts, including unicorns, bipedal beavers, goats. His most ludicrous purported discovery was of an advanced society of “Vespertilio homo,” or bat-men, who flew, built large temples to their gods, and copulated in public. The story was so bizarre that Edgar Allan Poe initially accused Locke of having plagiarized his “Hans Phaall, a Tale,” which recounts the journey of a hot-air balloonist who reaches the moon and discovers an alien civilization. While the modern reader would, hopefully, immediately dismiss such strange reports, as Goodman details, Victorian-era New Yorkers and The Sun’s founder and editor, Benjamin Day, did not.

From the outset, The Sun and The Moon is predicated on a Core Curriculum-relevant question: “Is there any thing as extravagant as the imaginations of men’s brains?” ponders Adams Locke’s forefather in An Essay on Human Understanding. Goodman then uses The Great Moon Hoax as a jumping-off point to explore the proclivities of an age much more given to flights of fancy. Alongside Locke’s article, the Aug. 25 edition of The Sun included a dramatic retelling of a near-collision between steamboats, as well as the scandalous tale of a young couple who had been discovered posing as husband and wife at a Greenwich Street boarding-house. It was an age when exciting new scientific discoveries appeared in the press on a regular basis, and P.T. Barnum had amazed the city with exhibitions of scientific oddities at his American Museum – until, in an appropriately Gothic twist, it burned down a month before Adams Locke’s article appeared.

Day pioneered yellow journalism by selling his Sun for a penny, making it popular among working-class readers who could not afford the six cents to buy more mainstream papers. Despite its low cost, though, his paper enjoyed only a limited readership before The Great Moon Hoax. Thus, as Goodman entertainingly brings to light, a paper that grew to be one of the most dominant in the city before closing shop in 1950 owed its success, to a large degree, to promiscuous lunar bat-men.

—Brian Phillips Donahoe
Lox, Stocks, and Backstage Broadway: Iconic Trades of New York City
by Nancy Groce
Smithsonian Institution Scholarly Press, 272 pp., $29.95

New York is arguably the most celebrated city in the world, extolled by Frank Sinatra, Jay-Z, and everybody in between. Explanations for the city’s exceptionalism are so commonplace they don’t need retelling, but folklorist Nancy Groce’s new book Lox, Stocks, and Backstage Broadway: Iconic Trades of New York City goes behind the myth of the city and dredges up untold stories of the workers and subcultures that create the distinctive foundation for life in New York.

Groce looks at discrete pockets of New York life, from bagel bakers to stockbrokers to subway conductors. Each chapter creates an informative – if not always riveting – picture of some aspect of what makes New York unique, relying on the anecdotes and wisdom of laborers, tradesmen, and artists in various fields. Subway riders talk about wearing Batman costumes, or nothing at all. Broadway wigmakers describe hand-tying individual hairs to create the exact right shade for a character’s locks. Train conductors discuss the emotional trauma they experience when people attempt suicide by jumping in front of their trains.

Groce weaves contextual information through all of this, tracing, for example, how graffiti developed from street vandalism to legitimate memorial murals to pricey corporate art, and how the stock exchange evolved from merchants meeting under a sycamore tree to the technologically advanced madhouse of today’s trading floor.

Although it can be entertaining, Lox, Stocks and Backstage Broadway is an academic project, the result of a multi-year project by the Smithsonian Institute to document life in New York at the turn of the millennium. And while academic rigor undoubtedly leads to the book’s considerable depth and breadth, it is also the source of its weaknesses. The first chapter of the book covers the history of urban folklore in unnecessarily technical detail, and is deadly boring. Groce’s explanations can be unnecessarily basic – it’s hard to imagine anyone reading the book who doesn’t know what Broadway, or the graffiti that adorns it, is. Her application of a scholarly idiom to city life sometimes causes unintentionally funny moments, such as when stock brokers are described in anthropological terms worthy of Margaret Mead: “Wall Street workers use orally transmitted stories, narratives, jokes, hazing, cautionary tales, and generations of accumulated knowledge to do their work.”

But Groce’s work should not be discounted on the grounds of stylistic choices and surfeit of information. By providing a deeper understanding of its hidden trades and subcultures, Groce illuminates what makes New York great while avoiding the reflexive cheerleading that so often surrounds academic discussion of the city.

– Jon Edelman

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MEASURE FOR MEASURE

WHISKEY SOUR

What if I get a fake ID that says I’m an organ donor and I die? Will they take my liver before they realize I am me? My real preference was mummification. I wanted my organs stored in jars and my body wrapped in silk.

—Laura Sperber

DROUGHT AND DEDICATION
(for Lil Wayne)

Handsome phantom. Blackout blackthigh. Soothsayer grimace. Talk like a frying pan and make switch tip limp cats into stage rear dancers. Money leafpiles have a stink. Mutual funds taste of salad. Tatum’s ringfingers gallop on tooth gold. Saliva method. Sang and finished: a palindrome realized, a bitch sent to an island that don’t exist, boiling water spilled into a soft lap, and an industrial mural, wet with vegetable colors. Fruit fly goons surround and rap: flat firmament. Ripen in tattoo wrap. Bully with no belt and every corner. Red sleep thoughts executed. Trap a homo in tree drool and throw the fossil into the gulf. This is your tour bus, your tour bus. Me, chilly brown factory hanging doors on your status.

—Marshall Thomas
The karate video we watched in class was really inspiring. I honestly wasn’t really expecting that. But in fact I was on the edge of my seat, and felt really inspired throughout. I also felt this sense of connection to my father’s country through watching the video. I could see how strong they are and how far the Japanese can excel when they really put their minds to something. I thought, “Wow! Those are my kinsmen! I could have that, too, if I wanted to.” I felt it was so wonderful to see how dedicated and hardworking the Japanese are at whatever they do, even at such a young age.

Sarah Palin –
Mayor of Wasilla – 2 terms
Leadership as Mayor – talked very frequently w constituents. At coffee shops.
*Lesson of “Maverick” outside of organizational loops does not work alone; only works w adoring press. Very limited. If you don’t have a structure of others within which you are willingly working and they with you, you will not be effective.
Huey Long??? (If she were smarter)

Your story was hilarious! From the first moment when I realized that the “she-bear” was a he, I was entertained and laughed a lot. Everyone is so quirky, and it is especially funny that Ursula thinks such deep, poignant thoughts (although it’s not funny that he’s castrated—very sad).

My mother returned to her town as she intended: respected and envied. The taxi was an unfit chariot: a station wagon.

Ng

It has been a birthright, since the dawn of time, of older brothers to pass on sex advice to the younger ones. Each of my brothers saw himself a sex god when he returned from college and, keeping the tradition alive, Mike had begun Thomas’s education. I ate my soup and observed. Oliver looked pale, and the tomato soup continued to trickle down from the corners of his mouth. If I hadn’t seen Mom fawning over him, I would think he had been clubbed in the face. I wished someone had clubbed him. That would’ve been nice. If I had done it, Dad would’ve pretended he gave a damn about one of us by beating my naked ass with his naked hand. I didn’t want that. Not tonight.

Where Do Words Go When You Stop Talking?

We are going to talk about Abraham Lincoln and dance. Now why haven’t historians talked about Lincoln and dance? Well, it probably begins with the fact that Lincoln himself never said a word about dancing and very rarely if ever danced...You can imagine someone tall and gangly like Lincoln trying to hop like that ... If we think back to where we began, with Lincoln’s birth on a humble farm and the gala of the first inaugural ball, we might find the quadrille a fitting place to close—a dance which synthesizes aspects of both into something entirely new and entirely American. It’s no surprise, therefore, that the quadrille evolved into our modern square dance, the official dance of this country.

My mother once slapped me for telling her she was fifty-seven (and yes, fact-checkers, she was fifty-seven.)
Professor Paul Olsen, beginning his section of the Life Systems course:

“Get out your clickers. It’s my first time, so be gentle. That didn’t exactly come out how I wanted.”

Overheard in the Westside Market check-out line:

Boy: “I feel like I haven’t seen you in a while.”
Girl: “Maybe that’s because you started banging that girl. Yeah, I went there.”

A student, conversing with his noticeably bronzed friend:

Him: “You look tan. Did you go somewhere?”
Her: “Thailand”
Him: “Is it tan there?”

One man to another:

“I can’t believe Tony Kushner grabbed your ass! I want to be sexually harassed by a Pulitzer Prize-winner, too!”
Well, maybe not by Marvin Hamlisch.

Three school-aged girls riding together on their scooters:

“And trust me. You don’t look anything like a butt. Don’t listen to them!”

An indignant student, waving a graded paper in front of his friend: “And so my professor was like, ‘I took off points because you didn’t cite your sources!’ I mean, what does it matter if I do or don’t cite everything as long as what I write about is true?”

A little boy and his mother are making a sand castle on a Malibu beach:

Son: “Please? I can’t go to school on Monday; it’s the worst day of the week.”
Mom: “Well, you have to. You know why? Because if you don’t go then attendance numbers will be down and the school will lose funding. You know what happens then? You’ll lose your arts enrichment program. Is that what you want?”

Two graduate students debating the merits of light-hearted cinema in Ferris:

Man 1: “You’ve never seen Happy Gilmore or Waterboy?”
Man 2: “I don’t like Adam Sandler.”
Man 1: “Are you serious? He’s like the Orson Welles of comedy!”
The only way you can possibly think that is if your knowledge of Orson Welles is limited to Pinky and the Brain reruns.

Guest Lecturer in Crime, Law and Society:

“A few years ago, Snoop Dogg had a song called ‘Gin and Juice.’ Now, that’s just inefficient. What you want is gin and tonic.”

Girl: “Where’s Greenborough?”
Guy: “I think it’s in Brooklyn.”

Our institutional memory ... It’s at 1020!