Paradise Lost
How Will Columbia Finance its Commitment to Secondary Education?

Dispatches from the Real World
Our Culture Editor Attends an n+1 Issue Launch Party

Also Inside: How to Get Good Grades
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LOUISE MCCUNE, CC '13, Senior Illustrator
ANNA BAHM, BC '14, Senior Editor
ALLIE CURRY, CC '13, Senior Editor
CLAIRE SABEL, CC '13, Senior Editor
ZUZANA GIERTLOVA, BC '14, Publisher

Contributors
DIANA CLARKE, CC '13
KATE GAMBLE, CC '12
ALEX JONES, CC '13
BRIANA LAST, CC '14
BIJAN SAMAREH, CC '15
PETER STERNE, CC '14
VICTORIA WILLS, CC '14

Copy Editor
HANNAH FORD, CC '13

Artists
CEILIA COOPER, CC '15
MANUEL CORDERO, CC '14
LILY KEANE, BC '13
EMILY LAZERWITZ, CC '14
LIZ LEE, CC '12
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theblueandwhite.org  cover: “Back to School” by Louise McCune
Every May I make a list of summer goals. It’s a long, somewhat scattered checklist of accomplishments that range from eating healthier to starting a blog. I give myself roughly 100 days to complete as many items as I can, and summer after summer, I’m lucky if I accomplish a quarter of them. (The aforementioned pair lie within that minority.)

Yet I hardly find this depressing. It doesn’t even deter me from making the next year’s list equally unrealistic. Because, for me, the purpose of the list isn’t to have every goal marked off come September. Was I really going to write a short story? Maybe. Was I going to learn French? Maybe. Was I going to do both while also learning an obscure programming language? Of course not.

But still, I make the list. And it is just as absurdly diverse each year. Because somehow it wouldn’t make sense to me to spend time coding an iPhone app if I couldn’t take a break to write poetry at some point. The beauty of the list isn’t just that most of the items (if completed) would look great on a resume (though they would), or that it would net me a large amount of Twitter followers (“#12. Be better at Twitter”). The list is about figuring out what I don’t want to do. It’s more important to me that when I returned from my internship at night, I chose not to spend time writing a screenplay. A senior I may be, but that doesn’t mean I have my life figured out. The list is just my way of trying, at least for a few sweat-filled months when I’m free from schoolwork, to determine where my passions lie. Apparently French just isn’t one of them. But now I know. And that, if anything, is what our four years here are for.

Oh, and get a Twitter. Apparently those are a thing now.

Brian Wagner
Editor-in-Chief

Selected tweets at Bwog in the past two weeks, in chronological order (for more background, turn to page 6):

• @bwog whoa!! That’ll be great!! I’m gonna check @bwog everyday (^-^) please update a lot of @JaeseopKim91AJ thanks!!

• @bwog hey,why some of the reader of Ajj’s article misunderstood ur article? why they comment as if it’s all set by you to lift Aj to ur blog?

• Can @bwog leave Jaeseop/AJ alone. Don’t feed into obsessed fan’s requests and let him leave a normal college student life.

• @bwog wow that’s great my question that I want to ask ”what is your inspiration that you having a new haircut”
• @bwog can u posting more info on ur blog about columbia? a scholarship maybe? I look for GSAPP

• @bwog @JaesopKim91AJ If other UKiss Members were Girls, Who would you married and Who is the sexiest Member?

• @bwog @JaesopKim91AJ what’s stands for bwog?

• @bwog I’m glad we gave up on blogging about columbia and decided to blog about k pop instead. Way more lucrative.

• it’s like @bwog is becoming a kissme LOL awesome.

• so much..?! AJ’s so handsome there..?!,---> @bwogcolumbia unr. blog , this account help us KISSmc(s) to know Aj’s activity.

• @bwog please ask AJ what majors he is doing :) and WHY HE IS SO SMART? THANKS~

• @bwog Please be cautious with the Jaesop thing Respect his privacy & wish to be a regular Columbia student. I worry about possible stalking.

• When @Bwg commenters sympathize with Barnard students, you KNOW something has gone horribily, horribly wrong. #dormpocalypse #mlibc

• who is @bwog? I’ll follow for get the news....

POSTCARD FROM MORNINGSIDE

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dear editors,

I’ve spent my summer learning arcane and denotably British drinking vocabulary. I hope it’ll come in handy at some point this year! About time we stopped talking about the chanties, eh? As Evelyn Waugh once said, “I put the words down and push them a bit.” He was British and an alcoholic. three sheets to the wind,

your Intern

Blue and White
Columbia
New York City, USA

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September 2012

Postcard by Louise McCune
Residents of Morningside Heights did not take kindly to the sudden demise of P&W Sandwich Shop last December. Beloved by its patrons for its whimsically named, mouth-watering sandwiches and comfortable neighborhood vibe, P&W was a New York deli with a personality. Every lunch hour, owner Wendy Binioris (the “W” in “P&W”) acted as an endearing mother to her customers.

For many, the thought of strolling down Amsterdam without the opportunity to pick up an afternoon “Sasqwich” loaded with roasted turkey and salami was untenable. But all is not lost: individual, shrink-wrapped P&W sandwiches are now being sold next door at the Hungarian Pastry Shop, also owned by Wendy and her husband Peter (the “P”).

Shelves of flaky baklava, their popular pumpkin pie, and strudel priced by the pound pimp out the display cases at Hungarian. For more savory satisfaction, peek into the corner and note a new addition to their standard sweets: a sandwich bearing roasted turkey, cranberry sauce, alpine lace, and alfalfa sprouts, on toasted olive bread—it’s a tantalizing reminder of P&W’s “Bethy-Poo.” Could it be the sandwich, resurrected?

Peter warns, “We’re just not equipped to be making the same sandwiches that we did next door.” Although some standbys remain on the shelves of the Pastry Shop (such as “The Diana’s Delight”), the selection is limited. Instead the café serves sandwiches that require less meticulous preparation, “something simple, mainly baguettes and cheese.”

Though customers can expect the same fresh ingredients, the variety and convenience of P&W will, for the time being, live on only in Morningside’s collective memory; the ghosts of P&W’s signature coleslaw and pickles haunt today’s unaccompanied sandwiches. Some might argue that P&W lost its panache years before its lease ended—niche Italian sodas and clarinet reeds disappearing from the shelves in exchange for soaring rent—but the unbelievers would be wrong. Those were sweet afternoons spent on the steps of St. John the Divine, pickle juice drooling down chins towards waiting napkins; and even in the last days, you could crane your neck to spot a box of reeds, slowly gathering dust.

— Briana Last

On August 14th, Bwog published an ostensibly unprovocative post divulging that Jaesop “AJ” Kim, 21, member of the South Korean boy band U-KISS, and K-pop idol, will spend this fall at Columbia’s School of General Studies (which is known for annually attracting a handful of minor royalty and supermodels). But this somewhat routine manoeuvre soon spiralled into an unexpected episode of opportunism, and heartbreak.

Although K-pop acts are not unlike the N’Sync and Spice Girls of our own bygone tween dreams, fans of the genre are characterized by an entirely foreign ferocity. So our blogging brethren discovered. “@bwog will you please keep update about AJ @ Columbia? we’ll be so much thanksfull with that... :) and please take care of him,” requested @vina91KISSme the following day. The Blue & White’s Culture Editor, ever the keen observer of aesthetic trends, saw an
opportunity for cultural immersion, and a chance at an international following. He rolled up his sleeves and addressed the KISSmes, as the band’s followers are known.

“Good afternoon @ukisskoreastar fans tweeting at us from Asia! We will keep you updated on @JaeseopKim91AJ’s time here at Columbia,” he wrote, reflecting upon what might be an iron law of Twitter: as followers accrue, so increases the pandering. The tween Twittersphere of Southeast Asian jumped aboard.

“KISSme(s): we contacted @JaeseopKim91AJ for an interview yesterday. We hope he’ll agree! In meantime, what questions should we ask?” The tweets streamed in hot and heavy: Does he miss his fellow performers? If his boy band were all girls, who would he marry, and why? This was Bwog’s bestseller since Operation Ivy League!

Between August 15th and 17th, Bwog received 210 mentions on Twitter from U-KISS fans, and gained more than 300 followers (for more KISSme tweets, turn to this issue’s Bluebook on page 4). At one point 20 per cent of Bwog’s real-time readers were from Southeast Asia—usually, that demographic is less than one quarter of a per cent.

After AJ’s managers at NH Media forbade him an interview, the editor felt sharp guilt for raising the earnest hopes of hundreds of KISSmes. So he hasn’t tweeted anything more at all about it, despite @Valencia0409 plaintively crying, “where is AJ news?? :A: @bwog.”

He doesn’t want to lose the followers

— Conor Skelding

The Blue & White dispatched me to the Columbia Alumni Association’s “Annual Inter-Club Beer Tasting - Saison Global Language Exchange” event at the Harvard Club of New York City. As the magazine’s sole contributor with a membership at the Columbia Club, the assignment was inevitable. The editors were looking for a brief note on the event including some jabs aimed at the attendees without real engagement in the culture war. Simple enough.

But as I sat in a high-backed chair, eating fried clams and wondering if anyone there played golf with Jamie Dimon, I decided that I might have enjoyed the gilded age—that I liked counting stuffed baboons and elephant heads among our posh company—even as I felt I shouldn’t. Such extravagance seemed to me not the Columbian mode of interaction with wealth.

The average student spends too much time laziness in the cocoon of conventional liberal wisdom to be admittedly satisfied in that setting, even if he were raised in it. Certainly, we have our cadre of “sellout” finance types, but how many would feel comfortable admitting their aspirations to wealth in CC?

Perhaps I draw too-hard lines for the sake of sport (forgive me—I’m an undergrad one year more yet). Still, Columbians are coy about their aspirations to money. They aren’t after lobster mac and big game on the walls, and those that are are compelled to conduct themselves with a falsely charitable sprezzatura. Instead, Columbians earn endless degrees in search of an examined life. Such pursuit is lauded. And the “life well-considered” should find an audience at the university, but I can’t help but find that too-abstract path an inferior means, to the common end: some Aristotelian “good life.”

I asked the straw man helping me with this piece, “What is wrong with trying to make a little money, to live nicely, to pay off debt, to save for a family?” “Nothing,” he replied. “But shut up about it. Discussing money is rude, and the Core unites us all.”

That might be the simple answer: that most everybody aspires to wealth, only with varying degrees of subtlety and decency. It wouldn’t be the first time I didn’t know which fork to use first.

—Alex Jones
Pretty much everyone knows Deaton Jones, CC ’13. His voice is recognizable, his anecdotes notorious, his energy irresistible. But even his closest friends have trouble pinning him down. “Deaton does so many things at once,” marvels suitemate Matt Grumbach, CC ’13. He seems to be everywhere simultaneously, and yet deeply immersed in the task at hand. He has an infectious vivacity and an appetite for new challenges, and is perpetually pursuing an exhaustive schedule. He can barely keep up with himself; at one point during our conversation, as Deaton explained his preference for stylish garb over sweatpants, he interrupted himself to apologize for having shown up in the offending garment. He ordinarily wouldn’t, he explained, it was just that he had rugby practice in an hour.

This is merely the latest in a long line of sporting endeavors. Despite eschewing the label of “athlete,” he likely could have been a member of more than one varsity team. He remarks that although he is “quite flamboyant,” one of the things he prides himself on is “that I can do the masculine things.” He continues, “It bothers me when people think that gay people are sissies.” Hence the rugby. While at college, Deaton has run in numerous races and triathlons, most recently completing the Paris marathon in less than three hours while studying at Reid Hall.

Deaton hails from Raleigh, North Carolina, a relatively conservative pocket of the country where he often felt out-of-place. “I don’t particularly like the South,” he admits. He found Raleigh’s homogeneity oppressive, particularly because of its pervasive homophobia. He was drawn to New York City, where one of his aunts, whom he describes as “the black sheep of the family” for her liberal and cosmopolitan sensibilities, had moved. And although he assimilated quickly, his roots emerge in displays of southern gentility.

Compared to “the normal Columbia student”, Deaton feels he spends significantly more time away from the fold, both at work and at play. He sees his numerous internships in fashion more as “real-world experience” than an entry into the rarefied world of haute couture, however. “I like fashion, but I’m not set on it as a career path,” he says. He applies the same laid-back sentiment to going out; he’s just having fun, he insists, not trying to hobnob with celebrities—although the Black Eyed Peas’ manager did once invite him to share a drink with the group at a club.

Deaton has an eccentric silliness and he enjoys dancing while nobody—or everybody—is watching. He has been known to dance so hard he splits his pants—which has happened on five separate occasions. Louise McCune, CC ’13, recalls one time freshmen year when Deaton told her to wear a costume to an otherwise ordinary lunch date in
John Jay. She assumed he was kidding, but he showed up dressed in his aunt’s old fur coat with a strange belt—in short, a costume. “He’s incredibly adaptable,” says another suitemate. “[He’s] one of those people who you can never predict what he’ll do next, but you know he’ll excel at it.” McCune agrees; whatever he ends up doing, she says, “he’s always Deaton—consistently extraordinary.”

—Peter Sterne

GAVIN MCgowN

Gavin McGown, CC ‘13, is not one, but a whole cast of campus characters. “That’s me in a nutshell, or in five nutshells!” they cheerfully concluded our interview. McGown, who identifies as gender-queer, prefers non-binary pronouns. References to “they,” “them,” “theirs,” and “themself,” reflect McGown’s refusal to adhere to a restrictive definition of gender. To Gavin, queerness is a process of “questioning, transgressing, and breaking apart” not only gender identities, but also restrictive political and sexual norms.

Many who don’t know Gavin personally are likely to recognize them thanks to their distinct sense of style—ascots one day, heels the next—and fearlessness of speaking out. Last semester, GenderRevolution, the trans rights group of which Gavin is president, prominently posted large color posters of McGown, and several other members, across campus. “It wasn’t about turning ourselves into icons,” they explained, “it was about starting a serious conversation about the expected modes of gender presentation.”

Conversation with Gavin, both serious and playful, flows easily. One is immediately struck by their pristine elocution, put to good use through a long-term affiliation with the Philolexian Society. In eleventh grade, fed up with being misheard, Gavin, then a fast-talking mumbler, “sort of Higginised myself into a very precise way of speaking.” Being heard has played as important a role in McGown’s life at Columbia as being seen: “People pay a lot of attention to me because of the way that I speak. My intention is not to get people to pay attention to me, but my intention is, that when people do pay attention to me, they hear me loud and clear.”

Gavin arrived on campus knowing that they wanted to speak out. Around the same time as they were revamping their dentals and plosives, a documentary about the 1968 student sit-ins convinced them that Columbia was the place they wanted to be. And while prominently political, McGown has also turned their voice to other forms of public speaking. The Classics-Philosophy double major won a prestigious city-wide Greek recitation competition last year, for a presentation of Clytemnestra’s “blood orgasm” in Euripides’s Agamemnon. (Should you have the opportunity to ask them to knock off a few lines, I urge you to take it.)

McGown dreams of becoming a professional classicist. As in all their pursuits, they are unabashedly unapologetic. “I have a hard-on for Plato; don’t ask why,” they giggled. So I asked, and Gavin graciously clarified: “it gave me access to a canon that is entirely fascinating, and admits so many different interpretations.”

Heterogeneity is something Gavin consciously embraces, explaining of their academic and activist endeavors, “they’re not in conflict, but they’re also not necessary in conversation … [They] inform each other in some ways but they’re different spheres in my life. And that’s just how I do things.” McGown’s performance as the leading female role in Alcestis, last year’s dramatic production by the Classics department, however, suggests that there might well be opportunities for overlap. Chris Travis, CC ’11, a friend and former Philo moderator, puts it well: “Gavin is a great example of intersectionality.”

In spite of the breadth and depth of their commitments, Gavin remains nonchalant. “I don’t really worry about anything, to be honest,” they tell me, and I believe them.

—Claire Sabel

Illustrations by Claire Sabel
Next time you Instagram a pic of those mouthwatering fish tacos with the subtly precious garnish on Mercer, imagine your photograph as a little whisper in the ear of every one of your followers (who vary wildly in terms of their real-world emotional proximity to you).

“Not you too!” you gush. But really you’re saying, “I knew you’d be here because your stubble and studded Docs look too good through that sepia lens and no, you should never apologize for A.P.C.” Yeah, it’s just the two of you and over 50 million other people—hold it, five million more just joined the ranks—at the dankest international party in town, thrown by 2011’s best-looking 20-whatevers every week. Guilty as charged, I suppose. But frankly, my dear, should we give a damn?

Sure, on its surface a social networking application that distorts and discolors photos may not be a medium for breathtaking creativity. But does it merit such sharp critique? Instagram cloaks you in false creativity and bougie pretension the way certain “recessionistas” cloaked themselves in “Missoni for Target” in the heady days of 2011, and did anyone bemoan them for their high-low fashion appropriation? I mean, this is a recession. Is it even P.C. to criticize someone for rolling low-budget these days?

Instagram emulates real chemical processes and it does so in a few seconds when so-called real, reverse commodities fetishizing—actually nostalgic, I’ll add—“artists” used to take hours. Is it really that much worse to carefully select a “Valencia” filter to highlight the delightful sunset or protrusive cheekbones you just captured than it is to purchase one of those knock-off Polaroids from Urban Outfitters? Is it even that much more despicable than our grandparents’ Polaroids—which, matter-of-fact—produced photographs of rather shitty quality authentically? Of course it’s not.

Matt proposes that we turn to netart. That we ironize and reclaim the .gif in all its original, late ’90s, candle-flickering glory. That we endure ten-minute videos of people who remind us of our angry, facially pierced peers who attend Sarah Lawrence and Brown. Because this is somehow more enlightened, more obscure. Next time you reblog a neon Lisa Frank dolphin leaping in cyclical arcs to your epilepsy-inducing Tumblr, imagine sharing with your two followers a little clove cigarette wheeze that says, “Look at me. Using technology ten years old when I could be using my iPhone. All in the name of an ‘art’ movement—cum-lazy-search-term co-opted not least”—you cough—“by M.I.A. and the extremely non-independent record companies backing her.” But meta-commentary on Slime Time Live and O.J. Simpson memes does not a thoughtful critic make. Since when is deliberate stupidity valid dissent?

But I digress. Call it what you want; if you apply enough critical self-awareness to anything these days, it’s art. Alternatively, consciously not applying sufficient critical self-awareness seems to produce art too. In any case, it’s art.

Get over yourself. Remember that you, too, unironically once had a MySpace. You probably still—albeit, involuntarily—do have that MySpace. Now you have an Instagram profile. Should you Instagram? Maybe not. But Should You Allow the Creativity Police to Dictate Just Exactly What You Should Do and Share With Technology? Absolutely not. And, come on. Robert Frost probably would have seen the proverbial pixelated woods here for the trees.
Instagram?

Next time you snap a shot with Instagram, imagine your photograph as a little whisper in the ear of every one of your followers.

"Psst—look at these fish tacos I’m eating in SoHo," you say into the ear of your fourth closest friend, your ex, several half-acquaintances, and a stranger.

Now imagine the filters as pretentious ways of masquerading as creative. Your picture, edges toasted with the Earlybird filter, thus translates: “Madame, would you care to gander at a picture of the tacos for which my boisterous buddies and I paid too much for yonder evening?” spoken in a velvety faux Castilian lisp, the smell of rosewater and lime heavy on your breath. Nobody would “like” that in real life.

The filters available in Instagram emulate real chemical processes, the results of a hundred year’s worth of tinkering in darkrooms with chemicals, cameras, and film. Each developed photograph was an irreversible labor of love. I’m not saying you have to ditch the smartphone for a real camera (although the economic restraints of real film and darkroom time might make you think twice before taking a picture of a decaying building or bougie cupcakes or whatever you feel like “capturing” with your “artist’s eye”), I’m saying you should get more creative with the technology your epoch handed you. And you should do that by becoming an Internet artist.

For those who aren’t initiated, search #netart on Tumblr. Before you hit search, make sure you’re wearing close-toed shoes, because you’re about to have your assumptions shattered, and the little shards of your former world view are gonna hurt to walk on. Internet art is art that utilizes the Internet as a medium, often to comment on our digitalized lives. Internet art is the geocities-era .gif embodiment of every big word you never understood and the most transgressive Mean Girls meme you’ve ever read. It’s a ten-minute video of a 26-year-old liberal arts graduate with a nose ring filming herself staring at the built-in cam of her MacBook while scrolling through custom Photobooth filters, forcing you to think—really, critically think—about what it means to be a 26-year-old liberal arts graduate with a nose ring who stares at your MacBook while scrolling through custom Photobooth filters for ten-minutes.

Most importantly, netart doesn’t shy away from the questions Instagram is too afraid to ask. To return to my previous example, while Instagram asks “would these shrimp tacos look cooler in sepiatone?” Internet art, presenting a picture of shrimp tacos stolen from a stock photography website with the watermark still showing framed by two gifs of flickering candles stolen from a Super Nintendo game, asks, “What does it mean to look at pictures of shrimp on the Internet?” And those are the questions we should be whispering in strangers’ ears.

When it comes down to it, Instagram is a lame use of technology that everybody knows about, while netart is a deliberately lame use of technology that nobody knows about. And, as Robert Frost would have said in 3-D text on a screencapture of a Microsoft word document if he were a netartist, “& tht makes all the diff.”•
Ah, Deluxe—what other diner?

What other diner is anything but? What other diner has fare so mediocre and so overpriced (not that V. would discuss financial matters over dinner)? At what other diner do such numbers of first-years find themselves dismally dining with their parents, trapped like insects under the looking glass, peering up at imperious peers who pass by free of supervision?

There it is—V.’s very first and most succinct piece of advice for his gentle sister. May she never eat at Deluxe, bar-baronous place that it is.

Understand, dear reader, that this is the year our wonderful Constance matriculates at Columbia College in the City of New York. And so has Verily Veritas undertaken to consider and condense his most vintage wisdom about this fair University.

Give old V. enough respect, reader, to credit him with some awareness of his various black eyes and feathers in his cap. To his credit and shame, he is an idler, a ponderer, and a sit-ter. Often, he has thought, one is one’s own best company, and accordingly many of our hero’s evenings consist wholly of a comfortable seat, a brandy, and Brandenburg.

But forgive your muddling V.; here is the heart of the matter: his sister is quite uncivilized and much unlike himself. How sharp the pain in remembering little Constance in the sitting room, practicing her etudes at five. How delightfully precocious she was, her blue eyes, framed by bouncing blonde curls, so circumspectly judging those around her. O!

It is with this heart full of love that V. Veritas casts a baleful eye on his beloved kin, his C. Veritas. Still only in her girlhood, she swears to be “totally considering rushing.” It is due to this wounded heart that V. was, perhaps, less than delicate in voicing his concern.

“The whole affair smacks of bolshevism!” he scoffed. V. thundered on: “I’ve seen them! Those hulking fraternity brothers, heads in Alma’s lap, making hand-signs at a camera! Father didn’t go Over There so that Americans could yell slogans and make hand-signs Over Here! A veritable pageant of paganism and groupthink.”

Blinking slowly, his dearest ingenue replies, “I don’t like what you like. It’s NBD, we’re just different. I still love you. I just find other things more interesting than the latest Penguin Classics catalog.”

Father forgive her.

The damndest thing is, Father does forgive her for her sympathy for the common woman and her aspirations to “the sisterhood.” If only Greek organizations were named for modern, rather than ancient Greeks, V. might verily award them points for consistency. (He finds her “progressivism” charming.) If only she understood the true virtues of the classics, of tradition. She would honor the Veritas line, which has always stood alone.

Ah, but it is all too much. Your old V.V. will sit here, solemn and solitary, boxing up his books for the porter to bear to C.V.’s dormitory. In each book, six-sevenths of the way in, crafty old V. has placed a gift certificate to The Heights. The trial is twofold. Pray for her, that her sororal duties do not detract from her obligation to the texts, and that having imbibed the Greek letters, she realize the true meaning of loyalty, honor, and sacrifice for one’s family.
Saturday Night Fever

Columbia’s Other Radical Tradition: Health Care Reform in the 1980s

By Anna Bahr

In the fall of 1983, women graced Columbia’s undergraduate class for the first time. The same year, the HIV/AIDS crisis rose to global prominence. It marked a remarkable confluence of both triumph and tragedy, each of which was navigated by groups of ambitious individuals whose activism determined the future attitudes of the University toward marginalized groups. They endowed an institution with empathy.

Health care, as evidenced by every stump speech of this summer’s presidential campaigns, is a specifically political issue. Who gets sick and how quickly they are treated reveals their socioeconomic status, sex, and sexuality. Being the disadvantaged party in any of those categories can mean the difference between life and death. However, in contrast to the current vitriolic climate, Columbia’s historic health care reforms eluded overt controversy. Likewise, they lacked the antagonistic explosiveness of the hallowed ’68 protests, so often held up as the standard of Columbia counterculture. Despite Medical care that addressed the needs of women and queer men was espoused as an obvious course of action. Advocates shaped policy not because they were violently critical of existing structures, but because they were explicitly self-righteous and stood up for their beliefs without interrupting the overall pace of life.

After lagging behind peer institutions, once Columbia integrated undergraduate women into its student body, it did so unequivocally. The University threw generous support behind building a Women’s Health Center at a time when explicit discussion of reproductive health was “marginalized and not acceptable at most university settings,” says Dr. Martha Katz, the Center’s first director. Open for its first full year in 1984, the clinic introduced a new model of care that not only offered superior sexual health services—an unprecedented investment in women’s well-being—but also worked with Columbia security to manage cases of rape. Counselors would accompany victims to the hospital, and advise women dealing with sexual harassment before the term had a functional meaning; Columbia’s care providers professionalized emotional as well as physical support.

Almost contemporaneously, another remarkable development took place within the campus medical establishment. In 1985, the university became the first academic institution in the country to offer free HIV testing to its queer student and faculty community through the Gay Health Advocacy Project (GHAP)—much to the chagrin of its notoriously image-conscious administration. Racing ahead of nationwide recognition of the disease, GHAP reached out to researchers at St. Luke’s for trials with HIV-positive students and encouraged testing at Columbia before AZT (an antiretroviral used to treat the virus) had been officially approved by the FDA. Still, Columbia’s administrative leadership was concerned with the liabilities of the virus, going so far as to form an HIV Advisory Committee that sought to distance the University’s image from associations with the disease scourging New York. The committee discussed the realities of HIV as a handicap in admission to law and medical schools based on applicants’ HIV status: Will they live long enough to survive graduate school?

The Women’s Health Center

Robert Pollack, then the Dean of Columbia College, described the faculty vote to admit women as the obvious step forward: “Opening the College to women was by any measure fair, generous, creative, democratic and open-minded.” Yet the decision was infamously delayed. Though the University saved face through its relationship with next-door Barnard and ever-present female graduate students, Columbia’s academic rivals were reaping the benefits of coeducation long before Columbia, and the University needed more than speeches to catch up. John Jay lacked bathroom facilities with the requisite “Women” sign on the door. Panty raids at
Barnard were Friday fraternity fun. Medical care did not include gynecological services.

But Columbia readied itself for the inclusion of the fairer sex with enthusiasm, recognizing that “if the University wanted to serve its women students, it needed to meet their needs,” says Rebecca Weiker, CC ’88, one of the first women admitted as an undergraduate. “Not just as an afterthought, but as a priority. If Columbia was really going to be coed, it had to treat women well.” With the support of both Richard Carlson, the director of Health Services, and the Dean, the Women’s Health Center did just that.

This was ten years after Roe v. Wade, when stories of back alley abortions and plane flights for overnight procedures in willing clinics were still fresh in the minds of American women. To organize health care around the unique demands of women was a phenomenon born of the pro-choice movement—an ambitious tenet of the feminist agenda. But the University, though progressive, proceeded cautiously. Still recovering from its 1960s adventures in controversial politics, throwing immediate weight behind a mission statement with a resounding feminist ring was unlikely. Candid conversation about birth control, STIs and eating disorders was still rare between mother and daughter, let alone in school-sanctioned forums. For the American public, such forthright dialogues were freely associated with bra-burning and Gloria Steinem’s rhetoric.

To reassure the administration that its goals were focused on public health, not public policy, the clinic’s visionaries had to temper the program’s radical connotations by clearly delineating between women’s care and women’s liberation. “The people who developed Our Bodies, Ourselves [an early iteration of women’s health advocacy publications, radical for its frank discussions of abortion and pregnancy] were alienated. They didn’t fit into the academic setting. Columbia trusted us because we mainstreamed the image of women’s health. It wasn’t fringe anymore,” says Dr. Katz.

Thanks to a $300,000 grant from the New York State Dormitory Authority (the project was funded independently of University investment) to build and buy equipment, a bright, modern space was renovated, complete with three examining rooms and a counseling room. The clinic abandoned the expensive care of specialists and primary physicians, instead using nurse practitioners who could spend more time with young women, helping them to assess potential risks to their health. While the renovation was aided by state funding, the clinic operated under the budgetary oversight of Columbia Health Services. This arrangement gave the University administration some distance from the program while sanctioning it.

Care surpassed the basic annual in-and-out physical. It was a safe space. Even faculty experiencing sexual harassment sought
counseling at the clinic. In an era when date rape and sexual coercion were absent from colloquial vocabulary and rarely publicly acknowledged, the clinic prioritized assault issues and took initiative in cases of student rape. The clinic even developed some of the first crude rape kits, sterilized and pre-packaged versions of which later became standard hospital gear. Dr. Katz went as far as to perform a vaginal smear for a violently assaulted undergraduate student at St. Luke’s—a hospital at which she was not formally employed. “The spirit of the women who worked at the clinic was amazing. I haven’t seen anything like it since. It was more a movement than a clinic. The level of commitment transmitted to the nature of the care,” she remembers.

The example of personal investment in the program set by its leaders was emulated by dedicated undergraduate students. A peer counseling program trained students to help their classmates understand their health care choices. After undergoing extensive training, student facilitators would roam through dorm halls singing “sex raps” that explained basic principles of safe sex and STI transmission, answered classmates’ questions and practiced basic pregnancy counseling. Shockingly recent, even in the 80s, “[young women] had really little knowledge about their bodies or their choices,” says Weiker, who went on to work for the clinic after graduation. “Having that kind of control over your sexuality and your reproduction meant basic empowerment.”

### The Gay Health Advocacy Project

A similar combination of stigma and silence surrounded health care for gay men. “Two things were important when we talked about AIDS in the ’80s: One, a diagnosis was recognized as a death sentence; without treatment you had, max, 10 years before you died. Two, anonymity. There was a lot of discrimination against those with HIV. People would sometimes use pseudonyms when they went to our conferences,” says Dr. Laura Pinsky, who began working with Columbia Health in 1985 and co-founded GHAP. By the end of 1983, half of the nearly 1,400 people infected had died. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) estimates at the time, men who had sex with men comprised 71 percent of diagnoses. Dr. Pinsky remembered that figure being closer to 100 percent at Columbia. For a time, Pinsky kept a running list of the Columbia students and faculty killed by the disease--nearly all of those were gay men. After hitting 127, she stopped updating it. The city was recognized as the epicenter of the disease, a reputation administrators were all too conscious of.

But New York also has a distinguished history of LGBTQ activism. It was the site of the first openly-LGBTQ weekly newspaper in America, Gayweek; it made legal history as the first state to reduce sodomy to a misdemeanor. The increasingly visible gay social scene and acceptability of openly identifying as homosexual took root on campus. Columbia boasted one of the most vocal queer communities in the country; as early as 1967, Columbia had become home to the first LGBTQ student organization in the world—the Student Homophile League. Its presence on campus was well-organized and passionate.

Still, discrimination at Columbia and in the city ran rampant. Dr. Katz described attitudes toward the unrelenting HIV virus as nothing short of hysterical. “There was a frenzy on campus,” she says. “The administration didn’t want a gay man [who worked at the University] as a receptionist because they were afraid he would get a paper cut and bleed on the phone... We simply didn’t understand the disease.” This was the standard fare for the day. Hospital employees making their rounds at St. Luke’s served infected patients by leaving dinner trays outside hospital doors for fear of contraction on contact. This substantial stigma was pervasive, the fear, contagious, and, to a degree, justifiable.

To navigate the potential legal hazards of
an at-risk student population, the University created an HIV Advisory Committee composed of the senior vice president for planning and budget activities, Joseph Mullinix; representatives of Health Services, Dr. Laura Pinsky and Dr. Richard Carlson; Kendall Thomas, a professor specializing in law and sexuality; legal counsel for the University, and a handful of human resources affiliates. Though Health Services was “always supportive of GHAP,” says Dr. Pinsky, the administration was less concerned with public health than avoiding potential legal complications. The committee (described as “egregiously unaware” and “looking to cover its legal ass” by a source close to the situation) sought to chisel out a uniform policy on such issues as allowing students with an HIV-positive diagnoses to live with their uninfected classmates and how infected staff could be medically treated.

With Dr. Pinsky and co-founder Paul Harding Douglas, an AIDS researcher who died of AIDS-related complications in 1995, GHAP became a model for testing programs across the country. Though initially much more poorly funded than the Women’s Health Center, and without a publicity apparatus (the program couldn’t afford to take out ads in the Spectator), it remains one of the most respected groups at Columbia, offering better care and support than any comparably city-sponsored program. Over 250 student advocates have devoted countless hours as peer counsellors through its 27-year history.

Movements advocating equal and specialized health care for all represent a quieter political revolution. Health advocacy at Columbia proved that political gestures can dissociate from rhetorical causes and abstain from strict variations on morality. Despite day-to-day discriminations and systemic social inequality, these movements were most revolutionary for their inclusion, rather than their specificity. Feminist health care? Advocacy for LGBTQ patients? Sure. But the qualifiers matter less than the fundamental obviousness of promoting health for everyone. That was was in the interest of the University. And yet, such foresight, nearly 30 years ago, has yet to extend to a national audience.

There has been some progress. This summer, the legitimacy of the Affordable Care Act, both affectionately and disparagingly—depending on your loyalties—dubbed “Obamacare,” and fought tooth and nail by its more virulent opponents, was upheld in the Supreme Court. It requires all insurance providers to offer women access to free birth control and abortion services. And yet, this month, the GOP announced its revised platform, which now enshrines official support for “a human life amendment to the Constitution that would make abortion illegal without specific exemptions for cases of rape or incest.”

Earlier this year, President Barack Obama announced explicit support for same-sex marriage. While his statement was for many both revolutionary and radical, it had little impact on the Defense of Marriage Act, under which married gay couples are not granted equal health care rights to those of their heterosexual friends.

Here we are at a historical moment during which dialogue surrounding the rights of women, gays, lesbians, transsexuals, and people of every color is constant, ubiquitous and persistent. The Internet feeds us with a steady influx of outrage at the smallest injustices. High-profile gestures toward change seem at once reactionary and reductive. Where Occupations and marches certainly draw much-needed attention to national issues, their overall impact is difficult to measure. Important, yes, but decidedly distant from concrete change. Perhaps the lesson here is to narrow our focus. National reform is necessary. But GHAP, a project started by two concerned Columbia affiliates, still offers some of the best care for those infected with HIV in the country. The Women’s Health Clinic proved so successful that it was eventually absorbed by Health Services and in so happening, was recognized of its work as a key player in making Columbia a more welcoming social environment for women. Maybe we should go back and start building small.
National Insecurity

Ian Bremmer Imagines America’s Fall From Grace

By Briana Last

Every Nation for Itself: Winners and Losers in a G-Zero World
By Ian Bremmer
Portfolio
240 pp.

As a civil war unfolds in Syria, America’s ineffectual attempts to resolve the conflict have been noted; the U.S. has proven incapable of preventing Russia and China from providing weapons to the Assad regime. The U.N., too, is powerless, as evidenced by Kofi Annan’s resignation in August. Europe finds itself embroiled in its own debt crisis and military intervention in Syria runs the risk of being too costly for America alone as it slowly recovers from a recession. For Ian Bremmer, a superstar professor in Columbia’s political science department, this is just one of many cases suggesting that the U.S. is waning in its status as sole superpower.

But bemoaning the decline of the United States as a diplomatic and economic force is nothing new, and in his latest book, Bremmer does little more than elucidate on the stock wisdom of American decline. He adds to the ever-increasing stockpile of doomsayer headlines, without distinguishing his book from its alarmist shelfmates.

Professor Bremmer is also president and a founder of the Eurasia Group, a political risk consulting firm (which assists companies, NGOs, and governments in making safe investments in emerging economies). Bremmer’s career at Eurasia furnished his expertise in assessing the political stability of emerging nations, and subsequently led to international intellectual stardom. Every Nation’s accessibility contrasts with the specialized work that Bremmer normally does. While Bremmer’s brilliance is easily found within detailed historical accounts, the book’s thesis does not hold up.

Bremmer argues that a new geopolitical landscape has developed—one he calls the “G-Zero” world—in which no individual nations take the lead on crucial political problems and each state fend for itself. This new world order does not, according to Bremmer, mark a decline of the US as a superpower per se, but does necessitate a decline in American exceptionalism in international politics as developing nations begin to throw their newfound weight around. Bremmer’s distinction between diminishing leadership and decline might be original, but it breaks down as his G-Zero scenario unfolds.

The world of G-Zero is a world “in tumultuous transition, one that is especially vulnerable to crises that appear suddenly and from unexpected directions.” Complex issues such as climate change and the control of cyberspace cannot be resolved without overwhelming consensus by all nations—consensus that is nearly impossible to reach.

Where Bremmer’s analysis feels particularly cogent is his vision for the future of the African continent, or in his words, its potential as a “pivot state.” The political scientist’s expansive knowledge as an expert in emerging markets is showcased as he plays witness to promising economic growth. According to Bremmer, given urbanization and increasing willingness to spend on goods and services across Africa, the continent will be quite fit to adapt to some future world order.

Yet, Bremmer’s G-Zero world order is ultimately an unconvincing depiction of the current state of geopolitics and of the future to come. As the author reminds his reader, the U.S. remains the largest economy in the world—highest in nominal GDP—and China’s prosperity is inextricably tied to American economic ascendancy. Though Syria remains a threat to global security, last year’s multi-state coalition against Libya means that the U.S. is still able to intervene when willing. Bremmer is right that climate change and cyberspace appear to be sticking points, but (recalling the Iranian hostage crisis, for instance) the U.S.’s failure to pressure developing nations to abide by its rules is to me more symptomatic of the complexity of these problems than the waning of a superpower.
WELCOME TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD

BAR ETI

USE CAUTION

"EXPERTS" ONLY

MENU:

LONG ISLAND ICED TEA
MEL'S HAYMAKER

DON'T HOG THE BATHROOM

PEOPLE ARE WAITING

DO SOMETHING CRAZY

YOUR FRIENDLY NEIGHBORHOOD DRUNCHIE OPTIONS

CART FOOD

TRY A PICKLEBACK

15TH AT MORTON WILLIAMS
OR THE ONE NEAR DUANE READE, GET CHICKEN WITH RICE OR LAMB GYPS! DON'T FORGET

THE WHITE SAUCE

CRACK DELI
HAM DEL
ROTI ROLL
SPICY SPECIAL

TWISTER
CHICKEN MALAI

Centerfold by Louise McCune

18
THE BLUE & WHITE
WELCOME TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD

QUETTE

TIP: 10-20%

FEELING GENEROUS?

buy a round for a friend or two

PUT DOWN YOUR PHONE

WEAR SHOES

Koronet

A SLICE, NATURALLY
Dispatches from the Real World

Our Culture Editor Attends an n+1 Issue Launch Party

By Conor Skelding

Editors of n+1 have boldly described their magazine, “like Partisan Review, except not dead.” They’ve favorably compared their publication to Lingua Franca, another late, great magazine (which managed to be both smarter and less self-righteous than n+1). The editors, among other people, think it, and they, are very cool. I’d been a subscriber for a few issues—and was between thinking they were very cool and very insufferable—and so when a friend texted me that I should come to n+1’s Issue 14 launch party that night in SoHo, I went.

The party started at 8:00, and I got on the downtown 2 around 10:30. My friend Mark said that he was tending bar from 12 to 2 am, so I figured I could at least get free drinks. I didn’t know exactly where the address was, being wholly unfamiliar with that part of town, but I headed east from the Canal Street stop. After a few blocks, I knew I was there. There were one-hundred-and-fifty raucous, animated, smoking, twenty-blank-year-olds shuffling around outside a packed, four hundred square foot gallery space which vomited forth vapid people and insipid dance beats. Three cabs were offloading and picking up what I took to be destitute, parentally-funded writers. There would continue to be a lot of cab traffic. People wore n+1 tote bags, backless dresses, short shorts. The women were dressed to party, showing off their long legs. The boys wore button down shirts that covered their shrimpy arms.

Andy and Kathy were to meet me there, but they had been in a park, drinking whiskey concealed in a plastic bag, so they were late. Observing the noisy scene alone, I felt pretty angry and crazed at the inanity, so I walked on down the block and up an avenue, looking for a deli. In Harlem I’d gotten used to greasy heroes and V8 juice and for the summer had given up my habitual visits to the farmer’s market; now that I was downtown in Bougeville, there were only vegetables, and all I wanted were eggs and bacon on a roll. I saw too many wood-paneled bars, yoga studios, art galleries, and fancy restaurants, and so I felt crazed again. On one corner there were some more drunk twenty-blank-year-olds—older than the people at the n+1 party, but still not that old—loudly stumbling towards me. I did not get out of their way. I turned around, and decided to eat later.

Andy texted me that he was sorry—they would be there in five minutes. This was unsurprising; at home I’d checked Google Maps, and wherever they were was only a five minute cab ride away. I stood outside the party and scowled at people.
Sooner than I expected, he and Kathy tumbled out of a cab. I was happy to see them. Kathy pulled me aside and said that Andy was drunk, and that she didn’t know how she would deal with these people, except by faking interest.

Kathy gave me a cigarette, and we three stood across the street from the party. On our side, there were about ten people. On the other side, there were 100 outside, and however many inside. Suddenly, there were more people standing in our circle: Celia, an n+1 intern, plus a tall girl, a skinny guy, and a meatier guy. All of us went to Columbia. Celia shook my hand in the V-shaped way some girls like, the skinny guy gave me a limp hand-shake (which maybe was ironic; I got the feeling he would rather have consummated that detestable clasp-hands-and-thump), and the meatier guy gave me a meatier handshake. We talked about some stuff which I now forget, but which seemed very immediate at the time. Kathy pulled me aside and said that she was having trouble faking interest. There was an issue of n+1 lying on the sidewalk.

Celia is an English major, and so am I, so we talked about English professors. I have to take something with Molly Murray. I asked her what n+1 interns do. She said nothing really, but they get fucked up. Andy said, well, you guys tweet. She said yes. Andy said, Conor was excited whenever you retweeted him. I was embarrassed. Celia said that the latest issue had a piece about Twitter. I said I know.

Celia is taking this year off to write some things for n+1. Andy told her to write for Bwog in her spare time. She said she could be our “correspondent from the real world.” I did not ask her if the “real world” was where your parents pay for your Brooklyn apartment and your amusements. She tells us that she went to prep school in North Carolina. She hates North Carolina.

I asked her what n+1 interns do. She said nothing really, but they get fucked up. Andy said, well, you guys tweet. She said yes. Andy said, Conor was excited whenever you retweeted him. I was embarrassed. Celia said that the latest issue had a piece about Twitter. I said I know.

Celia is an English major, and so am I, so we talked about English professors. I have to take something with Molly Murray. Celia said that she would rather be at a cozy, wood-paneled bar. I said, there are some right around the corner.

Celia offered to get us beers, because she was an intern, and could get us free beers. Two minutes later, she returned with five warm bottles of Brooklyn Pilsner. Kathy gave me another cigarette. I mentioned that there were a lot of young people here, though the editors are in their forties. Celia said that they like to fuck younger people. I wondered if that is what I would do if I were forty and divorced and had the option.

We mentioned that we know Mark, and Andy asked how he got to bartend. We figured he could get us free drinks. Celia explained that an n+1 staffer knew him from Twitter, and needed to ask somebody she knew would say yes.

Mark texted me to ask where I am, and I told him. He crossed the street. I asked him how much beers are. Two dollars each. I would not be getting free drinks. Mark asked me why I haven’t gone inside. Celia said because it was just an unadorned, hot gallery full of shuffling people. I said I wanted to see what was going on. He said it was ten dollars, even for subscribers. I decided not to go inside. I looked down, and the issue on the sidewalk was gone.

Celia had to go, and Mark had disappeared. Kathy, Andy, and I decided to go to 1020. I said, let’s take the subway. Andy said he’d pay for a cab. We took a cab, and Andy paid. I bought us car bombs at the bar. Earlier I’d done a few hours of data entry for a SIPA Ph.D. candidate, and we drank them up. We walked back to Harlem.

I woke up with a headache.

Names have been changed as a courtesy.
Columbia needs great science. Great science needs a home with a better name than Mudd or Pupin—one that is not susceptible to toilet humor—or, at the very least, a pronounceable acronym. And everybody needs single-origin coffee. To meet these needs of the 21st century, the University is proud to announce the construction of state-of-the-art scientific research facilities. Located on the corner of 120th Street and Broadway, the structure will revitalize the blighted north-west region of campus, displacing naught but a pigeon.

It’s time to usher in a new era. One that respects the glory of the past while looking towards the future. Construction is already underway for the 14-story, 180,000 square foot laboratory and adventure playground, which will stand over the Levien Gym, finally putting the unprofitable Athletics Department in its rightful place. Connected to Pupin and Chandler via pedestrian bridges, true scientists can feel intimately connected to campus life, while being completely cloistered from it: What’s that you’re reading on the lawn down there, Lacan? “I’M CURING CANCER UNDER A FUME HOOD, BITCH,” a researcher might sputter, without damaging the fragile philosopher’s psyche. The glass façade symbolizes transparency, that virtue that Columbia has always considered its guiding principle.

Progress has been as swift as it has been shiny. In fact, in our building is nearly complete, despite the fact that no one has offered to fund it. Behold the wonders of modern financial engineering! In order to make this as inclusive a process as possible, you don’t even have to know anything about science to be a part of our historic undertaking. All it takes is basic numeracy, also known as your credit card information.
BUT ACTUALLY

NoCo

2
Backers
$27
pledged of $100,000,000 goal
19
days to go

Back This Project
$1 minimum pledge

Pledge $10 or more
Thanks, but no thanks.

Pledge $20 or more
Warmer.

Pledge $50 or more
You get a free cup of coffee at Joe, The Art of Coffee. Told you you were getting warmer!

Pledge $100 or more
You get a limited edition air conditioner, modeled on the one that originally inspired the architect’s vision.

Pledge $250 or more
You can carry drinks into the library without getting stopped! Just show them the card we provide you with, and sip away.

Pledge $500 or more
A limited edition Joe chair! Who said you can’t take café culture home with you?

Pledge $1,000 or more
Dibs on any library computer with a big screen. Anytime. Ever. Even if some douchey grad student is taking a seat; especially if that grad student is in the humanities.

Pledge $5,000 or more
Dinner’s on Columbia...with PrezBo! You will be cordially invited to Low Library’s Rotunda for dinner and drinks with the man himself, all provided by Columbia catering. That’s right; you’ll get an uninhibited 30 seconds next to the man himself.

Pledge $10,000 or more
We’ll name a chair in the brand new 164-seat lecture hall after you.

Pledge $100,000 or more
One of the new labs will be named after you. Could it be the one where they discover the fifth dimension? Could it be the one where they code the next big social network? Probably! Unless you get the one by the southeast window. Apparently that’s a good smoke spot.

Pledge $1,000,000 or more
You will get exclusive access to the 14th floor sky lounge, including the liquid nitrogen tank that is currently there.

Pledge $10,000,000 or more
We’ll name the building after you!!!

September 2012 23
It is four in the morning again and I feel like I am walking a plank above an endless sea of lunatics and businessmen and “enthusiasts” and cartoon superheroes, and each step I take I feel like I will plummet but a stretch of wood appears at the last minute like a tetris cube and I am not sure whether or not I am relieved or annoyed each time this happens so I take a breath and exhale steam that poisons the sea of lunatics and they wilt like warm plant stems and turn into deep damp dark soil.

—Kate Gamble
Measure for Measure

Jailbirds

If I could, I would stuff you in this knapsack
along with the twigs and bones that I collected this morning,
in the warm wet woods with the warm green light.
I would know that you were in there
by the warmth on my back
and the weight of the straps on my shoulders.

If I could, I would tie our wrists together with my dad’s fishing line,
and draw a map on your back with mud,
tracing the route from Texas to the Bermuda Triangle.
Like spiders, we would follow the invisible thread
as if we knew how to navigate the North Atlantic.

I am carving “no trespassing” on the bark of this tree
so that I can break my own rule,
and decide if I want to let you break it with me,
and so that the birds who fly by it
and the ants who crawl over it
can break it too.

—Kate Gamble
In the forest of question marks you were no bigger than an asterisk.

This is the opening of a poem I wish I’d written to insult you.

But Simic left the forest, and I remained tracing the veins of your leaves.
I was reenacting history. Like how at the bar last night, you deigned to kissed me on the cheek—which if Americans only do out of love or pretension, meant that I would have to punch you.

Instead, I flicked white balls at flimsy cups and raised both fists at you in misplaced triumph. Outside, the trees were changing themselves so quietly, I worried their yellowness would elude me. Up the street, my cinderblock walls had cooled. The tack beneath posters curling in on itself.

I stumbled home and thought I could hear them fluttering. Or perhaps it was the asterisks, browned and shifting beneath my feet.

—Victoria Wills
Arrested Development

An SoA Grad Gets Clean and Grows up
By Diana Clarke

Larceny in My Blood: A Memoir of Heroin, Handcuffs, and Higher Education
by Matthew Parker
Penguin Group
288 pp.

Matthew Parker, SoA ’12, is neither a poet, an artist, or a philosopher and yet has composed and drawn a graphic novel laced with interrogations of German idealist philosophy and postmodernism. Parker’s debut book, the graphic memoir Larceny in My Blood: A Memoir of Heroin, Handcuffs, and Higher Education, tells the story of the more than two decades Parker spent in and out of prison and on and off of heroin, and the story of how he got out. Yes, it’s another addiction memoir. Yes, you should read it anyway.

First and foremost, Parker is a writer. For all its visuals, this book demands to be read. Its illustrations, and the handwriting accompanying them, are crude, even childish. The self-consciously simple and unreflective style is refreshing, with strong declarative sentences that allow the reader to tease out connections without too much prompting. Tales of addiction are generally ones of both redemption and maturity, and capture the writer as he sees himself in the throes of addiction, but the fact is that they’re not much to look at. Neither is an addict’s life, and Parker knows this. While drugs and the illicit thrills of dealing, sex, etc. that accompany them may seem glamorous, the story rarely ends anywhere but prison, and Parker’s drawings of that life are often clunky, cartoonish, and spare. By contrast, the loveliest illustrations are sketches without a hint of cartoon to them, depicting natural scenery, and especially musicians. Parker conveys how important art was to him in prison, and how important it is now. The musical performances he saw are recorded with more tenderness and wonder than the highest of highs. This exaltation of art—almost as a mechanism of salvation—seems to legitimize the book itself, while elevating artists to the status of saviors.

Of course, there’s a long history linking addiction and art. Parker explains this by calling attention to the Kantian thought process inherent to heroin addicts; wonderfully, he calls Kurt Vonnegut Jr.’s writing, “a shot of nihilism to go along with the senseless absurdity of living in a postmodern world.” Sometimes Parker takes that postmodernist riff too far, as when he alternates between scenes in the various prisons where he spent 11 years of his life, and the Columbia nonfiction MFA program. While he draws some very convincing (and highly satisfying) parallels between the American prison system and the Columbia University bureaucracy, the transitions are too abrupt: the turn of a page is all the preparation the reader is given. Trusting the reader too much is a classic first-book mistake, and can perhaps be forgiven, especially when the jolting transitions are read as a recreation of the disjointed effect that drugs have on a life—making the narrator unreliable not only in his telling, but in his character.

Or maybe, in classic Columbia student fashion, I’m overreading, thinking the signifier is the signified anywhere outside the classroom. Maybe Matthew Parker should have helped his reader a little more. At least he hates 1020 as much as I do.

In any case, in an environment as politically correct as Columbia, it’s hugely refreshing to find someone willing to say what he sees. Matthew Parker may not be culturally sensitive in most environments, but he doesn’t pretend to be. He’s keenly aware of the perverse racial dynamics in prison—of the necessity of unquestioning alliance to a particular racial or ethnic group for protection, and of the swastikas tattooed on all the other white dudes, and how he
didn’t want to be part of it—but he’s surprisingly uncritical of his personal impulses, often relying on stereotypes to depict bikers and hippies, and reducing women to tits, tits, tits. But when he shows himself just after being released from prison, spending his newly free nights in New York jacking off in his room, it’s clear that his callousness is not cool; it sucks, and that honesty about a junkie’s life, that de glamorization, is really a relief. Parker is frank about the inaccessibility of the intimacy he craves far more than sex, and is willing to give his reader a veneer-free look at what a drug habit means, from the poor social skills to the shameful involuntary ejaculation that results from detox.

I had a difficult time reading the part where Parker describes his poor flirtation skills (understandably stunted by long periods of time in prison and on drugs), admitting that he’s terrible at picking up women, and when he does (did) it’s only for sex, even as he complains that women judge him too harshly for his criminal past.

I don’t think I judged him; I think Parker puts up too strong a front. He articulates clearly and with empathy the hardships and prejudice (ex-)junkies face when reintegrating into society, and the unfair judgements based on education, background, and economics of which we all are guilty. (Why should the reader not judge him in return? Aren’t the superficialities he articulates just one step up from wanting tits that fit in a martini glass—something else he desires?) That attitude is deeply connected to Parker’s nihilistic, ironic bent. Considering that his book dwells on the humanity of addicts, I should cease blaming him for wanting what he did—but can I blame the many women featured in Parker’s memoir for not wanting him?

The answer seems to be no. Towards the end of the book (page 215, to be exact) Parker allows the profundity of his failings to surface: when he decided to get clean at the age of 40, he was trapped in his brain’s adolescent mindset. In fighting his way out of a stunted brain, Parker commits the teenager’s sin. He’s so desperate for a subversion of authority that he refuses to succeed. Parker perfectly relates this tension, this intergenerational misunderstanding, in a conversation with his mother:

Mom: Can’t you get laid in Brooklyn?
Matthew: Fuck a hipster? I’d rather not.
Mom: What’s a hipster?
Matthew: It’s a...never mind.

What adult man talks about sex with his mom? What mother wants to discuss sex with her son? We know at least one aspect of this relationship could use alteration. Eventually Parker does move beyond the adolescent and learns to accept authority in the rigorously anti-postmodern prison system, where social hierarchies and (for him) dependence on heroin are the guiding order of things. It makes the reader understand that following the rules is sometimes necessary in order to achieve a larger kind of freedom, one that lets you spend your day outside a prison yard.

But what’s particularly interesting is that, just as much as Parker needed heroin, he is addicted to intimacy—and in fact he calls himself an “intimacy junkie.” Everyone wants to be wanted. There are a million different ways to mitigate loneliness. By exploring the interconnection of self-destructive impulses, from overspending to eating disorders to more ordinary crime to sex and love, Parker implicates the reader in his story—and allows the story itself to be not only deeply redemptive but also flawed and human. I may not shoot up, and I’ve never been to prison, but I do have to have feelings, and just that can be goddamn hard.
Paradise Lost

How Will Columbia Finance Its Commitment to Secondary Education?

BY ANNA BAHR AND CLAIRE SABEL

Below is the conclusion of our story on The Columbia School. In the February issue of The Blue & White, we looked at The School’s remarkable educational philosophy, and explored the history of its connection with the University. In this second installment, we discuss the implications of Columbia’s financial and political investment in The School’s future.

“We’re still at the point of collecting information about how giant a problem we have,” says University Provost John Coatsworth. This “problem” concerns both the Provost’s office and the Columbia’s faculty, but has little to do with Columbia employees or students. The giant problem that Coatsworth confronts is the cost of educating five-year-olds.

The K-8 Columbia School launched in 2003 as a state-of-the-art private school six blocks south of Columbia’s Morningside campus, outfitted with superior resources that stand out from Morningside Heights’ lackluster public schools. Modeled after the Chicago Lab Schools, the ambitious, Deweyan pedagogy of the small satellite campus emphasizes independent thought and the integration of technology into basic classroom activity.

In the first half of this story, The Blue & White examined how the remarkable success of TSC’s educational mission dovetails with the sensitive issue of faculty benefits, illuminating The School’s questionable utility to the University. As Columbia’s budget faces continued strain from the economic crisis, the faculty fringe benefit pool—a fund that earmarks a percentage of faculty salaries for the costs of healthcare and tuition for faculty and their families—has suffered substantial losses, its funds depleted by $25-35 million. All the while, the university continues to outsource an estimated $12-14 million every year to sustain its elementary satellite.

After conversing with the three provosts who have held the office from the school’s origin through the present day, it is apparent that there are no easy answers. Though the current administration recognizes the necessity of a new approach, competing visions for a new plan render The School’s future uncertain. Communication, necessary among key administrators to resolve such uncertainties, is conspicuously lacking.

SUPPLY AND DEMAND

Rather than subjecting University employees to the fearsome world of New York private school admissions or the uncertainties of the public school system, The School at Columbia University (TSC) was conceived in the late ’90s as a means of attracting young professors with families who might otherwise be deterred by the tribulations of navigating New York City schools. Although TSC itself has, by all accounts, been remarkably successful in providing progressive secondary education in outstanding facilities, it benefits a much smaller population of Columbia employees than planned—and at a far higher cost than anticipated.

The critical issue plaguing The School is one of supply and demand. Columbia grossly overestimated the availability of both physical space and student slots open to faculty children. While it was initially assumed that the school could accommodate all interested faculty, University Provost Jonathan Coatsworth estimated that “at its present size, less than half the faculty that would like to get their children in the school actually do.” (Coatsworth assumed office in February, having been named interim provost in July 2011 after the unexpected departure of Claude Steele.)

The School was originally proposed by John Mitchell Mason Professor of the University Jonathan Cole, whose fourteen year tenure term...
was the second longest in the University’s history. Cole specializes in the sociology of scientific education, and developed a carefully delineated vision for TSC that “was never put into place as it was planned.” He believes TSC’s current financial strain on the University budget to be unsustainable, and that its role as a competitive faculty recruitment tool was severely compromised by concessions made to Manhattanville community advocates: admission is no longer a guarantee for faculty. At present, 50 percent of student spots are allocated, through a lottery, to children unaffiliated with Columbia living in neighborhoods spanning from Columbus Circle to southern Washington Heights.

As a worst-case scenario, Cole reluctantly imagines the school’s closure, meaning the loss of hundreds of millions of dollars that might have funded more comprehensive faculty health care or housing. Otherwise, the Columbia administration must adapt and “go to the second phase that we had talked about earlier on, which was to give money to the local public schools. But in return we are going to need to buy back the slots.”

Cole references the current proportion of placements for faculty children to (mostly subsidized) community spots, which differs significantly from the original model for TSC’s finances. To “buy” these spaces would require doling out hefty donations to existing public schools, in exchange for the restoration of TSC to its originally intended distributions: “50 percent faculty [paying half-tuition], 20 percent people from the broader neighborhood who could afford tuition, 20 percent would be allocated to non-profit organizations in the city like museums and others [paying full tuition]...and 10 percent of the student body would be selected at random from the community, and they would be, probably, fully funded.”

In its initial “battle” to secure approval to build The School from the Manhattanville Community Board, Allan Nevins Professor of American History, Alan Brinkley, who served as Provost during TSC’s first years, says, “Columbia had to agree to allow to give half of the available student admission slots to the community”—a concession that, while politically advantageous, sabotaged an investment plan that supported the superior facilities, services, and teaching of a high-end private school. As a result, far fewer families than the anticipated 40 percent contribute to the pricey $33,000 annual tuition.

**Crossed Wires**

The School provides over $4.5 million in financial assistance every year. Columbia compensates for this disparity between income and spending at a cost of $12-14 million every year, estimates Professor Christia Mercer, the former chair of Literature Humanities—now on leave—who chaired Provost Brinkley’s Faculty Task Force on The School in 2005. This considerable annual expenditure is siphoned off from the fringe benefit pool without delivering guaranteed placement for faculty children.

Provost Coatsworth and Vice-Provost Roxy Smith, who also staffed the 2005 Task Force on The Columbia School, categorically dismissed the possibility of either TSC’s closure or a reduction of its community placements. Smith seemed surprised that reducing community spots was even a consideration, stating, “I don’t think that’s a conversation that either the institution would have any interest in or the community would have any interest in.” The Provost was similarly resolute. While Brinkley echoed this sentiment, adding that he didn’t think anyone at Columbia would dare to ask, Cole believed that, despite ugly negotiations and a bout of bad press for Columbia, the payoff in faculty enrichment could be worth it. He further noted that the administration should never have cowed to community pressure for increased representation at TSC in the first place.
Columbia has justified funnelling money to fund TSC from the fringe benefit pool with the understanding that it would benefit current professors’ families, and as a recruitment tool would help departments attract the brightest in their fields. When The School first opened its doors, the fringe pool boasted a healthy surplus and seemed a natural source of funding. “It turned out that [The School] was very expensive, and, after a few years, the fringe pool wasn’t so healthy anymore. It was a big hit to the fringe pool, and we had a big deficit as a result,” recalls Brinkley.

By the spring of 2011, the fringe pool was losing $25-$35 million annually, “partially because of The School and partially because of rising healthcare costs,” explains Brinkley. The faculty task force assembled last year to assess the state of fringe benefits suggested cutting faculty health insurance plans and coverage of college tuition for faculty children to reduce the loss, though many questioned a lack of scrutiny pointed at The School’s funding.

Coatsworth and Smith suggest that funding for The School could be wrested from other areas of the University budget, but insist that potential financial redistribution on the University’s end will not affect TSC. “The commitment that’s in place right now for the school is still in place and will stay in place, and that’s a signed agreement with the community. So what John [Coatsworth] is talking about is how we look at the larger questions,” Smith said.

Vice-Provost Smith described the University’s commitment to fund TSC as “the equivalent of the financial aid for the community,” an essential component of Columbia’s finely balanced relationship with the larger Manhattanville neighborhood, especially during its expansion phase.

The Competition

Though TSC’s commitment to socioeconomic diversity makes it competitive with other elite New York private schools, these comparable institutions rest on substantial endowments that boast notoriously generous patrons. This is presumably not the case at The School. (Smith did not return a follow-up email requesting information about the exact size, restriction, and health of TSC’s endowment.) The Spence School’s $85 million endowment plus its $36,200 annual tuition fee rivals the financial capacity of a small college, though it serves only a fraction of TSC’s enrollment size and grants a mere 19 percent of the student body financial aid.

A closer approximation to The School at Columbia are the century-old Chicago Laboratory Schools linked closely to the University of Chicago. The Lab Schools maintain a growing endowment of $6,838,633, despite the fact that total high school tuition costs at least $5,000 less than annual tuition at The School. But the Lab Schools restrain their resources and do not guarantee financial aid, requiring that needy families re-apply for subsidized tuition every year—a policy implying that limited funds allocated to “deserving students” do not meet the needs of every underprivileged student.

While Columbia’s commitment to K-8 education in Morningside is a more comprehensive, and more expensive, project than simply revamping TSC’s admissions policy, it may also prove more sustainable in the long term. Smith emphasized that the recommendations of the 2005 task force on TSC centered on a five-year plan addressing specific concerns. Now, she says, they want to look at “the broader educational environment” from 102nd to 137th streets.

Cole explained that subsidizing public schools is a significantly less costly means of promoting K-8 education in the larger neighborhood—if Columbia abandons the current funding structure of
TSC. Although the Provost’s office remains firm in its assurance that TSC will not go public any time soon, Coatsworth confirmed that it was at least a possibility, even if a long-term one. Both he and Smith repeatedly drew attention to the success of an alternative model for Columbia-funded secondary education, the recently-opened Columbia Secondary School for Math, Science, & Engineering (CSS).

A few years younger than TSC, CSS has yet to graduate a class, which partly explains why it has dodged the public radar. Its undoubtedly more economical scheme dodges the fundamental financial flaws which TSC endures, and could alleviate TSC’s burden on the fringe benefits pool. Columbia commits about $100,000 annually to CSS, whose annual budget is approximately $2.4 million. This is equivalent to three fully subsidized places at The School, or 2.5 percent of The School’s expenditure on financial aid alone.

Columbia entertained the prospect of a University-supported public school while in the planning stages of TSC, but eventually rejected the idea, as Columbia would inevitably lose control over its direct operations to the NYC Department of Education, Cole explained. Yet CSS has achieved much of TSC’s mission—and on a limited budget. When the time comes to reconsider Columbia’s fiscal relationship to The School, CSS could provide a persuasive blueprint.

With competitive admission, a diverse student body, and a rigorous curriculum, CSS emphasizes the collaborative learning that defines TSC’s agenda, with a bonus focus in science and research. Beyond the obvious difference in grade ranges between the two establishments, the schools maintain drastically different infrastructural relationships with the University and pedagogical philosophies. CSS allows upperclassmen to take advantage of existing facilities by admitting them to classes on the Columbia campus, whereas TSC has been furnished with extravagant and autonomous accommodations.

**Back to the Drawing Board**

The problem with a theoretical integration of TSC into the public system is that many professors do not consider public schools viable options for their children. Coatsworth pointed out that a few Columbia-affiliated kids were “pioneers” in the first classes at CSS, and believes that, through Columbia’s support, CSS “could be seen as a public school that’s actually good enough so that Columbia faculty have incentive to send their kids there.”

However, Coatsworth would not elaborate on the feasibility of this change, or how soon such a change could be made. “We just haven’t gotten to the point where we can make a plan that involves The Columbia School, the public schools, and the University’s needs, and that’s what we would want to take a look at [in AY 2012-2013].” While this sounds like a successful compromise, the success of such transition relies on transparency and active efforts at communication between the forthcoming Task Force, Provost’s office, community representatives, and TSC administration. In striking contrast to Coatsworth’s tentativeness, The School’s founder, Cole, declared he could put TSC back on track in two months. To avoid the structural problems that beset The School from its very beginnings, all relevant parties must be represented to ensure justly that the needs of the neighborhood schools, faculty families, and the University’s budget are prioritized over politics—both internal and external.

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More learning time in Kindergarten should be devoted to number than to other topics.

As per your request, here are some pictures of the organic farm I worked on. The farm actually has a facebook page if you are interested in perusing it; it is under the name Heritage Produce at Shelton Herb Farm. I have some other photos of the hoop house construction on my personal computer if you are interested.

Imagine a classroom where students are greeted every day by their teacher and classmates, where there is a corner called the “Turtle Zone” for children to go to when they feel they need time to get their emotions back under control before they do something that will get them into trouble. Envision a school secretary handing two students a “problem solving diary” to complete after being sent to the office for fighting during recess.

*From a Barnard NSOP leader guide:

“Remember not to give any parents a schedule book!”

“All OLs should socialize with new students, be friendly, and enjoy the ice cream!”

“Go over the schedule book with the new students, but also talk to them about any Columbia life stuff that you want to share. Please use careful discretion in deciding what is appropriate and what is not.

*YOUR MEETING MUST LAST FOR AT LEAST 45 MINUTES. DO NOT RELEASE YOUR STUDENTS EARLY.*

For a person so committed to an artificial persona, particularly one as banal and dry as Andy Warhol’s, it is interesting that the artist has posthumously commanded the discourse that surrounds his work in what may be considered a tactic of reverse-psychology. It’s as though the monotone, nasally voice of Warhol speaks to his writers and critics from beyond the grave. Often this is via his heavily cited literary work, The Philosophy of Andy Warhol, the subtext of his influence being, “I don’t care what you have to say about me, but here are my thoughts on the subject. Write whatever.” And in this impassivity and detachment there is the subtle force of personality that comes through and makes one want to understand him. Is there something to his words, vacillating between banal and observant, which melds into a particular form of cryptography? Is there anything there in Andy Warhol?
HELPFUL BRO IS HELPFUL
A Tuck-it-Away storage truck was turning left from Broadway onto 114th, and got stuck in the intersection as the light changed. Two bros wearing tanks pushing a blue bin addressed the truck, helpfully yelling, “You’re in the way! Get the fuck out!”

SEMIEROTICS
An editor was welcomed home early one summer Saturday by her roommate, a waitress at the bar of a fashionable downtown hotel, with an eager question: did she know the guy who wrote Middlesex? “You mean Jeffrey Eugenides?” the editor replied.

Apparently, the roommate and several of her friends had been invited up to Mr. Eugenides’s room the previous evening. The roommate maintained this encounter was platonic, even though said the author told her at one point she would play a good Madeleine in the forthcoming movie adaptation of The Marriage Plot, and eyewitnesses confirm the roommate is “pretty hot.” Eugenides later texted the roommate to see if she was free to hang out the next time he was in New York.

CHINESE DEMOCRACY
Having completed work as a “peer mentor” for a private organization that hosts college admissions workshops for Chinese high school students at Columbia, one editor took an offer from the president of the organization to do her a “personal favor” and lead an unofficial tour of the Columbia campus. That day, the guide narrowly avoided collision with an officially sanctioned URC tour group. After sending the group on its way, and safe in the knowledge that she’d made $50 cash, she’s holding out for future offers.

ST. A’S IS JEALOUS
The sisters of Sigma Delta Tau have had an elevator installed in their brownstone. Passersby report “hella construction,” and general hearsay holding that an elevator of this type “would cost, like, $500,000,” substantiates this ADA-compliant rumor. The question is: will this lift, like its EC brethren, swiftly carry loads of boisterous undergrads to their bedchambers? Or is it doomed to Hamiltonian infamy, slowly and odorously raising passengers from floor to floor?

LAMB OVER FUCK YOU
A tired young student, in need of sustenance, turned (as many do) to Halal. Feeling adventurous, he asked the vendor at 116th St. by College Walk to make him a falafel. After taking “like 10 minutes,” our gossip was finally handed a sandwich, and gave the vendor a $10 bill. She replied “I don’t have change,” and took the money. Skeptical, the student asked her to hold on to the sandwich while he ran for change. Suddenly, the vendor realized she did have change for a 10! O holy miracle. First-years, be warned: the 116th Halal cart is looking out for neither your wallet nor your waistline.

COLUMBIA’S MISS MANNERS
As an editor was climbing down from the roof of a brownstone one eve, she spotted (or heard, rather) a drunken partygoer urinating off of the roof of the Sigma Chi house. The editor’s companion yelled, “You have the smallest dick on campus!” despite not being able to actually see said penis. The public pee-er was quickly shamed, and so zipped up prematurely and hustled back inside.

Spud Muffin...He’s a horse! •
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