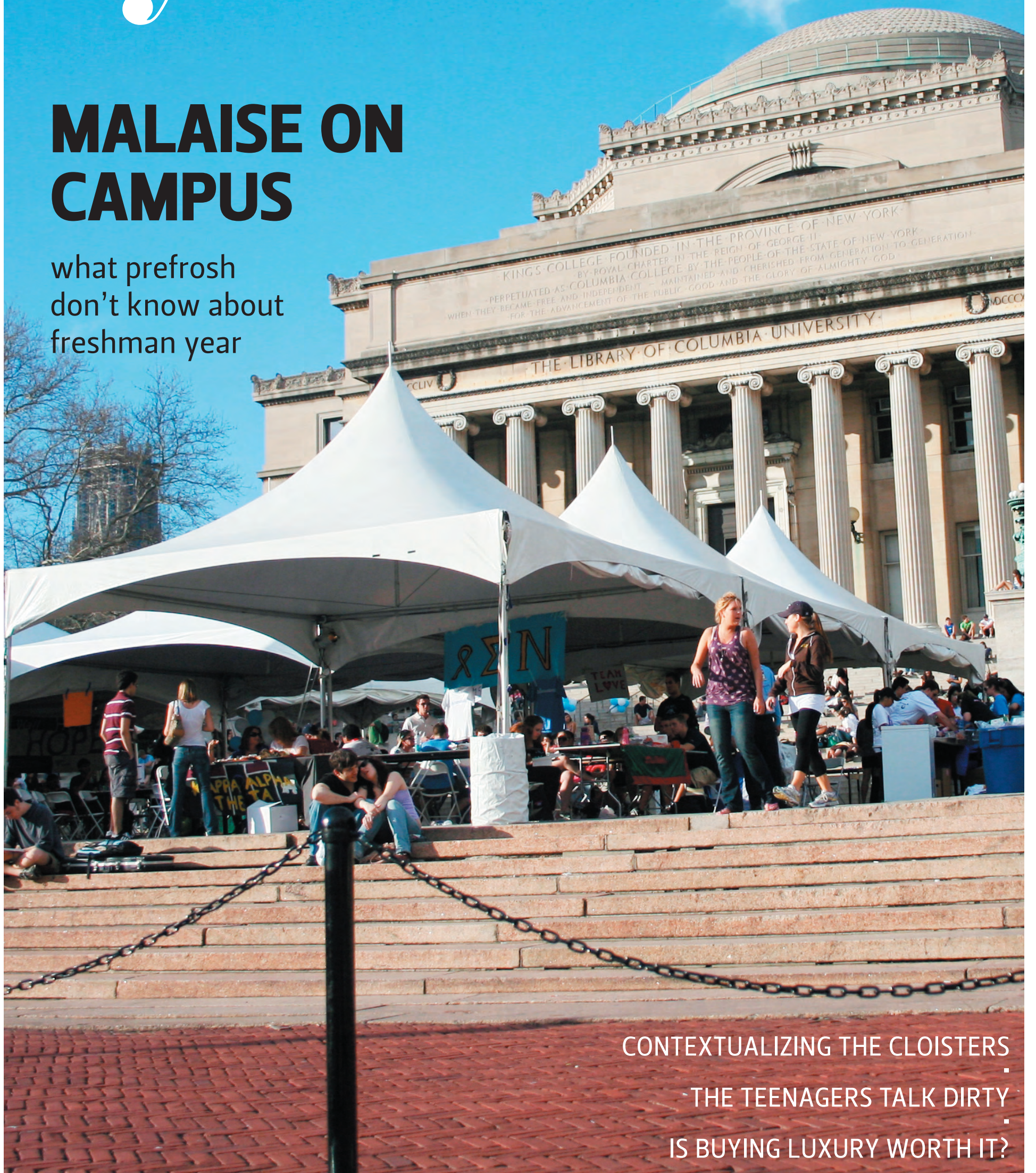


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the eye

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what prefrosh
don't know about
freshman year



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THE TEENAGERS TALK DIRTY

IS BUYING LUXURY WORTH IT?

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MALaise ON CAMPUS 07

Does Days on Campus for admitted students depict a Columbia community that doesn't actually exist?

By Elizabeth Simins

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Days on Campus is a touchy subject with me. I was psyched for it, but my dreams of an awesome weekend were quickly dashed—during the walking tour of Columbia and its environs, a friendly Morningside pigeon pooped on my jacket. If you don't remember, the walking tour is the first event at Days on Campus, so the pigeon-poop incident decidedly soured my whole experience. I also spent a lot of the first day hanging out with an old friend who actually had no intention of going to Columbia. I didn't spend much time getting to know my assigned DOC group, so I felt a little out of place the second day after he went home, and I knew it was totally my own doing.

It took me until about halfway through the first semester of freshman year here to find a group of friends who didn't feel temporary (except for a couple of people I met at the aquarium during one of the orientation events—hi, Noam!). The thing is, though, that when I was finally able to be honest with myself and others about the fact that I didn't feel I was making the friends of a lifetime, I noticed a striking phenomenon: there were a lot of people who felt the same way. Nobody wants to be the one to broach the

topic, but they readily agreed when I did.

And I think it's even more common now that I'm a little older—people are much more willing to admit they were once lonely or unhappy when they don't feel that way anymore. For the most part, we're more content and better adjusted now—I know I'm having the time of my life—so we're more comfortable coping to former vulnerability.

In our lead story this week, *Spectator* Arts and Entertainment Editor Elizabeth Simins explores freshman year—its ups and downs, and how well or poorly it's represented by that curious bastion of the Columbia experience: Days on Campus. After I spent an afternoon repping *Spectator* at the Days on Campus activity fair, the prefrosh have endeared themselves to me: is there anywhere a more nervous, adorable group of people than the class of 2012? I hope those who do end up here are happy next fall, but even more than that, I hope they know it's okay if they aren't at first. Adjusting to college is a lot to deal with even when you *don't* reflexively flinch every time a pigeon flies by.

—Alexandria Symonds

Science as Humanity

melanie jones interviews deborah blum

INTERVIEW BY MELANIE JONES

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE MILWAUKEE JOURNAL SENTINEL

NO ONE CAN ACCUSE DEBORAH BLUM of being an under-achiever. She is an environmental psychologist whose articles on animal testing, compiled in *The Monkey Wars*, were awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1992, and her follow-up biography of psychologist Harry Harlow, *Love at Goon Park*, was named Best Book of the Year by *Publisher's Weekly*, *Discover Magazine*, and *Library Journal*. As a professor of journalism and mass communication at UW-Madison, Blum has served on numerous advisory committees in the science community and been published in the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, *Psychology Today*, and *Rolling Stone*. Her most recent book, *Ghost Hunters*, chronicles William James' investigations of paranormal activity. Melanie Jones talked with professor Blum about balancing science with the humanities, journalism with teaching, and criticism with praise.

Your father, Murray Blum, was an entomologist, and your mother a writer. Did you grow up with a pretty equal respect for the humanities and sciences? What did your parents think of your decision early on to be an environmental journalist?

I'm definitely a hybrid. My dad wanted us (I have three younger sisters) to grow up loving the natural world. We had snakes for pets, jars of tadpoles on the breakfast table so we could watch them become frogs, and once—when he was studying poisonous spiders—a black widow in a plexiglass box as the centerpiece in our dining room tables. My mother “published” a family newspaper for us to write in and religiously took us to the library every week. As for my choice to become an environmental journalist, candidly, my mother was fine with it as long as I was really good at it. Pretty much a childhood mantra. My dad was initially horrified—he came of that generation of scientists who thought that real scientists didn't appear in newspapers—but I've pretty much won him over on that.

Your biographies and research articles are accessible in a way that reaches scientists and nonscientists alike. Do you keep a larger audience in mind when you write? Are specific books more aimed toward enlightening the general public or opening the minds of your colleagues?

Well, I've never been entirely interested in preaching to the choir. So I always try to write in a way that will (or so I dream) make people who don't like science become seduced into it, get caught up in how human the enterprise is and how useful it is to our understanding of how we are. I assume that everyone I write for, scientist or not, is smart enough to get my drift. It's more fun to write that way anyway. I recognize that a lot of scientists read my books, of course, and some of the books, like *Love at Goon Park*, regularly turn up in psychology classes. So that drives my obsessive-compulsive need to be right about things, which is a fairly healthy approach for a science writer.

With *Love at Goon Park*, which is both about a

very unusual psychologist and about the science of love and affection, I really had a larger audience in mind. I wanted readers to realize the ways that science helps illuminate our relationships—and also the fundamental bedrock importance of those relationships. With *Ghost Hunters*, yeah, I partly wrote that with the scientific community in mind, with the idea of kind of stirring things up, making the point that there's a kind of arrogance in insisting that one species, on one small planet in a corner of the universe, knows it all. Plus I liked some of the beautifully strange experiences that the Victorian ghost hunters tried to unravel.



You say in *Ghost Hunters* that it was “past time ... for science to open its mind.” Do you feel that science has become more flexible over time in accepting and examining alternate theories?

You're absolutely right. I do like risk-takers in science. I admire the courage it takes to resolutely push an idea despite the enormous antipathy of colleagues. I like exploring the ways that ideas in science arise and evolve. Harry Harlow was a mixed story, of course, but he was very successful in helping to drive the acceptance in psychology that love and affection are important. James was brilliant, internationally renowned for almost all his work, except the psychical research. So I was very intrigued by the reasons that he never gave up on it. Obviously, James and his colleagues never succeeded in making their psychical research mainstream. But they built a framework that still

supports the paranormal work, whether you like it or not, that does endure. And they did of a great job of suggesting that we just have our definitions wrong—that “supernatural” may just be another name for the natural world that we've yet to understand.

As to flexibility, I think science is mostly inflexible. As an institution, it holds onto ideas until they self-destruct or some courageous scientist blows them up. The theory of plate tectonics is a famous example of a scientist whose career was almost destroyed because he was absolutely right about an alternative model. And that hasn't really changed—funding encourages researchers to play it safe. But—to be incurably fair about this—one of the reasons the scientific system works, has produced such amazing results, is because it does adhere to very set demands, principles of evidence, and though that does sometimes make it difficult to work on innovative ideas it also prevents people wasting too much time on silly ones.

Your Pulitzer Prize-winning work, *The Monkey Wars*, examines both sides of the animal rights issue, and *Ghost Hunters* is similarly balanced between arguments for and against analysis of paranormal activity. After so much research on both sides, do you find your position on the issue has shifted or that it's difficult to have a definitive opinion at all?

When I wrote *Monkey Wars*, I had a couple of very clear objectives in mind. I wanted to explore the inherent ethical dilemma of doing research on closely-related species. Animal research is about us: number one species on the planet. We can do anything we want to these animals so the decisions we make in studying them are revealing about us as well as them. I

Who you gonna call? *Ghost Hunters* author Deborah Blum! Seen here in a big wicker chair!

wanted to illuminate what the research was, how it worked. And I wanted to allow voices on both sides of the issue to be heard. What's dismaying to me is those positions, on both sides of the issue, have moved so little in the years since I wrote the book. Scientists seem even more secretive about their work, activists even more angry. So... opinionated? More than I used

to be. Sometimes I just want to knock everyone's heads together and say: “Why don't you set the theatrics aside for a while and at least try to collaborate on making sure that animals in research labs are always treated with respect?”

Your books often incorporate social criticism into their examination of various scientific movements or stances. Is there any way to put scientific research, especially psychology research, in a bubble?

That's a great and even tricky question. Ideally, research itself is done in an objective way, not trying to load the data, or manipulate the results for a desired end. No surprise there. But obviously, particularly in the social sciences, questions may be asked in a cultural framework. And sometimes should. The tricky part—and this is true with all sciences—is when the results raise a social or moral question. Such as with Harlow's work: what if it was absolutely true that you could only get the answer by isolating or terrifying small monkeys? How much are you willing to pay for knowledge? What lines should a scientist refuse to cross? Or are there any? I think there are. And I think it's important for such questions to be asked and important for science—as a human enterprise—to consider the implications of such research. \\\

French Connection

why some french students say
'oui, oui' to columbia

BY ASHLEY JAMES

ART BY RACHEL LINDSAY

Those with friends who are juniors have certainly gotten used to the many photo albums featuring the Mona Lisa, Eiffel Tower, Arc de Triomphe, and whatever else those studying abroad curiously forget that most people have already seen before their camera has captured it. With all the Parisian flight that is study abroad, Columbia students may seem to forget that some Frenchies actually choose to take the opposite travel route. We spoke to two French students at Columbia to find out how our country's premier city has been treating them.

Franc-ly Speaking

Youcef Draia came to the United States from the City of Lights with high expectations for the Big Apple.

"I came with the illusion of finding love, but it was very delusional," Draia says, typing away his frustrations as we sit together in Butler Café.

"I am in shock," he adds dramatically. "At first people are very nice, welcoming, spontaneous. Especially when they find out I am French, foreign or whatever. France is supposed to be so sexy here," he muses.

Draia came to Columbia from Sciences Po, located in Paris, for an entire year of study abroad. While he is in junior standing at Columbia, the equivalent three years mean that at the end of this semester he will have completed his college degree requirement for France.

"This is my last year, then, I am heading back to France to get my Master's in International Affairs," Draia says.

Draia has only been speaking English for the past five years, but he finds that the transition to an American school has not been that hard for him.

"I didn't find it very difficult because I study the same subject, international relations. Yet, in America it is interesting because it is from an entirely different perspective, so I like that about it," he says.

As far as language barriers go, Draia has not had

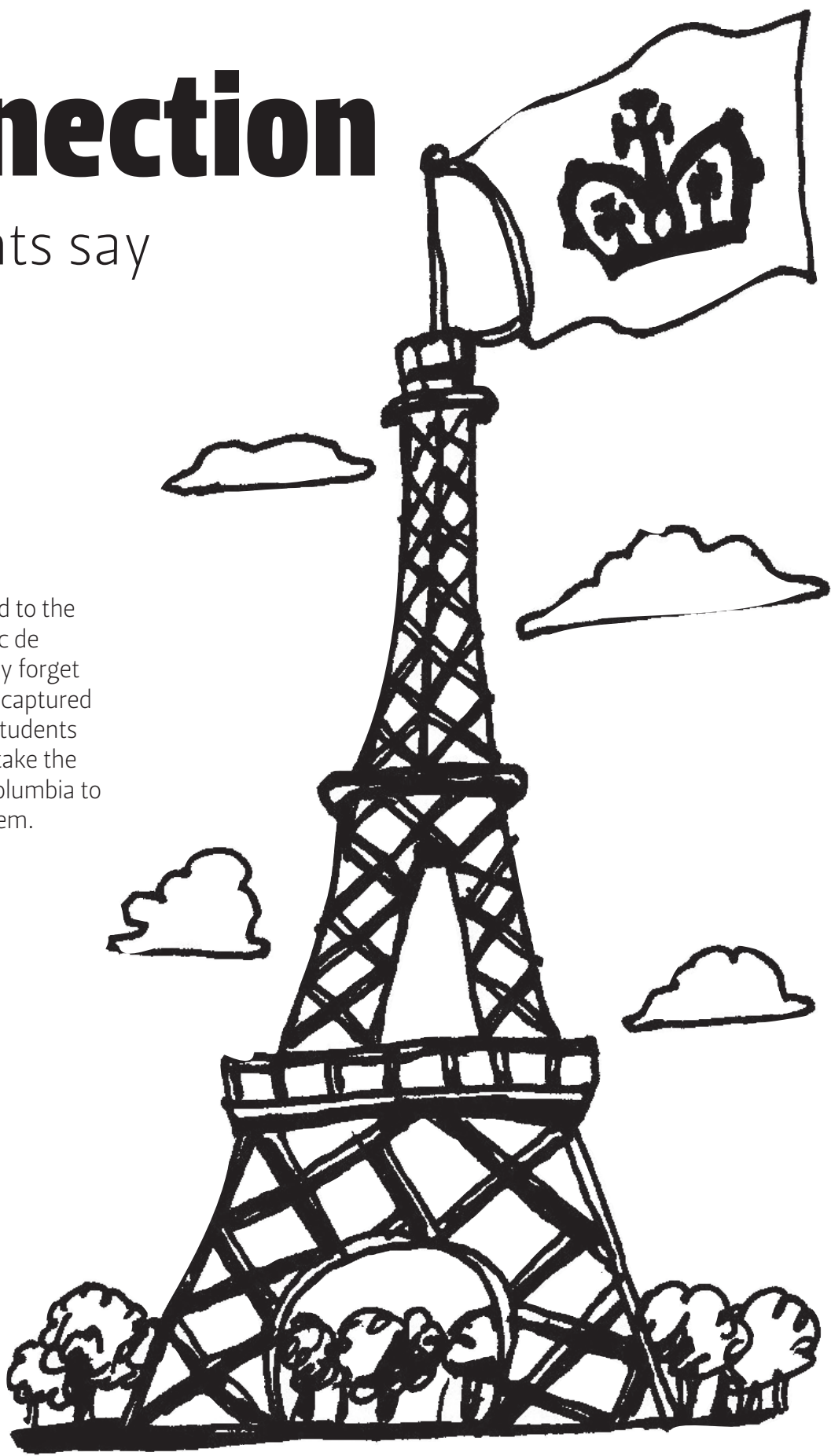
*"I CAME WITH THE ILLUSION
OF FINDING LOVE, BUT IT WAS
VERY DELUSIONAL."*

much of an issue, save for a few instances.

"Only when professors use colloquial vocabulary does it become a problem, like, 'the U.S. and Soviet Union butting heads.' What is 'butting heads?'" he asks.

Yet overall, Draia has found that the learning experience at an American institution has been a particularly rewarding one for him.

"In France we don't have campuses, we all live at home. It's not the atmosphere you find here, so that's why I enjoy it, the American college life."



But while Draia has found some level of comfort here, especially in terms of academics, he has learned to give up on his rather high expectations of life in New York City.

"New York is very exciting, but it is too stressful," he says.

He will return to Paris in May and tells me: "I am impatient. I miss home."

French Kiss Goodbye

Jessica Schinazi, CC '11, said farewell to friends and family in France when she was only in high school. The French first-year attended Lycée Français de New York, a private French-language school based on the France educational system, located on the Upper East Side.

"Since I went to school in the city, I've spent years speaking the [English] language," Schinazi explains.

When it came to deciding whether or not to return to France for higher education, Schinazi was definite in her desire to stay in the United States.

"A lot of my senior class went back to France," she

says. "But, the American system of education, I liked it better than France."

She says that after speaking with her friends who did return, she was glad she made the decision to stay in the states.

"They are dying," she says of these returned friends. "All of them have told me they want to come back and have the American college experience," she adds.

In particular, she says she chose to attend Columbia because "it is a very well-known school and the best alternative in America to a French education." She plans to study economics.

Schinazi has no plans to return to France after she finishes college as America continues to be the place she most wants to live. Yet, she still finds it necessary to maintain a connection with her home country.

"I connect with French people, through the French Society, movie screenings. I still have friends in the senior class [of high school]," she says. In particular, she enjoys simply being able to speak her first language with them.

"It's difficult to have to speak English all day," she says. \\\

Norooz and Neutrality

columbia's iranian student club talks persian politics, culture

BY ASHLEY JAMES

PHOTO COURTESY OF CISA

WITH THE MEDIA STORM that was Ahmadinejad's visit to Columbia last fall, you had better believe the Columbia Iranian Students Association was particularly targeted by the press.

"A lot of news sources contacted us, asking us to make a statement about his visit," says Sogol Salari, CC '08, vice president of CISA.

The board understandably felt compelled to issue a statement about the president's engagement at Columbia. Yet, as CISA is a decidedly nonpolitical club, choosing exactly what to say about the Ahmadinejad visit was a delicate process.

"There was some back-and-forth among the members," Salari says. "It was important we stayed neutral in our position because we are a cultural organization, and we didn't want to take an isolating position."

They eventually did release a statement, and it expressed their desire to remain politically undefined. An excerpt read, "As a point of clarification, the invitation extended to President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was extended by the University, not CISA. CISA is comprised of individuals with various opinions and beliefs. ... Our organization's focus is to support the united student's efforts to provide a safe and productive outlet for the expression of students' views."

While Ahmadinejad's visit may have challenged CISA in its quest to remain politically neutral, Salari finds that such a controversial event is an anomaly for the club and that for the most part CISA is successful in maintaining its cultural focus, leaving politics and religion at the door.

"We want to be able to unify all Persian people and make sure everyone feels welcome and comfortable," Salari says.

"What I really like about CISA is that it provides opportunities for all the Iranians and also non-Iranians, free from their political or religious background and beliefs, to learn about Iranian custom, while enjoying some beautiful aspects of Persian



Members of CISA bring the fun and hold the politics on one of their many cultural outings.

art, literature, and culture," says Hamed Mojahed, CC '08, webmaster for CISA.

This cultural focus mostly takes the form of planning and hosting events. CISA organizes film screenings, social mixers, and panel discussions.

"We like to do socials at least once a month because those are pretty standard. We do one or two panel discussions a semester, though we haven't done as many this semester," Salari says.

WHILE AHMADINEJAD'S VISIT MAY HAVE CHALLENGED CISA IN ITS QUEST TO REMAIN POLITICALLY NEUTRAL, SALARI FINDS THAT SUCH A CONTROVERSIAL EVENT IS AN ANOMALY FOR THE CLUB.

This past semester, the club hosted a screening of the popular coming-of-age Iranian film, *Persepolis*, a movie based on a graphic novel. Later this month, the Nobel Prize-winning human rights advocate Shirin Ebadi will be visiting Barnard, and the club "will be putting some stuff together for that day as well," Salari says. They also often co-sponsor panel speakers with the Columbia Political Union, without taking a stance on the actual speakers so as to maintain their political neutrality.

The event that is dearest to the organization and by far the largest in terms of turnout is the Norooz

Banquet. Norooz is the Persian New Year celebration, and CISA organizes a dinner accompanied by cultural performances for the special occasion. This year's event saw about 300 people, which included both Columbia students and non-Columbia-affiliated Iranian enthusiasts.

"It's one of our most important holidays in Iran where as students we get 13 days or more off, and families get enough time to visit most, if not all, their relatives and friends and

sometimes go for a vacation. Here in NYC, every year we throw a dinner party for the public while presenting cultural and musical aspects of the Iranian culture. Everybody in the group works so passionately to organize this exciting event and we always have a great turn out, from slide shows of Iran, to the fine Iranian cuisine, to musical or traditional dance performances and plays, to the public dance, to the Iranian DJ at the end of the night. I enjoy it when I see people's reaction when they interact with Iranians for the first time, they always say 'I had no idea you guys were this much fun,'" Mojahed says.

"Norooz is the pinnacle of our organization," Salari confirms. "We put more effort into it than anything else. It is what we take the most pride in, and to be able to share that with the school is great, to see other people who are not Persian come out."

While Norooz has the greatest number of non-Persian participants, Most of CISA's events are frequented by Iranians. The club has a listserv of about 400 people, which includes both Columbia students and Iranians living in the surrounding area.

"People usually hear about our events via the listserv," Salari says. "For the most part, the club consists of Iranian Americans. Most of us have been born and raised in

America. But we identify strongly with our culture."

Salari, who is from Detroit, found CISA to be a great opportunity to connect with those who shared similar family-life experiences, especially because, growing up in Michigan, she did not have many Iranian friends her age.

"The Iranian population in Detroit is not as high as say, Los Angeles, which is known to have a huge Persian population. For me it was really nice coming in as a freshman. I met students with such similar backgrounds. Here it was nice to have someone to relate to," she says. \\\

Do the Teenagers Need Their Mouths Washed Out?

dirty parisian lads and a lack of soap

BY CASEY ACIERNO

PHOTOS COURTESY OF BEGGARS GROUP

ON FIRST LISTEN, it can be hard to take the Teenagers seriously. The France-via-London three-piece dance band dresses and looks like American Apparel models, has charming French accents, and writes songs about Scarlett Johansson and American cheerleaders. Most of the lyrics are spoken over synthesizers, and the filthy lyrics sound less Daft Punk and more Penthouse. Worst of all, they started as a joke on MySpace.

So, why listen to the Teenagers?

"We don't think of the Teenagers as the one-hit-wonder, the take-the-money-and-run, so I hope people don't think that!" says Michael Szpiner, the Teenagers' bassist. He, along with vocalist Quentin Lafon and guitarist/synth player Dorian Dumont, started the band over Christmas of 2005 with "a MySpace page and a song." That first song became "Fuck Nicole," featured on their newly released LP, which had a typically auspicious start. "Quentin had a request from a girl named Nicole, and we were like, 'fuck you, Nicole,' and that's it," Szpiner says. The song is a clear template for other Teenagers songs—it combines witty, often vulgar lyrics spoken by Dumont with an insistent guitar line and a darkly humorous shout-along chorus. While this does not exactly seem a recipe for success, their unique music and lyrics were quickly picked up not only by fans, but by a major label.

The band left their native Paris and relocated to London, where they thought they would better be able to attempt a serious music career. "London's more exciting to us," Szpiner says. While there, they worked on their first record, *Reality Check*, which was released last month on Beggars XL. In

The Teenagers have ridden dance-band rock and cheeky lyrics to MySpace success.



This policy extends to their music videos. The shoot for "Love No" was filmed in Greenpoint during their last stay in New York. The casting call, posted on local blogs, asked for 18-24-year-olds who wouldn't mind spending the day "eating ice cream, roller skating, and making out on camera with good looking strangers." The video is similar to their album cover, which also features two good-looking people making out. Currently, they're looking for fans to record themselves singing "Feeling Better" for their new music video. "It's just more fun to do—it's just more cool" to have fans in their videos, Szpiner says. And it's not like they're short of fans—their MySpace page now has more than 75,000 friends who leave enthusiastic comments and express excitement over

people would be so shocked-slash-excited about it," Szpiner says. The chorus also proved too risqué for the FCC, who changed it for the airwaves to "I kissed my American crush," not only skewing the meaning, but erasing the naughtiness that makes the Teenagers so different. The song's racy lyrics and synthesizers successfully garnered additional attention for the dance-rock band, attention that would later be transferred to their other music and live performances.

The Teenagers are not only hilarious lyricists and performers on their albums—live, they are also serious musicians who perform capably, demonstrating their talent. On their last New York tour in January, Lafon danced around endearingly and awkwardly, telling the audience, "I saved a lot of moves for New York. I hope you noticed." Two girls dressed in their hipster best were called up onstage to provide the female vocals for "Homecoming," but proved more interested in dancing with Lafon. The band, though, is incredibly tight, and the show, as well as the music, was fun and rowdy. The Teenagers are excited about their return to New York, with dates at both the Music Hall of Williamsburg and Bowery Ballroom. "New York was really, really cool—we can't wait to go back," Szpiner says.

As for what is next for the Teenagers, they're not sure themselves. Though they have recently exploded due to the currently vital combination of MySpace, tenacity, and a novel concept, the vaguely gimmicky dance-pop theme could run out—soon. After a computer with their new demos on it was stolen, they're sure that their new music is "going to be different." Hopefully not too different, however. How exactly they intend to top songs about pneumatic actresses and making out to *Dirty Dancing* remains to be seen. \\\

WE WANT PEOPLE TO ENJOY THEMSELVES,
THAT'S THE MAIN GOAL.

addition to "Fuck Nicole," the album includes other similarly anthemic dance-rock tracks like "Love No," a song that takes to task a nagging girlfriend, and "Feeling Better," their self-referential track that reminds fans to listen to them when they're down (and buy their T-shirts).

The Teenagers are surprisingly earnest when it comes to their fans, even when they're not telling them to write "I love the Teenagers" on their bodies, as they do in "Feeling Better." "We want people to enjoy themselves, that's the main goal," Szpiner says.

their Coachella dates.

It's impossible to talk about the Teenagers without addressing their first big track, "Homecoming." When the duet-tribute to transatlantic romance (okay, one-night stands) first appeared on blogs about a year ago, the dark, synth-heavy music was one of the less important aspects of bloggers' posts. The matter-of-fact chorus, "I fucked my American cunt," is seemingly tailor-made to distract, well, everyone. "At the beginning, we didn't know that it was that rude, we thought it was just a bad word. We didn't know that a lot of

MALaise ON CAMPUS

what prefrosh
don't know about
freshman year

BY ELIZABETH SIMINS

PHOTOS BY MOLLY CROSSIN

“It’s so warm and so personal. ... Like family.” Believe it or not, Stephan Vincenzo, CC ’12, is talking about Columbia.

For the past two weekends, Columbia’s campus has been inundated with wide-eyed high school seniors, all here for Days on Campus. Their schedules have been crammed full of bus tours through New York, activity fairs, campus tours, performances in Low Library, a special preview of the Varsity Show, and countless other activities. It’s Colum-

bia’s chance to show prefrosh just how fun the University can be, and according to Vincenzo, they’re succeeding.

Jessica Marinaccio, dean of undergraduate admissions, says that about 30 percent of accepted students head to Morningside Heights every year to participate in Days on Campus. In addition to all the pre-organized events, students are invited to attend classes, stay over in dorms, eat in John Jay, and party in Carman. In short, they get to experience all the elements of any first year at Columbia—sort of.

“The purpose of Days on Campus is to expose admitted students to the options one might have ... should they



choose to come to Columbia,” Marinaccio says. “It is not meant to present a portrait of a typical day.”

Vincenzo made up his mind about Columbia long before his weekend here. And, like many other Days on Campus attendees, he left with a strong sense of Columbia that had nothing to do with what classes he wanted to attend or what the dorms are like. Instead, prefrosh like Vincenzo come away with what they believe to be an accurate understanding of Columbia’s overall sense of community and on-campus social atmosphere.

What Vincenzo doesn’t know yet, though, is that according to an alarming number of current Columbia students, his impressions are dead wrong. The average Columbia weekend is far more likely to consist of a bar-hopping trip downtown or a dinner at a nice restaurant than a football game or a school-sponsored dance. The attitude of independence is pervasive—every aspect of campus life, up to and including a laissez-faire advising system, encourages students to try to make it on their own.

“The type of people who go to Columbia, I think, are typically independent,” says Jenny Shen, a Columbia College first-year. Sara Jacobs, also CC ’11, seems to feel more negatively about the same issue. “I feel like the Columbia community in general is not very cohesive,” she says, “and this extends to the social life.”

The emphasis on independence is great for students who are “typically independent,” but it leaves others in a lurch—and Days on Campus does nothing to warn accepted students.

(Other) Alma Maters Dear

Students at most other Ivy League schools—along with the institutions themselves—are bound by their locations to create a thriving campus social scene with a tightly knit community.

“I think that, especially freshman year, it’s really easy to make friends because you’re put in this microcosm of the university,” says Gabe Friedman, Yale ’10, citing his school’s residential college system in which students are separated into smaller groups within the larger college. Yale students share many aspects of their lives—including residence halls, dining halls, and classes—with the other members of their residential colleges.

Zack Malet, Brown ’10, feels that “because there is no core curriculum [at Brown] ... it’s very possible to not cross paths with people who have different interests than you.” He does not hesitate to add, though, that “Brown definitely has a close community.” Cornell, too, leaves no doubts in the minds of its students. “I absolutely feel that a ‘Cornell community’ exists,” says Lauren Engelmeyer, Cornell ’10, “which is essential on a campus as big as Cornell’s.”

“The Brown campus and the area surrounding it offers about everything you need,” Malet says, “and not a lot of people leave campus.” Columbia, on the other hand, is located in a city very different from New Haven, Providence, or Ithaca—and even before they have decided to apply, prospective Columbia students are encouraged to stray from campus. “The Blue Guide,” a lengthy pamphlet available to anyone who stops by the

Visitors Center, makes a pretty good case: “New York City is home to some of the world’s most beloved and awe-inspiring landmarks,” asserts one blurb, arguably stating the obvious, “and it’s all just a walk, taxi, bus or subway ride from campus.”

But Columbia isn’t just changed by New York’s presence—it’s fractured. Students have so many options off-campus that they’re highly unlikely to choose any on-campus happenings.

Even tour guides alert high school students to the sprawling nature of Columbia’s social scene. “I usually tell them [the students] that, like, Columbia’s ... in New York City so everyone’s kind of doing their own thing,” says Akosua Ayim, CC ’11, a tour guide. Not only does this lead to the decentralization of the social scene, it causes students to reject the very idea of an on-campus social life outright.

On the weekends, for example, students from other schools are apt to attend school-sponsored social events. “Frats/sororities and school-sponsored events factor into many students’ social/party life,” says Matt Tann, Brown ’09, in an e-mail, “but there is also a vibrant social scene outside of these venues. It seems to me that the balance between the two is rather even.” Yale students also seem to put a lot of stock in institutionalized partying: “I think school-sponsored activities are definitely a big part of the social life,” Friedman says.

“The prevalent attitude on campus toward them [Columbia-sponsored events] is negative,” Jacobs says. Victoria Diaz-Bonilla, CC ’11 and a *Spectator* copy editor, agrees that there is a stigma of sorts attached to official social events. Though she goes to a Lerner party

every now and again, she is quick to jump to her own defense about doing so: “I’m not above Columbia-sponsored events,” she says, laughing.

As for prefrash, they may read “The Blue Guide” and hear about the heavy emphasis on off-campus life, but clearly they don’t quite grasp the extent to which this affects students’ lives. They must be getting ideas from somewhere else—namely, from Days on Campus.

Early Decisions

Though Vincenzo’s description of the campus atmosphere as “warm” and “personal” was probably the most extreme reaction, other accepted students were basking in a similar afterglow following Days on Campus.

Many were looking forward to a vibrant on-campus social scene. Carolyn Matos, CC ’12, says that she plans to split her social life “half and half,” between Columbia-related events and New York City. “I think I will attend a lot of Columbia-sponsored events,” agrees John Goodwin, also CC ’12, “but I will certainly try to branch out and see what the city has to offer, as well.”

None of these students is oblivious to New York City’s existence, and they all show a desire to take advantage of the city. But at the same time, their expectations betray an inherent lack of understanding of the way Columbia’s social scene works—or doesn’t, as the case may be. Instead of giving them a realistic look at the school, Days on Campus has created a belief in a kind of on-campus community that doesn’t really exist.

Out of the prefrash interviewed, Elliott Grieco was both the only one who was accepted regular decision and the only one who was ambivalent about his Days on Campus experience. “I did feel a



a community of any sort seems to dissolve. Instead, many students end up feeling like they are operating more or less separately from one another.

“You have to learn how to be independent,” Shen says. “It might be a little hard adjusting at first, so it’s not for everyone.” Shen, at least, seems to be enjoying herself. Sitting across the table from her in John Jay dining hall, Dilini Lankachandra, CC ’11, shares a similar sentiment. “Not as much as I’ve seen at other schools,” she says, when asked if she feels the presence of a Columbia community—she attributes

among this defector’s complaints are the lack of cohesion and warmth on campus, and the need for self-sufficiency.

“When I was here,” she says, “I kind of just felt like I was a robot like everyone else, who was just functioning and doing things ... and not really feeling.” Unable to break into what she saw as a “cliquey” campus atmosphere and feeling disconnected from the student body, this student decided to confide in her peers—and made a surprising discovery. “Once I started telling people I was leaving, they were just like, ‘Lucky you, I’m so unhappy here, you’re getting out!’” she says. “Once you start telling people you’re unhappy here, they’re eager to tell you about their unhappiness here too. There are a lot of unhappy people here.”

This student, who is still deciding what to do now that Columbia is in her past, is an extreme example of what happens when someone finds it impossible to fit into the Columbia mold. Many students who have miserable starts to their Columbia career, though, do end up adjusting—but not without harboring some feelings of bitterness toward the institution.

One Columbia College sophomore, who has also requested to remain anonymous, remembers her “completely horrible” first semester as being greatly aggravated by the lack of a centralized Columbia social scene. “It was just hard to make friends because Columbia’s not a social campus. After like the first week on campus when there were all those parties, the party scene kind of died down and it was the normal Columbia campus,” she says. “Pretty much nothing was going on unless your specific group of friends did something. So if you didn’t have an ID, that meant you couldn’t go out to bars, and then you didn’t have shit to do.”

The way this student describes the “normal Columbia campus” speaks for itself—according to her, Columbia’s natural state is enough to hinder one’s ability to make friends. As for the few Columbia-sponsored events of which she was aware, this sophomore says that they were widely considered “super-lame.”

“I guess that the general response was that, ‘Oh, Columbia’s doing something—we’re not going,’” she remembers.

After a long while, she managed to find a small group of friends despite the obstacles, which ended up making all the difference. But, even though she’s happy with her current situation, she still goes as far as calling Columbia’s community “non-existent.” “No, that’s a little extreme,” she adds hastily.

“If it is true that there is a Columbia community that I’m somehow missing, that’s pretty fucked up, because why do I have to look so hard to find a community, you know?”

little bit like the school was just using its name and location in order to convince students to come,” he says, though he maintains that he enjoyed himself overall.

As for life on campus, Grieco isn’t overeager to take advantage of Columbia’s resources, but he is still confident that the social scene will be lively enough to provide for him—something that isn’t necessarily true, according to current students.

Aside from Grieco, who detected the lack of a “centralized social scene” despite a “strong Columbia community,” the prefrash generally felt welcomed into the fold of a close group. In Vincenzo’s words, Columbia is “definitely like a community in every aspect.”

Broken Social Scene

Somewhere between Days on Campus and the start of freshman year, though, the feeling of being part of

this to the school’s location in New York. That being said, does she like Columbia? “Definitely,” she says. “I don’t think Columbia needs to be responsible for me finding things to do on the weekend.”

There is a certain type of person to whom Columbia caters well—the driven, self-reliant student who is ready, willing, and maybe even excited to “learn how to be independent.” But what about the Columbia students who have more than a little trouble adjusting? What about the ones who don’t mesh with a system that seems only to have the independent student in mind?

“I think it [Columbia’s campus] kind of has a little bit of a cold feel,” says one former Columbia student, who has recently withdrawn from the school. “I just wish there was more of a community feel here.” Originally a member of the class of 2010, this student, who wishes to remain anonymous, took a yearlong leave of absence after one unpleasant semester. After returning this spring for a stretch, she decided to leave Columbia once and for all. Chief



"I would say ... not there, but there is a possibility that I just don't know it's there. If it is true that there is a Columbia community that I'm somehow missing, that's pretty fucked up, because why do I have to look so hard to find a community, you know?"

Organized Living

Certain students, though, have an altogether different understanding of Columbia's community—they're so distant from those who are marginalized by the fractured social scene that they don't even see the problem.

"Personally," David Zhu, CC '11, says in an e-mail, "I feel that Columbia-sponsored events dominate the social scene on campus. ... These events are also generally well-received because a lot of them are established traditionally ... and students KNOW without even attending that these events will be great, which in turn encourages students to organize more events."

How does one reconcile Zhu's understanding of Columbia's social scene and community—"Of course there is a Columbia community! It's what we live and breathe everyday."—with the common sentiment that Columbia's pretty lacking in that department?

One answer is that Zhu is on the organizational side of Columbia's social community, as opposed to the receiving end. A member of Columbia College Student Council, Zhu served as the Engineering Student Council liaison for the class of 2011, and is currently his year's director of alumni relations. Deeply immersed in the organization of on-campus events, Zhu has "attended countless numbers of events at Columbia."

Of the 10 current students interviewed—all with widely varying levels of happiness at Columbia—only one other, Ayim, attends official events more than every once in a while. The reason? "I'm on campus committee, so I go to all of them," she explains.

The students who organize events also attend them, so it's easy to speculate that the organizers may actually make up the majority of the attendance at their own events—after all, so many others claim to spend most of their weekends avoiding them.

If members of CCSC and other related student groups—those that have the most direct hand in creating Columbia's social scene and shaping its community—go to every Columbia-sponsored event,

they're bound to make their friends there. "I met most of my friends through Columbia-organized events or through the organizations themselves," Zhu says.

To the knowledge of the students who organize the Columbia-sponsored social scene, the community is great—even centralized. School-sponsored events are full of all their closest friends and are the places to be if they want to have fun on the weekends. These organizers are bound to feel warmly toward Columbia's social scene, lacking—even alienating—though it may be for others.

The Future, or Something

"I don't think it's a lot of people," Ayim says, of the students who attend school-sponsored events, "but it's enough that it works."

The students on the organizational side of the on-campus social scene see no reason to enact any major changes to the extent that they have the power to do so. After all, before they can understand the problems that result from it, they have to be able to see the campus's disconnectedness.

It's likely that Days on Campus will continue to be a misrepresentation of Columbia well into the future—but not in its flaunting of Columbia's academic or residential resources, or even in the touting of Columbia's prime location in New York City. Rather, because the organizers of the event are happy with their own sense of a Columbia community, that general feeling will continue to be communicated to impressionable prefrosh, however inaccurate and misleading it may be.

And until the opinions on Columbia's community become more consistent and united, the community itself will be unable to do so—and first-years with high expectations for the social scene and no desire to be forced into total self-sufficiency will continue to be let down.

So, then, what is to become of the many students like this, who aren't as naturally independent as Columbia needs them to be? They will probably continue to fall victim to Columbia's fragmented community—and many of them feel that there's nothing they can do about it.

"I still feel insecure sometimes," says a current sophomore, who also wishes to remain anonymous, "but have made use of health services and am now

aware that that's just the way Columbia is—I wasn't doing anything wrong." This student halfheartedly suggests that he may have been happier if access to Counseling and Psychological Services had been more widely publicized and if there had been no caps on appointments. In the end, though, he clearly feels that Columbia is essentially unchangeable on the social front.

Independence Day

There is a vast disparity between the lives of those who organize campus-sponsored events and the rest of campus—namely, those who are supposed to be in attendance at those events. The organizers may choose to respect their peers and go to every Lerner party, they may go to have fun, or they may be required to do so—as in Ayim's case. But much of Columbia's student population sees school-sponsored events purely as an afterthought or a last resort, compared to the resources and experiences offered by New York City.

At its core, this discrepancy contributes to the overall sense of disconnect that many Columbia students feel. With opinions on the community ranging from it being "non-existent" to Zhu's "close-knit," attitudes toward the campus's social scene are just as divided as the community itself.

Perhaps this discrepancy can help explain the one between the attitudes of prefrosh who have just gotten back from Days on Campus and those of actual Columbia students.

The students in charge of organizing events are happy with Columbia's community—and, most important, they feel that there actually is such a thing. As a result, the prefrosh populating Days on Campus—essentially a series of organized events—get the impression that Columbia has a thriving campus social life and a close community. "I had a good time," Jacobs says, retrospectively, about her own Days on Campus experience, "although I must say that I was given a very distorted view of Columbia."

Marinaccio may feel that Days on Campus is not intended to represent Columbia on "a typical day," but the students who attend it are getting a different message. Their reactions demonstrate that they do expect the feeling of a campus community and centralized social life to carry over into their freshman years. As for the administration's view on the subject, Marinaccio declined to give her own description of the Columbia community, and the students who help organize Days on Campus were not permitted to answer any questions.

Could it be that this "distorted view" contributes to the all-too-common feeling of discontent among Columbia first-years? It makes sense—a student who is excited about the possibility of an active campus social scene and a visible community is bound to be disappointed by a vastly disparate reality. And this type of student is not likely to be the sort who would be equally excited by the immediate need to "learn how to be independent," as Shen puts it.

There's no denying that it's possible to be happy at Columbia—numerous students attest to that. But it's harder to find a foothold quickly at a school that encourages independence and shunts most socializing into the surrounding city. This is likely to be even more difficult for students who, perhaps urged on by Days on Campus, come in expecting Columbia to play a larger role in their social lives than it actually will.

"Everyone seems to ball it inside," says the former member of CC '10 who recently withdrew, "but there are a lot of people who are very, very, very unhappy and just dealing with it, because it's Columbia." \\\



Cloistered Away

the met's medieval haven uptown

BY DIANA GREENWALD

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE CLOISTERS MUSEUM

TODAY IS A BEAUTIFUL SPRING DAY. You could go for a run, you could sit on Low steps, and maybe if you are feeling cultural, you could go to a museum. Unless you are already a huge fan of 13th century Madonnas, The Cloisters—a branch of the medieval art collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art perched at the very top of Manhattan—is probably not an obvious choice. Medieval art does not necessarily appeal to New York City art enthusiasts who often seem most interested in art that pushes boundaries. (Just look at the around-the-block lines for the Whitney Biennial.) And art from the medieval era is likely the last thing students of the antiquity-obsessed Core want to look at in their free time. Curator in Charge of The Cloisters Peter Barnet recognizes this. He knows that “in the 21st century, medieval art is not everyone’s favorite [kind of art].” One has to wonder how The Cloisters—a self-defined anachronism—manages to survive in the trendy and crowded New York art scene.

The Cloisters’ aura is hard to evoke in writing. The best way to describe it, perhaps, is to explain how to get to the museum. Take the 1 train to 168th Street and switch to the A train, riding it to 190th Street. You will emerge from a typically gray and smelly subway stop, and take a 10-minute walk up the hill to Fort Tryon Park. You can catch a bus directly to the museum, but for the full effect you have to walk. (Just because it is located above 125th Street, Fort Tryon Park is not to be feared. As both Barnet and the first two minutes of the stroll will tell you, it has “improved tremendously” in the past 10 years.)

After 20 minutes of moving along the crest of Washington Heights and through a diverse collection of joggers, octogenarians shuffling hand-in-hand, and seven-year-olds on scooters, a stone bell-tower

appears. This tower mimics bell-towers of monasteries around the Mediterranean, and through the small windows at the top (just below the bells) is Barnet’s office.

The Cloisters was born in the second quarter of the 20th century when John D. Rockefeller Jr. asked the American sculptor and art collector George Grey Barnard (also the sculptor of the bronze *The God Pan* in front of Lewisohn) to give his extensive collection of medieval sculpture and architectural elements to the Metropolitan Museum. Rockefeller, who financed and spearheaded the project, donated some of his own medieval art (including the famed unicorn tapestries) and ultimately endowed The Cloisters. He even negotiated the conversion of the land surrounding the museum into a public park and made arrangements with the New Jersey government to ensure that the land across the river would remain forested and beautiful to look at. The crowning achievement was the construction of a museum building that echoes the Romanesque and Gothic complexes in Europe where the pieces in Barnard’s collection originated.

Rockefeller and the Met did not create a museum—they recreated an experience of Medieval Europe. And by placing The Cloisters in a location with breathtaking views of the Hudson that one does not readily associate with New York City, they created an experience that is both a destination and an escape. It is this focus on the broad experience that surrounds art, not just the art itself, which allows The Cloisters to “compete very well,” according to Barnet, in the densely populated museum world.

Situated on a cliff in Fort Tryon Park, The Cloisters has art and views of the Hudson not found anywhere else in the city.

Barnet describes The Cloisters as “the closest thing we have in the United States” to a real medieval building. The museum is primarily a framework for a series of cloisters, arcades, and other structures that have been reconstructed from authentic architectural fragments. One moves from vast rooms with exposed wooden beams along the ceilings, to chapels with stained glass windows and real 14th century altar-pieces, to a dimly lit room with walls completely covered in tapestries. While there are wall tags and some galleries furnished with glass cases filled with treasury pieces, The Cloisters are still more castle than museum, complete with all the details one imagines when reading about Lancelot.

Barnet and his colleagues work hard to keep The Cloisters looking like Don Quixote’s fantasies realized. There have been extensive efforts to preserve the architecture and to light the complex in a manner that displays the art the way it really would have appeared in the middle ages. While Barnet says there are no plans to revert to the lighting scheme of Rockefeller’s day, which consisted only of natural light and candles, there is a concerted effort to stay true to the institution’s original mission: to create a medieval oasis in the middle of Washington Heights. The museum has a niche in the New York art scene precisely because it is the odd one out—its goal is to construct an environment for viewing art that is completely different from that of the archetypal New York museum or gallery. The Cloisters is, despite its artistically conservative collection, a museological revolution.

The consequences of this experiential approach to art are far reaching. Museum Educator Nancy Wu described the wide range of experiences visitors seek and have available to them at The Cloisters. There are “school children that invariably learn history and are introduced to the Middle Ages” who come on field trips to see the descriptions in their textbooks come to life. There are “people who have a romantic notion about the Middle Ages as having a peace lost to today’s society, and they can find that at The Cloisters.” And there are religious groups who discover the profundity and spirituality of religious medieval art in the context of The Cloisters.

Wu notes that numerous Art Hum and Lit Hum classes visit The Cloisters. And after a short walk through the museum, it becomes clear that The Cloisters may act as SparkNotes for medieval literature. The renowned 15th century South Netherlandish tapestries depicting *The Hunt of the Unicorn* feature the medieval decorative motif of “millefleur”—literally, a thousand flowers—which is explicitly described by

Boccaccio in *The Decameron*. Wu says that these tapestries, which portray the unicorn being subdued by a virginal maiden, have a sexual interpretation. The tapestries are essentially a visual expression the same issues of control—or lack of control—of sexuality that Boccaccio and other medieval authors’ works grapple with.

The Cloisters not only teaches the power of context, but also provides a museum experience that does not feel forced. Walking into a typical gallery, with individual works spread on a white-washed, track-lit wall, you cannot help feeling like an analytical surgeon compelled to set your brain to a clinical disassembly of the meaning of work laid out in front of you. Viewing art at The Cloisters does not feel like this. Rather than dissecting works of art, one absorbs their meaning. The Cloisters is, essentially, an opportunity to learn history and art history by osmosis. It seems that The Cloisters has found a solution to the riddle of making art that many deem archaic and irrelevant appealing. Instead of pushing medieval art into the 21st century and manipulating it to fit into a contemporary context, The Cloisters chooses to manipulate you instead: it pushes you back in time. ∞

Out of Africa, Onto the Stage

a young lady shares her stories of surviving rwandan genocide

BY JACQUI STOLZER

PHOTOS COURTESY OF GERRY GOODSTEIN

THE THEATER MANIA WEB SITE lists 871 theatrical events that are open in the New York City area. To assist the overwhelmed tourist or seasoned theater-goer in choosing from their many options, there are 26 different categories listed, ranging from burlesque to musical to a clown show. Conspicuously absent, however, is a category for political theater.

The Phoenix Theatre Ensemble's newest endeavor shows why politically charged plays are few and far between. The ensemble devoted over two years to the production of *I Have Before Me A Remarkable Document Given to Me By A Young Lady From Rwanda*, a play by Sonja Linden that opened last Saturday. The project proved to be logistically difficult and socially resistant. Yet last Saturday night, such resistance proved worth overcoming. The result was an inspiring night of multimedia art, a touching commentary on the human experience, and a reflection on the power of artistic expression.

I Have Before Me A Remarkable Document Given to Me by a Young Lady From Rwanda tells the stories of two seemingly disconnected characters: Simon, a struggling British poet in his mid-40s, and Juliette, a young survivor of the 1994 Rwandan genocide. Their lives intersect when Juliette employs Simon's help in writing a book, and each are transformed by their unexpected friendship.

The script was inspired by Linden's own work with clients of the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture. During her time with the Foundation, she was particularly struck by the stories of a young woman from Rwanda, whose desire to write about the horrors she experienced parallels that of Juliette's. "When I came to write something of my own, as part of my residency, it was infused with her spirit and struggle to write," Linden says in her program notes.

Elise Stone, founder and co-artistic director of the Phoenix Theatre Ensemble, read the script at a friend's suggestion and immediately knew that it should be her next artistic endeavor. "My heart

taken by Rwandan orphans who survived the genocide. Finding many parallels between the exhibit and Linden's play, Stone felt strongly about bringing both of them under one roof.

Regardless of its sociopolitical weight, realizing this vision was a great feat, especially in Manhattan. It was a challenge for the Phoenix Theatre Ensemble to find an available space with both a theater and gallery. Eventually St. Peter's Church welcomed them, with its strong mission for arts in the city generating excitement for the project. The York Theatre Company, the church's theater-in-residence, also became a partner. The Middle Collegiate Church, located on the Lower East Side, offered rehearsal space, becoming the third contributor. With all of the partnerships necessary to make the production financially feasible, there was great difficulty in coordinating all parties involved.

And while The Phoenix Theatre Ensemble was able to muster a wealth of support for its cause, there were certainly skeptics. One organization with which Stone was in contact told her that they couldn't participate in a production with "Rwanda" in the title—they were convinced that people wouldn't come. "People get nervous at that word. They want nothing to do with it," Stone says. "I think that it is hard for people to look at Rwanda in particular because we have a collective guilt about it."

Such an aversion hasn't proved atypical—many prospective ticket-buyers share this sentiment. During the discussion held after the performance on opening night, a woman raised her hand and admitted, "I was kind of worried, because most political theater just doesn't work." But Juliette's personal account shows people that the atrocities of the genocide are committed against people not unlike themselves.

"We cannot digest large statistics—it's impossible," Stone says. "I don't think we are designed, either individually or collectively, to process the kind of scale of awfulness that is happening around us. People get immobilized by it."

But the play manages at the same time to be

both surprisingly light and endearing. There is much laughter as Juliette and Simon realize the cultural divides that exist between them. Linden recognizes humor as an important component of the script in order "to create a sense of balance and draw the audience in." If the audience can laugh with the characters, then they are more susceptible to cry with them—to internalize and understand their emotional journeys.



Actors Joe Menino and Susan Hayward help turn a difficult play into a meaningful experience.

Although both Linden and Stone aim to make the performance enjoyable and uplifting, they retain high expectations for the members of the audience. "We believe that stories have the ability to transform and save the world," Stone says, speaking on behalf of the Phoenix Theatre Ensemble. "We choose plays that make people think and connect with the world in a different way." This production takes it one step further—it asks people to take action. Just by buying a ticket, audience members contribute to the cause: one-third of the proceeds go to a humanitarian organization with a focus on Rwanda.

In addition to philanthropy, Stone wants to encourage discussions about Rwanda. She has invited various organizations to lead "talk-backs" after every performance, hoping to generate informal dialogue between cast and audience members. On opening night, Karen Schmidt from Columbia University's Earth Institute was the featured guest.

The power of shared expression is an idea intrinsic in the script and in the photographs themselves. "They are both projects that use art as healing," Stone says. In one of Juliette's particularly poignant lines, she says, "I wrote this book to take the pain from my heart."

It may be difficult to produce a play like *I Have Before Me A Remarkable Document Given to Me By A Young Lady From Rwanda*, but considering all the pain in hearts around the world, it's a wonder there aren't more plays like this one. \\\

"I THINK THAT IT IS HARD FOR PEOPLE TO LOOK AT RWANDA IN PARTICULAR BECAUSE WE HAVE A COLLECTIVE GUILT ABOUT IT."

and my eyes have always been on the African continent," says Stone, who has three adopted children from Ethiopia.

Stone was already a supporter of The Rwanda Project, which was founded by her late friend and theater collaborator, David Jiranek. The focal point of the project is a photography exhibit, "Through the Eyes of Children," which consists of photographs

Let the Ostrich Soar?

the human cost of the iraq war made visible

BY SARA ZIFF

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE FILM SALES COMPANY

WHILE THE EAGLE is known for its keen eyesight, the ostrich is said to bury its head in the ground when it feels threatened. Given America's blind handling of the Iraq War—what many consider the biggest foreign policy blunder in recent U.S. history—the latter bird currently seems a more fitting symbol of the nation.

With no evidence of WMDs and the Bush administration's efforts to hide the returning coffins of dead soldiers, it seems that America holds a myopic disregard for both the cause and the cost of the war. Now, five years since the U.S. invasion of Iraq, Phil Donahue and Ellen Spiro's must-see documentary *Body of War* offers an unvarnished account of one critically injured young veteran's experience, making the effects of the war palpable in a way that is noticeably absent from the nightly news.

"The costs of this war are hidden—we don't see them," says director/producer Donahue during an interview with *The Eye*. "We have, I think, an obsequious press. And the American people are not thinking about the thousands of people coming home in this condition." Donahue, who sports spectacles and a shock of white hair, is a former member of the media establishment himself, best known as the father of the modern television talk show. "If it isn't sanitized, then the coverage isn't good for business ... So here we have this big black hole. The corporate media has left—it hasn't really told us the whole story—and I thought, well, I'll try."

Donahue found his subject in Iraq War veteran Tomas Young, a lanky 25-year-old from Kansas City. In 2001, Young watched President Bush on television speaking from the rubble at Ground Zero and immediately responded to the call to defend his country by enlisting with the Army. While he expected to be sent to Afghanistan, he was instead deployed to Sadr City in Iraq in March 2004. Just five days later, while riding in an unarmored Humvee, his Army unit was ambushed and Young was shot just above the left collarbone, instantly paralyzing him from the chest down. In his very brief tour of duty, he had not fired a single shot.

"I remember constantly thinking this wasn't where I signed up to go, and I realized that you don't get to choose where you get deployed," says Young, who appears sunken and heavy-eyed throughout much of our interview. Young is still on a daily regimen of 30-odd pills a day, from anti-spasm medication to morphine, and while he maintains a quick wit and a level head, he often has to literally bow to the pain and dizziness of sitting upright. "As Americans, we are told that the military is to be used to defend the country and the Constitution, and all I can remember thinking was that down there in Iraq, we were doing neither."

As the film agonizingly reveals, everyday activities are often humiliating endeavors for Young, who relies on the help of his mother, Cathy, and his fiancée, Brie. Tomas and the Young family were remarkably willing to open their lives to the camera—in one of many scenes shot with shocking candor, Cathy laughs nervously as she tries to insert a urinary catheter into her grown son's penis. In another, while



Iraq veteran Tomas Young makes his way through an inaccessible Washington, DC.

IN HIS VERY BRIEF
TOUR OF DUTY, HE
HAD NOT FIRED A
SINGLE SHOT.



most brides-to-be fret over flower arrangements, Brie anticipates her wedding day on the computer researching ways to combat Tomas' erectile dysfunction. Such brutally intimate scenes push not only the conventional bounds of Young's relationships, but also our comfort zone as viewers. Yet it is this tension that makes the film so compelling, challenging us to behold the "body of war" in an attractive, well-spoken young man who should be in his prime and yet has been infantilized and made impotent.

In stark contrast to Young's modest and immobile existence, Donahue and Spiro often cut to footage of the Washington elite. "Nope, no weapons of mass destruction here!" President Bush says as he mockingly searches under the Oval Office furniture in a skit during the White House Correspondents' Dinner. Seeing the President pull faces at the posh affair, all too readily laughing at his own foolish charade while senators laugh and clink flutes of champagne, underscores this administration's callous disregard for the young men and women serving in the war. "[They] are basically saying, 'Yeah, it was a lie, but what are

you going to do now?'" Young says, shifting his weight and straining to sit upright. "And it upsets me to the very core of my being." The film interweaves Young's story with historic footage of the House and Senate debates that led to the original Iraq War resolution.

By the end of the film, these two streams of footage merge when Young visits Senator Robert Byrd, the foremost voice against the war, at the Capitol, and together they read aloud the names of the "Immortal 23" who voted against the resolution to go to war. Between this and other moments in the film (such as Young speaking out with Cindy Sheehan at Camp Casey, the anti-war encampment down the road from Bush's Crawford ranch), we witness Young's evolution into an outspoken leader, finding his new voice and role as a self-described "political irritant." At one of his many speaking engagements as a spokesperson for the non-profit organization Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW), he is even able to find humor in his plight. "I might say 'uh' and stammer a lot," Young says, "so forgive me for sounding a bit presidential."

Meeting Young in person is a humbling experience. Despite his physical disability, he is able to quote Tennyson and drop statistics about the war with relative ease. "Right now, 100 percent of Americans support the troops, but only 5 percent of the population is in the Armed Forces," Young says. "Most Americans do not serve and have no connection to people who do. And who makes up the 5 percent? Most in uniform are either minorities or come from lower economic classes."

With the media's oblivious coverage of the human cost of the war and a current administration of drumbeaters, most of whom seem to lack any real connection to the troops they send into harm's way, *Body of War* pulls back the sanitized veil and artfully puts a human face on the Iraq War. Clean-shaven and smartly dressed in a suit during our interview, Young's sleeve only partially covers a large tattoo on his forearm. It featured an illustration from the children's story *Where the Wild Things Are*, about a boy who is punished for journeying to an imagined land of fearsome monsters. In a war of imagined threats and all-too-real consequences, Tomas Young's brave journey reminds us not only of the consequences of this unprecedented vote for pre-emptive war, but also of what it truly means to be a soldier. \\\

Pass It Over

BY LIZ PIPAL

PHOTO COURTESY OF WEBSHOTS

LIKE MANY OF MY FELLOW GENTILES (a Hebrew word meaning “not-so-Jewish”), I have often wondered about the origins, meaning, and weird bread-stuff of Passover. Just what in the heck is it all about? Perhaps, I thought, it is a Jewish celebration of traditional nursery rhymes. Maybe the Hebrews have adapted the old children’s rhyme, to say: “Jakob be nimble, Jakob be quick, Jakob pass over the candle stick.” Or perhaps, like any other respectable holiday, it is merely an alternative way to celebrate football, a recognition of the common play in which the quarterback passes the pigskin (not kosher) over to his wide receiver. But then again, the phrase “pass over” could refer to anything—table manners, highway construction, flatulence... things near and dear to all of us. But Passover can’t be about all these things. No, there has to be a better, singular, and possibly theological explanation for this Passover business.

And so I decided to consult the oldest scripture in the lands, sacred to Jews, not-so-Jews, Muslims, Christians, Scientologists, and Reverend Jeremiah Wright: Wikipedia.

I will now share with you the fruits of my labors. Passover, the article explains, “begins on the 15th day of the month of Nisan.” Wait, what?



To aid in her quest to understand passover, Liz Pipal gathers some traditional elements.

Wikipedia, I’m ashamed. This is blatant product placement. Changing the name of a month into a car advertisement seems rather craven, particularly for an encyclopedia.

OK, but anyway, the article continues to explain that this so-called “Passover” has to do with locusts. Why are we still celebrating a holiday about locusts? This is tomfoolery!

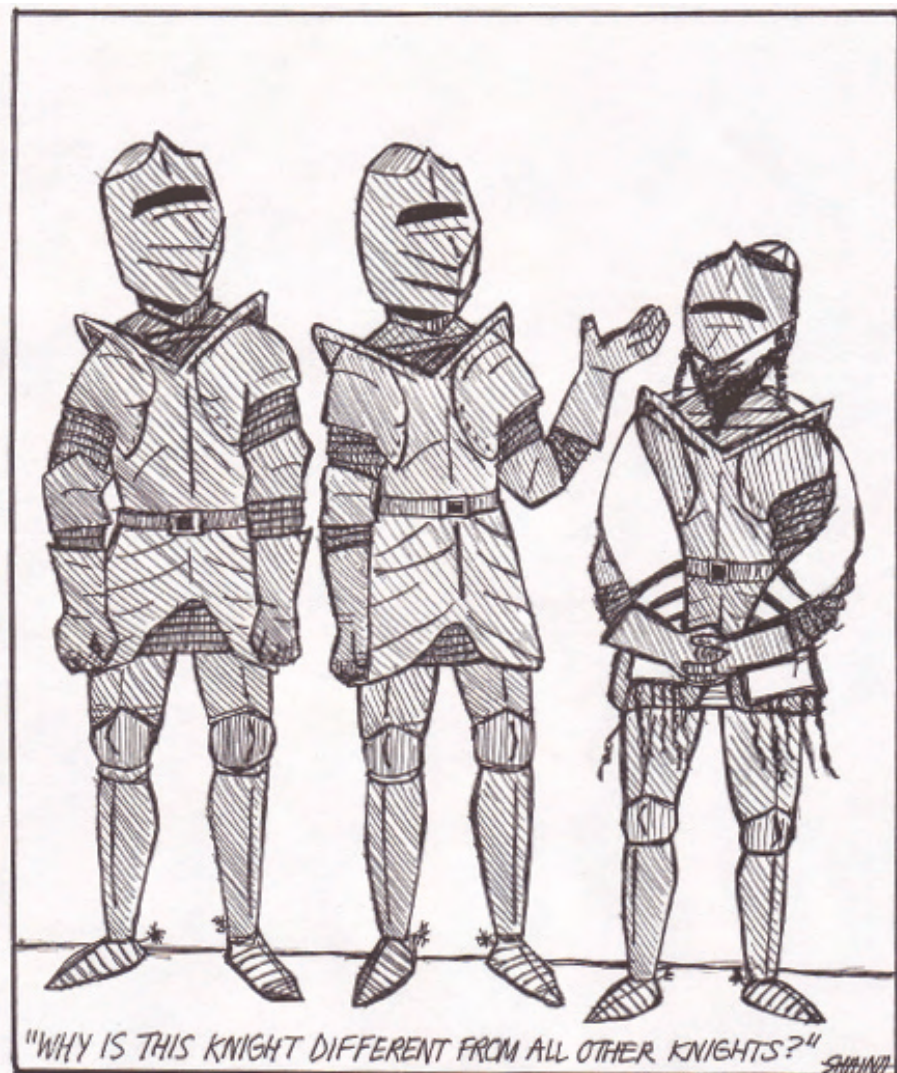
The site also claims that “the Torah says that it is because the Hebrews left Egypt with such haste that there was no time to allow baked bread to rise and thus flat bread, matzo, is a reminder of the rapid departure of the Exodus.” My question to you, Wikipedia, is this: who is this Torah, and what sort

of credentials does he/she have? Also, I believe ancient Egypt was mostly devoid of yeast anyway, and its citizens subsisted on a diet of papyrus and hippopotamus meat, and I would like to know if you could prove to me that there was ever any bread in the country at all, flat or otherwise.

Moving on, the site explains that “Passover commemorates God’s sparing of the Hebrew first-born as he saw the blood of the Passover lamb on the doorposts of their houses on the night of the Tenth Plague.” This is clearly false, because if I saw a bleeding lamb, my first reaction would be to find some grass or oats or something and maybe apply pressure to its wounds in order to stop the bleeding. I don’t think anyone would do any differently.

Also what kind of religion is trusting Wikipedia to explain its most sacred holiday? Can someone please answer that for me?

So I still do not understand this holiday. You could say that I “passed over” the true meaning of the holiday completely. You could say that. Well, I just did. \\\



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Faking Luxury

all that glitters ...

BY DASHA CHIRKOV

PHOTO COURTESY OF DESIGNERLUXURY

I GREW UP STUCK between two worlds miles apart, bonded by a surprising similarity. On one side, my Russian relatives were enjoying the recent influx of money into their revolutionized country. I was a first-hand witness to the mad rush to establish “New Russia” in the berth of luxury. On the other side, I attended a New England private school where every student found it equally necessary to establish their “old money” rank using luxury brands.

The language, the professions, the culture, the fashions—everything was different. Still, everywhere I went the brands were the same: Louis Vuitton, Chanel, Gucci, and Prada. It is a universal language. New money, old money, and almost no money

a student ID, at roughly \$300 a piece. The large purses with the Louis Vuitton logo were too expensive to attract their attention but the change purses were just right. Nowadays, we pass those girls off as silly label whores. However, they are part of this new culture that seeks out the imprint of luxury, which often in the process sacrifices the actual element of luxury.

No one near the Chanel cosmetics counter in Bloomingdales stops to ponder the quality of the product; they are assured that its value is sanctioned by its brand name. People like the idea that if they can’t afford a Chanel tweed suit or a \$400 pair of Chanel sunglasses, luxury is accessible in a \$25 tube of lipstick.

The corporate tycoons have taken advantage of this trend. They are buying out the luxury brand houses and bringing them into the competitive open market. Gucci, Yves Saint



Laurent, Stella McCartney, and Balenciaga are all owned by François Pinault. Pinault’s son François-Henri, chief executive officer of the company, is engaged to actress Salma Hayek, who wears predominantly Gucci and Yves Saint Laurent and touts those brands on the red carpet. So it all comes full circle: the tycoon, the luxury brand, and the obsession with fame.


Harper’s Bazaar warns its readers about the harms of buying knock-offs, claiming that such purchases aid an industry that underpays and abuses workers in Asian countries. Ironically, the factories that make these knock-offs are located next to the outsourced factories that produce the actual “luxury” goods. The producers of luxury goods are becoming exceedingly aware that brand-name power has the potential to outweigh the allure of a product’s actual quality. The emphasis has shifted away from the rarity and uniqueness of quality pieces to the profitability of marketing expensive items under the general title of “luxury.”

The luxury brand has gone from producing objects valued for their purity to producing items gilded over by labels and expensive price tags, where appearance replaces quality. So the next time you are eyeing that Coach wallet or those Chanel sunglasses, ask yourself if you are looking at luxury or the label. 

Traditionally reliable brands don’t guarantee quality anymore.

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SPLURGE OR STEAL: PAINTERLY PRINTS

BY MOIRA LYNCH

On many runways this spring, painterly prints enlivened simple silhouettes. The print can be the focal point of the outfit to make it stand out, or it can be one part of an interesting mix. The mix is harder to pull off, but it looks very modern.

As a focal point, a simple bikini becomes a work of art when splashed with a vibrant pattern. At \$355, a Chloé swimsuit is a deal compared to the stratospherically high prices of the line’s clothing. Speaking of Chloé, although the Spring collection was well-received, the chief designer Paulo Melim Andersson was fired due to a lack of profitability. Thankfully, Stefano Pilati has had more luck at Yves Saint Laurent since taking the reigns in 2004. He has experimented with painterly prints in the past, but this season he takes it to the next level with charmingly half-painted cork heels. A similar concept at a more reasonable price is Anthropologie’s ombre tote. These pieces can also be inspiration for your own designs if you feel like experimenting with some fabric paint.

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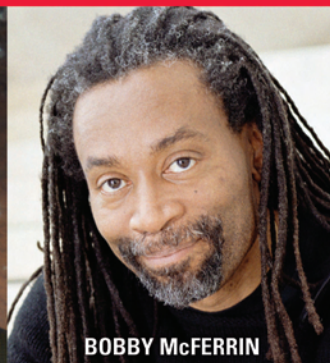
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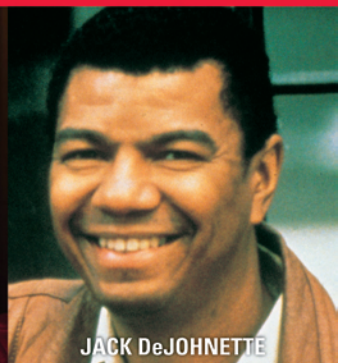
ASHA BHOSLE



BOBBY McFERRIN



CHICK COREA



JACK DeJOHNETTE

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