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the eye

Leaders of the Pack

columbia bikers take back the streets

by Jennie Rose Halperin

columbia campaigners \ \ \ deerhoofing it \ \ \ the new apocalypse \ \ \ karen russell's wolf parade

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LEADERS OF THE PACK

As the city goes, our campus is situated in prime bicycling territory—so where’s the bike culture at Columbia? pg. 07

by Jennie Rose Halperin
cover photo by Molly Crossin

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

The primary purpose of TV Land, the erstwhile Nick at Nite, is to transport us back to a simpler, gentler time. Those silly Munsters—they certainly never had to worry about the housing bubble! And what are those country bumpkins even doing in Beverly Hills? (It’s also a good place to see today’s stars during their embarrassing years. I’m thinking specifically of Jason Bateman, who was on *Little House on the Prairie* sporting an unfortunate haircut when he was 12. How far Michael Bluth has come!)

So I was surprised when I flipped the channel on earlier this week to find John Lithgow looking aghast, as he so often did in late-’90s sitcom *3rd Rock from the Sun*. It was a little unsettling to see the show on a channel I associate with *Green Acres*—it was, after all, a vestige of my youth, not my parents’. But it was even more disquieting to find myself feeling a little wistful for the America that the Solomon family found itself inhabiting in *3rd Rock*.

It was only 10 years ago, and they weren’t exactly the Munsters, but that was a simpler, gentler time. Clinton was being impeached, sure—but hey, he was still in office, and the budget was balanced! Dick Solomon, in all his

naivety, could ask an innocent question like, “What’s the point of having a democracy, if everyone’s going to vote wrong?” and it didn’t feel quite so... painfully depressing.

It’s also the format—the three-camera setup feels hopelessly ’90s. No self-respecting comedy has used it since *Arrested Development* broke convention in the early naughts. Nowadays it’s hard to believe any show with a laugh track could ever have truly been funny, and it takes a solid hour of watching *3rd Rock* or *Frasier* to really become re-acclimated to it.

It’s weird to be so nostalgically comforted by something that is, objectively, relatively recent, and that in many ways still feels relevant. (Witness Dick’s line, “Where would we be without the agitators of the world attaching the electrodes of knowledge to the nipples of ignorance?” Indeed!) Plus, Lithgow’s brilliant in his role—and after seeing the revival of *All My Sons* a couple weeks ago, I’ve decided TV is the medium I prefer for him. On the stage, he’s playing a man who refuses to take responsibility for his morally unjustifiable wartime actions—and the play may be 60 years old, but *that* hits a little too close to home.

—Alexandria Symonds

Out of Africa

BY ARIEL POLLOCK

In search of an adventure within the Cape Town city limits one weekend, my friend Rachel and I wandered to Bo-Kaap, a community of Cape Muslims known for its brightly painted houses and friendly atmosphere. From a quick glance at our guidebook, we learned that we could also visit the famous Bo-Kaap Museum (for only five rand—about 50 cents these days), so off we went in search of a small building on the main road.

Rachel, who goes to Barnard, shares with me a love of museums, the theater scene, and cynicism, as is the case with most people who have been in New York for too long. Sometimes when I miss the city, I'll find Rachel and we'll talk about what might be new at the Museum of Modern Art, or poke fun at the limited offerings of Cape Town nightlife. For us, finding this little museum was like finding a little piece of New York, a breath of (congested city) air.

We walked up and down the street three times before we saw it: a little door, farmhouse-style, with the top half swung open but the bottom half tightly secured with a bolt. As we stood there, wondering if perhaps the museum was closed, an old woman dressed in an apron and hijab came to the door. "Museum," she grumbled. Yes, we nodded silently—did you think we came for dinner?

The bottom half of the door swung open and we were welcomed in—to a total of three claustrophobic rooms. With little else besides prayer artifacts adorning the museum's few shelves and tables, the museum provided us with a solid 15 minutes of, well, mostly muffled laughter.

We left the establishment and didn't really

know what to say. I felt like I had even run out of sarcastic comments. The only thing that came to mind was to begin the comparisons: "Can you imagine, a museum like this in the city?"

As we walked down the street though, from the corner of my eye a man caught my attention and made me pause. He was sitting perched atop a roof, his feet dangling off the side of the building. He seemed to be staring back at us.

I remembered a poem I had read some years before, by the Israeli poet Yehuda Amichai. The poem, "Tourists," describes the experience of a man who is used as a reference point for a tour group visiting Jerusalem. Amichai writes:

"You see that man over there with the baskets? A little to the right of his head there's an arch from the Roman period. A little to the right of his head. 'But he's moving, he's moving!' I said to myself: Redemption will come only when they are told, 'Do you see that arch over there from the Roman period? It doesn't matter, but near it, a little to the left and then down a bit, there's a man who has just bought fruit and vegetables for his family.'"

I miss New York, don't get me wrong. There really isn't a museum here big enough to wander around for hours and sometimes my little elitist heart actually aches when I think of how the theater scene is basically limited to whatever's on in the one or two "cultural centers." But I've realized slowly how much there is to learn from people, from places, and from simple interactions.

I stood there watching the man on the roof and thinking of Amichai's words. He was sitting too far away to tell for sure, but it seemed that he was reprimanding me: get over yourself! So—even though the museums here are really very, very small—I'm trying to do exactly that. ●

Ariel Pollock is a Columbia College junior studying abroad in South Africa.

COMPILED BY HILLARY BUSIS
AND RAPHAEL POPE-SUSSMAN

Editors' 10

What we're into this week

1. Making my own sushi: "It's so much fun, and a lot easier than you would think. It also makes me popular—which of course is the ultimate goal in life."

—Shane Ferro, food editor

2. Christina Aguilera's "Keeps Getting Better": "Even though I know she's ripping off Lady Gaga, or at least Perez Hilton tells me so, it's still a fierce track because she's singing about female empowerment again, as opposed to that fake wanna-be soul bullshit from her last double album."

—Hayley Negrin, managing features editor

3. FiveThirtyEight.com: "Statistical analysis of the presidential campaign. All the charts, graphs, and figures a political junkie could ask for."

—Raphael Pope-Sussman, humor editor

4. Prince: "I have not only been into Prince for the past two weeks, I have been into Prince for the past 20 years."

—Jennie Rose Halperin, music editor

5. YouTube mash-ups of Reagan and one of the presidential candidates: "The Gipper's speeches can be used to either destroy or align with the McCain/Obama message, often to the sound of dramatic violins."

—Learned Foote, film editor

6. \$40 tickets for *Spring Awakening*: "If you're comfortable with on-stage seating, you can see this amazing production for half the usual price—and sit next to the brilliant cast in over half the numbers."

—Melanie Jones, interview editor

7. Pumpkin ice cream: "It's a summer staple dressed up for fall."

—Laura Hedli, theater editor

8. The cacti they sell at street fairs: "Affordable and almost impossible to kill, these little cacti have entirely unnatural looking neon flowers on top that you can coordinate with your room decor."

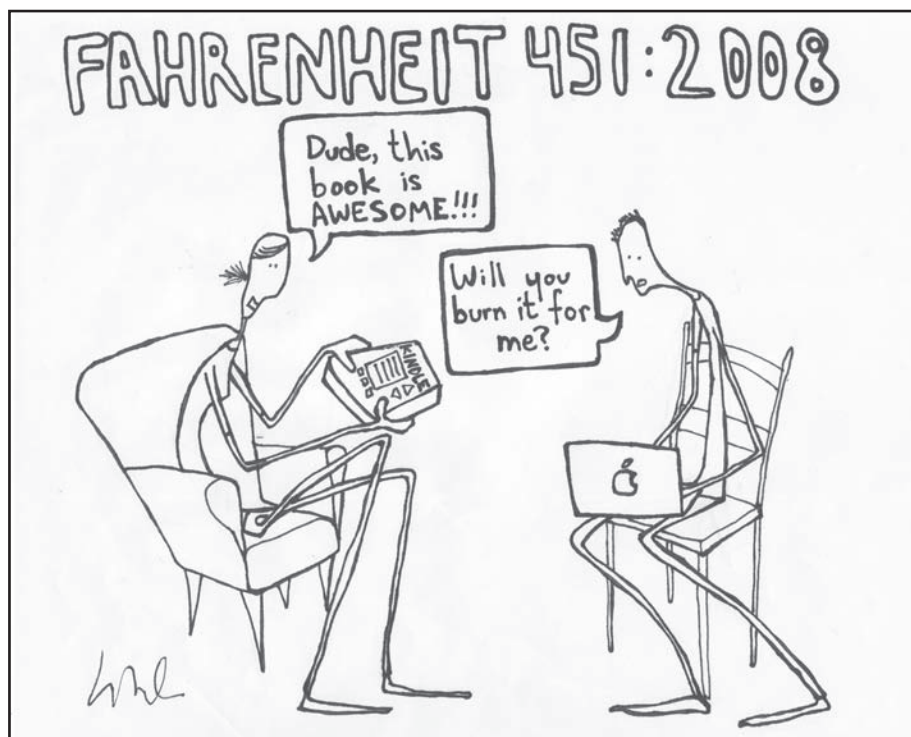
—Julia Halperin, art editor

9. Oatmeal: "As breakfasts go, oatmeal is a true classic. Mix some jam in there for a colorful and delicious morning treat!"

—Alexandria Symonds, editor-in-chief

10. What Claudia Wore: "A blog that examines, in excruciating detail, the various ridiculous outfits worn by members of the Baby-Sitters Club over the years. Prime example: 'a red satin baseball cap, purple sweatpants that were cut off just below the knees, purple high-tops with neon pink laces, red-and-white-striped socks, and a red and pink tie-dyed crop top shirt.'"

—Hillary Busis, deputy features editor



Eye Spy

Wasted beer-pong champion: Aw shit, man, you were drinking with your parents! Why haven't I ever had a drink with Dave?

Musical Topics for Your Lit Hum Paper

"My Boy Was Just Like Me"

An ontological exploration of Harry Chapin and normative fatherhood as exemplified by Homer's *Odyssey*.

"40 oz. to Freedom"

Deconstructing the tropism of the intoxicating beverage in Aeschylus' *Libation Bearers* and the eponymous proto-ska masterpiece.

"She Treat Me Like a Lollipop"

The hysterical-woman complex in the oeuvre of Yung Joc and Virgil's *Aeneid*.

Things You Didn't Know About Biking

The first bicycles did not have pedals and were propelled by pushing off the ground, Flintstone-style.

Debilitating ass-welts were a pitfall of early peddled bikes—iron tires proved poor at absorbing the shocks of the ride.

Things the GOVERNMENT doesn't want you to know about biking:

Biking increases in popularity during times of high gas prices. Is OPEC part of a worldwide cyclists conspiracy? If they have their way, will we be forced to wear those span-dex shorts with the butt pads? We want answers!

Bands of Bears, Not Brothers

This year's College Music Journal Music Marathon and Film Festival began on Tuesday and extends until Saturday—and, as always, the event features a whole slew of crazily named bands. Can you tell which of these band names are real, and which ones we just made up?

Amazing Baby	Kakkmaddafakka
Bearsuit	Pretty and Nice
Cut Off Your Hands	Mostly Bears
Hooray For Humans	Thank You For The Drum Machine
I Wrestled A Bear Once	

Answer: Trick question—they're all real. Psych!



Dear Blabby

BY RAPHAEL POPE-SUSSMAN
PHOTO COURTESY OF DAILY JOKE

This week in *The Eye*, advice columnist Blabby responds to readers' pressing questions.

Dear Blabby,

Midterms are killing me! I brought my aerobed to Butler, but they don't let you spend the night in a room anymore. I've been reduced to roaming the halls of Milstein with a backpack and a bindle. Please help me. Call upon your ancient wisdom and famous blabbiness, and tell me how I can keep my GPA nice and polished!

Signed,
Unmoored at Butler.

Dear Unmoored at Butler,

I applaud you for reaching out for help. Most people in your position wouldn't have taken the time out of their miserable lives to do so. Unfortunately, I don't have any magic bullets. Even if I did, those would be useful only for slaying vampires—not for linear algebra.

However, I do have a little advice on how to spruce up your living situation. Take a soda bottle and puncture it repeatedly with a ballpoint pen. Grab a piece of rubber tubing, slide it over the faucet in the men's room, and squeeze the other end into the soda bottle. And voilà! You've built a portable shower. Now you can hit the books hard and stay clean as a whistle!

Dear Blabby,

I just won a Nobel Prize, but I still can't seem to attract women. How can I use the esteem of the scientific community to light my MoHi mojo?

Signed,
Stockholm all alone.

Dear Stockholm all alone,

Patience is a virtue. As Sun Tzu may never have actually said, "The key to victory is momentum and timing." In bed. Ha! But seriously, there must be dozens of lady post-docs terribly hot and bothered by your green fluorescent proteins. Just use momentum ($p=mv$) and timing (in seconds), and you'll be fine. And for good measure, whenever you see a nice piece of tuchus, just say: "Is that a Nobel Prize in my pocket, or am I just glad to see you?" That will kill.

Dear Blabby,

My roommate has been writing calumnious lies about me in The Eye. He claims I am sexually frustrated, when in fact I am very sexually satisfied, particularly vis-à-vis his mother, who is known well around town. How can I get him to stop spreading this slander?

Best,
In Pain, in McBain.

Dear In Pain, in McBain,

You catch more flies with honey than with vinegar. Try smearing your roomie's face with honey during the night. When he wakes up, he'll have a face full of flies. That should teach him to think twice next time he wants to mock your sexual inadequacies. ●

Marching to the Beat of its Own Hoof

independence and progression with deerhoof

BY LIANNA CARRIGAN

PHOTO COURTESY OF FOUR PAWS MEDIA

“Overjoyed” is the word that Deerhoof drummer and sometime vocalist Greg Saunier uses to describe the band’s reaction to the infamous inability of critics to pin a genre on it. Some say “indie rock.” Some say “pop.” Some say “noise.” Deerhoof is none of these and all of these at the same time.

In addition to the band’s enigmatic style, there is its name—Deerhoof. It conjures up images of flailing limbs and a wild naturalism, both of which are reinforced by the physical energy of its music. Rob Fisk (no longer a member) and Greg Saunier founded the band—informally in 1991, officially in 1996. The name “Deerhoof” was, unsurprisingly, born out of Fisk’s interest in deer. As Saunier tells it in an e-mail: “Ah, that was Rob Fisk, a real naturalist, and the founder of the band. In addition to being a musician he is a wonderful visual artist, my favorite in this world ... He was always painting deer in those days and he liked the look of a hoof print, so Deerhoof became our name and the hoof print was sort of our logo for years. Even after he quit the band, Deerhoof has always presented animals and nature in a sort of mythological or magical light.”

Deerhoof began not as the current four-piece band, but as Fisk and Saunier’s two-man operation. Enter Satomi Matsuzaki. Shortly after moving to San Francisco from Tokyo, Satomi appeared at a Deerhoof audition for a singer. Saunier recalls, “[The audition] was in my kitchen. Satomi was the second singer we tried out but she was perfect right away.” Satomi’s voice is the polarizing first impression that will often make or break the experience for the listener. Her sharp, saccharine voice sounds like a little girl’s, layered over the driving guitar lines that lead the taut melodies, sweetening them like frosting sweetens a cake.

On its newest album, *Offend Maggie*, which was released this month on Kill Rock Stars, more of the lyrics are in Satomi’s native language—Japanese. “It’s Satomi’s native language so she



Deerhoof, which played yesterday (Oct. 22) at the Fillmore, is a band whose star is rapidly rising.

expresses herself a little differently,” Greg says. “It’s like my dad; he speaks fluent Spanish, but never when I was growing up. Recently we went to Mexico and it was like I had a different dad! His personality in Spanish was like 100 [times] more outgoing and he suddenly had a sense of humor.” The band remains enigmatic about its new album’s title, responding sarcastically to a question about what it means: “Offend means to cause to feel annoyed, upset, or resentful. Maggie is short for Margaret.”

Offend Maggie is the band’s 10th album; the songs are as enigmatic and charming as ever, with the addition of a more electronic influence, a sound that also cropped up on last year’s *Friend Opportunity*. Sometimes writers and reviewers try to interpret Deerhoof albums as concept albums. Saunier refutes their efforts: “But any album can be a concept album if you’re willing to use your imagination a little bit. People have an amazing ability to infer all kinds of stories or characters, or they see changing landscapes along with the music, and I really love the fact that people can do that. It’s not like there is one right answer for

any album, including ours. I hesitate to go into *Offend Maggie* too much because I don’t like the idea of cutting off a listener’s ideas, or reducing their role. The listener’s role is very big in our music.”

The listener’s independence in interpreting music is a major theme in Saunier’s rhetoric. “Even in one country or even one city, different listeners have such different reactions. One person sits down really quietly and listens with great intensity, while someone else reacts to the same song by jumping up and down and screaming,” he says. Some even react by choreographing a ballet to the music. In October of 2006, a community in Maine put together a production of a ballet based on Deerhoof’s 2004 record *Milk Man*. Deerhoof was not directly involved, but the members marveled at the work produced by the small community. “One of the most amazing things about it actually was that we WEREN’T involved. A schoolteacher just conceived of and orga-

nized the whole project herself. We showed up for the dress rehearsal and the final performance and just watched. It was one of the great highlights of our musical experience,” said Saunier.

He goes on to illuminate the story of *Milk Man* itself: “We had originally thought of *Milk Man* as a kind of Broadway musical for kids so it was mind-boggling to us that someone we didn’t even know bought our little indie rock CD and had the same idea form in her mind, and then actually took it all the way and organized the show. It was incredible.”

The ballet is in part due to a devoted fan base, but also to the increasing popularity of the band in communities all over the world. Greg admits that “there certainly has never been any overnight success for this band,” but he also says, “since the very beginning there has always been more of an audience for Deerhoof than I expected, so I’ve always been happy. And grateful to our fans.”

The little band that could: fans thrive on the band’s cuteness and its ten albums released over twelve years. Deerhoof strives for quality as well as quantity, and its now-widespread fan base continues its devotion to the band. ●

“ANY ALBUM CAN BE A CONCEPT ALBUM IF YOU’RE WILLING TO USE YOUR IMAGINATION A LITTLE BIT.”

Nuns and Alligators and Wolves, Oh My!

karen russell discusses teaching, criticism, and the everglades

BY YIN YIN LU

PHOTO COURTESY OF
VINTAGE ANCHOR PUBLICITY

"It was the night of our thesis reading," Karen Russell says, but judging from the excitement and conviction in her voice, it might as well have been yesterday. "Everyone was gonna eat sushi and wear a dress. That's where I found out that I got published in the *New Yorker*." She was only 23 years old—fresh out of the Columbia MFA program.

Within four years of that monumental event, Russell has accumulated a number of other noteworthy literary achievements—she not only was published again by the *New Yorker*, but also

was featured twice in *The Best American Short Stories*, was listed by *Granta* as one of 20 Best Young American Novelists, was nominated for the Dylan Thomas Prize (given annually to the best writer in English under 30), and published her first book, *St. Lucy's Home for Girls Raised by Wolves*. Phew.

Now Russell teaches a Beginning Fiction Workshop at Columbia University—and it would be an understatement to say that she loves it. "They [my students] are incredibly talented. Every semester I've been blown away by the freedom—the stakes are different at that level—people aren't really careerists yet," she says. "They aren't writing thinking it's going to be published tomorrow." Teaching in and of itself—"helping people who have a vision of the essay or story that they want to produce"—is a distinct pleasure for Russell. "It feels like being a weird literary midwife or something," she explains. "People have a more personal stake in it. It's their story and you're there to help them tell it."

"I'M NOT INTERESTED IN THE TRADITIONAL ENDING: 'AND THEN HE GOT THE GIRL,' 'AND THEN THE BOYS WERE SAVED.' I WANTED TO GET TO AN EMOTIONAL NOTE, HIT A CERTAIN RESONANCE IN SOMEONE."

Russell first taught while enrolled in the Columbia MFA program, as a professor for University Writing. While in the MFA program, she also wrote most of the stories that were eventually published in *St. Lucy's Home for Girls Raised by Wolves*. This much-acclaimed collection of short stories was named a Best Book of 2006 by the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and the *San Francisco Chronicle*, and was also a finalist for the Young Lions Fiction Award in 2007. The 10 stories, which range from the title story, about girls who are raised by werewolves and re-educated by nuns, to a story about a family that wrestles

alligators ("Ava Wrestles the Alligator") to another about brothers looking for their sister's ghost with a pair of magic goggles ("Haunting Olivia"), are all narrated in the first person by children or young adolescents. "There's something about an adult perspective looking back through a child's eyes that I find really compelling," Russell explains. She enjoys exploring the "cusp between adulthood and childhood."

Many reviewers have lauded the stories for their emotional poignancy and inimitable style, but others have criticized them for having "no resolution." (When "Accident Brief" was published in the *New Yorker*, even her own grandfather called her and said, "That's really smart of them—you've gotta pay money to the magazine to find out how it ends!") Russell does acknowledge this and comes to terms with it. "Some people are just frustrated with the short story form in that regard—it's not like a novel," she says. "I'm not interested in the traditional ending—'And then he got the girl,' 'And then the boys were saved.' I wanted to get to an emotional note, hit a certain resonance in someone." The whole purpose of her short stories is, essentially, to lead up to that point, that "emotional precipice."

After reading the tales of *St. Lucy's Home for Girls Raised by Wolves*, it is easy to wonder if any of their components are based upon reality. As Russell herself admits, they are so eccentric, so "out there," but surprisingly, they are not entirely removed from reality. Some of her stories, especially "St. Lucy's Home for Girls Raised by Wolves," are "emotionally autobiographical" because they explore simple universal themes, such as leaving home or growing up. However, some of Russell's settings are influenced by her own childhood environment. Since she was born and raised in Miami, she lived near the Florida Everglades, which happens to be where Ava wrestles the alligator. "It's a very strange place to visit," Karen says. "Miami is stereotyped as this gaudy, loud place, which it is ... but it's just naturally beautiful. There's this strange rubbing shoulders of the artificial and the real. Everything's sort of intermingled there."

In fact, Karen's current novel-in-progress, *Swamplandia!*, is a continuation of "Ava Wrestles the Alligator" which retains the short story's setting. Like her short stories, the novel has a surreal plot, involving "two sisters who find themselves alone on a swamp in the wake of a family loss" and an alligator-rescue theme park that is put out of business. Ava, the 13-year-old protagonist, believes that she is the star alligator wrestler and attempts to "wrestle her family back to the land of the living in the wake of this great loss." Because it is a novel, *Swamplandia!*'s ending is more conclusive than the ending of the stories in *St. Lucy's Home for Girls Raised by Wolves*, although it does not completely resolve every conflict. As Russell puts it, "it's more of a nudge."

In addition to completing the novel, which will be published sometime next year, Russell's future plans involve teaching "a seminar about monsters and an advanced fiction workshop" at Williams as a visiting professor next semester. After that, she plans to begin a new novel and complete another story collection—but both are "kind of in the misty future." ●



Though still poised at the beginning of her career, Karen Russell has already accumulated numerous literary accolades.



LEADERS OF THE PACK

**columbia bikers take
back the streets**

**by Jennie Rose Halperin
photos by Molly Crossin**

UNTIL I GOT TO COLLEGE, bicycling meant riding seven miles to work through suburban streets—empty, save for a few parked cars. Within two months of arriving in New York, though, I had discovered a whole new side of biking. I participated in my first Critical Mass, a monthly event in which hundreds of bicyclers ride together in solidarity, chanting and yelling despite the police, trying to kick cars off the streets at least for a little while. “Whose streets?” the riders asked. “Our streets!” came the reply.

A few months later, we attended a memorial ride for Eric Ng, a teacher and anti-war activist killed Dec. 2, 2006, by a drunk driver on the West Side Highway. The West Side Highway bike path, or greenway, which traverses the whole of the island, was conceived of as a safe space for cyclists—a place where nothing like this could have happened.

It sometimes feels like the odds are against New York City bicyclists, one of the most varied groups in the city. Often perceived as activists, environmentalists, racers decked out in Spandex, punks, or—particularly on the Upper West Side—delivery people, in truth, mobile urban dwellers are far more varied than that. “Most people who ride bikes in the city are using them for utilitarian purposes and may not consider themselves ‘cyclists’ or ‘athletes.’ Many cyclists are commuting to work or school, riding to run errands in their neighborhood, or riding for work as a food delivery person. ... They are cycling because it is cheaper than cabs, gas, and even the subway. It is also one of the

No matter why you bike, there's an organization for you. For radicals, groups like Times Up! (www.times-up.org) provide free repair lessons, salvaged parts, and rides through the city with a varied community. For community empowerment, Recycle-A-Bicycle, which provides youth empowerment and environmental education (www.recycleabicycle.org), is the way to go. For transport, there's Transportation Alternatives (www.transalt.org). (According to Samponaro, there are several CU students who volunteer there already, utilizing TA's diverse, membership-based community.) For fashion, there's the Sartorialist's Vintage Bike Man (www.sartorialist.com). There are also a series of blogs to support the NYC bike community including BikeBlog (www.bikeblognyc.com) and the Bike Snob NYC (bikesnobnyc.blogspot.com). Finally, if you're into seeing bikers getting excited (and we don't mean by bells and whistles), check out bikesmut.com. Caution: this site is not for the faint of heart. ❧❧❧

fastest and most independent ways to get around the city,” says Susan Lindell of Recycle-A-Bicycle.

Over the past 10 years, it has become far easier to bike in New York City. In 2006, the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation released bicycling data from 1998 to 2005. This landmark study included fatality data and infrastructure critiques intended to make the city more bike-friendly. Over the years examined in the study, the city added approximately 216 miles of “greenways,” or easily bike-able roads, and will probably add 200 more in the next three years.

These miles will directly affect Columbia students as the Riverside bike path, the Harlem River path, and the West Harlem Piers project all open within the next year. In addition, the new 106th Street bike lane, which connects Central and Riverside Parks, opened last month to great fanfare and ribbon-cutting. Many of these improvements are due to Mayor Michael Bloomberg's progressive belief in alternative transportation. The governor views himself primarily as a pedestrian, and said in a 2006 *New York Times* article: “Even if they're in the right, they are the lightweights. Every year, too many people are hit by cars—and bikes have to pay attention.” While all this is true, his crack-downs on Critical Mass rides have angered many New York City bicyclists. “Bloomberg supports a certain kind of cyclist,” says Jenna Freedman, bicycling advocate and Barnard librarian. “He disappointed the bicycling community by continuing the prior administration's policy of attack on Critical Mass,” says Eric Goldhagen, a New York City bike advocate. “I expected more from a fellow urban bike rider, also from a financial perspective, it is sad that he did not put an end to the attacks on the rides. ... There is just no logic to the city's handling of the situation.”

Columbia students already live in a prime cycling area—located between Central Park, Riverside Park, and the West Side Greenway, our campus's location provides plenty of places for two-wheeled exploration. Plus, it is always impres-

sive to downtown dwellers when Columbia students bike to and from Brooklyn, giving more street cred to those who dwell in an oft-underappreciated part of the island. Bicycling also gets a person more acquainted with the city's nooks and crannies. “Everyone I know says that they don't realize how tiny Manhattan is until they start riding a bike,” says Alison Powell, BC '09. “You get to know the terrain. The scale becomes clear.”

Rachel Lindsay, CC '09, agrees with Powell. A recent bicycle convert, she started biking because “the bike path was just way too beautiful to turn down. After I started biking, I loved the city more and more—I saw it differently, experienced it differently, more slowly. It also really improved my ability to navigate the city. I had a new orientation that was not based on subway stops.”

Another bicycle enthusiast on campus is Kenneth Jackson, a professor of history who is popular for his annual all-night bike ride through the city conducted in conjunction with his History of the City of New York class. Jackson, a member of the Five Borough Bicycle Club, is lauded as an inspiration on campus for bike-friendly students. “One thing that increases bike consciousness is Ken Jackson's bike ride, which is the first and last time many people will bike in their college career, and it's an amazing, wonderful thing,” says Lydia DePillis, CC '09 and an avid Seattle cyclist.

While some Columbia students are embracing the bicycle as a form of transport or recreation, others perceive themselves as athletes. The Columbia cycling team, a club sport focused on racing, includes some of the most motivated and active athletes on campus. Last year, the team finished fourth out of 74 in the Eastern Conference and plans to continue that streak. Alexander Graybeal, SEAS '09 and president of the Cycling Team, says: “Our overall goals are to help introduce new people to the sport of bike racing and to compete at a high level throughout the collegiate season. ... We are a relatively quiet sport on the Columbia campus.” He continues, “It's not like people can see us practicing in Dodge or pick us out from our hulking physiques around campus. This hides the fact that we are one of the most successful inter-collegiate athletic teams.”

Decked out in Spandex, these Lance Armstrong-types ride expensive, streamlined racing bikes that contrast sharply with commuter bikes. Some members of the team both commute and race, but most draw a distinction between their biking and the commuters and recreational bikers zipping along the greenway. Graybeal says: “Racing and commuting may seem entirely separate. Racers in their rainbow Lycra on their expensive bikes cut a sharp difference against commuters often in their business attire, riding a hybrid or the average Craigslit jalopy. However, the worlds of racing and commuting are heavily connected. To begin with, many riders do both. I know several racers whose interest in cycling began with commuting. Racing became the logical next step. In my own case, I started out racing, but the green side of commuting appealed to me, and I now commute by bike almost exclusively to work over the summers and part-time during the school year.”

DePillis says: “I think it would be great if the CU bike team wanted to lead bike tours, or give bike-repair lessons, but they're athletes—there



are fundamentally different reasons for biking. My impression is there's a strict divide between athletes and non-athletes—either you're an athlete, or you don't really do anything athletic.”

Perhaps partially because of this divide, there is a distinct lack of bike culture on the Columbia campus, which makes it distinct from other campuses, where bikes are gaining in popularity. “It's really hard to quantify the number of people biking,” DePillis says. “There are certainly more people with bikes. What hasn't increased is the number of people actually getting around on bikes.”

At several universities around the country, bike shares, where there are a certain number of bikes that stay on campus for student use, are becoming a part of the university landscape. For other schools, particularly at large schools where car culture is a part of campus life, bike co-ops and clubs for parts and shared labor are important for student bicyclists.

“If I want bike culture,” says Powell, “I have to go downtown.” She's quick to add: “I don't want to totally discredit it, though. There are definitely people who bike. If I want to take a ride, there are people I can call.”

“I thought for sure there would be bike clubs at least, here,” says Margo Kulkarni, SEAS '10 and a transfer student from Smith College. “In

DEPILLIS BELIEVES FEW COLUMBIANS USE BIKES FOR TRANSPORT BECAUSE “PEOPLE ARE TERRIFIED, AND RIGHTLY SO.”

Amherst, everyone bikes, and here, not so much.” Lindsay agrees, saying, “We should start a co-op, really, even if all it does is tell people what locks they'll need for the mean streets of NYC.”

Perhaps the disunity of Columbia bikers can be explained by student utilization of New York transportation. “At other campuses, there's probably more bike culture because they have something to fight about. At Columbia, there's a sense of ‘Why would I bike because I am already doing something good for the environment?’” says Powell.

The environmental argument runs strong among students, drivers, and bicyclers alike—but bicycling actually may not be that much better for the environment than public transport. The subway is frequent and reliable, which is why many environmental bicycling groups, including Transportation Alternatives, have partnered with the Straphangers Alliance, a public transport advocate organization.

Another concern that many students have is that to ride a bike alone when meeting friends downtown creates, as Powell says, “a sort of weird, anti-social thing.” DePillis counters, “The time you spend downtown with friends is the time you are there with them. ... Oftentimes bikes are faster, not to mention more pleasant than the train.” She does concede, though, “Your wardrobe choices are a little limited.” That being said, Lindsay bikes to her internship, and it is not uncommon to see business women tearing up the greenway in power suits and pearls.

While some students are worried about isolation, more hesitate to buy a bicycle because of a more dodgy issue—safety. DePillis, who has advocated bicycle use to her friends and community since high school, believes that few Columbia students use their bicycles for transport because “people are terrified, and rightly so.”

The most recent data for New York City bicycle fatalities dates from 2005, at 225 deaths, but due to improvement of the West Side Greenway, as well as several new bicycle paths, the number is decreasing. The greenway, opened in 2001, provides a clear path up the West Side into the Bronx. Since it opened, there have been a few fatalities,

CYCLE THE CITY



- 1 West Side Greenway, obviously. I like up near 130th Street, after Fairway, where it turns into the park.
- 2 However, down by the 79th Street Boat Basin is really nice too.
- 3 Central Park West is nice, but there's a bike lane that's not enclosed, which is a little scary.
- 4 Through Central Park to the Harlem Meers is beautiful.
- 5 The plaza in front of Grant's Tomb is the best spot to practice bike tricks.

map courtesy of Google Maps

marked by haunting “ghost bikes,” white memorials for the bicyclists mounted by the side of the walkway. While the greenway provides new space for New York City bicycles, as DePillis says, “A green bike lane is only as good as the pedestrians who use it, and it's sometimes terrifying—it's like riding on a sidewalk.”

Directly after the fatality report was released, two bicyclers were killed on the greenway in Chelsea—Eric Ng and Carl H. Nacht. While there were 225 deaths over the eight-year period of the city's report, the numbers remained steady and were comparable to national averages. Though many of the deaths were children, a recent study suggests that compulsory helmet laws have cut down on



the number of child fatalities. Unsurprisingly, the largest numbers of injuries were traffic-related, and one-third took place in Brooklyn.

At Columbia, safety is not always the number-one priority for students. “Bicycle safety is a hard thing to judge at Columbia. We have the benefit of being near the West Side Highway, where it is safe and easy to get around,” Powell says. “The most unsafe thing I see are people riding on the sidewalk.”

There are simple steps to take to reduce risk, such as learning hand signals, and wearing lights or a helmet. Still, many students go without, whether for fashion or out of ignorance. “The main thing about bike safety in New York City is safety in numbers. The more bicycles on the street, the safer it will be. ... Also supporting an organization in your day-to-day life or riding with a friend helps the cause. Particularly in a university set-

ting, there are plenty of people in the area who can support each other,” says Caroline Samponaro, CC ’02 and director of bicycle advocacy at Transportation Alternatives. She continues, “I believe, of course, that you should wear a helmet because, well, why wouldn’t you?”

DePillis, while she has never been in a serious accident, is definitely aware of the dangers of bicycling. “I’ve never gotten into an accident in New York, which is amazing because I sometimes do stupid things. I just have developed this zone. It’s this state of heightened awareness when you know everything moving around you,” she says. “In general I think it’s better to have more bikes on the street because you’re less of an anomaly and traffic gets used to you. It’s not just being cautious, it’s also being aggressive.”

Most CU bicyclists have experienced their fair share of bicycle stress. Lindsay, for example,

relates the following anecdote: “I was cutting around cars to get in front of the bus that was blocking the ‘Bus Only’ lane I ride in, going with traffic. As I emerge from between stopped cars to get back on the bus lane, I crash into this man on a bike going the wrong way! I was so shocked I didn’t even react, and then he was gone. I have no clue what he said ... but I’m pretty sure ‘fuck’ is the same in every language.”

Safety is not only about helmets and lights—it is also about keeping property safe. “I am astonished that people leave their really nice bikes out,” DePillis says.

As a freshman, I lost my bike in front of Schapiro—I checked for it the morning after locking it up, but all that was left was a bent aluminum wheel frame. DePillis has suffered a similar fate. “Sophomore year, my soul-mate bicycle got stolen in Chinatown.” She adds, “That didn’t make me cautious with bikes. It just made me give up the idea of having the perfect bike in New York. You just have to make a compromise with something you don’t mind leaving outside. Also you’re not out \$600 if it’s stolen.” Lindsay also lost her bike after leaving it locked up downtown overnight.

Due to a recent spike in bicycle thefts, perhaps caused by the higher number of bicycles left outside, Columbia Public Safety reminded students of its lock discounts and provided a link to racks on campus in an e-mail this month. They also recommended that students stay away from wire locks and handrails, which are unreliable in New York.

Almost every student agrees that Columbia needs more bike racks. The existing racks on campus are often packed full, causing students to lock where they can, which sometimes leads to towing and theft. At Barnard, bikes spill off the rack, chained to poles, left on the street, and even chained haphazardly to the library. Columbia bicyclists have learned which on-campus racks are better and which are worse—Wien is a particularly dangerous spot to lock up. For bike team members, dorm rooms are the place where the greasy chains and sleek bodies find their homes, nailed to the wall or slumped in a corner. Less avid students can use their bicycles for clothes hangers.

Though sometimes it seems like the odds are against bicyclists on campus and in the city at large, the best part of New York biking is its equality. On a bicycle, weekend warriors, fashionistas, anarchists, old people, young people, and people of every skill level ride together for so many different reasons, exercising their bodies and minds with their own style—mountain bike, road bike, recumbent, or hybrid.

Precisely because of this equality, there is a place for everyone to bike, even if the preferred neighborhood is simply Morningside Heights. “The people I know who have bikes have them to get around, even just around the neighborhood,” DePillis says. “There’s a space where it’s not practical to walk but stupid to take the subway, and that’s where bikes are ideal.”

Though the initial price may be steep for a nice bicycle—expect to pay around \$150 on Craigslist—subway costs will decrease, spirits will rise, and legs will be stronger if you start riding. Mark Twain may have put it best when he said: “Get a bicycle. You will not regret it if you live.” ■





Behind the Kitchen Doors

down and dirty in one of the city's best restaurants

BY JULIE APPEL

PHOTO BY MOLLY CROSSIN

Ever thought about dropping out of Columbia for culinary school? With the rise in popularity of the Food Network, reality television like *Top Chef*, and the Page Six personalities of New York chefs like Anthony Bourdain, David Chang, and Mario Batali, the life of the chef has been elevated to fairy-tale proportions.

Before you ditch Contemporary Civilization for Knife Skills, take a good look at your plate, with those julienned vegetables and perfectly plated garnishes. Julie Appel, Columbia student and chef extraordinaire, reports from the trenches of one of New York's busiest restaurants, where she spent her summer behind the kitchen doors.

I stood staring dumbly at my thumb, waiting for the blood flow to subside, but all the while watching as it dripped down my hand onto my latex glove. I tried compression—a few paper towels holding the wound—and elevation—walking around like an idiot with my hand above my head—but nothing would make it stop.

For the first time since I'd started my job, I'd cut myself using the meat slicer. My right thumb—which, seeing as I'm a homo sapien, I usually need—had a large slice of flesh taken out of it. All I could do was keep my mouth shut while I watched the blood squirt out.

That was the first rule I learned: keep your mouth shut and your eyes open and you'll be fine. Unfortunately for me, my eyes must have been closed or my mind must have been somewhere else,

as I'd accidentally taken my thumb to be a piece of zucchini that should have been cut into one-inch slices so it could get braised in oil.

I'd broken the cardinal rule of restaurant kitchens, an important part of which is the "...and your mouth closed" caveat. Never talk back, and never, ever say that you're not busy. If you're not busy, then there's something you should be doing, and you need to find out what it is.

Though the production of food seems like an easy enough task, it is actually quite labor-intensive and specialized. If you walk into a restaurant and order a plate of spaghetti and meatballs, you might expect that there is one cook in the back who has the ground beef, forms the meatballs to order, and drops in the pasta.

What you may not think about is that the pasta has already been precooked and portioned out so that everyone gets an equal share. The meatballs have already been mixed in huge quantity—40 pounds of ground beef, four quarts of ricotta cheese, a quarter-cup of salt and pepper, and a few pinches of nutmeg—formed into balls, and fried, so that they're ready to be put into an oven and warmed up.

**BY THE TIME YOU GET
YOUR PLATE OF FOOD,
THREE DIFFERENT COOKS
HAVE TOUCHED YOUR
PASTA AND MEATBALLS.**

Don't let *Top Chef* tell you otherwise—the life of a worker in a top kitchen isn't so easy to stomach.

By the time you get your plate of food, three different cooks have touched your pasta and meatballs.

Even the parsley garnish on top takes time. As a matter of fact, that parsley garnish on the top, with the leaves cut into thin strips, took someone probably two hours to prepare. They needed to wash and pick all the parsley leaves—about an hour-long task on its own—then stack them one on top of another, about eight or 12 leaves at a time, and painstakingly chiffonade them into small strips.

To make a cup of parsley chiffonade might take a cook two hours—the length of time it takes to sit through a CC class.

The cooks who are preparing your food, however, may well have been honing their craft for years—much longer than the two hours it takes to chiffonade parsley. (They also may be new blood and just learning the ropes. You can be sure, though, that they are learning quickly and thoroughly, and, with each mishap, understanding more and more about what not to do.)

Ten hours a day, five days a week: that's quite a bit of experience plated up with your polenta and mushroom ragout.

Experienced cooks can tell if a chicken breast is done cooking by listening to it. If it is bubbling just slightly, that means that the protein in the meat is solidifying and it is cooked through.

Someone who has been around a kitchen for long enough can look at the oil in a pan and immediately know whether it is hot enough to properly sauté a piece of meat so that it will not soak up too much fat and be greasy, and so that it will retain a crispy and crunchy texture on the outside while still having enough juice inside to make it plump and flavorful.

By your 20th hour standing in front of a pasta roller, flattening out the dough and putting it through the roller once, then twice, then a third time, and thinning it out so that it's about a quarter of a centimeter thick, you may finally get to the point where you can deftly handle the dough so that it does not fall all over the floor.

By your 40th hour standing in front of the same machine, methodically inserting the pliable but not-too-sticky ball of flour and egg into the machine, you might be able to deftly throw one end of the sheet of dough that is coming out the roller over your other arm, so that you can work with twice the amount of dough you'd been working with previously, and finish in half the time.

And, by your 80th hour in front of the two rollers, you might be so adept that you can fill a whole sheet tray of ravioli—which is 60 ravioli—in a matter of minutes.

Working in a kitchen is nothing if not repetitive. The exact same things have to be done every single day, so that the exact same plates can be produced, day after day, to ensure customer satisfaction.

But it is also nothing if not fulfilling. Dicing an onion is just about one of the most productive things that one can do with one's time—taking a 12-quart container of whole beets and cutting them into two four-quart containers of cut beets is incredibly cathartic.

And if you don't believe me, you should try it sometime. ●

Battle of the Activists

ena brdjanovic and melanie jones interview juan lamata and ory rinat

BY ENA BRDJANOVIC AND MELANIE JONES
PHOTOS COURTESY OF JUAN LAMATA
AND ORY RINAT

In the wake of midterm season, we have all entertained the notion of fleeing Morningside Heights for climates less synonymous with test scores, GPAs, and the ever-looming presence of our future goals. And sometimes things are more important, more pertinent, than graduating in four years—the upcoming presidential election, for one. **Juan Lamata**, CC '10, took a semester off to work for the Obama campaign as a field organizer in the Iowa caucus, which helped cinch the nomination for the then dark-horse candidate. With the election only two weeks away, Ena Brdjanovic spoke with Lamata about why a semester under Obama beat one under PrezBo, and why all those sleepless nights were more than worth it.

What makes the 2008 presidential campaign so important?

In so many ways it feels as if America is on the brink. Of what, nobody's for sure, but after the last eight years of poor, and I would say malicious, government, there is a vacuum of leadership and a demand for honest and intelligent governance.

What were the big issues at the Iowa Caucus?

Immigration is a huge issue, and the Latino community there has recently been heavily targeted by ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) raids. In Iowa, there was record Latino turnout for the caucus, and it was instrumental for winning Obama delegates in places where he was not supposed to do well at all. ... I loved this part of my job because I got to travel up and down the entire state and become intimately acquainted with a population in Iowa that often gets overlooked.

What was a typical day for you?

Well, all days were pretty atypical, except for the fact that they were extremely busy. I was at the office by 9, six days a week, and noon on Sundays, but I was hardly ever home at a reasonable hour. When I got to Iowa I was an unpaid intern spending my Friday and Saturday nights working until about 2 in the morning. By the time the caucus was just a few weeks away, I just told myself I had invested far too much to let up. I'm not sure I slept more than a few hours the last two

“WE END UP WITH THE SORT OF GOVERNMENT WE DEMAND.”

weeks. ... The best days were when either Obama or another high-level surrogate came to town. Those days were always wild, and I never really knew what to expect.

From a (relatively) insider perspective, why is Obama the candidate to vote for in November?

The people who work for him do it because they are trying to make the world a better place. It sounds silly, but I felt I was surrounded by very intelligent and very hard-working people who were committed to righting some of the wrongs in our world.

Have you had any interaction with Barack Obama?

I interrupted a commercial with Barack Obama and Paul Tewes (Iowa State Director). I knocked over a gigantic HOPE sign and said “shit” really loudly. Then I mumbled an apology and ran away. Not my best moment on the trail.



Having worked in the more nitty-gritty aspects of politics, have any of your views on the electoral process, or politics in general, changed?

It was shocking how large a percentage of Iowa High School seniors didn't know what a caucus was until I showed up in their classroom. Similarly, there would be days when it felt like you only got to talk to racist and ignorant voters. Or sometimes someone would tell me they're voting for Barack but then give some awful reason, and I would just sort of say thanks and try and end the conversation. ... Despite this, the experience in Iowa gave me renewed faith in our electoral system. It definitely felt like that was the time when voters could really influence the platforms of their party.

What has been your greatest reward thus far working on the campaign?

I had a really cool laminated badge that had my name and said “OBAMA STAFF” really big, but I lost it in the victory party.

Besides voting, is there anything Columbia students should do to get more involved in the political process? Should everyone start volunteering?

One thing the Obama campaign has shown is the immense power of concerted volunteer efforts. Such a large part of it has focused on getting traditionally non-politically active people involved, and I think that can only be a healthy thing for a democracy. I think people need to understand that we end up with the sort of government we demand, and that a direct participation in the democratic process is the only way to influence it.

In what way has your experience benefited you more than a semester at Columbia?

It really opened up my perspective on life after college. It was reassuring to see that there are a ton of options and that you are not quite so limited by your major.

Will the experience still have been worth it if Obama loses?

Obama will not lose.



As the National Chairman of Students for Rudy, then-junior **Ory Rinat** decided to campaign for Rudy Giuliani in the Republican primaries. He traveled across the United States and throughout the boroughs while at college. Now a senior and a McCain supporter, Rinat talked with Melanie Jones about balancing politics with schoolwork, why he feels Obama doesn't understand the economy, and how he hopes to continue in politics after college.

Just how high up were you in the Giuliani campaign during the primary? What were your general responsibilities as the National Chairman?

I was responsible for running a national students coalition for the campaign. In that role, I selected state and campus leaders to help run the coalition, organized rallies, spoke at events, put together newsletters and volunteer deployments. I spent a lot of time in states like New Hampshire and Florida, especially in the weeks and days leading up to those primaries.

What's it like to be on the campaign trail?

You're at events, you're in the office, you're at meetings, you're at rallies, you're everywhere, all at once, always on the phone, always e-mailing, always working. It's a rush and a thrill, and you have to truly believe in the issues and candidates you are working for to be able to keep going nonstop.

What makes the 2008 presidential election so important?

Our next president will have to make tough choices to deal with the crises we face, and Obama could not be more wrong on the issues that matter most. One example—he brags about tax cuts for 95 percent of working families, when well over 40 percent don't pay any taxes—his claim is simply a lie. ... On the other hand, McCain's economic policies keep taxes low by extending the cuts that created the lower 10 percent bracket and increased the child tax credit. McCain has the leadership needed to make the tough choices, to fight against earmarks and wasteful spending, to win the war in Iraq, and to get our economy going again for all Americans of all income levels.

“OUR NEXT PRESIDENT WILL HAVE TO MAKE TOUGH CHOICES TO DEAL WITH THE CRISES WE FACE.”

Has working on this campaign helped you in your major at all? Do you see a future in it as a prospective career?

I love working on campaigns, dealing with the issues I care about, and doing all I can to get candidates who believe in smaller government, more freedom, and more security elected. I hope to continue working on campaigns for a long time.

Have any cynical or idealistic assumptions you had been disproved or affirmed by your experiences in the electoral process?

People think all politics is local—it really is true.

How hard is it to juggle the responsibilities of schoolwork and campaigning?

It's tough to keep up with both—the passion and excitement of the campaign can often get in the way of school work. I think all too often I choose campaign work instead of writing a paper, studying for a midterm, but I know I learned just as much if not more from the work I have done on campaigns.

Will the experience still have been worth it for you if McCain loses?

Absolutely, but I am hopeful. ●

The End Is Nigh, and Always Has Been

the modern sci-fi movie: same old, or new revelation?

BY SAM REISMAN

PHOTO BY MIRAMAX FILMS

If you've been to the movies lately, then you know that the end isn't nigh—it's been here for a while. We just haven't opened our eyes to it. From sci-fi/horror to Disney fare, many films express this sentiment these (last?) days. In the good old Hollywood disaster films of the '90s, aliens and asteroids laid waste to CGI cities with spectacular brio, eradicating extras by the dozen, yet sparing our clever heroes so they could live to save the day. But disaster just isn't what it used to be.

While the ingenious plan to snare Godzilla in an NYC suspension bridge might have fit the bill a decade ago, audiences today can't respect the *Cloverfield* monster until he bites, buries, infects, explodes, swallows, and smashes each and every character before finally dispatching the camera itself with a flick of his skyscraper-sized tail. The deserted urban landscapes of *I Am Legend* and *WALL-E* evoke civilizations extinguished with a whimper, not a bang, and the hellish, war-torn terrains of *Land of the Dead*, *28 Weeks Later*, and *The Dark Knight* deftly illustrate what can become of morality and decency when order collapses. (Okay, *The Dark Knight* spat out a glimmer of redemptive hope with the two ferries not blowing each other up, but did anyone actually buy that? C'mon.) Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* (the film adaptation of which is due later this year) takes place in a wasteland America where most resources and remnants of human goodness are exhausted by page one, and entirely sidesteps the sensationalism of catastrophe, plunging right into its somber aftermath.

So what changed? Maybe 9/11 endowed filmmakers and filmgoers with a more sober perspective on collapse. We don't need to go to

the movies to watch buildings fall because we've seen it on the news, and we don't necessarily expect our best and brightest to make it through anymore. As in the past, movies that traffic in prospective Armageddons use the occasion less as a platform for chaos and carnage, and more as an opportunity to explore pressing social and political issues and to engage troubling questions about human nature.

But if I were to propose a new genre—the post-millennial apocalypse picture—one of its most persistent conventions might be the moment when one character hijacks the narrative in order to draw explicit parallels between the reel nightmare and the real world, to tell us that we are already living the chaos envisaged onscreen.

Take Alfonso Cuarón's *Children of Men* (loosely based on a novel by P.D. James, but taking most of its cues from CNN), in which an inexplicable worldwide epidemic of infertility causes widespread social disorder. The cause of the infertility is never explored, essentially acting as a placeholder for any catastrophic event that spells the end of humanity: global warming, nuclear war, the exhaustion of natural resources, choose your own Rapture. "It's too late," says the film's protagonist Theo Faron (Clive Owen). "World went to shit. Know what? It was too late before the infertility happened..."

The suggestion that the seeds of the terrifying

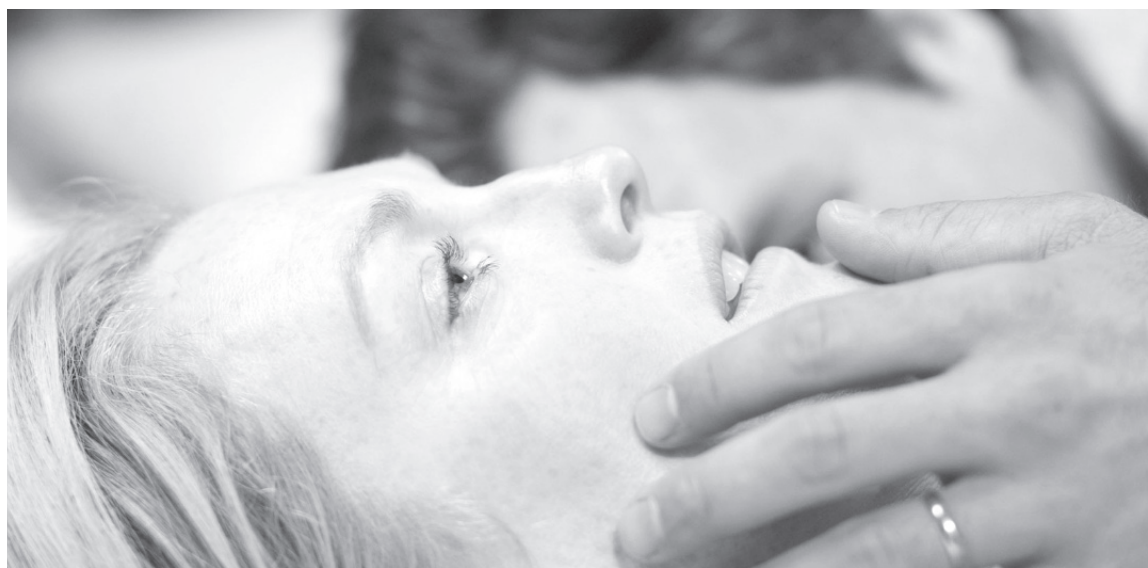
PARALLELS BETWEEN THE REEL NIGHTMARE AND THE REAL WORLD TELL US THAT WE ARE LIVING THE CHAOS ENVISAGED ONSCREEN.

future envisioned by the film are being laid in our present is cannily illustrated throughout, with narrative references to current immigration and homeland security issues and with deliberate visual evocations of Abu Ghraib and the London Underground attacks. In *28 Days Later*, Major Henry West (Christopher Eccleston) muses that the four weeks of murder and chaos that erupted in England after a viral outbreak were no different from the four weeks preceding them, or the four weeks preceding those. If science fiction once used to play to the wonderment at the anticipated innovations of the future, today's sci-fi is more concerned with keeping one depressingly plausible foot on the ground. Gone are the glittering flying cars and interstellar space missions; *Minority Report* instead seizes our imagination with sleeker, sexier Gap ads, and *WALL-E* buries us alive in titanic heaps of our own everyday kitsch.

Emerging from this new but already well-established tradition, Fernando Meirelles' *Blindness* is the latest film to ponder seriously the end as we know it, with less attention paid to the flash and smash of citywide destruction and more to the siege on the human spirit. If society collapses, can we act as noble savages or simply as very capable, violent apes? Based on the novel by Nobel Laureate José Saramago, the film uses the conceit of an epidemic of blindness to contemplate just such a collapse. As the "white sickness" spreads, the infected are rounded into quarantined concentration camps, where—absent from government and absolved from maintaining civil exteriors—the characters (identified only by their occupations—"Doctor," "Bartender"—niches in a society that no longer exists) shed all veneers and reveal their essential natures, often with ugly and devastating results.

In *Blindness*, Meirelles' greatest accomplishment (with immeasurable contribution from cinematographer Cesar Charlone) is his creation of an absorbing and strangely beautiful visual style that realizes the sensation of "seeing blind." The camera eschews traditional medium shots and close-ups for deliberately awkward framed compositions that illustrate a world of tactile sensation, emphasizing the surfaces of tabletops, the breadth of walls, and the shapes of bedposts, and demonstrate a particular affinity for the workings of crucial tools (scissors, radios, guns). Meirelles' dynamic handheld camera explores the film's settings with astounding energy, grace, and laser-like precision for capturing the sources of sound, the presence of heat, and the smell of squalor. *Blindness* effectively delivers our familiar world back to us through a nightmarish prism of unease and terror.

As proficiently made as it is, strongly acted and well-written, *Blindness* ultimately can't break the familiar mold of this new genre. It plays out yet another iteration of the same sobering question: One day, the lights will go out, and where will that leave us then? ●



Blindness is the latest in a line of psychologically terrifying apocalypse films that presume the end is inevitable.

Baby It's Cold Outside

five essential fall items for guys

BY LINDA HUANG

With fall arriving rather early this year, stylish men may be wondering how to update their wardrobes for the chilly weather. We selected these five fall essentials to keep you warm and confident when walking to your classes. Key menswear trends seen on the fall runways include plaid (as seen at Marc Jacobs and DSquared2), leather motorcycle jackets (Rag & Bone), patterned sweater vests (Etro), and our favorite fall accessory, black thick-rimmed glasses (Michael Kors and Dolce&Gabbana). In addition to a selection of classic pieces, we've also listed updated alternatives, with more modern cuts and trendier fabrics, for those of you looking to spiff up your existing staples. With these items, you'll be able to incorporate runway trends and avoid looking too foppish.

1. Fall jacket: The blazer

The blazer is a classic piece that instantly makes a man look sharp and well dressed—that is, if it fits well. When picking a blazer for the fall, choose one in a neutral color, such as brown, tan, or gray, for a more casual look. The Hugo “Amel” Wool Shrunk Sportcoat is a functional one-buttoned gray blazer that has a nicely tailored shape, while J.Crew's Herringbone Blazer is another, less expensive look that we love. If you're looking to try the runway-inspired leather jacket look, we suggest Theory, Mike & Chris, and Dunderdon, all brands that make stylish leather jackets.

2. Leather messenger bag

The perfect accompaniment to the rest of your ensemble, the classic leather bag is a stylish carry-all for your books while trudging to class or Butler. Jack Spade's Grain Leather Bag is a classic, but Urban Outfitters has a cheaper PVC version. For a more casual look you could go for a lighter fabric, such as

nylon or canvas. Banana Republic's Everyday Nylon Messenger Bag is an excellent, sturdy option.

3. Collared shirt

A good shirt is a must-have year-round, and it is wise to invest in several colors and styles. A particularly appealing shirt this season is the solid vintage oxford shirt from J.Crew, which looks great with a blazer, vest, or cardigan. If you want to rock the plaid, fitted shirt, which was a runway staple, both Adam Kimmel and Band of Outsiders offer excellent variations.

4. Scarf

Layering on a scarf is the perfect way to add a more individual look to an outfit. J.Crew has basic cashmere solid color scarves, while J.Press has a variety of schoolboy scarves that come in many colors and patterns (including plaid). A plaid scarf is a great way to incorporate the trend without going all out with the shirt, as modeled in the DSquared2 Fall 08 collection.

5. Sweater Vest

When paired with a T-shirt or a collared shirt, a vest is an easy way to add a little something extra to an outfit. A wool knit vest by Phillip Lim is a solid color pick that's casual and practical. We've also been noticing more patterns on sweater vests. To add some personal style, choose one with a simple pattern that's not too overpowering. Nom de Guerre's Regulation Shetland Vest has just the right amount of detail. ●

Person of the Week: Kate Moss

BY SHIRLEY CHEN
PHOTO COURTESY OF
RUNWAY REPORT

It's official: supermodel Kate Moss is gold. What designers and editors have long known has now been made literal. On Oct. 4, sculptor Marc Quinn unveiled a 50 kilogram gold statue of Kate at the British Museum in London as part of the “Statuephil-ia” exhibition. Appropriately entitled *Siren*, the statue features Kate in a bizarrely sexual yoga pose. It seems as if, whether she likes it or not, Kate will always be the center of attention. However, she has gained some calmness and dignity over the years. Tabloid photos no longer depict Kate in darkly lit corners with illegal narcotics, and instead show her on playdates with her daughter Lila Grace. She also announced recently that she quit drinking for her rock star boyfriend.

Discovered at John F. Kennedy International Airport at age 14, Kate's “heroin chic” style catapulted her into a role as the face of a new grunge generation. A decade later, the it-girl waif child has blossomed into



a certified icon with an inimitable look, which has been profiled in a new book. Angela Buttolph wrote a fashion biography, *Kate Moss Style: Inside the World's Most Famous Wardrobe*, which is reported to actually be good.

I guess there is some justice in the world. After landing over 300 magazine covers, dating Johnny Depp, designing seven Topshop collections, and majorly bouncing back after a cocaine scandal, Kate deserves this veneration, as well as a hearty congratulations for beating her addictions. \\\

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