

6 November 2008 / vol. 5 issue 9

the eye

The Professor Awards

the eye's guide to columbia's best and brightest

david eisenbach sexes up history ∞ the microphones' mystery man ∞ ben greenman's big idea

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THE PROFESSOR AWARDS

We asked you, Columbia community, to tell us about the best professors you've had in your time here. The results—just in time for course registration, pg. 07

photos compiled by Molly Crossin

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

In looking this week at the nominees for our Professor Awards, I got to thinking about how lucky I've been so far at Columbia. By and large, almost all of my professors have been great at their jobs. I've been wondering all week what precise qualities make a professor exceptional, and I think what it comes down to is passion—which is in no short supply in Columbia professors.

For some, it's been their passion for their subjects—English professor Molly Murray and film professor Jameel Khaja are clearly so immersed in, and continually excited by, their subjects that it's hard not to feel the same way. Passion breeds energy, and that precludes boredom—an hour of lecture flies by.

Other professors are clearly passionate about their students and invested in the success of each member of class. Geoffrey Mac Adam, who teaches French, and creative writing professor Alan Ziegler both made themselves so available, and were so receptive and flexible, that I always felt comfortable in

their classes—and, because of that, eager to contribute.

Of course, an encyclopedic knowledge of his or her field is another contributing factor—I'm convinced Anne Lake Prescott knows literally everything there is to know about Renaissance studies (she's funny, too) and that Andrew Delbanco can tell you more about America than pretty much anyone. Being attractive doesn't hurt either—though looks don't make a professor great, they *are* a strong motivating force to get up for that 9 a.m. class—and I've had more than my fair share of absurdly hot professors, but I'm not going to name names as far as that goes.

If you haven't had my luck with professors—and even if you have!—check out our lead story on page 7 to discover some of the smartest, most passionate, and funniest professors Columbia has to offer in a variety of departments. Spring course registration starts in a little over a week—we just want you to be happy!

—Alexandria Symonds

Out of Africa

BY ARIEL POLLOCK

PHOTO COURTESY OF SHAWCO

Every day, little white vans wait impatiently, with their engines running, on the edge of the University of Cape Town's campus.

Nope, it's not as sketchy as it sounds. They're waiting for groups of students, mostly Americans studying abroad for the semester, who will board them and travel to schools and orphanages at the far reaches of the Cape Town city limits. The vans are under the auspices of the Students' Health and Welfare Centres Organisation. SHAWCO is an institution at UCT, the first stop for well-meaning students looking for volunteer opportunities.

I came to South Africa as most study-abroad students seem to, with a grand plan for saving the world. It went something like this: I would get off the plane, find several worthy non-profits with which to intern and volunteer, gain a wealth of knowledge in the medical, political, cultural and/or economic fields, and return to America well-armed to be Superwoman. So when I stepped onto campus the first day and SHAWCO representatives walked up to me to sell their cause, I gladly bought in. How could it go wrong?

The first visit to St. George's Home for Girls went relatively smoothly, despite the fact that our group leader was home with some illness and we hadn't yet received our workbooks for the "Life Orientation" curriculum we were to be teaching. Small glitches, I wrote home cheerfully in an e-mail update, in the bigger scheme of making a difference.

Then the workbooks arrived. Activities one and two involved coloring, though SHAWCO supplied no paper or markers those first couple weeks.

Activity three, however, read, "Part One—Kickboxing Moves for Self-Defense." The target group was seven-year-old girls. And then, "Part Two—Making Valentine's Day Cutouts." The month was September.

That's right, let me say it again: kickboxing for little girls, and Valentine's Day cutouts in September. In the same activity.

It was after that evening that I began to admit that, perhaps, SHAWCO had some flaws. Major ones. But nobody seemed to be stepping up to the plate to ask why, or what, made hundreds of students continue to donate their time and effort



These children are perhaps not benefitting from kickboxing lessons and Valentine's Day card-making.

to an organization that seemed to plan programming in the same way that kids play "pin the tail on the donkey."

I can't say that I have stepped up either. Instead, I have stepped increasingly further down. As an American here for five months, I am just not ready to spark change in an organization that has existed for decades. I think that the majority of SHAWCO volunteers, also Americans here for only one term, feel similar.

Certainly, I came here with unrealistic expectations. I wanted to be a part of an organization that would change me, more than I wanted to be the change myself. When SHAWCO failed to reach the bar, I didn't challenge it, and I didn't find opportunities elsewhere. Instead I stayed put in my position as a quasi-babysitter.

Should I be responsible for the reform of a septuagenarian institution? Clearly not, nor should or could any one well-meaning student. That's not tempered idealism, it's simply reality. But if I had to do it again, I would have followed one of my favorite mantras: discomfort leads to productivity.

Discomfort should lead to productivity. I should have walked into the office and asked how exactly martial-arts-and-crafts teaches kids "to develop motivation, leadership ability and self-confidence," as SHAWCO claims on its Web site. Or, I should have walked out of the office and found a different organization—one more actively devoted to development and less entrenched in its own legacy. If I could do it again, I would try to do two different things: on one hand, recognize where change is possible and make it happen, and on the other hand, learn to walk away quickly from places where it's not. ■

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. A man in Leesburg, Va.: "This hard-core McCain/Palin supporter, dressed in full army fatigues, was hand-waxing his car when I came to his door as an Obama representative, but he was sweet enough to say hello and point me to the nearest CVS. Now that's what I call non-partisanship!"

—Melanie Jones, interview editor

2. The Comeback: "If you're already a fan of brilliant-but-canceled comedies like *Arrested Development* and *Uncle Clared*, you'll love this short-lived meta-series starring Lisa Kudrow as a washed-up sitcom star making a reality show. Note to self: I *do* need to see that."

—Hillary Busis, deputy features editor

3. Interview magazine: "In an era when magazines are folding left and right (arrivederci, *CosmoGIRL* and *Men's Vogue*), *Interview* recently underwent an expansion. A literal one: they're printing on bigger paper. It's a ballsy move, so thank goodness they've got the content and photography to back it up."

—Alexandria Symonds, editor-in-chief

4. Alfred Kubin at the Neue Galerie: "Kubin's dark, nightmarish drawings are perfect for those of us who have not had enough of Halloween."

—Shane Ferro, food editor

5. Beet pasta from the farmer's market: "The other day, I decided to be adventurous and stray from my usual spinach/whole-wheat pasta and try the beet pasta. It's red! Until you cook it. But it's delicious plain, and even better with some Parmesan."

—Lucy Tang, books editor

6. Playbill Radio: "In addition to show tunes 24/7, the station features interviews with actors, playwrights, directors, composers, and others in the industry. What's more, it's free."

—Laura Hedli, theater editor

7. The Needy Visions: "I am really excited for one of my favorite Boston bands to finally come to New York to play this week—at a Todd P event, no less! They'll be here twice this month, again on the 15th with The Homosexuals, another amazing group."

—Jennie Rose Halperin, music editor

8. Jericho: "An old show that's new to me. Skeet Ulrich (yum) returns to his small Kansas town only to be cut off from the rest of the states due to a massive nuclear attack. Small town politics, danger, and romance actually make a pretty compelling combo, and aren't all New Yorkers just a little sentimental when it comes to small towns? I know I am."

—Hayley Negrin, managing features editor

9. Penn Masala: "Cheesy '80s pop songs (think Journey) sung by an Indian a capella group from UPenn."

—Learned Foote, film editor

10. "Hot N Cold" by Katy Perry: "The lyrics are reprehensible, as is the song in general. But I've found that the more you listen to it, the greater it becomes."

—Julia Halperin, art editor

**I CAME TO SOUTH AFRICA
AS MOST STUDY-ABROAD
STUDENTS SEEM TO, WITH
A GRAND PLAN FOR SAVING
THE WORLD.**

The Name Game

In this week's lead story, you can read about some of the best professors that Columbia, Barnard, and SEAS have to offer. There's a way instructors can excel beyond teaching, though: having awesome names. Below, find a few of our favorite professorial monikers.

Troels Jorgensen, mathematics
Horst Stormer, physics
Bajeera McCorkle, political science
Ovidiu Munteanu, mathematics
Wayne Proudfoot, anthropology
Gustaaf H. Brooijmans, physics
Joost Keizer, art history
Manning Marable, African-American studies
Wojciech Kopczuk, economics
Dorothy M. Peteet, earth & environmental science
Norman H. Christ, physics

Eye Spy

Guy standing on the sidewalk watching as another guy dressed as a jar of Jif Peanut Butter walks by: "There's like four grams of protein in that shit. I did not get muscular eating that!"

—Greenwich Village Halloween Parade

Did you know?

A just-in-case version written pre-election night for your reading pleasure, or dismay.

- ⊙ The 44th president of the United States is the son of a goat-herder.
- ⊙ The 44th president of the United States was born in _____.
- ⊙ Barack Obama is the first Columbia College alum to win the presidency.
- ⊙ John McCain is the second Naval Academy alum to win the presidency.
- ⊙ Barack Obama will be the first president who is only one-half white.
- ⊙ John McCain will be the 44th president who is at least two-halves white.

Fun Fact:

An elector who casts his vote for a candidate who did not win the state is known as a "faithless elector." In 2004, John Edwards received a single electoral vote from a faithless elector. If John Edwards himself were an elector in this election, his marital infidelities would allow us to call him an "unfaithful elector." Coincidence? I think not.

Hail to the (Chief/Thief/Geezer)

a belated election prediction

BY RAPHAEL POPE-SUSSMAN

It's over! It's finally over! Holy mother of God, it's over!

That's right, kids. The election is over. Or maybe it's not. We're not sure, because this article was due before Election Day.

We don't know the exact results of the election. But, using recently devised analytic technology, we've put together a little prediction of what will have happened in the world of politics by the time you are actually reading this article.

Just fill in the blanks according to Tuesday's results, and you'll see our prediction.

God Bless _____ (America/Fake America/re-counts)! After almost two years of waiting, this great country finally knows the identity of its 44th president. Or perhaps we're still waiting for the teams of lawyers, judges, and vote-suppressors to determine it.

We've finally elected our first _____ (antique/black/TBA) president in our nation's history. For the next four years, we can look forward to a vice president who is _____ (sharp shootin'/Biden-esque).

Oh, what a whirlwind it's been.

A few years ago, no one could have predicted that the voters of the world's oldest, awesome-est democracy would nominate a _____ (secret Muslim/rich white guy) as president.

Yet today, we've truly broken barriers.

When the networks called the election Tuesday at _____ (9 p.m./11 p.m./least three times for each candidate), the whole world was _____ (relieved/relieving itself on an American flag).

It goes without saying that after eight years of _____ (failed/abysmal/insufficiently reactionary) leadership, most Americans were ready for _____ (a change/more of the same/some football).

That would explain the _____ (record/pitiful) turnout, in which more than 100 million _____ (socialists/Americans) went to the polls to _____ (commit voter fraud/vote) in this presidential election.

Finally, we can kick back and _____ (relax/move to Canada/let the Supreme Court figure things out).

And so, let us always remember this _____ (spectacular/taint-tastic/inconclusive) election, in which the best _____ (man/man) won.

Even though your candidate lost due to _____ (massive vote-suppression/"Donald Duck" voting 100,000 times), it's heartening to know that any _____ (zombie/secret Muslim) in this country has a chance to be president.

And, no matter the _____ (recent/still-undetermined) outcome, that's cause enough to celebrate.

Because, in the words of Thomas Jefferson, "A democracy is nothing more than mob rule, where 51 percent of the people may take away the rights of the other 49."

Actually, maybe that quote isn't so helpful to the despondent faithful.

Remember, instead, these immortal ords of Jefferson: "Always take hold of things by the smooth handle." And then pummel yourself until this election is but a distant memory. ●



All Eyes on Eisenbach

melanie jones interviews david eisenbach

BY MELANIE JONES

PHOTO COURTESY OF JOYRIDER

David Eisenbach, CC '94, has been many things: professor, historian, media expert, television host, author. This past year, he added communications director to presidential hopeful Mike Gravel to his resumé. Gravel, the irascible former senator from Alaska, is responsible for releasing the *Pentagon Papers*, and Eisenbach co-authored with Gravel, *The Kingmakers*, which *Publishers Weekly* called “essential reading for all Americans.” With his History Channel special, *The Presidents Unbuckled*, set to shock America with the history of sex in the Oval Office, Eisenbach spoke with Melanie Jones about working with Gravel, his current projects, and what he thinks of the election “spin.”

Your most recent project is called *The Presidents Unbuckled*. Admit it—are you trying to make history “sexy”? It’s rare you see a topic that looks like that much fun to research.

History is sexy ... or at least, it should be. But historians have always dismissed the sex lives of historical figures as gossip and not “real” history. ... An East German prostitute almost got John Kennedy impeached, and Woodrow Wilson’s paramour-turned-second-wife took over his presidency after his stroke and fumbled the negotiations over America’s entry into the League of Nations. This is real history, and it’s sexy. And if it turns on a new audience to learn more history, I’ve done my job.

Why are we so fascinated with presidential love lives?

Presidents have always been celebrities who are subject to a strange combination of mass admiration, envy, and ridicule. When people talk about the sexcapades of celebrated figures, they vicariously share in the fun and feel a sense of moral superiority over their “betters.” And people have always liked to see that important individuals also have messy personal lives. After you watch *The Presidents Unbuckled*, you will never look at Washington and Lincoln the same way again.

***Kingmakers* doesn’t pull any punches about the distortion of news in mass media. Have you gotten a lot of flak from reporters or journalists about your book?**

I hear Chris Matthews wasn’t happy with what I wrote. Can’t say I blame him.

On the election: Obama has been called a “transcendent figure,” a modern-day John F. Kennedy. Do you agree? It almost seems like his legacy is being written before it’s even begun.

JFK and Obama are known as “transcendent figures” because they seem to usher in a new zeitgeist. In reality, the zeitgeist changed before they hit the national scene. ... Kennedy just became the featured embodiment of the growing spirit of social and political activism—not to mention sexual hedonism.

At Obama’s inauguration, the “transcendent” moment will not come from his speech. It will be the oath of office: “I, Barack Hussein Obama, do solemnly swear that I will faithfully execute the

office of president of the United States, and ... preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States.” ... His inauguration will make this new age obvious to everyone.

From a “spin” perspective, what do you think about the coverage of Sarah Palin? Is there some truth to her camp’s allegations of sexism from the mainstream media?

I don’t even know what “sexism” means anymore. Was it sexist for Palin to sell herself as a lipstick-wearing hockey mom in high heels? Was Tina Fey’s impersonation of Palin sexist? Was it sexist for Rush Limbaugh to admiringly call Palin a “babe”? And Jay Leno’s jokes about her wardrobe? By the 1970s definition of sexism, we’ve all been sexist toward Palin.

But over the past few decades, there’s been a sea change in how Americans think and talk about sexuality, gender, and race. Sarah Palin and Barack Obama are embodiments of this new age. Sexism and racism are still huge problems, but the old definitions don’t always apply.

“HISTORY IS SEXY ... OR AT LEAST, IT SHOULD BE.”

Do you have any moments from the Gravel campaign to share?

After the CNN debate, Gravel was so angry with Anderson Cooper for constantly cutting him off, that he walked up real close to A.C. and bellowed: “Anderson, you’re screwin’ me! Tell me, Anderson, why are you screwin’ me?” Only he used a cruder word for screwin’. The look on Cooper’s face... priceless.

Is there any chance that, with increasing methods of mass communication, grass-roots movements and third parties can make more of a difference?

It’ll be a long time before an insurgent campaign or party wins an election without mainstream media attention. Ron Paul used the Internet to raise \$2 million in one day. But that’s chump change in the face of the hundreds of millions that a major-party candidate, like Obama, can also raise on the Internet.

About the Internet: What do you see the effect of clips like Obama Girl or streamed SNL debate skits being on elections in the future?

The line between pop culture and politics has long been blurred. But as I wrote in *The Kingmakers*, it got totally erased the day George Bush did his *Top Gun* imitation before the “Mission Accomplished” speech. Today, the ladies of *The View* are some of America’s most influential political commentators. John McCain announced his presidential run on David Letterman and appeared on SNL the Saturday before Election Day. Tina Fey had a big impact on people souring on Palin. And there’s already talk of Fox giving Palin her own talk show.

When Fox News broadcasts Obama Girl imitating Tina Fey imitating Sarah Palin—you know we are through the looking glass. ●



Eisenbach sexes up history with his new documentary, *The Presidents Unbuckled*.



The Eight-Track Wonder

phil elverum on the microphones and mount eerie

BY JACOB BRUNNER

PHOTO COURTESY OF PHIL ELVERUM

My first experience with Phil Elverum four years ago left me both healed and confused. At 16, I was too much of a macho prick to be caught enjoying some sad sap waxing cosmic about his inner struggles. Even before Phil took the stage, I was imagining ways to defend myself against my more masculine friends: “Yeah, you know, my girlfriend dragged me here,” or “Whatever, the tickets were free.” Those were, after all, the only reasons I had decided to tolerate an evening with The Microphones. And yet, by the end of the show, I was completely transformed. The music’s broad human concerns, expressed in quavering, ambiguously beautiful melodies, gave me access to a level of spiritual and emotional depth that I hadn’t thought attainable. After the last smattering of applause, I hovered awkwardly over the stage and waited for Elverum to pack up. When I asked him for an autograph, he grabbed my notebook and drew a huge mountain with some crude-looking clouds below it. He drew an arrow pointing toward the mountain and labeled it “Mount Eerie.” Another arrow, pointing toward the clouds, was labeled “The World.” Elverum’s musical career is built on mystery—on cryptic lyrics and art that bewitch fans and draw them into his own unique purview.

Back in the mid-’90s, Elverum was living in Anacortes, WA, just another music-obsessed teenager working at the local record store. Things changed when he began experimenting with the recording equipment that Bret Lunsford, the store’s owner and a member of the K Records band D+, kept in the

storage room. “I was playing in bands in Anacortes,” Elverum explains, “but then I started teaching myself how to record music at a little homemade studio we had put together in the back of the record store. I was just doing these recording experiments and that became The Microphones. It used to be all about recording.” There was some precedent for his interest in sonic manipulations. His close friend Karl Blau, a successful and intriguing artist in his own right, was constantly recording 4-track cassettes. “He was amazing at it,” Elverum says. “He really introduced me to the idea that you could just do it.”

Elverum’s do-it-yourself recording projects eventually caught the attention of Calvin Johnson, founding member of Beat Happening and head of K Records, during a brief stint in Olympia. Given access to Johnson’s famous Dub Narcotic studio, Elverum began producing a slew of albums for K Records under The Microphones, including *It Was Hot, We Stayed in the Water* (2001) and the seminal *The Glow Pt. 2* (2001), which was recently treated to a deluxe reissue. While *The Glow Pt. 2* was the most critically acclaimed album in his output, the album that unveils the deepest themes is 2004’s *Mount Eerie*. Dealing with death, rebirth, nature, and the

“ALTHOUGH SOME SONGS ARE LITTLE ISLANDS OF THEIR OWN, MOST OF THEM ARE PART OF THIS LARGER CONVERSATION THAT I’M HAVING WITH MYSELF.”

Though the natural world heavily influences Phil Elverum’s music, he hesitates to label it as such.

universe, the album was an epic opera centered around the site of Mount Eerie, an actual mountain on Fidalgo Island. It may have been unintelligible to some fans, especially those who had been delighted by The Microphones’

ever-increasing melodic privileging, but for others it represented the culmination of a true visionary genius’ lifelong meditation on the weightiest elements of human existence.

But Elverum isn’t quick to embrace thematic interpretation. When asked about the role of nature in his music, he expresses discomfort. “I guess it’s true that ... [it] can seem that my songs are focused on nature, but it’s not intentional,” he says almost apologetically. “It’s just the world that makes sense to me ... I’m really hesitant to talk about nature as this picturesque, separate place other than the world we live in. When I sing about nature, I feel like I’m trying to sing about the same world that we all live in and that there are these totally wild things that are totally natural that happen in our daily lives. It’s not like you live your life, and then you go on vacation to a beautiful place, and then come back to real life.”

After the heady explorations of *Mount Eerie* the album, The Microphones were reincarnated as Mount Eerie the band. It’s unclear what exactly prompted the name change, but that element of mystery is important to understanding Elverum’s aesthetic language. “All of my stuff that I do I end up having not that much control over it. It just comes out, you know? So I can only look at it from the same perspective as you, like, ‘Oh well from this era there are a bunch of songs about this topic and from another era there are a bunch of songs about that.’”

This might seem like a frustratingly lazy attempt at self-definition, but there is something much deeper at play. “I kind of consider all of my songs to be part of one big project,” Elverum explains. “Although some songs are little islands of their own, they don’t get touched once they’re done, most of them are just part of this larger conversation that I’m having with myself.”

Rather than trying to conjure some artificial aesthetic mission and forcing all of his songs into that mold, Phil Elverum writes songs about life’s experiences with great uncertainty and open senses.

This approach has even begun to shape the recording process. The most recent Mount Eerie release, *Lost Wisdom*, was a spontaneous home-recording session with Julie Doiron and Fred Squire of the influential Canadian band Eric’s Trip. “Well, we didn’t intend to record an album. We were just casually recording these songs in my studio, for no reason. It was ambiguous what they were going to be used for,” Elverum says. Clearly, to be an Elverum fan requires some patience.

His prolific output has slowed down considerably since his adoption of the Mount Eerie moniker, although this year has seen a resurgence with the critically acclaimed *Lost Wisdom* and the lo-fi folk-metal EP *Black Wooden Ceiling Opening*. Nevertheless, tapping into the gifts of Phil Elverum’s discography is a true delight. Surrender yourself to his sound universe, and you’re guaranteed to make a valuable discovery—these songs aren’t just about Elverum’s conversation with himself, but about all the interior conversations people have, wandering aimlessly through a beautiful and mysterious environment. ●

The Professor Awards

the eye's guide to columbia's best and brightest

PHOTOS COMPILED BY MOLLY CROSSIN

Whether you're a starry-eyed first-year or seasoned senior, choosing classes can be a pain in the ass. Most departments don't post course syllabi on their Web sites, so it's difficult to know if a class will be as good as its description makes it sound. Registering for in-demand courses like Art and Music Hum requires lightning-fast typing skills or the patience to sit at your laptop for hours, mindlessly clicking until something opens up. And CULPA, our best weapon against boring instructors and power-mad TAs, often tends to be woefully out of date.

Luckily, *The Eye* is here to help you this registration season. We've compiled an assortment of reviews that highlight some of the best professors Columbia has to offer, in departments from history to chemistry. We've also turned the spotlight on the Core Four, a quartet of amazing Lit Hum, Art Hum, Music Hum, and CC teachers, and a Barnard first-year seminar professor for good measure. If you've never considered trying out an urban studies lecture, or dabbling in ethnomusicology, now's your chance to learn more about what you've been missing. Read on to find out who's earned *The Eye's* seal of approval.

—Hillary Busis





The Bill Nye Award for Excellent Science Guy–ity 🕒

Christian Rojas, chemistry

“Organic Chemistry is not a class that is easy to get excited about—it tends to be the course that pre-meds fear, then later wish they could remove from their transcripts. The workload is immense and the problem sets are hard. There is no reason why this class should be fun. That’s why Christian Rojas is so special. We all knew Rojas would be a really different sort of professor when, during the first week of lecture, he handed out a poem instead of a problem set, then proceeded to recite it aloud in his best affected Irish accent while parading up and down the room. His goal: to not only make orgo palatable, but to make it enjoyable. Somehow, he succeeded. Lectures run the gamut from thought-out explanations of complicated reactions to experiments that would involve flashes of light, fire, tequila, or all of

the above. He also always makes sure to punctuate some drier material with much needed jokes to keep us interested. When asked whether one of his favorite chemists did any free radical chemistry, he responded, ‘No, I think he was pretty conservative.’ There was also a physical demonstration of backside displacement that quickly devolved into a rendition of ‘I’m a Little Teapot.’ Rojas is anything but boring. By holding office hours nearly every day and making himself very available to those of us with questions, he always does his best to make sure everyone understands some very difficult concepts. It is clear that he cares a lot about his students, and we certainly appreciate it. He turned even me, one of the class’s greatest skeptics, into a lover of organic chemistry.”

Most Likely to Start a Dead Poets Society

Jenny Offill, creative writing

“She teaches a class called The Unhinged Narrator. It’s all about narrators who are in some way insane, obsessed, or otherwise alone in society. We’ve read books such as *Jesus’ Son* by Denis Johnson, *Notes from Underground* by Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Lolita* by Vladimir Nabokov, and *Hunger* by Knut Hamsun. The best part of the class is that it’s a writing class. She assigns us really challenging but entirely fulfilling assignments. She makes the class feel less like a class and more like a club. We’re there because we genuinely enjoy discussing our and others’ writing. I hear she’s also a great workshop professor, but I’ve never had her.”

Most Challenging (and Rewarding)

Ellen Gray, music

“To speak up in Ellen Gray’s class is to invite scrutiny. With careful prodding, she’ll work her way into your argument and make you rework your points to

absolute clarity—or show you that you need to do more careful research. She is just as demanding in written work, but perhaps her most endearing qualities are the way she articulates everything that can be improved and somehow never poses her arguments as threats. She just sees the best possible options. Drawing on her training in music and anthropology, she leads case studies in terms of ethnomusicology: girl groups become a way of describing racism and AIDS in South Africa, and the tango leads to discussions about class struggle in Argentina. Startlingly forward and informed, she sustains a constant energy that makes classes delightfully challenging.”



photo courtesy of Greg Pflugfelder

Best Home Décor 🏠

Greg Pflugfelder, East Asian languages and cultures

“He offers two small undergraduate seminars—A Cultural History of Japanese Monsters and Who is the Samurai?. He runs ‘Monsters’ like he himself is sitting in a class, learning from us. Everyone in the class is guaranteed an A— if they participate and do the assignments, so all anyone cares about is discussing the readings, which are consistently the most interesting reading I have each week. He told us he likes teaching undergraduates because we’re not afraid not to know things—very comforting to hear, I thought. He’s notorious in EALAC (East Languages and Cultures) for being a total flake and occasionally just not showing up to class, but he’s also the most easy-going guy around. I’m looking forward to our student-faculty interaction dinner later this semester. Previous students claim that he has a collection of antique dildos and Greek male-male pornography.”

Most Inspirational

Gregory Smithsimon, urban studies

“I took two classes with him, and you’d be hard-pressed to find someone who cares more about his subject. As a young professor, he really connects with students and truly wants them to succeed. Freshman year I had to take a month off of school, and he met with me one-on-one every week until the final to catch me up on the material I missed. He’s one of the reasons I am an urban studies major. Additionally, I know most professors have real-life experience when it comes to their subject, but I have something of a soft spot for Smithsimon’s, who did his Ph.D. dissertation on Battery Park City, part of which featured my high school, Stuyvesant. Finally, it’s a testament to how well he knows the subject that he commands so much respect, especially from black students. Half of my Race, Ethnicity, and Urban Immigration class was comprised of black football players. (Smithsimon later told me a student came up to him and said the only reason he signed up for the class was because it fit in with his practice schedule, but he was glad he took it.) I think it can be a tenuous line having a white professor (and Smithsimon is quite, um, white) teach minorities about race clashes, but he manages to do so in an honest and open way.”

Best Nerd Humor 🤓

David Keyes, applied physics and applied mathematics

“Half of all SEAS sophomores must take a course that he created called Intro to Applied Math. Not only does he teach everything interestingly and clearly, but he cares that you understand the material. He also learned nearly everyone’s name in our 100-person lecture, while going abroad basically every week for conferences. It’s rare to find a professor in SEAS that

cares just as much about his research as he does about his students. He gave us supplementary lectures on various things going on in the field, and sent us out funny/slightly nerdy e-mails with engineering/math jokes. Here’s one of his favorites: ‘What do people call an engineer who graduates in the bottom quartile of his or her class?’ The answer is: ‘an engineer!’”



photo courtesy of David Keyes



The toast of Columbia College: Core professors Kavros, Pedersen, and Catterson.

The Core Four (plus one more)

*Nervous about navigating the Core? Take a class with any of these outstanding profs, and you'll soon be able to discuss everyone from Bosch to Beethoven to Boccaccio with ease.**

Best Lit Hum Professor: Harry Kavros

"I had Harry Kavros for Lit Hum back when I was a bright-eyed, frightened first-year. He was so thoughtful about each of our readings and so genuinely interested in what we had to say, but at the same time he definitely knew who wasn't doing the work, though he never made people feel bad about their contribution. He had high standards and our respect for him made us want to live up to them. He was vastly knowledgeable and yet approachable—he had us over to his apartment for an afternoon of pizza and review—and he stands out in my mind as one of about three professors in my entire five semesters at Columbia who most made me want to come to class and made an impact on my intellectual growth."

Other options: Ezra Tawil ("He can even make you care about Thucydides"), Vlad Vintila ("Also qualifies for HOTTEST"), Edward Mendelson ("I never imagined that people could be so energized during a 9 a.m. class, but he makes it happen")

Best CC Professor: Susan Pedersen

"I came into sophomore year dreading CC—I was worried it would be all theory with no practical grounding and no real through-line. Susan Pedersen alleviated my fears on the first day, when she announced to the class that she was an historian and intended to conduct her class as one.

At the beginning of our discussion of each text, she briefly went over the historical context for the work, which was a much-appreciated way to orient us without saddling us with extra reading. She's also really personally involved with how *you*, specifically, are doing in her class—she'll give you an honest evaluation of how you're doing so far if you just stop into office hours and ask for one, and at the end of the term when you pick up your graded final exam, you'll find a sheet inside with an assessment of your strengths and weaknesses in class, along with the ways in which you've improved. Plus, the woman boasts impressive credentials—she's a Guggenheim fellow and onetime dean of undergrads at Harvard."

Other options: Nancy Workman ("The best at promoting discussion without making the class listen to someone's ridiculous commentary"), Kathy Eden ("It was incredible how much word etymology and background history she was able to give us"), Arne de Boever ("He allows science majors like myself to really enjoy reading the material")

Best Art Hum Professor: Lynn Catterson

"Professor Catterson introduced Art Humanities on the first day of the semester as a class focused on 'looking, not reading nor writing.' She aims to teach her students how to look at works of art in the analytical manner of art historians. Despite her laid-back attitude, especially when it comes to assignments (which many students appreciate), Prof. Catterson is extremely knowledgeable about many facets of art and incorporates very interesting personal stories in her lectures (such as her extreme fondness for going on modern-day pilgrimages and seeing dead bodies). Her annual home-cooked dinner, to which all students are invited, at her beautiful top-floor apartment in the Bronx as well as her trips to the Met, during which she proves the lack of authenticity of many of the displayed works, are special highlights of the semester."

Other options: Ioannis Mylonopoulos ("He also dresses better than any other professor I know"), Zoe Strother ("I learned more in her class than in any other semester of the Core"), Denise Budd ("It's almost scary how much she knows about art")

Best Music Hum Professor: Karen Henson

"She's British, so she's got that great accent, and is very funny in a snarky, self-deprecating, basically British type of way. She's essentially the Bridget Jones of Music Hum. I've obviously only had her as my professor, but judging from all the horror stories I've heard from friends, she makes enduring Music Hum as easy and painless as possible."

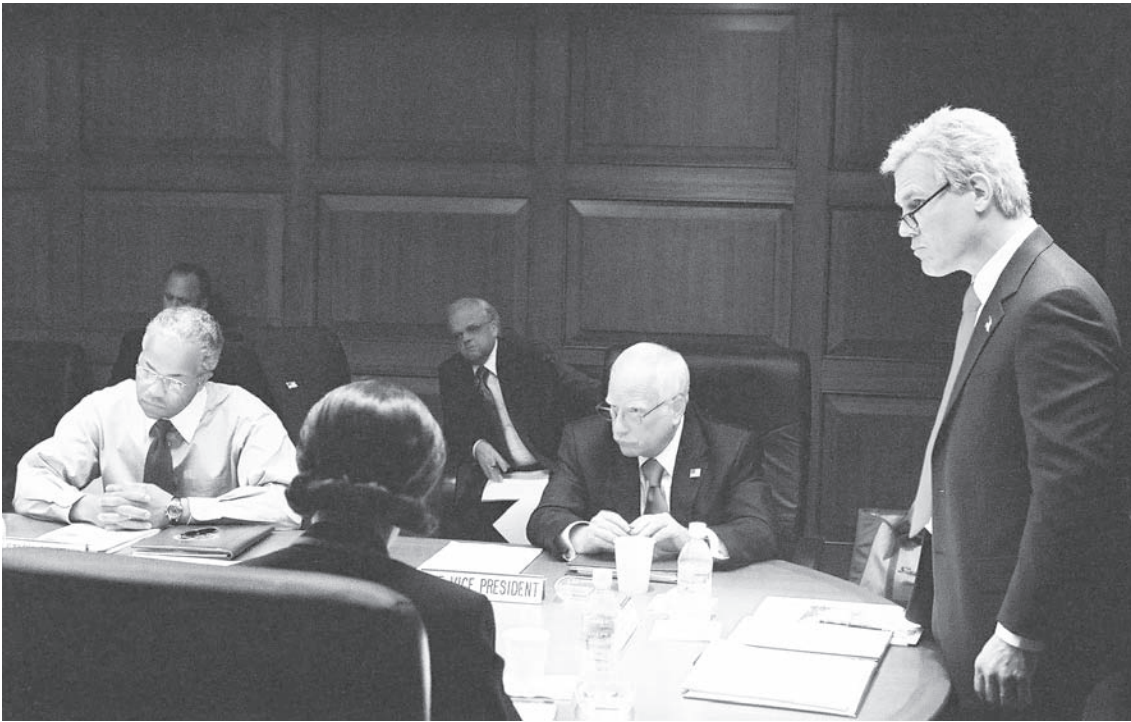
Other options: Max Schmeder ("He doesn't put a boundary between himself and his students: it's like we're equals, which is kind of rare")

Best First-Year Seminar Professor: Peggy Ellsberg

"She teaches First-Year Seminar and also Literary Approaches to the Bible, which is what I'm in. She's brilliant and knows everything about the Bible, plus she's a total character. Not only did she ask us for our thoughts on whether she should get a tattoo the first day of class, but she tells stories about horse communicators and how her own horse looks like Johnny Depp, how her husband canonizes saints. Also, she uses modern-day comparisons to get us to understand the Bible (i.e. 'Going to Egypt would have been like going to Sephora')."

Other options: Richard Pious ("We lit up Italian cookie wrap paper on the last day of class and it did spark/firework-type things. It reminded me of something out of *Mona Lisa Smile*")

**We didn't include University Writing professors because it's nearly impossible to switch sections once you've been assigned, and we didn't recommend anyone who teaches Frontiers because, let's face it, you're going to suffer no matter what. ●*



A Few Bad Men

oliver stone and the making of empires

BY LEARNED FOOTE

PHOTO COURTESY OF SIDNEY RAY BALDWIN

Director Oliver Stone has a few things to say about politics and power, especially in his '90s dramas *JFK* and *Nixon*, his (underrated) Greek epic *Alexander*, and finally, his summation of the last eight years: *W*. His films are nothing if not sensational—we don't normally hear too many serious people accusing Lyndon B. Johnson and the CIA of orchestrating JFK's assassination, and *W* suggests that Dick Cheney openly told Colin Powell that there would be no exit strategy from Iraq and its oil fields. Stone plays hard and loose with the facts.

But let's give him the benefit of the doubt and set details aside for the moment. After all, even when dealing with the present, who can form an accurate conception of the truth in this echo chamber of reverberating political "realities"? FactCheck.org reveals that during the campaign, both Barack Obama and John McCain repeatedly misrepresented the facts to the American people with well-financed television ads. The truth seems impossible to grasp independently, as expert economists fiercely offer solutions to the fiscal crisis using arguments that greatly exceed my Principles of Economics-level understanding, along with the understanding of the majority of the American population. It is no wonder we turn to stories, character judgment, and archetypal themes, especially as filtered through Stone's paranoid visions.

A few key themes emerge as we consider the

central characters in these four Stone films: John F. Kennedy—more a shadowy figure of archival footage than a character; Richard M. Nixon—a superbly tortured Anthony Hopkins; Alexander the Great—Colin Farrell, who inspirationally spouts rhetoric; and George W. Bush—Josh Brolin, in a performance of surprising intelligence. First, these men have remarkable visions for the world, and they do mean well. Second, they step into a blood-thirsty realm, a place Nixon describes as "the beast ... this damn system of government." And third, power leads to corruption. Stone is at his best and most interesting in a crowded room, where we see power leap from person to person as subordinates attempt to win the leader to their side or question his legitimacy.

W contains all of these propositions, but the stakes have changed, and this is, in the end, where *W* falls short. Stone does take a step in the right direction. Perhaps the most surprising thing about the movie is how balanced it seems. I expected the movie to be the equivalent of a Bush pull-quote calendar, a different mangled aphorism for each day of the year. And indeed Stone places a number of "Bushisms"—words like "misunderestimate," for instance—into lines of dialogue. But Stone's choices of where to place these lines makes them far less condemning than they could have been. Throughout the movie, Bush comes across as a guy who may be more intelligent than we think. "Iraq is not Iran, and Iran is not Iraq: I know that," would normally be a line to send audience members into a condescending cackle, but in the movie it comes across as a fairly wise statement, cutting through the noise of his advisors and aides to form the core of his ambitious foreign policy. At one point, Karl Rove tells Bush to name a situation,

Colin Powell (Jeffrey Wright), Karl Rove (Toby Jones, back-ground), Dick Cheney (Richard Dreyfuss) and George W. Bush (Josh Brolin) in *W*.

and Rove will give him an opinion to recite. Bush corrects Rove, a twinkle in his eye. I'll tell you what I think, he says, and you give me the words.

Even if *W*, like the rest of Stone's films about politics, does (mutedly)

portray its protagonist as a well-intentioned man, Stone falls far short in portraying the corrupt world in which this would-be emperor works. Think of *Nixon*, as the president meets with a high-ranking CIA official who knows terrible secrets. The man goes into a monologue on flowers and death, and—for one brief, cinematic instant—his eyes are pure black, with no sign of an iris or the whites of the eye. The shot lasts only a moment, but the impression is clear: there is evil in the world, an evil so unimaginable that Stone must resort to special effects to convey its impact. How does this poetic and subtle moment compare to Dick Cheney, who spends all of *W* scheming like Mr. Burns of *The Simpsons*?

In *W*, we have a nice guy and a blatantly evil schemer at odds with one another. But other Stone films portray something different. "The war is within us," says Chairman Mao to Nixon. "History is a symptom of our disease." It is this disease, the struggle for power with one's closest friends, that Stone reveals in his most brilliant filmmaking. Alexander descends into madness as he wonders whether each cup of wine from a faithful servant may be poisoned. The plot to assassinate Kennedy implicates more and more people, from the Cubans to the Mafia to others within the White House. In a Stone movie, secret alliances and conspiracies are minutely telegraphed, favors are traded, and entire family histories are quietly spoken of. We cannot—and the leaders cannot—keep track of all of them.

**"THE WAR IS WITHIN US.
HISTORY IS A SYMPTOM OF
OUR DISEASE."**

**— CHAIRMAN MAO
IN *NIXON* (1995)**

W ultimately fails because it lacks this sense of paranoia and corruption, this portrayal of brilliant individuals protecting their interests. The movie arguably does present George W. Bush fairly, but it does so by drastically reducing the scope of the drama—and the last eight years have certainly been filled with drama. *Nixon* ends as the President and Kissinger go down on their knees, praying for grace from a God they have long since abandoned. *Alexander* ends with the destruction of an empire, set to terrifying stone paintings of ancient myths: Medea and Prometheus. *W* ends with a man on a baseball field with an empty glove. Some metaphors capture the unease of a nation ruled by imperfect individuals who have more power and knowledge than we Americans dare fathom, but some metaphors do not. ●



Signed, Sealed, Delivered

ben greenman on the postcard project

BY REBECCA EVANS
PHOTOS COURTESY OF
HOTEL ST. GEORGE PRESS

When people think about what books are, they tend to come up with the same physical principle: a collection of pages, bound at one edge to a cover. The content is what varies and makes each book unique; the external structure is relatively set. Ben Greenman's newest book, *Correspondences*, changes this long-accepted standard. *Correspondences*, to be released this month by Hotel St. George Press—the launch party will take place to-night at the Tenement Museum—consists of seven stories, all of which are centered around letters.

The limited edition (only 250 are being printed) letterpress collection consists of a box casing with four foldout pockets. Three of the pockets are filled with accordion books, each containing two stories. The seventh story is printed on the casing itself. The fourth pocket contains a postcard to be completed by the readers of *Correspondences*. This is where the Postcard Project enters the picture, and where it becomes clear that the content of *Correspondences* is just as innovative as the book's format.

The Postcard Project is an international interactive fiction project in which readers offer their own creative contributions to the seventh story in *Correspondences*, titled “What He’s Poised to Do.” The story describes a few days in the life of an unnamed man who “knows that he should be

happy, but he is not.” He goes on a business trip and begins an affair with a young woman who works in the hotel at which he is staying. He is told about, writes, or receives nine postcards throughout the story. The Postcard Project invites readers to choose one of these

“postcard-points,” write the postcard, and send it to Hotel St. George. A selection of postcards will be archived online, and some may appear in future editions of *Correspondences*. The idea is that the Postcard Project will encourage readers to do what is normally left to an author and enter into the characters’ emotional experiences. It’s a bold idea, and Hotel St. George is justified in calling it an “unprecedented ... experiment.”

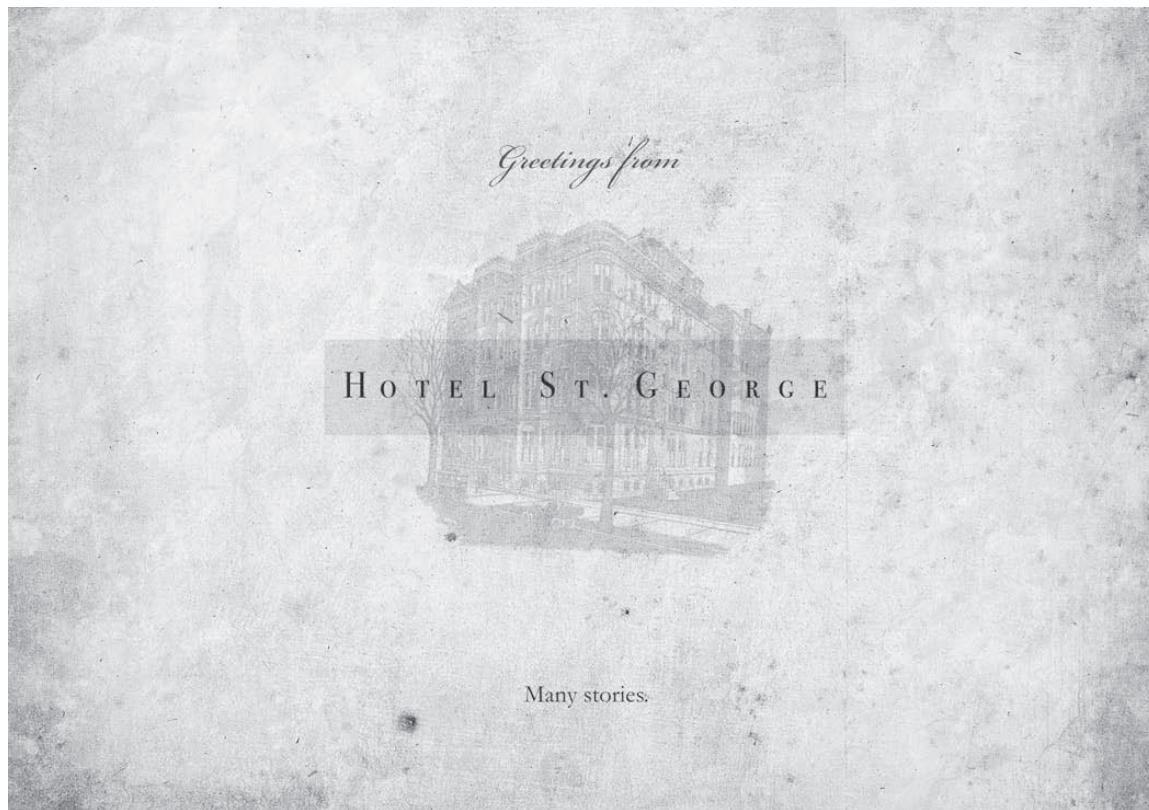
Those who are familiar with Ben Greenman’s work aren’t surprised by the idea’s originality. When his first book, *Superbad*, was published in 2001, *Kirkus* gave it a starred review and described it as “something extraordinary.” His unique mix of traditional prose and metafiction, of cultural commentary and comedy, made both *Superbad* and *Superworse* (a significantly expanded 2004 edition) stand out. His next book, 2007’s *A Circle Is a Balloon and Compass Both: Stories About Human Love*, received similar acclaim.

Greenman is both a unique and prolific writer. An editor at the *New Yorker*, he’s a frequent contributor to the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Paris Review*, and *McSweeney’s*, among others, and his comic and topical faux-musicals (including the recent “Palin! The Musical,” which contains such gems as “I hunt with a shotgun / Not a musket or pistol. / I’m holding one now. / Will you marry my Bristol?”) have enjoyed wide popularity. After *Correspondences* is released, it will be only mere months before his next book, *Please Step Back*, is published in 2009.

Although it’s unusual to publish two books in such a short span of time, Greenman realized that he had completed a collection of stories linked by the theme of letter-writing around the same time that Hotel St. George expressed an interest in publishing a book with him. The set of stories and the proposal “happily collided,” Greenman says. As he worked out the details of the collection with Hotel St. George, their shared vision naturally “led to the second phase, which was the Postcard Project.”

Greenman acknowledges that there may be a number of “MFA audition-type responses,” but his plan has always been that the Postcard Project will invite both writers and non-writers to participate. “It does take a little commitment beyond just reading,” he admits, estimating that the process, from reading the story to physically sending the postcard, will be “conservatively a half-hour investment.” But he hopes that everyone, not just those who already think of them-

“ONE OF THE THINGS ABOUT THE BLOG ERA OR THE E-MAIL ERA IS THAT PAIN GETS LEFT OUT A LOT.”



Readers can either send the postcards provided in *Correspondences* (above) or their own cards.

selves as writers, will be inspired to respond to the story. “I do want people in a non-literary way to think into the character a little bit,” he says. Ideally, people will submit postcards that try to “establish something” new about the characters, “to accomplish something” that the story doesn’t already accomplish.

In some ways, Greenman points out, convincing people to write is easier today than ever before. “Technology lets people mouth off more, not less,” he says. We are constantly sending e-mails and text messages; many people post on blogs, or frequently update their profiles on social networking sites such as Facebook. Facebook’s status message in particular lends itself well to an understanding of the digital age as the age of writers. “It’s not a sort of space to do free-form poetry in,” Greenman says. “You can imagine how when this was invented it was supposed to be a little more informational.” Yet people use it to convey various emotions and aspects of their personality. “Some people are very funny in that space, some people are tacitly revealing,” he says. The nuance and subtext in even a simple status— “[blank] is sad today”—are evident.

Beyond the sheer volume of text that we generate every day using computers, cell phones, and Blackberries, technology has given people better tools for understanding literature. “Writing fiction is always about, to some degree, dividing yourself up into multiple people,” Greenman says. Now, when the division of content between the work e-mail and the personal e-mail has become instinctive, when many people set their Facebook profiles to “Private” for fear that an employer will find unsavory information, “people know how to switch registers” and essentially present themselves as different characters. Because of this, Greenman believes, people “are better trained to understand fiction than they ever have been before.”

Though technology has made writing more accessible in many ways, the Postcard Project

makes unique demands of participants. It may encourage people to come up with different interpretations, but “What He’s Poised to Do” is still ultimately Greenman’s. The framework provided in the story both defines the context and requires that people strive for emotional depth. “One of the things about the blog era or the e-mail era is that pain gets left out a lot, or people are able to express what they’re in pain about totally on their own terms,” Greenman says. This is not the case with the Postcard Project, which allows Greenman to retain authorial control. “It’s like locking people in a room with me for ten minutes” and seeing what comes of it, he says, half-joking.

Still, while Greenman remains the central creative force, the Postcard Project is defined by its interactive nature. Each participant allows his or her postcard to be made public by submitting it, but the process remains a private, individual activity. In fact, says Greenman, “private space” is the most pervasive theme of the Postcard Project, in terms of both the process and the story itself. “Even in the way that I designed this book, it’s very much about private space,” he explains. On the Internet, “text is cheaper than ever ... Anyone else could be looking at that [text on the screen] at the exact same time. It’s not private.” When it came to *Correspondences*, he says, “I wanted to remake the idea of private. Really private. It closes up into a little book. It’s expensive, letter-pressed and exclusive.” Even within the stories, privacy has an important role. The hotel in “What He’s Poised to Do” is unwired; the man is not hooked up to a high-speed internet line, but is writing postcards. When he decides not to send a postcard to his son, he does not discard the draft on Gmail, but places the card in his suitcase. Hotels used to afford a certain removal from one’s day-to-day life, Greenman says, and this project was “an attempt to remind people of that time when normal life granted them a lot of private space.”

Today, people expect communication to be constant and responses to be instantaneous, a far cry from the days when a letter was received a week or two after being sent. Greenman believes that sort of time line not only demands more accountability—you have to be willing to stand by what you’ve said in a letter days later—but is also “much wider and more humane.”

Technological advances have, in many ways, made human relations harder, not easier. The ability to change plans and opinions on the spot has weakened our collective sense of responsibility, and the lack of private space is detrimental to the down-time that is necessary for any relationship to function.

This is why Greenman writes about human love. “My fiction could have been about NASA,” he explains, “but I think people will figure that [scientific advances] out.” But while we could land a man on the moon and make smaller, more complex gadgets, “the one thing nobody ever figured out was how men and women are supposed to interact.” This truth is part of the Postcard Project’s appeal: Romantic difficulties are perhaps the only thing to which everyone can relate. “Everyone over 15 has been in some version of one of these circumstances—wanting somebody, wronging somebody, being disappointed by somebody,” Greenman says. The hope is that people will view the Postcard Project as a challenge to use their own lives as an entry point into fiction. “Will people enter into the spirit that I wanted them to?” he asks. Who knows? But that’s what makes it interesting. ●

Launch party for *Correspondences*:

Thursday, Nov. 6, 2008 at 6:30 p.m.

Lower East Side Tenement Museum, 108 Orchard St.

POSTCARD PROJECTS THROUGH THE YEARS

PostSecret

Frank Warren

Frank Warren’s popular community art project, in which people design and submit postcards that anonymously confess a secret they’ve never before revealed, boasts four books—*PostSecret: Extraordinary Confessions from Ordinary Lives*, *My Secret*, *The Secret Lives of Men and Women*, and *A Lifetime of Secrets*—as well as a blog, postsecret.blogspot.com, and a Web site, www.postsecretcommunity.com.

A Postcard Memoir

Lawrence Sutin

This memoir consists of reproductions of antique postcards connected by brief corresponding passages. The twist is that very few of the postcards are explicitly connected to Sutin’s experiences.

Had a Good Time: Stories From American Postcards

Robert Olen Butler

Pulitzer Prize-winning author Butler offers 15 eclectic and moving stories based on the varying contents of real postcards.

“Two Hundred and Forty-Three Postcards in Real Color”

George Perec

This remarkable short story by renowned French writer and Oulipo member George Perec (1936–1982) takes the form of 243 postcards.

Omelet Magic

the woman behind wilma's grill

BY JENNIFER MAYER

PHOTO COURTESY OF

COSTA MESA OMELETTE PARLOR

Seeing her in a sleek black jacket and a leopard-print scarf, one would have never guessed that Wilma Jordan had spent the last eight hours dicing tomatoes and making pancake batter.

Although most students can only picture Wilma in her signature white uniform, permanently stationed behind the grill bearing her name, Wilma wants us to know she “has a very busy life outside work”—and a different appearance to boot.

Prior to getting her start at the dining hall 22 years ago, Jordan worked at a deli on 125 St. As the deli was about to close down, one of her loyal customers asked her if she'd like to continue working, citing her excellent service, and referred her to Columbia Dining Services.

“The angel led me to Columbia,” Jordan says.

“Wilma's Grill” was christened in 2000 after she was awarded Employee of the Month as an extra reward. She was surprised and excited, mostly because the naming reminded her of TV programs she watched in which grills and kitchens were named after the famous chefs that worked there.

Wilma is widely known among dining hall patrons as the goddess of the omelet. It was her idea to initiate the omelet special, and she chooses the special for each day. Men flock to her meat lover's special, and women give thanks for the egg white omelets. Less conspicuously, she's also in charge of the flavors for the waffle and pancake batter.

Wilma claims she has no secret to her delicious egg concoctions other than “plenty of love and prayer.” She professes that she prays over all the omelets before they are served.

“Seriously, you have to pray over them, because you want them all to be different and enjoyable to that person,” she explains.

Possibly the greatest miracle of the omelet grill is Wilma's ability to serve so many students in such a short period of time. While students are willing to wait on the sometimes painfully long line to get their breakfast, Wilma knows they're busy, with either a class to get to or a long day at the library ahead of them. She credits her speed to a former job at which she sold hot dogs from a cart for commission.

Wilma says that when she was chosen to man the omelet station she hadn't had a lot of prior experience making them. However, the transition to omelet maker was not difficult for her, as she enjoys cooking and baking when not at

work. Wilma likes to experiment with making foods other than those of the breakfast variety, like oxtails or spaghetti and meatballs. She also has to meet the demands of her family, who is familiar with her reputation as a great chef. “My family enjoys my cooking when they come over,” she says. “I have four nephews and a niece, and they'll call and ask ‘Aunty, what are you cooking?’ or ‘I want you to cook this.’ As a matter of fact, my niece called the other day and said ‘Aunty, I need a stuffed blue fish.’”

“THE ANGEL LED ME TO COLUMBIA,” WILMA JORDAN SAYS.

When not catering to her family's culinary whims, Wilma also likes to go to the theater and is a self-proclaimed TV lover.

Even though she often has to keep her head down while working, to avoid burning herself or flubbing an omelet, she does enjoy chatting with the students. “I enjoy the communication that we have, because I don't have any children, and I'm single, I live in my own apartment. So therefore, I'm having some kind of communications with people because once I leave, I go home, and there's no one there,” she says. She tends to think of Columbia students as her children, and of herself “as Old Mother Hubbard, or the old lady in the shoe.”

The behind-the-scenes action at John Jay Dining Hall starts in the wee hours of the morning, with some employees arriving as early as 5 a.m. to start preparing to serve brunch. It's feasible that you might encounter a John Jay employee on his way to work as you're heading home after an all-night bender at the Amsterdam bars.

“One of the things people don't realize is that we're here when you're sleeping. When you think we should be bright-eyed and bushy-tailed, some of us are already tired from all the stuff we had to do to prepare it [the food] to be served,” says Jordan.

As Wilma makes her way out of the dining hall to head home, no lack of energy is discernable. She bids farewell the employees who are busy cleaning the dining room before dinner, and even shouts an enthusiastic “Shalom!” to the Kosher Deli chefs.

If you feel the need to soak up some of Wilma's exuberance, especially on a dreary Friday morning, just follow her advice: Always say hello to the people who are feeding you. And to ensure a pleasant omelet experience, specify your omelet as egg whites—before you order the ingredients. ●



John Jay breakfasters would be stuck with cereal and toast if not for Wilma Jordan's delicious omelet concoctions.



One-of-a-Kind Chic

geminola offers reworked vintage at its best

BY AMY DAVIS

PHOTO COURTESY OF GEMINOLA

Situated on a quaint block in the West Village, Geminola is barely identifiable among the row of majestic brownstones save for the collection of elaborately clothed mannequins greeting its customers at the door. A fashion haven to stylists, celebrities, and glamour girls alike, Geminola has lured the glitterati to its Perry Street location since it opened in 2004. The store

sells reworked vintage that both starlets (Nicole Kidman) and It girls (Daisy Lowe) look great in. The boutique got the most press when Patricia Field put a dress from the store on Sarah Jessica Parker's character in season six of *Sex and the City*. Carrie Bradshaw ran through the streets of Paris in one of designer Lorraine Kirke's creations, a seafoam green ballet dress, paired with her omnipresent Manolos.

The feeling one gets upon stepping into Kirke's boutique is like the excitement of a six-year-old immersed in the pre-Christmas frenzy at FAO Schwarz. Kirke scours vintage flea markets and estate sales from London to Los Angeles in search

Person of the Week: Lorraine Kirke

We talked to the designer and owner about the influences behind Geminola's aesthetic:

The Eye: You started as an interior decorator. How did you make the transition into clothing design?

Lorraine Kirke: I thought to myself, "Wait, I want to wear my interiors, I want to wear the curtains, the bed covers!" And there it started.

Eye: Where do you draw inspiration for your designs?

LK: Books, art, architecture.

Eye: Whom do you count as your style icons today?

LK: Kate Moss, Edgar Degas.

Eye: Describe your personal style.

LK: Eclectic, bohemian, basically ... sexy.

Eye: If you were to throw a dinner party and could include on the guest list three guests, living or not, fictional or non-fictional, who would they be and why?

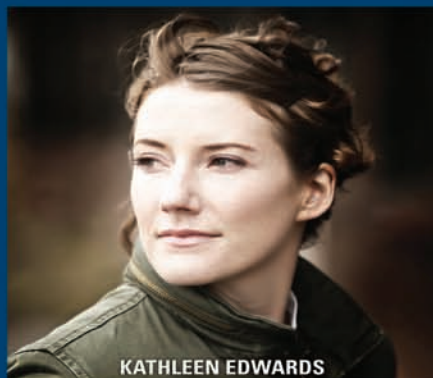
LK: Grace Kelly, because of her poise and elegance. Fellini, because he can piece together images and choreographs the way I like to design ... patchworking. Kate Moss, because I would risk having her over to completely ruin dinner. \\\

of costumes, antique fabrics, and trims. Back in her New York City studio, after disassembling her finds and dyeing them bold, beautiful colors (think magenta, aubergine, and blueberry), she pieces them together. The looks have a youthful playfulness mixed with an old-school Hollywood glamour, and each piece feels endowed with a one-of-a-kind aura. The surfaces of the garments, mainly dresses, tunics, and blouses, have rich details that catch the eye and invite it to linger, while the shapes are feminine and chic. The best thing about the unique pieces made from vintage clothing is that they're completely and utterly updateable. In stitching together a piece of lace from a Parisian opera house, a crinoline skirt from 1960s Nashville, and a silk flower taken from a 1920s flapper hat from the Chelsea flea market, Kirke creates a conglomerate of wearable history—a kind of quilt, but one that also makes a great cocktail dress. ●

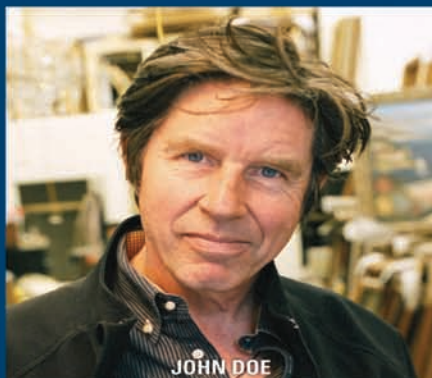
Geminola - 41 Perry St, New York, NY 10014

CARNEGIE HALL presents

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KATHLEEN EDWARDS



JOHN DOE

Fri, **Nov 7** at 8:30 PM | Zankel Hall

KATHLEEN EDWARDS JOHN DOE

Folk-rock chanteuse Kathleen Edwards joins West Coast punk star John Doe for an evening of country ballads and pop-infused barn burners.

Presented by Carnegie Hall in partnership with WFUV.

Tickets: \$38, \$44



"[a] smoky and sensual voice"
—*Los Angeles Times*

EVA AYLLÓN

Sat, **Nov 8** at 8 PM | Stern Auditorium / Perelman Stage

EVA AYLLÓN

Peruvian superstar Eva Ayllón is known worldwide for her sensual blend of Peruvian, African, and Spanish dance music known as *música criolla*.

Presented by Carnegie Hall in partnership with the World Music Institute.

Tickets start at \$20.

Only \$10* with student ID at the Carnegie Hall Box Office

ORCHESTRAL REPERTOIRE WORKSHOP: MOCK AUDITION

Gain an insider's view of the orchestral audition process! Young artists participate in mock auditions as part of the Orchestral Brass and Winds Professional Training Workshop, led by a panel of faculty members including principal brass and wind musicians from the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, the New York Philharmonic, and The Philadelphia Orchestra.

Tues, **Nov 11** at 5:30 PM | Weill Recital Hall

BRASS MOCK AUDITION

Panelists: Joseph Alessi | Carol Jantsch | Julie Landsman | Philip Smith

Wed, **Nov 12** at 5:30 PM | Weill Recital Hall

WINDS MOCK AUDITION

Panelists: Elaine Douvas | Daniel Matsukawa | Ricardo Morales
Michael Parloff

A Program of The Weill Music Institute at Carnegie Hall

Professional Training Workshops are made possible, in part, by Mr. and Mrs. Nicola Bulgari and the Gladys Krieble Delmas Foundation

Tickets for each concert: \$15

Only \$10* with student ID at the Carnegie Hall Box Office



MICHEL CAMILO



CHARLES FLORES



DAFNIS PRIETO

Thurs, **Nov 13** at 8:30 PM | Zankel Hall

MICHEL CAMILO SOLO/TRIO

Michel Camilo, Piano | Charles Flores, Bass | Dafnis Prieto, Drums

CARIBE

Grammy- and Emmy-winning jazz pianist Michel Camilo and his tight-knit trio present an evening of Latin jazz that includes Camilo's tour de force "Caribe," a favorite of Dizzy Gillespie, who recorded his own version of the piece.

Presented by Carnegie Hall in partnership with George Wein.

This concert and Just Jazz: The Joyce Wein Series are sponsored by the Joyce and George Wein Foundation in memory of Joyce Wein.

Tickets: \$34, \$44

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