



the
eye

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THE ACTIVE VOICE

*why columbia grads
choose the picket over
the podium*

STEPHIN MERRITT ON MUSICAL
THEATER

THE SEXES WEIGH IN ON LINGERIE

DESTROYING NEW YORK ON THE
BIG SCREEN

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

By all accounts, I was doing pretty well in my interview for this position. I was poised. I had answers: unrehearsed, but well prepared. I even hazarded a joke here and there—until Alex Gartenfeld, nodding in response to whatever I'd just said, looked me square in the eye and asked:

"Could you define 'pretentious' for us, please?"

Stunned, I stammered something about inaccessibility or contempt for the mainstream or being really into R. W. Fassbinder (maybe all three). The question caught me off-guard because although that word is often bandied about in reference to *The Eye*, as well as Columbia students in general, I'd never thought to ascribe a definition to it. *Pretentious*: it's practically onomatopoeic. Say it aloud and you've unconsciously developed a sneer by the end. No need for a definition—it's self-explanatory.

Later, in considering why some have chosen the word "pretentious" to describe *The Eye*, familiar arguments surfaced in my mind: last semester's redesign, which rendered the magazine a sea of white space and Times font, was particularly polarizing for readers. In my opinion, the content—the actual writing and photography—was always professional enough to back up these design choices, which might have been lost on a magazine with a less talented staff.

But what about that content? Should we be running profiles on Top-40

musicians instead of on Menomona and Battles? Managing editor Hayley Negrin would answer *absolutely* (she's a huge Britney fan). If I disagree—and I don't, necessarily—then am I just buying into the hipster aesthetic? Have I... have I become *one of them*?

Have I become pretentious as a result of my association with *The Eye* to date, as erstwhile music editor? Or because of my association with Columbia? Some combination thereof? The outward signs, if you were to ask my friends from high school, might point to yes—since my first semester here, I've bought brightly-colored Nikes, skinny corduroys, and a couple of pencil skirts. I've acquired asymmetrical bangs, along with the oeuvres of both David Foster Wallace and the Cocteau Twins. In short, I've been doing my homework. And in the face of all this high-minded, intensely self-aware culture, I do feel I've learned something. I see the world more clearly now, I think, than when I started at Columbia—and not just because my new rectangular glasses are complete with an updated prescription.

But that word, "pretentious," connotes also a level of disdain. I don't think *The Eye* has ever come off as disdainful toward a reader who has never heard of, for example, the artists profiled in any given issue. We present material we think is current and interesting—whether you read it or not is your choice.

Of course, an accessible layout goes a long way in ensuring a lasting,

rather than passing, interest in *The Eye*. It's with this in mind that our supremely talented design team, chief among them Thomas Rhiel and Haley Vecchiarelli, have worked to find a more reader-friendly version of *The Eye*'s ultramodern image. There's still white space, but it's used in moderation. And we've replaced Times with Leitura—a font that, five days ago, I didn't know existed. Now I can't imagine how I lived without it.

This week, our lead story focuses on why Columbia doesn't live up to our Ivy League brethren when it comes to representation in public office. Our interview features an MFA student, Leigh Ledare, who currently has his work on view at Rivington Arms on the Lower East Side (and whose work, it should be noted, my very modish older brother called me earlier this week to recommend). And Diana Greenwald has tackled wine, that loftiest of subjects, and brought you a point-by-point guide to developing your own palate. All these subjects could be seen as high-minded and, at the risk of death by repetition, pretentious. In my opinion, the writers' dedication to direct, engaging journalism has ensured that the articles avoid this label.

Whether I'm right, though, is up to you to decide. If there's one thing I've decided about that word, "pretentious," it's that nobody's definition is universal.

—Alexandria Symonds

Mother Nature's Son

dena yago interviews leigh ledare

INTERVIEW BY DENA YAGO

PHOTO BY MOLLY CROSSIN

Leigh Ledare steps in where normal parent-child boundaries dissolve. Nearly a decade ago Ledare, currently a School of the Arts student, came home from college to find his mother had become a stripper. For the past eight years, he has been compiling a visual and textual documentary of his mother, hoping to create the most complete portrait of such an enigmatic maternal figure. His book, *Pretend You're Actually Alive*, will be published in early April by Andrew Roth. One of Leigh's video works is currently on show at the Rivington Arms gallery in New York, and he has an upcoming solo show there in September.

How did you start asking her [your mother] to take pictures?

I came home for Christmas one year. I had stayed at my grandparents' house, and then in the morning she telephoned and we agreed to meet for coffee. She ended up answering the door of her apartment entirely naked. It was a way of her announcing to me what she was up to in her life at the time, working as a stripper in a club next door to my grandparents' house. I quickly realized she had this young man naked in bed with her and so I began taking pictures of them, really not knowing how else to deal with it.

Who was the guy?

He was this guy who worked at the food court and was kind of a funny character. Just a somewhat lost kid. ... Part of the project has to do with making a multifaceted portrait of my mother. She is a very complicated person. What's being published in the book in April has to do with my relationship in making a portrait of her in this period of time when she is reinventing herself as a dancer—only this time as a stripper—and trying to find a benefactor. The activities in her life at that time centered around attempts to find an economic means to get by. She also has always had this sense of theaterizing her life. ... All of her experience is a reality, although at times she arrives there through a fictitious means.

What did your mother do?

Before she had my brother, she had been dancing from the time she was 13 until about 21 with the Joffrey Ballet and the New York City Ballet. She ended up having my brother and stopped dancing for various reasons. I think she had some sort of breakdown, I'm not really sure. It's one of those mysterious moments no one talks about. She ends up blaming my grandparents for a lack of financial support or something, but it's hard to know what actually happened. After this she taught dance for a while, and later my parents did a series of odd jobs. We ran a bed



Freud would have a field day in Leigh Ledare's studio, where nude photos of the artist's mother are on prominent display.

and breakfast for years and didn't have a business license. My grandmother had volunteered at the faculty housing department and would just send visiting faculty to us, which was great because we always had interesting people around.

It seems that the book is a lot about her gifts from men.

A lot of the gifts were a way of appearing to be sought after, elevating her status and her sexual currency. A lot of it has been her figuring out ways to commodify herself.

Does she see herself as purely maternal to you? Does she divide her sexuality and her maternity?

I think she had a very nontraditional upbringing in certain ways and so definitely our relationship reflected that. That's another issue that the book takes up indirectly: how is our subjectivity constituted in our relationships in terms of being somebody's child or being somebody's parent, and when that breaks down what does that mean.

Is the book then an Oedipal monument to your mom? It doesn't seem so much that it is trying to be this objective document.

I see two story lines. I see it both as a portrait of her during these years when she's trying to cash in on her sexuality before her looks fade, and it's also my own coming of age complicated by my mother's projected sexuality. It's where those two intersect that it's interesting. There are other boundary issues that are there about

authorship. In a way the book is a collaboration with her.

Are you going to continue this project with your mother basically until she dies?

I think that this is the end of it.

What made you decide that you were finished with this?

I suppose there came a point where it was resolved enough. I figured out what the issues were in the work and figured out how to bring a lot of the content out to the surface and deal with it. You work with material for such a long time and then the initial content of it begins to feel banal, no matter how provocative other people might think it is.

Did it resolve any issues between you and your mom?

I think that creating the book was a way of having a productive relationship with her. For instance when she answered the door naked, at that point it was almost saying you can take it or leave it, accept it or not. ... In my mind, having a relationship with her is about being tolerant of this side of things. I see her as a character that's reacting to all these different forces that are very universal, whether it's economic or this crisis that she is having with her age. I see her as just a more extreme version of the way other people respond to the world. In a broader sense it's my record of negotiating a relationship with her, just as she's finding ways to negotiate her relationships with the outside world and herself.

Cultural Revolution

the arts initiative's great leap forward

BY DARYL KING

PHOTO BY DANIEL YEOW



The CU Arts booth opens for business in Lerner Hall.

WHEN ASKED WHAT SHE THOUGHT of the Arts Initiative at Columbia, Carling Bateman, BC '10, replied blankly, "What initiative?"

The Arts Initiative, launched in 2004, was an effort to fulfill President Lee Bollinger's wish to expand and develop the way Columbia takes advantage of the city. It is a vast communication network of almost 150 groups, departments, and programs on campus, including most of the major student publications and cultural groups. Yet students like Bateman prove that the Arts Initiative has yet to actively engage many Columbia students.

In its latest move to raise its campus profile, the Arts Initiative has launched the Ticket and Information Center in conjunction with the Office of the Provost. The center is a place to buy tickets for both on-campus and off-campus events, not exclusive to the arts, and to find information about what the Arts Initiative offers in general.

According to Director Gregory Mosher's annual report issued last spring, Havel at Columbia was the supposed solution to the Art

Initiative's lack of presence. Caralyn Spector, program manager of the Arts Initiative, believes that the Havel program increased the initiative's campus presence.

"In terms of programming, the Havel residency was incredibly impactful," she said.

"IT HAS A MUCH GREATER VALUE THAN THE WEB SITE BECAUSE IT IS A TANGIBLE PLACE TO GO."

For seven weeks, Václav Havel, the former and first president of the Czech Republic, held a residency at Columbia that featured joint ventures with the Museum of Modern Art, the Apollo, and other major cultural institutions in the city. According to the annual report, the one undertaking that had the most impact on the lives of Columbia students was the inclusion of Havel's masterpiece, *The Garden Party*, in the Literature Humanities curriculum with attendance required at the dramatic

reading of the play. The former president held his residency from Oct. 26 to Dec. 17.

Mike Molina, CC '10, did not connect personally with Havel's hit and run residency and *The Garden Party* in particular. "I wish that there had been more of an introduction. No one knew who he was; he was only here for a little bit, and then he was gone. It was a weird thing to place on freshmen. He was awesome, and I enjoyed *The Garden Party*. But the majority of people didn't take advantage of the time that he was here," Molina said.

Aside from Havel, Spector believes that the CU Arts Web site is one of the initiative's successes.

"The Web site acts as a portal for students," she said.

There students can see listings of both part-time and full-time jobs at some of the art world's leading companies such as BAM, the Weill Music Institute, Ars Nova, the Metropolitan Opera House, and the Guggenheim Museum. In addition, The CU Arts Web site also features the \$20 or Less: Student No Rush Program, where students can find reasonably priced tickets to off-Broadway theater, dance, and opera performances in New York City.

Soo Han, CC '09, however, had trouble getting tickets to a show through the Web site.

"It is not very clear when tickets are available. One time, I tried to sign up two months before, and it was all sold out," Han said.

One student worker at the ticket center, Ben Klein, School of the Arts, echoed Han's hesitation toward the CU Arts Web site and believes that the ticket center could better address students' needs.

"It has a much greater value than the Web site because it is a tangible place to go," Klein said.

Another ticket center worker, Nikita Espangel, SEAS '08, saw the popularity of the center right away, saying that many people

had already bought tickets just hours after its opening and that the booth had received considerable attention from passersby.

Spector wants the Ticket and Information Center to be a "one-stop shop for the entire community." And while she hopes "it will help build a stronger community," she is not hesitant to admit the initiative is "always a work in progress."

Ashley James contributed to this article.

What Wallach Wants

gallery director sally weiner speaks from experience

BY ASHLEY JAMES

PHOTO BY DIANA WONG

LAST WINTER the Robert Moses exhibit in Wallach Art Gallery drew a large crowd from around the city into a lonely corner of Schermerhorn. The gallery has inhabited the less-frequented space on the eighth floor since the mid-1980s after the Fine Arts Library moved to Avery. Sally Weiner, who has served as director of the gallery for the past 19 years, believes that the space is not entirely meeting its potential.

"There is no question the gallery has suffered by location," Weiner said.

And while the Robert Moses exhibit brought unprecedented numbers through her doors, Weiner mentioned that the number of visitors for a particular exhibit can be intimately linked to "whether we get a *New York Times* review."

But Weiner is proud of what Wallach has been able to achieve under her tenure, particularly in terms of the gallery's evolving relationship with art history graduate students.

She cited a past exhibit, "Brushed Voices: Calligraphy in Contemporary China," as one particularly good example of the relationship between students and the gallery. Yiguo Zhang, a graduate student of art history who wrote his dissertation on calligraphy, conceived of and curated the exhibit himself. And in 19 years of exhibits, Weiner lists it as one of her personal favorites.

"It was a particularly impressive exhibit," she said. "The fruits of the gallery's relationship with students can be seen in the shows. Providing this opportunity for students is our mission, and they are obviously very bright people."

Graduate students with a particular area of focus can apply to curate their own exhibitions. After they propose the show, it is reviewed by a steering committee mostly composed of art history professors.

Last fall another Columbia graduate student's show, "Revolutions: A Century of Makonde Masquerade in Mozambique," generated buzz. One *New York Times* capsule called it "intellectually gripping, showing art not as a luxury item at the fringes of society, but as a transformative force at its center."

Dartmouth professor of African art history Alexander Ives Bortolot curated the exhibit while completing his Ph.D. at Columbia.

"I've always found the gallery to be very open to art history students and faculty involvement, and I think they strongly believe it is their mission to provide a forum for the development of student and faculty academic interests," he said.

Kristin Romberg co-curated a show with another student in 2005 and expressed, in an e-mail, appreciation for the program.

"In art history, you can go into academia or into museum or gallery work, but we spend most of our time preparing for an academic career, which means teaching and research," Romberg said. "So the Wallach Gallery provides a good chance to try out different skills, to work together with other people on a joint project, and to work directly with art objects and think about how they're made and how they need to be displayed."

The current exhibit at Wallach Art Gallery is "Paths to the Press: Printmaking and American Women Artists, 1910-1960," and shows printmaking work from 80 artists. Its opening reception on Jan. 22 featured a talk by the exhibit's curator, Elizabeth Seaton, who is also the assistant curator of the Beach Museum of Art. Many of those in attendance were Columbia affiliates or professors. There was not a significant student presence.

When asked about student involvement in the gallery Weiner said: "I would love it. I've wanted for years to have more students involved in the gallery, as visitors, working." She hopes to eventually implement staff-student docent programs, in which those interested in museum work can gain useful experience on campus by working in the gallery.

Weiner would also like to strengthen the relationship Wallach has with the School of Arts. She said it would be "great to have a program with the curatorial studies major," but that it has not been possible as of yet.

As to the fluctuating numbers of visitors to the gallery, Weiner is hesitant to link numbers to overall exhibit effectiveness. "Visitation depends on the exhibition. It varies by topic," she said.

Weiner is hoping that the Manhattanville expansion will be the answer to some of her space-related prayers. Bringing in more visitors by increasing the ground space of the gallery would be ideal.

"The ground floor space would make the gallery more accessible to the public," she said.

Though many of her hopes are tied to Manhattanville, here in Morningside Heights, Weiner believes that Wallach Gallery continually fulfills its mission.

"Giving these students an opportunity to work out ideas in a visual context, with actual objects, is certainly one of the more gratifying things. ... The gallery is blessed by the caliber of the students."



Sally Weiner, director of the Wallach Art Gallery, in Low Rotunda.

Merritt Badge

the magnetic fields frontman on spector and sondheim

BY JENNIE ROSE HALPERIN

PHOTOS COURTESY OF SACKS & CO.

IN THE LATEST ISSUE of the *Village Voice*, a critic laments the lack of rock stars on today's music scene. Whatever happened to the "fuck you" attitude and wailing guitar riff? Why are rock stars so afraid to tease their hair and wear leather?

While songwriter-and-performer Stephin Merritt professes an affinity for the era of big rock-star hair (think lots of Phil Spector), he is not going to fill the gap it has left. Shy, self-effacing, and more fond of the mandolin and synthesizer than the electric guitar, Merritt's music ranges from the magnificent (*69 Love Songs*, his three-disc opus), to the strange (*Showtunes*, a collection of, well, show tunes, from his many musical theater endeavors), to the childish (his music for the film *Lemony Snicket's A Series of Unfortunate Events*). And that doesn't even begin to mention his many side projects, including The Gothic Archies, Future Bible Heroes, and the 6ths.

While Merritt's main focus has been on his band The Magnetic Fields, which released an album this year, life has been busy for this prolific songwriter. The band is touring this month, though not necessarily in support of the new album—the band deemed it too difficult to play in concert because the feedback may damage their ears.

The album, *Distortion*, is another concept album, following *69 Love Songs* and an album called *i*, in which all the songs begin with the letter "i." The album features every instrument except for the drums feeding back through complicated and old-fashioned methods. Every drumbeat on the album is based on the beat of the Ronettes' "Be My Baby," according to Merritt.

"I do feel *Distortion* is a departure from the themes [of the last two albums], though in terms of production style, it is not," Merritt says. "I don't need to distance myself [from my themes]. Two gimmicks in a row is not the same as three gimmicks in a row."

"Inspiration is frustrating. You don't want to wait for inspiration."

Merritt, who suffers from hearing damage, plays his shows at concert halls so that respect for his craft and the subtleties of his melodies are not lost in the din of a crowd. He also does not use monitors and covers his ears during applause, for fear of further damaging his already delicate hearing. In New York, the band is playing five sold-out nights at Town Hall. Even so, Merritt is calm and collected about the upcoming tour. "I am not nervous," he says. "I do not have stage fright. The only time I am nervous is when we are under-rehearsed, which we are not."

An enigmatic figure with a dry sense of humor, Merritt is notoriously terse in interviews. His speaking voice is similar to his singing—deep



and rich, with a smoky undertone of whisky and cigarettes. He has sung alone on previous albums, but though his singing voice is expressive and full on its own, he chose to work with his friend and long-time collaborator Shirley Simms on the vocals for *Distortion* after recording his voice on the entire album. He claims that he realized later that what was missing was Simms, who has a soaring and high-pitched vocal range, the opposite of Merritt's. In past interviews, Merritt has described her voice as "pure pop," and drawn a sharp distinction between his work as composer and as pop artist. His range seems effortless.

For a man who cites his influences as ABBA and The Jesus and Mary Chain—the new album is based on their landmark *Psychocandy*, which Merritt describes as "a mix between Phil Spector and the Velvet Underground"—this obsession with pop music seems likely. He listens to very little "new music," is unable to name one album of the past year, and says that the best album of the year was the *Sweeney Todd* soundtrack.

To justify himself, he cites the pop-music adage, "If you want to have a hit record, cover a Supremes song. I think if you want to make a nice soundtrack album, just do *Sweeney Todd*, and you can't go wrong."

Like musical theater, Stephin Merritt appeals to the heartsick romantic, dramatically telling stories of broken hearts and unrequited love. He claims that his songs don't come from his love of musical theater, but rather the other way around. "My songs are easily adaptable to theater because I have a dramatic sense of how things should go from one part of a song to another."

Whether it is his sweeping synths or vividly poetic and storytelling lyrics, the man behind these songs is much more subdued and humble.

"Why did I start writing music?" he says. "When I was learning to speak, it just seemed like the thing to do. I don't remember starting to write music ... When I was a child I didn't care

about the quality of the output. I can still write songs spontaneously like a child, but they're, you know, horrible ... More than that, I would be [writing songs] accidentally if I didn't do it for money. These things go around in my head, as they do for many other people."

Merritt clearly has dreams of a Broadway life, though. He owns a chihuahua named Irving (after the songwriter Irving Berlin), and is able to hold long conversations on Sondheim. This range of influences, from the highbrow Sondheim to the lowbrow ABBA, is just part of the whole for Stephin Merritt—a pastiche of his own American life.

"In a large way, I have been formed by American tastes in music. If I had lived outside of America, life may have been different. For one, I would have a different accent," he says.

This soft-spoken, often difficult performer makes no excuses, and considers his songwriting a job. Here, then, is the anti-rock star, who writes songs as a living, for money, no matter what. "I don't know that I want to find inspiration. I need to be able to do the work whether or not I am into it, and I do approach it as work ... Inspiration is frustrating. You don't want to wait for inspiration. I can be feeling uninspired, feeling like there are no ideas popping into my head. But there usually are."

While the *Voice* may lament the loss of the big-hair, big-attitude rock star, Merritt harkens back to the first rock stars of America—the great Broadway composers who lived, wrote prolifically, and died with a place in the Great American Songbook. Merritt's place is soon to be solidified, as he redefines music for the stage, for the screen, and for the studio.



Stephin Merritt, center left, with Magnetic Fields bandmates: (l-r) Claudia Gonson, Sam Davol, and John Woo.



THE ACTIVE VOICE

*why columbia
grads choose the
picket over the
podium*

BY AMANDA ERICKSON
PHOTOS BY MOLLY CROSSIN

The only thing America has heard about presidential hopeful Barack Obama's time at Columbia is that he doesn't want to talk about it.

He rarely mentions his time at the University. Even though he's been invited by several wide-eyed and eager senior class presidents in search of a graduation speaker, he hasn't been back to hobnob since he graduated.

When I placed a call to one of his many press

secretaries, she was surprised herself at his lack of enthusiasm for the Light Blue. "He hasn't gone back to Columbia? You mean at all? You're sure about that?" she said.

His willful disdain for our hallowed halls hasn't gone unnoticed by students.

"Columbia alums don't talk about their Columbia past," said Kwame Spearman, CC '06, who now attends Yale Law School. "Candidates don't announce it. I don't think there's



a dearth of Columbia graduates. We just need to highlight it.”

Hillary has made quite a show of highlighting her Wellesley years. In her attempt to court women voters, she has been back to Wellesley at least twice since 2003, and the picture of her delivering her graduation address as class president oh-so-many years ago is somewhat iconic.

Though Obama’s campaign wouldn’t comment on whether the presidential hopeful was snubbing Columbia or just trying not to actively remind people of the occasional drugs he did during his youth, one thing is clear: associating himself with Columbia isn’t an advantageous course of action in his eyes.

“Columbia has always had a certain taint in the American mind-set,” said professor David Eisenbach, who teaches a course on the history of the American presidency. “It just doesn’t have the same prestige ... that Harvard or Yale has. Americans are more likely to associate Columbia with Allen Ginsberg or Jack Kerouac than any political leader.”

When I met with professor Robert McCaughey, who teaches the history of higher education at Barnard and is the author of *Stand, Columbia: A History of Columbia University in the City of New York*, he spent the first several minutes debating the premise of my inquiry—that Columbia produces fewer students who go on to hold major public office than our counterparts Harvard and Yale.

“I think if you remove two families from Yale’s count, the statistics would look so different,” he said.

The numbers, though, tell a different story—of the last 42 presidents of the United States, five have gone to Harvard, three have gone to Yale, and two to Princeton. Georgetown and Stanford each graduated one president from their undergraduate schools.

Columbia, along with Brown, the University of Pennsylvania, and the University of Chicago, haven’t. (Though both Franklin and Theodore Roosevelt attended Columbia Law School, neither of them finished their degree here.)

McCaughey, though, thinks looking at presidential degrees provides few if any clues as to what kind of leaders Columbia produces and

what their degree might mean in terms of their careers. He attributes the statistics in part to geography and in part to size. Columbia and Barnard, he said, have one of the smallest student bodies in the Ivy League. Both schools have traditionally attracted mostly students from the metropolitan area, while Harvard and Yale bring in students from all over New England and all over the country.

“We weren’t sending graduates back to Idaho to run for office with an Ivy League degree like Yale was,” he said. Instead, our students went

“COLUMBIA HAS ALWAYS HAD A CERTAIN TAIN IN THE AMERICAN MIND-SET.”

on to hold city and state-elected and appointed positions.

It didn’t help, he added that the president has traditionally been from an old-money Protestant tradition—the kind of crème de la crème genealogy that Columbia historically has had the most trouble attracting.

“We didn’t educate the WASP elite,” he said.

In many ways, McCaughey and media consultants agree that we’ve made up a lot of lost ground in the last 30 years.

This is due, in no small part, to changes in New York City, Columbia’s academic offerings and rankings, and its rising exclusiveness. Twenty years ago, the school was admitting about a third of those who applied, and now we’re admitting less than 10 percent.

Columbia has also created programs to entice students into careers in public service. The Columbia Center for Career Education hosts a non-profit job fair every spring. The Office of Scholarships and Fellowships runs an intensive competition to pick the school’s nominees for the prestigious Truman Scholarship, which provides money for graduate school to exceptional juniors from around the country who hoping to pursue a career in public service.

Barnard has created the Barnard College Leadership Initiative, which is designed specifically to educate women for the challenges of undertaking roles as leaders of public service, business, and non-profit groups. The goal of the initiative is obvious—to train students to be effective leaders in a variety of fields—and the approach is academic. Students complete a two-semester seminar and a research project.

According to a Columbia official, 208 CC and SEAS students entered law school in 2006, up from 187 in 2005.

Though Alumni Affairs does offer an online network and directory that any alum can join and post messages on, it doesn’t make any arrangements to facilitate access to alumni data or the alumni network. As any student (or prospective student, or friend of a Columbia student) will tell you, we’re still way behind the curve. Columbia has one office for pre-professional advising, and no one answered the three calls I placed during business hours, (though I received a call back later in the day each time from the dean in charge of law school advising).

Harvard has 13 separate pre-law offices, one in each house, where students can go anytime for advice.

One thing Columbia does have, however, is location.

Former Alaskan senator Mike Gravel is on a campaign bus, headed somewhere to talk to some people about something.

He’s the long shot’s long shot candidate for the Democratic presidential nominee this year, and he’s stayed in the race despite his abysmally low poll numbers and negligible fund-raising. He’s also a Columbia alum.

Attending school here, he said, didn’t turn him into a politician.

“I was already steeped in politics when I went to Columbia,” he said. “I had already picked my direction.”

He was drawn to the University because of its location, enrolling in General Studies in 1955, after four years in the army. To make ends meet, he worked full time, first on Wall Street and then as a taxi driver. In New York, he attended Tammany Hall meetings on the Upper West Side.

He doesn’t cite specifics but says he learned a lot about good government from the University, and in particular from Victor Fuchs, a professor who studied health and economics and now works at Stanford.

When he graduated, he moved back to Alaska and ran for the legislature. He was elected to the Senate 39 years ago.

He’s not one to shy away from his school, or suggest that he received anything less than a stellar education.

“Columbia’s extremely famous. Columbia’s just as well known as Harvard,” he said.

Chris Kulawik, CC ’08 and president of the College Republicans, isn’t convinced that the school is doing everything it can to cultivate relationships with politically-minded alums.

While he said he knows a lot of students who enjoyed their work at a think tank or on a campaign this summer, he doesn’t know many who know what they want to do after graduation.

“The natural inclination is to be political at Columbia,” Kulawik said, though he doesn’t think it’s a school’s job to push its students toward a career in public service, or in investment banking.

He said the school’s Office of Government and Community Affairs wasn’t able to help the Republicans last year when they were trying to bring Senator Judd Gregg to campus.

“Do I think we can develop better connections?” he asked. “I definitely think so. ... If we took the initiative to develop a network, it would definitely do me a great service.”

Stef Goodsell, CC ’09, has been working for Hillary since her first semester at Columbia, when she answered constituent letters.

She too was drawn to the city’s resources, including the opportunity to work for Hillary. Dressed in a Columbia sweatshirt and sweats, she speaks with poise and energy. You can tell she’d be a great cheerleader for your cause, and her school.

She’s been working for the campaign ever since, taking on a full-time staff position as intern coordinator this summer. Last month, she was in Iowa. This week, she’s hunting down the senders of bad checks.

“I started following the presidential election in 1996,” she said. “I was one of those girls who as a 12-, 13-, 14-year-old was impressed and enthralled with Hillary.”

After she graduates, she wants to do something policy or campaign-oriented for a year or two. After law school, she said, she might want to run for office.

It’s not something she worries about too much now, she said, besides making friends in the political science department (she is very close to political science professor Judith Russell, who runs Academics for Hillary, and can “go to her for anything”) and working Hillary’s campaign.

“It’s always something that I’m aware of,” she said. “But I’m not like ‘oh, I’m not going to 1020 because of my fake ID,’” she said. “I’m cognizant of it, but it’s not dictating my days.”

“AMERICANS ARE MORE LIKELY TO ASSOCIATE COLUMBIA WITH ALLEN GINSBERG OR JACK KEROUAC THAN ANY POLITICAL LEADER.”

Ted Kennedy’s cheating scandal (he was caught copying a Spanish test), was mentioned when he was campaigning, but it didn’t prevent him from getting elected. Obama’s supposed decision to use cocaine while in college (he didn’t actually, though it’s commonly believed he did) has not become a serious stumbling block.

Evan Cornog, an associate dean and professor at the School of Journalism who teaches courses on politics and the press, said that more often than not, what you do as an undergraduate doesn’t make or break you as a candidate, though candidates who were Phi Beta Kappa, valedictorian, captain of the football team, or



editor of their school newspaper can build that into their narratives as a success story from birth.

Similarly, a particularly scandalous college story may not play well in Peoria.

“It’s hard to imagine anything in Dwight Eisenhower’s undergraduate career coming up in the campaign,” he said. “For younger candidates in more recent elections, more is fair game. There’s more biographical trivia.”

As I’m packing up my bag to leave McCaughey’s office, I ask him one more question. It’s an afterthought, but also an unspoken theme with anyone who speaks about, attends, or even visits Columbia. Columbia—what does this all have to do with 1968?

McCaughey pauses before answering, ticking off the left-wing humanitarian organizations where the students who occupied the building went to work after they graduated.

“That generation stayed true to their ideals,” he said. “They all worked at organizations that fit their beliefs after college ... and they’re

the generation that would be running for office now.”

Columbia is supposed to raise a class of students who are committed, if not obsessed, with shaking things up and making the world better.

Perhaps it’s not that Columbians aren’t politically active, it’s that we’re pushing for a different kind of change. In the arena of activism, not politics. In the world, not necessarily the U.S.

Harvard has the Kennedy School of Government, which ranks as one of the best schools in the country if you’re looking for a career as a chief of staff or campaign manager,

at least according to *U.S. News and World Report*. The school boasts such famous (or infamous) alumni and professors as current Secretary General Ban Ki Moon and Bill O’Reilly.

Columbia’s response to that is the School of International and Public Affairs and the Earth Institute, two internationally-focused programs, the latter of which is led by the ever-present Jeffrey Sachs.

Philosopher and poet Mark Van Doren, gay rights advocate and playwright Tony Kushner, and poet and civil rights advocate Langston Hughes all attended Columbia before going on to careers in advocacy.

Ron Towns, CC ’08, is a champion of Columbia as a school that educates its students to go out in the world and make things better. A self-described do-gooder, Towns is studying education and education policy. Last year, he was awarded the Truman Fellowship.

He grew up with a family full of teachers and hopes to be a superintendent of a large urban school district someday, or else go into law and education policy on a federal level.

Though he said he enjoyed the University’s education program (he’ll graduate in May with a teaching certification) and the help he received when applying for the Fulbright, he doesn’t hesitate when I ask him whether Columbia does enough to get its students interested in public service.

“No, not at all,” he said. “There’s a mentality that if you graduate from an Ivy League institution you should make a lot of money. When you go into public service you aren’t making a lot of money.”

He repeats a question he gets asked again and again by friends.

“Why did you go to Columbia if you just want to teach?”

The trend of activism continues today. While our peers at Harvard and Yale are participating in debates and Model United Nations, Columbians are hunger striking and actively debating the implications of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad’s presence on campus.

“Schools tend to lend credibility,” said Kevin Wardally, a New York based political consultant. “Being able to say I’m a Columbia man means something nowadays.”

What Lies Beneath

boys and girls talk lingerie

TEXT AND ART BY DASHA CHIRKOV

BENEATH IT ALL, even in winter when we pile on the layers, every girl begins her day with the basics—or the not-so-basics. Lingerie is a staple in nearly every woman's wardrobe, whether it be the simple bra and panty or the more elaborate corset and garter belt. At one point or another, every girl must think about her lingerie, and there is a good chance that boys have thought about it, too.

For men, lingerie holds an iconic status that embodies sex appeal. For women, lingerie is often a matter of necessity. What are the differences in how men and women perceive lingerie? Columbia students—both male and female—were interviewed to discover their views on the subject. For the girls looking to please the boys, read on to discover their fantasies. For the boys wondering how a girl's mind works, the unfiltered essentials are ahead.

Each interview begins with what seems to be the most obvious question: bikini-cut or thong? Of the girls interviewed, each responds that a thong is preferred simply because it solves a common fashion problem: the visible panty line. As Laura Taylor, BC '10, puts it, "Thongs are a means of survival ... because I hate underwear lines through clothes."

The boys provide an element of surprise with a general preference for the boy-short. Alex Greer, CC '08, says his favorite piece of lingerie on a girl is a pair of "boy shorts—you know, those things that go sort of straight across." The men are proud of their knowledge of lingerie—to have an opinion on the subject was proof of their experience in that department.

When asked what importance men place on lingerie, Greer immediately points out the obvious flaw in this question.

"I would definitely have to be attracted to [a girl] before I could find out what lingerie she wears... it's not that important."

Hugh Pollack, CC '09, points out that once you have a girl in her lingerie, you are at the "point of no return." Yet, lingerie is still better than commando. It is the last thing to come off before complete exposure. Greer says, "It's all about the surprise. As you're undressing, [the clothing] is getting smaller and smaller."

I like the challenge."

The men have high standards for lingerie. Jeffrey Northrop, CC '08, states over and over again his disdain for Victoria's Secret's "trashy" style and cites the expensive lingerie of Kiki de Montparnasse as his favorite. More than one male

interviewee mentions a \$295 box set of underwear from Kiki de Montparnasse as their favorite piece of lingerie on a girl. Each pair of plain cotton underwear from the set has a saying written on the derriere—they respectively read: "Mange-Moi," "Baise-Moi," "Aime-Moi," "Fesse-Moi," and "Attache-Moi." Excuse my French.

Greer explains his dislike for other types of lingerie, saying, "Crazy sparkling shit takes away from the point of lingerie, which is to make a girl look pretty." Or so he thinks.

The women are much more focused on lingerie's functional qualities, which never once, understandably, occurred to the boys. A student who would like to remain anonymous, given the private nature of the interview, says, "There are two different kinds of lingerie: the functional every-day comfortable kind and the special kind for special occasions."

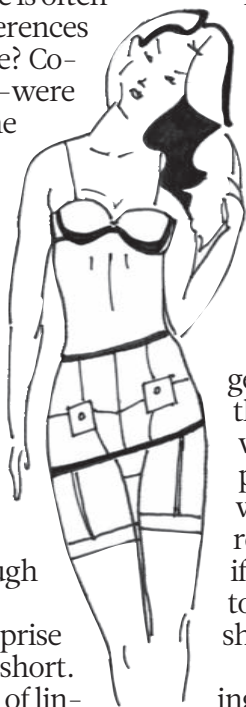
Kendall Barnes, CC '08, works at a lingerie shop in Denver called Sol. She stresses that comfort is key in determining how well a woman can pull off—as it were—a piece of lingerie and recommends that all women be fitted to determine their correct bra size. "A bra can be beautiful, but if it doesn't really fit properly, it's going to make you uncomfortable and that will show."

Lingerie is often expensive, providing women with another incentive to find pieces that fit well. Barnes says, "The most I ever spent was \$300 on a bra and panty set." She also shops at Victoria's Secret when she cannot afford the more expensive stuff.

For the women, lingerie is about feeling—as Barnes puts it—"pretty, sexy, and comfortable." Taylor points out, "I really don't see the point in spending good money on something like lingerie if it doesn't fit well and look pretty. When I buy pretty things like my [favorite] red bra, it's more fun for me to know that it's there than [it is] for someone else to see." It is more about self-confidence than impressing the boys.

Each interview ends with two questions. The first: Best lingerie color? And the second: Lacy or plain? The decision is unanimous: black lace is always a classic. The boys seem to also agree that plain is never bad. The girls say they like to experiment with colors such as red, green, and plum. Even if men and women never agree on the subject of lingerie, at least black lace holds common ground.

Girls like to own it, boys like to look at it. Lingerie is the middle layer between complete nakedness and the external appearance we present to the world. It is intimate, suggestive, and, in most cases, necessary. For men, lingerie is a symbol of sex appeal. For women, it is a source of confidence, which, one could argue, creates sex appeal. Regardless, there is no doubt that what lies beneath someone's exterior is universally important.



SPLURGE OR STEAL: SPRING COLOR

BY MOIRA LYNCH

If the winter chill makes you long for spring clothes, go for a new look early. One key spring trend, an extreme color scheme, is not hard or expensive to get right. From stark black and white to several bright hues paired together, many designers went for striking palettes that enlivened otherwise simple pieces.

If you are feeling bold, try a combination of coral, light peach, and navy, like Jil Sander showed. The pieces can all be found at American Apparel, but the look will still be unique. Alternatively, take a cue from Ralph Lauren's collection, in which black is used as a contrast to white or an Easter-egg hue.

The up-and-coming designer Chris Benz has also done some excellent work with color. He mixes pieces of the same color, but in two or three different shades. He also accessorizes muted cream outfits with one neon piece, like a big hat or a scarf.

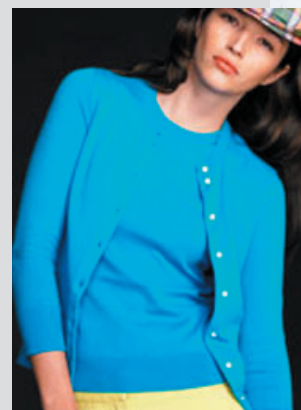
So be daring with color if you are sick of winter styles—just add tights if the weather gets bad again.



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photos courtesy of chris benz, urban outfitters, j. crew, and american apparel

New York Monster Mash

destroying manhattan to shock audiences

BY PETER LABUZA

PHOTO COURTESY OF PARAMOUNT PICTURES

NEW YORKERS HAVE PLENTY to worry about while living in the city: muggings, shootings, asteroids, and giant apes. At least, they do according to some of the recent movies released, which follow in a tradition of many films that begin or end with Manhattan in ashes.

It has once again become popular to set cinematic New York ablaze. The most recent episode is the monster flick *Cloverfield*, produced by *Lost* and *Alias* creator, J.J. Abrams. The film tracks an amateur video (a la *The Blair Witch Project*) shot by a small group of friends trying to escape Manhattan while the city is attacked by a mysterious monster.

Cloverfield is not the only recent film to take on the city's destruction. In *I Am Legend*, Will Smith stars as the last man alive in New York, wandering through a desolate and empty city after a virus wipes out the rest of humanity. The first season of the TV hit *Heroes* shows a future in which

a nuclear bomb destroys the city. *The Day After Tomorrow* and Peter Jackson's *King Kong* remake are other recent hits that have presented an imperiled New York City.

The history of cinematic attacks on Manhattan goes back to Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack's 1933 *King Kong*, featuring the giant ape's famous climb to the top of the Empire State Building. In the 1976 remake, Kong rides to the top of the Twin Towers, while the unfortunately terrible 1998 *Godzilla* remake by Roland Emmerich also features a colossal monster taking over the city.

Other visions of the city present a dystopian New York that has already been destroyed. Who can forget the final image of *Planet of the Apes* as Charlton Heston falls to his knees on the beach, staring up at the half-buried Statue of Liberty? Or John Carpenter's *Escape from New York*, which depicts the city as a walled prison for 3 million criminals? The final moments of the Spielberg-directed *Artificial Intelligence: AI* create a similarly jarring effect as Haley Joel Osment travels around a flooded

city, looking in awe at the ruins of a past generation.

But even as Michael Bay smashes the city's landmarks with his asteroids in *Armageddon*, the question lingers: why do filmmakers love laying waste to the city that never sleeps? The answer comes in many forms. Perhaps all of us secretly hope to witness the city in ruins. Each one of us could hope to be Will Smith, walking around New York City without hundreds in the way. Anyone could appreciate the irony of *Escape from New York*, as many of us already consider the city to be overrun with criminals. But another popular theory on why filmmakers tear the city apart is the symbolism: New

York encompasses all America. Show some small suburban street in ruins and audiences will never feel the punch. Show one shot of New York as a complete

wasteland, and a viewer might think that the entire nation or even all of human civilization has fallen.

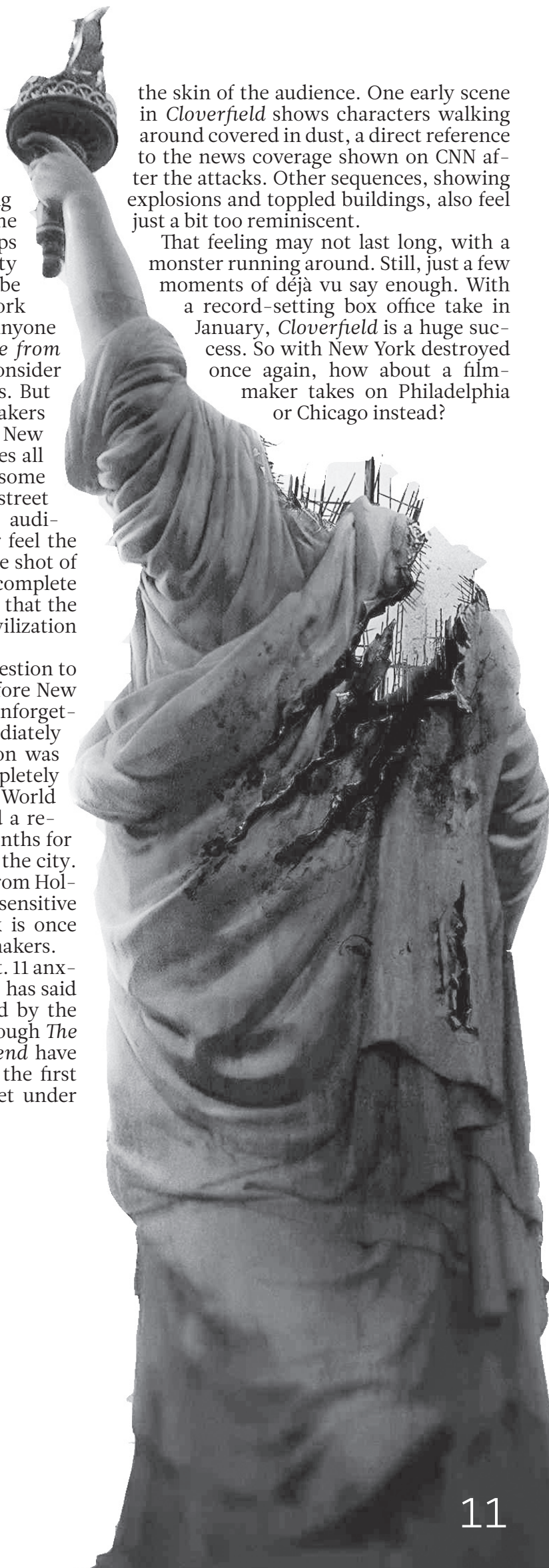
Yet now filmmakers have a new question to deal with: How far can we take it before New Yorkers feel like they are reliving an unforgettable day from seven years ago? Immediately after Sept. 11, New York's destruction was taboo—*Men in Black 2* had to completely re-shoot an ending that featured the World Trade Center, and producers delayed a remake of *The Time Machine* by six months for a scene in which meteors fall all over the city. But with the release of Sept. 11 films from Hollywood studios, it seems that the sensitive time has come and gone. New York is once again vulnerable to attack from filmmakers.

Cloverfield tries to tackle post-Sept. 11 anxiety straight on. Director Matt Reeves has said that the style was heavily influenced by the amateur videos shot on Sept. 11. Although *The Day After Tomorrow* and *I Am Legend* have torn New York apart, *Cloverfield* is the first post-Sept. 11 film to really try to get under

the skin of the audience. One early scene in *Cloverfield* shows characters walking around covered in dust, a direct reference to the news coverage shown on CNN after the attacks. Other sequences, showing explosions and toppled buildings, also feel just a bit too reminiscent.

That feeling may not last long, with a monster running around. Still, just a few moments of déjà vu say enough. With a record-setting box office take in January, *Cloverfield* is a huge success. So with New York destroyed once again, how about a filmmaker takes on Philadelphia or Chicago instead?

Cinematic visions of the city present a New York that has already been destroyed.



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Birthright on Your Bookshelf

the palestine question in contemporary writing

BY JESSICA JEONG

PHOTOS BY BRANDON HAMMER

WHILE MOST OF US slept through our vacations, many Jewish young adults—including dozens of Columbians—journeyed to Israel on Taglit-Birthright trips. Each year, thousands of students between the ages of 18 and 26 go on these trips, which are free and funded by the Government of Israel, United Jewish Communities, and private philanthropists through the Birthright Israel Foundation.

When it comes to the seemingly endless fighting between Israelis and Palestinians over the region formerly known as Palestine, feasible perspectives on solutions to the conflict elude us much in the same way as our inability to accurately pinpoint its beginning. Because of the sensitive nature of the topic, accusations of bias or anti-Semitism are not uncommon for the political scientists and Near Eastern scholars trying to scratch at solutions through their writing. This is perhaps why many choose the more demure medium of the book as an outlet for discourse rather than the popular print and television media that can sensationalize or otherwise besmirch dialogue of this nature. And Columbia's involvement with the Palestine question isn't exclusive to Hillel's association with a Birthright bus—Columbia students and faculty, both present and previous, have contributed work on both sides of the dialogue.

For those of us who don't have the opportunity to observe the conflict first-hand, the wide range of books these scholars produce can teach us about the many nuances of the conflict—provided, of course, that we are wary of the authors whose personal biases obscure the realities of the situation. It is important to know which books to read and which to avoid.

To dodge the pitfalls of appearing biased, many writers and editors have cultivated a consciously neutral format for their critical examinations. One particularly good example is *Wrestling With Zion* (2003), edited by playwright Tony Kushner and Columbia Journalism School professor Alisa Solomon. In the introduction, Kushner and Solomon state their goals for the project. They write, "We have not tried to forge a movement or codify an orthodoxy of opinion ... We've invited a plurality, convened an assemblage of smart, engaged, and talented people, to join in debate over an issue of the greatest moment."

Wrestling With Zion was partly inspired by the full-page advertisement in the *New York*



Overlooking Bethlehem.

Times in 2002 entitled "To Our Fellow Americans," a series of five statements concerning the rights of Israel without any mention of Palestine, signed by eminent scholars such as Saul Bellow, Harold Bloom, David Mamet, and Elie Wiesel.

As Kushner and Solomon have stated in their own words, the book represents a wide spectrum of perspectives from authors of diverse backgrounds rather than advocating a particular political ideology. Instead, it is a collection of beautiful writings from a multi-

Columbia's involvement with the Palestine question isn't exclusive to Hillel's association with a Birthright bus.



tude of voices, such as C.K. Williams' poem, "The Wall," Robert Pinsky's poem, "Immature Song," and Seth Ackerman's essay, "Israel and the Media: An Acquired Taste."

The wide range of the authors' opinions and the various genres of writing included in this anthology are what set it apart from other books on the topic. The writings, while not all strictly non-fiction, ultimately bring to light facts about the conflict that one could otherwise overlook.

Also included in the collection is Susan Sontag's essay, "On Courage, Truth, and Resistance," which particularly nuances the psychological product of two opposing forces—desire for a safe state of Israel and sympathy with the displacement of countless Palestinians. Sontag praises the Israeli soldiers and citizens who rise up against the American government to attend to the suffering of Palestinians. To her, being an Israeli is not inconsistent with a concern for the well-being of Israel's neighbors, even if they are political enemies that are seen as a threat to Israel's existence.

Well-chosen anthologies like that of Kushner and Solomon remain valuable resources, but more recent books also merit reading, since the relationships between Israelis and Palestinians—and even between Americans and Palestinians—are always evolving. In recent months, some authors have chosen to focus on the American political maneuvers that have added to the conflict. In *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* (2007), University of Chicago professor John J. Mearsheimer and Kennedy School of Government professor Stephen Walt attempt to shed light on what they term the "Israel Lobby," or "a loose coalition of individuals and organizations who actively work to steer U.S. policy in a pro-Israel direction."

The book is the result of the two authors' revisions and additions to the original article,

which was published in the *London Review of Books* in 2006. It expands on the idea that American foreign policy is being manipulated by the Israel Lobby through its use of the notion that American and Israeli interests in the Middle East are “essentially identical.” Although extremely controversial, the book is worth reading for the perspective it provides, regardless of whether one agrees with Mearsheimer and Walt on every point. As M.J. Rosenberg of the Israel Policy Forum commented, “People are definitely arguing about it. It’s also the kind of book you do not have to agree with on every count—I certainly don’t—to benefit from reading.”

Abraham H. Foxman, the National Director of the Anti-Defamation League, wrote his own book specifically to debunk the ideas presented by Mearsheimer and Walt. *The Deadliest Lies* (2007) is mostly a critique of the facts and analyses presented in *The Israel Lobby*, as well as in Former President Jimmy Carter’s *Peace Not Apartheid*. Foxman, hailed by Martin Peretz, editor-in-chief of the *New Republic*, as “a tribune in defense of the Jewish people,” carries out his role as the representative of Jewish Zionism. Because he presents formidable counterarguments to *The Israel Lobby*, reading both books in tandem can really engage the casual reader in the larger political dialogue represented on both sides.

In the swing of the presidential primaries, it might be of particular interest to read about Israel from the perspective of a former American president—one who happened to have a hand in major advancements toward peace in the region, such as the Camp David Accords between Egypt and Israel. *Peace Not Apartheid* (2006) presents an approach to the problem that is based not only on historical facts but also on personal experience, and he does not hesitate to give advice for the future. What makes the book an engaging read is Carter’s accounts of his meetings with major players in the struggle, as well as his reflections on the events during his presidency. Carter focuses minimally on the problems that exist in America’s foreign policy relating to Israel and Palestine, but rather highlights the humanitarian steps that the American government and its allies have taken and must take to help alleviate the violent conflict between the two groups.

However, Carter never expands on some of the most fundamental ideas in his book—in particular, the idea of the rightful existence of the State of Israel. In fact, although most of his anecdotes and observations seem to take the middle road, he refers to the people involved in the conflict as “Israelis and others in the Middle East,” rather than as Israelis, Palestinians, Jordanians, etc.

Nor does he sufficiently explain the parallels between the Palestinian experience and apartheid in South Africa, as the book’s title suggests. Although Carter presents seemingly sound explanations, today’s presidential candidates will most likely have to take a more realistic, specific stance on the conflict if they want to persuade voters that they can actually clean up the even larger political mess in the region that the Bush administration will leave behind.

Alongside these insightful authors who seek to challenge different viewpoints, there are also those who take a more simplistic and

biased approach to the issue. Their words should be taken with a grain of salt, as they often employ the technique of stereotypical categorization based on ethnicity and religion to discredit their opponents. One example of such writing is that of John Hagee, a pastor based in San Antonio, Texas.

Hagee’s *In Defense of Israel: The Bible’s Mandate for Supporting the Jewish State* (2007) provides a case for Israel through a literal interpretation of select Biblical passages. In doing so, Hagee radicalizes much of his arguments: “Let me be clear: Israel is not the problem, and making Israel the scapegoat will not solve anything. ... The problem is radical Islam’s bloodthirsty embrace of a theocratic dictatorship that believes they have a mandate from God to kill.”

In addition to numerous other glaring generalizations that would make any reasonable person cringe, Hagee resorts to a linear comparison between Christianity and Islam to convey his message of the dangers of Islam. Included in the book are factual charts to contrast Islam and Christianity, with categories like “Allah Contrasted with Jehovah,” in which readers learn that Muhammad “slaughtered thousands of people.”

Aside from his qualification as a Christian pastor, he writes about topics on which he has no apparent authority. Chapter titles range from “The Religions of the Middle East” to

Said addresses the various layers of the Israel-Palestine conflict, including the psychological rationalizations of both sides, in his book *The Question of Palestine* (1992). He critiques the way in which the West categorizes the Palestinian people as “the other,” such categorization stemming from a belief that “they” are backward and unworthy of consideration. Said still remains the authority on the Palestine issue in many aspects, despite the proliferation of historians and scholars who have recently written on the topic.

Professor George Saliba of Columbia’s Middle Eastern and Asian languages and cultures department suggests *The Persistence of the Palestinian Question: Essays on Zionism and Palestinians* (2006) by Joseph Massad, a current Columbia professor who specializes in modern Arab politics. His book analyzes Zionism and the history of Palestine, illuminating the many layers of dispute in the Palestinian question.

Professor Saliba also notes that Ilan Pappé’s *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* (2007) is worth reading. Pappé, an Israeli and a former professor at Haifa University who currently teaches at University of Exeter, writes with a voice that Saliba says “everyone in New York wants to suppress,” but he “does not allow politics to frighten him.” The book focuses on the 1948 ethnic cleansing of Palestinians from an Israeli perspective.



The Lebanese-Israeli border.

“Revolution and Radical Islam,” and the contents are far from insightful.

On the other side of the debate are those writing with more scholarly authority. Arguably the most renowned Near Eastern scholar is Edward Said, who is Palestinian by birth and who served on the Columbia faculty for 40 years. In addition to his contribution to postcolonial theory, most notably Orientalism,

From Said to Saliba and Massad, Columbia’s faculty is rich with resources that we as students can utilize to learn more about the conflict first-hand, without leaving Morningside Heights. Our generation can take constructive steps toward peace with an increased awareness and a conscious effort to comprehend the many sides of this seemingly endless debate.

In Vino Veritas

a crash course in amateur oenology

BY DIANA GREENWALD

PHOTO COURTESY OF HAWK CREST WINERY

My family was, despite our best efforts, half an hour late for our reservation at Taillevent—a giant of the Parisian food scene that was then in its 32nd year as a three-Michelin-star restaurant. As we walked into the wood-paneled dining room, we were ready to surrender ourselves to the culinary experts for some much-needed pampering. Everything was going as expected as the mustachioed headwaiter showed us to our table and took our orders, but when he sent over the sommelier, the expert who recommends wines to go with your meal, we had a bit of a surprise.

In this institution of a restaurant (it was founded in 1946), I expected to see a sommelier who looked like the headwaiter—middle-aged, with laugh lines around his mouth. Instead we got a 24-year-old with gelled hair. How could anyone this young be the wine steward at one of the best restaurants in France?

One has to study for years to become a sommelier. It was shocking that a 20-something could both complete the training and get one of the most competitive jobs in the industry. But it turned out that the sommelier's vintage year didn't matter: the wine was delicious. It complemented our food wonderfully and fueled the warm and happy atmosphere that is

necessary for any great meal in Paris. Our baby-faced sommelier did a fantastic job, proving that wine—and furthermore wine expertise—is not something that can only be enjoyed and understood by the over-40 set.

If you are curious about alternatives to the watery Coors Lights and boring rum-and-cokes that are the standby choices on Thursday through Saturday nights, it might be time to explore wine. But how can the typical busy, budget-constrained Columbian learn about and enjoy a Bordeaux, Barolo, or Trochenbeerenauslese? (Yes, Trochenbeerenauslese is a kind of wine—an ultra-sweet German dessert wine, to be specific.) Below are some simple guidelines to help the novice wine-drinker find his or her way, or rather his or her palette.

First, a semi-obvious cardinal rule of wine must be stated: drink what you like. According to Joshua Weston—the wine expert for Best Cellars, a chain of wine stores that only sells wine at prices of \$15 or less per bottle—the most important thing to remember when drinking wine is to “trust your own palate. No one can teach you which wines to like or not like ... Wine is subjective pleasure.” Equipped with the basic knowledge that your most essential wine guide is your own tongue, you can move on to some basic and neatly-numbered tips for navigating the world of wine:

❶ Think about how you take your coffee.

Weston recommends “understanding your own palate preferences before you dive in.” The variety of wines available is mind-boggling—especially today, in what he calls “the Golden Age of wine consumption.” There are wine-producing regions on six continents that are constantly creating bottles of all styles and price-points.

The best way to discover your taste in wine is, of course, to taste a wide variety of wines. But before you start tasting at random, take a few minutes to consider what you drink with your breakfast after dragging yourself out of bed for that 9 a.m. seminar. Weston says he can often tell what kind of wine people will like by asking them how they take their coffee.

“In the mornings, our palates are naked and revealed. You act out of habit, and by default choose what taste you naturally like best,” he says. “For example, people who like black coffee usually like a big red wine because it has the same bitterness [that strong red wines have.]” Furthermore, he insists that people who drink their coffee with milk prefer lighter reds and fuller whites, and those who take both milk and sugar will probably be drawn only

to rosés (pink wines) and whites. Don't feel left out if you never drink coffee: grapefruit-juice drinkers like more acidic wines, while orange juice drinkers prefer sweeter wines.

❷ Consider what you're drinking.

The above section used words to describe wine—sweet, bitter, acidic—that are usually applied to food. The overlap in adjectives is not accidental. Wines have tastes as varied and extreme as foods do—you just have to wait a little bit for them to come out.

Smell a wine as you drink it (to enhance the flavor), wait for the sting on the tongue that accompanies every alcoholic drink to subside, and move the wine around your mouth a bit before swallowing. As you move the wine over different parts of your tongue, you will experience different flavors. Of course, this process does not need to be part of every sip, but it should be done until you feel you have a good grasp of a wine's taste.

❸ Remember what you drank.

“What separates wine professionals from novices is the ability to put in context their tasting,” Weston says. “You can give a sip of wine some profound respect and let it tell



you a story ... and chronicle it. It doesn't take long to record a taste of wine ... hold it in your mouth and ponder what's going on. Begin to develop a set of reference points to compare different wines to.” Once you get to know a wine, try not to forget it or your reaction to it (meaning: don't drink so much you forget the finer points). A mental library of the different flavors you find in wines—and which wines you like—is really the only reliable map of the wine world.

❹ An inexpensive wine isn't always a bad wine.

You're not getting shafted if your work-study job doesn't allow you to taste \$100 bottles of wine. In fact, you're not even missing out if you can't afford wine that costs more than \$20 a bottle. “One of the great things about wine is that there is no correlation between wine cost and the pleasure you get from it,” Weston says. What determines pleasure is personal preference. So, here's a question for the Econ majors—what does determine price? “Supply and demand establishes price, it has nothing to do with pleasure,” Weston says. Furthermore, he points out that 80 percent of the wine available is sold for under \$15, and that there's some “damn good wine” in that 80 percent. So even if you order wine like Homer Simpson does—by picking the second-least-expensive bottle on the menu—you may end up with a high-quality wine.

Where does this delicious yet reasonably priced wine come from? According to Weston, there are good deals to be had from Latin America—Chilean and Argentinean wines are bargains because the Chilean and Argentine pesos are actually worth less than the U.S. dollar. Despite the price of the Euro, Spanish and Portuguese wines are also relatively cheap because they produce a lot of bottles, but have small populations that don't consume a lot of what's made—leaving plenty of supply for export. Finally, one can also find a good deal in Australian wines. All of these countries produce wines of “all styles and for all tastes,” says Weston.

❺ Go forth and be merry.

Armed with this primer, it's time to taste, taste, and taste. It's easy to gain experience with wine. When you are at a nice restaurant, just tell the sommelier how much you want to spend on a bottle of wine and trust him to bring you something great. And when it's your turn to buy the liquor on a Thursday night, bring back a nice Portuguese white in addition to the Smirnoff.

Aural Report

BY RAPHAEL POPE-SUSSMAN
PHOTO COURTESY OF FREE REPUBLIC

Black candidate Barack Obama wouldn't just be the first black president. He would also be the first black president with comically prominent ears. But the mainstream media doesn't want to talk about ears. They want to talk about woman candidate Hillary Clinton's crying and formerly-fat candidate Mike Huckabee's formerly 326 pound fat-fat ass—they don't hit the hard facts.

But the humor section of *The Eye* is hard-hitting. We're going to take an in-depth look, here and now, at the ears of the candidates in this election.

Eight hundred-dollar haircut candidate John Edwards has perfect ears. But we're not going to talk about that. We're going to talk about the people in this land who don't have perfect ears. Like Bes-sie Flaxweed, a young Tennessee girl whose ears were savaged by ravenous bandicoots in the Appalachian backwaters. Time is we talked about the two Americas we live in today. The America of people who have perfect ears and the America of people who don't have perfect ears. We're not gonna stand here any longer and accept two Americas. No, by God, we will do whatever it takes to unite this country into one America. And if that means grabbing the nearest machete, or meat cleaver, or (heaven help us) can opener, and mutilating our own two good ears so that this society no longer judges people on the content of their ears, but on the color of their skin or their character, then so be it.

Formerly-fat candidate Mike Huckabee has two ears. But he's also got a secret weapon. You see, Chuck Norris doesn't believe in democracy. He inaugurates candidates with his fists. Chuck Norris is going to drag Mike Huckabee into the White House, by his ears. And Mike Huckabee's ears are gonna hear what America is saying. From your lips to Mike's ears. If you want the *Ten Commandments* appended to the Constitution, Mike's ears are gonna hear it. Heck, if you want the script of the movie *The Ten Commandments* appended to the Constitution, that's fine too. What's important is that in this country, real Americans—not the pundits or pollsters



Barack Obama is literally all ears.

or otologists—decide whose ears are the ears for them. Because this election is not just about one man's ears. It's about all our ears. Amen.

Woman candidate Hillary Clinton has soft, feminine ears. But they're also ears that have heard a lot. They're tough, experienced ears. Experience. That's a word with ear right in the middle. And Hillary's experienced ears can detect that subtlety. More important though, with ears like these, she can listen. These are ears that can hear what America has to say. They're ready for change. They want new earrings. But they also want a better life for the middle class.

Thrice-married candidate Rudy Giuliani has tested ears, ready ears, now ears. On Sept. 11, 2001, those ears didn't wiggle. They stood still, and they stood strong, on Sept. 11. Forget the Battle of Guadalcanal—Rudy's ear canal survived the most conservative administration in the past half-century, not to mention Sept. 11, 2001.

Old-coot candidate John McCain has honest ears. They don't listen when the special interests are whispering sweet nothings into them. But they will listen to John's old, but surprisingly bangable, wife. But they won't lie. That's just not their style. If the dress makes you look fat, those ears will let you know it. "Politics as usual" are three words John McCain's ears can't hear. Literally. Doctors think it's because of nerve damage.

Well kids, those are the facts. All we do is report—now it's your turn to decide. Vote wisely, and remember: You can't spell "Four More Years" without "ears."



cartoon by shaina rubin

Urban Outwitters

BY AKIVA BAMBERGER

THE ONGOING WRITERS' STRIKE and the end of *Real World: Sydney* made it difficult for me to effectively waste my winter vacation. Fortunately, with the 2008 election coming nigh, I decided to become informed about this year's terrific and highly electable candidates.

A great starting point for newcomers, I'd been told, was the priceless words of the masses. Where better to find such wisdom than at that greatest of knowledge repositories, that site of sites—urbandictionary.com?

When I first heard about Barack Obama, it was in connection with the so-called "Obama Girl," a solid 7.3 out of 10 on the hot-or-not scale and a fan of the "politics." On Urban Dictionary, user Liberals Rock called Barack Obama: "An awesome man who is going to be our first black president unless the neo-nazi, homophobic, anti-semetic, 'pro-life,' klansmen turn out in the polls." Mr. Rock, I thought at first, you rock. I also dislike homophobic klansmen! I must like Obama.

I promptly continued my search for other candidates.

One source on Hillary's Urban Dictionary page seemed more reliable than the others, claiming that "I took my happy to ass college and gave myself an education and now make over a hundred grand year." A college-educated gentleman must have a solid opinion! Unsurprisingly, the arguments he set forth against Hillary were clear and cogent. Clinton, he wrote, is not electable because she is a "stupid bitch and quiet possibly the ugliest lesbian ever." This user, one Mr. or Ms. I hate fucking hillary, was right—it was time I looked for a smart choice for president, not some stupid bitch.

Moving on from Hillary, I struggled to decide which candidate to re-search next. Just then, I remembered a piece of free advice. While walking up Broadway, I saw scribbled on the wall of Lerner Hall the words "Google Ron Paul." On the Ron Paul Urban Dictionary page, I found some fascinating information. Ron Paul was described as "the only honest man left in Washington," and "the 44th president of the United States of America." I saw a picture of Ron Paul smiling his innocent ol' grandpa smile. He reminded me of the wholesome Pablo Sánchez, the "Secret Weapon" of Backyard Football.

Still, I felt bad about voting for an anarchist with a blank smile. That's when I came across the final candidate in my search for president: John McCain. According to the most popular definition on Urban Dictionary, McCain is "an American politician, God and time traveling warrior." I had heard about this "God" before. If McCain was God, then according to Urban Dictionary, McCain was a "large angry fairy-pixie in the sky" and "the most popular star in human history." As a long-time fan of fairy-pixies and stars, I had no doubt which candidate I would vote for in '08.

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