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Dustin Rubenstein is an assistant professor in Columbia's Department of Ecology, Evolution, and Environmental Biology. He received the 2010 American Ornithologists' Union Ned K. Johnson Young Investigator Award and the 2011 Animal Behavior Society Young Investigator Award.

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Kathryn Vreeland '06CC is currently studying at the University of Queensland School of Medicine in Brisbane, Australia, as part of an exchange program with the Ochsner Clinical School in New Orleans. >> **Page 9**



Rashid Khalidi is the Edward Said Professor of Modern Arab Studies at Columbia. His most recent book is *Sowing Crisis: The Cold War and American Dominance in the Middle East*. A new edition of *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness* was published last year.

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Julie Wu '96PS is the author of *The Third Son*, which was short-listed for the 2009 Faulkner-Wisdom Novel-in-Progress Competition and will be published by Algonquin Books in fall 2012. >> **Page 34**



John Mariani '73GSAS is a food and travel columnist for *Esquire*, wine columnist for Bloomberg News, and author of *The Encyclopedia of American Food & Drink*.

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COLUMBIA

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Executive Vice President for University
Development and Alumni Relations
Fred Van Sickle

Publisher
Jerry Kisslinger '79CC, '82GSAS

Editor in Chief
Michael B. Shavelson

Senior Editor
David J. Craig

Associate Editor
Paul Hond

Contributing Editors
Joshua J. Friedman '08JRN, Eric McHenry

Art Director
Eson Chan

Assistant to the Editor
Nicole Brown

Web Editor
Jacqueline Ballantine

Editorial Assistants
**Deaton Jones, Amanda Pickering,
Lauren Weiss**

Mailing Address
Columbia Magazine
Columbia Alumni Center
622 W. 113th Street, MC 4521
New York, NY 10025
Tel. 212-851-4155
Fax 212-851-1950
magazine@columbia.edu
www.magazine.columbia.edu

Address and Archive Assistance
assistmag@columbia.edu
212-851-4155


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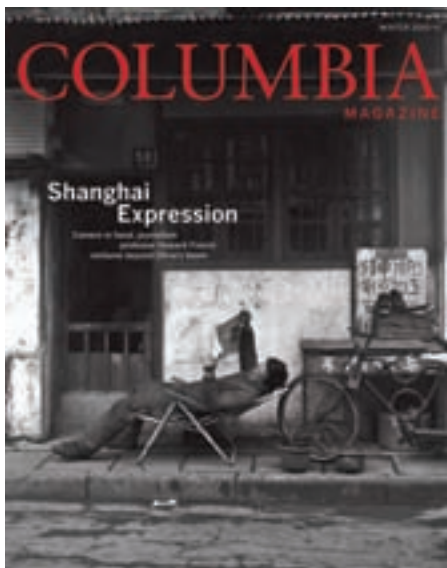
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letters

PICTURING FRENCH

I am writing to commend Paul Hond for his article on Howard French (“The Power of Lingering,” Winter 2010–11). French is pictured as highly competent: a star reporter for the *New York Times*, speaks seven languages, and now a professor at Columbia. My mental image automatically identified him as a Caucasian, if not a WASP. Then came the zinger: “where his ancestors were slaves.” Brilliant writing and editing. Congratulations.

That said, is it now accepted usage to allow the solecism of number disagreement within a sentence? In the article “Grave Decisions,” I read “one in five . . . spends their days.” I see this in the pages of the *Times*, a book from Oxford University Press, and in other publications. Is this the result of succumbing to the late feminist mania when “his” or “him” became anathema? It grates.

Giulio D’Angio ’43CC
Philadelphia, PA

MIDTERM EXASPERATION

As a newspaperman who covered national politics in Washington for more than 50 years and who has voted for both parties, and occasionally could not vote for either party, I am writing in response to Lincoln Mitchell’s article “A Midterm Examination” (Winter 2010–11).

Mitchell is correct that the Obama White House failed to either solve the economic crisis or demonstrate the president’s empathy and concern. In a way, it was unfair of the voters to blame Obama for the continuing economic downturn, just as it was unfair of them to turn out George H. W. Bush in 1992 for the economic recession that was essentially over by that November.

Obama adopted the problem as his own by optimistically asserting that his stimulus package would reduce unemployment to 6 percent or less. He said it, and when it did not happen, the voters blamed him.

Mitchell is correct that the Republicans’ danger is in overreaching to satisfy the right wing of their party. The Tea Party has been mostly concerned with taxes and the deficit and in general has not taken up the social issues of the far right: abortion, immigration, gay marriage, and the like. They have their crazies, but Tea Party folks I know are primarily interested in fiscal issues.

Since cutting entitlements, though necessary, will not be popular, the two parties can only succeed by agreeing to take that step together, and not allowing either party to demagogue. Speaker John Boehner has made that clear. The Republican leadership and the White House need to agree to bite

that bullet together. One hopes that President Obama will concur.

Gordon E. White ’57JRN
Hardyville, VA

How sadly predictable. I picked up “A Midterm Examination” hoping for some balanced and nuanced thinking and found the usual array of patronizing, elitist, and knee-jerk clichés that liberals always deploy against Republicans, particularly when grasping for a way to explain the “shellacking” of the 2010 midterms.

Mitchell says the GOP swept the House in 2010 not by “presenting alternative policies or a rational critique of the Obama administration, but by allowing the most extreme and sometimes downright wacky attacks on the Democrats to drive the Republicans’ message.”

This is an absurdly simplistic analysis. What I remember of the fall run-up are the impassioned speeches and thoughtful writing of dynamic people like Eric Cantor ’89GSAPP, Carly Fiorina, Tim Pawlenty, Scott Brown, Paul Ryan, and Marco Rubio. Did Mitchell bother to read Rep. Paul Ryan’s “A Roadmap for America’s Future”?

These men and women, and their very serious policy prescriptions, were not hard

LETTERS

to find in the months before the election—if Mitchell had chosen to do some real reporting. In fact, they were all over Fox News and the dreaded “right-wing talk radio.” I suppose the stereotype of simple-minded Republicans “cling[ing] to guns or religion,” as President Obama once put it, is reassuring to liberals — but it is not reality. If the Democrats want to win, they will have to stop underestimating and start listening.

Stephanie Gutmann '90JRN
Piermont, NY

“A Midterm Examination” contains no mention of Lincoln Mitchell’s politics, while there is a note that he is an associate research scholar at Columbia’s Harriman Institute. This gives the impression that the author is presenting a scholarly, objective analysis rather than an editorial. While it is well known that almost all university professors are liberals, *Columbia Magazine* seems to be presenting an editorial as a piece of scholarship.

Mitchell gives reasons for the midterm vote without a shred of evidence. “The same electorate that was so anxious for change in 2008 punished the Democrats a short two years later for failing to turn the country around quickly enough,” he writes. There is no consideration of the reasons that the public didn’t like the policies of the Obama administration or the Democratic-led Congress, including the underhanded way it passed Obamacare or its freewheeling spending.

Whether or not you agree with Mitchell’s analysis — some of which appears to be objective and much of which appears to be left-wing talking points — the article should be presented as an editorial, with the usual disclaimer from the University.

Alvin Levy '66GSAS
Commack, NY

Lincoln Mitchell provides some useful insight about why the Democrats suffered stunning losses in the November elections, but I think he misses a couple of major points. The voters sent Democrats pack-

ing because they reject the radical growth of the federal government in recent years. For example, since the Democrats gained control of Congress in January of 2007, the national debt has increased from about \$8.6 trillion to \$14 trillion, up 63 percent in just four years. This debt is growing by more than \$100 billion per month and is approaching 100 percent of GDP. Voters know the runaway spending had to be approved by Congress, and they know that this level of debt is reckless and unsustainable. They realize that it gravely threatens our economic strength and national security.

Mitchell states that the “constant talk about how the Democrats were taking away people’s rights to own guns, make their own decisions about medical care, or run their own businesses—all dramatic overstatements at best — resonated with many voters.” But these concerns are not “dramatic overstatements” at all. About 20 states have filed suit in federal court challenging the constitutionality of the health-care legislation. Now that the negative consequences of the legislation have become more apparent, the Obama administration has even exempted many large businesses and organizations from compliance with certain aspects of the new law.

President Obama’s party probably also lost support because of his fight with the state of Arizona, in which the Justice Department, under Eric Holder, is opposing that state’s efforts to reject illegal immigrants, even though the new Arizona law mirrors existing federal law. The fact that we have millions of illegals living in the U.S., consuming billions of dollars’ worth of public services (medical care, education, and the criminal justice system), makes a mockery of the rule of law and our national sovereignty.

James E. O’Brien '66CC
Maitland, FL

Lincoln Mitchell does an admirable job of balancing criticism of both parties in giving President Obama a midterm grade.

But his fair and balanced approach goes out the window when he cautions the Republicans on misreading the November elections. He avers that Republicans must not view the election results as “a triumph of the radical right-wing ideology.”

Since when are balanced budgets, smaller government, lower taxes, free trade, and deficit reduction radical? Perhaps in urging such caution, Mitchell reveals why progressives lost 63 House seats and 6 Senate seats in November.

Gerard J. Casedy Jr. '65BUS
Ponte Vedra, FL

Lincoln Mitchell’s assessment of the 2010 elections reveals how difficult it has become to engage in dispassionate analysis.

I am particularly intrigued by the facility with which he dismisses as “far-out,” “absurd,” “unfathomably strange,” “nutty,” and “downright wacky” a number of perceptions of the Obama administration that to many Americans are self-evident truths. I find myself compelled to ask whether it is so unreasonable, especially when considering the conduct of the Holder Justice Department, to infer that the administration’s agenda is in fact anti-white, if not by design, then by inherent ideological bias? If it is so “wacky” to reach this conclusion, how does Mitchell account for the fairly well-documented white flight from the Democratic Party that is now taking place?

I agree with Mitchell’s assertion that Democrats “blundered badly” in letting so many allegations and accusations go unchallenged. But could this be because no effective refutation exists?

I cannot fault Mitchell for seeing things as he sees them, and I have benefited from his perspective, but I suspect that much of the electorate has seen what it does not wish to see: a president who stands athwart the American tradition and is instead the standard-bearer for an ideology that has been failing people around the world for over a century.

Chad Klinger '66GSAS
Carbondale, CO

I enjoy reading your very professionally presented articles, discussions, opinions, and accomplishments of our fellow Columbians.

In particular, I was really impressed with the brilliant article by our fellow alumnus Lincoln Mitchell '96GSAS, who explained some of the reasons for the results of the 2010 elections.

As a follow-up piece, it would be fascinating to see how he might respond to some of the other reasons presented in my book, *Barack Hussein Obama: Our New Messiah?*

That may help us understand more fully why that election referendum on Obama was less favorable than we might have preferred.

Charles H. Doersam Jr. '44SEAS
Old Lyme, CT

I am seriously considering canceling my subscription because *Columbia Magazine* should either be politically unbiased or present two viewpoints. You should publish both right- and left-wing views instead of only publishing the liberal explanation for the landslide Republican win and historic Democratic loss that was one-sidedly defended in Lincoln Mitchell's article.

Mitchell is incorrect when he states that "the president should not be expected to have to state that he is indeed a citizen," because it very clearly states in the U.S. Constitution that the president must be a U.S. citizen. If it were concluded that the president did not possess a U.S. birth certificate, his presidency would be fraudulent.

Arthur Desrosiers '03PS
Miami, FL

In an ailing economy, aggressive increases in regulation, expensive new programs, and stimulus programs with extremely long-term horizons didn't address the major concerns of many voters. Obama's agenda had the wrong items at the top.

Lincoln Mitchell's article mischaracterizes the Tea Party. While several of its candidates had quirky views on issues at the margin, the Tea Party fundamentally is

Key to Abbreviations: Each of the following school affiliation abbreviations refers to the respective school's current name; for example, GSAS — for Graduate School of Arts and Sciences — is used for alumni of the Graduate Faculties, which became GSAS in 1979. The only code not associated with a particular school is HON, which designates that person the recipient of an honorary degree from the University.

| CODE | SCHOOL |
|-------|---|
| BC | Barnard College |
| BUS | Graduate School of Business |
| CC | Columbia College |
| DM | College of Dental Medicine |
| GS | School of General Studies |
| GSAS | Graduate School of Arts and Sciences |
| GSAPP | Graduate School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation |
| JRN | Graduate School of Journalism |
| JTS | Jewish Theological Seminary |
| KC | King's College |
| LAW | School of Law |
| LS | School of Library Service |
| NRS | School of Nursing |
| OPT | School of Optometry |
| PH | Mailman School of Public Health |
| PHRM | School of Pharmaceutical Sciences |
| PS | College of Physicians and Surgeons |
| SCE | School of Continuing Education |
| SEAS | Fu Foundation School of Engineering and Applied Science |
| SIPA | School of International and Public Affairs |
| SOA | School of the Arts |
| SW | School of Social Work |
| TC | Teachers College |
| UTS | Union Theological Seminary |

about government size, scope, and spending levels. Members were gravely concerned about the massive deficits, and they often felt that Republican candidates better reflected that concern.

There was no mention of the independent voter, while in race after race it was the reduced support of the independent voters that led to the Democrats' defeat.

Also not mentioned were the moderate Democrats who lost their seats as a consequence of pressure by congressional leaders to support legislation central to the Obama agenda, but unpopular in their home districts.

The change the electorate wanted in 2008 was not the change Obama and Congress delivered, and the results of the 2010 elections showed that clearly.

H. Kurt Christensen '77BUS
Washington, DC

FINAL OPTIONS

I was surprised after reading David J. Craig's article on Professor Iyengar's studies that there was no mention of the state of

Oregon's Death with Dignity law ("Grave Decisions," Winter 2010–11).

Oregon's law allows individuals with terminal illnesses to choose the time and place of their deaths by allowing doctors to prescribe lethal amounts of medication, which the patient self-administers. As a 66-year-old, the simple idea that I can be in control of my own demise is a source of some comfort to me.

The people of Oregon passed the law in 1994. It has withstood several challenges by both religious opposition and the Bush administration. In the 12 years following its enactment, some 480 people have used the law's provisions to end their lives. The numbers have fluctuated from year to year, but the average of 40 per year is far fewer than the opposition's predictions.

Richard York '85BUS
Portland, OR

David J. Craig's interesting but puzzling article says that U.S. doctors should be

Continued on page 60



MARK STEELE

Meet the Flockers

“More Americans Living with Extended Family” — CBS news headline from 2010

“Their family groups, which include parents, stepparents, siblings, aunts, uncles, nieces, and nephews, can swell to upwards of 30 individuals, more than almost any other group-living avian species.”

— Dustin Rubenstein on the superb starling, *Natural History* magazine, 2009

On a February morning, in a winter when the sky really did seem to be falling — caving in all over with snow, sleet, and ice — Dustin Rubenstein, an assistant professor in Columbia’s Department of Ecology, Evolution, and Environmental Biology (E3B), sat in his office on the 10th floor of Schermerhorn Extension and thought about the rains in Africa.

Precipitation was in the air. January 2011 had been New York’s snowiest in history, and 2010, by NASA’s measurements, was the hottest global climate year on record. Now, outside Rubenstein’s window, the city was enameled in a white, bathtub-slick glaze, the city’s chunk of a 2000-mile-wide winter storm, one of the biggest in generations.

It was a fitting backdrop for a talk about Rubenstein’s work, where weather meets feather, beak meets beaker, and the past becomes a forecast.

“We’re trying to understand how variable environments with extreme weather events, like these storms, affect the behavior and physiology of birds,” says Rubenstein, a tall, fresh-faced behavioral and evolutionary ecologist who came to Columbia in 2009. “If we can understand how over the last tens of thousands of years organisms adapted to these variable environments, we might

be able to understand how other organisms respond to climate change down the road.”

Ten years ago, as a PhD candidate at Cornell, Rubenstein went to Kenya to study the role of volatile environments in the development of family-living species. He focused — through a spotting scope, under a lone acacia tree, in the savanna heat — on *Lamprolornis superbus*, the superb starling, a small, showy East African bird with a blue breast, red-orange belly, and metallic blue-green wings. This creature was ideal: abundant, festively marked, and a practitioner of cooperative breeding, an arrangement shared by 10 percent of the world’s 10,000 existing bird species. In most cases, the family group consists of one egg-producing couple and a circle of relatives, or “helpers,” usually offspring from previous years who delay their own breeding to tend to the youngsters. The superb starling takes this lifestyle even further, according to Rubenstein: It’s a *plural* cooperative breeder, living in groups of 20 to 30, with three or four breeding pairs per group, each with its own nest and helpers. The key to this complex social system, Rubenstein theorizes, is the savanna itself — semi-arid grasslands dotted with clumps of trees, where rainfall is unpredictable.

“Species that live in more variable environments tend to go toward family groups more than those that don’t,” Rubenstein says. “We think that living with families is a way to cope with these environments. Having helpers in the dry years, when there isn’t much food around, means more individuals to bring food to the babies.”

During the past decade, Rubenstein and his students have captured and banded more than 800 birds. They monitor nine groups at any given time — about 200 to 250 birds, each with a metal leg band bearing a unique number and a color combination so that it can be recognized at a distance. “The superb starling breeds in two rainy-season peaks,” Rubenstein says. “We spend six or seven hours a day observing them. We identify the breeders and the helpers. We check the nests daily

to see how many eggs are laid. In the dry season, we spend a lot of time catching birds in traps baited with papaya and cornmeal. We take hormone and blood samples, replace bands, and mark new birds that have immigrated in.”

The samples are taken back to the squeaky-clean laboratory in Schermerhorn Extension. Rubenstein characterizes the E3B facility as “a hybrid molecular physiology lab with the theme of social behavior and family living.” There, students extract, sequence, and analyze superb starling DNA and conduct other tests on immune function and communication. Lea Pollock, a junior majoring in environmental biology, is studying female dispersal patterns. (Rubenstein’s research shows that the males stay with the family, while the

“Having helpers in the dry years, when there isn’t much food around, means more individuals to bring food to the babies.”

females often will leave to join other groups — and, on occasion, cheat on their mates — to ensure genetic diversity.) “Lea found in some of the old data that the females in the group were also closely related. Sisters might be dispersing together, or females that have already immigrated into groups might be recruiting female relatives. Lea has been extracting a lot of DNA from a couple of years’ worth of starling samples, and we’ll use the genetic details to look at relatedness patterns among females as they enter groups.”

Since the birds, male and female, are indistinguishable from each other visually, the lab looks at how the birds recognize their kin. Sara Keen, a bioacoustics specialist in the E3B master’s program, records the superb starlings’ high chirrups, which to an untrained ear sound like something between a rewinding cassette tape and the squeal of polished glass, and breaks down the aural fingerprints that appear on her

computer screen in the form of a spectrogram. “These birds live with relatives, so they need to be able to recognize relatives,” Rubenstein says. “We think that’s done with group-specific calls.” Another grad student, Kathleen Apakupakul, is researching immune system function in the superb starling in relation to environmental variations and mate choice.

“We’re finding that everything is tied to that variation, from breeding behavior to stress physiology to immune function to how many sons or daughters the birds produce,” says Rubenstein. “The environment seems to be driving most of their lifestyle.”

In May, Rubenstein and 16 undergrads will go to Kenya for the end of the brief and fickle wet season. The moody climate of the sultry savanna might be a long way

from the winter sludge outside Rubenstein’s window, but in some ways it’s just around the corner. “One consequence of global warming will be more variation and extreme weather,” Rubenstein says. “More winters with lots of snow, followed by summers with lots of drought.”

Two days after the Great Ice Storm of 2011, the U.S. Labor Department released its monthly employment figures. Construction jobs fell by 32,000. Severe weather was blamed. And with increasingly harsh conditions expected, and the financial climate already unstable, the trend in America among nonwinged bipeds toward multigenerational family living — a rise of 30 percent since 2000, according to census figures — seemed likely to continue.

“You never know when you’re going to need help,” Rubenstein says. “So rather than kick your kids out after they graduate, you might want to keep them around.”

— Paul Hond

Feeding the Meter

The blogger Andrew Sullivan recently wrote that, under his editorship, the *New Republic* had once inadvertently published a poem whose last line read, “This is dummy copy.”

“The truly tragic thing,” Sullivan remembered, “is that the only reader complaint we got was from the poet himself.”

Definitions of the verb *publish* include “produce for distribution” and “make generally known,” but in the case of poetry it usually means only the former. Poets know better than to expect their published work to find much of an audience, let alone to provoke any kind of response.

Which is why Keith O’Shaughnessy ’94CC was so surprised when he came home one day in late 2009, not long after the appearance of his second-ever published poem, “Il Mio Tesoretto,” in *Columbia Magazine*, and found a fan letter in his mailbox. He was even more surprised when

he discovered the identity of its author — Ifeanyi Menkiti ’65JRN, owner of the famous Grolier Poetry Book Shop in Harvard Square. “Essentially he praised the poem and said, ‘I want to have your books in my shop,’” O’Shaughnessy recalls. “But I had no books.”

That would change quickly, and dramatically. Over the next year and a half, the prolific O’Shaughnessy published three poetry chapbooks — short, saddle-stapled collections. As they appeared, he passed them along to Menkiti, who read them with growing admiration and stocked them in his store. Then, last summer, Menkiti called O’Shaughnessy and surprised him yet again. “He told me, ‘I’m creating a prize, and you’re winning it.’” *Incommunicado*, O’Shaughnessy’s first full-length book of poems, arrives this month from the brand-new Grolier Press as the winner of the inaugural Grolier Discovery Award.

It’s an improbable story — but then, both of its principals are improbable people. O’Shaughnessy grew up in Princeton, New Jersey, the son of a prominent lawyer, and attended the elite Lawrenceville School and Columbia. Now 40, graying at the temples, and unconventionally handsome, he is finishing his dissertation on Shakespeare at Drew University. He still lives in Princeton, and still dresses preppily, in natty sport coats with pocket squares and colorful scarves. (“He looks like he just walked out of a Scott Fitzgerald novel,” his friend and poetry mentor Rachel Hadas says.) But for years O’Shaughnessy has commuted every weekday to Camden, where he teaches five English courses per semester at Camden County College. He says he feels more at home among its first-generation college students than he does at writers’ conferences or cocktail parties. He used to drink and smoke but doesn’t do either anymore; mostly, he just teaches and writes.

His poetry is as impeccable and *sui generis* as he is. In *Incommunicado*, he uses the dislocation felt by an American in Mexico as a way of writing about larger estrangements — from language, from others, from one’s self. His lines are simultaneously earnest and playful, austere and effusive, direct and multivalent. Sentences can spill across dozens of lines without losing their grammatical coherence or sense of trajectory:

Into the Sun’s *tequila* fever, out of
the Moon’s
kablua lunacy, the blood-drunk
offerings charge
through the streets’ crated barricades,
neither at *margarita* capes
nor toward *sangria* scarves, but from
the *absinthe* phantoms
of cowed steer, grazing fat on the ranch,
while the pricked stampede
drives on, with sheepish oxen, for
goatish mules, in the mad glory
of brute sacrifice, to its own wild
feast’s malediction.



IRENA ROMAN

“I just love the freshness of his writing, the boldness, the inventiveness, the play with language,” Menkiti says. “So many poets are tentative, but there’s a sense of confidence in Keith’s writing. It’s very much his own voice, something that has taken possession of him.”

Menkiti was born and raised in Nigeria, and came to the United States in 1961 on a scholarship from Pomona College. While there, he received the English department’s top prize for a paper about the poetry of Ezra Pound. That made a huge impression on him — that his name, accent, and skin color didn’t distract the professors from the merit in his work. “I think that at some level, ever since then, I’ve associated poetry with integrity,” he says. He went on to earn a master’s in journalism from Columbia, another in philosophy from NYU, and a PhD in phi-

losophy from Harvard, where John Rawls was his thesis adviser. Since 1973, he has taught full-time at Wellesley College, but his enthusiasm for poetry has never waned. When he learned that the Grolier, one of only two all-poetry bookstores in the country and a Harvard Square landmark since 1927, was in danger of closing in 2006, he bought it. “It’s a sort of rescue operation,” he says.

He now spends several afternoons a week surrounded by poetry, and it’s rare for a poet he has never heard of to stun him the way that O’Shaughnessy did. It’s even rarer, he says, for him to write a fan letter. “I know myself very well, and that’s out of character for me.”

In the future, he plans to make the Grolier Discovery Award a more traditional open competition, with entry fees and

blind judging. “With Keith’s book, we’ve set the bar high for future winners,” he says. O’Shaughnessy is grateful for that sentiment, but even more grateful for the unusual way his book came into being: not by surviving a process of elimination but by speaking to a reader.

“Ifeanyi has some fairly radical views about contemporary poetry, which I tend to share — about how mechanically professional so much of it has become,” O’Shaughnessy says. “I look at the winning books that I get as consolation prizes from those contests, and they’re not even the same species as mine. This manuscript would never win a fair fight in a competition. That’s why I’m so grateful to Ifeanyi. He likes my book for the same reasons I like it.” — *Eric McHenry*

Letter from Brisbane

A white refrigerator bobbed below my open window and caught in the tree’s branches. I rubbed sleep from my eyes and gazed at the brown river 15 feet below. The river, which hadn’t been there the night before, flowed between my apartment complex and the townhouse across the causeway. The clock read 5:30 — time for the birds’ chorus and the outbreak of brilliant, hot sunshine that made me wish I was a morning person. But the magpie and kookaburra had not woken me today. An endless siren pierced their songs.

The smell of cooked kangaroo and tomatoes hit my nostrils when I opened my bedroom door. Tigie was making his famously pungent chili in the kitchen. He saw my quizzical look and said, “Electricity is being shut off at eight. Thought we should empty the fridge, have a good meal.” I wondered if our neighbors had done the same before theirs was swept away.

I wandered out to the balcony, where our third roommate, Dave, was grilling sausages. I saw that our swimming pool, swollen at bedtime the night before, had engulfed the entire courtyard. “Who knows how to swim?” said Tigie. He had survived the 2004 tsunami in his native Sri Lanka, so our current flood in Brisbane, the worst natural disaster Australia had ever seen, barely made him sweat. I raised my hand, recalling the morning of my college graduation five years earlier, when I reluctantly dove into the crisp Columbia University pool to fulfill my undergrad requirement. There is a running joke that Columbia College students are required to take a swim test so that, should catastrophe strike Manhattan, they could swim to New Jersey.

“There is no way I am swimming in this water,” I announced to the six classmates holed up in our second-story flat. I could handle the toxins of the Hudson, but the

muddy lake pooling around us posed a legitimate threat from bull sharks and the most poisonous snakes in the world. We live in a modern city of three million people but keep a *Field Guide to Australian Reptiles* on our coffee table.

Tigie likes snakes. After breakfast, he and Dave, both well over six feet tall, went on a mission to survey the neighborhood, help where they could, and salvage supplies, wading up to their necks through the courtyard. “Come back with a boat!” I shouted.

Twenty-four hours earlier, on Tuesday, January 11, I had returned from visiting my family in snowy Manhattan to begin my second year of medical school as part of an international exchange program between Ochsner Clinical School in New Orleans and the University of Queensland School of Medicine in Brisbane, Australia. When I landed, the pilot announced, “Welcome to Queensland, the Sunshine

COLLEGE WALK

State!” It was raining. News of flooding far north of Brisbane had reached me during the break, but I had noticed over the previous year that the country was in constant flux between rain and drought, flood and fire. I figured it was business as usual.

It wasn't. The rains had begun in December and traveled over three-quarters of the vast state of Queensland, inundating one town after the next. Canals overflowed south into the bloated Wivenhoe Dam, and

chairs that had joined the refrigerator. I uploaded it to Facebook, and within minutes I received messages from former Columbia classmates living in Thailand, California, and Sydney, offering refuge. Theo Borgovan '08GSAS, my classmate in the Ochsner program, called to say that he and his wife were on high ground about two miles away and could provide electricity, food, and a couch.

An emergency service rescuer paddling a tinny stopped by to check on us.

People near us fled to higher ground by Jet Ski, kayak, and blow-up raft. It was exciting being in the midst of the flood action, boldly stating that we'd only evacuate if it were via the helicopters that flew overhead. But the humor only masked our knowledge that others had it far worse. Toowoomba, a town that I'd visited on a rural hospital trip, had not had the warning and gradual flooding afforded to Brisbane, but instead had been struck by what news stations called an “inland tsunami.” Television channels played the same images of families trapped on vehicle roofs, captainless boats running into bridges, water swallowing up homes, and loved ones missing.

I measured time not in minutes or hours, but by the steadily disappearing railings and staircases of our building, counting the number of steps the water had to go before it reached us. As a sophomore, I had survived torrential rains on a spring break trip to Florida with the Columbia sailing team. I could handle this. Yet despite my self-confidence and trustworthy friends, it was hard not to cry. The rapidly changing scenery made me feel both awe and uncertainty.



JANET HAMLIN

subsequent runoff into the Brisbane River broke its banks late on the day I arrived. David Wilkinson '65PS, who is dean of the University of Queensland School of Medicine, later wrote to me, “Initially [the flood] was something that affected other people in other places, far away. Then friends started to be affected, and then teaching sites began to be cut off. As Rockhampton [the site of one of our teaching hospitals] became isolated, it all became far too real.”

Now I stood on the balcony and snapped a photo with my iPhone of the floating lawn

He applauded our stockpile of Brisbane's local beer, XXXX (pronounced “four-x”). I didn't mention that we only had one rose-scented candle and three medical “say ah” flashlights for the impending powerless night. He declined to join in a toast, but informed us that the brewery had flooded. Cans and kegs were floating down the main drag. He advised us to stow our belongings as high as possible and to take any valuables with us. “But it's just stuff,” I heard countless times in the following days, from people who had much more to lose than I did.

Dave and Tigie paddled up to our balcony in a tin motorboat borrowed from the flooded University of Queensland boathouse. I laughed with relief. The rising waters had seeped into the flat below ours, and it was past time to evacuate. We received a text message from our clinical skills professor: “Situation will worsen. Land Rover at your disposal. Come over now!”

We navigated our boat through garbage, over fences we knew to be just below the murky surface, and emerged onto a vast lake that covered the road and cricket pitch underneath. I stared in shock at the tips of signs marking Nando's Chicken, the corner store, and the bakery. We followed the tree-tops that indicated the road heading uphill. When we reached dry land, we docked the boat and joined our neighbors registering with emergency service workers.

We spent the next two days at a friend's crowded flat in hungry, muggy idleness.

Power was out. The 90-plus-degree summer heat intensified the odors of mildew and sewage. Grocery-store shelves were bare from the previous days' scramble to stock up on bread, milk, and bottled water. Tigue miraculously scrounged up a bag of oranges to supplement our crackers and canned tuna.

School was canceled. We were still responsible for the week's material but could not take advantage of the free study time without access to the Internet or study materials. Frustration merged with helplessness as we waited for the flood to run its course through Brisbane. After reaching its peak of 14.6 feet on January 13, the water steadily receded, revealing a thick carpet of putrid brown sludge.

Day one of the cleanup effort brought 12,000 registered volunteers to Brisbane, with three times as many flood victims, friends, and strangers walking the streets with buckets.

People accepted what had happened and began cleaning. All we had to do was shout into someone's home, "Do you want a hand?" I watched a little boy pretend to fly his mop down the driveway. He wrung it out and brought it back again to his father.

Tricia, Dave's girlfriend visiting from the United States, chose to stay in Brisbane to help for the week rather than return home or flee to the beach. Women and children showed up with water, sandwiches, tea, and coffee. Tigue joined two Australian defense squads at the end of our street loading heaps of rubbish into trucks. "Military or civilian," he later said, "it didn't matter who you were, what the job was, it got done. With smiles! No one complained." Strangers cleaning apartments in our complex joked, "How do international students have so much stuff?"

Our swimming pool was a mud pit; the flowers and bushes were gone. Luckily, the

water crested 13 steps below our door — our textbooks were spared. Armed with boxes of tea candles, Dave and Tigue chose to live in our powerless flat. I escaped to the spare bedroom of a generous classmate who had not been affected by the flood. I cranked up her air conditioner and swam in her clear pool, while Dave and Tigue took cold showers and heated the kettle for morning coffee on the propane grill outside. When the electricity was restored two weeks later, I returned to the flat, scrubbed it from floor to ceiling (our shoes had tracked mud everywhere), wrapped up the vacuum cord, and eagerly dove into my freshly made bed.

The following morning I woke to the birds' songs. I opened my blinds and saw a large University of Queensland research speedboat still nestled in the center of the cricket pitch. — *Kathryn Vreeland '06CC*

Hands and Hearts

Maybe you've heard of Community Impact, the nonprofit Columbia-based service organization, which turns 30 this year. Maybe you were a volunteer in your college days, or maybe you're the parent of one of the 900 current student volunteers. Maybe you're one of the 8000 people now participating in Community Impact's programs in adult education, mentoring, and homeless advocacy. Or perhaps you're a supporter. Or a board member. Or you've been to Earl Hall on some other business and seen the sign pointing downstairs.

But you might not know how the agency got started, and even if you do — even if, like Joe DeGenova '82CC, you were there — anniversaries are a time to reflect on the elements of action and chance, the peculiar chain that produces the celebrated thing.

It was 1981. America was in a severe recession, and the Reagan administration

had begun to purge the Social Security disability rolls. Thousands of mentally ill people lost their benefits, and many ended up on the streets, adding to an already burgeoning homeless population. The *New York Times* described the situation that September: "Settling on stoops and in vestibules, on park benches and in subway entrances, New York City's tens of thousands of homeless men and women are too numerous and widespread to ignore."

DeGenova wasn't the likeliest guy to take up the cause. He was born in Camden, New Jersey, grew up in Woodbury Heights, and was the first in his family to attend college. He hoped to major in economics, go to business school, and, as he says, "make as much money as I could." But in his freshman year, he and his friend David Joyce '81CC saw a sign in Hamilton Hall for the Big Brothers Big Sisters program. Both of them signed

up. The experience opened their eyes to the "jarring juxtaposition" of Columbia's resources and the needs of the people living nearby. By 1981, DeGenova was majoring in economics and philosophy, and no longer thinking about an early retirement.

DeGenova's Little Brother at that time, William, went to P.S. 145 on 105th Street. One day, a teacher from the school, while conferring about William's reading progress, told DeGenova that there was someone in the neighborhood he should meet — a man named Timmy, who went around with a shopping cart full of food and fed people. Timmy worked out of a church basement on 100th Street. DeGenova went to see him.

"Here was a guy with a long gray ponytail tied up in a bun, and he's making 10 pounds of spaghetti," DeGenova said recently in his office in East Harlem at the Center for Urban Community Services (CUCS), where he is

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deputy director. "Someone had given him the tomato sauce, and he had day-old dough from a pizzeria run by Hindu people, which he made into bread, and we went out on the street and started giving it out. When people saw him coming, they ran to the shopping cart. Kids, homeless people."

DeGenova assisted with the shopping-cart rounds for six months. Then he went to the Catholic chaplain at Columbia, Paul Dinter. "We really should be doing something for the community," DeGenova told the priest.

Dinter agreed. He gave DeGenova \$500 and some office space in the basement of Earl Hall.

"Paul Dinter was critical to getting us started," DeGenova said. "He helped us raise money and gave us some legitimacy in the eyes of the University." In the fall of 1981, DeGenova and David Joyce went around to different religious functions on campus to announce their plan to start four initiatives: a soup kitchen, a shelter, a Big Brothers Big Sisters program, and a tutoring program. More than 200 volunteers signed up. DeGenova and Joyce formed a committee of nine students, with DeGenova in charge. Joyce visited soup kitchens around the city. "He went to places where you stood in line, and places where you sat and were served," said DeGenova, "and he came back and said, 'I think we should have people served, because it's much more dignified.'"

The two friends then went to Broadway Presbyterian Church on West 114th Street and met with the pastor. "We told him we'd like to do a soup kitchen there," DeGenova recalled. "He said, 'Well, I've gotta run it through these different boards of the church, and it may take six or nine months before they'll give us a decision.' So we said, 'Man, we want to do something sooner than that. Look at all these people.'" DeGenova and Joyce spoke with the head of one of the boards at the church and pressed their case. Six weeks later, the soup kitchen was up and running. Then the pair worked with a priest at St. John the Divine to open a 19-bed shelter, and established their own Big Brothers Big Sisters program.

They created a student executive committee, and student coordinators were elected to lead each project under the auspices of the committee and the paid staff. A law student, Charles O'Byrne '81CC, '84LAW, who later became a figure in state and national politics, connected them with the nonprofit law clinic at the law school, which provided legal assistance. Then, with Dinter's help, DeGenova and Joyce approached an alumnus named Connie Maniatty '43CC.

"You find people who are good and decent, you ask them to make an investment, and it builds from there," DeGenova said. "Connie Maniatty was this great guy, went to school on the G.I. Bill, ended up at Salomon Brothers, and was a trustee of the University and a supporter of the Catholic campus ministry. He gave us \$4000 to hire a consulting group to help us put together a board for a nonprofit. Then Rabbi Michael Paley became the director of Earl Hall, and he helped us assemble a really good board with people both inside and outside Columbia. Eventually, we started working with the student activities center — through the structures of the University."

In early 1983, David Joyce was experiencing joint pain, which had been diagnosed as rheumatoid arthritis. The condition got worse, and by March he couldn't get out of bed. He was taken to the hospital, where it was discovered that he in fact had a heart valve infection that had spread. Two weeks later, early on April 2, as Good Friday became Holy Saturday, Joyce died. DeGenova was at his bedside, along with Paul Dinter, volunteer leader Mark Napack '82CC, and Joyce's fiancée.

DeGenova continued to lead the agency through a decade marked by homelessness, crack addiction, AIDS, and cutbacks in social services. By 1986 he was putting in 80 hours a week. He was also engaged. "One night at 11 o'clock I got a call from a kid in the South Bronx, and I turned to my fiancée and said, 'I gotta go to the Bronx, Carmen's out in the street, I gotta help her find a shelter.' When I got back at 1:30 in the morning, my future wife said to me, 'I don't think this is going to work.'"

DeGenova tried to rein himself in and began looking for another job. In 1989 he left Community Impact to join Columbia University Community Services (an affiliate of the School of Social Work), where he became assistant director at a shelter for mentally ill homeless women. The organization spun off from the University in 1994 and became CUCS, where DeGenova is today.

DeGenova was succeeded at Community Impact by Sonia Reese '79TC, now in her 22nd year as executive director. Under Reese, who grew up in the Grant Houses just north of Teachers College, the number of volunteers has more than doubled, the budget has more than tripled, to \$1.4 million, and programs have been developed in computer training, technology access, standardized-test tutoring, and conflict resolution. Reese is planning an outreach event for this fall, and in April she reconnected with DeGenova at the 30th-anniversary gala benefit auction for Community Impact.

In his office at CUCS, DeGenova, in the anniversary spirit, went through some photos of Community Impact's early days. Most showed volunteers working with program participants. In one of them, an older man is speaking with a student in a denim jacket and wire-frame glasses.

"That's Doug Brennan," said DeGenova, and he lit up with a memory of Brennan '87CC, '89SW. "Check this out: Doug's at our Ice Cream Day to recruit new volunteers and he meets this woman, a first-year law student. He comes back and says, 'Joe, I met the woman you're gonna marry.' I said, 'How long did you spend with her?' He said, 'Fifteen minutes.' I said, 'Come on, man.' He said, 'She's coming in to interview tomorrow, she wants to volunteer for the soup kitchen.' I said, 'We don't interview soup kitchen volunteers.'

"I'd never dated a volunteer. So she comes in, and I interview her for an hour. We go out for the first time two weeks later and we click. I said, 'This is it.'"

DeGenova and Michele Cortese '87LAW will be married 25 years next January.

— Paul Hond

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by paul hond

a sentimental education

Playwright Tony Kushner gives a lesson in long division.

[The date, the blind date](#), my mother's latest attempt to address what she saw as the longstanding problem of my bachelorhood, had ended cordially, without dessert, and I found myself walking alone through the electrified chaos of Times Square, down to 42nd Street and west, past the bus station and toward the calm beyond 9th Avenue. Near the corner of 11th Avenue, I came upon the Signature Theatre, whose marquee read: *Angels in America: A Gay Fantasia on National Themes*.

The play had been a hit on Broadway in the early 1990s, I recalled. I hadn't seen it then, nor had I seen the 2003 film version that Mike Nichols directed for HBO. I knew only that it had something to do with AIDS, and if you had asked me who wrote it, I'd have probably said, "Larry Kramer, or no, Tony Kushner," or vice versa, since the two names had melded together long ago in my Swiss-cheese consciousness to form a vague idea of a gay Jewish left-wing activist playwright with glasses. But the playbill outside the Signature clearly said Tony Kushner, and it was Kushner, I knew, who had gone to Columbia.

Curious, I stepped into the warmth of the box office, which was open because a show was in progress. The man at the ticket booth said that the Signature Theatre's production of *Angels* was one of three Kushner works being featured in the company's 2010–2011 all-Kushner season (the Signature focuses on one playwright per year), and

that Kushner's latest play, *The Intelligent Homosexual's Guide to Capitalism and Socialism with a Key to the Scriptures*, would have its New York debut this spring at the Public Theater, in a coproduction with the Signature.

"I usually don't buy tickets in advance, since you never know what will happen," I said, "but maybe I'll squeeze in a matinee this week."

The man smiled. "*Angels* is nearly seven hours long," he said, and seeing my alarm, he added, "It's in two parts, *Millennium Approaches* and *Perestroika*." That didn't help from a commitment standpoint. Yet seven hours *did* have a kind of thrilling defiance in it, a gothic grandeur, something formidable, even religious. Besides, it was called *Angels in America*, which didn't *sound* boring, with those two capital A's like spires on a gate through which I would pass. Then he told me that *Millennium Approaches* and *Perestroika* each won the Tony Award for Best Play (in 1993 and 1994, respectively), and that *Millennium Approaches* earned Kushner the 1993 Pulitzer Prize for Drama.

"Sold," I said, eager to fill this hole in my awareness.

The following Wednesday, I arrived to a packed house and took my seat.

From its incantatory opening — a eulogy given by an Orthodox rabbi for an old immigrant woman he didn't know — the Signature's production, directed by Michael Greif, gave me a vision of the thunderbolt that had split

illustrations by gary kelley

the American stage 20 years before. In the fall of 1992, when *Angels* opened at the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles, the *New York Times* theater critic Frank Rich articulated the wild excitement that had broken out in the theater world over the arrival of what appeared to be the Thing Itself: “Some visionary playwrights want to change the world. Some want to revolutionize the theater. Tony Kushner, the remarkably gifted 36-year-old author of *Angels in America*, is that rarity of rarities: a writer who has the promise to do both.” The following spring, the play, directed by George C. Wolfe, came to New York with so much hype on its wings that it could hardly be expected to fly so high.

On May 4, 1993, *Angels* made its Broadway debut at the Walter Kerr Theater. Frank Rich saw the play again and doubled down. “*Angels in America* speaks so powerfully,” he wrote, “because something far larger and more urgent than the future of the theater is at stake. It really is history that Mr. Kushner intends to crack open.”

Now, in the smaller, more intimate setting of the Signature, *Angels* spread itself out, revealing the relationships of two conflicted couples in New York, one gay (Louis and Prior), the other Mormon and married (Joe and Harper Pitt), whose lives intersect during the Reagan-fueled mid-1980s, when a culture of individual self-interest arose alongside a deadly epidemic that was attacking

tion about love, loss, history, survival, and the politics of responsibility. Kushner’s immense human feeling, a cosmic empathy that he extends to all his characters, aroused terror and pity, while the play’s overt theatricality reminded spectators that they were watching a *performance*, just as Bertolt Brecht, that famous skeptic of naturalism, prescribed, lest the audience dissolve into emotional catharsis and lose its critical eye. Even *Angels’* livid dragon, Roy Cohn, a coarse, closeted lawyer and avatar of egotism (based on the historical Roy Cohn, who as a young attorney helped send the Rosenbergs to the electric chair and acted as Senator Joseph McCarthy’s chief counsel during the Army-McCarthy hearings), maintains a certain dignity of ideological and psychological constancy as he dies of AIDS in a hospital bed, haunted by the ghost of Ethel Rosenberg, and huffing forks of fire till the end.

Angels made Kushner famous, and he began engaging his broadening audience wherever and whenever he could — on *Charlie Rose*, in magazines and books, at talks at universities and synagogues — in an ongoing conversation about politics, art, psychology, sexuality, and intellectual history, with an emphasis on social justice and liberation. “I believe that the playwright should be a kind of public intellectual, even if only a crackpot public intellectual,” Kushner has written. “Someone who asks her or his thoughts to get up before crowds,

Yet seven hours *did* have a kind of thrilling defiance in it,
a gothic grandeur, something formidable, even religious.

marginalized communities. Prior has been diagnosed with AIDS, prompting Louis to a morally perilous decision; the Pitts are ripped apart by Joe’s repressed homosexuality and dawning liberation; and a turbulent angel crashes through Prior’s hospital-room ceiling to deliver burning messages to the feverish, lesion-spotted man.

As we reach the tower of this cathedral of a play, Prior, having battled with the angel and the disease, stands near the Bethesda Fountain in Central Park. It is 1990, and Prior is, by some grace, still alive. “We won’t die secret deaths anymore,” he tells us. “The world only spins forward. We will be citizens. The time has come.”

The universality of Prior’s message, with its faith in the inevitability of progress, was powerful and present and did not need to be named. Yet for all its loaded content, *Angels* was no polemic, but a furious, head-spinning dialectic, a rapturous, raging, overstuffed, flamboyantly literate, hilarious, horrifying, always-riveting conversa-

on platforms, and entertain, challenge, instruct, annoy, provoke, appall.” Kushner has fulfilled this ideal, providing a penetrating, outspoken, erudite, and at times priestly progressive voice, while risking, with every appearance, with every foreword and afterword, with every inspired speech frantically scribbled in the back-seat en route to a college commencement, the order of his writing mind and his finite fund of hours.

In a way, Kushner’s whole life is a piece of writing, the words weaving through shifting modes of presentation, entwined in a continuing dialogue, thesis and antithesis unloosening flumes and plumes of new ideas, a waterfall of confessions, expressions, obsessions, impressions, digressions, whole therapy sessions — one learns quickly that there is very little to say about Kushner that he can’t say better himself.

Still, I wanted to speak with him. I sent out queries and was granted an interview on the morning of February 14,

which was a free day for me. My purpose was clear-cut: to find out what role a Columbia education might have played in shaping the vision of a great playwright.

[The night before the meeting](#), my mother called. “So what’s new?” she said.

“I’ve been busy,” I told her. “I’m interviewing a playwright tomorrow.”

“Oh? Who?”

“His name is Tony Kushner.”

“Is he married?” My mother gave a light laugh. She had lost her husband six years earlier, and was on the lookout.

“Yes, he’s married,” I said, and took some pleasure in the details. “To a man. Legally. They got married in Massachusetts in 2008. Progress and hope for the world.”

“That’s because they’ve got Barney Frank up there.” My mother said this without judgment, just putting two and two together. “So when are *you* going to get married?”

I sighed. “We’ve been through this. I have to figure out what kind of life I want, what kind of compromises I can make. I’m . . . you know, I’m . . .”

“You’re *what*?”

“I’m ambivalent. I’m divided. My head, my heart. I’m torn. There is a battle within, Mom. A bloody civil war.”

“Then settle it already. No one’s getting any younger.”

[Kushner arrived at 8:05 a.m.](#) at the appointed spot, a café on the Upper West Side. I was waiting at a back table and signaled to him. He wore a stuffed knapsack, round glasses, and a dark half-zip Columbia (the sportswear brand, not the school) fleece pullover. We said hello, shook hands, and sat. I told him how knocked out I was by *Angels*. He nodded and thanked me. He seemed a little distracted. He ordered oatmeal, with the fruit and nuts on the side, and a cup of decaf. I ordered a slice of whole-grain toast and an espresso. Kushner said that he had just been doing rewrites on his new play, which was in rehearsals. I felt guilty for pulling him away from what sounded like pretty urgent business, but I figured he knew what he was doing.

To get the ball rolling, I said, “So I read that you’ve been writing a screenplay about Lincoln.”

Kushner averted his eyes. “Well, I can’t talk about it a whole lot because we’re going to start filming in the fall of this year —”

“Oh, no, not that,” I said, worried that he thought I was looking for gossip (“Is Daniel Day-Lewis tall enough?”). “I mean, how, uh, has Lincoln emerged for you as a character?”

Kushner nodded once; his needle steadied.



“Steven Spielberg did this film that I wrote for him, *Munich*, and we both had a very good time doing it, and he asked me to consider this Lincoln project,” Kushner said. “At first I said no, because I found the prospect of writing about somebody as great as Lincoln daunting. As a person he’s an incredibly fascinating study. His psyche is so available to us because of the things he wrote and said. He was a president who wrote and talked about emotion in his public utterances, and more in his letters. The hard thing is that Abraham Lincoln was a genius — I use that word very, very seldom — but I think that he was really one of the upper-echelon geniuses, like Shakespeare or Mozart or Michelangelo. It’s very difficult to write about people like that. Although you can describe the parts of them that seem approachable in terms of how their personalities developed — in Lincoln’s case, his mother died and his sister died when he was very young — what has to remain a mystery is how they did the thing that we most value them for.”

Kushner has a Mahlerian profile, with the glasses and thick hair and forehead, but his face and voice more resemble the actor John Turturro. His manner is warm and relaxed, utterly social, and modest in proportion to his reverence for the artists and thinkers, dead and alive, with whom he communes.



“I think the case could be made that Lincoln is the greatest leader of a democratic country the world has ever known,” said Kushner. “When you look at the horrifying circumstances that he inherited when he became president, and the way that he not only managed to keep the country together but created from the chaos of the beginnings of the war something that eventually became a revolutionary event that overturned institutionalized slavery — in a sense he saved the idea of democracy, made it possible. This is what he says in the Gettysburg Address: that given that the 1848 revolutions in Europe were fairly recent events, the jury was still out

on whether or not democracy could work or whether it would simply degenerate into anarchy. The Civil War was, as he says, a great trial of that idea, and he identified slavery as the source of the threat of disintegration of the Union, and saw the way in which slavery and democracy are absolutely antithetical to one another.”

Our food arrived. As Kushner stirred his oatmeal, I thought back on what he said about the limits of biography, and how the principle might apply to Kushner himself. We know, for instance, that he was born in New York City in 1956 and grew up in a small Jewish community in the small southern city of Lake Charles, Louisiana; that he was aware of being gay at the age of six, and that he wrestled with shame and self-hatred and alienation into adulthood; that his father, Bill, a Juilliard-trained clarinetist and poetry lover, had moved the family to Lake Charles to run the family lumber business, and paid his three kids (two boys and a girl) a dollar for every poem they memorized; that Sylvia, Kushner’s mother, had been, at 18, first bassoonist in the orchestra of the New York City Opera, and later played Linda Loman in a Lake Charles Little Theater production of *Death of a Salesman* that put an arrow in young Tony’s heart; that his parents were New Deal liberals who encouraged Kushner to embrace that which made him different (they meant his Jewishness); that he tried psychotherapy while at Columbia in hopes of changing his sexual preference; that in 1981 he came out to his mother, who was heartbroken at first, but soon came around; that Sylvia died of lung cancer in 1990; and that Bill continued to have trouble accepting his son’s identity until the praise for *Angels* helped open his mind.

We know these things, and much more.

And yet.

“Were you a history major?” I said, taking a stab.

“Medieval studies.”

“Medieval studies?” I saw stone towers, horses, flashing swords. “How did that come about?”

“I took a freshman expository writing class, and everybody was taught by a graduate student doing some sort of fellowship. The woman that I had was a medievalist who specialized in Anglo-Saxon literature. This was the first time I’d been in the room with a literary scholar, and I was reading *Beowulf* and *The Song of Roland* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. I had never realized what literature could do, how rigorous you could be about breaking it down and discovering extremely sophisticated aesthetic and philosophical machinery at work, and how the form and the content related, and how this poem, *Gawain*, which you

could read as this fun spook story, is actually about art, about the power of the imagination, about artifice. That was a great revelation to me.

“Midway through my junior or senior year, I went to Karl-Ludwig Selig, the big *Don Quixote* specialist, and told him I wanted to take Edward Tayler’s two-semester Shakespeare class. A friend of mine had taken the class and said I had to do it. And Selig said, ‘You need to take Latin if you’re going to be a medievalist, and Shakespeare isn’t medieval, so we think you shouldn’t do that.’ So I switched to English.

“In my senior year I took Kenneth Koch’s 20th-century poetry class, which changed my life. He was a wonderful, wonderful teacher. After reading and talking about a poet, he had us write imitations of that poet. I had such awe for the poems and for how difficult poetry was to write. I’m not a poet, but I would write imitations for the requirement, and Koch would give me A’s and A-pluses. I was intimidated by him, so I never tried to become friendly with him, and he didn’t particularly encourage that, or maybe he had some students he seemed to like a lot and I wasn’t one of them. But a couple of times he

could identify the polarities you could start to understand the central dynamic principle of Shakespeare’s plays. I think there’s a great deal of truth in that.”

In my notebook I wrote the number two. I recalled the concluding words of “With a Little Help from My Friends,” Kushner’s post-*Angels* essay on the myth of the isolated artist and the truth of collaboration. “Marx was right: the smallest indivisible human unit is two people, not one; one is a fiction.”

“I also took a really good class in 20th-century drama with Matthew Wikander,” said Kushner. “That’s where I first read Brecht.”

Brecht. Kushner’s maestro, his model of the political artist, who proposed a socially engaged theater that edified as it entertained.

“Around that time, Joe Papp brought Richard Foreman from his loft to Lincoln Center to do a new version of *The Threepenny Opera*, which had only been done in the U.S. in Marc Blitzstein’s version in the ’50s. It’s a bowdlerized *Threepenny*, all the dirty words are taken out, its ugly, scabrous spirit has been removed. It’s still a huge hit because the music is so sublime, but listening

“I had never realized what literature could do, how rigorous you could be about breaking it down and discovering extremely sophisticated aesthetic and philosophical machinery at work.”

liked some image and underlined it and wrote ‘good’ on the side. And at that point I wanted to be a playwright, to be a writer. And I kept thinking. ‘Either he’s made a mistake, or is it possible that he thinks I have talent?’ It was very hard for me at that point to —”

Kushner searched for the words, his eyes lowered, and we both said, “accept that.” For a second I thought I was watching Kushner accept it anew.

“But Tayler’s Shakespeare class,” Kushner said. “Nothing I’ve ever done in my life on an intellectual level was as exciting as that.”

Edward Tayler began teaching Literature Humanities in 1960. When he received the Presidential Award for Outstanding Teaching in 1996, the citation noted, “Your students call you magical, learned and passionate, tough yet tender, witty, humane, wholly unique. Many report that you have changed their lives.”

“Tayler’s approach to Shakespeare was dialectical,” Kushner explained. “He said that to read Shakespeare, you only have to be able to count to two. As he saw it, Shakespeare is organized along polarities, and if you

to that version you didn’t really get what Brecht was doing; it just seemed sort of quaint. Papp used the very good, very direct Manheim translation of *Threepenny*, and Richard Foreman, who’s an amazing artist, was the perfect person to do it, and it was one of the greatest things I’ve ever seen.

“Dialectics is the heart of Marxism, and it’s also very much the heart of Brecht. I’ve said this before, but Brecht taught me about Shakespeare, Shakespeare taught me about Brecht, Marx taught me about Shakespeare, and Brecht taught me about Marx.”

Outside the classroom, Kushner, the future political playwright, was gaining an education in activism, having been initially drawn to Columbia out of nostalgia for what he calls the “days of rage” of the 1960s. When Kushner came to Columbia in 1974, the city was on the edge of bankruptcy, and the Morningside Heights branch of the New York Public Library was set to be closed.

“So these old lefties in Morningside Heights went into the library at 113th Street and said, ‘We’re not leaving,’” Kushner recalled. “Word got out. I saw on the bulletin

board in Carman Hall that they were having a sit-in. So I went. Then these acid-burnout types who had been around in '68 came to see what was happening. We stayed for three or four weeks, and it turned into a big thing. We had readings and slept there and wouldn't leave, and eventually they kept the place open, which was great, because the people who used it were these octogenarians who had been around in the '30s and '20s, really old New York, ultra-left, wonderful people.

"By my senior year, I was very involved with the anti-apartheid divestment movement, going to meetings, and directing for the first time."

Kushner got involved with a theater group called the Columbia Players, and in a preview of his outsized ambition, he directed Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair*, which had 36 characters. Kushner sewed all the costumes himself.

"And there was no theater major," Kushner said, "which was a great thing."

The remark surprised me.

"I feel it's a great shame that Columbia now has a theater major," said this man of the theater.

I leaned forward with my face in my hands, concerned. "Tell me why."

"Because it's vocational training, it's not a liberal arts degree. I'm sure that Columbia insists, as many schools do, that their theater majors take lots of academic classes, but I don't think 18 is a good age to train somebody to be an actor because there's a certain dismantling of the self that takes place. Good acting training should be sadistic. You have to unlearn a lot of what you think you know about acting, which is very entangled with your sense of self, in that the self that you present on stage has all sorts of complicated relationships with the self you imagine yourself to be and actually are. The difficult process of taking inventory of that and letting go of some of the things that you think make you attractive and appealing and good onstage and in public is very difficult. The first year in most serious acting training is a really hard year, and I think it's ridiculous to think that people are going to do it when they're 18 and away from home for the first time. You learn something, but I think you'll learn it better when you're four years older.

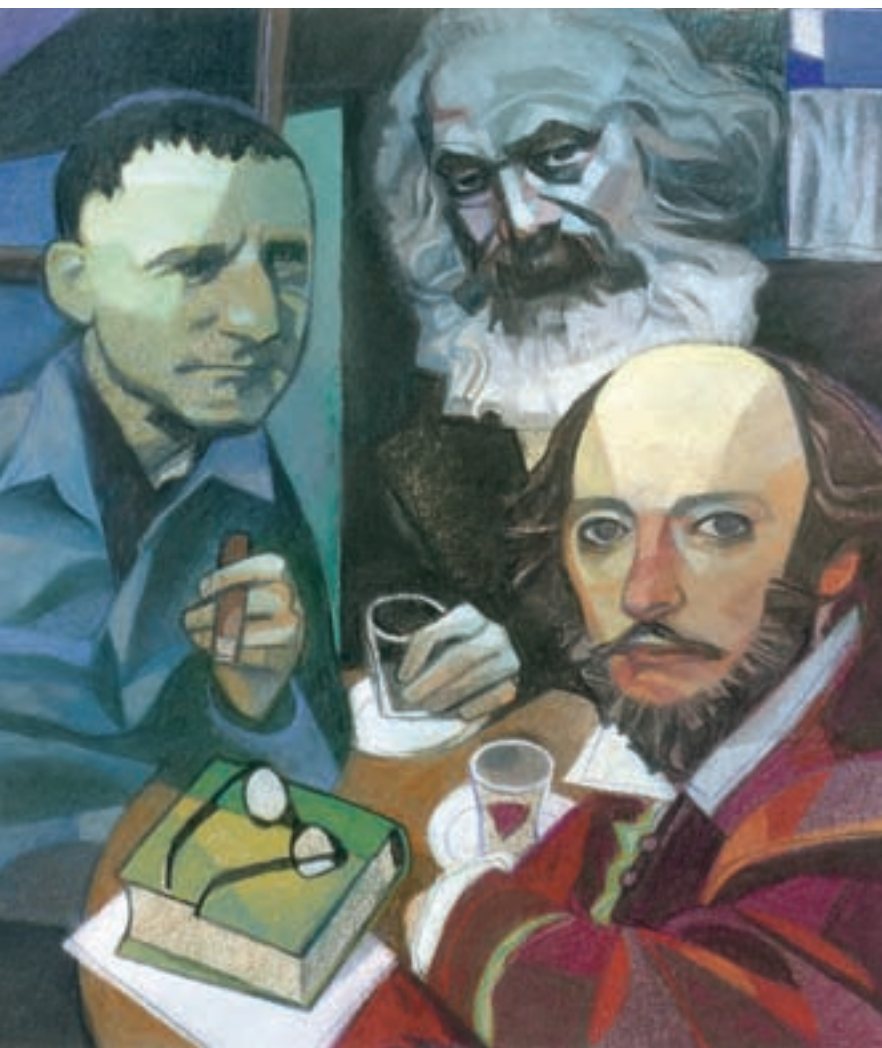
"Meanwhile, the liberal arts degree is one of the great inventions of Western civilization. It's the perfect moment to become a brain for four years, and retrain, and learn, and I don't think you ever get that back, I don't think life is going to ever give you another four years when you're allowed to just sit around and be confused."

I still sat around being confused, but I saw Kushner's point. I wished I'd read more in college, devoured more, been confused more.

There must be some Brecht plays on my shelf at home, I thought. Maybe tonight I'd curl up with *Mother Courage*. I then recalled something Kushner wrote in his "Notes about Political Theater" — "I do theater because my mother did theater." I thought about the term "political theater," and how it had a dual sense, and then I remembered that Lincoln had been shot in a theater and that Ronald Reagan was an actor.

Following the trail back to presidents, and to Columbia, and hardly knowing what I meant, I remarked to Kushner that lots of people thought Barack Obama '83CC was a pretty good actor.

"Well, all politicians are actors in some ways," Kushner said. "So is Lincoln. He was obsessed with



Shakespeare, which probably along with the Bible was his favorite reading material. He loved actors and loved talking to actors about Shakespeare, and he loved reciting Shakespeare.” Kushner paused for half a second. “Of course, Obama’s an extraordinary performer, but I think anybody who thinks that he’s —” He veered from the thought, and went on with enthusiasm. “I think he’s an immensely exciting figure who on some level is working off the Abraham Lincoln playbook. He’s certainly one of the best writers we’ve had. So far he hasn’t produced a second Gettysburg Address, and nobody has written another *Moby-Dick* or *Leaves of Grass* or Emily Dickinson’s poems. It’s a different era. But I think he’s a bril-

“His name is Tony Kushner, and his new play is called *The Intelligent Homosexual’s Guide to Capitalism and Socialism with a Key to the Scriptures*.”

“The what?”

“It’s set in Carroll Gardens, Brooklyn, in 2007, and it’s about a retired longshoreman, Gus Marcantonio, who’s a cousin of a historical figure, Vito Marcantonio, a socialist who represented East Harlem in the ’30s and ’40s.”

“A socialist?”

“Gus summons his three children to his house for a series of shocking announcements,” I said, paraphrasing the description on a postcard that I’d picked up at the Public. “The play explores revolution, radicalism,

“Brecht taught me about Shakespeare, Shakespeare taught me about Brecht, Marx taught me about Shakespeare, and Brecht taught me about Marx.”

liant politician, and, I think, possibly a statesman. I think he understands something about democracy that a lot of people have forgotten, which is that to exercise power, there’s a necessity of making compromises.

“The trick for Lincoln, who talked about this a lot, is that you hold on to some kind of moral true north, you keep your eye fixed on the ultimate values and goals toward which you are aspiring.”

After the interview I went to the office to do some research. That’s when I found out that Roy Cohn was Roy Cohn ’47CC, ’49LAW. Then I realized that Cohn would have been on campus at the same time as Allen Ginsberg ’48CC. Talk about poles. I read some more Kushner and went home.

Early that evening, my mother called.

“Happy Valentine’s Day!” she said. “Any plans tonight?”

“No, just staying in. Work to do.”

“Still on the fence.”

“Ambivalence expands our options,” I said, quoting Hendryk from *Terminating*, a short Kushner play. “Ambivalence increases our freedom.”

“I don’t know where you get these ideas.”

“Ambivalence is what made Lincoln a great president,” I said. “He was in touch with his doubts, and was willing to talk openly about them. That’s how he worked through extremely difficult questions.”

There was a pause. “You are not Abraham Lincoln.”

“That’s not the point.”

“So how was the interview with the playwright? What did he write?”

marriage, sex, prostitution, politics, real estate, and unions of all kinds. Oh, and two of Gus’s kids are gay. Shall I get tickets?” I didn’t wait for an answer. “Kushner said he was thinking a lot about Arthur Miller while he was writing it. He loves *A View from the Bridge*. That had a longshoreman in it.”

“Well, anything with a longshoreman sounds good,” my mother said. “When are you coming to visit?”


“Soon. I promise.”

Later that night, I grabbed an old anthology of plays from my bookcase. Inside it were some of Kushner’s heroes: Brecht, Eugene O’Neill, Miller, Tennessee Williams. I took the book and my voice recorder into my bedroom so that I could listen to Kushner’s words while I skimmed the pages.

I lay on my bed and turned on the recorder. Kushner’s voice rolled out. I closed my eyes and listened.

“One of the great gifts that one can get from the theater is that ability to see two things at the same time. When you’re watching a play, you believe in the reality of the thing you’re watching, while at the same time being acutely aware that what you’re watching is not real. You have to develop that double vision, that ability to be within the event and out of the event at the same time. That’s critical consciousness: the ability to see past the surface into the depths and inner workings of what’s gone into creating the surface effect.

“Theater can help with that, and to a certain extent you have to be able to see double when you’re looking at reality. Tayler would say you’ll be reality’s fool if you don’t.”



In the Cardamom Mountains of southwest Cambodia, the rain forest grows thick. During monsoon season, a canopy of phayom, rosewood, pinang baik, and white meranti trees blocks out the sun. At night, the forest emits its own soft orange light, as hunters burn campfires to ward off elephants.

“It’s seriously rough country, a wild and beautiful place,” says Brendan M. Buckley, a Columbia scientist who led a research expedition here in January. “You move slowly, bashing and slashing your way through the vegetation.”

Buckley is here because he thinks these woods, which are among the most remote in Asia, hold secrets to the disappearance of a city that once existed in the jungle some 100 miles north of the mountains. This was the city of Angkor, which, at its pinnacle in the 12th century, was home to

750,000 people and covered some 400 square miles — the largest footprint of any urban development in the preindustrialized world. Its workers built gigantic Hindu temples out of sandstone and planted rice paddies that stretched far over the horizon. Its engineers created dams and reservoirs to irrigate crops, even waterways to travel around the settlement by boat.

And then this civilization vanished. By the time Portuguese missionaries arrived in the 16th century, the city had been largely abandoned and its temples enshrouded in vegetation.

What happened to Angkor? “There are few written accounts that have survived from the period, so it’s an enduring mystery,” says Victor Lieberman, a professor of Southeast Asian history at the University of Michigan. “We historians don’t have much evidence to grasp onto.”

What happened to Angkor?

Evergreen trees on a remote Cambodian mountain range could hold



secrets of a lost civilization. **By David J. Craig**

But that's changing now that Buckley is discovering new clues — not in stone carvings or long-lost travelogues, but in the flesh of evergreen trees.

The scent of conifer

Climbing up a ridge in the Cardamoms, Buckley spots a cluster of evergreens known as *Dacrycarpus imbricatus*, a rare species with no common name in English. With their needle-shaped leaves and shrubby limbs, the trees look out of place in a rain forest.

“Even in the tropics, we find evergreens in the highest, coolest altitudes,” says Buckley, an associate research professor at Colum-



Brendan M. Buckley

ANDREW NELSON

bia's Tree-Ring Laboratory. “We look for evergreens because they show their growth rings clearly. They're prized for their soft lumber, too, so we have to go into remote areas to find any old ones still standing. These here are really nice — maybe 500 years old.”

Buckley unzips his knapsack and removes a wood borer, a hand-operated drill with an extremely long, hollow bit. He presses the borer gently into the side of a tree, aiming it straight for the core. Then, gripping the borer's T-shaped handle with both hands, Buckley leans into the tree and begins rotating the tool as if it were a tire iron. With each half-turn, the scientist lets out a grunt and the wood produces a nasal, birdlike squawk. The oily, slightly floral scent of conifer wafts in the air. After 15 minutes (“*I've had bursitis in both elbows*”), Buckley stops, the borer having disappeared almost entirely into the tree. He inserts a tiny spoon into the back of the tool's hollow bit and pulls out a long beige dowel partitioned by some 450 orange stripes — a chronicle of this tree's life.

“These rings hold a lot of secrets,” he says. “Not just the tree's age, but also its annual growing conditions. In a year when there's little rain, you'll get a skinny ring.”

Since the mid-1990s, Buckley has collected cores from thousands of trees across Cambodia, Vietnam, Thailand, and Laos, generating insights into the region's climate history that could have

been achieved no other way: Just as ice cores provide a glimpse of past atmospheric conditions and coral reefs indicate historic ocean temperatures, tree rings document annual precipitation levels.

And it doesn't hurt the tree. After Buckley takes a core, he doesn't even need to plug up the hole. “It's actually better for the tree if you don't plug it,” he says. “Trees are very good at compartmentalizing their wounds, which means they physically and chemically wall off the injured area to prevent pathogens from seeping in.”

Over the course of this three-day field expedition, Buckley will collect dozens of cores, slide each one into a clear plastic tube that resembles an oversized drinking straw, and ship them to his lab at the Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory, in Palisades, New York. Once he's back at the lab, he will sandpaper each core until it's shiny smooth, which enables him to take microscopic measurements of its rings. Then, by analyzing the rings from many trees of the same species — looking for years in which all of the trees grew a skinny ring or a wide ring, for instance — he will identify common patterns in their year-to-year growth variations. With this information, he can estimate past rainfall levels.

“Weather stations started taking routine measurements of rainfall in this area in 1951,” Buckley says. “So we start by correlating the newest tree rings against these precise rainfall measurements. Then, we can extrapolate backward into the distant past, based simply on the rings.”

Buckley didn't start this work with Angkor in mind. As a climate scientist, he has always had a broader goal: to help fellow scientists design computer models that can predict future rainfall patterns in Asia, based on past monsoon cycles. He has already made important contributions in this area, showing, for instance, that when water temperatures in the Pacific and Indian Oceans have changed over the past millennium, monsoons have typically been disrupted, triggering wild variations in the amount of rainfall they bring.

A few years ago, however, Buckley, who is widely regarded as the foremost tree-ring researcher working in the Asian tropics, started receiving phone calls from historians and archaeologists. Word had spread that he was routinely coring trees as old as

ANDREW NELSON

PATRICK BROWN





Buckley's tree-ring research supports a theory that most scholars, until now, dismissed as overly speculative: that climate change led to Angkor's collapse.

750 years, dating back to Angkor's heyday. Soon, Buckley was collaborating with archaeologist Roland Fletcher, a professor at the University of Sydney and an expert on Angkor's medieval civilization. Buckley began looking for old-growth forest as near as possible to Angkor and helping his colleague interpret the data.

Their big discovery came last spring, when Buckley, Fletcher, and fellow Columbia tree-ring specialists Edward Cook and Kevin Anchukaitis published a paper showing that Angkor, during the century before it is thought to have collapsed, experienced two long and severe droughts. The first lasted an astonishing 30 years, the next 20 years. Each of these dry periods was punctuated by several years of heavy monsoons that, according to Buckley, likely caused devastating floods.

"We're talking about dry spells the likes of which we've never seen in modern history," he says. "And then, the skies open up and the rain won't stop."

Partial histories

That discovery, published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, has provided the most compelling evidence yet for a theory that most scholars, until now, have dismissed as overly speculative: that climate change contributed to Angkor's collapse. Other, more subtle clues had been found before. A few years ago, Fletcher and his team of archaeologists unearthed evidence that Angkor's main reservoir was retrofitted around the same time the

city is thought to have collapsed, in the early 15th century, to be just half of its original size. The archaeologists hypothesized that this renovation was undertaken during a prolonged drought to ensure that water coming into the reservoir from a nearby river would accumulate rather than seep into a big, half-empty mud basin.

"There are also accounts of drought in China and in India around this same time," says Lieberman, the historian at Michigan. "It would stand to reason that Angkor might have had extreme weather, too." This was a period when the Earth was undergoing a major climate shift, scientists believe, as it was transitioning from what's commonly called the Medieval Warm Period into the Little Ice Age.

Few historians have considered climate change's effects on Angkor, however. The standard explanation for Angkor's demise, Lieberman says, is that its ruling elite simply abandoned the city when economic activity in Southeast Asia shifted southward toward coastal ports in the 14th century. Other scholars say that Angkor's political structure disintegrated when Buddhism swept through the region in the 13th century, as Angkor's rulers considered themselves earthly representations of Hindu gods.

Lieberman stands alone among prominent historians in that he has suggested for years that climate change hastened Angkor's collapse. "The evidence that Angkor saw severe drought was rather circumstantial before Brendan generated this rainfall data, but I still thought it was the best *prima facie* explanation we had,"



First into the tropics

A TREE RING is nature's best rain gauge: The wider the ring, the heavier the rain.

Until recently, though, scientists thought that tree-ring research, or dendrochronology, couldn't be done in the tropics. That's because rings are the result of a thickening and hardening of tree cells at the end of each growing season. Trees in warm climates typically grow year-round, so they tend not to produce rings.

There are a handful of evergreen species, however, that produce faint rings in response to Southeast Asia's seasonal monsoons. And over the past 15 years, Brendan M. Buckley and his colleagues at Columbia's Tree-Ring Lab have analyzed cores from thousands of evergreens across Southeast Asia, producing the first detailed history of rainfall in the region. Their work recently led to Columbia's creation of a free online database for scholars called the Monsoon Asia Drought Atlas, which provides year-to-year rainfall levels in Southeast Asia dating back to the year 1300.

Scientists in the 1930s first realized that some evergreens in the Asian tropics show rings, but for many decades they dismissed the trees as too difficult to work with. The problem was that in years when the summer rains were light, and the distinction between

wet and dry seasons therefore very subtle, the trees didn't form rings.

Buckley has solved this problem, in part, by gathering an enormous number of tree samples. "If you core enough trees, you should get at least one with that elusive ring represented," he says. "Sometimes you have to get crafty: You'll find the ring only on one side of the tree, possibly because the sun was hitting the branches on that side. Or the ring will show up only toward the top of the trunk, as that's where most growth occurs in a slow-growth year."

Even if Buckley finds a ring for every year, however, analyzing a tree's growth patterns in the rain forest's complex ecosystem is extraordinarily difficult. If, for instance, a tree was once smothered by other trees and vegetation, it might have received less groundwater than would typically be expected. Its rings therefore would be skinny, suggesting there had been a mild drought, even if the monsoons were heavy.

"This is especially problematic in a tropical rain forest," Buckley says, "because there's so much variability in your forest cover."

Fortunately, Buckley's colleague Ed Cook, who directs the Tree-Ring Lab, is a statistician and has written several computer programs to help dendrochro-

nologists make sense of tree-ring measurements. One of his programs addresses precisely the problem that Buckley confronts in the tropics: It identifies temporary peaks or dips in a tree's growth rate and, if other trees in its vicinity don't corroborate those peaks or dips, the program corrects for the discrepancy.

Prior to Buckley venturing into the tropics, Cook, armed with a wood corer and these statistical techniques, became one of the first dendrochronologists to work in the deciduous forests of the northeastern U.S. At the time, back in the late 1970s, most dendrochronologists restricted themselves to working in much simpler ecosystems, such as in the American Southwest, where trees tend to be evenly spaced out and to have equal access to rainwater. Cook's fieldwork in New York's Hudson Valley produced the first detailed rainfall history of this region; it also demonstrated that tree-ring research could be conducted in thickly grown forest.

"Scientists in our lab have gone on to do this work across the entire forested world, from the Northern Boreal Forest to the tropics of South America and Southeast Asia," says Cook. "It's taken a lot of diligence, perseverance, and stubbornness."



he says. “Other historians haven’t looked at this issue closely, I think, in part because they don’t feel comfortable with their own understanding of the science. So, in the absence of any written accounts of drought or flooding near Angkor, they’ve preferred to focus on the types of phenomena they’re accustomed to writing about, which are the economic, political, and cultural factors.”

Now, with Buckley’s findings, Lieberman believes that historians are obligated to study how Angkor, as well as several other historic Southeast Asian civilizations, were affected by extreme weather. He points out that Buckley’s data reveal prolonged droughts also occurred between 1638 and 1641, just three years before peasant rebellions led to the fall of the Ming Dynasty, and between 1756 and 1768, around the same time that three kingdoms in what are now Vietnam, Myanmar, and Thailand all collapsed. In a forth-

“Other historians haven’t looked at this issue closely because they don’t feel comfortable with their own understanding of the science.”

— Victor Lieberman

coming essay coauthored with Buckley, Lieberman exhorts fellow historians to examine why certain civilizations succumbed to these droughts while others survived. The answers might lie, they say, in the societies’ water-management strategies, the nature of their governments, and the diversification of their economies.

“For the first time,” Lieberman and Buckley write, “we have the data to make climate change a part of our regional narrative.”

Archaeologists, meanwhile, say that Buckley’s work is helping them justify further research on Angkor’s water-management system. Fletcher is now studying the remains of a stone dam built across the Siem Reap River to fill the reservoir that was renovated near the city center. “It looks like the dam was obliterated suddenly at some point, which we can tell by the way its remains are distributed in the riverbed,” he says. “It looks like there was a deluge.”

In a forthcoming book about Angkor, Fletcher lays out this hypothesis: The city had grown so sprawling by the 14th century, and its infrastructure so large and unwieldy, that its citizens couldn’t alter dams, reservoirs, and irrigation ditches quickly enough when the monsoons went haywire.

“When the rains were light, these people had to figure out how to collect every drop of water,” Fletcher says. “And when the monsoons got really heavy again, any infrastructure that had been renovated to accommodate the dry periods could have been torn apart. If this kept happening, the people would have lost faith in their rulers.”

Water for tomorrow

Today, Buckley and other Columbia tree-ring scientists, including Edward Cook, his son Ben Cook, Kevin Anchukaitis, and Rosanne D’Arrigo ’89GSAS, continue to sample trees throughout Southeast Asia. Among their goals is to improve the integrity of the rainfall data that form the basis of the Angkor drought study. They also want to expand their geographic coverage — they’ve sampled trees from 300 locations in India, Nepal, Myanmar, China, Japan, as well as in Southeast Asia, so far — to determine where droughts have been most severe over the past millennium.

“Ultimately, we want to be able to tell how a drought affected one country versus another in the same region,” says Buckley. “This will give us a detailed understanding of monsoon activity.”

This information, the scientists say, could help governments in the region determine where they ought to construct new reservoirs to prepare for the possibility of severe and prolonged drought. The scientists worry that the summer rains could be disrupted again if global warming causes water temperatures in the Indian and Pacific Oceans to rise. The monsoons, they point out, provide drinking water for hundreds of millions of people year-round, as well as irrigation for their crops.

“One of the powerful things about paleoclimate research is that it shows us what nature is capable of,” says Anchukaitis, who integrates tree-ring information into the computer simulations used by climate modelers. “We may not have any written record of a 30-year drought ever occurring in this area, but it happened once. The trees show that.” 📌



The Arab
Reawakeni



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With rebellion sweeping the Arab world, Rashid Khalidi, the Edward Said Professor of Modern Arab Studies, talks to *Columbia Magazine* about the prospect for real change.

COLUMBIA MAGAZINE: The revolutions across the Arab world may have been precipitated by Mohamed Bouazizi's self-immolation in Tunisia, but how far back do we need to go in order to understand what has been happening?

RASHID KHALIDI: During the Cold War there were authoritarian regimes on both sides of the Iron Curtain. At the end of the Cold War, there was a series of democratic transitions in many parts of the world: Latin America, East Asia, and ultimately the Communist bloc. It happened in Turkey. It happened in many Muslim countries, such as Indonesia, Malaysia, and Bangladesh. But it did not happen in the Arab world.

The Arab world had what analysts call a democratic deficit. The question was, Why was what was happening in South Korea or Taiwan or Indonesia or the Philippines not happening in the Arab world?

This winter's revolutions in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and elsewhere were long overdue. They show that a lot of what people glibly said about this region was wrong, not so much that it had a democratic deficit — it did — but that this was an area that was uniquely immune to democracy. Or that the values of ordinary Arabs differed fundamentally from those of people everywhere else in the world: that here people were more affected by extreme religion, that here somehow religion played a much larger part, that here somehow certain kinds of values that had become universal had not taken hold.

What does this tell us? For one thing, that everything we have been told systematically by talking heads, by pseudo-experts, by self-appointed gurus on the Arab world has been proven to be completely false. These people should be on their knees in sackcloth and ashes as far as I'm concerned.

I think what we have seen in every single Arab country where there have been demonstrations, or the beginnings of regime changes, are expressions of the same universal values

that we've seen from East Asia to Latin America: democracy, social justice, rule of law, constitutions. Notably absent have been words like *Sharia*, or even *Islam*.

COLUMBIA: Religion obviously plays a role in the politics of this part of the world.

KHALIDI: It certainly does. But the terrorists — people who believe that only violence will suffice to achieve change and who have an extreme vision of some kind of religious order they want to impose — are big losers; they're nowhere to be seen. Clearly, there are ways to change other than by guns and assassination and bombing. Moreover, even those religious parties that are pointed to as the great bogeymen — the Muslim Brotherhood, the Ennahda movement in Tunisia — are nowhere near the head of these movements. Some of the religious groups are barely involved; others, like the Muslim Brotherhood, opposed the January 25 demonstration. The youth movement of the Muslim Brotherhood followed the groups that were organizing the demonstrations and split off from their leadership.

Clearly, if things do not play out positively for democratization, these parties could easily regain their footing; they do have a constituency. Polls suggest that the Muslim Brotherhood might get as much as 15 percent of the vote in Egypt. It's not a negligible force. Yet somehow these groups missed the bus.

COLUMBIA: Does that mean that the young secularists we've seen in the streets of Cairo and Alexandria can hold their own?

KHALIDI: It's not just the young secularists; there's a huge middle class in Egypt. These are people who, whether they're pious or not, in their great majority believe that religion should not determine public life. In Egypt this belief is as strong as anywhere else in the Muslim world, and that transcends religious morals; it transcends political lines. It's a deeply ingrained feature of Egyptian public life, together with a lot of public piety. I don't think we should be so scared of public piety; we live in a country that is drenched in public piety. But we're also a nation that has established a separation between church and state. Admittedly, we've had a couple of hundred years in the U.S. to work on these things, while the Egyptians are in uncharted territory. In any case, I think this fear of an Islamist takeover is overblown.

COLUMBIA: What did the Muslim Brotherhood mean when it announced in February that it was going to run only for a certain percentage of seats?

KHALIDI: The Brotherhood was explicitly trying to set to rest fears people had about them. They understood that they had been used by the Mubarak regime to scare foreign powers into backing the regime, and to scare the middle classes into backing the regime. The



Muslim Brotherhood is the most tried-and-true bogeyman of every despot in the Arab world. Both Sadat and Mubarak inflated the threat of the Muslim Brotherhood, even as they sometimes covertly colluded with them.

COLUMBIA: How significant is the return of Sunni cleric Yusuf al-Qaradawi to Egypt?

KHALIDI: I think what al-Qaradawi *said* is what's significant, though the media couldn't *not* play up his return. After all, it's the first time he's been back in 50 years, and on February 18 he gave the Friday sermon to 1 million people. That's news any way you look at it. No *Khutbah*, or Friday prayer, since the dawn of Islam, that I'm aware of, has begun with anything but "O Muslims." That's how the imam starts the sermon. It's been that way for almost 1400 years. Instead, al-Qaradawi began, "O Muslims, O Christians." He's addressing the whole Egyptian people, not just Muslims. He talked about secularism, about democracy. This was a service in which Muslims and Christians both prayed.

COLUMBIA: Editorial writers have been drawing parallels between this year and 1979, 1989 — even 1848. But is 2011 unique?

KHALIDI: It certainly is, though one can understand the comparisons to Tehran. People are afraid, and there are those who fan the flames of that fear. Any serious analyst who knows *anything* about this region would talk about the differences between Sunni and Shia, and the differences between the roles of the religious establishments in Iran and in Egypt. One has to understand that Khomeini telegraphed his intentions to establish a theocracy long before he got back to Tehran. One has to understand how he took over leadership of the movement, why there was an Islamic Revolution in Iran, and the other ways in which the shah's regime differed from the Mubarak regime. Tehran is not Cairo, Iran is not Egypt, and Sunni is not Shia.

COLUMBIA: For all the corruption of Tunisian president Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali, Tunisia was at least a secular state. Is it likely to survive as a secular state?

KHALIDI: I think so, for reasons that are very specific to Tunisia. First, Tunisia has a union movement with half a million members, which always managed to maintain its independence from the regime, unlike the Egyptian union movement, which was once very powerful but has been under the control of the regime for several decades, since even before Mubarak. Second, women have all kinds of rights and are active in the workforce. Third, the population, including women, is literate and well educated.

Fourth, Tunisia has a well-organized civil society, even though the regime was authoritarian. Finally, there is a big middle class, and a huge diaspora of Tunisians in Europe — mainly in France, as well as in Germany and in Italy.

COLUMBIA: Are discussions in Tunisia addressing the question of a presidential versus a parliamentary system?

KHALIDI: That constitutional debate is going on in Egypt as well. People are asking whether they should continue with a top-heavy, presidential, executive-dominated system or whether it should be balanced not only with a strong parliament but also with an independent judiciary, which everybody agrees should be easy in Egypt but very hard in Tunisia. The Tunisian judiciary had been castrated

“These are people who, whether they're pious or not, in their great majority believe that religion should not determine public life.”

by the Ben Ali regime, whereas in Egypt the judiciary *ferociously* maintained its independence from the executive branch. These questions are being debated in both countries, as is the nature of the constitution, the balance of power between the executive, the legislative, and the judiciary, the relative independence of each, and how soon to have elections. There is the question of how long it will take to put together viable political parties without having the only two parties that could run in these elections — in the case of Egypt, Mubarak's National Democracy Party (NDP) and the Muslim Brotherhood — having an enormous advantage because they're the only ones who know how you run an election. I lived in Chicago for 15 years; I know what a machine is. A machine is something that gets out the vote and provides jobs for the boys, and in some cases the girls, and at the moment, there are only two of those in Egypt. One demand of the popular movement in Egypt is for the dissolution of the NDP.

COLUMBIA: If the regime of Bahrain's King Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa, a Sunni, were to be seriously threatened by his largely Shia population, would Saudi Arabia, which has its own troubles, come to its rescue?

KHALIDI: Saudi Arabia is already coming to the rescue of its sister Sunni monarchy. The king of Bahrain was in Saudi Arabia to welcome King Abdullah back from his three-month recuperation after his operation at Columbia University Medical Center. There is no question that for Saudi Arabia the reason there's a causeway between the two

kingdoms is not just so Saudis can go to Manama and get drunk and consort with loose women. It's there so that Saudi Arabia can exert its influence as directly as it needs to.

The same kind of entrenched interests that exist in the Mubarak and Ben Ali families exist in spades in the royal families of these countries. You have succession issues; you have governments in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Bahrain where all the major portfolios are in the hands of the royal family. The prime minister of Bahrain is the king's uncle and has been in office for decades. If those kinds of things don't change, there are going to be problems. Even in Saudi Arabia, there's unrest because all the king seems to do is to generously condescend to give his subjects money rather than listen to their demands for political participation, for profound reform, for some kind of representation. That's what people want. Bahrain is way ahead of Saudi Arabia; it has an elected parliament. It may be a gerrymandered parliament, like Jordan's, but it's a parliament.



© FELIPE TRUEBA/EPA/CORBIS

COLUMBIA: Do you think the role of Facebook, Twitter, and other social media has been overstated?

KHALIDI: I'm sure these things played a role, but I would remind you that the people of Cairo rose up and drove out a hated regime and had to be brought back under control by artillery fire from the citadel during the French occupation of 1798–1801. The Egyptian people were involved in similar uprisings in the 1870s and early 1880s, and in 1919, when there was an enormous revolution that eventually forced the British to grant them

independence. It didn't take Facebook, it didn't take radio, it didn't take Al Jazeera to create these major popular upheavals in the past.

However, I'm sure that the specific nature of what happened, and the way in which groups managed to organize, owed a great deal to modern means of communication. The young people used it very well to outwit a smart regime.

COLUMBIA: You and many others have written about the image of the Arab in the West. But how do Arabs view themselves? A young Egyptian told the BBC in February: "We have felt passive and had always been told that our problems were someone else's fault — America, Israel, the Jews." He went on to say that in Tunisia and Egypt they've seen what they can do themselves. Does this represent a major change in the way Arabs see themselves?

KHALIDI: Across the Arab world, these patriarchal, patronizing, autocratic regimes — whether monarchies or nominal republics — have infantilized their citizens. They have treated them as subjects and taught them that they're incapable of doing anything themselves. The rage that develops in response to being treated without dignity diverts into all kinds of perverse religious, sexual, violent, and criminal behavior. Now that there is a sense of agency, there's a desire for dignity that was denied by the regime and which is now being achieved.

Sometimes when we hear calls for dignity, what is meant is not just human individual dignity, but the dignity of whole countries whose regimes have allowed them to become weak, submissive, and passive. The Arab world was once upon a time a region where there were powers that played a role in the world. Today there are three Middle Eastern states of any importance: Israel, Turkey, and Iran. There's not an Arab country that has *any* weight in international affairs at all. So the call for dignity means: "We're a people of 300 million. Why do we have no weight whatsoever in the world? Why do we have no self-determination? Why is our future determined from outside the region?"

The degree to which Egyptian television has been exuding patriotism since January 25 is impossible to overstate. The old nationalist anthems are being dredged out of the archives. You hear Umm Kulthum, you hear Abdel Halim Hafez, you hear the great singers from the '50s and the '60s talking about the glories of Egypt, how we all love Egypt — stuff we hadn't heard for decades. Until January *nobody* was proud of Egypt — and Egypt stands for the rest of the Arab world. When Egypt is in an ignominious situation, to some degree so are all Arabs.

COLUMBIA: Is there a secular, noncorrupt figure waiting in the wings in Egypt or elsewhere? An Ataturk, perhaps?

KHALIDI: I can't talk to a journalist, American or Arab, without being asked, "Where are the leaders?" The activist and journalist Nawara Negm, a wonderful young woman who is one of the organizers in Egypt, as far as one knows, was asked about this. She said, "The age of *zaims* is over." *Zaim* means "strongman."

The Middle East had that. There was the shah in Iran, Abdel Nasser in Egypt, Hussein in Iraq. That model decisively failed. Mubarak is the last in the line of such *zaims*. At least we *hope* he was the last. I don't think that the kind of society that's thrown up this movement is going to tolerate another *zaim*, and I think this society has moved beyond that, at least in the case of Egypt. That doesn't mean that such a system may not be imposed, but that is a recipe for instability and it wouldn't last.

The Egyptians have shaken off a lot. They have not yet succeeded in finally and fundamentally making a lot of changes, but one of the things that they have changed is the sense that you need a supreme leader.

I'm a historian; I'm never happy predicting the future. I don't see the Ataturk model. But if you say to me the *Turkish* model, with a military that eventually ceases to intervene in public life; with an evolution of a secular system, which can incorporate religious parties; with a greater and greater degree of democracy, which is what the Turkish model so far represents, that I can see. That has a lot of appeal in the Arab world, partly because Turkey is a little bit like the Arab societies, partly because it is so successful. It is a model in multiple spheres, not least of which is the constitutional and political, but also the economic and the cultural. At the same time, Turkey is a modern society. And it's rich. There is *humongous* Turkish investment in Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Egypt, and North Africa.

COLUMBIA: Is democracy necessarily the way to go? And, at least outside Egypt, will democratic institutions have to be constructed from scratch?

KHALIDI: Each country differs. There's a democratic tradition in Egypt and in a number of other Arab countries. It doesn't exist in Yemen or Saudi Arabia.

But frontiers and minds are more permeable in the 21st century than they ever were before. It does not take three generations for someone to understand some aspects of Jeffersonian democracy. One thing that's been astonishing to me is that across the Arab world, the same basic ideas about constitutions are being expressed. Clearly, there are prerequisites for a successful democratic system to be established — people have to be educated, they

have to be literate — but for a number of these countries, those conditions do exist. And even in those where they don't, it's possible to make a beginning.

Jordan has had parliaments. Before the dictatorships that started with the Baath coup of 1963, Syria had a parliamentary regime inherited from the French mandatory period. Egypt had a parliamentary regime from 1922 to 1952, and there were constitutional debates going on in Egypt in the 1870s and early 1880s. There were elections in the Ottoman Empire, which included much of the Arab world, in 1876, 1908, 1912, and 1914.

My point is you're not building on sand. There are countries with respected legal professions: Egypt is the most notable case of this, but it's also true in Lebanon and Kuwait, where the idea of an independent judiciary is respected.

Democracy by and of itself won't solve everything. It may not even be achievable in some of these countries. And then there are powerful vested interests, a problem not unfamiliar to Americans. It's been a problem in all democracies, ever since democracy began. In many cases,

"Across the Arab world, these patriarchal, patronizing, autocratic regimes . . . have infantilized their citizens."

the reason democracy failed in the Arab world is that democratic parliamentary regimes were unable to deal with those countries' problems in the '20s, '30s, '40s, '50s, and '60s.

COLUMBIA: Problems such as education and literacy?

KHALIDI: There is a huge youth population in Egypt and a large educated population for which suitable jobs don't exist, as well as serious problems of infrastructure, housing, and inequality of income. Cairo has a community living in obscene luxury, in gated communities around the ring road that circles Cairo, while millions of people in the city live on \$2 a day. That's hard to sustain without its breaking down from time to time. Addressing these issues will not be easy; the Mubarak regime failed in that regard. Then sustaining economic growth, bringing down the birthrate, educating whoever is born, and getting them into decent jobs — you've got to get 7, 8, 9 percent growth in these countries to keep up with this youth boom. Well, good luck to the democratic regime that has to deal with that. So democracy is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for real change. ♣



DAUGHTER, LOST

Fiction by Julie Wu '96PS

When I was twelve, I got sold to a couple in Hsinchu. My husband used to say, before he died, that my father sold me because I complained too much. But that's not true. It was my fate.

I think of this as I open the door to find my daughter, Chio-Kwat, standing on the doorstep, smoothing her hair behind her ear, her head bent down. Behind her is Taoyuan's biggest street, with rickshaws clattering, motorcycles zigzagging, cars crammed from curb to curb. But I know my daughter has walked here in her canvas shoes, her delicate nostrils filtering the must and fumes. Her eyelashes twitch, casting shadows on her cheekbones, which are like mine — too pointy, bad luck. She needs to eat more, to gain more weight like me to soften the angle of those bones.

Her pale skin, also from me, is tight and smooth. She hasn't cried much over her father's death. She must have come for the money.

"Have you eaten?" I say. For this is how we greet each other in Taiwan.

"Yes, I had breakfast," she says, moderately polite. It is noon. She's obviously come expecting lunch and she looks to the side in embarrassment, her eyes flickering over the shiny rosewood of my altar and side table. "I was just at the market so I thought I would visit."

Her hands are empty, but it is entirely possible that she was unable to afford anything at the market. She spends all her days in a shack with a corrugated tin roof, stringing umbrellas together by hand with her good-for-nothing husband. I let her in. She is, after all, my daughter, though she was supposed to have forgotten about that.

I serve her sparerib soup and bean thread noodles with pork. I have become Buddhist, a vegetarian, but I still cook meat at home every day to serve my lazy son and his conniving wife. I know, you see, what they're up to.

"How is my brother?" Chio-Kwat says, and her words jolt me from thinking about the envelope in my pocket.

"Hmm. Still losing jobs. Now he's in a cannery."

She eats two bowls of noodles and seven pieces of sparerib.

"Ay! When did you last eat?"

Her face sours. "Breakfast, I already told you."

She is the only person I know who complains more than me. When she was a girl I passed her house on my way to the market, and even then, standing in the doorway,

Illustration by Wilson J. Ong





DAUGHTER, LOST

she would look at me with those greedy eyes, trying to make me feel guilty. I just thought, it's a good thing we gave her away when she was born. Give her five dumplings, she'll want ten. We would have had to pay dowry, too.

So, you see, she was supposed to remain their daughter, marry their son. And if she had, she would have been better off. Their son she was supposed to marry went to college and wears shirts imported from Japan. He rides a Suzuki and bought a new house, three stories, bigger than mine. Instead, Chio-Kwat knocked on my door when she was sixteen. Unknotted her bundle of clothes on my futon. Complaining, complaining. Her mother beat her, her mother called her names. And so? So she ran away and came back to us. So she married for love, and now she has a husband, poor and beating her every day. Probably beating her

Central Mountains, far off, where I was born. I can hardly see the green peaks anymore because of my cataracts, but as I water — just a little, for too much water will drown an orchid — I can smell the thick pine forest, the moss from Chia-Yi, where I have not set foot for sixty years.

Across the street there's a tall building with a peeling poster of the Democratic Progressive Party candidate — the one who's going to get us attacked, talking about independence from China. Before the building was built, I could see all the way to the Taiwan Strait. It was there, the west coast, where I was taken by horse cart, to the couple who bought me and trained me to keep their Japanese-style house sparkling clean, their altar polished.

"You were not lucky," I say to Chio-Kwat. "I did not know, when we gave you away, that your new parents would be so

Well, she didn't go to school much, either. "Sign it, and you say you don't have any right to the inheritance."

Her face darkens. "My brother."

It's true. My son is a snake. My daughter-in-law is the snake charmer. But it is better to keep the money in the family. Chio-Kwat's husband will gamble away everything or spend it on his girlfriends.

"We took you back," I say, "and we had to pay a lot of money to those people because you left. Just after the store closed, too," I add. "We had no money to spare."

She drops the document on the floor and stands up. She folds her arms. It's like the day she came home, jutting her chin out. "I won't sign it."

I feel a rush of anger. "Then you are no longer my daughter."

She stands for a few minutes, looking away, blinking. She turns to the south, the wind blowing the hair off her forehead. Perhaps she is thinking about lawyers, which she cannot afford and which are a joke anyway.

She turns back and kneels down on the concrete floor to sign. As she bends over the paper, I gasp, seeing the fullness of her breasts filling the neckline of her dress, the curve of her belly. Now I know why she was so out of breath.

She throws the pen on the floor and stands up, eyes flashing. She sees my open mouth and traces my gaze to her belly.

"Ma," she says. "I came here to tell you."

I'm wordless for a moment, listening to the wind, to the honking of cars and the clattering of rickshaws in the street below.

She turns to leave.

"Wait," I say. And I pull the temple money out of my pocket. "For the baby. For good luck."

She hesitates, frowning, then grabs the money out of my hand.

She leaves, and the wind slams the door behind her. The air rises, swirling around me, and the document flutters against my legs. In the wind I smell Chia-Yi. ❧

It's a good thing we gave her away when she was born. Give her five dumplings, she'll want ten. We would have had to pay dowry, too.

with those umbrellas. She could have been wearing nice Japanese clothes like that boy.

I take her up to the roof so I can water my plants. I catch my breath, my cheong sam too tight around my belly. She sits down on a folding chair, smooths her hair behind her ear. She's waiting. Waiting for the money. She breathes as hard as me, though she shouldn't, being so young. Maybe she's anticipating. My husband, on his deathbed, promised her a house. I see her glance at the table, where there are loose 10NT bills.

"I'm bringing those to temple," I say. I scoop up the bills and put them in my pocket next to the envelope. I need that money to buy candles.

I water my orchids. I have placed them on the south side of the building, the best light for orchids, so as I water I face the

unreliable." They said they were teachers. And they were, but in music; they were Chinese opera singers, moody and broke.

"You could have asked," Chio-Kwat says, frowning.

"Do not be insolent."

This is her problem. Always complaining. Never accepting.

"I am not insolent," she says. "I am just saying, you could have asked them."

"It was your fate," I say. She doesn't know I had no say in the matter. It was my in-laws who decided she would be given away. And seeing how ungrateful she is, I bring out the envelope from my pocket and unfold the document. My son has written it, as I was busy being a maid and did not learn these fancy words. I hand Chio-Kwat a pen.

She squints at the paper. "What do these words mean?"

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NEWS

Michael Purdy named executive vice president for research

G. Michael Purdy, who for the past 10 years directed Columbia's Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory (LDEO), has been appointed the University's executive vice president for research. In his new position, Purdy is responsible for establishing and administering policies that govern all research at the University, in the natural and biomedical sciences, social sciences, and humanities.

Purdy oversees nine administrative units that provide support services to researchers and ensure their compliance with the terms and conditions of their funding. Some of these offices help faculty apply for grants; others hold training sessions to make sure researchers know the latest government health and safety regulations; another operates a hotline for members of the University community to report improper research practices. In addition, Purdy's office encourages interdisciplinary research

and provides seed money for early-stage investigations.

President Lee C. Bollinger, in announcing Purdy's appointment in January, said the marine geophysicist possesses "not only the respected scholarly and administrative experience required in this position, but also a deep familiarity with Columbia's academic culture and our ambitious goals for scientific research in the years ahead."

A native of England who earned his PhD at Cambridge, Purdy came to Columbia in 2000 to direct LDEO, a rural campus in Palisades, New York, where scientists study the solid earth, its oceans, and the atmosphere. Previously, he directed the National Science Foundation's division of ocean sciences, managing an annual research budget of more than \$200 million; before that, he chaired the geology and geophysics department at the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution in Massachusetts.

During Purdy's tenure at Lamont-Doherty, its 200 scientists doubled the amount of federal research money they received, from \$31 million in 2000 to \$66 million last year. Purdy also oversaw the completion of the Gary C. Comer Geochemistry Building, a 70,000-square-foot facility that serves 80 geochemists at LDEO, and the conversion of a 235-foot commercial boat into a state-of-the-art research vessel, rechristened the *Marcus G. Langseth*, which LDEO operates for the National Science Foundation.

Arthur Lerner-Lam, a seismologist who served as Lamont-Doherty's associate director under Purdy, has been named interim director of the observatory.

Purdy says that one of his goals as executive vice president is to raise the public profile of science and engineering at Columbia. The University, he points out, is experiencing dramatic growth in these areas. For instance, the University recently opened the

New dean to coordinate growth of science departments



Amber Miller

The University has created a new administrative position, the dean of sciences for the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, to help manage the growth of its science departments.

Amber Miller, a Columbia astrophysicist, was appointed to the post effective March 1. She previously served on the Arts and Sciences academic review committee, faculty budget group, space planning committee, and executive committee of the faculty.

Miller says that her job is to work with the University's top academic officials to ensure the success of several large, interdisciplinary science initiatives while not short-changing any other science programs.

"I'm going to work with the senior leadership to make science stronger across

DIANE BONDAREFF

Northwest Corner Building, a facility for biologists, chemists, physicists, and engineers who work together on interdisciplinary projects (see related story on page 40). Columbia also began construction last year on the Jerome L. Greene Science Center in Manhattanville. Here, neuroscientists and researchers from a wide variety of other disciplines will collaborate — as part of the University’s Mind, Brain, and Behavior Initiative — to study how the brain’s mechanisms relate to high-level functions such as memory, language, and emotion.

“I think Columbia is a heck of a lot stronger in science and engineering today than most people realize,” says Purdy, whose own research has focused on the structure and dynamics of the Earth’s crust beneath the ocean. “Part of my job is to get the word out about the profound impact our research is having on society. I also hope this will translate into donations. We

need to raise money to hire more faculty for these programs and to build new physical facilities.”

Purdy also wants to foster new collaborations. “My responsibilities stretch across the University’s medical center, its engineering school, and its basic science departments, and I want to help these units work together more effectively to take advantage of a growing number of interdisciplinary research opportunities,” he says. “We’re going to make sure we continue to improve all of the core science and engineering departments, which, of course, are the foundation of any interdisciplinary science research we do.”

As executive vice president for research, Purdy succeeds David Hirsh, who held the post since it was created in 2003. Hirsh, a professor of biochemistry and molecular biophysics, is returning to Columbia’s medical center to pursue his own research.



EILEEN BARROSO

Michael Purdy

Columbia,” says Miller, who is the Walter LeCroy Jr. Associate Professor of Physics. “We are going to take a good look at the needs and priorities in the basic sciences and get a sense of what we need to do to improve our ability to get things done around here.”

Columbia’s science departments are entering a period of considerable growth and transition. This past winter, for instance, many biologists, chemists, physicists, and engineers started moving into the 14-story Northwest Corner Building. This building, when fully occupied, will house 21 laboratories for projects in areas such as nanotechnology, biochemistry, biophysics, and biological imaging. Columbia is also building a new neuroscience facility

in Manhattanville, the Jerome L. Greene Science Center, where researchers from a wide variety of disciplines will study how the brain’s mechanisms relate to memory, language, and emotion.

For these types of interdisciplinary programs to succeed, Miller says, there must be increased communication across Columbia’s academic units. “I’m going to be talking regularly with my counterparts outside of the Arts and Sciences departments, such as at the engineering school and the medical campus,” she says, “to make sure these projects are getting the right resources.”

Miller says she will be advocating to senior University officials on behalf of all the science departments within Arts and Sciences. To this end, she will be speaking

regularly to science department chairs and forming a new faculty committee to understand the needs and priorities within the basic sciences.

“We’re going to make sure that all departments thrive and grow as the new interdisciplinary programs move forward,” says Miller. “We want to make sure that every department has its needs looked at fairly, and that no program gets lost in the shuffle.”

In her own research, Miller leads a NASA-funded project that aims to capture snapshots of microwaves emitted shortly after the big bang. She is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations and recently served as the chief science adviser to the NYPD Counterterrorism Bureau.



“Big, tough, and tender”

In January, the University opened its new science and engineering building, a glass and aluminum-clad tower at the intersection of Broadway and 120th Street. Designed by Spanish architect José Rafael Moneo, the Northwest Corner Building contains 21 large, high-ceilinged laboratories, as well as a café, a science library, a 164-seat lecture hall, and several smaller classrooms and faculty offices.

“Everybody on my research team is excited,” says biology professor Rafael Yuste, who moved into the 14-story facility over the winter. “We have lots of natural light now and plenty of space. When you walk into the mezzanines, you’re constantly interacting with colleagues. It’s like one big forum.”

Eleven professors have already relocated to the building or are in the process of moving; the University still must complete the interiors of several laboratories. All of the building’s occupants will be interdisciplinary researchers working at the boundaries of biology, chemistry, physics, and engineering.

Architecture critic Nicolai Ouroussoff, in his February 9 *New York Times* review of the facility, praised Moneo for having created airy and spacious interiors that encourage “intense social communion.” The building’s “spirit of openness and exchange” is best exemplified, he wrote, by a public café that is visible to passersby through huge windows, making it “a kind of interstitial zone floating just above the city.”

The public can enter campus through the café or by a new stairway on the east side of the building. These welcoming gestures make Moneo’s design “a work of healing,” Ouroussoff wrote. “Seen in the context of Columbia’s often tense relationship with its Harlem neighbors, including recent battles over its plans to build a new 17-acre campus in West Harlem, the building is a gleaming physical expression of the university’s desire to bridge the divide between the insular world of the campus and the community beyond its walls. . . . It’s a big, tough building, but it’s tenderhearted, too.”



Columbia’s new Northwest Corner Building contains a publicly accessible café (left), a lecture hall (right), and a two-story science library (far right), in addition to 21 laboratory spaces and many classrooms, offices, and seating alcoves.

Photographs by Eileen Barroso

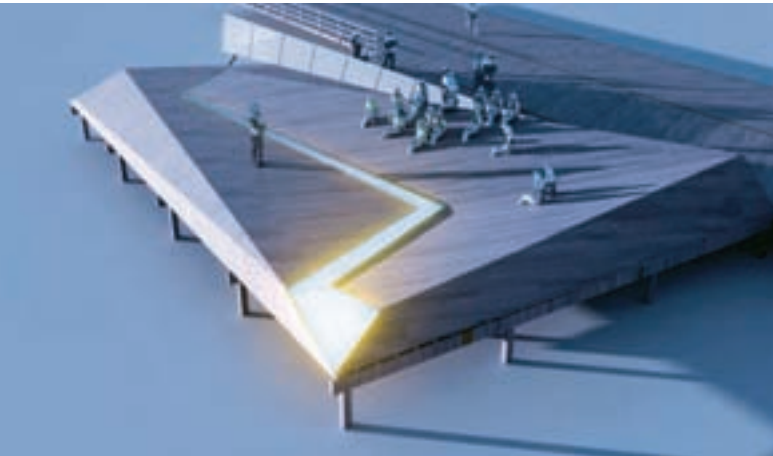


Shadows on the boardwalk

It's a peculiar location for a Holocaust memorial: the neon-lit, popcorn-strewn boardwalk of Atlantic City.

How could victims of genocide be properly honored here?

Architects Patrick Lausell '09GSAPP and Paola Marquez '09GSAPP provided a solution recently, beating out 700 other plans from architects in 55 countries as part of a competition organized by a group of local community leaders. Entrants were asked to design a memorial to be located on the ocean side of the boardwalk, where there's currently a large, covered pavilion.



Alumni Patrick Lausell and Paola Marquez submitted the winning design for a Holocaust memorial planned for Atlantic City's boardwalk.

Lausell and Marquez's design, titled "Fractured Landscapes," imagines a new section of boardwalk whose surface is contorted into large, asymmetrical slopes.

"We want to convey that something violent happened in our collective past," says Lausell. "The memorial will be a part of the boardwalk itself, using the same materials, but buckled and broken and fractured."

A lightning-shaped crevice in the memorial's surface will be covered by glass to represent, according to the winning proposal, "a river of light . . . expressing our hopes for peace."

The effort to build a Holocaust memorial near the boardwalk has been led by Rabbi Gordon Geller, of Temple Emeth Shalom in nearby Margate City, who has been advocating for the idea to politicians for nearly 30 years. The Atlantic City Council has approved the memorial contingent on Geller's ability to raise private donations to cover its estimated \$2-\$4 million cost by the middle of 2012.

Some Jewish leaders have criticized Geller's plan, arguing that it's inappropriate to honor Holocaust victims in a gambling mecca. Geller insists the boardwalk is an ideal location, as nearly 10 million people walk it each year. Lausell agrees, explaining that the memorial is designed to educate people as well as to provide solace to victims and their families.

"The Atlantic City boardwalk is one of the most visited sites in the United States," he says. "We'll have a built-in audience that may not be aware of, or thinking about, issues like genocide. That's exactly the audience we're trying to reach."

They shot it their way

Columbia filmmakers have collected prizes for some of 2010's most daring and original movies.

Lisa Cholodenko '97SOA, who directed and cowrote *The Kids Are All Right*, led the way down the red carpet. Her film, starring Annette Bening, Julianne Moore, and Mark Ruffalo, depicts a lesbian couple whose world is disrupted by the appearance of their children's sperm-donor father. It won the Golden Globe Award for Best Motion Picture, Comedy.

Cholodenko and her cowriter, Stuart Blumberg, also won New York Film Critics Circle and Independent Spirit awards for best screenplay. *The Kids Are All Right* was nominated for four Oscars, including Best Picture and Best Original Screenplay.

Jennifer Redfearn '07JRN and Jed Rothstein, who studied at the School of the Arts in 1996 and 1997, both received Oscar nominations in the category of Best Documentary, Short Subject. Redfearn directed and coproduced *Sun Come Up*, which tells the story of the 2500 residents of the Cartaret Islands, in the South

Pacific, who were uprooted and forced to relocate to another island because of rising sea levels.

Rothstein directed and coproduced *Killing in the Name*, which follows Ashraf al-Khaled, a Jordanian man whose wedding was attacked by a suicide bomber in 2005 and who is now on a mission to speak out against terrorism in Muslim communities.

"I remember getting up nearly every morning during the height of the Iraq War and hearing about horrific bombings in market squares and busy streets, and always asking, Why?" Rothstein said in a recent interview with the International Documentary Association. "I set out to find someone who had experienced this type of trauma firsthand, and who was trying to answer the same basic questions that interested me."

At Sundance, a documentary coproduced by faculty member Maureen Ryan '92SOA won the World Cinema Documentary Directing Award. *Project Nim* tells the story of a chimpanzee raised like a human child in the lab of Columbia psychologist

Richman Center to fund research by legal and business scholars

Real-estate developer Richard Richman and his wife Ellen have announced that their family's philanthropic foundation will give Columbia \$10 million for a new center to support research at the intersection of law and business.

The Richard Paul Richman Center for Business, Law, and Public Policy will promote interdisciplinary research on topics such as financial regulation, health-care financing, mortgage lending, and economic stimulus. It will be run jointly by Columbia's law and business schools.

"Complex challenges in public policy need to be informed by the pragmatic perspectives of both business and law," says Richman '72LAW, '73BUS, who chairs the Richman Group, one of the nation's largest developers of rental property and affordable housing. "Columbia's intellectual capital in these two disciplines is unparalleled and represents a powerful tool to address today's problems, as well as to lay the foundation for a well-planned future."

Columbia's law and business schools already have deep ties. They offer a joint

JD-MBA program and some of their faculty conduct research together. For instance, law professor Edward Morrison and business professors Christopher Mayer and Tomasz Piskorski in 2009 published a series of legislative proposals to prevent home foreclosures, several of which were enacted by Congress.

Mayer, a codirector of the Richman Center, says the center will fund more research of this type. The center will also invite industry leaders to share their ideas with faculty and students on campus and organize academic conferences to help faculty promote their work to policymakers.

"The goal is to create an institutional framework," says Mayer, "that helps our law and business faculty do policy-relevant work and then get their message out into the world effectively."

The gift from the Richman Foundation also funds two new professorships. The recipients of these endowed chairs — one at each school — will conduct research in business, law, and public policy, as well as plan conferences and help shape curricula. An additional \$3 million for these professorships



Ellen and Richard Richman

is being provided by Gerry Lenfest '58LAW, '09HON and Arthur J. Samberg '67BUS.

The Richman Center's codirectors, in addition to Mayer and Morrison, are business school dean Glenn Hubbard and law school dean David Schizer.



The Kids Are All Right, directed by Lisa Cholodenko '97SOA, received four Oscar nominations and won a Golden Globe.

SUZANNE TENNER / FOCUS FEATURES

Herbert Terrace, who attempted to teach language skills to the chimp but was largely unsuccessful. Markus Kirschner '09SOA and Geoffrey Quan '08SOA also worked on *Project Nim*.

Pariah, whose executive producer was adjunct film faculty member Mary Jane Skalski, won Sundance's Excellence in Cinematography Award for a U.S. dramatic film. The film is a coming-of-age story about an African American teenager in Brooklyn who struggles with her sexual identity.

One of the most provocative films screened this year at Sundance, *Circumstance*, edited by Andrea Chignoli '07SOA, won the Audience Award for a U.S. dramatic film. Set in Lebanon and filmed in Lebanon, the film depicts a lesbian relationship between two teens in present-day Iran.

"I know everyone, especially the cast and crew, have given up a lot to do this," the film's director, Maryam Keshavarz, told Iranian magazine *Persianesque*. "We believe in this story, in human rights, and in artistic expression."
— Joshua J. Friedman '08JRN

Giving, for art's sake

A foundation devoted to the legacy of abstract expressionist painter Ary Stillman (1891–1967) has donated 90 of the artist's



Art historian Annette Blaugrund '87GSAS, pictured here with art history chair Robert E. Harrist Jr., helped arrange a gift to Columbia from the estate of the late painter Ary Stillman, whose work hangs behind them.

works to Columbia along with \$800,000 for a fellowship fund for PhD candidates in modern art history.

The gift from the Stillman-Lack Foundation includes 15 canvases and 75 works on paper, some of which are already on display in the art history and archaeology department in Schermerhorn. In addition, pieces from the collection will be given to the first 25 students to receive Stillman fellowships.

A native of Russia, Stillman immigrated with his family to Sioux City, Iowa, as a teenager and, in the 1940s and '50s, was a part of the New York City art circle that included midcentury greats like Mark Rothko and Jackson Pollock. Stillman's work received praise from critics like Clement Greenberg and was exhibited widely during his lifetime. His work is now held in 46 museums around the world, including major museums in Baltimore, Houston, and New Haven.

The Stillman-Lack Foundation, which has worked to preserve and make accessible Stillman's work for the 40 years since his death, recently announced that it is closing and

distributing its assets. Its donation to Columbia is one of the foundation's final acts.

"We wanted Ary Stillman's legacy to reside at a teaching university," said Barry Lack, the foundation's executive director and a distant relative of the painter. "Columbia was an obvious choice for its distinguished tradition in art history and for its location in a major art center where Ary had lived, studied, and painted for many years."

The Ary Stillman Fellowship Fund will receive \$1.2 million in additional support from the estate of the late John W. Kluge '37CC, '88HON, raising the total value of the new endowment to \$2 million, under the terms of a matching program that Kluge established for Columbia in 2007. "A gift of this size is a great benefit to art history at Columbia," said department chair Robert E. Harrist Jr. "The PhD students who receive these fellowships, and who and go on to become leading teachers, critics, and curators, will forever be linked to Ary Stillman. His work will literally be on the walls of their offices — it's an amazing gift." — Marcus Tonti

That's teaching them

On February 8, the University honored eight professors for their classroom skills and commitment to mentoring students. At a celebratory dinner at Casa Italiana, the professors were presented with Distinguished Columbia Faculty Awards, which include stipends of \$25,000 per year for three consecutive years.

The honorees were American studies scholar Rachel Adams, biologist Stuart Firestein, political scientist Mahmood Mamdani, medieval art expert Stephen Murray, environmental scientist Paul Olsen, historian Susan Pedersen, philosopher Achille Varzi, and classicist Katharina Volk.

The awards are funded by a \$12 million donation from Trustee Gerry Lenfest '58LAW, '09HON.

Firestein says that being a good science teacher requires humanizing the research process: "Too often, science is taught as a mere accumulation of facts. But that's not how scientists think. We need to be passionate and full of questions. I try to show my students that."



Biological sciences chair Stuart Firestein is presented the Distinguished Columbia Faculty Award by his former student Eleonora Spinazzi '10CC.

First to see the sun

“The Japanese were very calm, no crying or talking; children and babies were quiet, and millions poured with purpose into streets and parks, all looking up at the very tall buildings that swayed around them like tall palm trees without relief.”

This is what Jeanette Takamura, dean of the School of Social Work, witnessed on the afternoon of March 11 outside her Tokyo hotel. Having traveled to Japan to attend a conference, she managed to leave the country two days after the devastating earthquake and tsunami hit.

When this magazine went to press on March 29, Columbia students were selling wristbands to raise money for relief; the Miller Theatre had raised more than \$34,000 through a March 27 benefit concert featuring Yoko Ono, Sean Lennon, John

Zorn, and Sonic Youth; the Asian Columbia Alumni Association was co-organizing the citywide New Yorkers for Japan benefit on March 31; public health professors were consulting to UN relief efforts; and a group of faculty, students, and administrators led by Takamura and Columbia physician Nick Homma was meeting regularly to determine how Columbians could most effectively contribute to Japan’s aid.

“We’ve been in contact with our alumni club leaders in Japan, and so far we’ve heard encouraging news about the safety of many Columbians there,” said Michael Griffin, one of the University’s executive directors for alumni relations. He notes that Japan is home to nearly 2,500 Columbia graduates, the largest alumni population in a non-English-speaking country.

The University, to educate alumni about the ongoing crisis in Japan, streamed online a panel discussion on March 23 featuring historian Carol Gluck, oceanographer Michael Purdy, economist Jeffrey Sachs, and nuclear physicist William Zajc.

“All of these efforts are heartening, as Japan has long held the United States in the highest esteem and has looked at this country, despite the past, with a great sense of relatedness,” says Takamura. “As a third-generation Japanese American myself, nothing could be more reassuring for the future than to see Columbia and the United States acknowledge this sense of relatedness by reaching out to Japan during this most difficult time.”

For information about how to donate, visit news.columbia.edu/japanearthquake.

University Senate weighs ROTC return

The University Senate convened a special task force this winter to consider whether the Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (ROTC) should be invited back to campus. The impetus for the dialogue was the federal government’s repeal last December of the military’s “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy, which Columbia and many other universities previously said violated their nondiscrimination codes.

The Senate’s task force for military engagement, chaired by Columbia law student Ron Mazor ’09CC and College associate dean Roosevelt Montas ’95CC, ’04GSAS, conducted a student survey in February about the prospect of Columbia hosting an ROTC program for the first time since 1969. It also held three town hall-style meetings and invited e-mail comments from all members of the Columbia community.

The survey, to which 19 percent of 11,629 polled students responded, found that 60 percent of Columbia students would welcome ROTC units. (Currently, a handful of Columbia cadets commute to Fordham University and Manhattan College to train with their ROTC Army and Air Force units, respectively.)

When *Columbia* went to press, the Senate was planning an April 1 meeting at which the full advisory group of students, faculty, and administrators was expected to vote on whether to recommend that the University formally invite ROTC back. Although Senate recommendations are nonbinding, President Lee C. Bollinger has promised to consider the Senate’s opinion carefully.



EILEEN BARROSO

ROTC cadets participating in a flag-raising ceremony on campus last year.

“I think this is an issue that has significantly stirred the interest of the community, and it is important for the community to have a sustained, serious, factually based discussion about it,” Bollinger said at a March 4 Senate meeting. “The Senate is the place to institute that discussion. I do think there are other bodies that ought to be brought into this conversation, particularly the Council of Deans. Out of this should hopefully [develop] a sense of what the community feels. And then the University should take this [consensus opinion] and find ways to achieve this.”

To learn more, visit columbia.edu/cu/senate/militaryengagement.

NEWSMAKERS

May it please the court

Barack Obama '83CC has nominated White House deputy counsel **Donald B. Verrilli Jr. '83LAW** as solicitor general



GETTY IMAGES

Donald B. Verrilli Jr. '83LAW

of the United States. If confirmed, Verrilli will serve as the federal government's chief advocate before the U.S. Supreme Court; Elena Kagan held that post before joining the high court last summer. Verrilli, who specialized in First Amendment, telecommunications, and intellectual-property law at Jenner & Block, joined the Justice Department in 2009 and the White House legal staff in 2010.

Curative powers

Harold Varmus '66PS has been appointed director of the National Cancer Institute, the U.S. government's principal cancer-research agency, which distributes approximately \$5 billion annually. Varmus, a Columbia University trustee from 2002 to 2005, previously served as president of the Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York City. In 1989, he shared a Nobel Prize for research into cancer's genetic basis . . . **Peter Carmel '70PS**, a pediatric neurosurgeon and a former Columbia professor, has been

elected president of the American Medical Association, the country's largest and most powerful organization of physicians, with approximately 230,000 members. Carmel is chairman of the department of neurological surgery at New Jersey Medical School and co-medical director of the Neurological Institute of New Jersey.

Living architecture

Chuck Hoberman '85SEAS, an artist and engineer who invents collapsible structures — from small toys to stadium domes — based on organic design principles, has unveiled several new works in recent months. These include a sliding glass entranceway at Harvard's Wyss Institute and large windows, with moving geometric overlays that act as sunshades, at the Simons Center at SUNY Stony Brook. In addition, Hoberman has designed a large shading system to cover the atrium of the Audiencia Provincial, a building that is planned for Madrid's new court complex, the Campus of Justice. Hoberman has a career retrospective at the Building Centre in London through April 30.



JORG MEYER

Chuck Hoberman '85SEAS

Whole foodies

Siggi's Skyr, a yogurt company started five years ago by **Siggi Hilmarsson '04BUS**, is now selling 100,000 five-ounce cups a week after seeing its sales double in 2010, *Inc.* magazine reported in February. Siggi's yogurt is fat-free with a creamy, concentrated texture that comes from straining out the whey, which is a traditional practice in Hilmarsson's native Iceland . . .



ICELANDIC MILK AND SKYR

Siggi Hilmarsson '04BUS

Max Goldberg '98BUS has become an influential voice among organic-food devotees through his Twitter feed and blog, Livingmaxwell.com. In a February 3 *New York Times* profile, Goldberg described his shift from investment banker to organic-food advocate, aided by his decision 10 years ago to give up alcohol, cigarettes, and antidepressants. "As a man who blends his own Brazilian nut milk each morning," the *Times* wrote, "Mr. Goldberg gives advice that carries a certain authority."

The rights stuff

In December, former U.S. Army Captain **Tanya Domi '07GSAS**, a public-affairs officer at Columbia, attended President Obama's signing of the law to repeal the military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy at the invitation of the White House. Domi served in the Army from 1974 to 1990 and was investigated



Tanya Domi '07GSAS

several times for her sexual orientation, which she refused to reveal. After DADT became law in 1993, she traveled around the country arguing for its repeal and testified before Congress about the discrimination and harassment she experienced in the Army.

Houses divided

History professor **Eric Foner '63CC, '69GSAS** was awarded this year's Lincoln Prize for his latest book, *The Fiery Trial: Abraham Lincoln and American Slavery*, which explores why the president was slow to publicly support African Americans' social equality. The prize, which honors the finest English-language scholarly work on Lincoln or a related subject, comes with \$50,000 . . . Hebrew and comparative literature professor **Dan Miron '67GSAS** won a National Jewish Book Award for his book *From Continuity to Contiguity: Toward a New Jewish Literary Thinking*, which argues against attempts by scholars to identify commonalities in all Jewish writings.

Hail from the chief

Jacques Barzun '27CC, '32GSAS was awarded a 2010 National Humanities Medal by the White House in March for his "distinguished career as a scholar, educator, and public intellectual." Barzun, a cultural historian known for the range of his scholarship,

taught at Columbia from 1932 until 1975. He has written and edited more than 40 books on subjects that include French Romantic music, German literature, philosophy, education, and detective fiction . . . Chemistry professor **Gerard Parkin** received a Presidential Award for Excellence in Science, Mathematics, and Engineering Mentoring in January, a prize that comes with \$10,000. Parkin, in addition to mentoring his undergraduate and graduate students at Columbia, brings sixth graders from the Columbia Secondary School for Math, Science, and Engineering to campus to perform experiments with his research team.

Truth squad

Lindsey Christ '08JRN won four awards from the Education Writers Association for her reporting for NY1 cable news. One of her prize-winning stories revealed that a celebrated Mandarin-English public school on Manhattan's Lower East Side routinely charged its predominantly low-income families \$1,000 for mandatory after-school language classes . . . Two J-school graduates recently won George Polk Awards. **Jeff Gottlieb '80JRN** won the award for local reporting as part of a team from the *Los Angeles Times* that exposed government corruption in the working-class city of Bell.



Lindsey Christ '08JRN

Amy Brittain '10JRN, with Mark Mueller, won the award for metropolitan reporting for a series in Newark's *Star-Ledger* about the use of steroids by hundreds of police officers, firefighters, and correction officers.

Top of the heap

Recyclebank, a start-up cofounded by **Ron Gonen '04BUS**, has been named the top clean-tech company in the U.S. by the *Wall Street Journal*. Recyclebank works with communities in 29 states and the United Kingdom to create incentives for recycling.



MICHAEL LEWIS

Ron Gonen '04BUS

National trust

Barbara Ruch '65GSAS, a professor emerita of Japanese literature and culture, received the Kyoto Culture Award in Kyoto on January 27 for her lifetime contributions to the arts and culture of the city. An expert on the Japanese art form *etoki*, in which performers tell stories using painted handscrolls, Ruch is only the second non-Japanese person ever to win the award . . . **John S. Micgiel '92GSAS**, an adjunct associate professor of international and public affairs, was awarded a medal by the Institute of National Remembrance in Warsaw in December for his scholarship on modern Poland.

—Joshua J. Friedman '08JRN

EXPLORATIONS

What bugs mosquitoes?

Mosquitoes may be the world's most dangerous pests: They require only stagnant water to breed, evolve quickly to resist insecticides, and spread malaria to 250 million people annually. Each day, nearly 2000 children in sub-Saharan Africa die because of mosquito bites.

Szabolcs Marka, an associate professor of physics, is developing a novel way to protect people from the vectors: a virtual mosquito net with infrared light vibrating at wavelengths that irritate the insects' nervous systems. He has already proven the concept: In a test chamber in his Pupin Hall laboratory, he has shown that mosquitoes will not transgress an infrared shield.

"Mosquitoes are extremely sensitive to heat and light," says Marka. "This is partly how they locate their prey — by sensing the infrared light emanating off our bodies. We've found that it's fairly easy to overload and confuse these sensory systems. When they hit the lasers, they stop and turn around."

Marka's primary research interest is searching the universe for black holes. An experimental physicist, he develops laser sensors

that detect gravitational waves from outer space. A few years ago, while reading about efforts to control malaria-spreading mosquitoes, Marka realized that his work might be useful.

"The malaria problem was already very personal to me," says Marka, who saw a dorm mate at Kossuth Lajos University, in his native Hungary, die of malaria after visiting Uganda in the early 1990s. "And I've always wanted to find a humanitarian application for my work."

This past fall, Marka received a \$1 million grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to develop his optical barrier for mosquitoes. His grant was one of five awarded through the foundation's Grand Challenges Explorations program, which supports experimental projects aimed at improving public health in developing countries. Three other grants went to scientists working on new ways to treat malaria or prevent its transmission.

Said Bill Gates recently: "Some, perhaps many, of these ideas may not pan out. But if even one of these projects is successful, it will have been well worth the investment."

In the shape of a fruit, a blueprint for robotics

Xi Chen, a 34-year-old mechanical engineer at Columbia, believes he has discovered a way to make medical robots so small they

could crawl into your arteries to remove a blockage. His insight came in a supermarket — while he was sizing up a pumpkin.

As Chen inspected the pumpkin's surface, he was struck by how its ridges were arranged like the teeth of a gear. If he could understand the physical process by which these ridges formed, he thought, he might be able to fabricate microscopic gears needed as components in the next generation of nanoscale medical devices.

In his laboratory, Chen set up a camera in front of several small, undeveloped pumpkins and programmed the camera to take a photo every day. Weeks later, by analyzing the photos and dissecting pumpkins at various stages of development, he concluded that a pumpkin's skin grows faster than its inner flesh so that its outer surface buckles. He also quantified — by observing the same process in peppers, melons, gourds, and cantaloupes — how a

fruit's overall shape and the thickness of its skin influence its surface contours.

Since first reporting these findings in 2008, Chen has been making inorganic materials, such as plastic polymers, mimic these natural processes. By coating a micron-sized dollop of gel with a film of polyethylene, and then shrinking the underlying gel, for instance, he can create plastic gears with precisely arranged teeth. He believes that these gears could one day be incorporated into tiny medical devices that enter our bodies to clean out blood vessels or deliver drugs.

"One of the main challenges that engineers now face in trying to develop such devices is creating the gears," says Chen, who is in conversation with potential industry partners. "They use a chemical process that is time-consuming and very expensive. But by copying nature, we've created a method that's simple and affordable."



EILEEN BARROSO

Xi Chen



Szabolcs Marka hopes to control mosquitoes with infrared light shields.

Marka and his collaborators, who include his wife Zsuzsanna Marka and Imre Bartos, both of whom are also Columbia physicists, are now fine-tuning their technology to find optimal properties of light for repelling mosquitoes.

An even more formidable challenge might be figuring out how to implement the technology. Marka envisions that an infrared barrier could be projected in the shape of a cone over a bed or in the shape of flat curtains in windows and doorways. The light would emanate from simple diode lasers, similar to those found in compact-disc and DVD players.

But how could a rural village without electricity power a laser system? Marka says the lasers use so little electricity that cheap solar panels could accumulate enough energy during the day to power them all night. To test this theory, he and his research team will visit several villages in Tanzania this summer. By inspecting people's homes and observing the layouts of their villages, the scientists will create computer models to test the efficacy of various implementation strategies.

"We see this as a complementary approach to conventional mosquito nets and insecticides," says Marka. "And I don't see any reason why we couldn't cover everybody's bed with an infrared shield one day."



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MICHAEL GARRETT, ESQ.
'66CC, '69LAW, '70BUS
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THE 1754 SOCIETY

REVIEWS



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Joseph Stalin, Harry Truman, and Winston Churchill in Potsdam, July 1945, before the start of the Big Three conference.

Roads Not Taken // By William R. Keylor

The Lost Peace: Leadership in a Time of Horror and Hope, 1945–1953

By Robert Dallek (HarperCollins, 432 Pages, \$28.99)

In the course of the past four decades, Robert Dallek '64GSAS has produced a succession of pathbreaking historical studies of the foreign policies of American presidents, from Franklin D. Roosevelt to Richard Nixon. His earlier works were based on extensive research in the primary-source collections of presidential libraries and government archives. They unearthed striking new information of great interest to professional historians and the general public. In *An Unfinished Life*, his biography of John F. Kennedy, for example, he presents a wealth of new information about Kennedy's severe health problems gleaned from the previously unavailable medical files kept by JFK's personal physician.

His latest book, *The Lost Peace: Leadership in a Time of Horror and Hope, 1945–1953*, does not pretend to reveal long-hidden secrets of statecraft. It is based exclusively on secondary sources and is dominated by a single interpretive theme that is foreshadowed in the book's title. In investigating the foreign policies of the major powers in the world during what might be called the Truman-Stalin era, he poses a simple question: "Why can't a world with so many intelligent and thoughtful people do better?" Dallek laments the irrational, unrealistic actions of world leaders that were fueled both by highly distorted interpretations of historical precedents and by an egregious misreading of contemporary

developments in the years after World War II. In highlighting several instances of such flawed leadership, he wistfully asserts that a heavy dose of rational, realistic analysis in the early stages of the Cold War would have resulted in a much more stable and peaceful international order than the one produced by statesmen (and they were all men) at critical turning points in world history after the breakup of the Grand Alliance in 1945.

This elegantly written book does not stop at identifying the many instances of what the author regards as woefully mistaken decisions. It takes the next step of proposing alternative policies that might have resulted in a much safer and more secure world than the one bequeathed by the architects of the Cold War. One can assign Dallek's book to the genre of counterfactual history, which considers the what-ifs of the past. "Ultimately, one of the great tragedies of World War II after the death of so many millions," he mordantly observes, is that "it became not an object lesson in how devastating modern weaponry had made wars of any kind . . . but the foundation for military buildups by America and Russia, the two greatest victors in the conflict."

If only Truman had pressed for a new summit meeting with Stalin after the atomic bombardment of Japan to express America's reluctance to build such destructive weapons in the future and to invite the Soviets "to join him in a shared effort to ban their development and deployment." If only Stalin had explicitly expressed his genuine fears of a German revival, and had promised self-determination for the countries in Eastern Europe that his armies had liberated in exchange for "a [U.S.] commitment to Germany's permanent demilitarization, the march toward East-West conflict might have been averted." If Truman had recognized "that China's Communists might be willing to stand apart from Moscow" and were amenable to improving relations with the United States, Washington could have "abandoned Chiang for Mao and his transparently more popular party" during the Chinese Civil War, which reached its turning point in the years after the Second World War. The long period of Sino-American hostility might well have been prevented.

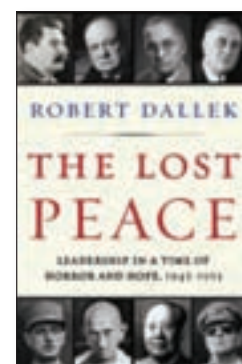
Turning his attention to postwar developments in the Middle East, Dallek wonders why "no one seemed to think of annexing a part of Germany comparable in size to the small area of Palestine to make up the new state of Israel . . . A Jewish state in Europe, where most of the settlers in the new homeland had been born, could have avoided the bloodshed" between Israelis and Arabs in subsequent years caused by the "displacement" of Palestinians. In fact, someone *did* propose the carving out of a homeland in Germany for the survivors of the Holocaust. King Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud of Saudi Arabia made just such a suggestion to Roosevelt during their secret meeting aboard a U.S. naval vessel in Egyptian waters on February 14, 1945, during FDR's

return trip from the Yalta Conference. It is hard to imagine that such a solution would have been palatable to the destitute Jews crowded into displaced-persons camps in Europe. One presumes that they had no interest in remaining in a country that had maltreated them so horribly during the war, but, rather, longed to reach the state that their coreligionists in Palestine already were preparing to create after the end of the British Mandate.

A recurrent theme of the book is the periodic misreading of history and the development of false historical analogies that yielded unsound policies. Memories of appeasement and American isolationism in the 1930s, coupled with the tendency on the part of many American leaders to equate Stalin with Hitler, foreclosed the kind of sober, realistic appraisal of Soviet intentions that could have produced a more stable and peaceful world. Dallek notes that such missteps and false historical analogies were not confined to Washington. "One can only imagine how much better off Russia and the world would have been if . . . the unyielding ideologues in the Kremlin" had realized that a "cooperative posture" toward Washington would have been welcomed in the United States and yielded American economic aid to that devastated country.

The lone hero amid Dallek's long list of villains in this unfolding drama was George Kennan, whose ideas "might have changed the course of the Cold War" if they had been taken seriously by U.S. policymakers. Had his expressions of concern about the excessive and unrealistic aspirations incorporated in the Truman Doctrine and the militarization of the containment policy symbolized by the formation of NATO been given serious consideration in the Truman administration, the costly and dangerous nuclear arms race between the two superpowers could have been avoided. The kind of clear-eyed, coldly realistic analysis that Kennan brought to bear on world events was notably absent in both Washington and Moscow, whose leaders, Dallek believes, allowed their personal prejudices and misreading of history to distort their vision of the world.

As Dallek sees it, the Korean War "was the result of poor leadership and misjudgments" by the leaders of all the interested parties: South Korea's strongman Syngman Rhee's bellicose statements calling for the unification of the peninsula under his rule; Truman's and Dean Acheson's failure to explicitly warn the North that an armed attack on the South to achieve unification under Pyongyang's rule would be met with an American military response; Washington's passivity in the face of MacArthur's



insistence on crossing the 38th Parallel and toppling the North Korean regime; Mao's dragging his heels on the possibility of a negotiated settlement, despite the almost 1 million Chinese casualties in the war, over the subsidiary issue of prisoner-of-war exchanges; Stalin's grossly mistaken belief that by tying down the Americans in a long, drawn-out conflict in East Asia, he would prevent them from building up military forces in the region that most concerned him — Europe.

Like all counterfactual history, Dallek's lucidly presented and powerfully argued indictment of these postwar world leaders is vulnerable to the popular complaint that hindsight is 20/20. Retrospective criticism of decision making, fortified by the knowledge of what in fact transpired after the events in question, fails to take into account the limited information that leaders at the time possessed, the difficult choices they faced, and the trying circumstances under which they had to operate. The alternative scenarios that Dallek indulges in are intriguing, even if some are implau-

sible: Soviet-American cooperation in the prevention of a nuclear arms race and the creation of a neutralized, disarmed Germany in Europe; a postwar Jewish state in the Rhineland rather than in Palestine; the replacement of Chiang with Mao as Washington's partner in Asia; and a Soviet withdrawal from Eastern Europe, followed by an American program of economic assistance to its war-ravaged former ally. Leaving aside the question of whether these alternatives would have been preferable to what really happened, we need to ask if they were even remotely possible in the critically important transitional period from world war to cold war.

William R. Keylor '71GSAS, '71SIPA is a professor of history and international relations and the director of the International History Institute at Boston University. The sixth edition of his The Twentieth-Century World and Beyond: An International History Since 1900 has just been published.

Radical Treatment // By Julia M. Klein

The Emperor of All Maladies: A Biography of Cancer
By Siddhartha Mukherjee (Scribner, 571 pages, \$30)

It is difficult, if not impossible, to reach middle age without experiencing at close hand the ravages of cancer. In my case, the litany of loss includes a grandmother killed by colon cancer, a longtime friend who succumbed to metastatic breast cancer, and a mother who survived breast cancer in her 60s but died, two years ago, of stomach cancer.

By the time it was diagnosed, my mother's disease was advanced, metastatic, and therefore inevitably fatal. She was nevertheless offered chemotherapy, which might have retarded the progress of her cancer; there is no way of knowing for sure. My mother, in her early 80s, was both valiant and hopeful about her treatment. "I want to live," she told the oncologist. She persisted in believing that she might somehow be cured, despite having been told that a cure was impossible. Her faith in modern cancer medicine was as profound as it was misplaced. About nine months after her diagnosis, just after we had decided to enroll her in a hospice program, she asked me, heartbreakingly: "Julia, when do we go to the doctor?" A week later, she was dead.

It was with this dismal personal history as context that I picked up Siddhartha Mukherjee's much-praised *The Emperor of All Maladies: A Biography of Cancer*. Mukherjee, an assistant professor of medicine at Columbia and a staff physician at Columbia University Medical Center, writes that he originally intended the

book to be a journal of his two years as an oncology fellow at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston.

He ended up producing something considerably more ambitious: an eloquent and indispensable history of cancer. (The "biography" conceit of the subtitle is clever without being particularly illuminating.) *The Emperor of All Maladies* tracks the first historical glimpses of the disease, the development of treatment regimens, the role of prevention, and the biological mechanisms by which cancer wreaks its various forms of havoc. Anchoring the narrative, and giving it a human face, are case studies of patients who lived to tell their tales — and of others who did not.

By dint of its subject matter, *The Emperor of All Maladies* can at times be difficult to read. The vividly depicted suffering of patients such as Carla Reed, in the grip of an aggressive leukemia, or Barbara Bradfield, battling metastatic breast cancer, might evoke painful associations. (It did for me.) And Mukherjee's elegant exposition of the science of cancer — which touches on retroviruses, proto-oncogenes, tumor suppressors, genetic mutations, biochemical pathways, and more — will prove challenging for readers without a decent background in biology.

It's worth persisting. This is a remarkable book: cogently written, impressively researched, and animated by a sensibility that is at once skeptical and empathetic. Mukherjee relates cancer's story as

if it were a thriller, and his narrative command is as thorough as his scientific expertise. This isn't a full-fledged cultural history, but it is enriched by Mukherjee's literary proclivities. He begins each chapter with epigraphs, and names such as Czeslaw Milosz, T. S. Eliot, and Jack London turn up alongside quotations by cancer researchers.

After immersing the reader in Carla Reed's plight, Mukherjee flashes back to the 1940s Boston laboratory of Sidney Farber, a chemotherapy pioneer, and then to the writings of the Egyptian physician Imhotep. In a manuscript dating from about 2500 BC, Imhotep describes a case of breast cancer; in regard to treatment, he writes simply: "There is none."

This is the first record of cancer in the medical literature. Over the centuries, Mukherjee says, cancer seemed to be something of a bit player. Though it can strike children and young adults, cancer, a disease of cell division run amok, is strongly correlated with age. In the past, infectious diseases decimated large swaths of the population before cancer could emerge. It follows that, as our population ages, the prevalence of cancer will increase, and the need for effective treatments and preventive measures will grow even more urgent.

Mukherjee is keenly aware that as cancer cases escalate, cures have not kept pace. While he tends to see cancer researchers as heroic, he is less sanguine about practitioners who have too readily employed radical surgery and radical chemotherapy.

A cancer diagnosis has historically inspired fear not just because of the disease's painful course and high mortality rate, but because of the arduousness of treatment. Cures, often of dubious efficacy, entailed surgical disfigurement, the ingestion of highly toxic chemicals with crippling side effects, potentially damaging radiation, or some combination of the three. (My mother's oncologist, describing her decline into semiconsciousness, attributed the blame jointly to her cancer and the drugs she was taking to combat it.)

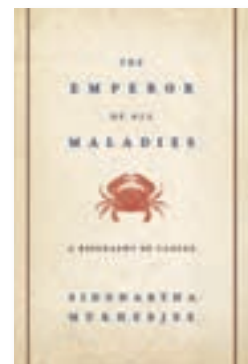
Mukherjee compares cancer treatment to the conundrum of Lewis Carroll's Red Queen, with both doctors and patients "stuck pedal-

ing furiously just to keep still in one place." And yet, only a few decades ago, the situation was markedly worse. Some once-fatal cancers, including childhood leukemia, are now highly curable. And the armamentarium of remedies has expanded. William S. Halsted's late-19th-century radical mastectomy, which excised lymph nodes as well as breasts, has mostly been replaced by the simple mastectomy and, in some cases, a breast-sparing lumpectomy. High-dose chemotherapy cocktails are being supplemented — if not yet eliminated — by less toxic and more targeted drugs, including Herceptin (for breast cancer) and Gleevec (for leukemia).

In these more subtle remedies, along with better prevention against carcinogens, lies oncology's future, Mukherjee suggests. "No simple, universal, or definitive cure is in sight," he writes. But as the science of cancer grows more sophisticated, it will spawn more sophisticated oncological medicine, a constantly evolving array of specific treatments and cures.

Mukherjee shies away from utopian predictions. "Technology," he writes, "dissolves its own past," complicating any such forecasts. But neither human nature nor the nature of cancer, is likely to change. So, he writes, "the relentlessness, the inventiveness, the resilience, the queasy pivoting between defeatism and hope, the hypnotic drive for universal solutions, the disappointment of defeat, the arrogance and the hubris" that have characterized the battle against cancer to date will surely be part of its future, too.

Julia M. Klein is a cultural reporter and critic in Philadelphia and a contributing editor at Columbia Journalism Review.



The Secretary's Letter // *By David Pryce-Jones*

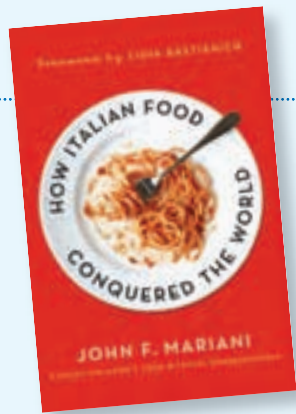
The Balfour Declaration: The Origins of the Arab-Israeli Conflict

By Jonathan Schneer (Random House, 432 pages, \$30)

Early in November 1917, Arthur Balfour, the British foreign secretary, handed an extraordinary letter to Lord Rothschild, head of that famously successful Jewish family and unofficial representative of British Jewry. Balfour had chosen this rather personal means of communicating that the members of the British government "view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people." An important qualifica-

tion added that nothing was to be done to prejudice the rights of the Arabs.

How this, the Balfour Declaration, came about has always been a mystery. A home in Palestine for the Jews could not be considered a British national interest. Nor did the issue of a national home attract more than a small and unrepresentative minority of Jews. Zionism, or Jewish nationalism, was then a relatively new movement.



Venni, vidi, ora mangiate!

The book: *How Italian Food Conquered the World* (Palgrave Macmillan)

The author: John F. Mariani '73GSAS, columnist for *Esquire* and *Bloomberg News*

Columbia Magazine: *How Italian Food Conquered the World* chronicles the rise of Italian cuisine through modern history, from the resourcefulness of poor immigrants in the early 20th century to the culinary sophistication of contemporary five-star chefs. Why did you want to tell this story?

John Mariani: If I had written this book 10 years ago, I might have called it *How Italian Food Conquered America*. But since then, all the evidence that I can see — not only from traveling abroad, but from reading about the hottest new restaurants opening in London and Berlin, and even in Mumbai and Tokyo — is that, after decades of Italian food being labeled as secondary to haute French cuisine, it is now far more popular, and far more enjoyable, than French food, virtually everywhere.

CM: You describe four key events that led to this culinary shift, all of which occurred outside of Italy.

JM: First, in the 1970s, there was the American food movement, when the number of gourmets and foodies grew substantially and wanted really good Italian food, Chinese food, Thai food, and so on. Then in the mid-1980s, there was a resurgence of interest in Italian fashion and style, and the fashion press would report assiduously on the chic trattorias where Gianni Versace and Giorgio Armani were eating their pasta. This connection made what had been perceived as old-fashioned, heavy, red-sauce cooking into something really hip and stylish. Also in the 1970s and early 1980s, America started to get much finer and fresher examples of Italian wines and food products. Now you could really reproduce the true flavors of Italian

food in this country. Finally, in the '90s, almost to top it all off, there was the Mediterranean diet, which said that Italians, specifically, were the healthiest people on the face of the earth, and this is the way that they ate.

CM: And it was the overnight-transport revolution that made fresher ingredients and better products available?

JM: Before FedEx and DHL, it was virtually impossible to find things like extra-virgin olive oil, real prosciutto di Parma, balsamic vinegar, or fresh porcini mushrooms outside of Italy. With these carriers, all these ingredients suddenly were available to chefs, restaurateurs, and home cooks. Now you could really reproduce the true flavors of Italian food in this country.

CM: Until very recently, what Americans considered Italian cuisine was more of a southern variety, with hearty pastas and red sauces. Was this primarily because of the particular immigrant population that settled here?

JM: Eighty-five percent of the 5 million Italians who came to America between 1880 and 1920 were from the south, predominantly from Sicily and Naples. They flourished, mostly in the eastern cities, and created their Italian American cooking from the abundance of ingredients they found here. They created dishes from reminiscences of favorite family cooking. But things like spaghetti and meatballs were considered luxuries in the old days, which they rarely could have afforded. Yet that's the stuff that started being served in the little restaurants, in places like Little Italy. So this southern Italian food really became Italian American food.

CM: Does that mean the basic marinara sauce is actually an Italian American creation, rather than a true Italian staple?

JM: Absolutely. Up until the mid-19th century, nobody used tomatoes in Italy, except in the south. How could you get a tomato from Naples up to Turin or Florence? The thing would just rot. But once they started canning, the north begrudgingly accepted tomatoes and tomato sauce. Meanwhile, in America during the same period, the immigrants were going wild, because they could afford to have tomato sauce any night of the week, and they put it on everything.

CM: Has America been more responsible for the Italian food movement on the world stage than Italy itself?

JM: Having just returned from Italy, I can say that while I ate very well, it was the exact same food that I ate last time, and the time before that, and the time before that. The food is spectacularly good, but the excitement is clearly on this side of the Atlantic. New York, San Francisco, and some other cities around the United States are doing food at least as good, and I think more innovative and more exciting, than what's going on in Italy today — which stays basically traditional, and basically regional. The food here has become much more refined. What you're eating anywhere in the world now is much closer to the American model than the models in Italy.

CM: What is it about Italian food that has such universal appeal?

JM: I think it's simply the likability of the basic ingredients. Everybody loves noodles, bread, tomato, and mozzarella. I mean, what's better than that?

— Stacey Kors

Its leader, Chaim Weizmann, had presence and intelligence, but he was a social outsider, an immigrant speaking with a Russian accent. David Lloyd George, a prime minister of extreme moral agility, was prepared to ditch the Declaration up until the very last moment. Lord Curzon, former viceroy of India, and Edwin Montagu, a Jew, were the only cabinet colleagues with an informed interest in foreign policy, and both opposed the Declaration.

Arab nationalism was another relatively new movement, and its leaders at once objected to the idea of a national home in Palestine for anyone except themselves. The British seem to have set Arabs and Zionists against one another, with the immediate consequence of bringing trouble on themselves. As the Jewish national home shaped into the state of Israel over the next decades, many in the Arab and Muslim world came to believe that the Balfour Declaration marked a first step in an Anglo-Jewish imperialist policy of deliberately deceiving Arabs.

In *The Balfour Declaration: The Origins of the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, Jonathan Schneer '78GSAS, a professor of history at Georgia Tech who specializes in modern Britain, has put together a mass of material to decipher how the British got themselves and many others into a long-drawn mess. He concludes that there was no Machiavellian conspiracy. On the contrary, he shows that the Declaration was formulated amid the urgent but conflicting pressures of a world war. Official and unofficial lobbyists, busybodies, and double-dealers were in their element. This is a story about the workings of politics and diplomacy, and its moral is that even at the highest levels of government, decision making is at the mercy of opportunism, sheer chance, and, above all, ignorance.

The November 1914 decision of the Young Turks in Constantinople to join Germany's side in the First World War was the first miscalculation with unforeseen consequences, for it placed at risk the future of the entire Ottoman Empire. Had Turkey instead joined the Triple Entente — composed at the time of Great Britain, Russia, and France — or stayed neutral, there would have been no Balfour Declaration. The embryonic Arab and Jewish nationalist movements were already anticipating independence from Ottoman rule. On the grounds that my enemy's enemy is my friend, both were quick to seek British sponsorship for their ends. The British, in need of allies in the all-out campaign against the Turks, responded positively. Suddenly the future of the Middle East was up for grabs.

Sharif Hussein bin Ali of Mecca was the only Arab in a position to act as nationalist champion of the Arab cause, and Schneer deals kindly with him, and at length. Head of the Hashemite family, with impeccable Islamic credentials, the sharif was a shrewd and ambitious ruler who had few resources except his wits. He could raise only a limited number of undisciplined Bedouin tribesmen to fight for him, and they tended to vanish in a crisis. Prudently, he kept lines open to both Germany and Britain until he was sure that the latter would win the war and he could pick up from them whatever spoils were available. Once the British began driving the Turks out of Mesopotamia and Palestine, and once

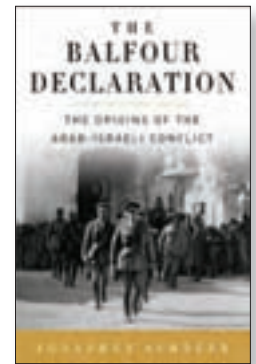
they had paid and armed the sharif, he liked to visualize himself as emir or grand sharif over Arabs everywhere.

Sir Henry MacMahon, a colorless official whose career had been in India until he became British high commissioner in Egypt, had the thankless task of striking a deal with the sharif. Schneer joins the many historians who have picked over the ambiguities in their correspondence. MacMahon thought he had excluded territories — including Palestine — from the kingdom reserved for the sharif; the latter claimed that he had been promised all Arab territories. Each was undoubtedly trying to take advantage of the other, but their exchange of letters involved negotiation and could not carry the weight of binding legal documents.

In June 1916, Sharif Hussein at last leaned out of his palace window in Mecca to fire a shot that symbolized armed opposition to his Ottoman overlords: the Arab Revolt was under way. One of the British officers sent to lead the sharif's Bedouin tribesmen was T. E. Lawrence, mythologized as Lawrence of Arabia. After the war, he popularized the notion that the British had broken a cast-iron agreement that the sharif was to become king of all the Arabs, and that this was a shameful betrayal.

Schneer is vague when it comes to allotting blame. But if so famous a man as Lawrence could come out accusing his superiors of treachery, who were Arabs to discredit him? As it was, Sharif Hussein had manipulated the British into helping him fight the Turks and obtain a kingdom in Arabia, going on to complain because it wasn't larger. Present-day Arab insistence that ever since the First World War they have been victims of imperialist perfidy obscures the reality that the sharif had manipulated the British into arming and financing his campaign to take the place of the Turks in all their Arab provinces.

Enter Sir Mark Sykes, whom Schneer holds responsible for making the political process even more confused than it already was. Sykes was a baronet, a rich dilettante who had enjoyed traveling in the Middle East before becoming a Conservative member of Parliament, and then secretary to the war cabinet. In a secret 1916 treaty with François Georges-Picot, Sykes's French opposite number, Sykes agreed to reserve Palestine for the French. British politicians and the military soon regretted this, and were delighted when wartime realpolitik made the treaty null and void. The changeable Sykes had seen nothing incompatible in backing British and French ambitions, Arab nationalism, and Zionism at the same time. He met Chaim Weizmann in January 1917 and their immediate friendship was, in Schneer's phrase, a crucial connection. "Sykes clearly recognized in Weizmann the Zionist he had been seeking, while Weizmann immediately recognized in Sykes the highly placed government official with whom Zionists could



most effectively work.” When the Balfour Declaration became public that autumn, Sykes boasted to Weizmann, “It’s a boy!”

In Schneer’s opinion, Sykes had such a singular gift for squaring circles that he might have been able to satisfy the rival claimants he’d encouraged. Unfortunately, he died in 1919, before the postwar settlement could be finalized, leaving posterity to deal with the mess.

Yet even beyond Sykes, his great ally, Weizmann, held an improbable ace in his hand. He was a Jew at a time when Jews were imagined to have the international power to influence the outcome of the war. Rumor had it, Schneer writes, that in the face of defeat, Germany was planning to attract Jews to its side with its own Zionist manifesto. France actually got in first, preemptively, with its June 1917 appeal for a Zionist home in Palestine under French administration. As Sykes warned the Foreign Office, “With ‘Great Jewry’ against us, there is no possible chance” of defeating Germany.

In grim reality, Jews in Central and Eastern Europe were prime victims of the war — poor and humble people powerless to save themselves from being massacred by the thousands as battles

raged above their heads. But Sykes’s view, Schneer tells us, was apparently shared by the majority of the diplomatic establishment of the U.K. and France: “That Sykes might have gripped the wrong end of the stick altogether; that his notion of Jewish world power was outrageously, egregiously, mistaken; that it was based upon romance and myth and age-old prejudice, not upon fact; and that it was at heart profoundly irrational does not seem to have occurred to any of them.”

The inescapable conclusion of Schneer’s pioneering research across three continents is that Weizmann and the Zionists in London won out and got the Balfour Declaration because so many politicians were in the grip of anti-Semitic stereotypes. It is outrageously ironic that the age-old fantasy of Jews as the invisible string pullers of everything should underlie the foundational certificate of the state of Israel.

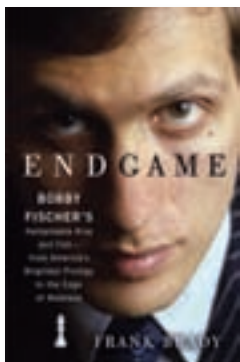
David Pryce-Jones is a senior editor at National Review. His newest book, Treason of the Heart: From Thomas Paine to Kim Philby, will be published in May. He lives in London.

Grandmaster Flash // By Phoebe Magee

Endgame: Bobby Fischer’s Remarkable Rise and Fall — from America’s Brightest Prodigy to the Edge of Madness

By Frank Brady (Crown Publishers, 416 pages, \$25.99)

In the spring of 1949, Joan Fischer bought her six-year-old brother Bobby a plastic chess set at a candy store on their block. Bobby’s main opponent was his mother, and each time he beat her, he would turn the board around, play her side, then beat her again. “Since Bobby couldn’t find a worthy opponent, or *any* opponent for that matter,” writes Frank Brady in his new biography, “he made himself his principal adversary. Setting up the men on his tiny board, he’d play game after game alone, first assuming the white side and then spinning the board around . . . ‘Eventually I would checkmate the other guy,’ he chuckled when he described the experience years later.”



The lonely child in a Brooklyn apartment brilliantly playing two sides of the same board, and making himself his own “principal adversary” is one of many telling images in *Endgame: Bobby Fischer’s Remarkable Rise and Fall — from America’s Brightest Prodigy to the Edge of Madness*. Two distinct Bobbys stand out in the public memory. One is the

genius, a chess player of the highest caliber who brought new life to the ancient game. The other is the madman, the hate-spewing international fugitive. Where these two sides intersect is of particular interest to readers who seek the real Fischer.

Their guide is Frank Brady ’76SOA, a former professor of journalism at Barnard and now a professor of communication arts at St. John’s University, the founding editor of *Chess Life* magazine, and the president of Manhattan’s Marshall Chess Club, where a teenage Fischer played his “Game of the Century” in October 1956. Fischer’s unusual display of daring and instinct, including ingenious sacrifices of his knight and queen, earned the battle its nickname.

In that match, the 13-year-old Fischer defeated 26-year-old Donald Byrne, a Penn State professor of English and the 1953 U.S. Open Chess Champion. “It was as though [Fischer had] been peering through a narrow lens and the aperture began to widen to take in the entire landscape in a kind of efflorescent illumination,” writes Brady. “He wasn’t absolutely certain he could see the full consequences of allowing Byrne to take his queen, but he plunged ahead, nevertheless.”

Brady knew Fischer from the time Fischer was a child, played games against him, ate dinner and took walks with him during the

“on” times in their on-and-off friendship. From this relationship the author is able to fill in many missing details from his subject’s highly unusual life. A few months before the Byrne match, for example, Fischer was invited to join the eccentric neo-Nazi millionaire E. Forry Laucks and his Log Cabin Chess Club on a 3500-mile road trip to Havana. Bobby’s single mother, Regina, a travel-hungry intellectual, radical, and endlessly fascinating character (who warrants more space in the book than Brady is able to give), insisted on tagging along. Rounding out the party were two other chess-playing walk-ons: Norman T. Whitaker, a con man, pedophile, and disbarred lawyer who once falsely claimed to know the whereabouts of the kidnapped Lindbergh baby, and Glenn T. Hartleb, a bespectacled chess expert from Florida who greeted everyone he met “by bowing low and saying with deep reverence, *Master!*” Here, as throughout *Endgame*, Brady approaches the odd facts of Fischer’s life with the measured patience of the historian and the eye and ear of the novelist.

In the summer of 1972, at 29, Fischer faced the defending world champion, the Soviet Union’s Boris Spassky, in the Icelandic capital of Reykjavik. After 21 games, and with millions watching around the world, Fischer defeated Spassky 12½ to 8½ to become World Chess Champion. Fischer’s performance also brought chess into the spotlight in America — a considerable feat in itself. During the tournament, televisions in New York City bars were tuned to chess instead of to baseball. Chess sets sold out in department stores, and, as Fischer himself put it, the game was “all over the front pages” in a country where it had long been of interest to only a quiet few.

Timing and circumstance had a lot to do with Fischer’s celebrity outside the chess world. It was the middle of the Cold War, and beating the Soviets, who had for decades dominated international chess, became for Americans a matter of national pride. While his role as the American challenger made him an underdog, Fischer did not play the part well. His arrival (on a plane stocked with oranges, so that juice might be “squeezed in front of him”) was delayed by squabbles over money, and once he got to Reykjavik, he delayed the games with tantrums about distracting television cameras and lights. Fischer’s success became such a topic of geopolitical interest that Henry Kissinger telephoned — twice — to urge him to quit the antics and play the game. In the atmosphere of paranoia and accusation that lingered, Fischer believed for most of his adult life that the Soviets were plotting to kill him.

As a biographer, Brady is better placed than anyone to relate how Fischer’s genius warped into madness, but he resists this kind of analysis, being more concerned with persuading us that the Fischer who ranted against the Jews and applauded the September 11 attacks should also be remembered as a player of considerable grace. Brady is also remarkably adept at making both the mechanics and the beauty of chess understandable to the novice, and at making chess seem important and worthy to one who might oth-

erwise have no interest in the game. He opens his book with a quote from the novelist A. S. Byatt, about a young chess player who saw movements across the board as beautiful lines of light. Brady, too, sees chess as a game and an art — and sees Fischer, then, as an artist.

While Brady’s passion for the game is one of his strengths, the reader at times can feel bogged down in long, consecutive descriptions of tournaments. It’s not that the various matches are hard to



© BETTMANN / CORBIS

Thirteen-year-old Bobby Fischer contemplates his next move at the Manhattan Chess Club in 1956.

grasp, it’s that they are easy to forget, and so the reader might find it difficult to understand Fischer’s overall progress. The book both suffers and benefits from Brady’s enormous amount of research. Narrative transitions are occasionally buried under an overload of information.

It is the rare firsthand accounts from Bobby and those who loved him that provide the most affecting moments in the book. Chief among them is a 1973 letter from Regina to her son, in which she warns, “The greater the person’s mind and talent, the greater the destruction . . . Don’t let millions of people down who regard you as a genius and an example to themselves. It’s no joke to be in your position.”

Anyone who reads *Endgame* will know how right she was.

Phoebe Magee is a freelance writer living in New York City.

The World in a Jug // By Rafi Zabor

Alan Lomax: The Man Who Recorded the World

By John Szwed (Viking, 438 pages, \$29.95)

In May 1932, folklorist John Lomax and his teenage son Alan drove around the town of Terrell, Texas, with an Edison cylinder-recording machine in the back of their Ford Model A. When they heard a washerwoman singing on her porch, they pulled over to try out the recorder. The woman put on a clean apron and began to sing for the device in words pared down to the barest expressive essentials. “*Healin’ water done move, / Healin’ water done move, / Soul so happy now, / Healin’ water done move.*”



“The voice of that skinny little black woman,” Alan Lomax wrote decades later, faithfully reproducing the juvenile romanticism of the moment, “was as full of shakes and quavers as a Southern river is full of bends and bayous . . .

As the song ended, she was weeping and saying over and over, ‘O Lord have mercy, O Lord have mercy.’”

His epiphany had a second part that connected the spiritual with the sociopolitical. A few miles down the road, at the Smithers Plantation in Huntsville, the Lomaxes recorded black tenant farmers singing the hard truth of their lives: “*His clothes is full of patches, / And his hat is full of holes, / Stoopin’ down, pullin’ cotton, / From the bottom boles, / Poor farmer, poor farmer, poor farmer, / They git all a farmer makes.*”

“I saw what I had to do,” Lomax said, looking back 64 years to his 17-year-old self and adding the mythifying note: “My job was to get as much of these views, these feelings, this unheard majority, onto the center of the stage.”

It’s one thing to feel a sense of mission, another to fulfill it. That Alan Lomax did fulfill it, on an unprecedented scale and as far as was humanly and technologically possible in his time, we learn from *Alan Lomax: The Man Who Recorded the World*. John Szwed, the author of this comprehensive and acute biography, and a professor of music and the acting director of the Center for Jazz Studies at Columbia, takes us with Lomax time and again, at home and abroad, down backroads and across savannas into unknown country. We watch this formidable Texan engage with the locals, find his way to the most primordial and essential musicians, and come away with hundreds, sometimes thousands, of recordings and interviews that are accompanied by their cultural and sociohistorical context, ready for broadcast, archiving, and release. Even today, listening to Lomax’s field recordings can

shock a listener from his comfort zone into musical *materia prima* as elemental as earth and breath and blood, or startle us with a refinement that seems to come out of nowhere.

Szwed seems in effortless command of a complex field of action. His writing moves without strain, from the general to the particular, from the big picture to the small, and he possesses an intellectual and scholarly range appropriate to his subject. As for the defining period of the New Deal, for instance — when Lomax, based at the Library of Congress, was given extraordinary scope and resources — Szwed gives us a masterly compound picture of the politics and aesthetics of the time, including a wealth of bureaucratic struggle, the still-vexed question of copyright and royalty payments, and Lomax’s deep engagement with such iconic figures of the period as Lead Belly, Woody Guthrie, and Jelly Roll Morton.

When, in 1938, Lomax first met Morton, a seminal but forgotten New Orleans musician running a nightclub in a corner of Washington, D.C., he viewed jazz as the enemy of all he held dear, his preference always being for the root above the branch. But with characteristic keenness he recognized the man’s musical and personal authenticity as soon as he heard him play and talk. Their long interviews, which, according to Szwed, invented the genre of oral autobiography, resulted in the classic 1950 book *Mister Jelly Roll*. The new commercial recordings Lomax secured for Morton restored to him, in his last years, the proper benison of his art.



COURTESY OF THE ALAN LOMAX ARCHIVE

Raymond Spencer Moore in his tobacco field, Chilhowie, Virginia, photographed by Alan Lomax in September 1959.



COURTESY OF THE ALAN LOMAX ARCHIVE

A congregant of the Union Holiness Church, Portsmouth, Virginia, photographed by Lomax in May 1960.

Lomax left for Europe during the McCarthy years, and remained there for most of the 1950s. Based in England and working with the BBC, he recorded extensively throughout the British Isles and, via radio broadcasts and concerts, achieved a degree of celebrity he had not known at home. By the time of his visit to Spain in 1952 — which resulted in 11 LPs with authoritative commentary for Columbia Records — Lomax’s romanticism had been tempered by experience and honed to a gleaming edge. “I remember the night I spent in the straw hut of a shepherd on the moonlit plains of Extremadura,” Lomax wrote. “He played the one-string vihuela, the instrument of the medieval minstrels, and sang ballads of the wars of Charlemagne, while his two ancient cronies sighed over the woes of courtly lovers now 500 years in the dust.”

Lomax returned to the States in 1958 and settled in New York, where a folk music revival was gathering enough steam to look like an engine of significant social change. He threw himself into the center of another convulsive American epoch, mentoring young musicians; writing articles, books, and ballad operas; producing records, concert series, and films; and battling sectarian academics and citified popularizers. He was perceived as a purist even as he welcomed rock ‘n’ roll as an authentic American idiom.

Arguably, no one else in view could equal Lomax’s depth of experience and scholarship, but he was hardly the only man present who thought himself best qualified to run the show. (Notwithstanding the guidance he received from Margaret Mead, writes Szwed, critics “challenged nearly every aspect” of his research.)

He was involved in a number of territorial squabbles, including his literal wrestling match at the 1965 Newport Folk Festival

with Bob Dylan’s manager, Albert Grossman, which Szwed almost convinces us was not about Dylan going electric but about the fair distribution of rehearsal space.

In his last years, getting fat, almost broke, despite awards and patronage (including that of Columbia University, which for a time housed his nearly infinite archive), with the IRS nipping at his heels, Lomax moved toward a more scientific approach. (For 27 years, he held the unpaid position of director of the Cantometrics and Choreometrics Research Project at Columbia.) It was a hard sell, both in the academy and on the street. In advance of digital technology, Lomax even envisioned a “global jukebox” through which those fundamentals could be pursued not only within cultures but across them. He was trying to get the concept funded when a stroke felled him. Lomax died in 2002 at the age of 87.

In the wake of Alan Lomax, many can speak for the passionately dedicated scholar of American music; others, bruised by the dynamo, have different tales to tell. Szwed details Lomax’s two marriages and many girlfriends, for instance, and the difficulty the unconventional households caused his daughter. For the most part, though, Szwed functions, persuasively, as an advocate for the man he calls “one of the most influential Americans of the 20th century, a man who changed not only how everyone listened to music but even how they viewed America.”

Rafi Zabor is the author of The Bear Comes Home, which won the PEN/Faulkner Award for Fiction, and the memoir I, Wabenzi. He lives in Brooklyn.

Continued from page 5

having more candid conversations with dying patients and their family members about the range of end-of-life options available to them. This is confusing, because earlier in the article Iyengar seems to be promoting the idea, common in France, that doctors should tell patients when it's time to "pull the plug." This stems from her idea that people who receive guidance from experts when making complicated decisions tend to be more at peace with the outcomes.

Iyengar's research also shows that businesses can increase sales by providing shoppers relatively few options for a given product, as humans find choosing among a limited number of options is easier and more satisfying.

So why does she want American doctors to provide patients with still more information about end-of-life options, if this will presumably confuse them more? After what Iyengar said before, this makes no sense. Her ideas, when carried beyond business, are an embarrassment.

Albert Sanders '41SEAS
New York, NY

David J. Craig responds:

Iyengar, in her interview with Columbia Magazine, said that dying patients in U.S. hospitals often spend long periods of time on life support because doctors have failed to discuss with them alternatives such as hospice in adequate detail, not because patients are overwhelmed by the number of end-of-life options available to them. (Her famous "jam study," which showed that people often become indecisive when faced with many options, isn't directly relevant here.)

Iyengar examines the psychology of decision making in many contexts, and her analysis has yielded conclusions as varied as our natures. She is not a theorist attempting to formulate a single, comprehensive explanation for how people make decisions. Our article should have made this more clear.

Sheena Iyengar claims that there is little discussion of end-of-life issues in hospitals because "health-care providers earn lots of money sustaining people on life support and administering expensive tests in their final days." As a practicing physician for more than 20 years, I have not found this to be true. More often than not, even the best-informed families insist on intensive end-of-life care for their loved ones. Reasons include living wills, family's wishes in the absence of a living will, religious beliefs, and hope for the possibility of extending life, however briefly. Also, families requesting higher levels of such care generally bear no financial responsibility for the tests and procedures subsequently performed, as these are usually covered by Medicare, as well as other insurance carriers. Families often opt for less aggressive intervention in otherwise hopeless cases when they are exposed to at least some financial responsibility for the costs.

In terms of payments to hospitals, your readers should note: For many years, hospitals have been receiving lump-sum payments from Medicare, which are based upon each patient's diagnosis, regardless of the length of stay in the hospital. If an elderly patient remains hospitalized on life support with inoperable cancer, for example, then the hospital receives a lump-sum payment; it *loses* money for each additional test performed and it *loses* money for each additional day that the patient is kept alive by artificial means. It is therefore in the hospital's financial interest to persuade patients and their families to terminate aggressive care and allow terminally ill patients to die.

There are long-term acute-care hospital units (often referred to as LTACH units), which may be operated as for-profit entities separate and distinct from regular hospitals. These small LTACH units treat complex medical and surgical cases, some of which might exemplify the article's financial-incentive claim. However, this is the exception, not the norm.

Charles Markowitz '82CC
Lakewood, NJ

"Grave Decisions" thoughtfully addresses many aspects of decision making, including difficult decisions at the end of life.

However, I was surprised at the suggestion that end-of-life options are not discussed with patients because "health-care providers earn lots of money sustaining people on life support and administering expensive tests in their final days." I think this is an unlikely explanation. Most physicians and hospitals are swamped with patients and have no need to inappropriately inflate their caseloads.

But a more prevalent reason for failure to discuss end-of-life options is that physicians have been trained to defeat disease at every opportunity. In recent decades the development of successful treatments for so many formerly fatal disorders (of heart, lung, kidney, liver, etc.) seems to have led some physicians to ignore the inevitability of death and to want to fight until the bitter end. It is true that the persistent use of every possible technological tool often makes the end unnecessarily bitter for the patient, and this is one of the major problems in end-of-life care today.

Peter Rogatz '46CC, '56PH
Port Washington, NY

OF SLIPPERS AND SLIPS

As a parent of a recent Columbia arts and sciences graduate, I have read with interest your high-quality alumni magazine and its fascinating and insightful articles over the past several years.

But one article has really stood out, and that is "The Art of Pleasing" (Winter 2010–11). Paul Hond captured the odyssey of Arlene Shuler and has written a beautiful biographical essay that places her and her journey to New York City Center's leadership in the context of the times.

Thanks to Hond, and to Lois Greenfield for her fine accompanying photograph.

Neil Kauffman
Swarthmore, PA

As always, I enjoyed reading *Columbia Magazine*. I especially enjoyed your article

about Arlene Shuler — until I read the last sentence of the penultimate paragraph: “Then she lay the fabric at her feet.” Mr. Hond: Please repeat 10 times:

lay, laid, laid
lie, lay, lain.

It distresses me to see such an error in *Columbia Magazine*, a magazine that should stand for excellence in writing and scholarship.

Isabelle Emerson '77GSAS
Las Vegas, NV

STRANGE BEDFELLOWS?

In your College Walk article on Albert Ellis (“Grouped Therapy,” Winter 2010–11), your writer says that Ellis had an affair with Ayn Rand. Surely this was only an “affair” in the sense of “*affaire d’honneur*,” or a duel? There was no love lost between the two (see Ellis’s book *Is Objectivism a Religion?*). What evidence, if any, is there that there was ever a romance between them?

Ralph Linsker '67CC, '72GSAS
Millwood, NY

WARRIOR SCHOLARS

I have been conducting research for a novel and screenplay on the life of my grandfather, Sherwood F. Moran '16UTS, who, following Pearl Harbor, interrupted his work as a missionary in Japan to join the Marines at age 56, landing on Guadalcanal to humanely interrogate young fanatical, suicidal POWs.

Also during the war, his son, my late father, Japan-born, Japanese-fluent Sherwood R. Moran, served as a code breaker in the Pacific, where he was friends with Donald Keene and Ted de Bary. They were part of a small group who could read, write, and speak the enemy language, and of course now, with the passage of the decades, that small group has become much, much smaller.

Reading about Keene and de Bary in the past two issues of *Columbia Magazine* (Michael Shavelson’s fine review of Keene’s *So Lovely a Country Will Never Perish*:

Wartime Diaries of Japanese Writers in the Fall 2010 issue, and Thomas Vinciguerra’s interesting College Walk about de Bary in the Winter 2010–11 issue) reconnected me with two men who were part of not just that noble effort, but of my father’s life, and whom I last saw during my graduate school days more than 40 years ago. I thank you. It is heartwarming to know that those two warrior scholars still walk among us.

David Moran '70GSAS
Wayland, MA

DRAWN CONCLUSIONS

Professor Robert Harpur, lampooned in Vardill’s 1766 cartoon “College Intrigues, or the Amors of Patrick Pagan” (Finals, Winter 2010–11) was more than just another one of Alexander Hamilton’s tutors. The historian J. T. Flexner credits Harpur with instilling the advanced math and physics (“natural philosophy”) skills that allowed the unqualified and slight former student to ascend to an artillery captaincy heavily reliant on such knowledge, a position of inestimable value throughout the Revolution, and well noted by General Washington.

What American history would we write if Harpur had left King’s for good in 1767, before Hamilton had a chance to meet him some five years later?

Parenthetically, Hamilton finely outfitted his artillery troops with the last of his funds from his St. Croix sponsors, money intended for tuition.

William A. Taylor '70GSAPP
St. Croix, VI

VETTED

So Claude Suhl considers himself a veteran, but one who fought for his country by blocking the steps of Low Library to prevent the ROTC from recruiting on campus; by being dragged away from anti-Vietnam War rallies by the police; and by registering voters in South Carolina for Martin Luther King’s Southern Christian Leadership Conference (Letters, Winter 2010–11).

I invite Suhl to visit his local VFW and American Legion posts armed with a copy of that issue of *Columbia Magazine* (since he has evidently never been armed with anything else) to discuss his veteran status with the real veterans, who sacrificed so much by going in harm’s way for their country. I am sure the ensuing discussions will be lively and may even help round out Suhl’s education.

David Clayton Carrad '66JRN
Augusta, GA

Claude Suhl is by no means a veteran. What he was demonstrating were the rights to protest and carry out the act of free speech against the very people who provided it to him.

The ROTC does not or did not recruit. The Reserve Officers’ Training Corps is a college-based officer commissioning program that men and women voluntarily elect to pursue. It also provides financial aid to those pursuing a career in the military. By “prevent[ing] the ROTC” from being on the Columbia campus, you made it more difficult for young Americans, including me, to utilize a fantastic program and pursue a career of their choosing.

Lt. Col. John H. Gadjjo '86SEAS
Hershey, PA

A COMPLEX SYNDROME

In regard to Zev Lewinson’s letter about mercury causing autism (Winter 2010–11), anecdotal evidence is usually useless. Millions of people are walking around with mercury fillings and no thyroid problems. Coincidence does not mean cause. Lewinson should look up the Danish study in which two groups of children were followed, one given vaccines stabilized with mercury and the other with mercury-free vaccines. There was no difference in the incidence of autism between the two groups. So much for the mercury theory. Autism is a syndrome complex and has multiple causes; so far not one has been shown to be directly related.

Joseph Marcus '72PS
Great Neck, NY

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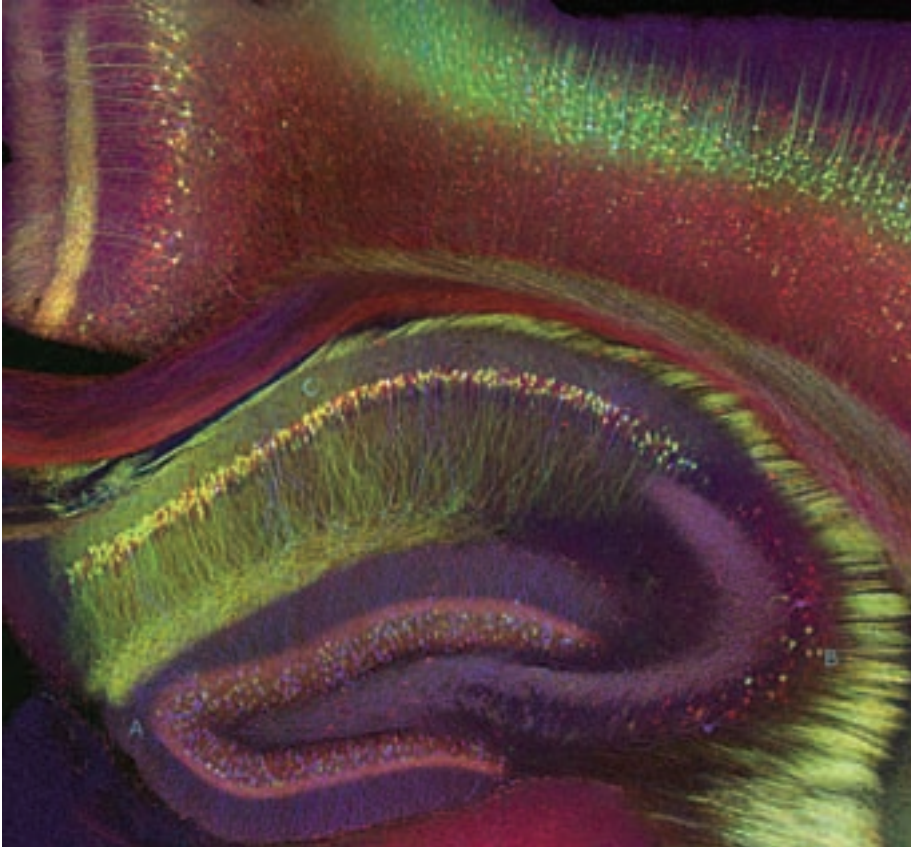
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FINALS



Beauty and Brains

“I used to carry images of the brain in my wallet,” says Carl Schoonover ’11GSAS, a fourth-year graduate student in Columbia’s neuroscience program. “I’d show them to other people and their response was, ‘Whoa, *that’s* the human brain? How is that possible? It’s so beautiful.’ I was surprised that people who didn’t know the meaning of the pictures also found them beautiful. That convinced me that there was interesting material here, and not just for the scientist in me.”

Portraits of the Mind: Visualizing the Brain from Antiquity to the 21st Century (published by Abrams) is Schoonover’s coffee-table tour of how philosophers and scientists have represented that most mysterious of human workings. Schoonover compiled images from archives and from neuroscientists around the world to create a

visually explosive book that includes essays by Jonah Lehrer ’03CC, Columbia professors Michael Goldberg and Joy Hirsch, and other leaders in the field. The pictures — from speculative drawings to micrographs to computer-assisted scans — are elegantly simple here, impossibly complicated there.

“Neuroscience is a field with a lot of beautiful data,” says Schoonover, who works in assistant professor Randy Bruno’s CUMC laboratory studying how the somatosensory cortex of rodents processes information from their whiskers to make sense of their environment.

“The selection of images for the book was based on aesthetic value and their having a story to tell. I think the book works because the pictures are beautiful enough that one wants to know what they’re about and how they were made.” — MBS

Family Weissman, Jeff Lichtman, and Joshua Sanes of Harvard made this photomicrograph (above left) of a mouse hippocampus, an area of the brain critical for learning and memory, in 2005.

A drawing of a dog’s olfactory bulb from 1875 (above right) by Italian physician and scientist Camillo Golgi. The features that appear here were revealed by a revolutionary method for staining nerve tissue that Golgi pioneered. Courtesy of Dr. Paolo Mazzarello, University of Pavia, Department of Experimental Medicine, Section of General Pathology.

Pictures from Carl Schoonover’s *Portraits of the Mind: Visualizing the Brain from Antiquity to the 21st Century*. To see a slide show of more images, visit magazine.columbia.edu/finals/brainimages.

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