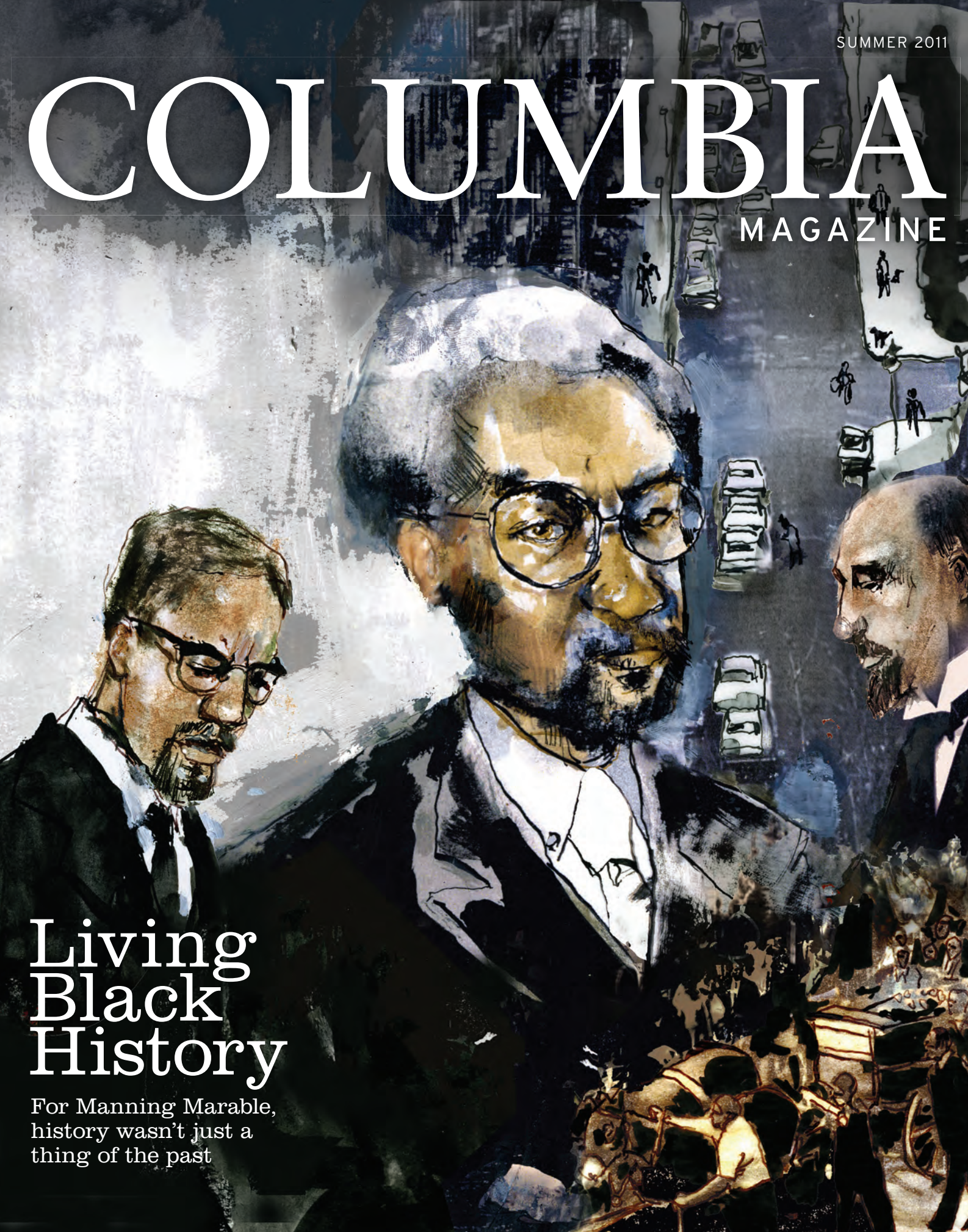


SUMMER 2011

COLUMBIA

MAGAZINE



Living Black History

For Manning Marable,
history wasn't just a
thing of the past



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By Stacey Kors

When the Chinese-born composer Zhou Long won the Pulitzer in music this spring for his opera *Madame White Snake*, he established himself not only as a prominent composer, but — in his mind — as an American.



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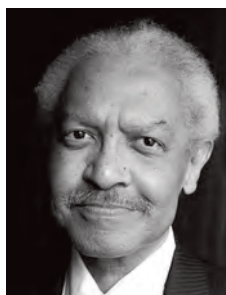
CHESTER HIGGINS JR. / NYT / REDUX



Bel Kaufman '36GSAS is an author, public speaker, and teacher, best known for her 1965 best-selling novel *Up the Down Staircase*.

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PHILIPPE CHENG



Manning Marable (1950–2011) was an author, activist, scholar, and the founding director of the Institute for Research in African-American Studies at Columbia. His last book, *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention*, was published in April.

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Kelly McMasters '05SOA is the author of *Welcome to Shirley: A Memoir from an Atomic Town*, currently being made into a documentary film. She teaches nonfiction writing at the School of the Arts and at the journalism school.

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Jonathan Owen is an assistant professor in the Department of Chemistry. This June, he was awarded a five-year research grant under the U.S. Department of Energy's Early Career Research Program.

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Stephanie Staal '93BC, '98JRN is an attorney and former features reporter for the Newark *Star-Ledger*. She is the author of *The Love They Lost*, a journalistic memoir about the long-term effects of parental divorce.

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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 Assistant
Hyatt Mustefa

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

To update your address online, visit
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Advertising:
Publisher's Representative
Bruce Ellerstein
917-226-7716

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 **COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY**
IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK



letters

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

The Spring issue really brought spring into my heart. Paul Hond's article on Tony Kushner ("A Sentimental Education") is an incredible piece of writing. One sentence says it all: "I wish I'd read more in college, devoured more, been confused more" — and I would add "and paid attention more." More power to both Hond and Kushner, and to Columbia.

Gloria Donen Sosin '49GSAS
White Plains, NY

Paul Hond's interesting cover story makes clear how Kushner's art has seduced so many people, but the piece is deaf to the long tradition of art in the service of propaganda. The beautiful music, stained glass, and paintings carrying the Catholic message come to mind, as does the art of communism and fascism. All have been adept at expressing the "inevitability" of their viewpoints. Common to them all is the dictatorial and condescending assumption that they know best how everyone should live. These pernicious tenets are masked and sold under the guise of general benevolence.

Dolores Dembus Bittleman '52GSAS
New York, NY

Paul Hond's article, which I read and admired, describes Vito Marcantonio, a longtime member of the House of Representatives

from East Harlem, as a socialist. This is not quite accurate. I wrote my senior thesis at Princeton on Vito Marcantonio and interviewed his wife as well as several important political figures of that time, including labor leader Alex Rose, the founder of the Liberal Party of New York.

Marcantonio, a protégé of Fiorello La Guardia, was elected to Congress as a Republican, but as he moved to the left, the Republicans wanted nothing more to do with him, so he joined the American Labor Party. Rose told me that the ALP was taken over by communists during this period, which is why he left to form the Liberal Party.

Marcantonio's enemies always accused him of being a communist or at the very least a fellow traveler, even though he never joined the party. He said he disagreed with the communists, but defended their right to participate in the political process. In 1948, after the Justice Department indicted the top 10 American communists, Marcantonio, a lawyer, volunteered to defend them.

Marcantonio lost his congressional seat in 1936 but won it back in 1938 as the ALP candidate. Because he was a thorn in the side of the New York political establishment, and because of the tensions of McCarthyism, the Democrats, Republicans, and Liberals joined to get him out of

Congress by offering him a place on the New York State Supreme Court. When Marcantonio turned them down, they all endorsed a single candidate to run against him in 1950 and redistricted to take away large numbers of people who had supported him. He lost, but still managed to get 40 percent of the vote. After this, he maintained offices in East Harlem, planning to seek election again. While out on the street collecting petitions, he died of a heart attack.

It was brilliant of Tony Kushner in his latest play, *The Intelligent Homosexual's Guide to Capitalism and Socialism with a Key to the Scriptures*, to invent the character of Gus Marcantonio as a cousin of Vito Marcantonio and have him be a communist and a longshoreman. What Marcantonio's defeat meant was that in New York, at least, third-party candidates of the Left would never be allowed to win. This has greatly diminished political discourse in New York, something Kushner's play is clearly meant to revive.

Richard Cummings '62LAW
Sag Harbor, NY

I am impressed by Paul Hond's report on his conversation with Tony Kushner, and on Kushner's making it, deservedly, to the Spring cover of *Columbia Magazine*. The

LETTERS

magazine reflects the thoughts and feelings of its readership, and I share in the pride. People who work hard to realize their God-given talents are admirable, especially if, like Kushner, they can already see the extraordinary fruits of their efforts.

By now, everyone is aware of the brouhaha surrounding Kushner's almost not receiving, and then receiving, an honorary degree from the City University of New York. The argument in favor of CUNY's conferring the degree was that Kushner's criticism of Israel is free speech, protected not only by the U.S. Constitution but by that pinnacle of free thought and free speech, the university. Furthermore, his opinions are irrelevant to his accomplishments as a playwright.

But is a university merely a trade school, confining itself to the production of excellent craftspeople? Or does it also take responsibility for molding character, for helping its students to fulfill their potential as caring, honest, and fair improvers of humanity? Kushner is a social and political playwright and an activist — a public figure — so the burden of free speech should be even higher for him. He needs to get his facts right.

Kushner stated that Israel was “founded in a program that, if you really want to be blunt about it, was ethnic cleansing.” But I remember when Israel was founded and David Ben-Gurion entreated the indigenous Arab population to stay and be equal citizens. I clearly remember hearing on the radio, and reading in the newspapers one day later, about seven Arab nations ordering the local Arabs to leave and allow the invading armies to massacre the Jews.

W. Zev Wanderer '64GSAS
Eilat, Israel

POLK FOLK

Your Spring issue is one of the best ever, with its highly edifying, in-depth interviews with Tony Kushner and Rashid Khalidi. (And who is the well-learned interviewer of Professor Khalidi?)

But in noting the George Polk Awards won by two journalism-school graduates,

you failed to mention that the Polk Award for Commentary was given to Juan Gonzalez '68CC for his exposé of massive fraud surrounding CityTime, New York City's computerized payroll-management system. This is the second Polk Award for Gonzalez, who was an active leader of the Young Lords in the 1960s and is now a columnist at the *New York Daily News* and a co-host, with Amy Goodman, of *Democracy Now!*

Sol Fisher '36CC, '38LAW
Pleasant Hill, CA

CASTING A POLL

Rashid Khalidi argues that what we are witnessing is an authentic, universal yearning for “democracy, social justice, rule of law, constitutions,” which will leave behind the Islamists and terrorists. (“The Arab Reawakening,” Spring 2011). While this may be what Khalidi desires, the evidence argues against it. Rigorous face-to-face polls conducted independently over the past few years by the University of Maryland and the Pew Research Center report that while Arabs do support democracy, their version of democracy is directly antithetical to ours.

In Egypt, which Khalidi holds up as a prime example of a secular, democratic movement in action, 74 percent of citizens in 2007 favored the strict application of Shariah, 91 percent favored keeping Western values out of Islamic nations, and 67 percent supported unifying all Islamic nations under a single caliphate.

A 2010 Pew Research Center poll documented that 82 percent of Egyptians support stoning people who commit adultery, 77 percent support whipping or cutting off the hands of thieves, and 84 percent support the death penalty for persons who leave the Islamic religion. An April 2011 Pew poll simply reiterates these strongly held sentiments, confirming that Egyptians' idea of democracy bears no resemblance to ours, with its separation of church and state; tolerance; freedoms of conscience, religion, and speech; and the like.

Moreover, the idea that the Muslim Brotherhood — the ideological front for violent movements like Al Qaeda and Hamas

— with its motto ending with the words “Jihad is our way, dying in the way of Allah is our highest hope” is some sort of benign bogeyman is a bizarre concept to anyone familiar with its history or aspirations.

Allon Friedman '89CC
Carmel, IN

Rashid Khalidi, Edward Said Professor of Arab Studies, responds:

Polls are tricky things. This is especially the case when they are quoted out of context, by people with an *idée fixe* and an ax to grind. I contacted one of the two scholars who produced most of the polls quoted (selectively) by Allon Friedman, and received a comment from Steven Kull, a member of the faculty of the School of Public Policy at the University of Maryland and director of the Program on International Policy Attitudes.

Readers of *Columbia Magazine* have a choice: to take what the pollster himself says, and look at the full polls, to which he has provided links; or to rely on your correspondent's data, cherry-picked to buttress a predetermined conclusion: those Muslims are just not like us, and not to be trusted.

Writes Steven Kull: “Chapter 8 of my book *Feeling Betrayed: The Roots of Muslim Anger at America* pulls together data from numerous sources and provides an abundance of data showing strong support for democracy and other liberal values. Friedman is quite wrong in saying that we make the case that Muslims have antithetical views to the West. In the studies, and in more depth in my book, we provide evidence that there is strong support for these values as well as a desire to preserve a central role for Islam and sharia. I call it an inner clash of civilizations that has not been fully sorted out.”

Please visit www.worldpublicopinion.org/magazine.columbia.edu/letters/summer-2011 for links to the polls under discussion.

DEEP IMPACT

Thanks for your fine College Walk piece celebrating the work of Joe DeGenova

'82CC and Community Impact ("Hands and Hearts," Spring 2011). The remarkable choices Joe made and the wonderful success he has had brought tears to my eyes.

The story reminded me that those who decry the current generation aren't looking at the real world. In reality, children of immigrants, and children of the affluent, too, sometimes turn away from easy dreams of worldly success and give their lives instead to helping others, in small ways and large.

My own way was small. Brought up in Little Italy and Queens, the first in my family to attend college, I chose to spend my professional life teaching almost exclusively at public universities and colleges. Like many of my contemporaries in the 1950s, I enrolled at Columbia at a time when college teaching was grossly underpaid and the best we could hope for was a life of genteel poverty and maybe a modest retirement. Fortunately, it turned out otherwise.

Joe DeGenova, on the other hand, has given himself to helping in a big way. He had every reason to expect an affluent and cushy early retirement, but turned away from that to do good. His example has spoken eloquently to many of his contemporaries. That so many young people have responded to him and to the programs he started floods my heart with joy. There is far more to be done, but every once in a while we can sit back for a moment and rejoice in a rich and productive model of selfless devotion.

Mario A. DiCesare '60GSAS
Asheville, NC

BOOK ROOM

Columbia Magazine's book reviews are always particularly enlightening, because reviewers are allowed considerably more space than in other publications, thereby enabling them to provide greater background details while espousing their opinions. David Pryce-Jones's review of Jonathan Schneer's book *The Balfour Declaration* ("The Secretary's Letter," Spring 2011)

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
EN	Fu Foundation School of Engineering and Applied Science
GS	School of General Studies
GSAPP	Graduate School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation
GSAS	Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
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
SIPA	School of International and Public Affairs
SOA	School of the Arts
SW	School of Social Work
TC	Teachers College
UTS	Union Theological Seminary

is such an example of a history lesson wrapped up in a book review. It brought to mind a humorous anecdote related to what Pryce-Jones properly describes as a "long-drawn mess," the after-effects of which still appear on the front pages of our daily newspapers.

Lord Herbert Samuel, the first high commissioner of the British Mandate, arrived in 1920 to take over the previously Ottoman territory of Palestine. When General Sir Louis Bois, head of the occupying British military administration, demanded a receipt for the transfer that read, "One Palestine, complete," Samuel signed but added the common commercial escape clause "E&OE" (errors and omissions excepted).

Michael D. Spett '56CC, '60BUS
Jupiter, FL

In his fine review, David Pryce-Jones begins by quoting from Arthur Balfour's

November 1917 letter to Lord Rothschild that the British government "view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people," and then states, "An important qualification added that nothing was to be done to prejudice the rights of the Arabs." This summary of the qualification is misleading.

The actual qualification reads, "It being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country." It is clear from these words that not all the rights of the Arabs were protected from possible "prejudice." While civil and religious rights were to be protected, political rights in Palestine are not included. This was deliberate. It was to be a national home for the Jewish people, who were allowed to

Continued on page 60



MARK STEELE

Nibs and Nibbles

“It’s the classiest award in America,” said *Doonesbury* creator Garry Trudeau after he won the 1975 Pulitzer Prize for Editorial Cartooning. “No dinner, no acceptance speeches, no TV show. They just call you up and say, ‘Good going, the check is in the mail.’”

The Pulitzer Prizes, awarded annually by the Graduate School of Journalism, are the pinnacle of achievement in American reporting, letters, and music. But for most of their 94-year history, they were not known for pomp and circumstance — or for flaxseed-encrusted salmon.

Then, in 1984, the Pulitzer Board decided it would be more fitting to honor the recipients at an awards luncheon. Ever since, the winners have received their formal citations, as well as their \$10,000 checks, over salad and chardonnay.

So it was that on May 24, in the Faculty Room of Low Memorial Library, more than 200 guests gathered to clink glasses and chat. This year, six of the winners were Columbia alumni or professors, or both — almost certainly a record.

Among the celebrants was Assistant Professor of Medicine Siddhartha Mukherjee, who won for general nonfiction with *The Emperor of All Maladies: A Biography of Cancer*. When the winners were announced on April 18, Mukherjee was in a bookstore. “Oddly enough,” he said, holding a glass of white wine, “I was buying Kay Ryan’s book.” That book was *The Best of It: New and Selected Poems*, this year’s winner in the poetry category.

Zhou Long ’93GSAS also was caught off-guard. He became the first Asian American to win the prize for music, with *Madame*

White Snake, an opera that draws on a Chinese folk tale while combining Eastern and Western musical traditions. When a friend called to congratulate him, he hadn't yet heard the news and was skeptical. "I said, 'Let's check the Internet,'" he recalled. "I thought maybe I was a finalist. But my friend said, 'No, you *won!*'"

As the crowd proceeded into Low Rotunda for the lunch proper, each of the 31 winners carried a light-blue Tiffany gift box. Inside was a commemorative piece of crystal bearing the recipient's name and category, and a likeness of Joseph Pulitzer.

Then there were the nonmaterial perks. "A Pulitzer Prize comes with naming rights," said Pulitzer Board co-chair Kathleen Carroll, executive editor and senior vice president of the Associated Press. "From this day forward you will no longer be Joe Smith and Jane Brown. You will be Pulitzer Prize winner Joe Smith and the Pulitzer Prize-winning Jane Brown."

On that count, Jeff Gottlieb '80JRN stood slightly apart. With Ruben Vives, Gottlieb had led a team of *Los Angeles Times* reporters in investigating how officials in the California town of Bell raided the treasury to pay themselves exorbitant salaries. Los Angeles County District Attorney Steve Cooley called the malfeasances "corruption on steroids." Their reporting

won the prize in public service, which is always given to a news organization. So technically, the winner was the *Times*.

Gottlieb wasn't too concerned with the distinction. Like the other winners, he wore a name tag adorned with a Pulitzer motif — specifically, a rendering of the gold medal that is the unique award for public service. "Since I went to the J-school, this is particularly special," Gottlieb said.

Amy Ellis Nutt '95JRN, a staff writer for the Newark *Star-Ledger* and an adjunct professor at the J-school, won the feature writing prize for "The Wreck of the *Lady Mary*," a harrowing five-part series about the sinking of a commercial fishing boat off the New Jersey coast in March 2009. Only one crew member, Jose Arias, survived. "I'm thinking of him," Nutt said. "And the six who died."

In a corner of the rotunda, DeWitt Clinton Professor of History Eric Foner '63CC, '69GSAS stood eating a plate of salmon and Swiss chard. Foner had received the history prize for *The Fiery Trial: Abraham Lincoln and American Slavery*. "Do you know who the last Columbia historian to win was?" he said. "Richard Hofstadter." Hofstadter '42GSAS, who was Foner's mentor, won in 1964 for general nonfiction. "That shows you it's not an inside job."

Just then, one of Foner's former students came up to greet him. It was ProPublica

reporter Jesse Eisinger '92CC, who was sharing the national reporting prize with his colleague Jake Bernstein for exposing how certain Wall Street bankers put their own finances ahead of those of their clients and even their firms, which made the 2008 financial meltdown even worse. Eisinger had taken Foner's course in the history of Reconstruction.

"You've got to understand Reconstruction to understand the country today," Foner told him, grinning.

Eisinger smiled. "It was a great class. If only I had retained some of it." He confessed that his undergraduate academic record was not particularly distinguished. "Columbia was happy to see me go, but I hope they're happier to see me back."

As the guests dug into their dessert of key lime gâteau, they listened to remarks by Pulitzer Board co-chair Ann Marie Lipinski, curator-designate of the Nieman Foundation for Journalism at Harvard, and Pulitzer Prize administrator Sig Gissler. Lee Bollinger spoke briefly about the Pulitzer luncheon itself. "There's nothing I do," he said, "that I enjoy more during the academic year."

Then, one by one, as the winners in their respective categories were announced, they came forward to receive their certificates and their unmailed checks.

— Thomas Vinciguerra '85CC,
'86JRN, '90GSAS

Chemical Bonding

By the end of Commencement Week, the Morningside campus, which had been covered with aluminum bleachers, white tents, and more than 30,000 people, wore the trampled, sodden look of a fairground the morning after. On South Lawn, workers rolled up rubber mats, revealing a carpet of yellow straw where green turf had been. The disassembled metal benches on Low Plaza lay rain-flecked, gleaming

dually. On Friday afternoon, few people were about, and the campus, recuperating from its hangover, was peaceful.

Any wanderer straying into Havemeyer Hall, then, perhaps to relax for a moment in the wooden splendor of the famous lecture hall, or to examine, under the display case, the century-old milk-testing equipment of chemistry department founder Charles F. Chandler, would have been surprised to find,

on a bulletin board in an empty corridor, a flyer announcing an event at 4:00 p.m.

"Enantioselective Formal
aza-Diels-Alder Reactions"

Presented by Sharon Lee
(Leighton Group)

Highly functionalized piperidines
represent an important class of

heterocycles that are found in natural products and medicinally active agents. As a direct result, efforts to develop enantioselective diene-imine (aza-Diels-Alder) reactions to efficiently access these substructures have increased. We have developed highly enantioselective silicon Lewis acid mediated formal aza-Diels-Alder reactions with Danishefsky's diene and non-Danishefsky's diene to generate these biologically important heterocycles. To further prove the power of this method to access complex piperidine structures, we have accomplished the efficient synthesis of the drug target casopitant. During the course of our studies with aza-Diels-Alder reactions, we also became interested in natural products containing highly functionalized piperidines, in particular, the indolealkaloid Roxburghine D, due to its complex eight-fused ring system and four stereocenters. In the more than 40 years since its isolation, only one racemic synthesis has been reported. We hope to address this lack in an enantioselective synthesis through the use of a developed silicon Lewis acid mediated Pictet-Spengler reaction.

Room 209 Havemeyer

Happy Hour to follow!

Did someone say *Happy Hour*? Oh, for precious enzymes and sugars, for the pot of gold at the rainbow's end! And really, what better way to draw a crowd to an hour-long talk about aza-Diels-Alder reactions on a Friday afternoon?

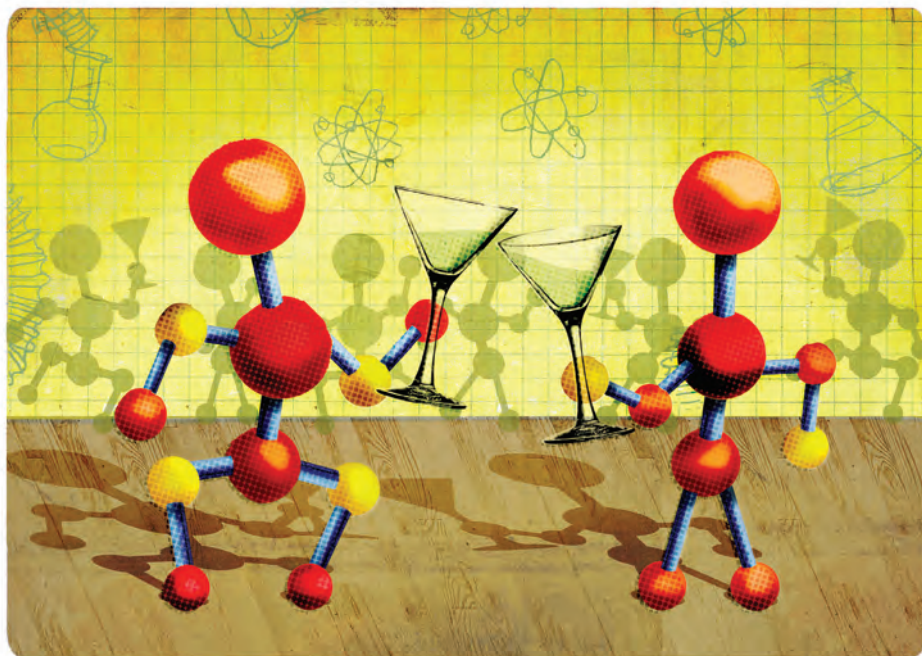
Conveniently, the post-talk bash was to be held upstairs on the seventh floor, in Havemeyer Lounge. No need for Dr. Chandler's milk-testing apparatus here.

But first, business. At 4:00, Sharon Lee, a fourth-year doctoral candidate, greeted her audience in room 209. This was Lee's first formal talk, and the tiered seats were filled with 40 of her colleagues in the graduate chemistry program, including her

lab professor, James Leighton, assistant professor Scott Snyder, professor emeritus Gilbert Stork, and, on a central perch, the owlish eminence of professor Ronald Breslow, now in his 55th year at Columbia. Lee, armed with a PowerPoint clicker and a matter-of-fact style, betrayed no flutters as she explained the stick-figure molecular

happens that the things we build have a function. If the world is better at synthesizing piperidines" — an organic compound found in black pepper and used in the synthesis of pharmaceuticals — "it may lead to some kind of a silver-bullet drug."

Lee's presentation was the semester's final installment of the student-organized Chemi-



RICHARD BERGE

schemes on the screen in language incomprehensible to most anyone outside Havemeyer — and even to some in it.

Also in the audience was Jonathan Owen, a 34-year-old assistant professor who had just been awarded a U.S. Department of Energy Early Career Research Grant. Owen's lab studies the inorganic chemistry of semiconductor and metal nanocrystals, with an eye toward renewable energy technologies. If you had whispered to him, "What is Lee *talking* about, with these piperidines and heterocycles and such?" he would have explained that she was seeking to develop methods to synthesize drugs. He would have spoken of the "craftsmanship of synthetic chemistry" and the synthesis of molecules. "We build Lego sets," he'd have said, "and it just so

cal Synthesis Research Symposium, which Owen created last fall as a way for the department's 20-odd faculty-led lab groups to introduce their work to their colleagues. There's a speaker series on Tuesdays for physical chemistry, and organic chemistry has its long-established "problem session" on Thursdays, but only the synthetic-chemistry seminar is followed by experiments in the benefits of fermentation. For Owen, connecting the symposium to the traditional Friday happy hour in Havemeyer is a way to "celebrate the talk and give the speaker a chance to socialize with the audience," and to provide an informal setting for people to share ideas about science.

Around the same time that Lee concluded her talk, Nick Anderson, a second-year student in the Owen Group ("I work on

quantum dots”) and one of the seminar’s organizers, was in Havemeyer Lounge, under the gray skylight, setting up a table with bags of potato chips and zero-calorie soft drinks. On the walls were old photographs of the School of Mines and giants like Nobel-winning chemist Harold Urey (1934, deuterium), who while at Columbia helped develop the atomic bomb.

There were bottles of wine, too, and the red plastic cups that one associates with cheap beer, and now, after a long week, and a long year, they trickled in, a full third, at least, of the 150-strong department. Among the crowd was Lee, who looked happy and relieved from her trial in room 209. She called her talk “good practice” for her upcoming postdoc interview at UC San Francisco.

Owen agrees. “Science is social,” he says. “If you can’t communicate effectively, your ideas won’t hit people.”

As students from different labs talked, ate, and pumped the squat metal keg, a contest broke out in the adjoining room. There, on a long table, red cups filled with beer were set up at either end, and two teams consisting of men in shorts and T-shirts took turns flinging ping-pong balls into the opposition’s cups, or trying to. If a ball landed in your cup, you had to drink.

“At our first talk,” said Anderson, with a nod toward the beer pong table, “a lot of professors came and got involved in a little athletic competition.” Anderson, wearing a “Galway Drinking Team” T-shirt, is a Guinness man himself.

Nearby, another student organizer, Ashley Zuzek, a second year from Dartmouth, said, “We’re often stuck in our labs, so it’s good to come together like this.” Zuzek is part of the Parkin Group, whose namesake, professor Gerard Parkin, had recently visited the White

House to receive his 2011 Presidential Award for Excellence in Science, Mathematics, and Engineering Mentoring. As Zuzek spoke of her work, which involves the processes by which impurities like sulfur and nitrogen are removed from crude oil, the skylight’s hue changed from milky to golden, and for what must have been the first time that week, solar photons entered Havemeyer Lounge.

More students arrived.

“People tend to get caught up in their own little space,” Owen says. “Integration leads to happier students and more productivity.”

As the party went on, the rest of Havemeyer Hall grew quieter. Under the display case, Chandler’s milk-testing equipment slept beside his apparatus for measuring sewer gas. Room 209 was dark. Outside, the evening sun dried the droplets on the metal bleachers, and dried the campus generally.

— Paul Hond

Cracking Wise

Bel Kaufman is seated in her long, light-filled Park Avenue apartment in what appears to be a white plastic outdoor chair, discussing the privileges that come with age. “I don’t do what I *must* do,” she says, “I do what I *want* to do.” Kaufman is wearing a beige blouse and light, neat makeup. Her hair is softly curled, her posture very straight. She wears sharp black flats — no orthopedics here. “Now, if I don’t want to do something, I say, ‘I’m sorry, no. I’m a hundred years old.’”

At one of three birthday parties given for her this year, Kaufman ’36GSAS graciously accepted her audience’s praise, but brushed aside the accomplishment of living a full century: “It must have happened when I wasn’t looking.” Kaufman still goes dancing every Thursday night, and a friend says her talent is in the mambo. She is working on her memoirs, but says that she hasn’t

had much time to actually sit and write. Age can’t quite keep up with her pace, though she does sometimes misplace things in her files and “that wouldn’t have happened when I was 99.”

On the other hand, her personal files are extensive. Her apartment is filled with written material — letters, awards, and hundreds of books, including copies of Kaufman’s own 1965 best-selling novel, *Up the Down Staircase*, in several editions and languages. On a coffee table next to where she is seated is a book of photographs her children made for her.

Here is Bel at five, in Ukraine, sandwiched between her parents, the whole family wearing big fur hats. Here is her bright-eyed grandfather, the Yiddish writer Sholem Aleichem, dressed as always, Kaufman says, in very dapper fashion. And here is Bel, older, windblown in a

bathing suit with her son and daughter, and still many years away from becoming the well-coiffed and glamorous woman in her straight-backed plastic chair on Park Avenue (she says it’s better for her back).

This spring, Kaufman, while still only 99, became an adjunct professor at Hunter College, where she taught a course on Jewish humor. Not only is a sense of humor one of Kaufman’s defining personality traits, it’s also her latest and most personal academic interest: the study of humor as a means to survival. In other words, laughing in the face of something as serious as time might be exactly why she made it so far in the first place.

Kaufman’s course examines “why so many American comedians are Jewish, why so many Jewish jokes are self-accusing,” and why the resulting Jewish humor is a defense mechanism for survival. “Jewish humor,”

she says, “is about beating adversity. Many Americans have absorbed that.”

When Kaufman immigrated to New York from Moscow at age 12, she entered the American school system with “not a word of English on my tongue,” and was placed in first grade. Her academic life improved from there. It’s funny: After graduating magna cum laude from Hunter in 1934 and earning a master’s in English literature from Columbia, after teaching hundreds of New York City schoolchildren and selling millions of books, after moving from Newark to Park Avenue and living to a hundred, Kaufman is still the oldest girl in the classroom.

When she looks back upon her own education, she recites Leigh Hunt’s “Jenny Kiss’d Me” (*Time, you thief, who love to get / Sweets into your list, put that in!*) and remembers two years spent at Columbia writing a thesis on London’s Grub Street, where in the 18th century “hack writers and gazetteers were like little mosquitoes flying around the big writers like Pope and Swift.” She rented a furnished room on Lexington Avenue from an Irish woman who told her, “boyfriends out at 10, steadies at 11.” (“So my boyfriends stayed ’til 10 and my steadies ’til 11.”) But she really lived in the stacks of what was, in 1935 and ’36, a brand-new library, later named Butler. “Those were very happy years.” She remembers her introduction

to teaching with equal fondness, and says, “Do you know how I knew I wanted to be a teacher?

“At Hunter I had a friend who was taking an education course. They went out to a classroom to work with little children, elementary schoolers. She invited me to come take that class for one day. So, I came and I looked. There were all those eyes fixed on me, waiting. They were waiting! For something I had to give them. Something they would remember. It was an extraordinary feeling. And that’s how I feel now, at 100 years old, when I have an audience to give to.”

She adds: “You cannot teach a sense of humor, just like you cannot teach talent. But you can show students examples of good humor that arise from character.” One such example might be the work of her grandfather, who found in the darkness and oppression of shtetl life a reason to write funny stories that people loved. “I am now the only human being in the world,” Kaufman says, “who remembers Sholem Aleichem. I sat on his lap, I walked with him. He taught me to speak in rhymes.”

Or take Kaufman herself, who wrote *Up the Down Staircase* in a time of personal distress.

“I had just left my husband. My children were grown and in college, and my mother was dying of cancer in a hospital. It was a sad time, but I was able to write humor

— just like Sholem Aleichem, who wrote humor on his deathbed.” *Up the Down Staircase*, based on Kaufman’s experiences teaching in New York City’s public schools, opened up the troubles of the urban classroom to an enormous audience. It was also a very funny book. “I had to rip up some of the funniest pages of the novel as I was typing them,” she remembers, “because my tears fell on them and made little blisters on the paper. I think what helped me survive was the ability to laugh.”

Kaufman says that if people come to listen to you, “you have to give them something that’s important and funny and serious.” So when questioned about a connection between education and humor, she asks if she should tell an intelligent Russian joke. Of course she should.

So somewhere in Russia, a man walks into a bar every day at three and orders two glasses of vodka. Eventually, the bartender asks, “Why not just order a double?” The man explains that he has a dear friend in Kamchatka, and each orders a drink for himself plus a drink for the other, and in that way they stay close though they are far apart. Then one day, the man walks in and orders just one vodka. The bartender says, “I fear that something has happened to your dear friend.”

“No, no!” the man replies. “It’s just that I’ve quit drinking.” — *Phoebe Magee*

Feeding a Poem to the Horse

An apple would be better
bitten down like the moon
to a crunchy nub
scored with greed

His lips flare in the air
from the fence of his teeth
and his tough tail flicks
where the flies stay

A carrot would be better
than these four-legged lines
that flee from me and never meet
any sweet little need

So we both might gallop
wild and away

— *Alan Michael Parker ’87SOA*

Parker’s latest collection of poetry is Holier Than This. He teaches at Davidson College and Queens University in Charlotte, North Carolina.

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Manning Marable believed that black history and scholarship should be a means not only for knowing the world but for changing it. His new book on Malcolm X could do both.

A Message for the World

By Paul Hond

1

The collective experience of pain and hardship, suffering and sacrifice, has given African Americans a unique perspective from which our consciousness has been forged.

— Manning Marable, *Living Black History*

On the morning of April 9, 1968, a 17-year-old high-school senior from Dayton, Ohio, got off a city bus in downtown Atlanta and walked up Auburn Avenue to the Ebenezer Baptist Church. Above the church's protruding blue sign, a solitary wreath hung on the red bricks. It was 6:30 a.m., and the young man, whose mother had sent him to cover the funeral for Dayton's black newspaper, was the only person around.

In hindsight, it seems logical, even inevitable, that the precocious teenager who was first on the scene that day should become, by the time he was in his early 30s, one of the world's most perceptive and influential scholars of the black experience. What sense of history, then, must have flooded Manning Marable's consciousness in the gray Atlanta dawn? What possession of time and space as he stood alone on a desolate street where, in just a few hours, 150,000 mourners — students and senators, pacifists and militants, athletes and entertainers, capitalists and socialists, diplomats and governors and ordinary citizens of different colors and faiths — would gather for the largest public funeral in U.S. history? What grief, what visions, as he walked among the linked-arm multitude behind the mule-drawn wagon that carried the coffin of Martin Luther King Jr.?

The following winter, in his first year at Earlham College in Richmond, Indiana, Marable had another brush with history. This time it was in the pages of a book: *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*.

"The full relevance and revolutionary meaning of the man suddenly became crystal clear to me," Marable later wrote of his conversion.

"In short, the 'King Man' became almost overnight a confirmed, dedicated 'X-Man.'" For Marable, Malcolm X was the "embodiment of black masculinist authority and power, of uncompromising bravery in the face of racial oppression," a prophet who "spoke the uncomfortable truths that no one else had the courage or integrity to broach."

What Marable could not have known in 1969 was just how all-encompassing his obsession with Malcolm X would become.

2

From the beginning of my academic life I viewed being a historian of the black experience as becoming the bearer of truths or stories that had been suppressed or relegated to the margins.

— Manning Marable, *Beyond Boundaries*

The author looked like a million bucks.

Trim, silver-haired, and neatly dressed, Manning Marable, the M. Moran Weston and Black Alumni Council Professor of African-American Studies and professor of history and public affairs at Columbia, arrived at Faculty House to celebrate the publication of *Beyond Boundaries: The Manning Marable Reader*, a collection of essays spanning Marable's 35 years as a self-described "public historian and radical intellectual." It was March 3, 2011, and Marable was in a period of unimaginable demands. In a few weeks he was scheduled to travel the country to promote a 500-page, much-anticipated work that he had completed with the help of an oxygen tank. The previous summer, he had undergone a double-lung transplant, the result of a lupus-like condition called sarcoidosis that had afflicted him for 25 years. ("He kept trying to pull himself out of sedation," Marable's wife and intellectual partner, the anthropologist Leith Mullings, later said. "He was determined

to finish the book.”) Now, back on his feet, Marable stood at a lectern in the Presidential Room and reflected on his career.

“The foremost question that preoccupies my work is the nexus between history and black consciousness,” Marable said. “What is the meaning of black group identity as interpreted through the stories and experiences of African American people over time?”

As he spoke, Marable must have also been thinking of that *other* book, in which he explored this crucial question more profoundly than he ever had before. Kristen Clarke ’00LAW, Marable’s coeditor on a recent collection of essays titled *Barack Obama and African American Empowerment*, noticed Marable’s preoccupation at an event for their book held in February, at the Hue-Man Bookstore in Harlem. Later, Clarke would recall how excited Marable had been that night about the coming publication of *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention*, the monumental biography whose decade-long gestation had created a good deal of suspense: How would the inquisitive, methodical, leave-no-stone-untuned Marable approach the larger-than-life icon whom Marable himself called “the most remarkable figure produced by 20th-century black America?”

As the April 4 publication date approached, with all its unobvious historic significance, Viking Books was buzzing with requests for advance copies and author interviews. This wasn’t surprising. Few figures in American history are as intensely loved, hated, and misinterpreted as Malcolm X, and Marable, never shy in his public engagement, yearned for the discussion that his powerfully written book was bound to set off. The pages contained an illuminating history of black nationalism in America (including the Garveyism to which Malcolm Little was exposed as a child through his preacher father, Earl); details of Malcolm’s extensive travels in Africa in 1964; insights into his psychic complexities, divided loyalties, and political and religious evolution; his split from the Nation of Islam and his increasing profile on the global Islamic stage; and glimpses of the minister’s private life, if privacy could be said to exist for a man who, as Marable demonstrates to dramatic effect, was for years relentlessly spied on by the FBI and the NYPD.

But what really captured Marable, and fired his activist blood, was the mystery surrounding the events of February 21, 1965, when Malcolm X was gunned down at a rally at the Audubon Ballroom in Washington Heights. Three men, all members of the Nation of Islam, were arrested and convicted of the murder.

To Marable, however, something was wrong with the picture.

A week after his appearance at Faculty House this spring, Marable was hospitalized with pneumonia. His classes were canceled. On March 31, as bookstores were unpacking their cartons of *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention* for their window displays, Marable went into cardiac arrest. Those who read the *New York Times* on April 2 would have seen a photo of Marable on the front page, with the stunning headline: *On Eve of a Revealing Work, Malcolm X Biographer Dies*.

Manning Marable was 60 years old. Three days later, the biography was released.



Substantial elements of the Black elite do not discuss the unique problems of the “underclass,” either with whites or among themselves, because in doing so they would be forced to confront the common realities of racism that underlie the totality of America’s social and economic order.

— Manning Marable, *How Capitalism Underdeveloped Black America*

At one o’clock on Cinco de Mayo 2011, the day commemorating the defeat in 1862 of the French army in the Battle of Puebla in Mexico, a different sort of military triumph was being honored in Lower Manhattan. The streets around the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund (LDF) on Hudson Street were barricaded, and people lined the sidewalks to watch the passing motorcade of President Barack Obama. The nation’s first black chief executive was on his way to Ground Zero to meet with 9/11 families in the wake of the U.S. military’s targeted killing of Osama bin Laden. As the procession of armored cars crossed North Moore Street, the mostly nonblack spectators cheered.

Meanwhile, inside the offices of the LDF, Kristen Clarke was working on a legal challenge to a proposed redistricting plan in Louisiana. The LDF had determined that the plan was intended to diminish black voting strength in the northwest part of the state, and Clarke was drafting a letter to the U.S. Department of Justice. But she was glad to take a moment in her office to remember her friend and mentor.

“I was in law school,” Clarke recalled, “but I was quickly drawn to IRAAS” — the Institute for Research in African-American Studies, which Marable founded in 1993 — “and was thrilled to learn that Dr. Marable was at the helm. Though I attended law classes, I spent most of my time at IRAAS, which I found to be a place that really fostered critical thinking.” There, in Schermerhorn Extension, Clarke taught an introductory African American studies course, was a senior editor for *Souls*, the quarterly journal of black politics and culture that Marable established in 1999, organized conferences and symposia, and later coedited, with Marable, a reader on the racial implications of the Hurricane Katrina crisis.

“Dr. Marable was one of the finest examples of the scholar-activist,” Clarke said. “In 2000, for example, we convened a conference of hundreds of scholars from across the country on the prison-industrial complex, which looked at unfair sentencing, over-incarceration, and police brutality. People came away feeling empowered and motivated to work toward solutions. Under Dr. Marable’s leadership, IRAAS quickly became one of the finest think tanks of scholarship for African American studies.” Clarke would know, having majored in African American studies at Harvard in the 1990s under Henry Louis Gates and Cornel West. “Also, female African American scholars were very well represented at IRAAS, as they were in almost everything Dr. Marable did. It was always important to him that women had leadership roles, and it’s unsurprising to me that when he stepped down as director of IRAAS in 2003, he passed the baton to a woman, Farah Jasmine Griffin.”

Clarke then turned to *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention*. As a lawyer who once worked at Justice, Clarke had spoken with Marable about his concerns over the assassination. “It’s noteworthy that Dr. Marable got access to the Manhattan District Attorney files and other records that previous scholars had not had the opportunity to examine,” Clarke said, “which is why I think in this book we get a deeper and more complex portrait of Malcolm X than we’ve ever had.”

Those files contained data that reinforced Marable’s doubts.

“True to his scholar-activist principles, Dr. Marable very much wanted the biography of Malcolm X to be used as a vehicle to reopen what he viewed as a cold case,” said Clarke. “He came to believe that the individual who fired the kill shot — the initial shotgun blast that extinguished the life of Malcolm X — is still alive and has never been brought to justice.”



4 A week after Barack Obama’s visit to Lower Manhattan, one of the president’s most forceful critics stood before several hundred people at the CUNY Graduate Center to discuss *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention*. It was the eve of what would have been Manning Marable’s 61st birthday, and the speaker, the Princeton philosopher Cornel West — dressed as usual in a black three-piece suit, white shirt, and silver pocket watch and chain — dug into his homily with a heavy heart.

“Manning Marable was my brother,” West said devoutly. “And I loved my brother Manning. Dearly.”

West recalled meeting Marable 31 years before, to get the older scholar’s signature on his copy of *From the Grassroots*, one of Marable’s earliest works.

“Dr. Marable very much wanted the biography of Malcolm X to be used as a vehicle to reopen what he viewed as a cold case,” said Clarke.

“As soon as I saw him, all I could do was give him a hug,” West told the crowd in his funky, ecumenical style. “He embraced *me*. He gave me confidence. He gave me en-cour-age-ment. I felt enabled and ennobled in his presence.” West, jazzman of ideas, syncopated his syllables, drew out sounds like a Selmer saxophone baptized in the river Jordan. “He had dedicated his life, and he *did*, he was faithful unto death in keeping alive the legacy of Frederick Douglass, and Ida B. Wells-Barnett, W. E. B. Du Bois, and Sinclair Drake, E. Franklin Frazier, and yes, Marx, and Weber on a left-wing day — all of the great scholars who provided an analysis of the dynamics of power and structures and institutions but always connected the agency of those Sly Stone called Everyday People. To look at the world through the lens of those Frantz Fanon called ‘the wretched

of the earth’ — that is, was, forever will be, the life and the legacy of my brother and your brother, Manning Marable.”

For West, who read the book twice, the biography raised a central question: “How do you talk about Malcolm X in the age of Obama?” He then contrasted the two leaders in relation to the poor, to the establishment, and to power itself, in ways unflattering to the president. “In the age of Obama,” said West, “the *last* thing you want to be is an angry black man.”

That got some knowing laughs. West was just warming up.

“The condition of truth,” he said, “is to allow suffering to speak — that’s Manning Marable on Malcolm X. Which means a lot of folks who claimed to be in love with Malcolm will be unsettled by Manning’s text. That’s *good*. That’s called education.” Applause for that one. “Cut against the grain! Shatter the myths! Malcolm was a *human being*. Not pure and pristine, but a cracked vessel like all of us, who at the same time had a level of courage and vision and determination that was so *rare*, especially coming from the chocolate side of town, and especially among the subproletariat — the black poor — the black *working* poor. We’re not talkin’ about bourgeois Negroes like Martin Luther King Jr. right now.”

Martin was a great brother, West said, but “he *decided* to be in solidarity with the black poor against the dominant tendencies of the black bourgeoisie,” whereas Malcolm “was already there.” For evidence, West quoted Marable chapter and verse, and, hitting the blue notes, alluded to what for him were the “saddest lines in the whole text,” on page 268: *The central irony of Malcolm’s career was that his critical powers of observation, so important in fashioning his dynamic public addresses, virtually disappeared in his mundane evaluations of those in his day-to-day personal circle. Especially in the final years of his life, nearly every individual he trusted would betray that trust.*

West let the horror of that sink in. The betrayals, of course, had an ultimate consequence, and while West didn’t get into Marable’s suspicions about the murder, the speaker who preceded him that night did: Marable’s partner, Leith Mullings, the CUNY anthropologist who in the early 1990s had tried to bring Marable, whom she did not yet know personally, to CUNY — and who was still miffed, as she sometimes quipped, that he chose Columbia — had told the overflow crowd what many of Marable’s associates were telling the media.

“Manning was obsessed with the mysteries and unresolved questions around the assassination,” Mullings said. “Who gave the order, and who pulled the trigger?”

Which raised a slightly different question: How do you get justice for Malcolm X in the age of Eric Holder?

That same evening, in Kansas City, Missouri, a 54-year-old man named Alvin Sykes placed a three-page typed letter into an envelope. Back on April 5, Sykes had been at a friend’s house when a news report came on CBS about a new book that examined the assassination of Malcolm X. Later, Sykes would recall the

announcer making reference to the author's "last interview" — a poignant phrase. "That got me," Sykes said.

Now, on May 12, Sykes, who was born to a 14-year-old mother and left school in the ninth grade, sealed the envelope and addressed it to a gentleman in Washington.



All history conceals an *a priori* superstructure which promotes the interests of certain social classes at the expense of others.

— Manning Marable, *How Capitalism Underdeveloped Black America*

The spring semester was winding down at Dartmouth, and Russell Rickford '09GSAS, an assistant professor of history, took a moment between student conferences to talk about his teacher, Manning Marable.

Rickford was getting used to this. One of Marable's star students, it was Rickford who served as editor of *Beyond Boundaries*, in addition to writing the eulogy in the program that was to be handed out at a May 26 public memorial for Marable at Columbia.

"Marable came of age politically and intellectually in a moment of great social upheaval," Rickford said. "His concerns reflect that moment. The black studies movement, the civil rights and black-power movements, the black-arts movement, and anticolonial movements deeply influenced his political consciousness and the kind of questions that he would ask for the rest of his life as a historian, as a political scientist, and as a social critic.

"Many of the eulogies that have come out since his death place him in a lineage that includes W. E. B. Du Bois, who was his great hero, and probably the most important figure in Marable's own political development. A close second is C. L. R. James, the historian and Marxist theorist, and to a lesser extent, Antonio Gramsci, the Italian Marxist. But certainly, Du Bois reflects Marable's commitment to scholarship in the service of social change and the black liberation movement.

"Marable's political consciousness and his fundamental political militancy were also informed by Malcolm. He always considered himself a sort of left nationalist — a black nationalist who, as he reflected on the black struggle in the United States and internationally, came to see class as the fundamental social contradiction and the primary source of inequality and racial oppression. As he matured, he became what I call an unhyphenated democratic socialist — a proponent of a deeply democratic, deeply egalitarian, nonsectarian, anti-Stalinist vision of socialism.

"Dr. Marable has an insider-outsider relation to black studies and the black community. I can't think of anyone with a more encyclopedic knowledge of the black experience. At the same time, he recognized that as a Marxist, he was representative of a minority constituency within the black community. He understood very clearly the ambivalence that the black working class had long felt toward the American Left. One of the main impulses of his scholarship and of his activism was to bridge that gap — not in a way that would impose upon black

workers these sort of arcane, derived ideas of Leninism or any other current of Marxism, but that would help to develop class consciousness within American workers of all colors — stimulate an organic Marxism in the heart of corporate capitalism. So he had that sort of duality. You might almost call it a Du Boisian double consciousness.

"Intellectually, Dr. Marable represents a structural critique of our racial democracy in a time when the public discourse is increasingly shaped by ideas of a postracial world — the notion that the civil rights movement solved the basic problems of racial inequality, a narrative that really enabled abandonment of the efforts to acknowledge and correct the institutional racism of the past. So Dr. Marable was writing and pursuing activism at a time when his message, his fundamental understanding of the nature of society, was, in many ways, marginal."

Though maybe that message was becoming less marginal, somehow, in the age of Obama. At any rate, that week, *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention* hit number three on the *New York Times* best-seller list.



Any criticisms, no matter how minor or mild, of Malcolm's stated beliefs or evolving political career, were generally perceived as being not merely heretical, but almost treasonous to the entire Black race.

— Manning Marable, *Beyond Boundaries*

The halal food truck in front of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture at 135th Street and Malcolm X Boulevard was doing good business on the evening of May 19. It was the 86th birthday of El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz, better known as Malcolm X, and inside the Schomburg, home to Malcolm X's diaries, the Langston Hughes Auditorium filled up with a crowd that included Muslims, Marxists, nationalists, families, students, and even some admirers of Barack Obama.

The seven panelists took their seats on the stage, and the Schomburg's director, Howard Dodson, entreated the audience to be respectful. Dodson knew that the evening's program, billed as a "critical discussion" of *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention*, would not be a picnic for the author. Many in the audience, and certainly on the panel, felt that Marable's inclusion in the book of speculation into Malcolm's personal life — a possible for-pay sexual exchange with a wealthy white man during Malcolm's hustling days (before he was reformed by the Honorable Elijah Mohammad), marital tensions in the Shabazz house — was sensationalistic at best.

Panelist Bill Sales '66SIPA, '91GSAS, an author and activist, said the book was "a revisionist tract" that was "compromised by the promotion market" and "speaks to the sensibilities of a white audience," and that "Manning Marable has transformed Malcolm X into a Social Democrat." Abdullah Abdur-Razzaq, a.k.a. James 67X, a close aide to Malcolm who had been extensively interviewed for Marable's book, testified vociferously to Malcolm's unbending heterosexuality. Poet Amina Baraka recounted that when she heard that Marable had "slandered" Malcolm, "I was in agony. Why would Manning Marable repeat these rumors and speculations?" Amina's husband, Amiri Baraka, revolutionary activist and former poet laureate of New Jersey,



counseled that we must “include Marable’s consciousness” in our reading of the book, and suggested that Marable’s use of the word “sect” to describe the Nation of Islam was a fair indication of his biases.

Here, the problem of Marable’s absence, his inability to respond, was manifest, echoing the broader, more boundless emptiness left by his death. So it goes when a giant vanishes.

Then, during the Q&A period, a middle-aged woman got up and declared that she hadn’t read the book and had no intention of reading the book. Malcolm X and Betty Shabazz were her heroes, she said with piety, and they always would be. She seemed to expect an ovation, but most in the audience saw the problem in her statement, and no one applauded her words.

7 As a black historian, the question that came to me was, “How can the *authentic history* of black people be brought to life?” By “authentic” I mean a historical narrative in which blacks themselves are the principal actors, and that the story is told and explained largely from their own vantage point.

— Manning Marable, *Living Black History*

“Slow down, slow down,” the affable man with the bushy graying Afro said to Zaheer Ali, a Harvard graduate who was rattling off all the administrative things he had to do in order to matriculate at Columbia. “What are your research interests?”

Ali gathered himself. He had come to Marable’s office in Schermerhorn Extension on a tip from a trusted source. Six months earlier, Ali was in a record store in Times Square when he spotted the sociologist Michael Eric Dyson, then a visiting scholar at Columbia. Ali introduced himself to Dyson, whom he recognized from TV, and Dyson

agreed to read Ali’s Harvard thesis on Islam and hip-hop. Later, over dinner, Dyson told Ali, “You’ve got to talk to Manning.”

Now, seated across from Marable, Ali said, “I’m interested in doing a history of Temple Number 7 in Harlem.” That was the Nation of Islam mosque where Malcolm X was minister from 1954 to 1964.

Marable’s eyes brightened, and he smiled his underbite smile. “You have to come here,” he said.

Ali did. It was 1999, and Ali entered the alternate universe of IRAAS, where research topics that “were on the periphery of what scholars would pay attention to,” such as CORE or the Black Panther Party, were treated as the important and relevant subjects that they actually were. Here, black history was the country’s foundational narrative, “the core thread of the American experience,” in the words of Marable’s student Stephen Lazar ’06GSAS.

“Professor Marable helped us frame our work so that it spoke to the central issues in the field,” Ali said recently in the office of the Center for Contemporary Black History, a research center founded by Marable in 2003 to examine black politics, culture, and society. “And it helped legitimize the work academically.”

In the summer of 2000, Marable hired the technology-savvy Ali to help him develop a multimedia study project on Du Bois’s 1903 book *The Souls of Black Folk* in conjunction with the Center for New Media Teaching and Learning. This led to conversations about doing a similar project on Malcolm X.

“In 2001, we began the Malcolm X Project (MXP), which was organized around gathering materials for the multimedia version of the autobiography,” said Ali. “We started interviewing people who knew Malcolm and worked with him, and that laid the early foundation for the Malcolm X biography.” Marable, always a generous

provider of opportunities, funded students' attendance at Columbia's Oral History Summer Institute, run by Mary Marshall Clark; and when Louis Farrakhan, who was appointed minister of Temple Number 7 after Malcolm's death, agreed to meet with Marable, who over the years had been critical of Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam, Marable brought Ali with him.

"It was an incredible meeting," Ali said. "It lasted eight hours. Minister Farrakhan called Dr. Marable 'a giant.' We came back later and did a five-hour oral history interview."

By meeting with members of the Nation of Islam, Marable and his team of some 20 student researchers were able to obtain a batch of old, decaying reel-to-reel tapes of Malcolm's speeches in Temple Number 7. Marable sent the reels to a sound archivist, who rescued as much material as was possible.

"That provided a lot of insight into the kinds of speeches Malcolm gave while he was in the Nation that no one had ever reported on," Ali said. "Dr. Marable would say, 'You know, the MXP, it's a way of life.'" Ali laughed. "It was like adventures in black history. This was living history."

After Marable's death, Ali appeared on the major networks, talking about his mentor and Malcolm X, who, like Marable, died just before the publication of his book. (Whereas Marable saw and held the finished product, Malcolm X did not see the final *Autobiography* — a red flag for Marable, who believed that the

were not caught at the scene; they were picked up a week or two after. Following the trail left by Hayer, who in a 1978 affidavit to attorney William Kunstler named his co-conspirators, Dr. Marable tried to track down who these other people were. By researching public records and aliases, he identified a person who is still alive and known in New Jersey. And that's in the book.

"This person, whom Dr. Marable names, was later involved in a bank robbery with two accomplices. The accomplices were prosecuted. He wasn't. And it seemed to Dr. Marable that his record was cleaned up."



Eric Foner was convinced.

It was 1993, and Foner '63CC, '69GSAS was chair of the search committee charged with finding a director for a new African American studies program at Columbia. One name kept popping up: Manning Marable, professor of ethnic studies at the University of Colorado, a renowned scholar and institution builder whose 1983 study of political economy, *How Capitalism Underdeveloped Black America*, became a touchstone for a generation of black intellectuals. He earned his PhD in history from the University of Maryland in 1976, taught at Cornell and Fisk, was founding director of Colgate University's Africana and Latin American Studies Program, and, after that, chair of the Black Studies Department at Ohio State University. Then he went to Boulder, where he got Foner's call.

"Manning said, 'Look. You're in New York City — the institution should be geared to Harlem,'" Foner said recently. "Harvard's program was geared to literature and culture. Manning was interested in public policy, history, and political science. He was a prolific and impeccable scholar who had a powerful vision of what IRAAS could become, and he rose to the top of our list."

Marable accepted Columbia's offer, and introduced himself to the university in his job talk in Schermerhorn Extension. His topic of choice was a controversial and little-understood black revolutionary who didn't get much play in academia.

"For him to come in and give a talk on Malcolm X was very bold," said Robyn Spencer '01GSAS, who was in the audience that day. "It said that this is a serious historical subject, that this person had an impact, not just on black people, but on American history, politics, and culture." Raised by working-class parents in a neighborhood in Brooklyn where "the *New York Times* was not even available," Spencer was in many ways an atypical graduate student and had spent her first two years "finding my way at Columbia, figuring out the language, and how to be." She'd been studying American history, and was interested in post-World War II black social protest. "As someone who was working on the Panthers, I'd felt a little marginalized: Was this really history?" Then she saw Marable. You couldn't miss him. "He looked like Frederick Douglass," said Spencer, now an assistant professor of history at Lehman College, with a laugh. "He had this presence, and you wanted to know more."

Then Marable talked about Malcolm X.

"Marable's political consciousness and his political militancy were also informed by Malcolm."

book was posthumously edited to the tastes of the book's coauthor, the liberal Republican integrationist Alex Haley.) Invariably, Ali's TV interviewers turned to the assassination.

"Professor Marable had many questions in terms of irregularities surrounding Malcolm's death," Ali said. "For instance, typically, there would be two dozen police officers assigned to the Audubon Ballroom when Malcolm was speaking. On that day, there were two. And why did it seem that the police rushed to wrap this case up in the nice, neat narrative of the Nation of Islam versus Malcolm X? Dr. Marable suggests in the book that this was maybe to protect their assets — their informants and agents who were in both organizations.

"Then there is Talmadge Hayer's affidavit. Of the three people who were convicted of the assassination — Hayer, Thomas Johnson, and Norman Butler — Hayer is the only one to have openly admitted his involvement, and at his trial he claimed that the other two men were not involved. But they all served time. Johnson died in 2009. Butler was paroled in 1985. Dr. Marable did speak with both Butler and Johnson, and felt the evidence suggested they were innocent. They

“He kept calling him ‘Malcolm,’ almost as if he knew him,” Spencer remembered. “It was a personal talk, and highly intellectual.” Marable also spoke about other things: incarceration, crack cocaine, structural inequality, and the challenge of transforming the relationship between Columbia and the community.

Spencer had been waiting for this. She asked Marable to be her adviser. He agreed, making her his first graduate student at Columbia. This was around the time of the Clarence Thomas hearings, when, as Spencer recalls, “black community internal politics were on public display. Race loyalty versus gender loyalty: Was feminism relevant to black women?” Marable had already answered the question emphatically in *How Capitalism Underdeveloped Black America* in a chapter titled “Groundings with My Sisters: Patriarchy and the Exploitation of Black Women” — a point not lost on Spencer. “To have a male scholar say that feminism was a legitimate part of the black political tradition, and not a side issue or a corrosive agent for distraction or something that white supremacy was trying to do to hinder black resistance, was revolutionary.

“At the same time,” Spencer added, “Manning was open to critical engagement. He wasn’t doctrinaire. It’s not that he wasn’t confident, self-assured, and moving through the world with a sense of his own intellectual weight, but he still managed to solicit your opinion. He tried to dismantle some of those hierarchies, tried to struggle against his own socialization, and challenged you to struggle against yours.”



Facing the rising sun of our new day begun,
Let us march on till victory is won.

— James Weldon Johnson, “Lift Every Voice and Sing”

Eighteen years after Spencer and Foner listened to Marable’s job talk, they returned to celebrate his life. It was May 26, 2011, and the Roone Arledge Auditorium in Lerner Hall was packed with those who knew Marable best, and many more who had been inspired by him. Zaheer Ali was there. So was Russell Rickford. So was Kristen Clarke. *Malcolm X* researchers Garrett Felber ’09GSAS and Liz Mazucci ’05GSAS were there. Mayor David Dinkins made it. Congressman John Conyers of Michigan sent a telegram. Marable’s distinguished colleague, Michael Eric Dyson, had come up from Georgetown. And, assembled in the first rows, Marable’s family members — including Leith Mullings; his sister, Madonna; and his three children and two stepchildren — provided, in their graciousness and modesty, a key to the man that was beyond any text.

After an opening benediction from University Chaplain Jewelnel Davis, Madonna Marable stood and sang “Amazing Grace,” a request from her late brother. Then, from the podium, came an extraordinary outpouring of appreciation. President Lee C. Bollinger called Marable “an academic hero who will stand forever.” Provost Claude Steele spoke of Marable’s “old-fashioned hard work and fearless inquisitiveness.” Eric Foner praised him as “the consummate public intellectual.” To Farah Jasmine Griffin, professor of English and comparative

literature and African American studies at Columbia, Marable was a “sheer force of nature” who chronicled better than anyone the “epic, painful, but beautiful struggle for freedom.” Dyson, who had defended *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention* in a debate with Amiri Baraka on *Democracy Now!*, called his friend “a disciplined scholar” and “a great man.” For Russell Rickford, Marable was “America’s postcolonial Du Bois.” And Zaheer Ali repeated his teacher’s sweet refrain: “I’ve got the best job in the world; I get to teach black freedom every day.”

One of Marable’s children, Sojourner Marable Grimmer, then got up with her brothers and sisters. Her voice trembling, “Soji,” as her father called her, made a final appeal to the audience. “Our dad was not only amazing in his work but truly amazing as a father,” she said. “That’s the type of legacy that we want to leave. *Be amazing.*”

At the end, everyone was asked to stand. Madonna Marable, accompanied by pianist Courtney Bryan ’09GSAS, sang the Black National Anthem, “Lift Every Voice and Sing.”

The voices rose, and for a moment, it seemed, Earth and Heaven did ring.



“Dear Honorable United States Attorney Eric Holder,” began the letter that Alvin Sykes had mailed, coincidentally, on Manning Marable’s birthday.

Sykes, a compulsive reader who had educated himself on civil rights law in the public library, was the man behind the Emmett Till Unsolved Civil Rights Crime Act, legislation named for the young black teenager from Chicago who was tortured and murdered in Mississippi in August 1955 for reportedly saying, “Hey, baby” to a white woman. In 2005, Sykes convinced U.S. senator Jim Talent, Republican of Missouri, to introduce a bill that would create a unit inside the Justice Department to investigate old crimes from the civil rights era. In 2008, President George W. Bush signed the bill into law.

Now, having read *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention*, Sykes was following the playbook by which he got the Till case reopened in 2004. In his letter to Holder, he outlined the technical legal grounds for reopening the case of Malcolm X.

On May 17, four days after mailing the letter, Sykes drove 65 miles to Topeka, Kansas. In the car beside him was his friend, Kansas state senator David Haley, who is the nephew of Alex Haley. The two men were heading to an event at the Topeka Ramada commemorating the anniversary of the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision. The keynote speaker was Eric Holder.

After the attorney general’s address, Sykes sought out Holder, and the two men shook hands. According to Sykes, Holder, without any prompting, told him that he had personally received Sykes’s letter and that the DOJ was reviewing it. Sykes left Topeka feeling hopeful.

“I expect it will take a while,” Sykes said in June. “Months at least, because of the potential involvement of state law enforcement in addition to the FBI. But overall, I feel confident that there will be an investigation.”

You might call it living history. 🕊





Legendary fencing coach Aladar Kogler
teaches his students to play
with sharp objects — their minds.

The Untouchables

By Paul Hond | Photographs by Lois Greenfield

Jeff Spear '10CC and
Daria Schneider '10CC.



Halte!

At the referee's command, our fencer lowers her weapon and steps off the fencing strip. She just blew the winning point. Now it's 14–14. What if she loses? What will it mean for her ranking? Her Olympic hopes? Oh, and her paper on Milton — was that due this week or next?

She has 15 seconds to eliminate these thoughts — all thoughts — and enter what her coach, Dr. Aladar Kogler, calls the flow state, that place of full integration of mind and body, what athletes and performers call the zone, what artists and scientists call inspiration, what believers call ecstasy.

She draws a breath and exhales . . . the negative thoughts go out . . . she reminds herself of past triumphs,

of her coach's emphasis on playfulness and enjoyment, his belief that *improvement* is more critical than victory. Some coaches prowling the sideline, yelling, "Wake up!" Not Kogler. He radiates calm and confidence. Earlier, during a break, he had gone over to our rattled fencer and silently patted her shoulder.

Later, she will have to write a detailed report of her bout. What was she feeling? What went wrong or right? What was her state of mind? Coach Kogler wants to know.

She will see him soon, at her next lesson. There, underground in Dodge Fitness Center, she will encounter him — the nimble, sprightly, ageless Aladar, so light on his feet that he seems to glide. With his sinewy frame and hollowed cheeks, one might take him for a ballet master, or the patriarch of a family of aerialists. At lessons he wears



burgundy velour sweatpants and a black protective jacket. He'll meet our fencer on the strip and commence the day's drills. Repetition, so that the body remembers what the mind must abandon. Technique must be automatic. *If you think, you are not in the moment.* A squeak of sneakers, the tap and clink of clashing metal, melodies in the invisible phrases scribbled on air by the dancing blade-points, but our fencer, focused, will hear nothing as she thrusts her weapon at Aladar's heart.

Like many fencers, she came to Columbia for Maestro Kogler. She was from Ohio, Massachusetts, Brooklyn, Texas, California, upstate New York. She had met him at a fencing camp, at a tournament, had transferred from another school to train with him. He had noticed her, too, had seen weaknesses that he could turn into strengths, strengths that he could turn into coups de grâce on a world stage. He would open her channels. Technique wasn't enough. They called it physical chess for a reason: Here

were tactics and penetration on a mortal level. ("Physical *speed* chess" in the words of 2008 NCAA men's sabre champ Jeff Spear '10CC.) And here was Kogler, fencing Hall of Famer, courtly citizen of eight Olympic villages, who understood the sport better than anyone. Most fencing coaches were specialists, but Kogler, driven to extremes in his youth, was master of all three weapons — foil, sabre, and épée, each with its own rules and techniques. *I had to be the best*, he often said, and he meant it.

Our young fencer had heard the stories. How Kogler was born in 1933 to an upper-class family in Hungary, where fencing, a modification of dueling created to stem the blood-tide of many a gored nobleman, had reached its highest development. It was the Kogler family sport. But after World War II, the northern part of Hungary was annexed by communist Czechoslovakia, and the Koglers, marked as bourgeois capitalist aristocrats, were yanked from their home at gunpoint at 2 a.m. and sent into exile.

"Don't think about results. Find meaning in what you are doing. The goal is happiness."

— ALADAR KOGLER

Below: Kogler with (from left) épéist Steve Trevor '86CC, sabreur Bob Cottingham '88CC, and foilist Caitlin Bilodeau '87CC.





Left: Bob Cottingham, U.S. Olympic team, 1988, 1992; NCAA champion, 1988; national champion, 1990.

Center: Steve Trevor, U.S. Olympic team, 1984, 1988; IFA champion, 1986.

Below: Sabreur Daria Schneider, NCAA champion, 2007.

Right: Foilists Sherif Farrag '09CC and Erinn Smart '02BC.



"The whole reason I came to Columbia was to be trained by Aladar and make the 1984 Olympics. Which I did."

— STEVE TREVOR

No plumbing, no electricity, no work permit. Kogler's father had a heart attack and died. His mother suffered paralysis in her face. His older brother escaped to the West and was labeled a spy. Aladar, 13, broken and miserable, fled to Hungary as a refugee to attend school. He had thoughts of suicide. To heal himself he explored a foreign philosophy that was introduced to Hungary in 1936 by Selvarajan Yesudian of India. Yoga, it was called, and Kogler sought out every book on it he could find. But in 1947, Hungary turned communist, and yoga, with its Hindu-spiritual currents, was banned. Aladar was sent back to what was now Slovakia. As a



class enemy, he was expelled from school, and so he decided to earn his working-class credentials — and any hope for an education — by volunteering in the most dangerous coal mine in Moravia. This furthered his project of self-discipline. *Control the thought and you control the emotion.* Aladar, soot-streaked, was allowed to finish his studies privately, and was admitted to the Institute of Physical Education and Sport in Prague as a gymnast and diver.

Then the Soviets figured it out. During the Cold War, Olympic medals were a means to demonstrate the superiority of one's political system, and fencing, that emblem of the

aristocracy, provided a chance to win *many* medals. Three weapons, men and women, individual and team, and with all those skilled Hungarians — one can imagine the excitement in the Central Sports Committee. Kogler, a highly accomplished fencer, had been obliged until then to keep his powers a secret. Now, under a regime that poured science and rubles into its athletes, his ability became his passport.

But, alas, as Kogler prepared to compete in East Germany, the KGB discovered his family connections — his brother a spy — and he was barred from international competition. *Imagine: a potential world champion who*

cannot compete. The injustice did not shake him. He had learned to control his emotions. He would, he was told, be allowed to coach, and it was then that he made his decision. *If I cannot be the best athlete, I want to be the best coach in the world.*

Kogler was appointed head coach of the Czechoslovakian national team, and trained 39 national champions in Austria and Czechoslovakia. He got his PhD in sports psychology from Charles University in Prague. *If I put everything into sport, I will survive.* His success brought him certain privileges, as he had hoped it would. After the 1980 Summer Olympics in Moscow,



Kogler, back in Slovakia, was permitted to travel 60 kilometers across the border to Vienna to coach the Austrian team, an arrangement that brought valuable Western currency to the Czechs.

In 1981, Kogler and his wife and son defected to Austria. They were placed in a refugee camp. Kogler's goal was to get to America, where a job awaited him once he got his papers. Then, on a summer day, Kogler was paid a visit by the Austrian secret police, who informed him that the Czechs were plotting to steal him back. The Koglers were put in a car and driven

Left: Sibling chivalry? Kogler with sabreur Keeth Smart '10BUS, two-time NCAA and national champion and three-time Olympian, and Erinn Smart, four-time national champion, 2008 Olympic team silver medalist, Columbia Athletics Hall of Famer.

from the camp to a village in the Alps. Ten days later, Kogler was in Detroit.

Freedom! Kogler was now the fencing coach at Wayne State University, replacing his old friend, the Hungarian master Istvan Danosi.

After winning the men's NCAA crown at Wayne State, Kogler joined Columbia in 1983 as head coach of the women's team. That same year, he was named men's and women's head coach for the U.S. national team. At Columbia, Kogler and men's head coach George Kolombatovich formed a partnership as co-head coaches that would last 28 years. Kolombatovich's chief focus was recruitment and administration, while Kogler was the man on the strip, behind the mask, the first PhD in sports psychology to coach in the United



Épéist Jon Normile '89EN, '02BUS, NCAA champion, 1988, 1989; three-time national champion; Columbia Athletics Hall of Famer.



"Aladar lets his students find their own path. He helps them figure things out for themselves."

— JEFF SPEAR

Left: Épéist Magnus Ferguson '14CC.

Center: Sabreur Jeff Spear, NCAA champion, 2008; two-time IFA champion.

Right: Foilist Sherif Farrag '09CC.

States, the European Zen-Meister with his visualization and biofeedback and relaxation techniques, his mantras, his writing assignments, his pressure drills for big national events. Under Kogler's sword, Columbia women and men won 25 Ivy League championships and five NCAA team titles, and produced 13 NCAA champions and 14 individual Division I national champions, in all weapons.

En garde!

Our fencer lowers her mask and faces her opponent, her weapon aimed as if at the North Star in a smooth line from her forearm. Kogler has trained her well. He embodies his teaching, *he* knows adversity, and so perhaps she wasn't surprised, after hearing the news this spring that her 78-year-old

coach was retiring from Columbia, that Kogler had parried any final touch. The maestro will continue to train top fencers for the 2012 and 2016 Olympics, and to pursue, with international cooperation, his scientific research into psychological preparation and the identification of athletic talent.

Kogler's transition was the occasion of an ingathering this summer in photographer Lois Greenfield's studio for *Columbia Magazine*. There, a few of Kogler's standouts, past and present, spoke joyfully of their guru. They called him disciplined, meticulous, intense, amazing, good-hearted, good-natured, the best coach ever, someone you wanted to emulate. "The most invaluable thing he taught me was to face my fears," said Keeth Smart '10BUS, team silver medalist at the 2008 Olympics. Columbia University Athletics Hall of Famer Caitlin Bilodeau '87CC, a

two-time Olympian and four-time national champion who, like Kogler, is also enshrined in the United States Fencing Association Hall of Fame, said, "His direction, his personality, his way of engaging you — the whole aura of who he is — inspires you to want to be the best, and to believe you can be."

Prêt!

Our fencer is ready. Her blade catches the light as the spectators lean forward in their chairs. But she is not in this world. She is inside a moment. She knows that she must take the game, take everything, as Kogler says, one touch at a time. It's 14–14, but for our fencer, the score is always 0–0.

Allez!



Zhou Long in Heilongjiang province in the early 1970s.



Of Snakes and Butterflies

When Zhou Long won the 2011 Pulitzer Prize for Music, he gained something more than artistic laurels.

Puccini had disappeared.

It was September 1969, and 16-year-old Zhou Long, a student from Beijing, arrived in the harsh climate of China's northeast Heilongjiang province, 1200 miles away from his family. His father was a painter and fine arts professor, and his mother a Western-style voice teacher. Zhou '93GSAS, who had taken lessons in voice and piano, had been preparing for conservatory study. Now, he was assigned to drive a tractor, grow crops, and spend hours every day hauling heavy sacks of beans and wheat down a narrow gangplank to the granary. During the long winters, the winds roared and the temperatures averaged nine degrees Fahrenheit, sending the inhabitants into underground dwellings.

This was the Heilongjiang Production and Construction Corps, a state farm near Hegang City. Zhou desperately missed his family and his music, and tried to find solace in the only melodies allowed on the farm: revolutionary songs, which he taught himself to play on his accordion. "I played some operas from the Cultural Revolution, too," he says. "But back home I had played art songs and listened to Puccini."

But Puccini was gone. The Cultural Revolution, Mao's brutal program of socialist orthodoxy that began in 1966, had expunged many things that smacked of the indulgent, capitalist West. Hundreds of

By Stacey Kors

thousands of city youth, like Zhou, left their families for the countryside, where they learned agricultural skills through manual labor. (The Chinese Communist Party allowed one child per household to remain at home; Zhou's younger sister was assigned to be a weaver in a Beijing factory.) Universities were shut down, and the future of a generation of talented students was now uncertain. "I had no chance, no hope without higher education," says Zhou. "I knew I would never become what I wanted to be: a composer."

At Zhou Long's home in Kansas City, Missouri, the walls are decorated with scrolls of Chinese calligraphy. The shelves hold books on 20th-century composers and music, color photos from Zhou's life in America — graduation portraits, pictures of Zhou conducting, vacation snapshots — and a handful of small black-and-white images from his days on the state farm. There are also several classical music awards. This past spring, he added another: the 2011 Pulitzer Prize in music, for his opera *Madame White Snake*.

Described by the Pulitzer Committee as "a deeply expressive opera that draws on a Chinese folk tale to blend the musical traditions of the East and the West," *Madame White Snake* is Zhou's first opera and the first full-length operatic work to be awarded a Pulitzer since Robert Ward's *The Crucible* in 1962. Zhou is the first Asian American composer to win the music prize, a fact he finds inspiring and humbling. "I thought I probably couldn't win it because I wasn't considered American," he says. "But my wife never agreed with me. She said, 'You *are* American. You should have a chance.'"



Zhou in his studio at the China Broadcasting Corporation in Beijing, 1984.

Chairman Mao's death in 1976 brought an end to the Cultural Revolution. The next year, Zhou was returning to Beijing from a field trip collecting folk songs when he heard an astonishing announcement from the state radio over the train's public-address system: China's college entrance examination was to resume. "I couldn't believe it," says Zhou. "I had given up my dream of going to college."

Once back in Beijing, he immediately applied to the prestigious Central Conservatory of Music, joining more than 1000 musicians competing for openings in the institution's first regular class in more than a decade. Zhou was one of only 30 people selected for the so-called Class of '77 (though instruction didn't actually resume until 1978). At the conservatory, Zhou, who listened to a great deal of Western opera while growing up, learned more about traditional Chinese music. "Peking Opera and Chinese instruments are supposed to be my cultural background, but they're not from my childhood and not in my blood," says Zhou. There was a requirement for the first class after the Cultural Revolution to study traditional Chinese music, which, Zhou says, "was a smart idea, because almost everything had been lost."

After he graduated in 1983, Zhou was posted to the National Broadcasting Symphony Orchestra of China as composer-in-residence, a powerful but undemanding position where he wrote 30-second music segments for state radio and television. The freedom and flexibility of his schedule gave him time for his own compositions, tonal works that drew heavily on his recent studies and interest in Tang Dynasty high culture. Nonetheless, he was already beginning to exhibit a modernist, experimental sensibility. His string quartet *Song of the Ch'in*, for example, which won first prize in the Chinese National Composition Competition in 1985, transfers the idiomatic sounds of the ch'in — an ancient seven-stringed instrument similar to a zither — to a Western string quartet.

The prize might have been a sign of things to come, but 1985 held an even bigger event for Zhou.

Chou Wen-Chung '54GSAS had already been at Columbia for nearly 25 years when he established the U.S.-China Arts Exchange in 1978. The Chinese-born composer and Columbia music professor saw the potential presented by the end of the Cultural Revolution and began traveling to China, giving lectures at the country's top conservatories, meeting cultural and political leaders, and establishing the relationships that would eventually allow him to bring students back to Columbia to study.

"After the Chinese government reopened the universities, there were so many talented students to select from," says Chou, now an 88-year-old professor emeritus. "My idea was to try to bring out as many as possible and to let them experience cultural life in the United States. Bright Chinese teenagers were just waiting."

COURTESY ZHOU LONG

CLIVE GRAINGER



Peter Tantsits as Xu Xian and Ying Huang as his wife, Madame White Snake, in the Opera Boston production.

Not just teenagers. Zhou was a student in his mid-20s when Chou gave a master class at the Central Conservatory. “Although I didn’t meet him until years later,” Zhou recalls, “I felt I had found my mentor.”

By 1985, Zhou was 32 and working as a professional composer when he sent some scores and cassettes of his chamber work to Chou. With Chou’s encouragement, Zhou applied and was admitted to Columbia’s DMA (doctor of musical arts) program. His wife, the violinist and composer Chen Yi ’93GSAS, whom he met while at the conservatory, followed one year later.

Zhou struggled with the transition. He spent most of his time studying English, but had such difficulty learning the language that Chou managed to have the language qualification for his doctoral degree waived. Zhou was also so “confused” by New York City’s cultural diversity and varied musical offerings that he shut down creatively, unable to compose for the first two years he lived there. “It was a huge shock coming from a closed country,” he says. “It was not just American culture. New York is an international, cosmopolitan city. It was everything together. I needed time to digest it all.”

Zhou was equally unprepared for the musical environment at Columbia.

“In China, we didn’t know what was happening in the States,” he says. “We heard some impressionism, some Debussy. But we didn’t learn about living 20th-century composers and couldn’t access the scores and recordings.” Columbia emphasized a highly modernist compositional style at odds with Zhou’s tonal approach. “I had been writing tonally from the start,” he says. “I got the sense that I couldn’t stay in tonality at Columbia, and initially it was difficult for me to make the turn. I wanted to defend my compositional background. I started to feel ashamed of anything I wrote in a tonal style, because I thought it wouldn’t be accepted.”

When he did compose again, Zhou entered what he calls his Buddhist period, creating music that explores Buddhism’s inherently dualistic precepts, such as being and nothingness, concentration of thought and expansion of consciousness. In the nine-and-a-half-minute-long chamber work *Dhyana*, for example, complex pitches and dense, disjointed rhythms relax and open up into slower, simpler, sonic spaciousness; scattered, worldly thoughts

coalesce into a focused serenity. While the spiritual significance of this period, which ran roughly from 1987 to 1994, shouldn't be overlooked, Zhou stresses that his reasons for pursuing Buddhist philosophies were more practical than religious. "I was frustrated, I was aimless, and I felt I got lost," he says. "For me, it was a creative turning point. I had to really clean up my mind. I thought that Buddhism could help me to concentrate, to focus, to think quietly about what I was doing here and aiming for."

During that time, Zhou began to move away from tonality and experiment with free atonality, marrying contemporary Western musical theory with traditional Chinese instruments and subjects.

Once he heard and studied more contemporary music, he says, "It was like I'd jumped out of a box. I felt as if I had more freedom, more choices. I spent so much time at the Performing Arts Library at Lincoln Center listening to 20th-century Western music intensively and studying scores. I was fascinated by George Crumb and his graphic scores, so I would go to a corner and look for other irregularly sized, photocopied scores. I knew they would be interesting."

In 1985, Zhou joined the ensemble Music from China and became its music director. He expanded the repertoire of the New York-based group — formed to present concerts of traditional Chinese music in the U.S. — to include contemporary Chinese works in Eastern and Western musical languages. His work with the group was well received: In 1999, ASCAP presented Zhou with its Adventurous Programming Award.

Since he came to America, Zhou's music has been shaped by the question of cultural identity. The American Academy of Arts and Letters, which honored him with its Arts and Letters Award in Music in 2003, stated that "unlike many composers of today working between cultures, Zhou Long has found a plausible, rigorous, and legitimate way of consolidating compositional methods and techniques that allow him to express brilliantly both his experiences as a composer of Western music and his considerable knowledge of his native China."

That's significant, especially given that Zhou's Chinese American colleagues Tan Dun '93GSAS and Bright Sheng '93GSAS had by that time made a more visible impact on the classical-music scene. Tan won an Oscar and a Grammy for his soundtrack to Ang Lee's *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* in 2000, and in 1999 Bright was commissioned by President Bill Clinton to compose a work honoring the visiting Chinese premier Zhu Rongji.

"Out of the whole group that came here from China, Zhou Long has been the hardest to follow," says Ken Smith, Asian performing arts critic for the *Financial Times*. "If you lay all of these composers' pieces end-to-end, you can really see a musical progression that corresponds to major changes in their lives — when they went to conservatory in China and then in the U.S. But Zhou's changes are not that pronounced. He was the most Western of the group



when he was in China. In many ways, his pieces from China don't sound much different from his pieces today. You can anticipate the mature composer in those early works."

By the late 1990s and early 2000s, critics began comparing Zhou, Tan, Bright, and Chen Yi. But according to Ken Smith, this first generation of post-Cultural Revolution composers — all of whom attended Columbia at the same time, studied with Chou, received their doctorates in the same year, and worked to blend Eastern and Western musical languages in their compositions — couldn't have been more different from each other.

"They came from different corners of China, and, once they hit the ground in New York, they went in different directions," says Smith. "That said, there are few moments in history where you can trace a change in musical life back to one particular class the way you can with theirs."

Zhou's former classmates had already written several Chinese American hybrids, most notably Tan's *The First Emperor*, which had its world premiere at the Metropolitan Opera in 2006, and Bright's *Madame Mao*, which was performed at the Santa Fe Opera in 2003. Zhou doesn't begrudge his colleagues' success, but he does tire of being regularly asked about them, even during interviews about his own opera. "I am low-key," he says. "I don't have a manager. I don't have a publicist. When I won the Pulitzer, the press once again wanted to put me in this group. I told them I've never been in any circle. I just work on my own, and work quietly. I don't even have a particular style. I don't reject anything: I look at everything equally."

Madame White Snake was commissioned by Opera Boston and the Beijing Music Festival. It is Zhou's most ambitious project and perhaps his most overt synthesis of Eastern and Western musical traditions. The opera is based on a popular 1000-year-old Chinese folk tale, retold in English by librettist Cerise Lim Jacobs. It is the story of a powerful white snake demon that transforms itself into a beautiful woman to experience love, but is, in the end, betrayed by her suspicious husband. A Peking Opera-style prelude and postlude, which formally describe the action, frame four acts, each introduced by a children's chorus singing a Tang Dynasty poem describing the four seasons.

"The opera functions almost like a symphony," says Gil Rose, artistic director of Opera Boston and conductor of the work's world premiere in February 2010. "Other operas do this, like Puccini's *La Bohème*. The first act is expository, the second is a scherzo in a major key, the third is a scherzo in a minor key, and the fourth is a minor-key resolution. *Madame White Snake* works in a similar fashion and finds the through line of symphonic work."

Zhou's vocal and orchestral music for the opera unfolds over 100 taut minutes and spans centuries as well as continents. There is no intermission.

Singers alternate among traditional operatic set pieces, Schoenbergian *Sprechstimme*, Peking Opera's stylized rhythms, and precipitous vocal slides. The chamber-sized orchestra features Eastern

"I've never been in any circle. I just work on my own, and work quietly. I don't even have a particular style. I don't reject anything: I look at everything equally."

and Western instruments, and the music moves seamlessly from clashing dissonances and percussive rhythms into sweeping, Pucciniesque melodies that lend surprising accessibility to the opera's complex and often atonal score. "Zhou has a highly developed sense of the dramatic in his music," says Rose, "and has a really good handle on pacing, which you can hear even in his orchestral work. Like Puccini, he knows how to hold his audience."

Puccini has always been Zhou's favorite opera composer ("He wrote some of the most beautiful melodies in the world") and was the only composer whose scores Zhou consulted while working on *Madame White Snake*, primarily to study Puccini's treatments of vocal lines. "Puccini is heavily orchestrated," says Zhou, "but he also gives space to the voice." Zhou didn't attend a single concert while writing the opera, and even refrained from listening to

recordings, so as not to be swayed by outside influences. "I didn't want to hear any other music. Only what was in my head."

It took Zhou three years to complete *Madame White Snake*. The process was so psychologically draining and overwhelming that he shut down after the project was completed and didn't compose again for a full year. "My feelings are reflected in my process," he says, "which is very slow and very careful. For the past few years, my heart had been with the opera. When the score was done, I felt depressed for a long time."

Zhou Long seems well suited to the slow pace and quiet life of America's heartland, where he moved 12 years ago to teach composition alongside Chen Yi at the University of Missouri-Kansas City Conservatory of Music and Dance. The couple's comfortable high-rise apartment has room for dedicated studio spaces for each; its inviting living area, with large windows overlooking the nearby Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, is centered around a wooden dining table, where Zhou and Chen discuss their music and students over steaks, mashed taro, and steamed bok choy, or while sipping Chinese fermented Pu-erh tea, a favorite of Zhou's.

The refrigerator in the extra-long galley kitchen is covered with Chinese takeout menus. A map of the United States is taped to the kitchen wall, and, though the couple has no children, "American Presidents" and "Animal Alphabet" placemats lie on the bistro table and counter. "It's educational," says Chen enthusiastically, as ebullient as her husband is restrained. "It helps us to improve our English. At the start of the school year, we follow all the parents to Costco to get these things."

Zhou clearly has adapted to American culture. Yet it took writing a Western-style opera and winning the Pulitzer for the composer to finally feel accepted by his adopted country. "I've lived here for almost 30 years," he says, as he puffs on his pipe, "and have been entirely working to blend the cultures. I think that I carefully combined Western and Eastern cultures, and that I did it well. I don't want *Madame White Snake* to taste like wine and beer mixed together. You can't ever say that you have the right or perfect result, but I believe in what I did."

"The Pulitzer gave me more confidence," he says. "It's a quintessentially American award. That it could be offered not only to American-born composers, but to a composer who immigrated to the United States and became an American citizen, really means something to me. Now I feel like an American." 🍷

Stacey Kors is a freelance music critic and arts writer. Her work has been published in Gramophone, the New York Times, the Financial Times, the Boston Globe, and the San Francisco Chronicle. She lives in New York City.

To listen to *Madame White Snake*, please visit www.wgbh.org/995/madamewhitesnake.cfm

The Spokes-Man of New York

Can Ken Podziba '91GSAPP make New York the next great biking city? // By Leslie Hendrickson '06JRN

The New York City subways were full of bicycles on the first Sunday of May, packed with people on their way to Battery Park in Lower Manhattan, where thousands had been gathering since daybreak. They came from Queens, the Bronx, New Jersey, California, France. Weekend cyclists rubbed elbows (literally) with spandexed athletes straddling \$5000 titanium frames. Manhattan office workers in wedge heels pedaled alongside nuclear families from Connecticut. On tandem bikes, the sighted rode with the vision-impaired, and wheelchair users propelled themselves on cycles powered by arm strength. And, as will happen at these endurance events, some riders wore tutus, or strapped boom boxes to their handlebars, or attached rubber chickens and stuffed flamingos to their helmets.

At the center of this sea of 32,000 bicycles, Ken Podziba '91GSAPP, president and CEO of Bike New York, smiled. The weather for the 34th annual TD Bank Five Boro Bike Tour, a 42-mile ride through car-free city streets, was perfect: a not-too-sunny day with a cool breeze. The tour, which sold out in just one day, is Bike New York's signature event, and Podziba, now in his second year at the nonprofit, could look around and believe that bike culture in New York was accelerating faster than his own Cannondale SuperSix 3 on a Central Park straightaway. But could New Amsterdam really switch lanes and become more like, well, Amsterdam?

Podziba hopes so. While the Five Boro got the headlines, Bike New York's overarching mission — to teach New Yorkers to be safe, courteous bikers who stop at red lights — would now kick into high gear. Summer was coming, and that meant more bikes on the streets, and, inevitably, more heated discussion over the vehicle's proper place on what has long been, at least in Manhattan, a grid dominated by pedestrians and cars. On this day, however, the two-wheeler ruled. As the thousands of participants took off for uptown — Church Street north to Sixth Avenue to Central Park, up to the Bronx, down FDR Drive, over the Queensboro Bridge, through Astoria Park and Long Island City, over the Pulaski Bridge to Greenpoint and Williamsburg and over to Dumbo, down a stretch of the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway and across the Verrazano-Narrows — Podziba hitched a ride in the director of security's car to the finish line on Staten Island.

As a kid, Ken Podziba spent a lot of time on wheels, but it was a skateboard, not a bike, that got him around the hamlet of Oceanside, Long Island. He went to college at Syracuse University, where he majored in advertising, then returned to his parents' house after graduation. Determined to make some quick cash, he took a job in real estate, cold-calling lot owners to see if he could broker deals for them. He enjoyed researching the buildings and properties, and soon started looking for

work as an urban planner at the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD).

"I showed up physically," says Podziba. "I was very aggressive, very persistent, and I got an amazing job."

One of Podziba's first projects was Brooklyn's MetroTech Center, a \$1 billion revitalization project that his bosses didn't think would fly. Podziba seized the chance: He met people and enlisted tenants for the center, a mixed-use facility that now houses the headquarters of the New York City Fire Department. Excited by the work, Podziba applied to Columbia's Graduate School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation. He began the Urban Planning Program in 1990. After graduating, he returned to the HPD, where he worked on the revitalization of South Street Seaport.

It was during this time that a chance encounter changed Podziba's direction. He was at a party in a friend's parents' backyard, and among the guests was mayoral hopeful Rudolph Giuliani.

"I thought, 'This is a man who could turn the city around,'" Podziba says, quickly adding that he's not a Republican. Still, he threw himself into Giuliani's campaign. He started out answering phones, and was soon digging up the voting records of other candidates in the race. After Giuliani won the election, he handed Podziba a *Green Book*, the official directory of the city's government offices, and told him to choose the department where he wanted to work.



Podziba took a post as the assistant commissioner of finance at the New York City Community Development Office, a body that decides which community organizations to fund with federal money. The job satisfied “the social worker in me,” he says. Then he moved to the Taxi & Limousine Commission, where he led efforts to help New Yorkers with disabilities. He was also the mind behind those talking messages in taxis, with celebrities reminding passengers to buckle up.

Then, in 1998, Podziba got a call from City Hall.

“I was told, ‘Come right away and don’t tell anyone.’ I was really scared. I thought I was going to get fired.”

Instead, Mayor Giuliani and the deputy mayor for economic development, planning, and administration, Randy Levine, offered Podziba the job of sports commissioner.

“I wasn’t aware we had a sports commissioner,” Podziba remembers saying.

“And they told me, ‘We do now.’” The New York City Sports Commission had just been created to attract sporting events to the five boroughs.

The first event Podziba brought to the city was outdoor bowling in Bryant Park with the Professional Bowlers Association. “It was live on CBS,” Podziba says. “The mayor rolled out the first ball.” Podziba served for 12 years, working to bring huge events like the 2014 Super Bowl to the

New Meadowlands Stadium in East Rutherford, New Jersey, while performing such civic errands as judging Nathan's Famous Hot Dog Eating Contest in Coney Island. When Michael Bloomberg took office in 2001, Podziba was one of only a handful of government officials who were reappointed.

The centerpiece of Podziba's wish list was the 2012 Olympic bid. He and his team needed to show the International Olympic Committee that the city was ready to host the games. "At the time, New York was only known as a professional sports town," he says. "We needed to build a résumé for amateur events."

In 2000, Podziba helped establish the New York City Triathlon, which includes a 40-kilometer bike ride on the Henry Hud-

son Parkway. The race, which was planned as a one-time event to impress the committee, is now in its 11th year. Podziba also worked with New York Road Runners to establish the New York City Half-Marathon, which starts in Central Park and ends on West Street in Tribeca. The Olympics bid was ultimately unsuccessful, although New York was among five cities to make the short list.

Being sports commissioner was gratifying, but the demands and the pace were intense. "I'm only one person," Podziba says, "and I had a huge constituency — 8.3 million New Yorkers." Podziba, the tireless pedaler, wanted to slow down, spend more time with his wife and two kids.

It's one thing to streamline a bicycle. But how do you streamline your life?

In 2009, Podziba's phone rang again. It was Bike New York, wanting to know if Podziba could recommend someone to replace the retiring executive director, Pam Tice. Podziba thought it over for

three months, then called back to recommend himself, thinking the position would already be filled. It wasn't. Podziba got the job.

On January 20, 2010, which Mayor Bloomberg proclaimed "Ken Podziba Day," Podziba left city government. After a long weekend, he began his new role at Bike New York.

"As sports commissioner, I was spread so thin," he says. "Now I can focus on bicycling and dive into the project to the fullest."

Bikers had already experienced bottlenecks in Central Park and at the entrances to several bridges along the tour route. When they arrived at the BQE, most were excited to be back on a wide thoroughfare. Although

commissioner didn't prepare him for the bumps in this year's tour. The road construction reminded everyone that the byways of New York still belonged to Toyota, Ford, and General Motors.

Podziba once had a car.

As sports commissioner, he enjoyed the privileges of a town car and a parking space in front of his apartment just in case he had to speed out to Queens to distribute trophies or give a proclamation at Gracie Mansion. But when he left city government, he also left behind, more or less, the internal combustion engine. Now he rides his Cannondale to work every day, cruising from his home on York Avenue and East 71st Street through Central Park to Bike New York's new offices at the Interchurch Center, across the street from Barnard College. It takes him about 20 minutes.

"I'm more connected when I bike," he says. "I'm healthier, I'm breathing fresh air, I'm more alert when I get to work."

Bike New York moved to Interchurch just a few months before this year's tour, leaving its original home at the American Youth Hostels building on Amsterdam at West 103rd Street, where the Five Boro Challenge was organized in 1977 as a way to teach and practice bike safety in the city. When Bike New York was formed to organize the event in 2000, the number of participants had grown from a few hundred to about 20,000. It cost \$7 to enter, and there was precious little in the way of Porta-Potties and snacks along the route. These days the tour has rest areas in every borough, where people can also compost banana peels and refill water bottles with New York City tap water. The entry fee, now \$75, helps support Bike New York's ambitious education initiatives.

Podziba has greatly expanded this public outreach. Bike New York holds bike-safety and maintenance classes for adults and has designed a bike-safety curriculum for teachers to use in the classroom. After piloting the program in city schools, Bike New York education director Emilia

Podziba had issued warnings about construction, no one — not the riders or the Bike New York staff — anticipated the extent of the delays ahead of them.

For those who began the tour right at 7 a.m., there were no problems. But riders who started later found themselves stuck on the BQE in the late afternoon. Delays of up to two hours kept thousands standing in wheel-to-wheel traffic just before the exit to the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge, waiting to merge from three lanes to one. Some fumed about the "Five Boro Walking Tour." Veterans said they'd never encountered delays like this in the past. Others turned around and biked back to Dumbo instead of pushing to make it to Staten Island.

For many, the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge, generally closed to pedestrians and cyclists, is one of the highlights of the ride, and was worth the wait. Podziba knew how complicated such events could be in a city of millions, but even his years as sports

"As sports commissioner, I was spread so thin," Podziba says. "Now I can focus on bicycling and dive into the project to the fullest."

Crotty realized the organization needed to go further.

“Teachers were saying, ‘We love your organization, we love what you’re doing, but our kids don’t have bikes,’” Crotty says.

Last year, Bike New York organized a series of Bike Bonanzas, where kids can get a used bike or swap a bike for a better one.

four long blocks from the nearest subway.) For \$50 a year, residents could have unlimited bicycle access, and rides under 30 minutes would be free, Podziba says. The DOT hopes the bike-share program will begin in the spring of 2012.

But as many pedestrians, motorists, and cyclists can attest, Bike New York has a lot

in learning more about cycling in the city. Podziba and the Bike New York staff were there to celebrate, but were also posting traffic-jam updates on Facebook and Twitter.

A few days after the race, Podziba posted a letter on Facebook to address the complaints from angry riders that had lit up Bike New York’s Facebook and Twitter accounts.



The Department of Transportation (DOT) provides helmets and bike maps, and the Bike New York team teaches students the rules of the road — a road that is getting more and more crowded each year.

According to DOT’s 2010 Sustainable Streets Index, commuter cycling increased more than 262 percent in the past decade. Under Bloomberg, the city has added over 200 miles of bike lanes to many streets, and a bike-share program, proposed by the DOT, is in the works. While the program is still in the planning stages, Podziba says it could open up a whole new world for New Yorkers.

“In New York, we tend to stay in our neighborhoods. How great would it be if I could just say to my wife, ‘Let’s go to the East Village’ and not have to spend \$20 on cabs?” (Podziba’s York Avenue address is

of teaching to do. Many riders blow through red lights and travel the wrong way on one-way streets. Community groups in Manhattan and Brooklyn have organized protests against the added lanes and bicycle traffic in their neighborhoods. Police have increased the number of tickets given out to scofflaw riders in recent months, especially in and around Central Park.

Podziba is convinced that with enough education, the bike culture in New York will evolve and harmonize with the city’s cars, buses, taxis, joggers, walkers, and delivery trucks. The curve in the road he is most concerned with is the learning curve.

The Five Boro Festival ended at mile 39 on Staten Island, with food, raffles, a rest area, and information booths for those interested

“In the previous months,” wrote Podziba, “we made planning and logistical decisions for the Tour, taking into consideration construction schedules and other outside information. We were fully aware of potential delays and made plans to deal with them. However, the reality is that the delays were greater than we anticipated and planned for.”

Podziba and the Bike New York staff have taken rider comments to heart and are working to make sure similar problems don’t affect future tours. Podziba personally telephoned many riders who complained about delays, and already has been meeting with DOT and NYPD officials about next year’s route.

“It’s all about coordination,” Podziba says. “I wish we could just fast-forward to 2012 — it’s going to be an excellent event.”

NEWS

Campbell Sports Center and marsh restoration get go-ahead from city

The New York City Council recently granted Columbia final approval to construct a five-story, 47,700-square-foot sports center at its Baker Athletics Complex on the northern tip of Manhattan. The new center will serve as a hub for student-athletes and coaches who practice and compete at Baker, which is the University's main outdoor sports compound. It is scheduled to be complete in late 2012.

The Campbell Sports Center, named in honor of University trustee chairman and former Lions head football coach William V. Campbell '62CC, '64TC, will include a strength-and-conditioning center, coaches' offices, team meeting rooms, an auditorium, and a lounge and study area. It will be located at 218th Street and Broadway, at the southeastern corner of the Baker Athletics Complex, where Columbia until recently had a maintenance garage.

The new center will dramatically improve the day-to-day lives of students and coaches, says Columbia athletics director M. Dianne Murphy. Currently, there are few indoor spaces at Baker where coaches can hold office hours, teams can gather, or students can find desks or computers. Athletes are often seen sitting on duffel bags in the grass before practice, doing homework.

"Soon, when our students travel up to Baker, they'll be able to lift weights, watch films with their coach, do a little studying, and gather in the lounge," says Murphy. "It will make their lives a lot easier and also create a sense of community."

In recent years, Columbia has made several upgrades to the Baker facilities. The football, baseball, softball, and soccer fields have been resurfaced, as have the tennis courts, and a new field-

hockey venue created. The two-story Chrystie Field House, which consists mainly of locker rooms, has been renovated with state-of-the-art training and sports-medicine equipment. But the 60-year-old building has only two small offices and a tiny student lounge.

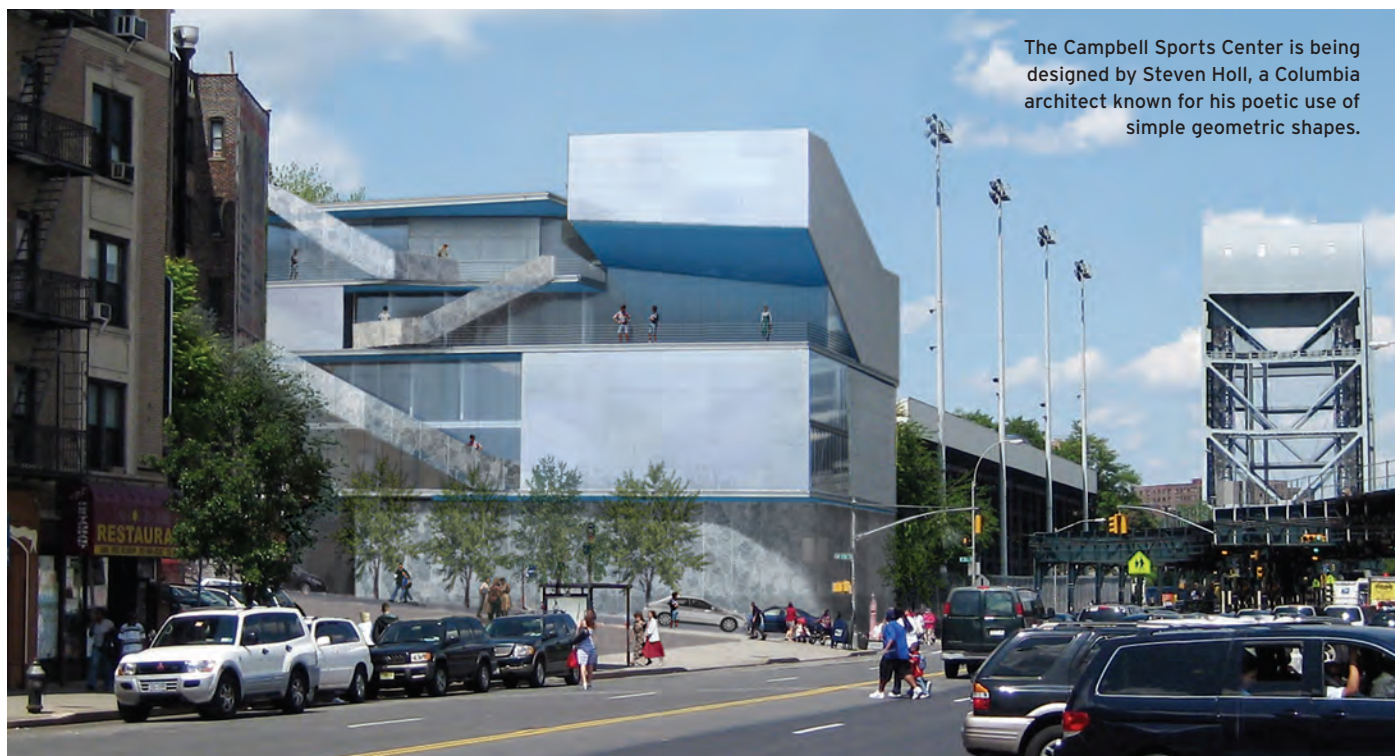
"Space is a major issue, because our athletics programs have grown significantly over the past 25 years," says Murphy. "The facilities at Baker were built at a time when Columbia College enrolled only men and had just seven or eight sports teams. Now we have 700 student-athletes who compete in 31 varsity sports, with both men's and women's teams using the facilities. We're still the smallest athletics department in the Ivy League, yet we're totally maxed out."

The construction of the Campbell Sports Center will also help relieve overcrowding at the Dodge Fitness Center on the Morningside Heights campus. All of Columbia's sports coaches are now situated at Dodge; some are forced to share offices on rotating schedules. Many of the coaches will move to the new sports center, freeing up office space and meeting rooms for Lions teams that compete at Dodge, such as fencing, wrestling, swimming and diving, basketball, and volleyball.

"Everybody on campus will benefit, since Dodge also serves as the main fitness facility for the general student body," says Murphy. "Dodge needs major renovations, but this is a first step toward creating more space for wellness and recreational activities there."

Architect providing "wow" factor

The Campbell Sports Center is being designed by Steven Holl, a Columbia professor widely regarded as one of America's leading



The Campbell Sports Center is being designed by Steven Holl, a Columbia architect known for his poetic use of simple geometric shapes.



The future locations of the Campbell Sports Center (A) and Boathouse Marsh (B) at Baker Athletics Complex, which is seen here looking west.

architects. He created MIT's honeycomb-like Simmons Hall in Cambridge, Mass., the gently curving Kiasma Museum in Helsinki, and a knotty cluster of residential towers connected by sky bridges called Linked Hybrid in Beijing. The Campbell Sports Center, an aluminum-clad building with walkways zigzagging up its southern facade, will be Holl's first building in New York City. It will feature numerous eco-friendly building and design elements.

"It's a bold structure that makes a serious statement about our athletics program," says Murphy. "It's certainly going to provide a 'wow' factor that will help our coaches in their recruiting."

Columbia aims to raise approximately \$55 million for the construction of the Campbell Sports Center; alumni and friends of the University so far have committed about \$34 million for this purpose. The center is one of the main elements of the ongoing \$100 million fundraising campaign for Columbia athletics, for which \$63 million has been raised. Other campaign priorities include endowments for coaching and administrative positions, support for regular sports-team operations, and the renovation of a tennis clubhouse.

According to President Lee C. Bollinger, the naming of the sports center will honor William V. Campbell's lifelong commitment to the University. Campbell was the captain of the 1961 football team that shared the Ivy League championship with Harvard, and he coached the Lions from 1974 to 1979. *Fortune* magazine has called Campbell, the former CEO and now chairman of financial-software company Intuit, the "secret coach" of Silicon Valley for his mentoring of executives at other companies such as Apple and Google. Campbell is known for his progressive and employee-friendly leadership approach, including his recruitment of women executives. He has led the Columbia Board of Trustees since 2005.

"Bill Campbell's passion for athletics and for the University is second to none," says Bollinger. "As a football player, head coach, devoted alumnus, and now chair of the University Trustees, Bill's leadership has meant, and continues to mean, so much to Columbia. It is truly fitting that we name our new sports center after him."

Wildlife preserve on the Harlem

As part of the project, Columbia is also creating a small public park on the western edge of the Baker complex, at 218th Street and Indian Road. The new park, called Boathouse Marsh, will overlook scenic wetlands in an inlet of the Harlem River. Columbia has committed to restore and preserve the wetlands, which are a native habitat of wading birds such as the great blue heron and snowy egret; leopard frogs; ribbed mussels; and other wildlife that has largely disappeared from the Manhattan waterfront. Park visitors will be able to walk amid lush water gardens on a boardwalk that hugs the marsh's perimeter; a nearby lawn will be landscaped with new trees, paths, and benches.

The park is being designed by James Corner Field Operations, the landscape architecture company that created the High Line aerial greenway in Manhattan's Chelsea neighborhood. It is scheduled to open next year.



A new park will overlook a restored wildlife habitat in an inlet of the Harlem River.

"This is going to be a beautiful place for families to come and enjoy the waterfront where previously there was no access," says La-Verna Fountain, Columbia's associate vice president for construction business services and communications. "We also have plans for Columbia faculty to involve local schoolchildren in the wetland restoration and in the monitoring of new habitat areas."

Visit giving.columbia.edu/cucampaign/athletics.html.

Columbia to Naval ROTC: Welcome back



Rear Admiral Herman Shelanski, at left, escorts President Bollinger and Navy Secretary Ray Mabus onto the deck of the USS *Iwo Jima*.

On May 26, President Lee C. Bollinger and U.S. Navy Secretary Ray Mabus signed an agreement of their intention to reinstate Naval Reserve Officers Training Corps (NROTC) at Columbia for the first time in more than 40 years.

Under the agreement, Columbia students will participate in Naval ROTC at SUNY Maritime College in Throggs Neck, N.Y., consistent with the military's practice of maintaining regional consortium units. Naval ROTC, which prepares officers for both the Navy and Marine Corps, will have an office on the Morningside Campus where active-duty military personnel will be able to meet with Columbia midshipmen.

"NROTC's return to Columbia is good for the University, good for the military, and good for our country," Secretary Mabus said at a signing ceremony aboard the USS *Iwo Jima*, which was docked in New York City for public tours as part of

AP PHOTO / BEBETO MATTHEWS

New autism center will foster Columbia, Cornell research collaborations

A new autism treatment and research facility to serve the tristate area will open in White Plains, New York, in late 2012. The Institute for Brain Development will be located on the Westchester campus of New York–Presbyterian Hospital and will be staffed by faculty physicians from both Columbia and Cornell.

"The creation of this institute is necessitated by the relatively recent emergence of autism as a major public-health issue," says Jeffrey Lieberman, who chairs Columbia's psychiatry department and helped plan the institute. "Put simply, there's an urgent need now for evaluating and treating autism."

The Institute for Brain Development will be directed by Catherine Lord, a clinical psychologist and a leading expert on autism. Lord most recently oversaw a clinical facility for autism spectrum disorders at the University of Michigan. She is best known for developing diagnostic standards

for autism and new ways of teaching social and language skills to autistic children.

The New York Center for Autism, a parent-advocacy organization led by business executive Laura Slatkin and attorney Ilene Lainer, has raised funds to cover most of the institute's initial underwriting costs.

The Institute for Brain Development will be the largest autism facility in the New York City area, providing diagnosis and treatment for hundreds of people annually. "My goal is nothing short of transforming the way autism is treated in the New York metro area and beyond," says Lord, who has been appointed to the faculties of both Columbia and Cornell. "By integrating our services with other community organizations and resources, the institute will offer a wide variety of treatment options for patients of all ages and needs. We intend to provide the very best environment for treating autism spectrum disorders."

Lord says the institute will collaborate with smaller autism clinical centers, such as the Developmental Neuropsychiatry Program at Columbia University Medical Center (CUMC) in Upper Manhattan. "The Institute for Brain Development will be the centralized care facility in the region, with the largest staff of autism specialists," says Lord. "There's a need to centralize some aspects of assessment and service delivery because autism is a very complex disorder that often gets misdiagnosed. But we'll make referrals to other centers that specialize in certain types of treatments or are more convenient for families to visit."

The institute will also be a major research center. Lord, who oversees several federally funded autism studies, says the institute will be fully staffed by physicians with faculty appointments at either Columbia or Cornell. Existing faculty at these and

the Navy's annual Fleet Week in late May. "Together, we have made a decision to enrich the experience open to Columbia students, make the military better, and our nation stronger."

Columbia and many other institutions, including Yale, Harvard, Dartmouth, and Stanford, broke formal ties with ROTC at the height of Vietnam War-era student protests. In recent years, these universities have resisted inviting ROTC back onto their campuses because, they have stated, the military's Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy violates their own nondiscrimination codes. Still, students could always participate in ROTC; Columbia's Army and Air Force ROTC cadets have long trained with other New York-area students at consortium units hosted at Fordham University and Manhattan College, for instance.

University officials say the new agreement with the Navy, which will give military

personnel a physical presence on campus, represents a reengagement between Columbia and the military. The impetus was the federal government's decision last December to repeal Don't Ask, Don't Tell. Following President Obama's signing of that legislation, there was renewed debate on many college campuses about whether to do more to support ROTC programs. At Columbia, the University Senate held a series of town hall-style meetings and conducted a student survey, which showed that 60 percent of students favored inviting ROTC back onto campus. President Bollinger subsequently sought the input of the University's Council of Deans, which unanimously agreed.

"Repeal of the Don't Ask, Don't Tell law provided a historic opportunity for our nation to live up to its ideals of equality and also for universities to reconsider their relationships with the military," says

Bollinger. "After many months of campus discussion, it is clear that the time has come for Columbia to reengage with the military program of ROTC. I believe that it is the right course of action for Columbia to formalize this recognition and thereby add to the diversity of choices for education and public service we make available to our students."

Columbia officials say the University will resume "full and formal recognition" of Naval ROTC after the effective date of the repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell, which is anticipated to come later this year. The Office of the Provost is creating a committee of faculty, students, and administrators "to oversee implementation of the ROTC program consistent with Columbia's academic standards and policies of nondiscrimination."

To watch video of the signing ceremony, visit news.columbia.edu/oncampus/2438.

other local institutions, she says, will be able to recruit study subjects from among the families served by the institute. "We're even going to hold seminars to teach other researchers about the data we collect," Lord says, "and to show them how they could use our data in their own work."

According to Lieberman, CUMC psychiatric residents and fellows will be able to rotate through the Institute for Brain Development; Columbia graduate students in fields ranging from psychology to speech therapy to neurology to early childhood education will work on research projects there.

"Having a treatment and research center staffed by faculty from both Columbia and Cornell is going to open up new possibilities for collaboration," says Lieberman. "That's important, because understanding autism requires the involvement of scientists coming at the problem from many different angles."



Jeffrey Lieberman and Catherine Lord

BRUCE GILBERT

"I want to be with Japan"

Donald Keene, one of the world's foremost scholars and translators of Japanese literature, taught his last class in front of a phalanx of reporters and camera crews in Kent Hall in April. His retirement after teaching at Columbia for 56 years made headlines, especially in Japan, because he'd already announced his intention to seek citizenship and permanently move there.

Following his last seminar, on traditional Noh plays, Keene '42CC, '50GSAS told the assembled journalists that the March 11 earthquake and tsunami that devastated Japan had only strengthened his resolve to be among the people whose language and culture he has loved since beginning his studies at Columbia in 1938. "I've made up my mind to become a Japanese citizen to be together with the Japanese," Keene, who is 89, was quoted as saying in the English-language newspaper *Daily Yomiuri*. "I want to live together with these people and share death with them, as I love Japan and believe in Japan."

OZIER MUHAMMAD / THE NEW YORK TIMES / REDUX



Donald Keene teaching his final class on April 26.

CAA hosts Barcelona trip

In May, about 100 Columbia alumni and friends gathered in Barcelona to experience the art, architecture, history, music, and food of the scenic Mediterranean coastal

city. The four-day trip, a signature event of the Columbia Alumni Association (CAA), included private tours and discussions with Columbia faculty.



Columbians on a recent CAA-sponsored trip to Barcelona, Spain, are pictured here in architect Antoni Gaudí's Parc Güell.

"We had alumni of all ages come from all over the world," says Ilene Markay-Hallack, the Office of Alumni and Development's executive director for University events and programs. "There was a wonderful energy — it was like getting to participate in Columbia classes, except while viewing a beautiful city."

On a walking tour, Columbia architecture professor Jorge Otero-Pailos explained how Barcelona's old Gothic Quarter has been restored over the past century as part of a deliberate project to celebrate Catalan culture; arts dean Carol Becker brought the group to museums showcasing the city's vibrant contemporary art scene; and economist Xavier Sala-i-Martin delivered an entertaining talk about how the Spanish clothing company Zara liberally institutes its employees' suggestions — a successful approach that Sala-i-Martin cautiously translated into parenting advice.

The weekend also included a two-day CAA International Club Leaders Conference, where alumni leaders exchanged ideas about how best to run their clubs.

To learn about future events, visit alumni.columbia.edu.

JAVIER ALMAR

CU ATHLETICS / MIKE MCLAUGHLIN

Lions collect record number of Ivy League championships

Columbia athletes won six individual Ivy League event championships this spring, bringing the Lions' total for the academic year to 22, the most in Columbia's history.

First-year golfer Michelle Piyapattra won her inaugural championship tournament, held in Northfield, N.J., from April 22 to 24. Piyapattra took an early lead in the first two days of competition, entering the final round six strokes ahead. She then fired off the best round of her young collegiate career — a three-under-par 69 — to become only the second Lion in program history to take home medalist honors at the event.

The rest of the Lions' championships this spring were in women's track and field. Junior sprinter Sharay Hale triumphed in three events: the 200-meter dash, the 400-meter dash, and the 4-by-400-meter relay, which she ran with senior Kyra Caldwell, junior Yamira Bell, and senior Laura Vogel. Hale set an Ivy League record with her

time of 23.68 seconds in the 200-meter dash. She shared the title for most outstanding women's performer of the championship meet, which took place in New Haven on May 7 and 8.

"With Sharay anchoring our relay team, everybody knew Columbia was going to win," says track coach Willy Wood. "There was no real question. She's that dominant."

At the same event, Caldwell won the 100-meter hurdles with a time of 13.92, becoming the first athlete in 10 years to break 14 seconds at the championships. Senior Monique Roberts then won the outdoor high jump by clearing five feet, eight inches. She's now claimed the Ivy League titles in both indoor and outdoor high jump for two years in a row.

Finally, junior Uju Ofoche won the women's long jump by leaping 20 feet, five and three-quarter inches. She also won the championship title for indoor long jump this past February.



CU ATHLETICS / GENE BOYERS

Michelle Piyapattra

"We were extremely proud of our whole team," says Wood. "Both collectively and individually, they made amazing progress this year."

Visit www.gocolumbialions.com.



CU ATHLETICS / GENE BOYERS

Sharay Hale (above) and Kyra Caldwell (above right) won titles at the Ivy League Championships this spring.

Lavine and Lenfest create \$5 million match for Core Curriculum

Two of Columbia's most devoted alumni have decided to invest in the future of the Core Curriculum by creating a \$5 million fund for faculty endowment with an eye to inspiring an additional \$5 million in gifts.

University Trustee-elect Jonathan S. Lavine '88CC and University Trustee Gerry Lenfest '58LAW, '09HON are each donating \$2.5 million to match, one-to-one, gifts to endow positions for five Core instructors. The assistant professorships created under the new Lavine-Lenfest Matching Fund will provide ongoing support for four-year appointments for nontenured Arts and Sciences faculty who teach Literature Humanities or Contemporary Civilization.

The new endowed Core positions, says Dean Michele Moody-Adams, "will provide us the means to attract the most promising rising stars to teaching in the Core — helping to launch their academic careers

while assuring the quality of the classroom experience for students."

Lavine, who is chair of the College's Board of Visitors and a co-chair of the Columbia Campaign, was formally elected to the Trustees in June and will begin his term on September 6. He has previously given in support of various initiatives, such as financial aid, Columbia Athletics (including the Campbell Sports Center planned for Baker Athletics Complex), and the Double Discovery tutoring program.

For Lenfest, one of Columbia's most generous living donors, the gift is merely his latest in support of teaching at the University. In 2006, Lenfest donated \$48 million to provide matching support for 25 new chairs in the Arts and Sciences and 10 new chairs at Columbia Law School, and in 2005 he created the Distinguished Teaching Awards for Arts and Sciences faculty.



EILEEN BARROSO

English professor Sharon Marcus teaches a Contemporary Civilization class in the Core.

"The Core Curriculum defines a Columbia College education," Lavine says. "It's both intense and faculty-intensive. If future generations of students are to experience the best of Columbia, we have to build resources for the faculty who make Core instruction so distinctive."

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In brief

Smoothing the way

Math professor Richard Hamilton recently won the 2011 Shaw Prize, an international award that comes with \$1 million.

Hamilton received the prize for devising the Ricci flow, a geometrical process for smoothing spheres and other complex shapes. He developed the tool in the 1980s; the Russian mathematician Grigory Perelman used it more recently in his proof of the famous Poincaré conjecture, which enables mathematicians to describe objects that exist, theoretically, in spaces with more than three dimensions.

“With his Ricci flow, Hamilton has provided one of the most powerful tools in modern geometry,” stated the Shaw Foundation in a press release.

The Shaw Prize is given annually in three areas: astronomy, life science and medicine, and math. Hamilton shares the 2011 prize with Swiss mathematician Demetrios Christodoulou.

Steele returns to Stanford

Claude Steele is stepping down as Columbia’s provost this summer, after two years in the position. Steele, a social psychologist who studies how stereotypes undermine the academic performance of women and minorities, has been named dean of Stanford University’s School of Education. Steele was a professor at Stanford for 18 years before coming to Columbia in 2009.

“Though personally saddened by Claude’s decision to return to Stanford, I completely understand this life choice,” wrote President Lee C. Bollinger in an e-mail announcing Steele’s departure. “Given Claude’s great talents and the importance of the issues he wants to explore and resolve, this is clearly a benefit to society, while it is equally a loss for us at Columbia.”

Bollinger has appointed John Coatsworth, dean of Columbia’s School of International and Public Affairs, to serve as interim provost. Coatsworth will continue serving as SIPA dean until a new provost is hired.

Better map your district

Law students in Professor Nathaniel Persily’s Redistricting and Gerrymandering course recently launched a website with their suggestions for redrawing the congressional districts of every state. Their maps, which can be seen online at www.DrawCongress.org, are designed to promote political competition and fair representation. The students created as many districts as possible split evenly between Republicans and Democrats, for instance.

“This is the first time any group has taken on a project of this scope,” says Persily, who redrew district lines for Georgia, Maryland, and New York, following the 2000 census.

The project’s aim is to provide state officials with legally defensible maps that could save them millions of dollars in consulting and legal fees. Earlier this year, several students traveled to Washington, D.C., to demonstrate their work to dozens of state legislators. Says Persily: “The students were, in effect, teaching the very people who will help determine the new district boundaries.”

Seven lucky fellows

The American Academy of Arts and Sciences, one of the nation’s oldest and most renowned honorary societies, recently welcomed seven Columbia professors. The new fellows are microbiologist Maxwell E. Gottesman, historian Mark A. Mazower, computer scientist Shree K. Nayar, geneticist Rodney J. Rothstein, literary critic Michael Scammell, Shakespeare scholar James S. Shapiro, and mathematician Shou-Wu Zhang. They will be inducted during a ceremony at the academy’s headquarters in Cambridge, Mass., on October 1.

Goldberg and Manley elected to NAS

Michael E. Goldberg, who is the David Mahoney Professor of Brain and Behavior in the Departments of Neuroscience, Neurology, Psychiatry, and Ophthalmology, and

James L. Manley, who is the Julian Clarence Levi Professor of Life Sciences, have been named fellows of the National Academy of Sciences. Election to the NAS is considered one of the highest honors a scientist or engineer can receive. A total of 45 Columbia professors are members of the NAS.

Alonso named GSAS dean

Carlos J. Alonso, a scholar of 19th- and 20th-century Latin American intellectual history, was named dean of Columbia’s Graduate School of Arts and Sciences (GSAS) on June 22. He had held the title of interim dean since September 2010.

Alonso has taught at Columbia since 2005 and is the Morris A. and Alma Schapiro Professor in the Humanities. He is author of the books *The Spanish American Regional Novel: Modernity and Autochthony* and *The Burden of Modernity: The Rhetoric of Cultural Discourse in Spanish America*.

Columbia wins design, editorial awards

For the fourth year in a row, *Columbia Magazine* has won several national awards for its editorial and design content. The Council for Advancement and Support of Education awarded the magazine, and art director Eson Chan, a gold medal for the design of the Fall 2010 short story “Aguas Calientes” by Lauren Grodstein, with illustrations by Vivienne Flesher, and a silver medal for the design of the Summer 2010 article “Autism, Unmasked,” with illustrations by Gérard DuBois. Associate editor Paul Hond won a bronze medal for writing “The Night Hunter,” his Spring 2010 profile of tunnel explorer and photographer Steve Duncan ’02CC.

John Roman’s artwork that accompanied the Fall 2010 article “Oil + Water,” about the BP oil disaster, won a certificate of merit from the Society of Illustrators of Los Angeles; the same artwork was included in *Communication Arts* magazine’s annual review of the best editorial and advertising illustrations.

NEWSMAKERS

In whom we trust

Michael E. Leiter '91CC stepped down as director of the National Counterterrorism Center on July 8, after four years in the position. Leiter was one of the few senior national-security officials whom President Obama kept on from the Bush administration, and he had strong bipartisan support in Congress and in intelligence circles. Leiter, who recently remarried, told the *New York Times* that he resigned for personal reasons and to allow his successor "to bring fresh eyes to the problems we face." . . . **Alicia Abella** '95EN, a research scientist at AT&T Labs, has been appointed to President Obama's Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanics. The child of Cuban immigrants, Abella will advise the administration on a broad range of initiatives designed to help young Latinos succeed in school.



COURTESY AT&T

Alicia Abella '95EN

Promoted at the Gray Lady

Dean Baquet '78CC, the Washington bureau chief for the *New York Times*, will become the paper's managing editor for news operations on September 6. Before joining the



Dean Baquet '78CC

Times in 2007, Baquet was editor of the *Los Angeles Times*, a job he quit after publicly refusing to lay off newsroom staff. He won a Pulitzer Prize for investigating corruption in Chicago's City Council in 1988 . . . Journalism professor **James B. Stewart** is now a columnist for the *Times*' business section. He is a Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter and the author of several best-selling business books . . . Former *Times* political reporter and restaurant critic **Frank Bruni** '88JRN now writes a Sunday column for the paper. According to the *Times*, he is the paper's first openly gay op-ed columnist.

Bemedaled faculty

Bertrand Delanoë, the mayor of Paris, presented Mellon Professor Emeritus **Robert O. Paxton** with the city's médaille Grand Vermeil in May. Paxton, the premier historian of Vichy France, was in Paris for the opening of an exhibition on literary life in France during the German occupation . . . **Kenneth Frampton**, who is the Ware Professor of Architecture, will be given the Jean Tschumi Prize for architectural criticism by the International Union of Architects at its triennial World Congress in Tokyo in September. He developed the concept of "critical regionalism," arguing that modernist architecture

must incorporate local building traditions in order to avoid having a homogenizing effect around the world.

Heart for the game

Archie Roberts '65CC, a former Miami Dolphins quarterback who went on to become a heart surgeon, has received the National Football Foundation's 2011 Distinguished American Award. Roberts is being honored for raising awareness about the risks of heart disease for heavy-set football players. In 2003, he created the Living Heart Foundation, whose mobile units have provided cardiovascular screenings to thousands of former NFL players across the country.

Bell, book, and fiddle

Theater director **Darko Tresnjak** '98SOA is the new artistic director of the Hartford Stage in Hartford, Conn. He will direct the comedy *Bell, Book, and Candle* in April 2012 . . . **Gabriel Lefkowitz** '08CC was named concertmaster of the Knoxville Symphony Orchestra this spring — his first profes-



ARTHUR MOELLER

Gabriel Lefkowitz '08CC

sional appointment. The 23-year-old violinist earned his BA in music and economics from the College in three years and then got his master's in violin performance from Juilliard.



ULF ANDERSEN / GETTY IMAGES

Gary Shteyngart

Super sad, true, and funny, too

School of the Arts writing professor **Gary Shteyngart** is the first American to win the Bollinger Everyman Wodehouse Prize for Comic Fiction, which he received for his novel *Super Sad True Love Story*. (*Super Sad* was also named one of the best books of 2010 by the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Boston Globe*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Salon*, and *Slate*.) The prize is awarded to a book that “has captured the comic spirit of P. G. Wodehouse,” the British author of the Jeeves and Blandings Castle stories.

Bright ideas

Nao Minami '10SIPA and **Patrick Kim '10SIPA** have launched an investment fund to develop and operate solar-energy projects. The New York-based fund, Green Street Energy LLC, recently completed its first solar installation on the roof of a

Hawaiian hotel. “We’re basically an independent power company,” says Minami, a former trader for Goldman Sachs . . . In April, a team of biomedical engineering undergraduate students won a national design contest for a device that monitors the respiration, heart rate, and body temperature of newborns. The device is intended to monitor babies in an understaffed neonatal unit at a hospital in Kampala, Uganda. It will be tested in the hospital later this year. The team, consisting of seniors **Heidi Ahmed**, **Pankil Desai**, **Morris Kaunda Michael**, **Yufeng Yang**, and **Gary Zhang**, was honored at the National Undergraduate Global Health Technology Design Competition at Rice University.

Long way from home

Among those award-winning engineering students, none is more intimately aware of people’s needs in the developing world than **Morris Kaunda Michael '11EN**. At the age of five, Michael fled war-torn southern Sudan with his family and spent most of his childhood in a Kenyan refugee camp. His mother, recognizing his intel-



Morris Kaunda Michael '11EN

lectual gifts, encouraged him to move to the United States as a teenager so that he could study here. Now that he has graduated from Columbia, he plans to study medicine and return to Sudan. “As a refugee, you don’t have a lot of things of your own,” says Michael, whose story was told recently on NPR’s *Tell Me More*. “Most things are gifts. The best I can do is to give back to the community.”



DARREN FOSTER '02JRN

Mariana van Zeller '02JRN

Shooting for the truth

Mariana van Zeller '02JRN, a broadcast journalist at Al Gore’s Current TV cable network, received a 2010 Livingston Award for her report “Rape on the Reservation,” which examines the increased incidence of rape on American Indian reservations. The Livingston Awards are given to journalists under the age of 35 and include a \$10,000 prize . . . A team of documentary filmmakers that included **Delphine Reuter '10JRN** was honored recently for its exposé about how hazardous waste produced in Europe’s wealthier countries is often dumped illegally in poorer ones. Their film, *Toxic Europe*, was named the Best International Organized Crime Report at the Ilaria Alpi Journalism Awards in Riccione, Italy, in June.

JOHN MAKELY / MSNBC

EXPLORATIONS

Waste-to-fuel project launches in Ghana

In Ghana's capital of Accra, most of the sewage generated by the city's nearly 4 million people goes untreated. The consequences are predictable: Flies spread cholera and other diseases, water used by many of the city's poorest residents is contaminated, and local seafood is unsafe to eat. Yet incredibly, water-treatment facilities built by aid organizations don't operate at full capacity.



SWITCH/PETER DICAMPO

Raw sewage today ends up on beaches in Accra, Ghana.

"The problem is at least partly economic," says Kartik Chandran, a Columbia associate professor of earth and environmental engineering. "Water-treatment plants cost a lot of money to run."

Can the process of treating wastewater be made more economical? Chandran thinks it can be, if sewage is converted into fuel. In his laboratory, he has developed an unusually efficient way to turn nitrogen and other organic compounds from human waste into biodiesel. This spring he received a \$1.5 million grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to build a new water-treatment plant in Accra to test his technology. Chandran is collaborating on the project with Moses Mensah, a chemical engineer at Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah University, and Ashley Murray, who runs a Ghana-based nonprofit organization that promotes private sanitation projects.

The grant will pay for the construction of a small biorefinery and its operation for two years. The facility, roughly the size of a gas station, is scheduled to open this fall. It will treat the wastewater produced by about 3000 people per day. The sludge will be

delivered by tanker trucks that drive around Accra collecting public latrines used by most of the city's residents.

"We expect to generate about 260 gallons of biodiesel daily," says Chandran, whose collaborators have arranged to sell the fuel to a local oil company. "That's not quite enough to break even financially, but we should steadily increase our output as we fine-tune our technical design."

The refinery will be staffed by two full-time engineers and an administrator, as well as by several engineering graduate students from Kwame Nkrumah University.

The long-term goal of the project, Chandran says, is to inspire local entrepreneurs and investors to launch their own refineries. In many developing nations, he points out, privately owned water-treatment projects are now regarded as a promising strategy for delivering sanitation.

"The model that we're going to demonstrate could be beneficial anywhere in the world," he says. "But in a country where sanitation projects are said to be unaffordable and impractical, it could literally save lives."

Survival islands

If an entire nation is made uninhabitable by rising seas, what is owed to its people? Should they be granted citizenship automatically in another country? Or should they retain their sovereignty somehow, despite having no territory?

Legal scholars are just beginning to grapple with these questions. From May 23 to 25, many of the world's leading thinkers in international and climate-change law came to Columbia to participate in the first international conference devoted to the legal rights of island nations threatened by global warming. The conference, also attended by representatives of several island countries, was co-hosted by the law school and the government of the Marshall Islands, a low-lying nation of 68,000 in the Pacific Ocean.

"There's no precedent in international law for dealing with this predicament," says Michael Gerrard, a Columbia law professor who

organized the conference. "In the last few years, scholars have begun thinking about the legal issues involved. But this is the first time we've all come together for a dialogue."

Even by the most conservative scientific estimates, which indicate that sea levels will rise two to three feet over the next century, Gerrard says that at least six nations will need to be evacuated: the Marshall Islands, the Maldives, Tuvalu, Nauru, Kiribati, and the Bahamas. These countries are unlikely to be submerged completely, but their drinking aquifers and arable lands will be ruined by saltwater.

Marshall Islands president Jurelang Zedkaia, addressing some 250 people at the conference, said his country's water security will be threatened first. "Our very statehood is at risk," he said. "We know this not only because of what scientists tell us, but because of what we can see with our own eyes."

New pathways for treating Alzheimer's

Scientists have long suspected that Alzheimer's disease is caused by sticky plaques that gum up synaptic connections in the brain. Pharmaceutical companies, in their quest to develop an effective treatment for Alzheimer's, have focused mainly on preventing the formation of these plaques.

But a new study has identified several other biological systems that appear to be involved in Alzheimer's. The study, published in the April issue of *Nature Genetics*, has found that people with genetic abnormalities known to cause problems with cholesterol, inflammation, and a deterioration of nutrient-transportation routes within brain cells are more likely to get Alzheimer's. The paper results from the largest genetic assessment of Alzheimer's ever conducted: It involved 155 scientists from 44 institutions led by the University of Pennsylvania, the University of Miami, Boston University, and Columbia. By pooling their data, the researchers were able to link four genes to Alzheimer's, thus increasing the total number of genes known to be associated with the disease from 6 to 10.

"This provides solid evidence that there are at least three other physiological pathways that need to be studied" in addition to the formation of the brain plaques, says Richard Mayeux, a Columbia neurologist and one of the collaboration's lead scientists. "It's really going to open up the field of Alzheimer's research."

The paper doesn't refute the consensus view that Alzheimer's is caused primarily by an overabundance of tiny protein fragments that solidify into brain plaques. In fact, the genes that Mayeux and his colleagues have linked to Alzheimer's each seem to increase a



CHANG W. LEE / THE NEW YORK TIMES / REDUX

Richard Mayeux with DNA test kits used to study Alzheimer's disease

person's risk for the disease only slightly. Nevertheless, the discovery could one day help drug companies create more comprehensive treatments, Mayeux says. He points out that several experimental drugs designed in recent years to prevent the formation of brain plaques have failed to slow or stop the disease. This has led many scientists to suspect that preventing the formation of these plaques, while a necessary step in treating the disease, is not adequate.

"Now, we need to ask: How important are each of these other factors?" says Mayeux, who is the Gertrude H. Sergievsky Professor of Neurology, Psychiatry, and Epidemiology. "We don't have those answers yet. But what's clear is that Alzheimer's disease is a lot more complicated than many scientists used to think."



AP PHOTO / RUSTY MIDDLETON

Rising seas are expected to inundate the Marshall Islands within decades.

Many of the legal scholars in attendance advised the island nations to draft resettlement plans that might be presented one day to neighboring countries. Some even suggested that the island nations demand sovereignty in perpetuity. Maxine Burkett, a law professor at the University of Hawaii, proposed a new type of international status for countries that have lost territory, which she calls "nation *ex situ*." A displaced population thus would keep its seat at the United Nations and retain its fishing and mineral-exploration rights.

Gerrard, who directs Columbia's Center for Climate Change Law, said the conference was the first step in building a body of knowledge to guide vulnerable nations. His center has launched a web site with legal resources on the topic and plans to publish a book based on the conference's papers.

To learn more, visit law.columbia.edu/centers/climatechange.

REVIEWS



Simon Schama discusses J. M. W. Turner's 1840 painting *Slavers Throwing Overboard the Dead and Dying, Typhoon Coming On* (detail) in his essay "Turner and the Drama of History."

Chef's Salad // By Julia M. Klein

Scribble, Scribble, Scribble: Writing on Politics, Ice Cream, Churchill, and My Mother

By Simon Schama (Ecco, 432 pages, \$27.99)

To listen to Simon Schama, or to read him, is to be exposed to gushing torrents of prose, prodigious and ecumenical scholarship, and the avidity of an enthusiast. Schama is University Professor and the author of at least 15 books, treating topics as various as Rembrandt, the transatlantic slave trade, and the French Revolution. As an award-winning writer-presenter of television documentaries, he has ranged across art, literature, and history.

In *Scribble, Scribble, Scribble: Writing on Politics, Ice Cream, Churchill, and My Mother*, Schama reveals himself as a dedicated foodie, a film buff, a critical observer of American politics, and a connoisseur of what he calls "gothic language." Arranged by topic and including essays, reviews, reportage, lectures, and theater program notes, the book serves as a fitting aperitif to his more substantial works.

My own first encounter with Schama was a happy accident. I had driven to the Free Library of Philadelphia this April to hear the filmmaker John Sayles, but when I waltzed into the auditorium, just as the ticket takers had dispersed, Schama was being introduced — and I realized I had mixed up the dates.

My disappointment abated almost immediately. Reading from *Scribble, Scribble, Scribble*, Schama plunged into the lushly descriptive “Cool as Ice,” from *Vogue*, evoking in besotted language what he called “the delirium of ice cream.” He extolled the art of the essay and such practitioners as George Orwell, disdainfully dismissing the less-studied utterances of today’s bloggers. And he expressed his partiality for “extreme American writing,” citing as favorites Melville, Fitzgerald, Faulkner (of course), early Mailer (*The Naked and the Dead*), Whitman, Lowell, Frost, and Joseph Heller, who had been a friend. Overall, it was a pyrotechnical performance — learned, forthright, intentionally excessive.

So by the time I picked up the new book, I was not entirely an innocent. The intense verbal energy, fondness for digression, and breath-taking syntactical feats that characterize a Schama talk all mirror his prose. Here, for instance, is full-on Schama in “Virtual Annihilation: Anti-Semitism on the Web,” describing the failure of 19th-century culture to banish the superstitions of the past:

From the outset, of course, the machinery of sensationalist stupefaction — the dioramas, and panoramas, the Eidophusikon — was the natural handmaid of the sublime and the terrible. As Victorian Britain became more colonised by industry, so its public became greedier for spectacles of disaster, brought to them as visceral entertainment: the simulacra of Vesuvian eruptions; the collapse of the Tay Bridge; an avalanche in the Simplon. More ominously, the paradox of a modernist technology co-opted to attack modernism became, in the hands of its most adroit practitioners, no longer so paradoxical.

The vocabulary is difficult, the references arcane, the phrasing musical, the argument complex. It may take more than a single reading to parse it. From this passage, Schama moves, in brilliant spurts, to D. W. Griffith, Leni Riefenstahl, and, finally, the topic at hand: the spread of anti-Semitic propaganda on the Web.

It is Schama’s saving grace as a writer and a polemicist that he is aware of his own self-indulgences. In a vivid essay on the seminars of the English historian J. H. Plumb, one of his teachers at Cambridge, he affects a third-person detachment: “Schama, as usual, depended overmuch on adjectival overload and overwrought atmospherics to conceal the shakiness of his hypotheses.” He adds, parenthetically, as though to inoculate himself against a critical scolding: “*Plus ça change.*”

The glory of rhetorical excess is precisely the subject of a 2008 London Library Lecture titled “Gothic Language: Carlyle, Ruskin,

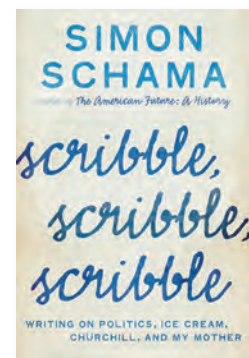
and the Morality of Exuberance.” Ruskin, an admirer of the artist J. M. W. Turner, “writes exactly as he supposes Turner must paint; with a kind of gorgeously incontinent abandon,” Schama tells us. Thus, Ruskin’s commentary on a Turner seascape involves “the impassioned conductor controlling the orchestra of alliteration, assonance, allusion, sudden metaphor, the words and the water they describe rolling over each other.” To borrow a Schama metaphor, we are in a world of Chinese boxes, with the divide between subject and writer continually collapsing.

Schama describes *Scribble, Scribble, Scribble* as “a salmagundi — a thing of various tastes and textures.” Many of the shortest, most direct pieces were written for the *Guardian*. These include Schama’s pointed, if unsurprising, takes on post-9/11 and post-Katrina America, in which his admiration for the generosity of the populace butts up against his anger at governmental missteps.

In the territory of art history, Schama is especially sure-footed. He ably defends the spirituality and profundity of the 17th-century Dutch masters from Ruskin and other antagonists: “What seems to be the most straightforward visual culture turns out to be a Chinese puzzle; an endless enquiry into the observation and representation of seen things and people.” His paeans to the contemporary German painter Anselm Kiefer stir admiration for Kiefer’s achievements as both a formal innovator and a commentator on the crimes of Nazi Germany. And in a *New Yorker* piece titled “Rembrandt’s Ghost,” Schama provocatively traces Picasso’s debt to the 17th-century portraitist. “It was,” he writes, “an unlikely pairing — the cerebral modernist who had made a point of expelling sentiment from painting going wistful over the master whose every brush mark was loaded with emotion.”

Readers perusing the collection, which also embraces appreciations of Martin Scorsese, Charlotte Rampling, Winston Churchill, Washington, D.C., and spaghetti Bolognese, will no doubt find personal favorites. Mine, titled “TBM and John,” is Schama’s tribute to both historian John Clive and the idea of biography as an intimate communion between subject and biographer. Thanks to Schama, I now know that Clive, my British-history professor at Harvard, was born Hans Kleyff, a Berlin Jew, and fled with his family to England before the Holocaust.

Schama’s description of his first meeting with Clive, who would become a close friend, is particularly engaging. Expecting Clive, from his famous biography, *Macauley: The Shaping of the*



Historian, to be “an understated, impeccably turned-out Harvard professor” with a sense of humor that was “gentle and loftily Jamesian,” Schama was bowled over by their first encounter:

John knocked (or rather pounded) on the doors of my rooms . . . , tripped over the door-sill and fell spread-eagled on my couch. After we had exchanged flustered apologies, it took about five minutes and a cup of tea (which John drank as if it were a famous vintage, enquiring after brand, store of origin, length of brew) for me to see how spectacularly wrong I had been. . . .

His speech moved from embarrassed stammering to flights of eloquence, the sentences broken with puns and rhymes and even snatches of song performed with exaggerated operatic trills. . . . At the delicious prospect of routing a common enemy, he would smack a fist into his palm with boyish exultation.

This is almost — not quite — better than actually being there.

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

Toiling in the Toy Department // By Alex Beam

An Accidental Sportswriter

By Robert Lipsyte (HarperCollins, 256 pages, \$25.99)

Robert Lipsyte’s path to sportswriting was indeed a happy accident. Queens-bred, hard up for summer cash, possessor of a not-exactly door-opening degree in English literature, Lipsyte got a job as a copy-

boy at the *New York Times* in 1957. As he explains in his new memoir, *An Accidental Sportswriter*, he became a peon among “the invisible line of Rhodes Scholars, Fulbright Scholars, and PhD candidates waiting for a job.” Lipsyte liked the crusty, ink-stained curmudgeons who sent typewritten stories whooshing through pneumatic tubes to the composing room. But he hated the job, and aimed for the higher reaches of the word-slinging trade by enrolling at Columbia’s journalism school.

By chance, a slightly better job opened up in sports. The rest is history, with a small *h*. Lipsyte ’57CC, ’59JRN ended up working at the *Times*, mostly as a columnist, off and on for almost a quarter century.

By his own account, young Lipsyte was “lippy,” talented, and the kind of nonsport sports writer that the *Times* was looking for in the late 1950s and 1960s. The incumbents — Arthur Daley, Dave Anderson, even the storied Red Smith — always struck me as a passionless lot: tweedy op-ed wheezers rusticated to a part of the paper known in the business as the toy department. Lipsyte is a honey of a writer, and won the columnist’s mantle, it seems clear, to draw readers back to vigorous and opinionated sportswriting.

He’s funny and irreverent, a nice one-two jab. Here is his coy aside about the boxing stories of A. J. Liebling ’25JRN, now enjoying a modest reputational rebound in smart society: “It would be

some time before I began to figure out why so many of the boxing trainers and cornermen who seemed all but mute to me were masters of aphorism for him,” writes Lipsyte after a few months on the boxing beat. “Liebling was a superb writer.”

We read of brushes with Rupert Murdoch and with David Berkowitz, the “Son of Sam” serial killer. In 1977, Lipsyte was serving time at Murdoch’s *New York Post*, where the word came down that “the Boss wants you to lose those poofter boots.” “Aussie homophobic bully!” was Lipsyte’s reaction and, no, he didn’t ditch his Italian suede shoes. On the next page, when Lipsyte met Berkowitz, being held for psychiatric evaluation, the suspect “smiled, relaxed, told me he did have the power to send destructive forces into my home but would not.”

Lipsyte is a different kind of cat who is attracted to like-striped felines. He returns perhaps too often to his outsider status in the world of Jock Culture. He eschews the “lodge brothers” of the sportswriting fraternity, who see their task as “goddung up” the heroes of the

Robert Lipsyte covering a boxing match at Shea Stadium in 1967.



COURTESY BARTON SILVERMAN



age. (Lipsyte on golf writers: “What a crew of house pets!”) “English major” is a broad metaphor for the kind of people not welcome in the sports scribbling fraternity. Or “puke.” That is what Columbia crew coach Bill Stowe called “anyone in 1968 who wasn’t on his boat, which included hippies, pot smokers, antiwar demonstrators, bearded weirdos, guitar players and, yes, English majors.”

“Sort of puke-ish, I am,” Lipsyte confesses.

He seeks out unusual assignments and champions the men and women he relates to. The first of his 20-odd books is *Nigger*, coauthored with comedian-activist Dick Gregory. Lipsyte was present at the creation of Muhammad Ali, and sticks with The Champ through fat times and thin, generally admiring, never worshipful. He loves Billie Jean King, whom he calls “the most important sports figure of the 20th century,” and he devotes a chapter of this book to the travails of the few professional athletes who have come out as gay, and to the generally chilly reception they received.

Lipsyte likes to pass judgment on people, and doesn’t spare himself or conceal the jagged edges of a tough life. He’s gone three rounds with cancer, and has been married four times. He doesn’t dodge unpleasant truths. For instance, he was the rare sports-writer to note that Mickey Mantle had jumped to the head of the

liver-transplant line, even though the ailing ballplayer was a poor candidate for the surgery, and died soon after.

That transgression, and others, catches the attention of “the ultimate lodge brother of our time,” the frictionless Bob Costas, who seeks out Lipsyte for a heart-to-heart conversation. “I was flattered that he had taken the time to mentor me — he was 14 years younger — but irritated by his presumption,” Lipsyte writes.

Costas has a useful message for him: Enjoy. Yes, it’s true that sports “has lost almost all its moral cachet,” in Lipsyte’s bitter phrase. But there is real beauty in the sporting life, and Costas worries that Lipsyte, whom he admires, is willfully blinding himself to moments of epiphany. “I wanted you to be less corrosive; skeptical, not cynical,” Costas says.

There is some truth to what Costas says. There are moments, for instance, when Lipsyte is flagellating himself for not reporting more aggressively on the blight of steroids in sports, when I want to say, “Relax, Robert. Let the world turn without you tonight. You’re talented, you’re a mensch, and you’re alive. You are the happy accident.”

Alex Beam is a columnist at the Boston Globe and the author of A Great Idea at The Time: The Rise, Fall, and Curious Afterlife of the Great Books.

Soldier, Spy // By Phillip Knightley

Wild Bill Donovan: The Spymaster Who Created the OSS and Modern American Espionage

By Douglas Waller (Free Press, 480 pages, \$30)

When the U.S. intelligence community celebrated the CIA’s role in the successful May 1 mission to kill Bin Laden, did any of its officers raise a toast to “Wild Bill” Donovan the father of modern-American covert action and head of the Office of Strategic Services during World War II?

The mission was exactly the sort of operation Donovan would have planned: daring, dangerous, and with an unpredictable outcome. It exemplified his belief, one that is a quintessential part of the American psyche, that nothing is impossible if you put your mind to it, and that a few determined men — a band of brothers, if you like — using improvised methods can achieve better results than any orthodox hierarchy.

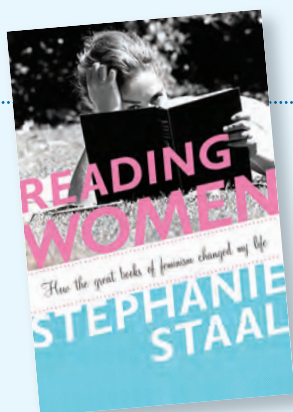
William Joseph Donovan, the son of Irish immigrants, was born in Buffalo in 1883. He graduated from Columbia College in 1905 and from the law school in 1908. (Franklin Delano Roosevelt was a classmate.) He then married money: His wife, Ruth, was the daughter of a Buffalo real-estate millionaire.

In 1917 he joined the 69th “Irish” Regiment of New York City and fought as part of the American Expeditionary Force in France,

where he won the admiration of his men. They nicknamed him Wild Bill because he never asked them to do anything he would not do himself.

Donovan traveled extensively during the interwar period, working covertly for the U.S. Military Intelligence Service. Although Donovan was a Republican, Roosevelt sent him to London in 1940 to assess Britain’s chances of surviving the war against Germany. There he fell under the influence of the head of Britain’s secret intelligence service, Stewart Menzies, who tried to use him in the campaign to bring the United States into the war.

In July 1941, Roosevelt appointed Donovan coordinator of information, a euphemism for chief of a service charged with spying, spy catching, and sabotage. Renamed the OSS and financed initially from the president’s secret funds, it grew exponentially; soon Donovan had 600 people working for him. Building a bureaucratic empire like this made him enemies, most significantly the head of the FBI, J. Edgar Hoover, who had wanted Donovan’s job for himself. As a result, Donovan spent almost as much time



Fem Text Redux

The book: *Reading Women: How the Great Books of Feminism Changed My Life* (PublicAffairs)

The author: Stephanie Staal '93BC, '98JRN

A decade after graduating from college, lawyer and former reporter Stephanie Staal '93BC, '98JRN set out to revisit her former feminist self by returning to the movement's foundational texts — and to Barnard.

Columbia Magazine: In *Reading Women* you say that when you reentered the classroom at age 33, you felt “like a starving woman who had stumbled onto a feast.” Why did you return to Barnard?

Stephanie Staal: After years of life in New York City, working as a writer and being stuffed into a tiny one-bedroom apartment, I found myself married with a baby, living in a big Victorian in conservative Annapolis, Maryland. I would pace around the house, overtired, and feeling like there was no way out. One day in a bookstore I came across Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*, which I had written papers on as a student. Rereading it was an intellectual “Aha!” moment. I had a new connection to this book. This experience opened me up to the idea of returning to school.

CM: What was Feminist Texts like when you first took the class as an undergraduate?

SS: When I was in college, there was a sense of change in the air, with Clinton's election, the Clarence Thomas hearings, and the publication of *Backlash*, Susan Faludi's book. There was a real fire in the women's studies classes, and it was exciting. Back then, these classes attracted women already committed to the cause and everyone was in lockstep, with not much tolerance for varying opinions.

CM: How did the students differ in 2004?

SS: When I returned, that kind of energized climate was no longer there, and at

times I felt a little frustrated. On the other hand, I found it refreshing that many took the class simply because they were curious, not women's studies majors. Most of the students were overwhelmed with the idea of the work and family balance. They felt as if they didn't know how to negotiate that territory. Most assumed it wasn't possible to do both, and this was a big change from when I was an undergrad.

CM: You reread a canon ranging from Mary Wollstonecraft to Simone de Beauvoir to Katie Roiphe. In your book you say you felt the writers were “passing their strength on to you.” How so?

SS: As an undergraduate, I had looked at these books as historical documents. The second time, I had a different connection to them in my new roles of wife and mother. Going back was an attempt to find community — not necessarily with the students, but with the writers and characters of these books.

CM: You were invigorated, but also unsettled. Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* depicts a stifling marriage, and you felt that way about yours at the time. You also point out that the husband in Charlotte Perkins Gilman's “The Yellow Wallpaper,” from 1899, had the same name as your husband, and you felt that was prophetic.

SS: Reading these two books in particular was interesting because my husband and I were both unhappy. I come from a family of divorce — this was the topic of my first book — so I've always had a conflicted relationship with marriage. The books provided great perspective. I started to see what I had in my husband: We were friends, we could talk, we shared a lot. I realized he

was dealing with cultural stereotypes, too. He also worked from home for the flexibility to have time with our daughter, and people questioned him for not taking the traditional path. After I started classes, we moved back to New York City. That felt like coming home, coming back to ourselves, which certainly helped.

CM: Some books fell flat for you the second time around, while others sparked new responses.

SS: You may reread a book that once had a great impact on you and not agree as much as you once did, but through this rereading you are ultimately learning about yourself. I identified with a lot of the women from the pre-1950s books because they talked about domestic life in a different way. It truly is remarkable what they had achieved, given how constrained they were. This made me reevaluate my own obstacles. I felt as if I really needed to pull myself together.

CM: You talk about holding the same book you held as an undergraduate and feeling unmoored in time and place. What is it about books that allows this magic to happen?

SS: *Reading Women* is about the act of rereading, the transformative power of books. I like to think of each book as a room. In this room are all the decorations of a certain era from when you first read that book. You can go to this room and meet different versions of yourself and have a conversation. Rereading offered a way to reconnect with the person I once was — not to wholeheartedly embrace her, but to realize how much I've grown.

— Kelly McMasters '05SOA

fighting ferocious battles with other departments in Washington as he did with the enemy.

Donovan's life has been covered extensively in earlier biographies, but Douglas Waller, author of *Wild Bill Donovan: The Spymaster Who Created the OSS and Modern American Espionage*, warns us that they have to be read with caution. One was commissioned by Donovan's family; another relied too heavily on the reminiscences of friends and colleagues; and a third was written by British author Anthony Cave Brown, who was subsidized by Donovan's own law firm and, more significantly, had a tendency to make things up. So it is important to say early on that Waller can be praised for his exhaustive research, meticulous accuracy, painstaking interviews, and an admirable scholarly attitude toward his subject. As far as the facts about Donovan's life are concerned, this is the definitive biography. But having achieved this difficult task, Waller does not seem too sure what to make of the man.

He decides that Donovan was a terrible judge of human beings, that the OSS made horrible mistakes and had disastrous operations, that Donovan's vision of covert warfare replacing conventional operations was illusory, that the OSS was not the key to winning the war and that it did not even shorten the war appreciably, and that the intelligence the OSS produced never matched the value of Ultra signal intercepts in Europe and Magic in the Pacific.

Nevertheless, Waller praises Donovan as a remarkable leader, one of creativity, personal courage, daring, vision, and unconventional thinking. He gives Donovan credit for his bravery not only on the battlefield, but also in facing a series of family tragedies. His much-loved elder daughter, Patricia, was killed in a car accident. His four-year-old granddaughter Sheilah accidentally drank silver polish and died almost immediately. Her mother, Mary, Donovan's daughter-in-law, died from an overdose of barbiturates and alcohol.

But it is Donovan's public legacy that concerns us here, and Waller concludes that even if the OSS did not survive after the war — President Truman disbanded it in September 1945, mainly for financial reasons — Donovan's ideas survived in the policies of former OSS officers who later became directors of the CIA. So in deciding Donovan's legacy, the crucial question becomes: Was this a good thing?

If we take a yardstick and measure how well the CIA performed in its principal task of predicting Soviet moves during the Cold War, we have to conclude it did no better than America's many think tanks. It never succeeded in its main objective of penetrating the Kremlin. It failed to predict the first Soviet atom bombs. It failed to predict the North Korean and Chinese invasions of Korea. It failed to predict Fidel Castro's victory and subsequent placing of Soviet missiles in Cuba. It never imagined that Saddam Hussein would invade Kuwait. Even though terrorists had attempted to blow up the World Trade Center once before, the CIA was caught by surprise on September 11, 2001. Above all, while ordinary Western tourists to Moscow could see that something strange was going on in the 1990s, the CIA failed to even imagine the collapse of Soviet communism and the end of the Cold War.

I would like Waller to have considered whether Donovan, like many a spy before and after him, was a fantasist. He saw himself, above all, as a man of action and had always longed to lead large bodies of men into mortal combat. Since that was not to be, he devoted his energies to the OSS, a miniature army of inspired amateurs, and offered them a chance to live out their fantasies.

Lots of adventurous young Americans found with Donovan a chance to develop those qualities that, unfortunately, seemed to be best stimulated by war: initiative, enterprise, daring, and self-reliance. Since many of these men went on to careers at universities, a link was established between academia and American intelligence that persists to this day.

The flaw in Donovan's organization was that it did not limit itself to the collection of intelligence, but mounted covert operations as well. The British were careful to avoid this dual role, so when the war ended they were able to close down Special Operations Executive but leave their traditional intelligence-gathering service, MI6, intact. Because of the way Donovan had structured the OSS, Truman's dissolution order in 1945 virtually wiped out both functions of the OSS.

Then followed the campaign that ran between 1945 and 1947 to create a peacetime intelligence agency using the OSS as a model. This made it inevitable that intelligence also included covert action, which meant intervention in the affairs of countries with which the United States was not at war.

This reach has endowed the CIA with enormous power. The influence of the CIA on presidential decision making has been such that it is sometimes difficult to see whether the president is running the CIA or the CIA is running the president. It is probably going too far to blame Donovan for this, but I feel he must share some responsibility.

Donovan's final years were miserable. Although the new CIA closely resembled the proposal he initially brought to Roosevelt, Truman did not even consider him for the post of director. He was offered only the chairmanship of an inconsequential committee studying the nation's firefighting departments. He took the job of U.S. ambassador to Thailand, but when his appointment ended he annoyed President Eisenhower by accepting a post as a lobbyist for the Thai government and collecting a \$50,000 fee.

He was admitted to the Walter Reed Army Medical Center in September 1957, suffering from arteriosclerotic atrophy of the brain, a form of dementia, and died in February 1959. Hoover, typically, started a rumor that the legendary "Father of American Intelligence" had died of syphilis.

Phillip Knightley is the author of The Second Oldest Profession: Spies and Spying in the Twentieth Century. He lives in London.



She Did It Her Way // By Stacey Kors

No Regrets: The Life of Edith Piaf

By Carolyn Burke (Knopf, 304 pages, \$27.95)

"I am not a *chanteuse réaliste*!" insisted Edith Piaf to an interviewer in 1943. It must have seemed like a shocking statement. Over the previous eight years, Piaf had become the foremost interpreter of this uniquely French song genre, filled with sordid stories of thugs, prostitutes, and tragic liaisons. Piaf, though, longed to sing sweeter refrains "that touch the hearts of those who hear them . . . men and women who are pure enough to be moved by love stories."

Not only did she believe that French audiences, especially in the midst of the German occupation, wanted more romantic fare, but it was also what she yearned for herself. For Piaf, the *réaliste* repertoire was a regular reminder of her sketchy beginnings on the rough Parisian streets.

No Regrets: The Life of Edith Piaf, an engaging, comprehensive new biography by Carolyn Burke '71GSAS, offers a vivid and revelatory account of the tragedienne's turbulent life, depicting a fiercely determined, surprisingly reflective woman who strove ceaselessly, though not always successfully, to improve herself and transcend her troubled past.

Abandoned by her mother at three, Edith grew up with her loving but feckless father, Louis Gassion, a transient circus performer, until setting out on her own at 19. Working as a street singer, she was performing "Comme un moineau" ("Like a Sparrow"), a harrowing tale about a prostitute who lives in the gutter, to passersby near the Arc de Triomphe, when she caught the ear of nightclub owner Louis Leplée. Struck by the raw potency of Edith's untrained voice, Leplée immediately engaged her for his club, and christened her "Piaf," Paris slang for sparrow.

Aside from her surname, Piaf changed little on her way from street to stage. Waifish and unglamorous, wearing a plain black dress and worn stockings, the diminutive, heavy-lidded chanteuse would stand stock still on the nightclub stage, arms cemented to her side, and let loose a powerful, heart-wrenching vibrato, jolting and then mesmerizing audiences with her confessional-sounding songs about life, love, and loss, tales she understood only too well. Maurice Chevalier, seeing her at Leplée's club, exclaimed, "That kid sings from the guts." Piaf was far from the first to embrace the *réaliste* repertoire; but when the Little Sparrow warbled, these songs became hers.

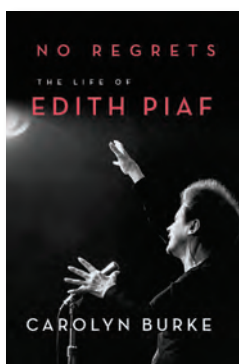
Numerous biographies of Piaf have been published over the years, many of them playing up the sensational side of her life, notably her countless, tumultuous affairs, which seemed to define

her almost as much as did her singing. (In her memoirs, Piaf admitted to having "a desperate, almost morbid, need to be loved.") Often, the sources for such scandalous information were self-serving and unreliable hangers-on.

In *No Regrets*, Burke, who earned her PhD in English and comparative literature at Columbia and has written biographies of photographer Lee Miller and poet Mina Loy, tries to go beyond the myth. Avoiding the subjectivity and speculation of some earlier portrayals, Burke maintains a comparatively neutral voice. When she allows herself to break into the narrative, it's mainly through careful supposition for the sake of plot progression: wondering, where no source material exists, how the singer might have reacted in particular situations, as one might do with a deceased loved one.

Burke doesn't neglect Piaf's infamous side, bringing us along to all-night parties and impulsive romances; but she also shows Piaf to be an artist who practiced ceaselessly and worked closely with composers and lyricists, exploring increasingly emotional subtleties in her repertoire. Though this was uncommon for singers at the time, Piaf also began writing her own lyrics, including her popular and defining "La Vie en Rose" from 1946.

Piaf was also exacting with the young singers she mentored — including, most famously, Yves Montand — even as she invariably became romantically involved with them. She worked them hard, coaching them in technique, building a repertoire of new



Edith Piaf meets with students at Columbia's Maison Française in 1947.

songs from her composer friends, and enabling them to join her at France's most popular nightclubs.

Burke draws on the singer's extensive correspondence with Jacques Borgeat — a minor literary figure who met and befriended her at Leplée's club — recently made available by France's Bibliothèque nationale. This material also enables Burke to clarify Piaf's involvement with the Resistance. Though she never cared much for politics, Piaf helped to hide Jewish colleagues during the occupation, sometimes defiantly singing their banned songs, and used her notoriety to aid French prisoners, secretly distributing false identity cards and maps during an 11-stalag tour of Germany.

Piaf was plagued in her final years by addictions to alcohol, painkillers, and other medications that, combined with her force

of will, propped her up sufficiently to continue performing through her many illnesses. "If I can't keep singing," she told one of her doctors, "I'll never be able to believe in myself."

During her final large-scale tour in 1959, Piaf sometimes forgot the lyrics to her songs and often couldn't complete her set. She finally collapsed near the end of what the press called her "suicide tour." When she died in 1963 at the age of 47, more than 40,000 mourners accompanied the cortege to Père Lachaise Cemetery, seizing up traffic across the city for the first time since World War II.

Half a century after her death, Piaf remains for Burke "a soul who gave of herself until there was nothing left but her voice and the echo of her laughter."

And a Dollar Short // By Dan Kennedy

Bad News: How America's Business Press Missed the Story of the Century

Edited by Anya Schiffrin (The New Press, 240 pages, \$24.95)

This April, the Pulitzer Prize for National Reporting was awarded to Jesse Eisinger '92CC and Jake Bernstein of the nonprofit news organization ProPublica for exposing the exotic financial instruments that led to the most serious economic crisis since the 1930s. It was good and important work. And it's no knock on ProPublica to wish such reporting had come years earlier. At such a late date, though, this wasn't even "shooting the wounded," as the old phrase has it. This was digging up the corpses to make sure they were still dead, then displaying their fetid, rotting carcasses in the village square.

Could journalism have done more to prevent the Great Recession rather than just explain it after the fact? Could the press have stopped the plague of mortgage-backed securities, collateralized debt obligations, and no-income, no-asset loans?

Those questions animate *Bad News: How America's Business Press Missed the Story of the Century*. Edited by Anya Schiffrin '00JRN, the director of the International Media, Advocacy, and Communications program at Columbia's School of International and Public Affairs, the book draws on — among other things — a 2010 conference at Columbia and work published in the *Columbia Journalism Review* (CJR).

The provocative subtitle notwithstanding, the authors represented in *Bad News* do not uniformly agree that the business press missed the story. Even Dean Starkman '84JRN, perhaps the most withering critic, writes that the press's responsibility for the financial collapse is a lot closer to zero percent than 100 percent. Yet most of the authors indulge in the idealistic and perhaps naive

view that the media should have done more, and that if they had, then at least some of the damage could have been forestalled.

Dueling essays by Starkman and Chris Roush, founding director of the Carolina Business News Initiative at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, form the heart of *Bad News*. Starkman presents the results of a study he conducted for the CJR showing that in the early part of the last decade, when federal authorities were investigating predatory lenders, the media responded with tough coverage. But "sometime after 2003, as federal regulation folded like a cheap suitcase," Starkman writes, "the business press institutionally lost whatever taste it had for head-on investigations of core practices of powerful institutions." Rather than exposing malfeasance, Starkman adds, journalists gave us gooey features about such soon-to-be-infamous companies as Bear Stearns and Countrywide Financial, and consumer-oriented reporting on the looming housing bubble. The latter were of some value, he says, but fell well short of the investigative work needed to expose the dangerous and criminal practices inflating that bubble.

Roush, by contrast, looks back at the past decade of business journalism as an unalloyed triumph — an era that "produced more first-rate business journalism than any other decade since the creation of mass communications." The problem, he argues, is that "the average consumer has not wanted to understand what the business media were telling them or simply chose to ignore the warning signs." And he offers numerous examples of good and better-than-good journalism exposing the underlying causes of what would later become a full-blown crisis.

My sense is that both men are right, and both are wrong. Starkman correctly points out that the press was at its toughest when it was able to cover government investigations. But I disagree with the conclusion he draws — that the press, as an institution, should have been able to keep the pressure on after the government lost interest. In fact, without the day-to-day drumbeat of coverage made possible by official action, the media can only produce occasional enterprise stories that, no matter how good, tend to be treated as one-offs, with little lasting effect. That's true even



if those one-offs appear on the front page of the *New York Times* or the *Wall Street Journal*. As investigative reporter Seymour Hersh said at a 2003 panel discussion, “What makes stories possible is ‘Senator So-and-So says this and that.’” The media do not operate in a vacuum.

Meanwhile, Roush is right to point out the good work the media regularly produced in the years running up to the collapse. But he loses me when he writes, “Isn’t it the job of a journalist to present

both sides of a story and to let the public — whether it’s investors, regulators, or consumers — decide what they want to believe?” Leaving aside his binary view of a complex story (“both sides”?), I would argue that it’s the journalist’s duty to uncover the truth, not to “present both sides” and let the poor, befuddled citizen figure it out.

“It’s . . . not enough,” Robert H. Giles ’56JRN and Barry Sussman write in the closing essay, “for news organizations to hobble themselves with a self-imposed fairness doctrine that gives space and time to disinformation.” But Roush is absolutely right that bad journalism always exists alongside the good. There was only so much effect that a well-honed, cautionary story in the *Wall Street Journal* could have in the era of CNBC and *Squawk Box*.

Fascinating though the Starkman-Roush debate may be, it is the wider-ranging essays that give *Bad News* its value. Both Schiffrin

and Nobel Prize-winning Columbia economist Joseph Stiglitz point out that business reporters, no less than other reporters, depend on sources whose agendas may not be in the public interest. Stiglitz offers the toxic example of bond traders who inveigh against government deficits, and who would in fact benefit personally from the lower inflation and lower interest rates that smaller deficits would bring — a conflict that is rarely disclosed.

Ryan Chittum reminds us that journalists were called upon to cover the unfolding crisis at the very moment that the newspaper business was entering a steep decline. Peter S. Goodman emphasizes a fact we don’t hear nearly often enough: that the rampant borrowing of the past decade was triggered by the stagnant incomes of the middle class. Supporters of public media will be chilled by an account, written by Steve Schifferes ’94JRN, of calls for an investigation into the BBC, whose tough reporting was blamed by some — including media competitors, government officials, and financial houses — for helping to trigger the 2008 British banking collapse. It was, in some ways, a preview of the American Right’s attack on NPR, though on a much larger scale, given the BBC’s outsize role in British journalism.

Did America’s business press miss the story of the century? The evidence in *Bad News* suggests that the answer is no. The problem was that the hollowness at the core of the housing market, though well reported, never became the consensus view, never got the sort of repetition on the network newscasts, on the cable news shows, on talk radio, and elsewhere that would have been needed to make a real difference.

That’s not a shortcoming of journalism so much as a commentary on human nature. Too many of us wanted to believe, and we did until it was too late.

Dan Kennedy is an assistant professor of journalism at Northeastern University in Boston and a commentator on media issues for WGBH-TV in Boston and for the Guardian (UK). His blog, Media Nation, is online at www.dankennedy.net.

Against Interpretation // By Kelly McMasters

Sempre Susan: A Memoir of Susan Sontag
By Sigrid Nunez (Atlas & Co., 144 pages, \$20)

How do you write about a cultural icon — an icon who was also your boss, your boyfriend’s mother, and your roommate, all at the same time? This is the challenge that novelist Sigrid Nunez ’75SOA sets up for herself in *Sempre Susan: A Memoir of Susan Sontag*. Even

those who’ve never read a word of Sontag’s writing will know about her mighty intellect, her charged sex appeal, and that striking skunk stripe that ran through her hair. But few will know the Sontag shown in these pages.



Susan Sontag and her son, David Rieff, in 1976.

In 1976, Sontag, who had taught in Columbia's Religion Department from 1960 to 1964, was recovering from breast cancer and a mastectomy and needed help with correspondence. Nunez was 25, a year out of Columbia's MFA program, and was working at the *New York Review of Books*. An editor told her that Sontag, one of the paper's contributing editors, was looking for an assistant, so Nunez was dispatched to Sontag's large and light-filled penthouse apartment on Riverside Drive at 106th.

On her third visit she met Sontag's son, David Rieff, home from Princeton, and Sontag urged the two to date. Within a few months Nunez moved into Rieff's bedroom, and Sontag gave her a private study for her work and the promise of a mentor-student relationship. It's easy to see why Nunez would accept the proposal, although soon the three were living together in a strange ménage à trois of the mind, both women battling for Rieff's attention when he was there and finding an odd camaraderie when he wasn't.

The Sontag who emerges from Nunez's pen is brilliant and intimidating, needy and self-absorbed, arresting and horrific. Nunez makes allowances for the fact that the 43-year-old woman was recovering from cancer, getting over a broken love affair, and feeling lonely. But Nunez is skewering when it comes to Sontag's relationship with Rieff. Contrary to Sontag's claims in conversa-

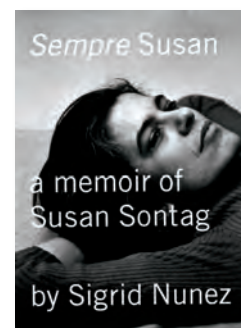
tion with Nunez and others of being a superb mother, Nunez lets her hang herself with her own words: "When I was writing the last pages of *The Benefactor*, I didn't eat or sleep or change clothes for days. At the very end, I couldn't even stop to light my own cigarettes. I had David stand by and light them for me while I kept typing." Nunez quickly reminds us, "When she was writing the last pages of *The Benefactor*, it was 1962, and David was 10."

Sontag is desperate for Rieff to stay on at the apartment, and it becomes painfully clear that Nunez is simply one part of the overbearing and intrusive mother's plan to keep her only son close. If Rieff wants to learn to ride a motorcycle or play tennis, Sontag wants to be his partner. "She referred to the three of us as the duke and duchess and duckling of Riverside Drive," Nunez writes. "I knew that wasn't good." Nunez eventually moves out; the relationship with Rieff "staggered on for another year and a half" but finally ended, too. Years later, a friend of Sontag's reminisced, "Of course, from the day you moved in with them, we all just looked on in *horror*."

Much of the book is devoted to drawing a portrait of the strange allure that made it possible for Sontag to coax Nunez in. As a protégé, Nunez doesn't find beauty in Sontag's writing, but she is inspired by her fierce intelligence and seriousness. Nunez shows Sontag as a frustrated writer, who often feels passed over for literary laurels. "For most of her life, she felt, her work had not been fairly rewarded. She had no real financial security until she was well into her 50s," Nunez writes. This novice seems to have spent much of her time with Sontag scrutinizing what it means to be a female writer, lessons ultimately more valuable to her than those of craft. There is an awe that pulses through most of the book, tinged with a surprising amount of sympathy for the woman who told Nunez she "had no patience for victims who couldn't take care of themselves."

Sempre Susan, born out of an essay, tapers into loosely connected vignettes to unsettling effect, mirroring Sontag and Nunez's friendship in later years. In memoir, story is used to illuminate the self; Nunez chronicles, remembers, reflects, but ultimately drifts off the page, and it is Sontag who is illuminated. The result is a sensation that wildly echoes the unbalanced relationship drawn between these two women. Just as she was on Riverside Drive, Nunez is ultimately eclipsed, even in her own memoir.

Kelly McMasters teaches the writing seminar *More Than Memoir at the School of the Arts*. Her book *Welcome to Shirley: A Memoir from an Atomic Town* is currently being made into a documentary film.



Continued from page 5

have political supremacy. In saving space, the editors missed a point of considerable importance to the legitimate claims of the Jewish people to settlement in the land of Western Palestine. (Jordan, being part of the British Mandate until 1946, is Eastern Palestine and the Palestinian Arab state.) All the language of the Balfour Declaration quoted above was adopted word for word in the preamble of the mandate itself.

Edward M. Siegel '55CC
'57GSAS '60LAW
New York, NY

ROCKY ROADS

Robert Dallek's *The Lost Peace* ("Roads Not Taken," Spring 2011) may suffer from the same misreading of history that it purports to expose. Dallek believes the creation of a "Jewish state in Europe" might have been preferable to the Jews' reclamation of their ancient homeland in Israel. Really? Are we to believe that the thousand-year-old tradition of European anti-Semitism would have thus magically disappeared? That an arbitrarily created Jewish nation in "the Rhineland" would not have created additional discord and hostility toward the Jewish survivors of the Holocaust?

Let's get real. The landmass of today's State of Israel in the context of the Muslim world is equivalent to the size of a matchbook sitting on a conference table. Instead of using the game of "what if" to fantasize about a Jewish-free Middle East, let us ask ourselves: What if the Arabs had joined Israel in accepting the original UN Partition Plan of 1947 — which would have created a Palestinian state — instead of rejecting the plan and declaring war on Israel at its inception?

Charles Markowitz '82CC
Lakewood, NJ

THE RECORDING ANGEL

Thank you for the review of *Alan Lomax: The Man Who Recorded the World* ("The

World in a Jug," Spring 2011). I'd never heard of Lomax until my music humanities class, but he instantly became one of my heroes. Perhaps this was because I grew up in the rural South and, though I fell in love with New York, I was overjoyed that someone had captured the music that was part of my roots. This book is now on my must-read list.

Bill Hudgins '72CC
Gallatin, TN

HITTING THE SAUCE

I read the Spring issue with interest and had to make a couple of comments about Stacey Kors's "BookTalk" interview with John Mariani, the author of *How Italian Food Conquered the World* ("Venni, vidi, ora mangiate!").

I am a New Yorker who has lived in Italy off and on since 1986. I now serve the parish of Fornelli in the province of Isernia and live in a rural village in the hills, where I work 700 square meters of hillside turf. I am in the middle of doing an Italian translation of a screenplay written in English for a never-completed film project on the six men hanged in a reprisal by the Nazis in Fornelli in 1943, so I had to ask around about agricultural customs and food supplies during the war to correct some of the gaffes in the screenplay. This led me to dig around in the history of Italian agriculture, cuisine, and the history of immigration.

Regarding Mariani's claim about the unavailability of olive oil: My uncle Paul Pellino used to import olive oil from Italy by ship in the 1950s for his store in the Bronx, so if you wanted it, you could definitely find it. You did not need DHL or FedEx. Maybe for truffles, mozzarella di bufala, and porcini . . . not for olive oil.

As for the use of the tomato: The tomato comes from Latin America and was thought to be either an aphrodisiac or poisonous until the 1820s. So there was no tomato sauce anywhere until some time after that. You can check in on Neapolitan cuisine by going to the Metropolitan Museum of Art and

examining the magnificent presepio figures in their collection: The ones from the 1700s do not have tomato sauce on the spaghetti; the ones from the middle of the 1800s do.

As for Mariani's claim that what is going on today in Italy is not as innovative as the hybridizations he prefers in New York and San Francisco, well, *de gustibus* . . . However, during my recent trip south of the Molise, I was impressed with the results obtained in the agriturismo sector, in which traditional and regional styles of food preparation are being brought to new levels of perfection and interest.

Frankly, the real significance of Italian cuisine is its traditional and regional character, and not its supposed "conquest" of the world. The Italian cuisine that Mariani admires may only be the latest incarnation of the Italian American family restaurants that fed dockworkers and garment workers in New York, fishermen and lumberjacks in Northern California, and politicians and business tycoons in Chicago and San Francisco in the late 1800s. It is good to know, in any case, that the culinary vocabulary of Italy has entered the restaurant vocabulary of those who can still afford to travel the world. But do come to the Mezzogiorno and discover a different kind of innovation, something more satisfying in the eating and in the reminiscing.

Francis Tiso '89GSAS
Isernia, Italy

For more on the history of the tomato and Italian cooking, please see Tiso's complete letter at magazine.columbia.edu.

RETHINKIN' LINCOLN

If the Obama-bashing letters ("Letters," Spring 2011) commenting on the Lincoln Mitchell article ("A Midterm Examination," Winter 2010–11) are representative of more than a Tea Party-sized fringe, then I am ashamed of my fellow alumni.

While it is possible to dispute the details of Obama's economic strategy, his general approach is classically Keynesian and has been strictly mainstream since the 1930s (and I do hold a degree in economics). Even

if Tea Party folks are primarily interested in fiscal issues, as Gordon White writes, that does not mitigate the gross errors in their economic analysis or their down-right lunacy in other areas — especially in respect to “birther” theory.

David M. Hoffman '61LAW
Summit, NJ

The torrents of criticism against Lincoln Mitchell in your Spring letters section should not go unanswered.

The thrust of readers' complaints was that Mitchell's piece on the midterm elections was partisan, that it reflected a one-sidedly liberal or Democratic perspective. Those complaints, I think, reflect the common assumption that fair-minded writing about our partisan politics needs to be “balanced,” that observations about the deceptions and inanities of one side need to be matched by equally weighty negatives about the other. Unfortunately, the obligation for balance runs into problems when the objective reality is highly unbalanced.

Take Obamacare. A health-care plan seriously portrayed by many Republicans as a dangerous assault on American liberty is in fact no more “radical” than a plan proposed by Republican president Richard Nixon more than 35 years ago, and strikingly similar to one signed into law only a few years ago by Republican governor Mitt Romney of Massachusetts. It is more conservative than systems that have been accepted by the great majority of European conservatives for many decades.

Contrast that with Representative Paul Ryan's road map, later incorporated in his budget proposal. Ryan's plan — almost universally embraced by his party after the elections — is only ostensibly about deficit reduction. (No genuine deficit-reduction plan could propose further major tax cuts while ignoring the military budget.) In fact, Ryan uses the long-term deficit problem as a pretext for an ideologically driven program that would undo much of 20th-century public policy. Its objective is the construction of

a free-market utopia that has never existed anywhere in the world.

One reader reproaches Mitchell for pointing to “extreme and sometimes downright wacky” rhetoric of Republican politicians. But this is a party whose partisans believe in a great deal of patent nonsense. For example: that President Obama was not born in this country and/or is a Muslim; that tax cuts actually increase government revenues; that global warming is a myth. In one poll, a majority of Republicans either believed that Obama was actually “on the side of the terrorists” or weren't sure. It is hardly surprising that these kinds of views are reflected in the posturing of the party's leaders. Mitchell could have been more politic and pretended otherwise. He chose instead to be unbalanced, and accurate.

Anthony F. Greco '67CC,
'76GSAS, '82BUS,
New York, NY

As a liberal, I'm amused at the way Lincoln Mitchell's article brought out the swarms

of 18th-century minds. Obama made mistakes, but not the ones he is so resoundingly accused of.

Obama's first mistake was his decision to try to be bipartisan. That led to several unnecessary compromises with Republicans, which led to some less-than-adequate legislation, including a badly flawed health-care law — better than what preceded it, but still badly flawed.

Second was his failure to bring the Afghanistan and Iraq wars to an end. Those continuations of the disastrous policies of George W. Bush have milked the treasury of untold billions of dollars, all off-budget, doing more damage to our financial situation than any tax efforts or other spending decisions.

The thing that worries me most about a country that is in the worst shape that I have ever seen it is in the evident underlying racism of much of the anti-Obama opinion.

Edwin M. Good '58GSAS
Eugene, OR



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2011 Calendar

The Black Sea
with Dr. Charles King
August 5-16

Crossroads of Cultures in the Mediterranean
August 29-September 13

Village Life in Tuscany
September 4-12

Waterways of Russia
September 13-23

Danube to Istanbul
with Professor William Ryan
September 16-26

China, Tibet, and the Yangtze
October 8-26 and
October 15-November 2

River Life along the Rhine and Mosel
October 15-23

History of the Mediterranean
October 17-November 2

French Alps and Provence
October 18-27

Following the Trade Winds to South America's Patagonia
October 31-November 25

Greatest Treasures and Legendary Places by Private Jet
November 1-22

Botswana Safari
November 4-14

World Highlights by Private Jet
with Professor Mark C. Taylor
November 29-December 14

Passage to West Africa
with Professor Gregory Mann
December 23-January 4, 2012

2012 Calendar

Guatemala
January 17-27

Experiences of a Lifetime by Private Jet
February 12-March 14

Expedition to Antarctica
with Professor Ben Orlove
February 15-28

Mysteries of the Mekong (Cambodia and Vietnam)
February 16-29

Mystical India
February 26-March 14

Galápagos and Machu Picchu
March 6-20

Coexistence of Cultures and Faiths with Professor Peter Awn
April 6-15

Waterways of Holland and Belgium
April 17-25

Aegean Odyssey
May 15-27

Garden of the Gods (Springtime in the Greek Islands)
May 22-June 2

Byzantine Odyssey (Turkey)
May 26-June 9

Changing Tides of History: Cruising the Baltic Sea with Presidents Gorbachev and Walesa
May 28-June 8

Sicily, the Aeolian Islands, and Southern Italy
June 13-26

Danube River and the Habsburg Empire
June 14-27

Coastal Life along the Adriatic with General Wesley Clark
June 24-July 2

Wild Alaska
June 25-July 2

Moscow and St. Petersburg
July 19-27

Classic Mediterranean Islands (Istanbul to Rome via Chios, Santorini, Crete, Malta, Sicily, Sardinia, and Corsica)
July 27-August 7

Discovering Eastern Europe
July 31-August 16

Opus Mediterraneo (Venice to Barcelona)
August 15-26

Classic Safari: Kenya and Tanzania
August 15-31

Village Life in the Italian Lakes
September 8-16

From the Walls of Troy to the Canals of Venice (Istanbul to Venice)
September 16-27

Provincial French Countryside
October 15-29

Timeless Israel
October 19-31

China, Tibet, and the Yangtze
October 20-November 7

The Ancient Coasts of Turkey and the Greek Islands
November 10-22

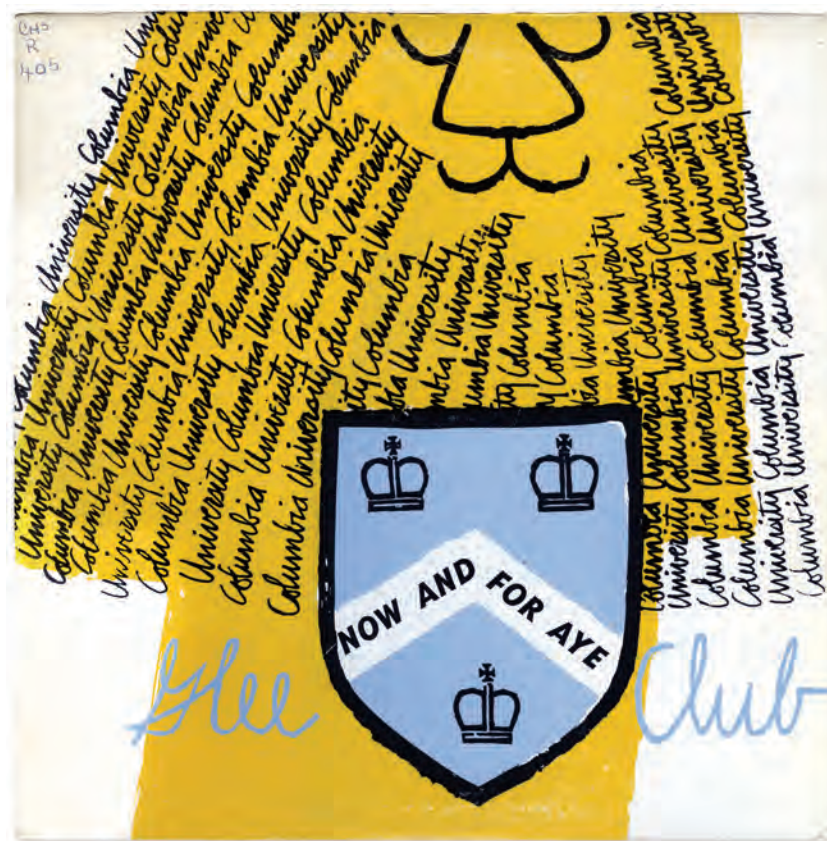
Australia and New Zealand
November 10-December 1

Moroccan Discovery
December 9-21

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FINALS



Sing, Lion, Sing

In 2008, tryouts were held for the Columbia Glee Club, the oldest extant student organization on campus. One person showed up.

American culture had changed. In 1963, 90 years after the first Columbia glee club was convened, the outfit reached a crescendo. The singers had already performed at the Eisenhower White House, and were about to become the first college vocal group to appear at Philharmonic Hall (now Avery Fisher Hall). They even released LPs, like the one shown here, of an assortment of choral delights — a Finnish lullaby, an Italian folk song, spirituals, sea chanteys, Columbia anthems, a Mozart cantata written for the Vienna Freemason Lodge. The repertoire was sung by upwards of 75 men three times per year: at Homecoming, during the Christmas season, and at an annual spring concert at Town Hall.

Then the Beatles happened, as did the rest of the '60s, and the clean-cut college harmonizers in their tuxes and blazers seemed to go the way of Eisenhower, Dylan's acoustic guitar, and Grayson Kirk. Glee had turned to gall.

There were other singing groups on campus, of course — the King's Men (now the Kingsmen), the Blue Notes (now Notes & Keys) — but the Glee Club was the most democratic, explains Gerald Weale '57CC, associate conductor of the organization from 1959 to 1965. The club provided a forum where sing-

ers “who didn't have years of training could reach people,” Weale says. “Columbia students picked up things quickly and very intuitively.”

A new exhibition at the Columbia Alumni Center celebrates 140 years of singing groups at Columbia, with photos, record albums, newspaper clippings, and other relics that reflect the University's vibrant vocal tradition.

In 2009, students and alumni, inspired by Glee alumnus Nicholas Rudd '64CC, '67BUS, worked to revive the Glee Club. This time, 100 people responded, says current conductor David Harris. Was it the popular new TV show *Glee* that stimulated such interest? Or were more students simply in the mood to sing in 2009?

Whatever the reason, there will be no swan song in the Glee Club's repertoire anytime soon. Singing is booming at Columbia. There are more than a dozen active a cappella groups, as well as the Columbia Alumni Singers, which Rudd and Michael Garrett '66CC, '69LAW, '70BUS helped assemble for the 2010 Alumni Weekend Reunion. (It's now a yearly event.) Weale and Bruce Trinkley '66CC, '68GSAS served as music directors.

For Weale, at least, the glee resurgence is no mystery.

“Choral music,” he says, “is one of the great gifts of God Almighty.”

— Paul Hond

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