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MAGAZINE



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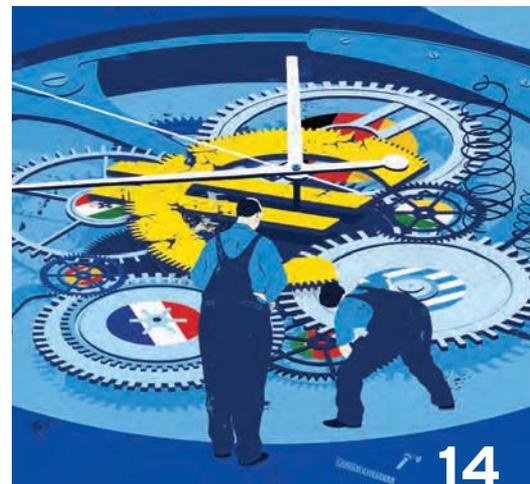
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IN THIS ISSUE



David Beim worked for twenty-five years in investment banking before joining Columbia Business School, where he has been a professor of professional practice in the finance and economics division since 1991. He is the co-author of *Emerging Financial Markets* and serves as a director of several mutual funds managed by Merrill Lynch. >> **Page 14**

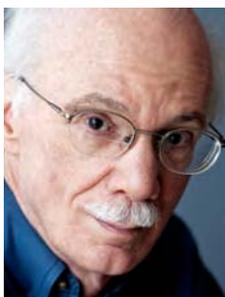


M. M. De Voe '01SOA is a widely published author of short fiction who has been nominated for three Pushcart Prizes and other literary awards. She is the founder and executive director of Pen Parentis. >> **Page 11**



Cheryl Greenberg '88GSAS teaches African-American and twentieth-century history at Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut, where she is the Paul E. Raether Distinguished Professor of History. She is the author of four books, including "*Or Does It Explode?*": *Black Harlem in the Great Depression*. >> **Page 54**

STEVEN J. SHERMAN



Steven Millhauser '65CC is the author of works such as the novel *Martin Dressler*, which was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1997, and, most recently, *We Others: New and Selected Stories*. He teaches at Skidmore College and lives in Saratoga Springs, New York. >> **Page 58**

MICHAEL LIONSTAR



Brent Stockwell is an associate professor of biological sciences and chemistry at Columbia University and a Howard Hughes Medical Institute Early Career Scientist. He serves on the editorial board of *Chemistry & Biology*, has been awarded ten US patents, and has published fifty-four scientific papers. >> **Page 26**

COLUMBIA MAGAZINE

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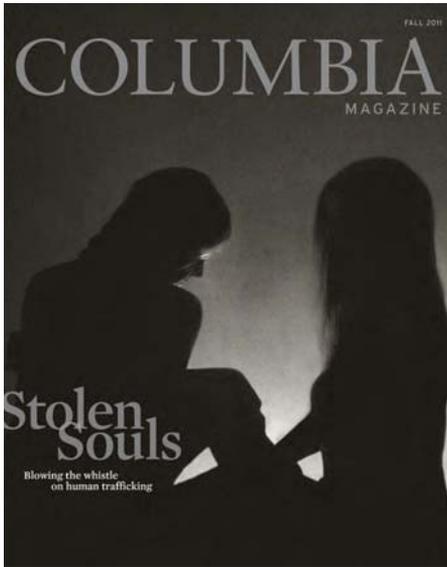
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letters

FIGHTING MODERN SLAVERY

Thank you for bringing us Paul Hond's "The Long Night" (Fall 2011). It shines a spotlight on a most shocking and shameful dimension of humanity. Awareness of modern slavery is not as widespread as it should be, considering it is a highly profitable, global criminal industry.

I recall learning in elementary school about the complex history of slavery in America. I vividly remember wondering if I would have had the strength of character to fight for the freedom of slaves had I lived in those times. Today, for me and for my children, who attend an elementary school without a modern-slavery curriculum, this is no longer a theoretical question.

"The Long Night" reads like the tale of a team of relay runners passing the baton, one to the other; it took a series of efforts before, finally, the UN acknowledged the slave trading of UN monitors sent to protect the people of Bosnia. These Columbia alumnae — Tanya Domi, Larysa Kondracki, and Eilis Kirwan — were moved to action against the inhumanity of slavery. They and their fellow alumni, Siddharth Kara, Faith Huckel, and Carol Smolenski, all found a way to use their backgrounds in social work, business, or film to fight slavery. It was inspiring. But it left me with a continually pressing question: do I

have the strength of character to find a way, with my background and in my line of work, to fight slavery — in these times?

Keren Blum '09TC
Rebbitzin, Chabad at Columbia University

A FRUITFUL IDEA

Having written one of the first pieces about vertical farming for *New York* magazine back in the spring of 2007, I was a little surprised that *Columbia Magazine* was just now getting around to covering Dickson Despommier, but you advanced the story quite nicely ("New Crop City," Fall 2011).

The only thing I would add is the story behind the story: were it not for the power of the Internet, the idea would probably still just be incubating with Despommier's graduate students. The fact is, my vertical-farm story was, hands down, the most viral piece I've ever written. It ricocheted around the world with astonishing velocity; newspapers from the Middle East to Europe downloaded the piece and reprinted it. It has been amazing to witness what struck me at the time as a pretty cool but perhaps slightly wacky idea take on a life of its own — and even come to fruition.

Lisa Chamberlain '03JRN
Brooklyn, NY

I read "New Crop City" and was sorry to learn that the idea has detractors among the ranks of organic gardeners. My understanding of your article drew me to the following conclusions: high-rise agriculture could use water that can be recycled endlessly (how about also collecting the vast quantities of rainwater that fall on urban roofs?); eliminate pesticides; provide totally safe food (isn't this what organic gardening should really be about?); prevent exploitation of immigrant agricultural workers and their children; make community-beneficial use of land area and recycle blighted inner-city landscapes; be a start in managing the salinization and breakdown of soil-based agriculture and intensive agri-irrigation; and provide significantly greater yields of food crops.

Are any of these statements false or only partly true? I am an enthusiastic supporter of the concept and want to know much more about its practice.

Victoria Hardiman '65GS, '67GSAS
Ames, OK

David J. Craig responds: In his book *The Vertical Farm: Feeding the World in the 21st Century*, Dickson Despommier describes many potential health, social, and economic benefits of indoor farming, including all those you mention here.

Let us be realistic. Vertical farming is unrealistically expensive. Science should not be in the business of wasting money. If Columbia is serious about solving some of the world's food problems, then it should form alliances with other universities that are ahead of us in this field, such as Ben-Gurion University of the Negev.

Farms need to produce protein. Raising fish in brackish water — by using water over and over because we are already running out of fresh water — is the way to go. We have plenty of sun — hothouses can be prefabricated and assembled while there is sun — but not enough water! Growing tomatoes, lettuce, or peppers, which consume a lot of water, is wasteful. The idea of vertical farming is a delusion, not science.

Charles Berman '57DM
New York, NY

TRILLING MATTERS

In my senior year, I had the privilege of attending a Trilling literature class, so it was with deep emotional and personal nostalgia that I read Adam Kirsch's praise of the forgotten man, "Why We (Should) Read Trilling," in the Fall issue.

I recall Stendhal's note on opening *The Charterhouse of Parma* — "To the happy few." It sounds snobbish, but it is an abiding reality that only a special and sensitive elite can appreciate the likes of Stendhal or Trilling. That is not to deny that each generation (and nation) has periods of flourishing interest in creativity in the arts and that there are times when it even reaches the masses. But those are exceptional times; they wax, and they wane. I think of the time of the Greek poets, of seventeenth-century Dutch art, of German music from Gluck to Richard Strauss, and, of course, of Shakespeare. We are in an age of coarse sensibilities. There are a "happy few" exceptions, but entertainment generally has a raw edge.

Trilling had a unique ability to grasp the style and the intent of the writer, and to articulate them in an exciting and creative way. The appeal, by the unhappy man, might be

considered effete, but that is always the case when the coarse encounters the refined.

Do not despair, Adam Kirsch. Think of all the great literary names that have been lost for decades and then have risen again.

Anson Kessler '47CC
Hendersonville, NC

I really enjoyed Adam Kirsch's article on Trilling. I studied with Trilling in 1974 when I was working toward my master's degree in comparative English literature and he taught a class on Austen on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons. I remember how excited he was when speaking of her *Mansfield Park*.

I was surprised that Kirsch didn't mention *Sincerity and Authenticity*, which changed my life by making me think about honesty and morality in a new way.

I went on to a career as a writer, novelist, actor, director, and educator. In the fog of memory, I remember having only one conversation with Trilling. I wonder now what he thought of the long-haired, very wild young poet with the Queens accent.

Richard Vetere '74GSAS
Flushing, NY

I am the nephew of Morriss Hamilton Needleman, who was an "enemy" of Lionel Trilling in the 1950s. My uncle's crime was being the author of the Barnes & Noble series *An Outline-History of English Literature* (with William Bradley Otis), *An Outline-History of American Literature*, and *Handbook for Practical Composition*.

In a sense, the books were the CliffsNotes of their day, but immensely more literate. They were so good, in fact, that Trilling attacked them fiercely, claiming that students used them instead of reading the literature and poetry they analyzed. At one point, Trilling gave a talk against "the chicanery of Mr. Needleman's pamphlets," and my uncle responded with a printed publication called *A Refutation of Mr. Lionel Trilling*.

Trilling's criticism only increased the sales of my uncle's books. "Trilling's attacks were the best sort of help in advertising my wares," my uncle told me.

I had veered away from Trilling all these years, out of loyalty to my departed uncle. Thank you, Adam Kirsch, for opening the door for me to Lionel Trilling's literary criticism. I am going to give it a shot. I'll certainly read Kirsch's *Why Trilling Matters*.

Arnold H. Taylor '64TC
Plainview, NY

The decline of the evanescent intellectual climate that Lionel Trilling epitomized both on campus and beyond has long saddened me. Not even the zillions of blogs, which further separate people with differing views, can replace it. Long after his passing, Trilling's name continues to signify an attitude, a way of looking critically not only at our culture but at culture itself. He called this "the liberal imagination," something that's all too lacking in both our national and international discourse these days.

Trilling's deeply held belief that complexity and experimentation with new forms have much to do with the search for truth is closely allied to his fascination with the modernistic temperament, just as his personal irony and distaste for true believers had much to do with his understanding of our limitations. Of course, while there's much in our predominant postmodern expression that's apparently complex, so little of it is true and even less speaks to what James Joyce called "luminosity," an appeal to the inner imagination, where truth and beauty coalesce.

But in Trilling's day, we also had the obsessional literalness of Cleanth Brooks, so allied in spirit as it is with the more contemporary attempt by the deconstructionists to divorce texts from any meaning beyond themselves.

Although Adam Kirsch did not note it here, in the early 1960s Trilling's most popular course was Contemporary Modern Literature. In it, we read the greatest modern works not only of the English-speaking world but of Western culture itself: Kafka, Mann, Proust, Joyce. Despite Trilling's love of nineteenth-century English literature, I can't think of any contemporary Brits that were included, except for Conrad, as part of a prelude that also

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Javi Plasencia '11CC
Kluge Scholar

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LETTERS

included Frazer and Freud. In a world whose perception and taste were becoming far more internationalized, something that for better or worse was taken up by Trilling's successors, this was an important step. No wonder Stanley Kubrick, who had audited this course, named Lionel Mandrake after him.

Another characteristic of modern literature that Trilling emphasized was its subversiveness. In our postmodern culture, strangely prudish as it is despite our more open sexuality, how many would still respond favorably to his refreshing late 1950s assertion that of all recent novels about love, the most genuine was *Lolita* — let alone take the trouble to figure out why — or even to feel the thrill and liberation of iconoclasm, even heresy? Given the darker side of the twentieth century, I've never been surprised that Trilling's favorite opera was Verdi's *Don Carlo*.

Yet Trilling was very much a traditionalist, a stalwart Edwardian gentleman, and the tension between this wonderful if sometimes irritating Arnoldian aspect of his personality and his fascination with cultural and moral brinkmanship taught us not only to grapple with the deeper and increasingly more complex aspects of our ever-evolving culture, but also to feel personally responsible for them.

Jack Eisenberg '62CC
New York, NY

It is absolutely beyond me why, with all the possible pictures of Lionel Trilling that *Columbia Magazine* could have run, we get a full-page picture of the critic with a half-smoked cigarette at his lips. The only things left out are the wisps of cigarette smoke in the air above Trilling's head.

Maybe those who knew Trilling remember him with a cigarette. They need no pho-

tos for those memories. For the rest of us, it is less "Why We (Should) Read Trilling" and more "Now Starring at Your Local *Columbia Magazine*: Lionel Trilling and His Faithful Companion, Lucky Strike."

Donald Nawi '62LAW
Scarsdale, NY

TALL TALES

Camilo José Vergara's nostalgic pictorial reminiscence of the World Trade Center in the 1970s repeats the misconception that Battery Park City was "erected on landfill extracted from the WTC site" ("The Looming Towers," Fall 2011). Battery Park City consists of ninety-two acres, only twenty-four of which came from land excavated to build the World Trade Center. The bulk of the site came from sand dredged from the lower New York Harbor, surrounded and kept in place by an underwater rock retaining wall, which also contained the fill from the WTC. All of this work was performed by the Battery Park City Authority, the New York State-created public-benefit corporation proposed by then-governor Nelson A. Rockefeller and enacted by the state legislature in 1968. Embedded in the morgues of many newspapers, this misunderstanding of the source of the landfill has become etched in stone but does not change the facts of how Battery Park City was created.

Avrum Hyman '54JRN
Riverdale, NY

Hyman was New York State deputy commissioner of housing and community renewal and the first director of public information of the Battery Park City Authority, serving from 1968 to 1979.

I enjoyed revisiting the Twin Towers through the photography of Camilo José Vergara. It's a pity they will not be reconstructed exactly as they stood before; the new cacophonous WTC project, entangled in endless arguments and counterarguments, will not have the same grandeur.

Piotr Kumelowski '87SEAS
Forest Hills, NY

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CHEMICAL REACTION

My memories of Havemeyer and Chandler go back further than the half-century-old recollections of William Reusch ("Letters," Fall 2011), all the way to 1935, when Professor Harold C. Urey came into my freshman chemistry class to tell us about the recently discovered neutron that was not yet in our textbook. And I remember his heavy-water distillation column, which ran down the Chandler stairwell. We used to grab that column as we ran down the stairs to change classes.

There was a chemistry museum on the first floor of Havemeyer. When I inquired a few years ago, no one seemed to know what had happened to that valuable collection.

Saul Ricklin '40SEAS
Bristol, RI

RACISM AT THE ROOT

The letter you published from Carol Crystle in response to your story on Manning Marable is incorrect and fundamentally damaging ("Letters," Fall 2011). Studies over the last fifty years have indicated that racism is at the root of the problem with the underclass. I suggest that the editor do more research to indicate what the true roots and causes of the problem are.

Donald McDonough '55CC
West Palm Beach, FL

NOT THE KINGSMEN?

The photo accompanying Stacey Kors's review of Carolyn Burke's *No Regrets: The Life of Edith Piaf* shows the French singer in 1947 at Columbia's Maison Française with a group of young men ("She Did It Her Way," Summer 2011). While doing research in anticipation of the Maison's 2013 centenary, we learned that the men are not Columbia students but members of Les Compagnons de la Chanson, a popular choral group established in the 1940s that performed through the mid-1980s. They sang and recorded many songs with Piaf, most famously, "Les Trois Cloches."

Shanny L. Peer
Director, Maison Française
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March 6–20

Fabled Andalusia and the Imperial Cities of Morocco
with Dean Peter Awn
April 6–15

European Coastal Civilizations
April 15–23

Waterways of Holland and Belgium
with Professor Evan Haefeli
April 17–25

Turning Points in History
with Dr. John R. Hale
May 16–27

Garden of the Gods (Springtime in the Greek Islands)
with emeritus professor Alan Cameron
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

A Musical Odyssey in the Mediterranean
featuring performances by Frederica von Stade with emeritus professor Alan Cameron
June 13–26

Voyage to the Lands of Gods and Heroes: A Family Learning Adventure
with emeritus professor Suzanne Said
June 22–July 1

Coastal Life along the Adriatic with General Wesley Clark (Ret.)
June 24–July 2

Wild Alaska Journey
June 25–July 2

The Black Sea
with pianist Leon Fleisher
July 18–28

Great Cities of Russia: A Cultural Tour of Moscow and St. Petersburg
July 19–27

Classic Mediterranean Islands (Istanbul to Rome)
July 27–August 6

Discovering Eastern Europe
July 31–August 16

Mongolia: Land of Genghis Khan
August 9–19

Opus Mediterraneo (Venice to Barcelona)
August 14–24

Classic Safari: Kenya and Tanzania
August 15–31

Danube River and Habsburg Empire
August 31–September 13

Village Life in the Italian Lakes
September 8–16

From the Walls of Troy to the Canals of 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
October 25–November 3

Australia and New Zealand
November 3–24

Moroccan Discovery
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Smoking Rules

Kiran Giribaldi, a student in the School of General Studies, sat cross-legged on a stone bench in front of Butler Library. She busily texted with one hand while the other held a burning Marlboro Ultra Light. Every so often, she took a drag on the cigarette. On this chilly afternoon during the fall term, Giribaldi had nothing to worry about.

But that could change.

“I feel bad about this proposed total ban,” Giribaldi said, referring to the possibility that the University could completely forbid smoking on campus. She puffed on her Marlboro. “It becomes really stressful when you’re in class for an hour and fifteen minutes or in the library for a long stretch without smoking. I have a few smoking friends, and we all

complain about the same thing: smoking has become so demonized that we feel embarrassed when we do it. It’s really hard.”

If you want to light up within the 116th Street gates, you’re free to do so — for now. But in the new calendar year, the University Senate could banish the evil weed from the quads. Such an action would, supporters say, save many smokers. Yet it would likely infuriate others. One thing is certain: the notion that Low Library is somehow responsible for keeping tobacco out of the lungs of students, faculty, and administrators has led to a defining and fractious moment in the evolving definition of *in loco parentis*.

For decades, a smoking culture flourished on college campuses, including Columbia’s. A hundred years ago, members of the Philo-

lexian Society would follow their meetings by dressing in gowns, singing, and drawing on long-stemmed churchwarden pipes on the steps of Earl Hall. Students and professors alike regularly lit up in class; it was rare to see literary critic Lionel Trilling ’25CC, ’38GSAS without a cigarette, or musicologist Paul Henry Lang ’79HON without a cigar, or sociologist Robert Merton ’85HON without his pipe. Faculty “smokers” — informal discussions devoted to minor matters of shared concern held in fogs of burning Pall Malls and Lucky Strikes — were a fixture of academic lounges. As recently as the late 1990s, the Columbia University Cigar Society had 350 members.

But for some time now, as restaurants, office buildings, trains, and other common

spaces became smoke-free by force of law, butts have been disappearing from campuses as well. Today, the Berkeley-based American Nonsmokers' Rights Foundation estimates that some 530 US universities and colleges prohibit smoking in any form.

Columbia may become part of the trend. In 2008, New York State banned smoking in all public- and private-college dorms. Around that time, the New York City Health Commissioner's office began asking about the University's tobacco policy. So vice president for campus services Scott Wright convened a Tobacco Work Group. After two years of research and polling, the group recommended that Columbia ban smoking within fifty feet of all campus buildings. When, by a vote of 31 to 13 in December 2010, the University Senate approved the measure, the distance was reduced to twenty feet on the grounds of feasibility.

Almost from the moment the resolution passed, other parties began arguing that the twenty-foot rule did not go far enough. Teachers College, Barnard, and the medical school have all recently banned smoking entirely. One of the leading proponents of prohibition on the Morningside campus is University senator Mark A. Cohen '69SEAS, '71BUS, a professor of marketing at the business school.

"Exposure to secondhand smoke is increasingly viewed as deadly," he said. "It is more dangerous than one might think intuitively. I am not, as I have been described, a crusader. I believe in the sanctity of individ-

ual rights, but I have a problem with walking through a cloud of smoke as I traverse the campus. And I hate the sight of butts."

Cohen's advocacy is born of experience. "I started to smoke at Columbia," he recalled. "I was good and addicted for twelve years, up to three packs a day. And I was here when a lot of interesting things were being smoked. But I quit over thirty years ago."

So, prompted largely by Cohen, the senate began revisiting the issue this fall. The lines were drawn at a town-hall meeting on October 10. There was little defense of smoking per se. But many wondered whether smoking on campus was anyone's business.

"This is a bad idea, quite simply," said senator and current law student Ron Mazor '09CC. "It cuts against the idea of the openness and tolerance that we ask Columbia University to truly embrace and value. We're talking about an undue hardship on people who smoke on campus. Smoking is legal. It's not a banned habit. It's not a criminal habit. It's perfectly within people's rights." He noted, too, that the Law School Student Senate had already passed a resolution that opposed a total smoking ban.

On the other side were health-conscious figures like Samuel C. Silverstein, the John C. Dalton Professor of Physiology and Cellular Biophysics and a member of the senate's executive committee. "I don't accept the libertarian view that to accept smoking on this campus is a reasonable proposal," he said, and invoked the Hippocratic Oath. "I would ask you to think about which

values you hold most dear. Is it how much you spend for health insurance? Is it how much you value the freedom to kill yourself? I hope not. I hope what you really care about is life, extending life."

So far, the executive committee has not endorsed the ban. A plenary session held on November 18 failed to act on the question. Instead, the University will study the implications of such a ban. For instance, contracts for unionized workers would probably have to be renegotiated to allow them extra time to leave campus if they wish to smoke during their breaks.

For the moment, the twenty-foot rule remains in effect. "It has not been an issue," said associate vice president for public safety James McShane, "because people are either complying with it or not complaining." But stroll through campus on any given day and you will likely see smokers here and there who are well within the twenty-foot smoke-free zone.

"I feel this total ban will never pass," said engineering student John Soyha of Turkey as he lit up a few steps from Lerner Hall. "And if it does, people won't obey it. I don't think a ban would change anything. I would probably keep on smoking."

Cohen understands the opposition's point of view. "I relate to the behavior of smokers," he said. "I empathize with them. But I think the default position of a university should be to do the right thing."

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

Man from UNTUCKit

*There once was a man in Hoboken
With shirttails so long he could stroke 'em
He said, "What a slob —
Their lengths I must bob
So my bad untucked self will look smokin'."*
— Anonymous

A crisis of confidence gripped the metro area. In front of his full-length bedroom mirror Today's Man trembled inwardly with self-doubt as he tossed his eye over his shoulder to study the effect of his liberated shirttails. He had

seen, now and again, in steakhouses and wine bars, what was clearly a more capable, more favored member of the species wearing his shirt outside his pants at an effortlessly perfect length and fit, implying taste, confidence, brashness — a mysterious piece

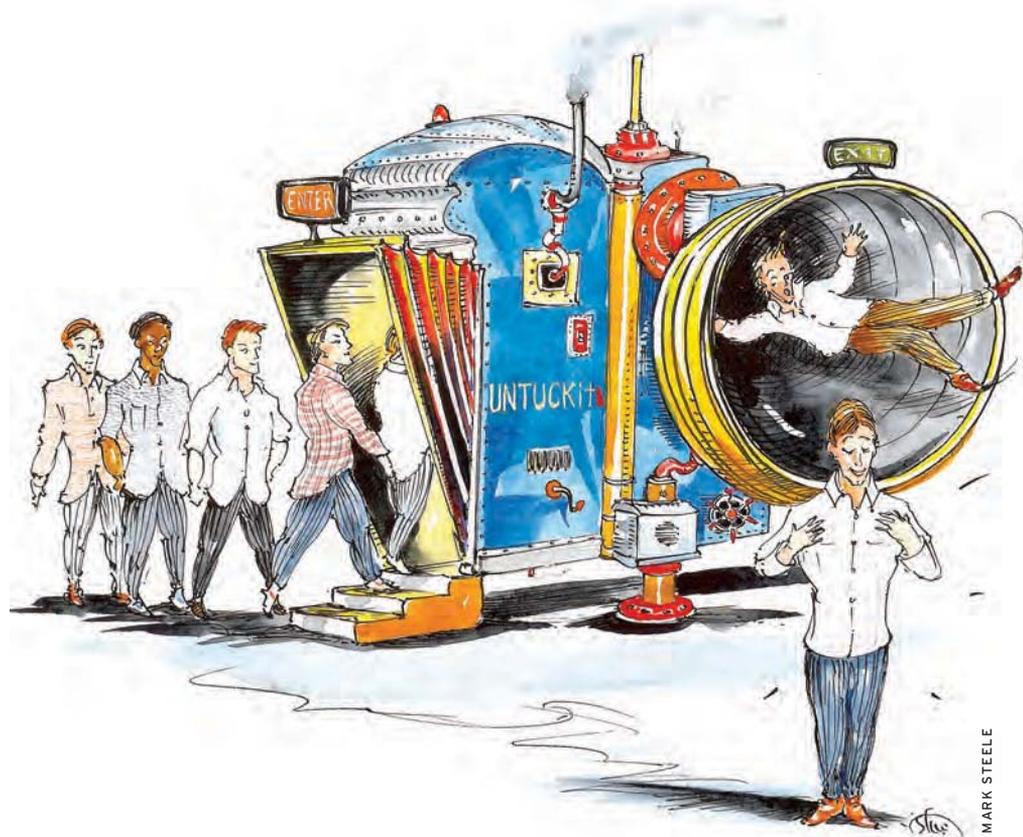
COLLEGE WALK

of luck, that shirt, or else a marvel of custom tailoring, because Today's Man, no matter how hard he looked (not that he had time to look, busy as he was), could never attain this ideal for himself. So he settled, accepted his lot, untucked himself at his peril, suppressed his anxieties, even convinced himself that he was bringing it off, never guessing that his fiancée, more than once, had confided to her friends her embarrassment at his appearance, comparing him in his long, unfurled shirt-flaps to a ten-year-old boy or a happy-hour schlub.

Enter, then, like a genie uncorked from a 2004 Barolo at a back table at Delmonico's, Chris Riccobono '07BUS, wine-tasting maverick, Knicks fanatic, and hellraiser of business casual, an idea-spouting risk taker who, in his resolve to fashion his life to his own personal specs, has located entrepreneurship's Holy Grail: a gap in the marketplace.

"I'm one of those guys who is always thinking of *anything* that can go," says Riccobono, standing by a rack of men's shirts in a showroom on West 20th Street. Not everything goes. There was his niche-market online dating service idea called Love for Little People (L4LP.com) and a reality-show pitch titled *Cabin Fever*, in which contestants on a two-week cruise vie to become Hollywood agents, and are judged by people they *think* are influential agents but who are in fact impostors — a cab driver, a janitor, a homeless person, and the like. No, not everything goes, but Riccobono's latest shot has the look and feel of inevitability, and certainly of cotton: the Bergen County, New Jersey, native has created, you might say, a new jersey.

"I had forty shirts, and there's only one that I could wear untucked," Riccobono explains. "I wore it everywhere. It was a J.Crew, a small — keep in mind, I wear a large. I talked to my friends, and they had the same problem: they had beautiful shirts but couldn't wear them out because they were too long." Riccobono's idea, which he christened UNTUCKit, was a button-down shirt whose lower hem hung past the belt line at the optimum, market-researched length of midfly.



MARK STEELE

"I don't like being in a suit, I don't like being shaved, I don't like uptightness," Riccobono says, sounding more Occupy than Wall Street, though in his John Varvatos boots, Seven jeans, and dark-blue Ted Baker jacket over an UNTUCKit "Paso Robles" red plaid shirt, he doesn't appear bound for Zuccotti Park. Whether it's wine racks or clothing racks, Riccobono's focus is fineness: he pulls out a pink and navy checked shirt (appellation: "Chablis") made from 120-thread two-ply Egyptian cotton, holds it up to express its lightness, its breathiness, and urges Today's Man to "get away from the uptightness of life, untuck yourself, and still look sophisticated."

This from a finance major who, in May 2001, came out swinging from Providence College, where he'd gone to play Big East tennis, ready to trade his racket for a jacket in Lower Manhattan, even if it meant keeping his shirt in his pants. "I never wanted to go the corporate path, no matter what," he says. "I saw finance as a bridge to doing

something on my own: you need money to start a business."

His plans for Wall Street were altered that September when the attack on the Twin Towers turned the financial district into a toxic disaster area. Riccobono recalibrated. He was accepted into General Electric's technical-sales and leadership program to learn about medical sales, a starting rung on the corporate ladder. During his training sojourns in Miami and Milwaukee, he studied for his GMATs, and in 2006 he entered Columbia's Executive MBA Program, which, to accommodate working students, holds classes every other Friday and Saturday. "It was great, because I was meeting successful executives," Riccobono says. "I was twenty-six, maybe the youngest guy there — everyone else was thirty to forty-five — and I was learning a ton. It's '05, '06, and every guy trading some kind of complex product was making money you wouldn't believe. So I said, 'This is great. This is what I'll do.' I focused on finance, took all these complex-products classes, and was in way over my

head. In '07, I interviewed for hedge funds. I thought, 'I don't know if this is my lifestyle — wear a suit every day to work, get in at five, leave at nine, and not be able to do anything creative on the side.' But then the decision was made for me: the market crashed, people were losing their jobs, and I said, 'This is the perfect time to start my video wine blog.'"

With the financial world in tatters, Riccobono, having inherited a love of wine from his father, took six months to learn everything he could about the wrath of grapes, approaching his subject with the single-minded ferocity of an athlete, pressing every drop of knowledge from his books and decanting many a pretty-labeled bottle. In 2009, he posted the first installment of *Pardon That Vine*, an earthy, proudly unpretentious video diary that numbers nearly four hundred episodes. The setup is simple: Riccobono appears in front of a video camera, seated at home in Hoboken or in one of the many wine regions he has visited — Napa, Sonoma, Piedmont, Campania, Bordeaux, Tuscany — dressed in a T-shirt and jeans ("In the wine world, there's a lot of snobbery, but people see a guy in a T-shirt and a backward cap and they're not intimidated") or a yellow or pink polo or, increasingly, an UNTUCKit button-down, wine swirling in the glass bowl of the goblet in his hand as he introduces the wine and shares with viewers the real-time sensations

of his nose and papillae ("I'm getting a huge blast of fruit here." "I'm getting a little cinnamon component." "I'm still getting this peanutty thing on the end." "It's got complexity, it's got mouth feel, it's got finish, it's got acidity, and it's got this pine-needle-meets-fire-smoke-pizza-oven scenario"), all delivered in a red-blooded way that makes you feel that you, too, can reach the high-hanging fruit of culture. The blog attracted thousands of followers, and soon winemakers from all over the world began shipping bottles to Riccobono for his review.

The experience taught the entrepreneur about social networking and marketing and prepared him for his next venture. "Here I was, in the worst economic environment in decades, trying to launch a fashion company, and I'm not even in fashion," he says. "Social networking allows you to start any business you want at a reasonable cost." With UNTUCKit, he had a snappy brand name that his PR firm could run with, and, unlike other concepts he'd concocted, nobody called this one kooky. Riccobono put together a business plan, raised money, built a website, consulted shirt specialists and pattern makers, spent ten months designing and redesigning, sought out the highest-quality fabrics from Turkey, Egypt, Italy, and Japan, and found a manufacturer in Poland.

When UNTUCKit went online in June, the response was swift. The *Wall Street Journal*

gave Riccobono's shirts a plug. So did *GQ*, *USA Today*, and NBC's *Today*. And Today's Man, seeing a new day and a new way, swiveled around excitedly in his cubicle, grabbed his mouse, and clicked. He ordered a shirt, six shirts. Then, lo and behold, Matt Damon requested a shirt. So did Kevin Connolly of *Entourage*, and Pauly D from *Jersey Shore*. If that wasn't enough, TV hosts Billy Bush of *Access Hollywood* and Mario Lopez of *Entertainment Tonight Extra* began wearing UNTUCKit shirts on their shows.

It's been a good start for a clothing company that's less than seven months old, but Riccobono measures success not by the yard but by the mile. He envisions a whole UNTUCKit line, a major brand, a smash hit, and many happy returns.

"I haven't made it, by any means," he says. "In fifteen years, I could be rich, or I could be back to square one. It's scary. I don't sleep at night. But that's what I love — the risk."

Yet for all his stubble and independence, for all the satisfaction of starting his own business, Riccobono must have some regrets about missing the Wall Street gravy train.

Doesn't he?

The entrepreneur smiles, and Today's Man, somewhere on his lunch break, tie barely loosened, smiles with him, perhaps a little wistfully, already knowing the answer.

"The truth is," Riccobono says, "I wouldn't have lasted long." — *Paul Hond*

Writer, Interrupted

In May 2001, Milda De Voe and her new husband bought their first apartment, one block from the World Trade Center Plaza, in Lower Manhattan. On warm nights, De Voe '01SOA, a writer and actress with a confident carriage and long red hair, would walk to the plaza to attend free concerts. During the day, she worked on her short fiction and contemplated writing a

novel. Wary of distractions, De Voe gave little thought to having children: it was enough to create characters.

One morning in September, De Voe overslept, missing a meeting on the plaza. She woke to her apartment shaking. Through her window, she saw the Twin Towers spewing black smoke into a blue sky. Millions of pieces of white paper were floating down.

De Voe escaped her rattled building through a neighbor's elevator, and she and her husband spent the next month camped out uptown on her mother-in-law's floor. Unlike many of her neighbors, De Voe couldn't wait to get back. "It never occurred to me to move away," she says. She came back in October, when the streets were still covered in ash.

Around this time, De Voe's father died suddenly, and her feelings about having children changed. By the new year, De Voe was pregnant.

In July 2002, De Voe gave birth to a son and began to raise him in a neighborhood that was itself facing the uncertainties of regeneration. She had a daughter four years later. De Voe found herself "struggling to make it as a writer and a mom," she says. "Both jobs are 24/7, and I didn't know what to do for myself as an artist or for my kids as a mother." For De Voe, parenthood was not a natural progression but a demanding task that posed a direct threat to her life's ambition.

In 2008, De Voe attended a community meeting about allocating public funds to bring the arts to the vicinity of Ground Zero. It was there that she conceived her idea for an organization that could provide networking opportunities and audiences for professional writers who also were parents. She called it Pen Parentis.

"After becoming parents, some writers begin to neglect their work, and others begin to neglect their kids," De Voe says, recalling her own feelings of isolation in her struggle to balance the two. Pen Parentis, funded in part by the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council,

greeted the world in January 2009 with a mission to support writers who, as De Voe writes in her essay "The Happiest Farmer," "love their children, but couldn't put down their laptop any more than they could ignore their toddler when the kid ran a fever."

De Voe now acts as Pen Parentis's executive director. Her Columbia classmate Arlaina Tibensky '99SOA is curator of the Pen Parentis literary salon, which convenes the second Tuesday of each month on Platt Street.

"In order to build a neighborhood," De Voe says, "we need to repopulate this place with culture."

On a recent Tuesday, members and guests of Pen Parentis gathered in the Gild Hall Hotel's Libertine Library, a distinguished-looking English tavern with oak bookshelves, red-leather sofas, and Persian rugs. People came to talk about their babies, in both senses, and to listen to writers Sarah Gardner Borden and Rebecca Wolff read from new novels. In her opening remarks, De Voe, who writes under the name M. M. De Voe, welcomed her guests and told them that the salons could be a good way to meet "everybody who is anybody — and has children — in literary New York." She then presented author Frank Haberle with the second annual Pen Parentis fellowship

grant of \$1,000, awarded to a writer with young children, and to be spent on supplies, office space, and child care. Haberle thanked the organization for its support of people who try to write and, "more frighteningly, who write and try to parent." Borden read from her book about a mother juggling children, a husband, and an affair. The audience tensed at her descriptions of everyday frustration, including a scene in which the mother shoves a wrapped tampon into her baby daughter's hand in a desperate attempt to entertain her. Wolff read from her poetic ghost novel, *The Beginners*, and afterward confessed to her own difficulties. "Look, I published a book of poetry about postpartum depression," she said. "There's a direct correlation with life there." Borden, when asked how motherhood has affected her work, replied that a child's "innate knack for metaphor" continues to inspire her. Plus, she said, "I really did hand my daughter a tampon."

When the reading was over, two young women clutched cups of wine and chatted. One wanted to have her copy of *The Beginners* signed. The other asked, "How many children do you have?" The first woman looked back at her in surprise. "I don't have children," she said. "I just came to hear fiction." — *Phoebe Magee*

Light Snow

Just enough snow fell last night
to emphasize what's there — nothing
fanciful, no octopi on the spruce boughs
or fungal protuberances in the garden —
just enough to highlight the cables
swooping in unison above the road
and to italicize the branches of the trees
out to their twiggy extremities
so that their complex articulations
might be legible. But what is it
I want to read in them? Just enough
to see what's there a little more clearly?

Or a little more than that? I don't know,
but what I see next is the snow
being blown from the trees in sudden
glittering puffs, one after another
of these literal illuminations
that swirl down and vanish,
dazzling, ungraspable.

— *Jeffrey Harrison '80CC is the author
of five books of poetry, including
The Names of Things: New and Selected
Poems and Incomplete Knowledge.*

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Too late for the euro?

A decade into its ambitious currency experiment, the Eurozone is in trouble. Business school professor David Beim, a financial-markets expert and former investment banker, says the euro's hour of reckoning is at hand.

Columbia Magazine: For more than a year we've been reading that the European debt crisis, which began in Greece, has put the survival of the euro in doubt. How likely is the euro to survive 2012?

David Beim: Not very. It might hit insuperable stress this year. What would crack the euro would be the defection of one or more countries. Greece has elections in April, and the opposition could well turn anti-euro after yet more austerity. Or the opposition in a small northern country — the Netherlands, Austria, Finland — might try to block further "rescue" payments.

Columbia: In December, the European Union held an emergency summit in Brussels. What did it accomplish?

Beim: It produced a declaration of intent. German chancellor Angela Merkel and French president Nicolas Sarkozy agreed to recommend a treaty change that would establish more central control over member states' budgets. Debts would have to

be reduced to below 60 percent of GDP and deficits to below 3 percent of the GDP. These were the original requirements of the Maastricht Treaty, which set up the euro in 1992, but they were never enforced. In fact, Italy never did meet them, nor did Greece, which concealed its figures to pretend it did.

Columbia: Even Germany doesn't meet those criteria today.

Beim: Only Finland does. A treaty change would require the signatures of all twenty-seven EU members, which is horrifically difficult to achieve. Of the ten EU members that did not adopt the euro, only four meet the Maastricht criteria: Sweden, Denmark, Luxembourg, and Estonia.

As you've seen in the papers, Britain has already balked. Prime minister David Cameron said he would not sign, because the EU was going to give powers to the European Court of Justice and the European Union bureaucracy in Brussels to enforce budget discipline and put sanctions on countries that fell outside of their agreements. Cameron

said, in effect, we're not going to let a bunch of bureaucrats in Brussels tell us how to do our budget. Even Sarkozy said publicly that the sovereignty of France comes first and anything that impinges on it is out.

My guess is that there will not be a treaty change for the immediate future. Lacking that, states that consent to more central economic control will have to work out an executive agreement with less than all. That would create three unions: twenty-seven in the EU, seventeen in the euro, and some lesser number in the control agreement. It's messy.

Columbia: Have you always been a euro skeptic?

Beim: No, I've been a euro enthusiast for fifty years. I've lived long enough to remember the beginning, when Europe was first getting organized and Europeans said, we've been ravaged by two horrible world wars, and we're going to be sure that never happens again. I thought, fabulous: this is really important. I applauded Europe for getting its act together. The designers of the European Union began brilliantly by lowering trade barriers in the 1960s and 1970s, aligning product rules in the 1980s, and promoting financial-market integration in the 1990s.

Columbia: Wasn't the union more than economic?

Beim: Absolutely. Its designers wanted to harmonize not just economic relations but also broader social and military policies, so Europe would feel more like a force in the world, a unified set of powers rather than a bunch of people bickering with one another. But there remained confusion about the endgame. Was the ultimate goal a single country, a United States of Europe? Or was it something less, and, if so, what?

bind all those connected to it. Instead, the Eurozone needs to get seventeen separate legislatures to agree to every significant initiative. This precludes the EU from taking decisive actions and causes the crisis to drift unresolved. The Eurozone is a monetary union without a political union.

Columbia: Isn't the European Central Bank (ECB) part of a governance structure?

Beim: The ECB is the manager of the currency. It controls the interest rates on short-term euro deposits, and can increase or decrease the supply of euros — it owns the printing press.

When states give up their separate currencies, they give up having their own monetary policy — they can no longer print money and can no longer devalue their currency. These are important tools for managing an economy, and it is quite serious to lose them. Greece, for example, is now quite dependent on Germany and the other northern countries, and this is uncomfortable on both sides.

This gets to the heart of the euro crisis. Loss of a separate currency is a partial loss of sovereignty. Are the nations of Europe ready for this, or does national identity still trump European identity? The December summit formally raised the idea of a fuller fiscal union. But most European states are less than enthusiastic about such a fiscal union, now that they look at it more closely. The Finns like being Finnish, the Greeks like being Greek.

Columbia: Is the size of the Eurozone part of the problem?

Beim: The Eurozone is too big, and the member countries are too different from one another. A currency union can succeed only if its members are sufficiently alike. In particular,

If the euro becomes divisive, pitting the interests of Northern Europe against those of Southern Europe, then it needs to be rethought.

The euro was not an end in itself. I get distressed when I hear politicians saying that the euro must be saved at all costs. Really? I would have thought cooperation must be preserved at all costs. If the euro promotes closer cooperation, then it is a good thing. But if the euro becomes divisive, pitting the interests of Northern Europe against those of Southern Europe, then it needs to be rethought.

Columbia: You've written that a critical flaw of the Eurozone is that it lacks effective governance.

Beim: There *is* no governance structure for the euro. There should be. Any great enterprise deserves a CEO and a leadership structure with full authority to make decisions that

they need to have a common rate of inflation. The currency of a more inflationary country will gradually devalue relative to the currency of a less inflationary country. For example, Greek prices increase about 2 percent a year faster than German prices, and this was true both before and after the euro was introduced. Germany is just more efficient, and its productivity rises faster than Greek productivity. When currencies were separate, the deutsche mark steadily appreciated and the Greek drachma steadily depreciated. In the fifteen years before the euro's launch in financial markets in 1999, the drachma lost three-quarters of its value relative to the mark.

These value changes played an important economic role: they enabled trade between Germany and Greece

to expand without causing balance of payments problems. But look what happens when you lock the two currencies together: now the higher rate of Greek inflation makes Greek goods become more and more expensive to Germans, and makes German goods look ever cheaper to Greeks. As a result, Germany over-exports and Greece over-imports. Cheap northern imports begin to crush Greek businesses, while Germany piles up ever-more cash and IOUs from the south. Germany has now become the China of Europe, and for a similar reason. Currency prices matter a lot.

Columbia: Yet a border-free Europe seemed to hold a lot of promise.

Beim: There is an economic theory called convergence that says that if you globalize — if you open your borders totally so that goods, services, people, capital, ideas, and money move freely across borders — then we will become more like one another.

The hope was that the euro would make Europe converge. But it didn't. Germany exercised wage restraint, liberalized regulations, and opened further to global competition, all of which boosted German productivity. Greece, Portugal, and other southern economies continued to limit competition, supported local monopolies, and left restrictive labor practices in place. Instead, the euro has revealed the lack of real convergence, the huge differences among these countries in corruption, rule of law, regulatory quality, and government effectiveness. Currency union should not have been implemented until such differences among countries had been more substantially erased.

Columbia: Is the Eurozone too big to fail?

Beim: I don't know who would bail it out. It's too big for the International Monetary Fund (IMF). I don't think the United States could spend scarce resources trying to bail out Europe. As for the Chinese, I was teaching a group of about thirty senior Chinese executives who had come to the business school's executive-education program recently. I gave them my little talk on the euro, and they were visibly angered at the thought that the euro might fail. They said, "We want it to succeed; it *must* succeed." They want to have an alternative to the US dollar. That's their game. But are they going to put money into the euro? I don't think so.

Columbia: Could the European Financial Stabilisation Mechanism or a unified European bond help?

Beim: These are both ways of raising new money that might be lent to the stressed governments of Southern Europe. But because this kind of lending is temporary, its success depends on the theory that the underlying imbalances will

quickly self-correct. They are not self-correcting, though. Once you see that the payments imbalances are structural, and are the result of the euro itself, you realize the folly of lending ever-larger amounts to states that already have too much debt. These are called bailout loans, but they are not bailouts at all: they only increase the debt of countries that have too much debt already. They pour more water into the boat, they don't bail it out. If countries have too much debt, there's only one rational solution: reduce their debt.

We had a comparable situation in the 1980s, when almost every government in Latin America was over-borrowed and in default. Everybody thought they'd grow their way out of it, but they didn't, and the crisis only got worse. The interest due was never paid but got rolled up into ever-higher amounts of principal. Those countries were just strangling. In Mexico it was called the lost decade. The crisis was brought to an end in 1989 by Nicholas Brady, the US secretary of the treasury, who told the banks that they had to negotiate major reductions of Latin sovereign debt. And so they did. New "Brady bonds" with secure principal but lower value were exchanged for existing loans. Latin sovereign debt was reduced by 50 to 85 percent, depending on the country. US banks and other big banks took a huge loss, but prosperity quickly returned to Latin America. Southern Europe urgently needs that kind of relief.

Columbia: How would that work?

Beim: It would basically be an offer to all those who hold Greek bonds, for example, to exchange them for a new instrument of greater security but lower value.

Columbia: Isn't a deal like that being negotiated?

Beim: Yes, but it's too little and too late, and it involves only private-sector lenders; that is, it exempts the ECB, IMF, and other state organizations. Also, they are trying to make it voluntary, which is extremely difficult to negotiate. The euro leadership has said they never want to do this again. But they will have to do something, some day.

My thought is to give the stressed Eurozone members true debt relief — comprehensive debt reduction that could let them restart their economies, but on one condition: those that get such relief must leave the euro. That condition gives them a reason *not* to ask for it; every country would want a debt reduction unless there was a penalty, and this would be the penalty, which would slow down contagion.

I don't think this is an unreasonable condition. Greece should never have been in the euro in the first place. Its businesses are now being crushed under a wave of cheap imports because its currency is overvalued. Re-establishing the drachma would be messy and expensive, but less messy and less expensive than staying in the straitjacket of the euro.

Too late for the euro?

Columbia: But the Eurozone leadership is not going to want to do this, is it?

Beim: No, amazingly, they are locked into a political idea that the euro must be preserved in its present form, no matter what payments imbalances it leads to. I have never seen a project with such strong politics and such weak economics. If some party has too much debt and is being economically crushed, like Greece, something needs to change — a fresh approach is needed. Instead, the leadership steams forward with more of the same, lending ever-larger sums instead of rethinking the fundamentals.

Columbia: How serious a problem is that?

Beim: The ECB recently announced that it will lend unlimited amounts to Eurozone banks on low-rate, three-year terms, creating the impression that Eurozone banks have an unlimited capacity to finance the Eurozone governments. But there is a huge problem: banks also need more equity capital to carry increased assets. The Basel rules require that banks hold sufficient “core tier 1 capital” — essentially, common stock and retained earnings — against various types of risks. These standards have been raised as a result of the 2008–2009 financial crisis, and now European banks do not have enough capital to counterbalance all the assets they currently

have, let alone new ones. The European Banking Authority recently estimated the capital shortfall of EU banks at 115 billion euros, though if the actual market prices of sovereign bonds were taken into account, the capital shortfall would come out closer to 300 billion euros.

In other words, unless some nice investors show up willing to buy one or two hundred billion euros of new common stock in the European banks, the banks will have to sell off existing assets and will be in no condition to go on financing the governments of Europe. Deutsche Bank estimates the expected bank downsizing at 1.5 to 2.5 trillion euros. Banks have overdosed on government bonds in the past and must now slim down. This takes out of action the main class of buyers for Eurozone government bonds.

Columbia: What happens when those bonds mature?

Beim: Some day quite soon, a stressed government like Italy or Spain will attempt to sell new bonds to repay maturing bonds, and the market will be unwilling to buy them. Then either it will face default on the maturing bonds or the ECB will have to be the buyer of last resort. The ECB has tried mightily to avoid being in this position, but I think it will face this choice soon. And to avoid a sovereign default, with all its unknown consequences, I think they will succumb.



Columbia: Why is it so terrible for the ECB to buy government bonds?

Beim: Because the ECB can pay for them only by printing money. What we call “money” is the promissory note of a central bank. Look at a dollar bill and you will see the words “Federal Reserve Note” across the top. A central bank, like any company, has assets on one side of its balance sheet and liabilities and capital on the other. If it takes on new assets, it needs to issue new liabilities, i.e., create new money. This is like turning on the printing presses to finance the stressed governments of Europe.

Columbia: Would that cause massive inflation?

Beim: I see no other possible outcome unless the Eurozone dramatically reverses course. This does not mean that prices

(OECD) warned of a worldwide recession if the euro crisis were not resolved.

Beim: The OECD is right. The flood of government bonds has overwhelmed the Eurozone banks and crowded out bank lending to the private sector, which has fallen precipitously in the past few years. The austerity imposed by the debt crisis further represses the economies. In fact, some economists will soon be saying that the massive printing of euros is desirable to fight recession, a kind of super quantitative easing.

But the real answer, I believe, is to admit that the primary source of these problems is the euro itself. Locking together the currencies of countries as different as Germany and Greece is a mistake, and predictably leads to payments imbalances. The same happened to Argentina,



Give the stressed Eurozone members . . . debt reduction that could let them restart their economies, but on one condition: those that get such relief must leave the euro.

would immediately start rising in Europe. There is currently a lot of economic slack all over the industrialized world. But the system would shift in a fundamental way, and the flood of new euros, once started, would be very hard to stop.

Furthermore, the quality of the euros would be undermined. The quality of any money depends on the quality of the assets in the central bank that issues it. Ideally, many would like a central bank to hold gold against its issuance of money, but there is not enough gold in the world to do this. The Federal Reserve does the next best thing and holds treasury bonds against its issuance of dollars. This is the closest thing we have to a risk-free asset, so the dollar has retained its popularity. But the ECB's assets are far from risk-free, and if it becomes the lender of last resort to stressed governments, its asset quality will deteriorate rapidly, and people's trust in the euro will soon fall. You don't want your currency to be backed by doubtful assets.

Columbia: How long could the system go on in that case?

Beim: Not very long. I would guess that this scenario would lead fairly soon to the withdrawal of one or more northern countries from the euro. It probably wouldn't be Germany at first, because they are working so hard to be good citizens in this drama, but it could easily start with the Netherlands or Finland.

Columbia: Shortly before the December summit, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Develop-

ment locked its currency to the dollar in the 1990s and soon fell into a current-account imbalance, rising public deficits, debt escalating without limit, and a bruising economic recession induced by austerity. It ended when the peso was re-established and inflation resumed. That experiment lasted ten years.

Columbia: The euro turned ten on January 1.

Beim: And it is showing the same pattern of current-account imbalance, rising public deficits, debt escalating without limit, and a bruising economic recession induced by austerity. Many intelligent and dedicated people have worked extremely hard to create and defend the euro. But the project is deeply flawed. It includes too many countries too unlike one another. It has no governance system to resolve its many stresses. And the central bank at the center of the system is about to swallow lots of bad assets and pay for them with newly printed money. This would be an ironic end for a currency that was designed to take printing presses away from national governments.

It is painful and difficult to reverse a course that so many governments have so thoroughly committed themselves to. Nevertheless, the question of exit is now being discussed in public for the first time. An orderly exit needs to be planned for, or a disorderly exit will soon occur. Europe should begin this reversal by creating a pathway for exit, beginning with Greece. The euro was a bold and creative project, but the time to rethink it has arrived.





BRUCE DAVIDSON / MAGNUM PHOTOS

TELL IT ON THE MOUNTAIN

The young playwright Katori Hall unlocks her voice in a controversial play about Martin Luther King Jr.

On a sunny Sunday morning in mid-October, thousands of people are gathered on the National Mall in Washington, DC, for the dedication of a memorial to the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. It is the first memorial on the Mall for a nonpresident and the first for an African-American. Dignitaries are everywhere. King's close friends in the civil-rights movement, including the ministers Joseph Lowery and Jesse Jackson, share remembrances. Stevie Wonder and Aretha Franklin perform. President Barack Obama '83CC, the embodiment of King's vision of equality, gives the keynote address.

The podium for the ceremony stands at the site's portal, a massive granite boulder cleft into three parts, the stone's center wedge thrust forward. Carved out of this midsection is a thirty-foot-high image of King, his arms folded, gaze steady, stance strong. On one side of the monument is a phrase taken from King's "I Have a Dream" speech, given in 1963 on the steps of the neighboring Lincoln Memorial: "Out of the mountain of despair, a stone of hope."

That same afternoon in New York City, hundreds of theatergoers are seated inside the Bernard B. Jacobs Theatre, watching one of the first Broadway performances of *The Mountaintop*, a fan-

By Stacey Kors

TELL IT ON THE MOUNTAIN

tastical, often humorously irreverent account of the night before King was assassinated on the balcony of Memphis's Lorraine Motel. This Dr. King, as written by thirty-year-old playwright Katori Hall '03CC and portrayed by Samuel L. Jackson, is a sometimes paranoid, sometimes playful chain-smoking womanizer with holes in his socks who nervously checks to see if his phone is tapped and flies into paroxysms of panic with every clap of thunder outside his motel window. The audience sees him drink and hears him urinate and curse and cry, childlike, in fear.

"I really wanted to deconstruct and humanize King," says Hall over lunch at New York's Café Luxembourg before an afternoon rehearsal back in September. "Before he gave that final speech in Memphis, everybody and their mama was like, 'Don't go to the church; they gonna bomb it.' I thought, Well, if the people who were just in the neighborhood, passing by the church, didn't want to go into it, I bet *he* didn't want to go into it. And it led me to the most amazing research, looking at wiretaps from the FBI and first-person accounts of people who were there at the speech.

"There's so much information out there, but there's nothing that cuts to the core of how you deal with knowing that there's a bullet waiting for you. I wanted to dramatically represent that in a way that could affect people, could move people, and, maybe, could change people's lives. This man stepped up, *in spite of*. This man changed the world, *in spite of*. What could I do?

"There was no grand plan to snatch him off the pedestal," she adds, a little defensively, "like, 'Ooh, I'm gonna make a name for myself.'"

Intentional or not, that's what Hall has done. Described by some as a cross between a Tony Kushner play and a Tyler Perry movie, *The Mountaintop*, which premiered in London and won the Olivier Award for the best new play of 2010, has met with both cheers and controversy in America. It has polarized not only critics but the black community as well — specifically, the older generation of African-Americans who experienced the civil-rights era of the 1950s and 1960s firsthand and canonize King for his inspirational leadership.

"A lot of black families in the South have on their wall what they call the Trinity," says Hall, who was raised in Memphis and now lives in New York. "They'll have pictures of King, Jesus, and Kennedy. In their eyes, I'm disrupting so many things. I'm an Uncle Tom; I'm a traitor to my race because I've decided to do my job and be a dramatist and put a human being on stage and not an idea."

Not only does Hall place a very human King at the Lorraine, but she brazenly gives him a motel-room companion: a young, pretty, and sassy angel disguised as a hotel maid named Camae, who is sent by God (a black woman) to chaperone King to the other side. Played in the Broadway production by Angela Bassett, Camae is

modeled after Hall's mother, Carrie Mae, whom she credits as the inspiration for *The Mountaintop*.

"I don't remember when my mother first told me this story," Hall says, "but she told it to me over and over again, every year on King's birthday or the day that he died. She'd say, 'You know, when I was fifteen I tried to go hear him speak, but I couldn't because Big Mama said that I couldn't — she heard that they was gonna bomb the church. So I decided to stay my ass at home. And I am so sorry I did, because I just never heard the man speak.' This story that she passed down to me, just by speaking it, became 3-D and real and alive. I decided that I needed to put it down on the page."

Camae may be based on Hall's mother, but there's plenty of the daughter in her as well. Whip-smart, funny, and attractive, with a ready smile, bubbly personality, and forthright manner, Hall exhibits a self-possession that belies her youth and a tough-girl defiance and an impolitic lack of self-censorship that confirm it. The Camae who calls the revered King a "bougie nigger" to his face has much in common with the playwright, who has no qualms about yelling at her Tony-nominated director, Kenny Leon, or telling one of the highest-grossing movie stars in history, who has a penchant for ad-libbing, "not to mess with my award-winning play." (Jackson responded with an opening-night card that read, "Thank you for the belligerence.")

Also like Camae, Hall seems comfortable with crude language — although she's quick to downplay how much she curses. "I got into a little tiff with Michael Schulman about that," she says with

"I really wanted to deconstruct and humanize King."

a laugh, referring to the author of a *New Yorker* profile of her that had recently appeared. "He spent five days with me in Memphis, and the only quotes he used were the ones I said 'fucking' in!"

Hall's audacity stems more from experience than recklessness. When Hall was in kindergarten, her parents — her father is a factory worker, her mother a phlebotomist — moved from a cramped apartment to a house in Raleigh, an almost exclusively white neighborhood in Memphis, hoping to provide their four daughters with a better life and their precocious youngest with greater educational opportunities. After being tested, Hall was accepted into the school system's program for gifted children. She was the only black student in some of her classes.

"I had a lot of white friends in school," says Hall, "but it can still be very isolating internally when you feel like people don't understand you. So you overperform whiteness in some way, whether by only having white friends or speaking in a very certain way, in order to be accepted by the community as a 'safe Negro.' But then sometimes you feel cast away from your kinship ties with black people, and even your blackness. That's why some people would call me



JOAN MARCUS

Samuel L. Jackson as Martin Luther King Jr.

Oreo and say, ‘You think you better than us,’ because I spoke in grammatically correct sentences — which I don’t always. It was an interesting line that I had to walk at an early age, one that a lot of post–civil rights black kids have had to walk. It can become an identity crisis if you let it. Or it can be a source of strength.”

For Hall, it was the latter. A talented student, she became the first black valedictorian at her high school, a goal she had set for herself in the sixth grade. When it came time for her to graduate, though, the school changed the usual procession order. Instead of the valedictorian leading the way, students were told to line up alphabetically.

“I don’t think it was a fluke,” she says. “In the school’s entire history, they’d always had the valedictorian go first. It was also weird that there was no mention of the fact that I was the first black woman valedictorian at the school in the newspapers or

anywhere. If it wasn’t blatant racism, it was something subconscious. People were still struggling to see everybody as equals, and that extended to the educational system.”

Hall was accepted to Columbia on a full scholarship. Coming from a home where vivid storytelling about the day’s events was a dinner-table ritual (“My parents are very dramatic people,” says Hall; “I learned from the best”), she decided to join Columbia’s theater department, which was housed at Barnard. Hall soon discovered that life in the “liberal” North would bring further racial challenges and identity struggles.

“I was in my second acting class at Barnard,” she says, “and my teacher told us to go to the library and find a play that had a scene for your type. My acting partner happened to be another black woman, and we really struggled to find a play embraced by the canon that had a scene for *two* young black women. So we went back to our instructor and said, ‘Please give us some suggestions,’ and she couldn’t think of *anything*. In that moment I thought, I’m going to have to write some plays with scenes for two young black women.”

To Hall, all her encounters at Barnard felt racially charged. In her first playwriting class, she says, her professor told her that she wasn’t a good playwright. “The other students thought I was bad, too,” she says. “All my characters were black, and I noticed that all the other characters were ethnic, too, but Jewish — most of the girls in my class were Jewish New Yorkers — and so each of them understood what the others were talking about. But when I would write about what I went through culturally, being in the South and being a black person, they would kind of not get it, and would say things like, ‘Oh, this doesn’t work.’”

The stage seemed as unwelcoming as the classroom. In the fall of 2001, Hall auditioned for a highly competitive senior-thesis production of Chekhov’s *Three Sisters*. Only a junior at the time, she was cast in a minor part; although that production included a black student in a leading role, Hall firmly believes that race was a factor in the decision. “I wasn’t the only person this happened to,” she contends. “People of color never got the prominent roles.” Already feeling isolated within the department, as well as in her new home of New York City on the heels of 9/11, Hall broke from the theater department completely, switching her major to African-American studies.

“I felt like I didn’t belong there,” she recalls, “that I was *made* to feel as if I didn’t belong there. I needed to learn more about myself, my culture, my heritage. In a weird way,” she adds, “it piqued a renaissance in me, in my interest in who I was and where I came from.”

Hall went to South Africa for the spring semester to study the arts and social change. “It was a country in transition, and living in the South, I had always felt I was living in a country in transition. I wanted to learn a lot more about that kind of black-and-white divide.” During that trip, she wrote *Freedom Train*, a performance-poetry piece about the oppression that can exist within activist movements, and she began to find her voice as a writer. “They gave

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me my own mike, and I performed my poetry with a band in front of a very open and embracing audience,” she says. “It was a life-changing experience: I began to see myself as a storyteller.”

Back in New York, Hall continued her acting outside of Columbia at the Harlem School of the Arts and also enrolled in the College’s creative-writing program. In her senior-year playwriting seminar, she was asked to write a scene about people fighting over an object. Hall, who was then reading Zora Neale Hurston’s *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, chose mojo. This time, her black characters worked.

“I finally realized that, in that first class, I was trying to write black characters but making them sound white,” she says. “Once I figured it out and stopped doing that, it just broke open for me.”

Out of that scene grew Hall’s first full-length play, *Hoodoo Love*, an unsentimental, sexually brutal story about a young blues singer in the 1930s who runs away to Memphis, falls in love unrequitedly, and enlists the help of an elderly former slave skilled in the African-American folk magic of hoodoo to win her heart’s desire.

“She could speak as well as any seminar student,” recalls Austin Flint, her playwriting professor, “but she hadn’t lost the language of her Memphis background, hadn’t forgotten how her grandmother and older relatives spoke. So she retained a very vibrant, genuine language with its own rhythms. To me, that good ear is one of the best predictors of who will become a professional playwright.”

After graduating from Columbia, Hall continued on her acting path, studying with director Robert Woodruff at Cambridge’s American Repertory Theater (ART), and receiving her MFA in 2005. During the two-year program, she revised and completed *Hoodoo Love* and discovered not only that playwriting was her passion but that it could be a professional possibility.

“It was at the ART that I was introduced to the plays of Suzan-Lori Parks and Lynn Nottage,” she says. “I knew they were out there, but now I was learning the lines and seeing inside the worlds that they’d created. I ate it up. Because I saw these two young black women — who had locks like mine — writing plays, I thought maybe I could really do this.”

Hall returned to New York after graduating, hoping to find acting work. (She won some small roles, including Woman Number Two in an episode of *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit*.) At the same time, she sent *Hoodoo Love* to the Cherry Lane Theatre Mentor Project, which matches three up-and-coming playwrights with three established dramatists and then stages the finished plays near the end of the season. Lynn Nottage was one of the mentors for 2006; she chose Hall’s play.

“I had moved back to New York with nothing, no money in my bank account,” Hall says. “I was walking down 42nd Street when I got the call, and started screaming. People probably thought, Oh, someone just died in her family. But I was finally being validated by somebody who was a writing idol to me.”

Like Flint, Nottage was taken with Hall’s command of Southern African-American vernacular. “I was struck by how she was able



Samuel L. Jackson and Angela Bassett in *The Mountaintop*.

to define a vocabulary that was evocative of the period,” Nottage says. “It immediately transported me back to that bluesy era, and the characters really leapt off the page for me. I knew exactly who they were. One of the difficulties many young writers have is bringing characters fully to life. That’s something Katori very successfully did.”

Following her critically lauded off-Broadway premiere at Cherry Lane, Hall was accepted to Juilliard’s playwriting program and received a Playwrights of New York Fellowship at the Lark Play Development Center, where *The Mountaintop* was first workshoped in 2009.

“It’s a very ambitious play,” says Nottage. “Katori was brave to take on an icon such as Martin Luther King and handle her exploration of him as a man in an incredibly irreverent way. She’s

not writing 'living room' or 'kitchen' plays. She's really tackling enormous issues."

"Lynn helped me understand what it was to be more than just a writer but to be an activist with your work," says Hall. "That your work is an extension of you, and the words you put on the page have to mean something — particularly since as women of color we don't get many opportunities to be on stage. So when we're given the opportunity, we gotta make it count."

For Hall, at least, the opportunities keep coming. Her latest play, *Hurt Village*, about a housing project in Memphis, receives its world premiere at New York's Signature Theatre in February. Set in 2002, *Hurt Village* is based on life in an actual development that has since been torn down; in her research, Hall discovered a forum on Facebook for former residents.

"They were all white," she says, "and from my own Facebook page it's obvious that I'm this little black girl. So I was like, 'I'm writing this play, and I would love to hear about how hurtful it was when you lived there.' These former residents lived there before 1968, right before King was shot. Everybody was giving me these idyllic memories of the project, how they would walk down to the store, how they would see Elvis . . . I call it racist Southern

"Lily-White Way," even though she is one of three African-American women playwrights debuting on Broadway this season — but is now more diplomatic and contemplative. Regardless of whether she had intended to court controversy, Hall has assumed the mantle of responsibility that comes with it.

"I don't know why the play has gotten the response it has," she says. "I haven't, oddly, thought about it too much. I don't read reviews, though I hear little bits here and there from people who are arguing around me, like friends who send me e-mails saying, 'Fuck the white man' and stuff like that. So I can't say I have a defense, or a response to the critics."

Yet when asked whether she feels that the lyricism of her language has been obfuscated by what some critics have labeled a miscast and heavy-handed production, Hall cautiously speculates on the reasoning behind the more negative reviews. "In London," she says, "it was a very understated production. We didn't have all the pomp and circumstance because we had no money. I wonder: are people responding to the play, or are they responding to choices made surrounding the play?"

She pauses thoughtfully, as if weighing the possibilities, and then tactfully changes course. "My work has a very different aes-

"I finally realized that, in that first class, I was trying to write black characters but making them sound white."

nostalgia. It's like, 'The South was so perfect, the South was amazing before the 1960s, before freedom came for them.'"

Then one day, Hall found a message in her personal Facebook inbox. "This woman said something like, 'I actually have to tell you that these people are really racist, and on the day that King was shot we had a barbecue, and everyone remembers that. When I commented on the fact that we had this celebration after King's murder, they kicked me off the page.' So they weren't honest with me about their political opinions.

"I thought it was interesting," she continues, "that this woman, very discreetly, sent me a sign through my Facebook message box. I feel like, down South, they're still not willing to have the conversation across color lines, except maybe in a space where they feel safe, like in front of a computer screen. I'm still trying to deconstruct it."

On a sunny Wednesday afternoon in mid-November, Katori Hall is lunching at Nizza, a favorite spot between Hell's Kitchen and the Theater District, before auditions for *Hurt Village*. *The Mountaintop*, despite a mixed reception from the press and doubtless aided by its star power and provocative buzz, continues to see strong ticket sales and had its run extended until late January.

After dozens of Broadway curtains and interviews, Hall appears more polished and professional than she had only two months before. She is still racially reactive — she refers to the

thetic, and what I'm gathering is that people were very surprised that it wasn't historical and super serious. Not only was I putting King in a room with a woman and giving him stinky feet, but the play has humorous undertones. I think that really threw people for a loop and made some people angry."

Hall wonders whether some theatergoers also felt alienated by her magical-realist approach to a relatively recent historical event, especially one so powerfully ingrained in America's collective consciousness.

"For some people, *The Mountaintop* isn't magic realism, it's supernatural," she says. "Not everybody believes in angels. I know I do, even though I'm not very religious. I do believe in heaven and earth being on the same plane, and spirits being able to speak to us. My mama's seen ghosts, you know, and so maybe that's why that way of approaching theater is alive in me.

"Or maybe it has something to do with being African-American, with that being part of my blood memory, where there's hoodoo and magic and roots. Other people might think it's hokey. All right," Hall says with an arch smile, "let my grandma put a hex on you, and let's see what you think in a year." 🍬

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“My doctors are trying to poison me.” These are the words not of a paranoid schizophrenic but of a clear-minded journalist named Leroy Sievers. Five years after being diagnosed with colon cancer, Sievers, increasingly aware that he would not survive the disease, began documenting his experience in a National Public Radio blog called *My Cancer*. In it, he related his struggles with the disease’s often-debilitating treatment.

“They call the process chemotherapy,” he wrote in 2006, two years before his death. “The idea is to poison the body enough to kill the cancer but not quite kill the patient. Best I can tell, it’s a difficult line to walk.”

Sievers was discovering what cancer researchers have known for decades: that chemotherapy, despite saving millions of lives since it was created in the 1940s, is a blunt, destructive tool. This is because it attacks all rapidly dividing cells in the body. Cancer cells are rapid dividers and highly susceptible to chemotherapy drugs, but so too are hair cells, skin cells, white blood cells, and cells that compose saliva and stomach fluids. The

result is a macabre race to treat the cancer before the drugs destroy the patient.

So why are we still using chemotherapy?

Brent Stockwell, an associate professor of biological sciences and chemistry at Columbia, says it’s because researchers have found it extremely difficult to develop drugs that target cancer cells specifically. Although scientists have made dramatic advances in their understanding of cancer’s basic mechanisms during the past few decades, most cancer drugs being used today are forms of chemotherapy developed as far back as the 1980s.

“There are a handful of so-called ‘targeted therapies’ that have been developed for specific types of cancer, including some forms of leukemia as well as skin, prostate, and breast cancers,” says Stockwell. “The survival rates for these cancers today are quite good. But most forms of cancer are still very difficult to treat because we don’t have therapies that are specific to them.”

To understand why, it is helpful to consider how drugs work. Often, a drug is a tiny molecule that slips inside a cell, attaches itself to a harmful protein, and, in

If scientists expect to cure cancer they need to take bigger risks, says Columbia biochemist Brent Stockwell.

By Douglas Quenqua

The Long Shot



doing so, disarms that protein. But the proteins that are responsible for most forms of cancer are slippery and oddly shaped; drugs have trouble attaching to them. For this reason, as Stockwell explains in his new book, *The Quest for the Cure: The Science and Stories Behind the Next Generation of Medicines*, many cancer researchers are reluctant to devote their energies to developing drugs that would target cancer



cells directly. Instead, they are trying to fine-tune more traditional chemotherapies with the hope of at least extending cancer patients' lives and relieving some of the drugs' devastating side effects.

"Today, if you want to look for drugs to interact directly with those tricky proteins inside cancer cells, you'll have a hard time getting any funding to do it," says Stockwell. "Federal funding agencies haven't invested a lot of money into this type of research lately because it's considered a lost cause. Even if you scrape up the money to do this sort of work, a scientist needs to consider, Am I going to stake my career on a long shot?"

In his own laboratory, Stockwell is swinging for the fences. He believes he can stop the slippery can-

cer proteins. At the center of his strategy is a specific protein called Ras, which is known to cause 20 percent of all cancers but which most of his colleagues long ago dismissed as "undruggable."

Stockwell concedes that the odds are against him. But to make big discoveries, he says, you need to take big chances.

"To my mind, there are different approaches to science," he says. "One approach is that you kind of turn the crank, you do what you're good at, and you move your field forward with incremental advances. My approach is to look for the home runs, to look for the big unsolved questions, and to try to come up with approaches that could really answer those questions and make a huge impact."

DROWNING IN THE SYNTHETIC SEA

Stockwell is a slight, fastidious man with neatly parted black hair and thin-rimmed eyeglasses. His office in Columbia's new Northwest Corner Building, a science and engineering tower at Broadway and 120th Street, is a study in organization, from the tidy rows of water bottles on his shelf to the precisely angled family pictures on his desk.

Stockwell, a forty-year-old Queens native, did his doctoral work in chemistry at Harvard in the late 1990s, an exciting time for drug discovery. After centuries of deriving medicines mainly from natural compounds, chemists were making great progress in synthesizing molecules that might be used as drugs. Companies were manufacturing huge collections of these synthetic molecules, which they sold to drug researchers. The researchers would essentially hurl these molecules at the protein they wanted to target, in hopes that one of the molecules would stick to it.

While working in the lab of the Harvard biochemist Stuart Schreiber, Stockwell started to look for a molecule that could shut down a squiggly, tapeworm-shaped protein named TGF-beta, which causes some tumors. Over the course of eighteen months, he tested sixteen thousand synthetic molecules assembled by commercial labs, but didn't find a single molecule that showed any promise of affecting TGF-beta.

"So then I thought, OK, it's probably not something that we can really find a compound to do," he says. "It's just an impossible, undruggable target."

However, to make sure that he had exhausted all possibilities, Stockwell conducted one last experiment. This time, instead of relying on synthetic products, he used a small library of naturally occurring

molecules, some two hundred extracts taken from hard-to-find marine sponges. To his amazement, one of these extracts showed a striking capacity to block the effects of TGF-beta. This taught Stockwell something that many other drug researchers were realizing around the same time: the synthetic molecules being churned out by commercial vendors were, for the most part, lousy drug candidates.

“There had been a lot of excitement about synthetic molecules initially because you could get your hands on huge numbers of them, which seemed to improve your odds of finding one that could act as a drug,” he says. “However, they tended to be flat, architecturally simple products. Natural molecules, in comparison, tend to be larger and more complex. Their structural richness, scientists came to realize, makes them better able to attach to other biological entities.”

As thrilling as the discovery was, Stockwell quickly found that natural molecules had their own drawbacks. Most notably, because they cannot be manu-

ers like Stockwell: those who work outside the normal confines of academic disciplines, at the nexus of chemistry, engineering, biology, and physics.

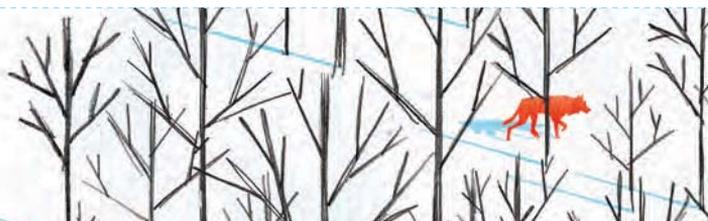
“Real-world problems are not simply biology problems or chemistry problems,” Stockwell says. “If you want to understand the physical forces that act upon molecules within human cells, or the electrical properties of single molecules, you need to bring together different types of researchers. Targeting an undruggable protein is this type of complex problem.”

Stockwell’s new laboratory is a bright, open space that is designed for collaboration. On one side, the room connects with the laboratory of Virginia Cornish ’91CC, a chemistry professor who creates artificial cellular pathways as a means of studying disease mechanisms.

“Virginia is also at the chemistry-biology interface,” Stockwell says. “So we put in a shared space between our labs.”

In his laboratory, Stockwell is now trying to find a drug to bind to the Ras protein, which is implicated

In the 1990s, companies manufactured huge collections of synthetic molecules, which researchers would essentially hurl at troublesome proteins in hopes that one would stick.



factured, there are limited quantities available. The world’s supply of the sponge extract he had identified was exhausted before Stockwell could finish his experiment. To this day, it remains a mystery whether that extract might have helped treat cancer.

“This is one of the reasons that few scientists today are chasing the most elusive proteins,” Stockwell says. “If you don’t find a drug candidate among the cheaply available synthetic molecules, you’re faced with looking at naturally occurring molecules that are much more expensive and in short supply. It’s a pragmatic challenge that has serious repercussions for our ability to develop new cancer treatments.”

AIMING AT CANCER’S SOURCE

From the nearly floor-to-ceiling windows in his new twelfth-floor office, Stockwell can look out on both Chandler Hall and the Sherman Fairchild Center, where he previously maintained separate chemistry and biology labs. The University conceived of the Northwest Corner Building precisely for research-

in about 90 percent of all pancreatic cancers and 50 percent of colon and lung cancers. Its job is to regulate cell growth in the body, which it does by toggling between “on” and “off” positions. When Ras is on, it’s instructing cells to divide; when it’s off, it’s telling them to stop. When Ras is healthy, it’s constantly fluctuating between these two positions. But when Ras breaks down — often as a result of a genetic mutation triggered by carcinogens — it tends to get stuck in the “on” position. The result is runaway cell growth, leading to tumors.

If researchers could find a way to shut down mutant Ras proteins, they might prevent some types of cancer. Scientists have long focused on the Ras protein, and many have tried to find a molecule to dismantle it, but, so far, they have produced nothing. To many scientists, Ras is just one more undruggable protein.

Stockwell isn’t so sure. As in his experience with TGF-beta in graduate school, he believes that finding the right molecule to bind with Ras is primarily a matter of working with better molecules. And he has devised a way to design his own high-quality molec-

ular candidates: he uses sophisticated computer models to synthesize molecules that are physically similar to natural molecules previously shown to have cancer-fighting qualities.

“The molecules we’re designing are based on the physical architectures of two naturally occurring molecules, one of which is found in chocolate and soy beans, the other in certain types of fungi,” Stockwell says. “A few years ago, my laboratory discovered that these two molecules will sometimes kill cancer cells that contain mutant Ras. So we’ve been synthesizing millions of compounds that are slight variations of these natural molecules, with the goal of creating a new molecule that’s perfect for latching onto the mutant Ras and disrupting it. This could enable us to treat many types of cancer, with few side effects.”

Although Stockwell’s approach is more strategic than the conventional method of throwing countless low-quality molecules at proteins to see if any will stick, he still believes that finding the right molecule requires testing many of them. The result is an emphasis on both quality *and* quantity.

“Our initial results are exciting,” says Stockwell. “We’ve identified some drug candidates that have real potential for locking into Ras. We need to do further experiments, but I’m optimistic we’re going to solve this.”

NO MORE CURES?

Even if Stockwell were to identify his elusive molecule tomorrow, an approved drug would likely be ten to fifteen years away. That’s how long it typically

improve treatments for some cancer patients,” says Stockwell, who reports his discovery in a forthcoming issue of a major academic journal. “We’re hoping that a pharmaceutical company will develop it into an actual drug that can operate in the human body.”

Stockwell believes the implications of his research go well beyond cancer. In *The Quest for the Cure*, he argues that scientists’ timidity in studying proteins that they fear are undruggable has contributed to a slowdown in drug discovery that has hobbled the entire pharmaceutical industry: the number of new drugs approved by the FDA annually has halved since the mid-1990s. In his own lab, Stockwell is also trying to disarm proteins that lie at the root of neurological diseases such as Huntington’s.

“All of the 20,000 or so drug products that have ever been approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration interact with just two percent of the proteins found in human cells,” he writes in *The Quest for the Cure*. “This means the vast majority of proteins in our cells — many of which, in theory, can modulate disease processes — have never been targeted before with a drug.”

Many scientists, he says, have taken this as evidence that these harmful proteins yet to be penetrated by drugs *cannot* be stopped. Pharmaceutical companies have also succumbed to this viewpoint, he says, shifting their priorities away from the discovery of new drugs in favor of finding new applications for existing ones.

“Pharmaceutical companies face tough economic questions,” Stockwell says. “Should they spend their

Scientists’ timidity in studying proteins that they fear are undruggable has contributed to a slowdown in drug discovery, says Stockwell.

takes for a pharmaceutical company to turn a molecule into a safe and effective drug.

In the meantime, Stockwell is pursuing other, more modest ways of improving cancer treatment. He recently made a breakthrough: he synthesized a molecule that, although it doesn’t bind to mutant Ras directly, is effective at killing certain types of cancer cells that contain the protein.

“This isn’t quite the home run we’ve been hoping for, because the molecule doesn’t seem to work against all Ras cancers, but one day it could dramatically

money going after proteins considered to be the most elusive? Or should they focus, perhaps, on fine-tuning their existing drugs in order to discover new clinical applications for them or to improve them just enough so that they can be marketed as new products?”

Pfizer chose to market sildenafil citrate, a heart medication, as Viagra when the company realized that it could be used to treat erectile dysfunction, he points out. And many drug companies have made incremental advances in cancer treatment by combining therapies in novel ways.



“The thousands of drugs that already exist represented the low-hanging fruit, because they work on proteins in our body that were the first ones scientists were able to decode,” Stockwell says. “The prospect of creating new drugs for the trickier proteins is exciting, but it’s also incredibly time-consuming, expensive, and risky. So pharmaceutical companies are choosing to spend a lot of their resources tweaking and repurposing drugs in order to squeeze as much profit out of them as possible.”

This has occurred at the same time that federal funding agencies have gradually shifted their support away from exploratory science endeavors and toward “translational research” that aims to turn proven scientific concepts into real-world tools. “Federal funding agencies really should be stepping in to fund the more basic research that drug companies are backing away from,” says G. Michael Purdy, the University’s executive vice president for research. “But we shouldn’t let the drug companies off the hook. They’re choosing short-term profits over their own long-term financial health and medical progress. That’s going to come back and bite them.”

Luckily, some federal funding for unconventional projects exists. This fall, the National Institutes of Health awarded Stockwell its new EUREKA grant,

for scientists conducting “innovative research on novel hypotheses or difficult problems.” The \$1 million grant will support Stockwell’s search for a molecule that could bind with the Ras protein.

Stockwell hopes that if he’s successful, his work will inspire other scientists — and funding agencies — to reopen the books on similarly dismissed proteins.

“In the course of time, an increasing percentage of proteins will likely be considered druggable,” he writes in *The Quest for the Cure*. “The day may even come, far into the future, when all disease-modifying proteins have been targeted successfully with drugs. This will represent the final triumph of human ingenuity, as we reach the pinnacle of medicine — when the majority of possible cures will have been realized.”

It’s a grand description of a utopian future. Which is exactly the point, Stockwell says.

“The book and the research are really about the question rather than the answer,” he says. “There’s no magic bullet that’s going to fix all of these proteins that cause disease, but we need to go after them a lot more aggressively.” 

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Half of All of What Was True

By Josh Weil | Illustrations by Vivienne Flesher

It was the first hot day of spring. Here in her husband's world, this Texas trailer park, that couldn't have meant anything more different than what it had meant back in Romania, back in the mountain village where Rozalia had grown up. But, still, standing in the open door after Rolly had left for work, she felt an augural dryness in the air, felt her childhood on haying days, that same sense of a new sun holding back. She could almost hear her mother filling the water bottles at the pump, the steady clang of her father in the barn hammering last year's bends out of the scythe blades.

All morning in the doublewide, she kept the air conditioner off. She liked to work in heat, liked the way it made her muscles feel looser, the movements of her arms

more fluid as she wove, the throb of her thigh as she pumped her foot, liked, too, the sweat; there was something more satisfying about finishing a piece with dampness sticking her back to the chair slats, something more *done* about getting up from the loom to wash the heat off her face with splashes of cold water at the sink.

Maybe it was the heat of the day, or the fact that she had left the lights off and the dim bathroom felt a world removed from the glare of dirt outside, but she found she didn't want to go back to her work. It was just after noon, a little later than the hour her father would have sent her down from the fields to make their lunch. Her grandfather would be the only one home, the only sound his steady breathing from the pallet where he slept in the dining room. The whole house still. Something delicious,

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almost sinful, about being at home, alone, in her parents' house in the middle of the day. In the kitchen, she would saw through the bread, lay out the cold slices of lamb, small moons of radishes. Sometimes, she would call her little brother, send him up to the fields with lunch, wait for the sound of him talking to himself in his high child's voice to fade into the distance, then slip from the coolness of the kitchen to the coolness of the barn, carrying with her a slice of lamb, bread, a small cup with an illicit taste of her father's juice, and the tingling thrill of playing hooky. Always, when her father finally came down an hour later, he would be angry. Always, that hour of doing nothing in the cool, dark barn would be worth it.

In the bathroom of the doublewide, she dried her face on the hand towel. It smelled of Rolly. She didn't like how much she was thinking about the past these days. That's not the kind of person she had ever been. But when she turned to leave the dimness of the bathroom, there was the bright sun blasting into her workroom down the hall, and the quietness of the trailer all around her, and Rolly, on the other side of town, working all day beneath pipes, and a younger voice than hers speaking to her in Romanian, whispering, as if afraid to wake her grandfather sleeping in the next room.

At the swimming spot, she pulled her car off the flat parking place Rolly had made and into the uncleared mess of sage, feeling foolish secreting it behind a mud bluff. She set the cooler in the car's shade, spread her towel in the sun.

The Rio was brown as puddle water on a dirt road, but the river was cool and the movement of the current made it feel clean. She swam against the drift for a while, first crawl, then breaststroke, then sidestroke, long and powerful, feeling pleasure in how well her muscles worked, how efficient she was — hands cupped just right, legs scissoring, her elbow barely lifting out of the water. She dove under, swam shut-eyed until she felt the bank. At the rope swing, she unlooped the rope from its hook. Even in the hot sun, a breeze shook a shiver from her. Through the entire rushing swoop, she clenched her teeth around a smile, and when the rope reached the end of its arc, she flung herself from it: a high, laughing shout launched into the air, away from her, as she dropped into her own explosion.

Floating on her back, shut eyelids glowing red, the sun hot on her face, she filled her chest with air and rode the river at the speed it took her. As a girl, she had loved swimming, had traveled two hours by bus to compete with the team in Sighetu, had loved chemistry, too, had been the best in her English language class, could have

been a translator in Bucharest, in Washington, DC, at the United Nations; could have gotten certified, at least, been an English teacher in her own town, been a Romanian teacher in Cluj or Oradea; could have worked anywhere doing what she did now — London, Paris, Barcelona; had always dreamed of living in an apartment with a rooftop pool, of driving across America in her own car, visiting Chicago, in winter, to see just how bad it was; had wanted to be a doctor, a midwife, to go to a drive-in movie theater, have a membership to a gym, own a laptop computer, a laser printer, her own store. Maybe just a bar. But hers. Children? She had never wanted to be a mother. She had never even, really, wanted to be a wife.

No, that wasn't true. She rolled off her back, straightened up, treaded water. Half of all that wasn't true, she told herself, or at least it wasn't true half of the time. She had not wanted to be a wife the way her mother was a wife: patching the family clothes, churning out feed for the men, a life devoted to the daily running of someone else's things. But that was precisely the peasant woman's world that she had left. To come here. With Rolly. She turned around, looked back at the river throwing its current at her. The rope swing was out of sight. She looked for a landmark she might recognize. Saw none. Not even a glimpse of road. Just the vast dry scrub of Mexico and the endless same on the Texas side. She lay herself into the current, started a steady crawl. She may not have wanted a husband, but she had wanted Rolly. Which, she reminded herself, was what she had. Her shoulders began to ache. She had only made it a small distance upriver, but she kept at it, elbows lifting lower over the water, hands dragging. She had wanted him more than she had wanted any of the rest. Or, at least, she had wanted him just as much.

Somewhere around the time she reached the curve in the river, she realized that she still did. Deep in her, between the cold flutter of water against her downward belly and the sun rubbing its dry heat into the exposed back of her neck, she felt the fact of it hit. She coughed: water in her lungs, her breath suddenly choppy. She straightened up, treaded long enough to see that the rope-swing pole was still hidden from her. On the shore, the road was a black curve between humps of brown earth. She watched it, the river slowly pushing her backwards despite her treading, and started again, struggling back up to the bend, swimming hard. A sharp pain jabbed her side. She stopped. Rolled onto her back. "*Cacat,*" she said to the sky. It took her swear and smothered it in all its limitlessness of blue.

She was wading ashore, still out of sight of the rope swing, when the truck pulled into view: a white SUV,



green stripe slashed across its flank, gold insignia, flashers asleep on its roof. It sat there, idling. The man inside sat there, looking at her. She was acutely aware of how little she had on: two pieces of blue swimsuit, wet to near black, and nothing else but her ring. The water sucked at her calves. The SUV's window slid down.

"*Buenas tardes, señora,*" the border patrolman called.

He had taken his sunglasses off, and he held them dangling by one ear grip pinched between his teeth.

"Hi," she said. "I speak English. I was only swimming."

His eyes seemed to squint. Even from that distance, she could tell it was more from smiling than from the sun. "That's what they all say," he called, "though I'll give you it's a rare one wears a bikini." He spoke through his teeth, the sunglasses jiggling in time with his words. "You got a vehicle?"

She nodded.

"Where's this vehicle at?"

"Up the road."

"How far?"

"Not far."

He seemed to wait for something else, then put his sunglasses back on. "Okay."

She half-waved a goodbye. The truck sat there, shaking a little under its hood. He was pretending to look for something on the dash. She stepped the rest of the way out of the river. His eyes flicked back to her and slid the distance of her legs.

"You need a ride?" he said.

Around her, the river water dripped: small dark circles like beauty marks on the pale ground.

"Thanks. No."

"You just gonna sunbathe there on the mud?"

"I can walk."

His laugh made her feel as if she'd taken a half-dozen steps closer to the truck. "Well, so can I," he said. "I can cook, too. But I still like to go to a restaurant."

Walking around the front of the truck, she watched him reach across the seat to pop the door open for her. She stood in the blow of the air conditioner.

"I'll get your seat soaked," she said.

While he reached for something in the back, she shifted from one foot to the other, the asphalt burning her feet.

"Stand up here on the runner," he told her as he spread his jacket out. He did it neatly, folded it so she'd sit on the clean inside instead of the dust, made a perfect square pillow of it, patted it once. "Hop in," he said.

As they drove, she listened to him talk to her, and tried not to say too much back, and tried even harder not to let herself look at him, and did. He had curly thick hair,

so black it was nearly blue, eyebrows just as dark and thick and eyes even darker; they caught hers, held hers, and then let hers go with a glance back at the road. She looked out her window at the desert whipping by. It was a landscape she had only known with Rolly; she couldn't imagine it existing without him, just as, after all these years, it was hard to remember how different he'd been without that landscape.

The patrolman — he'd told her his name, but she had not wanted to remember it — was talking about a restaurant he knew in the city he was from. He smelled faintly of freshly ironed clothes. She could feel the trickles of the river all over her body, icy in the air conditioning; they sent shivers over her belly, her thighs. He reached over and shut the AC off. She gave her smile to the window instead of him. Rolly was the only American she had ever kissed. A strand of wet hair was stuck to her cheek, tickling her lip. She reached up to move it. As soon as she had, she felt his eyes flick to her hand, felt the sudden change in the air inside the truck. For just a second, she wished she had kept her fingers tucked beneath her thigh. As if on their own, her eyes slipped back to his again. But his stayed on the road. She could see him feeling her look. It surprised her how long it took before she let him out from under her gaze. Her body didn't seem to want

The Rio was brown as
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to yield the moment to him, even as she grew uneasy, then nervous; she could feel excitement pumping into her chest. She wondered if that was how men felt when they held their stares on women walking by. It had been so long since she'd kissed a man without a mustache that she couldn't remember what it would feel like, other than completely different.

"That it?" he said.

"Sorry?"

"That your car?"

"Oh." They were already passing it. "Yes. Yes, that's —"

He braked, reaching suddenly across her front as they jerked to a stop. She fell forward against his arm. When he pulled his arm back, she could see a dark spot of wetness where her suit top had pressed at his sleeve.



“Sorry,” he said. “Reflex. I got a kid.”

“It’s okay.”

“I’m divorced, but I got a kid.”

He said it coldly. Something about that got to her: the way he’d tried to use his voice like something sprayed between them to cover a scent; the snick of her door unlocking at the insistence of his finger on some button on his side; the way he still wouldn’t look at her, as if she had already done something wrong.

“Would you mind pulling in?” she said. Some explanation about the asphalt burning her feet was on her tongue, but she held it. Instead, she just pointed with a small movement of her hand.

“Down there?”

“If it’s no trouble,” she said.

He drove the SUV down to the edge of the picnic sand. The truck idled on the slant, its nose tilted toward the river. The patrolman pressed his weight on the brake pedal. Gravity pulled her toward the dash. She asked him if he had a cigarette. And watched him squirm

under the decision of how to answer. He reached into an armrest cubby, brought out a pack, tapped it, let her pull one.

“Have to open the windows,” he said. “Chief doesn’t like the smell.”

They each slid their window down. The cool air leaked out. The hot air came in. He cupped a match for her. While she drew at it, she watched the sheen on the side of his neck, above his collar, where he was beginning to sweat. They smoked. They watched the river. His leg was shaking a little from pushing at the brake.

“This place private?” he said. His voice had lost its coolness. She wasn’t sure what had taken over in its place. She shrugged.

“I mean, is it yours, or the town’s?” He said too fast, “I mean, is it something you made like this?”

“My husband did it,” she said.

He nodded a couple times, as if he had something to add to that. “Maybe we should just finish these,” he said, “and then I’ll be on my way.”





She took a long inhale, blew out, and tossed her cigarette onto the sand. “Instead of what?” she said.

He stared at her. “I don’t feel right about this.”

“What do you have to feel wrong about?”

“You’re another man’s wife.”

“Are you telling me this because you think I don’t know?”

“We aren’t neither of us gonna feel good,” he said. Then added, “Afterwards.”

She knew he meant that he wasn’t going to feel good about it. She knew he meant that she should think about him, about his coming feelings of guilt, what burdens her actions might place on his mind. She worked at the ring on her finger while he talked of the repentance they’d feel, of other men he’d known, buddies on the patrol who had done such things and regretted it after, of the fact that he used to drink and had to be careful not to do things that would drive him back to it. When she got the ring off, she pulled her bikini top out a little and dropped the gold in. It was cool against her skin, a small hard circle weighing at the fabric against the bottom curve of her breast.

“You know,” he said, “the thing is,” and he said, “I have a fiancée,” but he was pulling up on the hand brake, yanking it hard, and turning to her when she leaned across to kiss him.

She missed the mustache. Where there usually was the thick, soft warmth of it nuzzling above her and Rolly’s lips, there was just the patrolman’s shaved undernose skin smearing its sweat against hers. It was like cuddling in bed without a blanket. She missed the tickle of the hairs and feeling her own smile against Rolly’s lips. Plus, the patrolman kept on doing something with his teeth. She tried to use the pressure of her lips to guide him away from whatever biting, nipping, scraping thing he was trying to do, but he wasn’t paying attention. She became aware of the fact that his hands weren’t touching her. And then that, instead, they were doing something at the level of their laps. At first, she thought he was trying to untie the strings of her bikini, but then she realized that was just his knuckles touching her by accident; he was unbuckling his own belt. She put a hand over his to make it quit.

He stopped trying to bite her long enough to say, against her mouth, “What is it?” and then, before she could answer, “I just need to give it air.”

She pushed away from him.

“I just need to get it out,” he said. “I wasn’t gonna do anything. I just need to give it a little room.”

Every time he said that word — *need* — she felt herself wince. “Tell you what,” she said, and tried to rid her

mind of hearing Rolly in the phrase she’d picked up from him, “Why don’t you just sit there.”

His hands were frozen on the zipper of his uniform slacks. “It was just starting to hurt,” he told her. “It gets cramped.”

The whine in his voice was almost enough to make her get out of the truck right then. It seemed to her that, in some way, always, day after day, she couldn’t get away from the pleading, the needing, the wanting her to take care of it and make it better.

“Give me your hand,” she said, and told him to stay still as she took it and brought it to herself.

When she was done, she gave the patrolman his hand back. He said something she didn’t listen to enough to remember and took out his wallet and a card out of that

She worked at the ring on her finger while he talked of the repentance they’d feel.

and offered it to her. His hand was shaking. She took the card, got out, shut the door, and dropped it to the sand. Standing in the full slam of the sun, she fished her ring out of her bikini top while he stared at her through the window. It took her some time to get the ring back on. When she crossed in front of the truck, he called to her. She turned to him long enough to say, “Now you don’t have anything to feel guilty about.” Then walked away to her car and waited for him to leave.

When he did, she turned and watched the road winding into the distance until she could no longer see even the occasional sun glint of the fast-disappearing truck. In the quiet after, she slowly waded out into the river. By the time she was deep enough to wash between her legs, she was feeling sick. She scooped a handful of gritty mud and stood in the cool water, her swimsuit bottom pulled down around her thighs, scrubbing at the fabric as if she could wear away even the pattern. For a while after, she just stood on the beach Rolly had built, feeling her lower half slowly dry. The sand was strewn with a few empty beer cans from their last picnic. Her car, and the beach towel, and the cooler all looked to her like someone else’s things. For the next half hour, she cleaned the beach of all the leavings of all the picnics they had scattered through the last years, piled the rusted wheel-rim fireplace with beer cans and chip bags and bottle caps and a hundred other things so distorted by the gnaw of time she could no longer even tell what they had once been. 

History in the Making

Historian Valerie Paley gives a heads-up on her makeover of the New-York Historical Society's permanent exhibit. // By Julia M. Klein

“Use the busts. Tell that story. Go.” These were the marching orders that Valerie Paley ’11GSAS was given in 2008 when the head of the New-York Historical Society Museum & Library asked her to curate an exhibition called *New York Rising*. The show, which combines a crowded, salon-style display of artifacts and images with touchscreen technology, was designed to be the centerpiece of the society’s first-ever permanent installation and a key part of its recent \$70 million renovation.

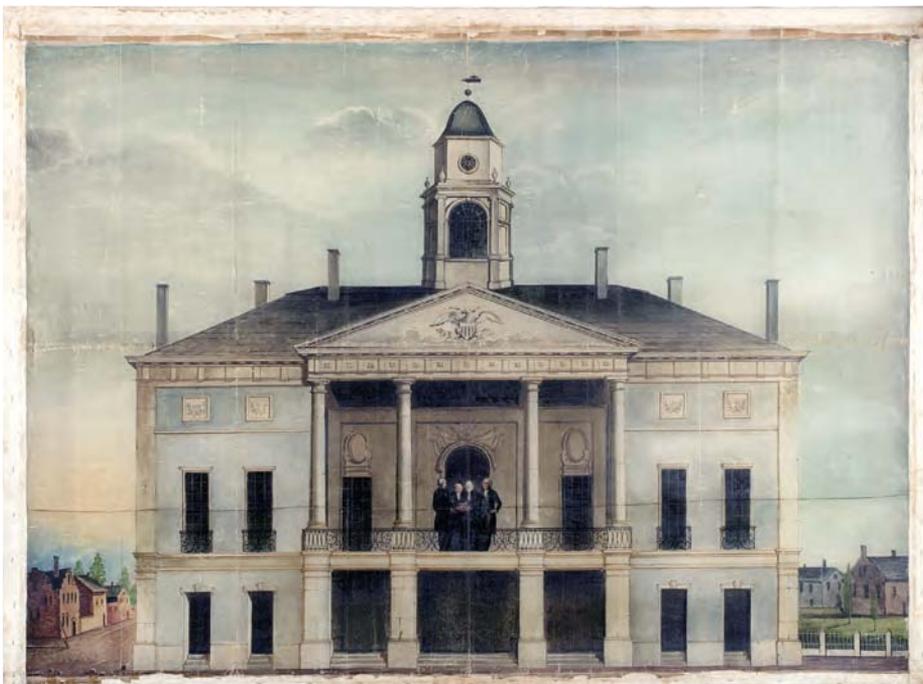
Paley, who is the society’s historian for special projects, faced a daunting curatorial task. The show’s intended focus was Revolutionary and Federalist New York, including the city’s occupation by the British, its largely unheralded role as America’s first capital, the birth of Wall Street, and the 1804 founding of the New-York Historical Society itself. Paley knew she had to employ the traditional artifacts in the collection, starting with the busts. This posed a serious problem.

“We don’t do the history of dead white men,” Paley explains. “It’s not the sort

of history we’re taught in the academy anymore, nor is it the sort of history that is revered among scholars. We want to do something a little deeper and more nuanced. But to superimpose the new social history on busts of dead white men can be a fraught process.”

Paley was born in New York City in 1961 and grew up in Greenwich Village, where, she says, “I always had this palpable sense of history around me.” But her route to becoming a historian was circuitous: she trained, from age three to fourteen, with the Joffrey Ballet, until an injury caused her to switch to modern dance (as a teenager she performed with the Valerie Bettis Dance/Theater Company). Following what she calls her “thwarted career as a ballet dancer,” Paley entered Vassar College, where she majored in English and psychology. After graduation, she joined her father’s graphic-design business, becoming first art director, then creative director. She retired in 1990 when her son was born (she now has a daughter as well and is married to a “semi-retired money manager”). But she soon found that “stay-at-home mothering as a full-time job wasn’t really my thing.”

So, at thirty-three, Paley entered Columbia as a master’s student in liberal studies, with a concentration in American studies. “Everything I did there was tailored around the idea of New York history and New York culture and architecture and preservation,” she says. “I absolutely loved it. I was almost bereft when I finished.”



President Washington Taking the Oath, Federal Hall, 1789, by Giuseppe Guidicini, 1839



Encouraged by her mentor, Kenneth T. Jackson, the Jacques Barzun Professor in History and the Social Sciences, Paley laid aside plans to be an archivist and enrolled in Columbia's doctoral program in history. She received her PhD this past May and was class valedictorian. Her dissertation discussed how the trustees of New York cultural institutions "shaped the cultural infrastructure of the city" and argued that the city's "openness to difference . . . made for some exceptional, world-class institutions."

Meanwhile, Paley had been volunteering at both the New-York Historical Society and the Museum of the City of

New York. In 2002, Jackson, who was president of the New-York Historical Society at the time and is now a trustee, offered Paley a position as editor of the society's journal. Paley accepted. This led her to the editorship of several exhibition catalogs. Then, in 2008, she got the call from Jackson's successor, Louise Mirrer: would Paley be interested in creating the new permanent installation in the Robert H. and Clarice Smith New York Gallery of American History?

"She's very good and very smart," Mirrer says, when asked why she selected Paley.

"She had just completed a dissertation on this period, so the research was very fresh in her mind. And I knew I could work with her. People are going to judge the institution on this installation, and I wanted personally to make sure it met all expectations for giving people a palpable sense of history."

And her exhortation to "use the busts"?

"Busts, in my opinion, are one of the most visceral expressions of the founding era," Mirrer says. "You're here with these people, they look at you, and I thought that museum-goers would feel the thrill of historical discovery were these people to come alive for them."

So Paley asked her staff to survey the relevant busts in the collection. Then, she says, “all of a sudden, we started making this Venn diagram of relationships. For example, John Jay [1764KC] and Robert Livingston [1765KC]: frenemies. They were very close friends who met in college and then became bitter enemies and political rivals.” In the collection were busts of both statesmen,

New York Rising suggests that the Revolution and its aftermath didn't just consist of “men marching around in costumes,” Paley says.

as well as letters between them that hinted at the complexity of the relationship.

In examining the era, Paley's staff eventually produced an astonishing three thousand pages of research, which they boiled down to five hundred. They called on Small Design Firm, in Cambridge, Massachusetts,

to help them create technology that would allow visitors to drill deep into both the history and the objects on view — “almost the way a historian does research,” Paley says. Eventually, the touchscreens were supplemented by wall labels, an iPhone app, and a program guide.

New York Rising has five sections: “Revolution,” “Marketplace,” “Capital,” “Pol-

itics,” and “Civilization.” Each is anchored by a large painting that serves “as a kind of gateway into the larger story that we're trying to tell,” Paley says. Vitri- nes contain an apparent jumble of smaller objects, including a brick from a tavern, a pair of child-sized slave manacles attached to a

cast of a child's hands, and one prize loan, from JPMorgan Chase: the dueling pistols used by Alexander Hamilton 1776KC and Aaron Burr. Below these, at floor level, are objects such as the prosthetic leg of Gouverneur Morris 1768KC and a keg that New York governor DeWitt Clinton 1786CC used to inaugurate the Erie Canal.

And the busts? Instead of positioning them high up, as though “they were looking down at the civilization below,” Paley says, she decided that “we'll scatter them around the way the men were scattered around the city at the time.”

The exhibition's juxtapositions are meant to be provocative. Near a large, headless statue of the British parliamentarian William Pitt, targeted by loyalists for his colonial sympathies, hangs a painting of an angry New York mob pulling down a monument to King George III. Beside it is another memento of that scene: a sculptural fragment from the tail of the horse the king was riding. Three artifacts, two acts of vandalism during the American Revolution: the connections aren't immediately obvious, but, once explained, they convey the tumult of the period.

The display also includes the utterly unexpected — such as a nineteenth-century portrait of a homely woman once thought, incorrectly, to be New York's royal governor Lord Cornbury (1661–1723), in women's clothes. An old label on the portrait advances this claim. Paley says she had to battle a curator who didn't want this historical mistake displayed. “That's why I want it there — because it's wrong,” Paley says. “History is a reflection of the time in which it's written. We use the portrait to represent [American feelings about] the decadence of British culture. But we're also using it as an object lesson in how history is told.”

In the end, *New York Rising* suggests that the Revolution and its aftermath didn't just consist of “men marching around in costumes,” Paley says. “Children were there; slaves were there. We want to capture the hustle, the bustle, the



Pulling Down the Statue of King George III, New York City, by Johannes A. S. Oertel, 1852-1853



Alexander Hamilton
by Giuseppe Ceracchi,
circa 1793

smells, the feeling of what it's like to live in this period.”

New York Rising, it turned out, was just the starting point of the Smith Gallery, a modern, light-filled expanse visible through glass doors from Central Park. When it became clear that the space could hold more content, Paley filled it with a remarkable variety of exhibits, introducing the society's collections, aims, and stance toward historical interpretation.

The first exhibit a visitor is likely to encounter is an installation by Fred Wilson titled *Liberty/Liberté*. Made for a 2006 show, *Legacies: Contemporary Artists*

Reflect on Slavery, the piece incorporates busts of George Washington and Napoleon, a wrought-iron balustrade from Federal Hall (where Washington was inaugurated), a tobacco-shop sculpture of an African-American, and slave shackles. Paley says it suggests a dialogue about “what is liberty to this slave and what is liberty to these freedom fighters who were slaveholders.” The Wilson piece is not only a commentary on the contradictions embedded in America's founding myths but also serves as an introduction to the historical society itself, showing, Paley says, “that we embrace that sort of critical history.”

One of the most engaging aspects of the Smith Gallery is *History Under Your Feet*, a tribute to urban archaeology. Displayed below the floor, in nine manhole-like exhibition cases, are such artifacts as the shoes of a child killed in a 1904 fire aboard a steamboat called the *General Slocum* (the deadliest catastrophe in New York before 9/11) and a crushed clock, stopped at 9:04 a.m., recovered from the World Trade Center debris.

The clock is positioned underneath the scratched and battered door of a fire truck used by first responders on 9/11. Both are adjacent to *Here Is New York*, seventy-five photographs of the terrorist attacks and their aftermath, including images of the smoke enveloping the World Trade Center, the search for survivors, and a rally in defense of Muslims. *Here Is New York* faces *New York Rising*, and, as Paley points out, echoes it both visually, in its salon-style display, and intellectually, as a testament to New York's capacity to remake itself after disaster.

Also in the Smith Gallery are screens showing collection highlights, a ten-foot-tall display case for large-scale treasures, and a video animation based on Johannes A. S. Oertel's *Pulling Down the Statue of King George III, New York City* (1852–1853), which is displayed in *New York Rising*. The animation, inspired by the painting, responds to the movements of onlookers. When enough people congregate in front of it, the video mob pulls down the statue — a way, Paley says, of reminding visitors that they, too, have a role in the history of New York, that it wasn't only the men whose heads were cast in marble and bronze who made things happen.

“There's a process, and there's a layering of history, and there's no right and wrong necessarily,” Paley says. “History is part of a continuum — and the museum visitor is part of that.”

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

NEWS

Next stop, Istanbul: Global Center opens in Turkey

Columbia, as part of an ongoing effort to expand its academic presence overseas, recently opened a Global Center in Istanbul, Turkey.

The new center, officially inaugurated with a series of events in Istanbul from November 1 to 3, joins a network of Columbia Global Centers established in Amman, Beijing, Mumbai, Paris, and Santiago over the past three years. The center's staff will help Columbia faculty pursue new research, teaching, and service projects by putting them in touch with local collaborators; it will foster new student-exchange and fellowship opportunities; and it will host conferences, seminars, and social events open to alumni in the region.

"The goal is to promote a wide range of collaborations between faculty and students from Columbia and their Turkish counterparts," says Ipek Cem Taha '93SIPA, '93BUS, a Turkish journalist and businesswoman who is serving as the center's interim director. "We have a lot to learn from one another."

Turkey is already the site of several research and service projects led by Columbia professors. The psychologist Jack Saul, for instance, is working with Turkish colleagues to train mental-health-care professionals to treat people traumatized by war, political violence, and domestic abuse; Elazar Barkan, an expert on conflict resolution, is working with the Istanbul-based nonprofit Anadolu Kültür to develop cultural exchanges between ethnic Turks and Armenians; and Holger Klein, an art historian, is studying Byzantine art and architecture in the Turkish city of Vize.

Karen Barkey, a Columbia sociology professor, has been appointed to lead a faculty steering committee to identify additional Columbia professors interested in launching projects in Turkey. "I'm already receiving a lot of phone calls from academics at Turkish universities with ideas for new projects," says Barkey, who has written about religious and ethnic tolerance in the early Ottoman Empire. "I'm pairing them with Columbia faculty who would make good research partners."

In early November, president Lee C. Bollinger, acting provost John Coatsworth, and several deans traveled to Istanbul to attend the center's opening, where Columbia professors participated in a series of public discussions with Turkish, Egyptian, and Iranian intellectuals about pressing issues that scholars could pursue at the new center. One panel, moderated by journalism professor Sheila Coronel, considered how the Internet is providing a platform for more independent journalism while also spreading disinformation and hate speech. Another examined how recent Turkish history holds lessons for Egypt's nascent democracy movement.

"A theme that emerged from our talks is that Turkey has already gone through a lot of the changes that protesters in Egypt and other Arab countries are now demanding," says Barkey. "Turkey once had a military leadership that hindered its democratization. And many secularists were tempted to support the military, for fear of what could happen if Islamists took over. Yet over the past couple of decades, Turkey's government, although influenced by Islam, has become increasingly liberal and protective of minority rights."

Mustafa Akyol, a local political analyst and deputy editor of the *Turkish Daily News*, said that economic development was instrumental in liberalizing social attitudes in Turkey. "As a middle class developed here, people started to see the world through a different lens," he said. "Many are still pious Muslims, but their Islam tends to be more globalized and open to outside influences." Amira Howeid, an editor of the English-language newspaper *Al-Abram Weekly*, which is based in Cairo, expressed optimism that Egypt will become a tolerant democracy. "Among the younger generation, we're already witnessing new bodies of thought, new types of liberal Islam," she said. "What exactly will emerge, we're not sure."

The new Global Center occupies about 3,000 square feet in a stone-faced, 19th-century building in Istanbul's modern center, Taksim Square. It features several offices and a large conference facility.

"Any Columbians traveling through Istanbul are welcome to stop by," says Kenneth Prewitt, Columbia's vice president of Global Centers. "The center is a place where you can conduct meetings, hold an academic conference, or simply gather with fellow alumni."

To watch a Columbia Alumni Association-produced video of the November panel discussions, visit globalcenters.columbia.edu.



Art historian Holger Klein measures part of a Byzantine-era church during an archaeological survey in Vize, Turkey. The new Columbia Global Center in Istanbul is encouraging more faculty to pursue research in the region.

Lenfest pledges \$30 million for new arts building

One of Columbia's most generous benefactors has given the University its largest gift ever for the arts: a \$30 million pledge for a new exhibition and performance venue.

The latest gift from H. F. "Gerry" Lenfest '58LAW, '09HON, a University Trustee who has donated to Columbia more than \$100 million over the years, will support the construction of a six-floor,

53,000-square-foot building on the new Manhattanville campus. The building, to be named the Lenfest Center for the Arts, will be located on a public plaza being created on West 125th Street between Broadway and 12th Avenue, and will be used primarily for showcasing the works of students and faculty, as well as those of visiting artists. It will contain a gallery; a film screening room; a versatile dance and performance space; and a presentation area for readings, symposiums, and seminars.

"The Lenfest Center will be a fantastic venue for our programs," says Carol Becker, dean of the School of the Arts. "It's going to allow us to reach new audiences and to build relationships with local communities. And it will offer the possibility of live performances, film screenings, readings, and exhibitions all under one roof."

The gift was announced on November 17 at Columbia College's annual Alexander Hamilton Dinner, at which Lenfest was given the College's highest honor, the Alexander Hamilton Medal.



EILEEN BARROSO

Gerry Lenfest at the November Hamilton Dinner.

"The breadth of Gerry Lenfest's philanthropy and generosity to Columbia is truly remarkable," says President Lee C. Bollinger. "From the law school he attended to the humanities and sciences, from the Earth Institute to our medical center, Gerry has provided the sustainable source of energy for excellence across a diversity of University life and scholarship. This latest gift not only reflects the extraordinary leadership in the arts that he and his wife, Marguerite, have long demonstrated in their home city of Philadelphia, it ensures that our thriving School of the Arts will finally have a facility that matches its astonishing creativity, and the University will have a vital new space for engagement in the robust cultural life of Harlem."

The Lenfest Center for the Arts is being designed by the Italian architect Renzo Piano. It will be built as part of the first phase of the Manhattanville campus's construction.

To watch a video about the impact of Lenfest's past giving to Columbia, visit giving.columbia.edu/lenfesteffect.

CAA hosting trip to Istanbul

Alumni and parents will join Columbia faculty experts in Istanbul, Turkey, from May 23 to 27, to explore the history, art, architecture, and culture of the city that bridges two continents.

The exclusive trip, hosted by the Columbia Alumni Association, draws on the efforts of Columbia's new Global Center in Istanbul and the Columbia University Club of Turkey, which is led by Ilknur Aslan '98SIPA. The trip is open to graduates of all Columbia schools and colleges.

Highlights of the long weekend will include tours with arts dean Carol Becker, art historian and Byzantine-architecture

specialist Holger Klein, and sociologist and historian of Ottoman culture Karen Barkey, as well as a private introduction to Turkish classical music. Culinary pleasures will include a dinner cruise on the Bosphorus, Turkish home-cooking lessons, and visits to the city's spice market.

A Columbia Conversation with prominent Turkish alumni, moderated by Ipek Cem Taha '93SIPA, '93BUS, a Turkish journalist and the interim director of the Global Center, will be streamed live on the Web from the event.

For more information, contact Ilene Markay-Hallack at im2@columbia.edu or 212-851-7841.



ROBERT RAE

In May, Columbia alumni will tour sites in Istanbul, Turkey, including the seventeenth-century Sultan Ahmed Mosque, or Blue Mosque.



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Endowment empowerment

Among all universities and foundations with endowments of at least \$1 billion, Columbia has earned the best returns on its investments over the past eight years.

That's apparent from financial statements released last fall. Columbia's investments earned a 12.1 percent annualized rate of return for the eight-year period between fiscal years 2004 and 2011; among all 94 universities and foundations with \$1 billion-plus endowments, the median annualized average return was 7.7 percent.

"Columbia has adopted an investment strategy that is explicitly designed to deliver long-term results," says Robert Kasdin, the University's senior executive vice president. "So it's remarkable that our investment team has tended to outperform both in years when the capital markets have been strong and when they've been weak. Typically, you'd expect to outperform only in parts of the market cycle, depending on the asset allocation and how much risk is in the portfolio. But Columbia did very well in the years leading up to the financial crash of 2008, it suffered less during the recession, and it has done exceptionally well since the markets have recovered."

In fact, in each of the past two years, Columbia's investments have performed better than those of all other Ivies, earning 17.3 percent in fiscal 2010 and 23.6 percent in fiscal 2011. These strong returns, together with new gifts made to the endowment, brought the fund's value to \$7.8 billion as of June 30, 2011, well exceeding its pre-crash peak of \$7.4 billion in 2007.

Gifts that keep giving

Columbia's endowment is a collection of money and financial assets donated to the University for long-term investment. It consists of 4,500 separate funds — many established by donors to support specific scholarships or faculty chairs, for example — that are invested as a single pooled investment account, much like a unitized mutual fund.

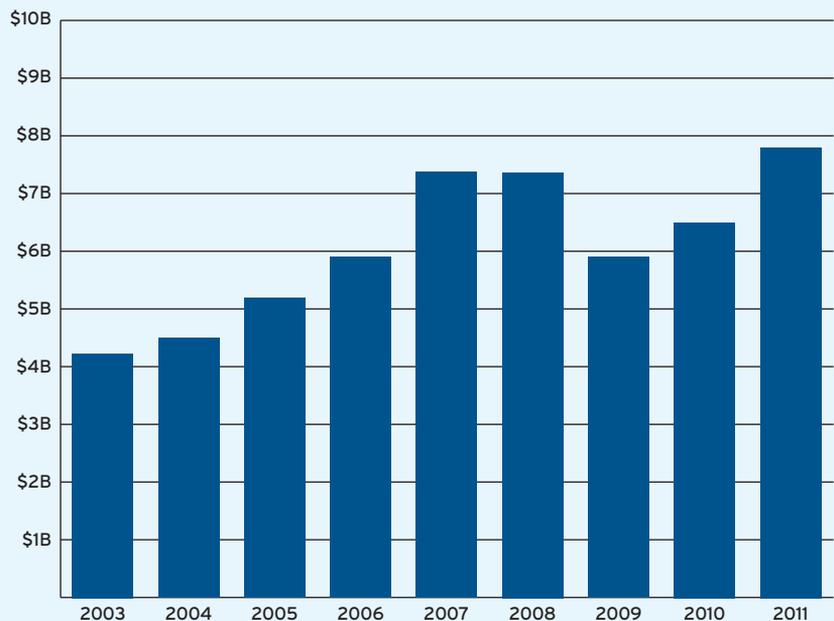
This year, payouts from Columbia's endowment earnings will cover about \$390 million, or 12 percent, of the University's roughly \$3.3 billion annual operating budget. Exactly how much Columbia spends from its endowment earnings each year is determined by financial guidelines adopted by the Board of Trustees, reflecting both the asset value of the endowment and the rate of inflation. In a typical year, this amounts to about 5 percent of each

ing for student financial aid, which, for instance, has helped Columbia maintain its need-blind admission policy for College and engineering undergraduates. They also support capital projects, research, the libraries, and hundreds of professorships and dozens of academic centers and institutes in perpetuity."

Although Columbia's endowment has done exceptionally well in recent years, it is much smaller than the endowments

Columbia's endowment growth

Over the past eight years, Columbia's endowment has nearly doubled in value, from \$4.3 billion to \$7.8 billion, as a result of the University's unusually strong investment returns and new gifts.



SOURCE: COLUMBIA INVESTMENT MANAGEMENT COMPANY

endowed fund's total value being paid out. Columbia officials say the endowment's growth in recent years has helped the University keep pace with the rising costs of higher education — which have gone up faster than inflation — while limiting the University's reliance on student tuition.

"Growing the size of the endowment benefits the entire University," says Kasdin. "The funds generated by our investment portfolio are a perpetual source of fund-

of other top universities. Harvard has an endowment of \$32 billion, Yale \$19 billion, and Stanford and Princeton \$17 billion each. These schools draw much larger payouts from their endowments, in dollar terms, than Columbia does each year.

Columbia, like any institution seeking to increase the size of its endowment, has a twin strategy: raise money and invest it wisely. The University's fundraisers, for their part, have made soliciting gifts for the endowment

Continued from previous page

a key goal of the ongoing Columbia Campaign. Of the \$4.6 billion raised through the campaign in the past seven years, about \$1.8 billion has been committed to the endowment, mostly for financial aid and faculty chairs.

What explains Columbia's investment success? According to Kasdin, one must look back to 2002, when the University created a nonprofit subsidiary, the Columbia Investment Management Company (IMC), to handle its investments. Until then, this work was done by a small group of investors in the central administration. The IMC, which employs twenty people, is nearly twice the size of that previous group.

"The primary mission the University has given us is to deliver long-term results. This is an advantage in the broader market," Narvekar says.

To lead the new team, Columbia recruited N. P. "Narv" Narvekar, who previously helped manage the University of Pennsylvania's endowment and had fourteen years of Wall Street experience. The University gave Narvekar's team a degree of independence: rather than reporting to Columbia's central administration, the IMC takes its direction from a board whose members include leading investment experts among the University's alumni and Trustees, in addition to a few senior Columbia administrators.

It is in the eight fiscal years since the IMC's creation that Columbia's endowment has outperformed all its peers.

"The Investment Management Company's independence has been important to its success," says Mark Kingdon '71CC, a Columbia Trustee who is the president and founder of Kingdon Capital Management and chairs the IMC board. "Narv and his team are able to focus on their primary mission, attaining strong investment returns over long stretches of time. They are highly disciplined, independent think-

ers who don't try to imitate what other investors are doing. They have a deep understanding of risk management, and do an excellent job of finding and monitoring superior managers for the University's endowment."

Thinking long-term

The IMC is located on the sixty-third floor of the Chrysler Building in midtown Manhattan, in a beige, sparsely decorated suite whose plainness comes as a shock after you enter through the building's luxurious Art Deco lobby. On a recent Monday afternoon, the mood in the office was subdued, as small groups of studious-looking investors huddled around computer screens, calmly discussing the prospects of various

stocks, bonds, private equities, and commodities. It was hardly the hectic scene you might expect to find in an investment firm.

"The primary mission the University has given us is to deliver long-term results," says Narvekar, the president and chief executive officer of the IMC. "This is an advantage in the broader market. We make every effort to avoid the distractions of quarterly or even yearly returns."

Narvekar insists there's no easy explanation for how his team has achieved exceptional returns compared to other university endowment managers. In many ways, he says, the IMC is similar to the management companies that handle the endowments of most other top universities. For instance, its employees don't invest much money in the market themselves; rather, they hire third-party managers to do so.

Peter Holland, the IMC's chief investment officer, explains: "Our in-house investment professionals are focused on larger strategic questions, such as, should we have more or less exposure to govern-

ment bonds in our portfolio? How about stocks? Real estate? Commodities or emerging markets? If we decide we're interested in Brazilian equities, one of our staff members will likely take a few trips down there to study the business landscape and then interview lots of potential partners. We'll choose a manager who deeply understands that market."

One of the IMC's distinct advantages, Narvekar and Holland say, is that their staff has spent the past eight years developing a systems platform that enables IMC analysts to efficiently assess both the performance of their third-party managers and the endowment's exposure to various types of assets held in their portfolios. "If we want to know how much risk a particular manager has taken, or how his returns rate against those of his peers in a particular market, we can compute that very easily and quickly," says Holland. "If we need to determine how much risk exposure we have, say, in Europe, it's remarkably easy for us to assess that and respond accordingly."

A key strategic decision that has paid off in recent years, Narvekar says, is that the IMC has been careful to maintain its liquidity, which turned out to be crucial in 2008. "When the market declined, some institutions were forced to sell off assets in order to pay their bills, which probably exacerbated their losses," he says. "Columbia didn't face that kind of cash-flow problem."

The University's endowment did lose about 16 percent of its value in fiscal 2008, yet this represented a much smaller loss than those incurred by some other prestigious schools. As a result, Columbia weathered the recession without making drastic cuts to its programs or staffing. "Our ability to achieve academic excellence in the highest tier with several peer institutions that have far larger endowments than our own," says President Lee C. Bollinger, "has been greatly aided by our relative financial stability during these turbulent years."

X-celence and Os

“Excellence in football is measured in wins,” said Peter Mangurian, the new Patricia and Shepard Alexander Head Coach of Football for the Lions, at his introductory press conference on December 9. “We need to expect to win. We need to expect to be excellent at what we do.”

Mangurian, a former NFL coach who worked two Super Bowls and was Cornell’s head coach from 1998 to 2000, intends to change the football culture at Columbia. In 2011, the Lions avoided a winless campaign by beating Brown on November 19 in the last game of the year, which wasn’t enough to save the job of coach Norries Wilson, who was dismissed the next day. Wilson went 17–43 in six seasons — a record that looks almost Lombardian next to the streak of forty-four consecutive losses that Columbia suffered in the 1980s. But as Mangurian firmly stated, “We will *not* be defined by the past.”

Mangurian, fifty-six, has three decades of coaching experience, mostly as a tight-end, offensive-line, and running-back coach in the NFL. From 1988 to 1997, he

helped lead the Denver Broncos, the New York Giants, and the Atlanta Falcons, all under head coach Dan Reeves, before joining the New England Patriots under Bill Belichick from 2005 to 2008, and finally the Tampa Bay Buccaneers under Raheem Morris from 2009 to 2010. Mangurian coached the Broncos in Super Bowl XXIV and the Patriots in Super Bowl XLII.

“Pete Mangurian is an outstanding football coach,” says M. Dianne Murphy, Columbia’s director of intercollegiate athletics and physical education. “He brings tremendous experience with a plethora of impressive mentors. He has worked in great organizations under Pat Bowlen, owner of the Denver Broncos, and Robert K. Kraft ’63CC, owner of the New England Patriots. Pete’s experience speaks for itself.”

This experience also includes a successful three-year stint as Cornell’s head coach. Mangurian brought Cornell from the Ivy League basement in 1998 to third place in 1999 and second in 2000, compiling a 16–14 overall record. The Big Red went a combined 10–4 in the Ivy League from



ALYSON GOULDEN / COLUMBIA SPECTATOR

Peter Mangurian

1999 to 2000, the team’s best two-year conference record in its history.

To watch video of Mangurian’s press conference, visit gocolumbialions.com.

Goldfarb named SEAS executive vice dean

Donald Goldfarb has been named the Fu Foundation School of Engineering and Applied Science’s executive vice dean, a new position in which he assists dean Feniosky Peña-Mora with faculty hiring, promotions, tenure, teaching assistants, and how space is allocated and renovated.

“The dean has to manage all kinds of things, like financial aid, student services, fundraising, and alumni development,” says Goldfarb, the Alexander and Hermine Avnessians Professor of Industrial Engineering and Operations Research, who was acting dean from 1994 to 1995. “My position is to help with the more academic side.”

Goldfarb’s appointment was made halfway through the fall semester, amid ten-

sions at the engineering school. This fall, several department chairs, and later a number of tenured faculty members, wrote a letter to senior Columbia administrators expressing their dissatisfaction with Peña-Mora’s management and asserting that he had failed to properly communicate with faculty on a variety of issues, including how space is allocated. Their complaints were the subject of a *New York Times* article on December 8.

John Coatsworth, the University’s acting provost, acknowledges that faculty have “legitimate concerns” and says that he and president Lee C. Bollinger are helping Peña-Mora and the school address them. Coatsworth notes that Peña-Mora has done

a good job of recruiting top professors to SEAS, enhancing the school’s academic stature, engaging alumni, and fundraising.

“With Donald’s involvement,” Coatsworth says, “I expect that communication between the dean’s office and the faculty is going to improve.”

Adds Goldfarb, “The engineering school has grown tremendously in the past few years, so it’s not a surprise that the dean’s office should require the assistance of an executive vice dean. When I was acting dean in the 1990s, the school was half the size it is now. I’m bowled over by the increased complexity of the dean’s job in running the school and serving all its faculty and students.”

George Van Amson appointed chair of CAA

As a Columbia undergraduate, George Van Amson '74CC was president of his first- and second-year classes, a varsity football and baseball player, a leader of Alpha Phi Alpha, and an active member of the Black Students Organization.

"It's possible I was *too* involved in extracurricular activities, to be honest," says the fifty-nine-year-old investment banker. "I could have spent a bit more time studying."

Van Amson was recently named chair of the Columbia Alumni Association (CAA), a volunteer position for which the gregarious Bronx native would seem ideally suited. The CAA is the University's broadest alumni network, connecting nearly 300,000 Columbians from all schools through more than eighty regional clubs and affinity groups, online resources, and hundreds of events each year.

Van Amson, who served as a University Trustee from 1996 to 2008 and is among Columbia's most involved graduates, says that one of his goals as chair of the CAA is to engage more graduates in the life of the University — at whatever pace is comfortable for them.

"Maybe you'll attend your class reunion this spring," he says. "Or maybe you'll go to a basketball game. Alumni who live near

campus may even come back to give career advice to students or to guest lecture in a classroom. I hope that everybody will consider taking part in at least one Columbia event this year."

This appeal to alumni — to make at least one new Columbia connection in 2012 — is being called the CAA Challenge. The University is also undertaking a long-term planning effort this year to determine how best to develop its alumni programs and outreach over the next five years. A twenty-member task force appointed by President Lee C. Bollinger, which includes alumni, deans, faculty, administrators, and students, will develop the plan, called CAA 2017. The task force is being co-chaired by A'Lelia Bundles '76JRN, a University Trustee, and Brian Krisberg '81CC, '84LAW, a vice chair of the CAA and chair emeritus of the College's alumni association.

"The goal is to promulgate a strategy for growing the CAA in ways that are responsive to alumni needs," says Van Amson.

Van Amson often jokes about his average academic record at Columbia. But plenty of what he learned at the College as an economics major obviously stuck: he went on to become a successful investment banker on Wall Street, rising through the ranks of Goldman Sachs and Morgan Stanley, where he is cur-

*"Give back to
Columbia.
Because it's
something we
can do, and
should do . . ."*

—KENNETH FORDE '59PS



THE 1754 SOCIETY

"A SURGEON'S SURGEON."

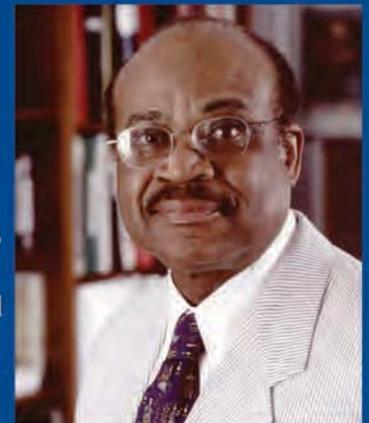
Kenneth Forde, M.D., a pioneer in the field of colon cancer, has educated and inspired generations of Columbia doctors.

Dr. Forde likes to say, "At Columbia, I've gone from applicant to student to intern to resident to professor and now to Trustee."

Now, he is leading by example once again—by including Columbia in his will.

Join Dr. Forde and others in the 1754 Society, a group of alumni and friends who have made bequests and other planned gifts to the University.

To learn more about Dr. Forde and planned giving, visit giving.columbia.edu/plannedgifts or call 800-338-3294.



rently a managing director of sales equity and trading management. Asked if any Columbia professors had a lasting influence on him, he quickly names the economists Phillip Cagan, C. Lowell Harriss, Seymour Melman, and William Vickrey, as well as the longtime dean of students Henry Coleman, whom Van Amson considered a personal mentor.

“Those guys took a kid from the Throggs Neck housing projects and gave him discipline and maturity,” he says. “They also inspired me.” Harriss regularly wrote to Van Amson for years after he graduated, Van Amson remembers, to offer support and guidance.

Van Amson now lives on Manhattan’s Upper West Side with his wife, Wendy Van Amson '83PH, with whom he has two daughters, Alexandra and Victoria, both students at the College, and a teenage son, Skyler. He’s a familiar face in the stands at Lions football and basketball games. He visits campus often to mentor students, and he serves on the board of Community Impact, a service organization that sends student volunteers from Columbia into New York City neighborhoods.

“Columbia gave me so much,” he says. “It gave me confidence, an intellectual foundation to build my career on, and lifelong friends. I’m very loyal. And I love coming back here. I love being



MICHAEL DAMES

George Van Amson '74CC

around the people here, participating in life on campus, and making the institution an even better place.”

To watch a video about the CAA, visit alumni.columbia.edu/caa-challenge.

Please join Chabad at Columbia University as it

בס"ד

Celebrates a Milestone: 15 Years on Campus



Eric R. Kandel

and honors professor of neuroscience and **Nobel Prize laureate Eric R. Kandel**

at a gala dinner on Thursday evening, **February 2, at Low Library.**

Joseph Telushkin '83GSAS
keynote speaker



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NEWSMAKERS

Booklandia

Works by two Columbians appeared on the *New York Times* Ten Best Books of 2011 list. The novel *Swamplandia!* by **Karen Russell '06SOA** was included, as was *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention* by **Manning Marable**, the late Columbia professor of African-American studies . . . The 2011 Thurber Prize for American Humor went to **David Rakoff '86CC** for his essay collection *Half Empty*. Rakoff is a journalist, essayist, actor, screenwriter, and regular contributor to public radio's *This American Life* . . . CUMC professor and staff physician **Siddhartha Mukherjee** won the Guardian First Book Award for *The Emperor of All Maladies: A Biography of Cancer*, which also won the 2011 Pulitzer Prize for nonfiction.



Lucas Papademos

Drachma drama

Former Columbia economist and professor **Lucas Papademos** was appointed prime minister of Greece on November 11. Papademos, who most recently served as vice president of the European Central Bank, taught at Columbia from 1975 to 1984. He is presiding over the country's first unity party until elections are held in February.



Chelsea Clinton '10PH

Nobody's better connected

The NBC News family recently added two political daughters. **Chelsea Clinton '10PH** joined the network as a special correspondent and will focus on the "Making a Difference" franchise, which highlights people and organizations doing extraordinary community work. **Meghan McCain '07CC** will be a contributor to the cable network MSNBC. McCain, who is also a columnist for the *Daily Beast*, previously interned at *Newsweek* and *Saturday Night Live*.

Commendable communication

Climatologist **Gavin Schmidt** won the first ever Climate Communications Prize, given by the American Geophysical Union at its annual meeting in December. Schmidt, an adjunct senior research scientist at Columbia's Center for Climate Systems Research and a climate modeler at the NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies, was recognized for his work with *RealClimate*, a blog he co-founded that aims "to provide a quick response to developing stories and provide the context sometimes missing in mainstream commentary" . . . **Heather McKellar '11GSAS**, **Kelley Remole '04CC**, **'09GSAS**, and **Catherine Jensen '08GSAS** received the Society for Neuroscience Next Generation Award, which honors members who have made outstanding contributions to public communication, outreach,

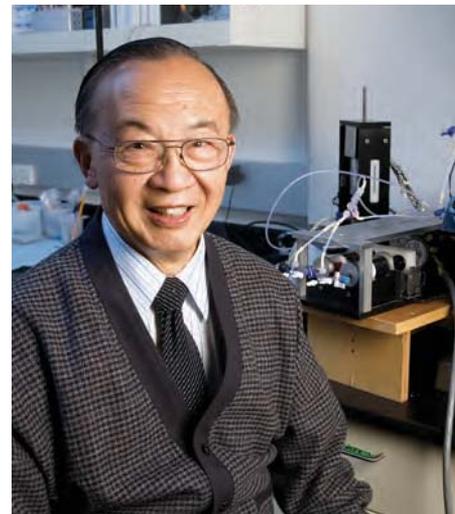
and education. They created Columbia University Neuroscience Outreach, to interest New York City school students in the brain and in science.

Knowledge is power

The Aspen Foundation announced **Dele Olojede '88JRN** as the 2011 winner of the John P. McNulty Prize, in recognition of his groundbreaking work delivering unbiased information to the Nigerian public. Olojede is the CEO and founder of Next, an integrated media platform that provides news and information in Nigeria via a traditional newspaper as well as the Internet, radio, and mobile applications. Olojede, a former foreign editor of *Newsday*, is also the only African Pulitzer Prize holder . . . **Michael Caruso '83CC** was named editor in chief of *Smithsonian*, becoming just the fourth editor in its forty-one-year history. Caruso has been editor in chief of *Los Angeles* magazine, *Details*, *Maximum Golf*, and *Men's Journal*, and was most recently deputy editor of the *Wall Street Journal's* magazine.

Federal cases

President **Barack Obama '83CC** awarded **Shu Chien '57GSAS** the National Medal of



Shu Chien '57GSAS

Science in December. The award, which in 2011 was given to seven researchers, is the highest honor bestowed by the US government on scientists, engineers, and inventors. Chien taught at Columbia from 1969 to 1988 and is now based at the University of California at San Diego where his work, primarily on the fluid-dynamic properties of blood flow, has led to significant advancement in the understanding and treatment of circulatory disease . . . **Henning Schulzrinne** was named chief technology officer at the FCC by chairman **Julius Genachowski '85CC**. Schulzrinne is a professor of computer science and electrical engineering at Columbia and has been an engineering fellow at the FCC since 2010.

Building blocks

Egyptian architect and Cairo University professor **Aly Raafat '57GSAS** won his country's highest state honor for the arts, the Nile Award. Formerly known as the Mubarak Award, the prize is worth some \$66,500 . . . **Margaret Sprug '93GSAPP** and **Steve Doub '96GSAPP** are designing what will be one of the world's most energy-efficient buildings. The Bullitt Center, located in Seattle, is likely to be the first large commercial



COURTESY OF MILLER HULL

Margaret Sprug '93GSAPP

office building to meet the goals of the Living Building Challenge, which stipulates that 100 percent of energy and water needs are met onsite, among other criteria.

Charging Lion

Justin Nunez '07CC beat nearly one hundred traders, bankers, and financial advisers in a charity decathlon in October to



TALEEN DERSEPAIAN / THEDECATHLON

Justin Nunez '07CC

earn the title of Wall Street's best athlete. The ten-event competition, which benefits the Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, took place at Columbia's Wien Stadium — familiar territory for Nunez, who played defensive back for the Lions. He now works in the investment management division at Goldman Sachs.

Attention, shoppers

Hunch Inc., a New York-based data-analysis company co-founded by **Chris Dixon '96GS, '99GSAS**, was acquired by eBay. Hunch uses information culled from social networks and other websites to provide personal recommendations to shoppers, which will help eBay remain competitive with e-commerce sites such as Amazon.com.

Dziękuję! Merci!

John Micgiel '77SIPA, '92GSAS was awarded the Commander's Cross of the Order of Merit of the Republic of Poland by President Bronislaw Komorowski at a ceremony at the Polish consulate in New York. Recipients were recognized for their contributions to the Polish-American community in science, culture, business, and politics. Micgiel is an adjunct associate professor of international and public affairs, as well as the executive director of Columbia's East Central European Center . . . **Antoine Compagnon**, who has taught French and comparative literature at Columbia since 1985, was presented with the Claude Lévi-Strauss Prize by France's Ministry of Higher Education and Research in November. The 100,000-euro prize honors Compagnon as a "great creative scholar



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Antoine Compagnon

who has gone off the beaten path in order to propose new methods of interdisciplinary thought." Compagnon's biography of the historian Bernard Fay, who taught at Columbia in the 1920s and 1930s and then headed the French National Library while collaborating with the Nazis, attracted a good deal of attention last year.

EXPLORATIONS

Portable diagnostic tool saving rural lives

Every year, millions of people in the developing world die of syphilis, tetanus, hepatitis, and other infections that could be easily treated with antibiotics. Often, the problem is not a lack of medicine but a failure to diagnose patients. That's because health workers don't have a practical way to screen people in rural areas: they must collect blood samples in remote health clinics, transport the samples to a laboratory that may be hundreds of miles away, and then return weeks later in an attempt to locate everybody who tested positive.

"This is time-consuming and very expensive," says Samuel Sia, a Columbia associate professor of biomedical engineering. "Aid agencies literally don't have the resources to do it."

Sia recognized this problem while traveling in Togo as a graduate student about ten years ago. And he believes that he has a solution: a portable diagnostic tool the size and shape of a credit card. The device, which he calls an mChip, requires just a drop of blood from a finger prick and reveals its diagnosis in fifteen minutes.

"This could dramatically reduce the cost of a large-scale screening program," Sia says. "It could also improve the likelihood that a sick person will get treated, because health workers could administer medicine on the spot."

In creating the mChip, Sia's research team had to miniaturize and tweak many aspects of the diagnostic process. A special anti-coagulant is used to get blood flowing through the mChip's hair-line channels; ultimately, tiny gold particles react to form a cloud of silver ions when there is sign of an infection.

"If you see silver, you've got a positive diagnosis," says Sia. "It's as easy as reading a home pregnancy test. With conventional diagnostics, you need a microscope to view the chemical reaction that is the basis of your test."

The mChip is not the first portable diagnostic device of its type; handheld tools already exist for detecting HIV. But the mChip has an advantage over similar technologies, Sia says, in that it is a

Serving family time

When a single mother goes to prison, what happens to her children?

Often, they are placed in foster care, which is not only expensive for the state but can

contribute to social and behavioral problems for the child and lead to trouble in school.

In 2008, the office of Brooklyn district attorney Charles Hynes, with the chil-

dren's interests in mind, tried a different approach: it began sending small numbers of female convicts to serve their sentences in a three-story stucco house in Brownsville, Brooklyn, with their children. If the women completed a one- or two-year stay at the group home — where residents are free to come and go but must pay rent, do chores, attend rehabilitation courses, and observe a 7 p.m. curfew — they could avoid jail time altogether.

The district attorney's office also called in Mary Byrne, a Columbia nursing professor who is an expert on how children deal with a parent's incarceration, to monitor the program and determine its impact. Last year, Byrne and several members of her research team visited the facility, known as Drew House, regularly over a period of seven months to observe life there: they watched the mothers interact with their children, shared meals with the residents, played with the kids, and interviewed case managers who run the residence.



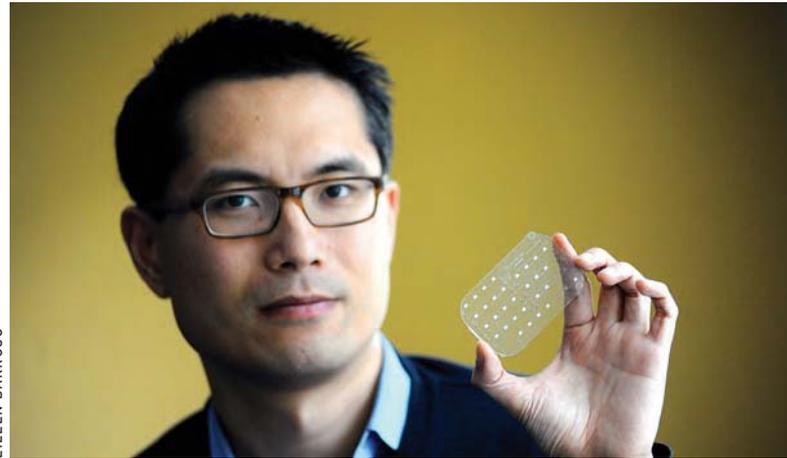
ALAN CHIN

Mary Byrne, an expert on how children deal with a parent's incarceration, center, speaks with case managers at Brooklyn's Drew House, where female convicts are permitted to live with their children instead of going to prison.

versatile tool that could be easily adapted for testing for hepatitis, herpes, gonorrhea, and chlamydia, as well as HIV and syphilis.

Over the past four years, Sia and several collaborators, including Wafaa El-Sadr, a Columbia public-health professor and a prominent HIV/AIDS researcher, have been using the mChip on a trial basis in Rwanda. They recently published a paper in *Nature Medicine* reporting that it detects HIV and syphilis with nearly 100 percent accuracy. This was based on a small study of a few hundred people; Sia and a private company he co-founded in 2004, Claros Diagnostics, are now seeking funds to conduct larger clinical trials.

“One of the most important applications for the mChip is for screening pregnant women and infants, because deadly infections can get passed on to newborns,” Sia says. “In rural areas, drugs are often available to treat these infections, but you don’t know whom to give the medicine to. So the main challenge is really diagnostics.”



EILEEN BARROSO

Samuel Sia has invented a device that enables rural health workers to tell within fifteen minutes if a patient has an infectious disease.



MICHAEL KIRBY SMITH / NEW YORK TIMES / REDUX

Samara Johnson, 5, plays with her sister, Rihanna Hall, 2, in the backyard of Drew House.

This past fall, the Columbia researchers published a report calling Drew House a model “alternative-to-incarceration” program and recommending that it be replicated elsewhere. “The children have benefited in pretty dramatic ways,” says Lorie Smith Goshin ’10NRS, an associate research scientist at the Columbia School of Nurs-

ing and the report’s lead author. “They’re attending school regularly, they’re meeting their developmental milestones, and they seem happy overall.”

The program also seems to be good for the mothers’ rehabilitation: of the nine women selected to live at Drew House since 2008, six have completed the program successfully and two are nearly finished, with only one woman needing to be transferred to a more secure detention facility. The women who completed the program have all stayed out of trouble since. “Drew House strengthened these families without compromising public safety,” the Columbia report states.

According to Byrne, Drew House is the only facility in the United States where women convicted of felonies can live with their school-age children while serving time. Byrne’s past research has focused on “prison nurseries,” where incarcerated women are permitted to live with their newborns in a separate section of a prison

for the first year or two of their children’s lives. These programs are similarly beneficial for both women and their children, Byrne has found, but they are rare: fewer than a dozen prison nurseries exist in the United States, one being at the Bedford Hills Correctional Facility for Women in Westchester County, New York.

“All criminal-rehabilitation programs tend to have trouble getting funding for political reasons, and those that would help mothers and children stay together face special scrutiny,” says Byrne, whose team is continuing to follow Drew House’s former residents. “Many people assume that a convict’s children ought to be taken away from her because she probably isn’t a very good parent to begin with. But that’s not necessarily the case, especially when a woman receives parenting-support services and guidance. These children can thrive, we’re finding, when the family is able to stay together.”

— Jessica Wapner

REVIEWS



Lenox Avenue, photographed by Berenice Abbott in 1938.

Echoes of Harlem // *By Cheryl Greenberg*

Harlem: The Four Hundred Year History from Dutch Village to Capital of Black America

By Jonathan Gill (Grove, 520 pages, \$29.95)

When Henry Hudson first sailed past northern Manahatta Island in 1609, natives peered at him from the banks of an inlet that would one day become West 125th Street. He anchored the ship and invited two men aboard, whom he dressed in red jackets and promptly tried to kidnap. They escaped, but several weeks later, as Hudson's ship continued north, the same men led a retaliatory strike, rowing alongside the ship in canoes and riddling it with

arrows. Hudson's men fired back with muskets and cannons, killing about a dozen people on water and land. This tale of inter-ethnic hostility serves as a starting point and a through line for Jonathan Gill's new history of Harlem. "The clash of words and worlds, the allure of blood and money, the primacy of violence and fashion, the cohabitation of racial hatred and racial curiosity — they have always been a part of what uptown means," writes

Gill '86CC, '99GSAS in *Harlem: The Four Hundred Year History from Dutch Village to Capital of Black America*.

Readers who know Manhattan's broader history will find some of the book's events familiar, but Gill's focus on Harlem makes the story fresh. We learn, for example, that after the English conquered New Amsterdam in 1664, Dutch Harlem's inhabitants resisted; the sheriff refused to swear allegiance to the crown, though he was allowed to keep his job despite declining to perform his duties. Mostly ignored by local English officials, Harlem developed its own culture through local inns, "the most public of places, where different classes, genders, religions, nationalities, political loyalties, and even races met and mixed." As a result, while Manhattan as a whole was devoting itself to economic development, Harlem remained a play space for downtown New Yorkers, where horse races continued on Harlem Lane (present-day Saint Nicholas Avenue) even as the Revolutionary War began.

Harlem had an early connection to black America, as Gill reminds us: its participation in slavery and the slave trade. A small number of Manhattan's free Africans lived in Harlem, largely in self-contained communities with their own cultural and social institutions. But half of all white Harlem families owned slaves at the beginning of the eighteenth century, and new laws and regulations constrained both enslaved and free black men and women, preventing them from owning guns, signing contracts, or giving testimony in court.

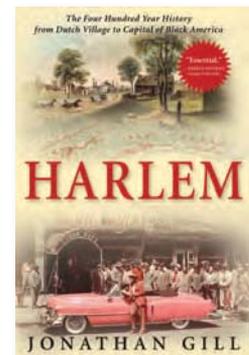
Harlem's role in the Revolutionary War was small but significant. George Washington and his aide Alexander Hamilton (who attended King's College between 1774 and 1776) fortified Harlem against the British in September 1776, and while the Battle of Harlem Heights held off the British only briefly, the psychological victory boosted morale — and Washington's stature. The neighborhood paid a steep price: two months later the British burned the entire village. For the next four years, Harlem was virtually unoccupied. Only after independence transformed Manhattan into a bustling trading center did Harlem regain its status as a frontier resort for the upper classes. Hamilton built a grand country estate on a thirty-two-acre wooded property between present-day West 139th and 146th Streets and lived there until 1804, when Aaron Burr killed him in a duel in Weehawken, New Jersey. Burr later married a Harlem socialite and moved there himself to enjoy the countryside and the wealthy entertainments of the period.

But Harlem was quickly changing. In the early nineteenth century, downtown industry began to reach northward. Ferry lines, piers, factories, and foundries brought wealth and opportunities for laborers. Farmland was turned into roads and business districts; the country's first horse-drawn street railway tied lower Manhattan to the Harlem River along Fourth Avenue. The West Harlem village of Manhattanville, founded in 1806, "came to resemble a tiny New England mill town," Gill writes, "with eighty

homes housing five hundred residents, most of whom worked in local tanneries, bottlers, a foundry and a fabric mill, breweries, stables, a hotel, rooming houses, and taverns." Manhattanville's success in manufacturing and trade brought its founders positions of influence in the city as a whole, in society and in politics. By the 1870s, most of Harlem had been incorporated into Manhattan politically and economically, if not always culturally.

As Harlem's industry expanded, its population became increasingly diverse. Immigrants from Ireland and Germany arrived in the 1840s and 1850s, followed by more from southern Italy and Eastern Europe. As the fortunes of Dutch, English, and German settlers improved, they moved to nicer parts of Harlem or out of it entirely; Italians and Jews moved up from lower Manhattan to take their place. Harlem's identity as an African-American community dates to the turn of the twentieth century, Gill writes, when an anti-black riot downtown coincided with a boom in speculative housing and the construction of New York's first subway. Harlem real-estate agents realized they could charge blacks higher rent than whites, since discrimination limited where they could live, so they lured black tenants as whites left for the Upper West Side, Brooklyn, and the Bronx. Gill acknowledges the concurrent descent of much of Harlem into poverty, but he does not focus his narrative on such discouraging developments. Instead, he traces Harlem's population shifts by highlighting prominent or colorful individuals, such as the naturalist John James Audubon, the political cartoonist Thomas Nast, and the impresario Oscar Hammerstein, through whose experiences we watch Harlem begin to develop its unique personality.

Harlem is best known, of course, for the Harlem Renaissance, a flowering of black artistic expression that seemed to answer W. E. B. Du Bois's call for the African-American to become "a co-worker in the kingdom of culture." The intellectual and political energy of the so-called New Negro, helped along by the Great Migration, which brought hundreds of thousands of African-Americans north between 1910 and 1930, inspired black painters, poets, essayists, filmmakers, authors, and musicians to create art from their own experience. The center of their activity was Harlem. Duke Ellington and Paul Robeson '23LAW, Claude McKay and Langston Hughes lived and worked there, as did political figures like Marcus Garvey, W. E. B. Du Bois, Walter White, and Adam Clayton Powell (both Sr. and Jr.). It served as a crucible for the truly American art form: jazz. But Harlem's glamorous high life — never the world of most Harlemites — came to an end with the Great Depression, which devastated black Harlem and set the stage for the



political tumult and crushing ghetto poverty to come. By the 1960s, Harlem had become the symbol of black urban poverty and protest.

Even in these years of renaissance and decline, Harlem remained deeply multicultural, its many Puerto Rican, Jewish, and West Indian residents living alongside their African-American neighbors. Discussing George Gershwin and Irving Caesar's 1919 song "Swanee," which Al Jolson included in his show *Simbad*, Gill writes, "A plantation tune by a Jew in a show about an Arab folk hero was the way they did things in Harlem." But Gill also flags the undercurrents of nationalism that had always run through Harlem, first by white groups and then by black, which he argues threatened Harlem's rich and multiethnic artistic culture. Gill describes not only the physical dangers of such nationalism, as in the burning of the Colored Orphan Asylum by white Civil War draft resisters, but also the political dangers inherent in belligerent nationalist rhetoric.

Gill's narrative style is primarily anecdotal. Readers are introduced to significant or emblematic Harlemites such as Eliza Jumel, a close friend of Alexander Hamilton, Thomas Jefferson, and Aaron Burr (whom she later married), and the gangster "Big Yid" Zelig, who stood up to Italian mobsters in the early decades of the twentieth century, but who recruited "Dago Frank" Cirofici into his own criminal circle. While fascinating, the focus on significant individuals too often leaves out the experiences of ordinary Harlemites. We hear a great deal about gangs, drug dealers, musicians, political activists, government leaders, artists, and businessmen. We hear far less about those who struggled to get by, to raise their families and improve their lives. Gill writes about the dramatic fight in the late 1960s over Columbia's plan to build a gym in Morningside Park, but then notes that, according to a 1967 poll, most Harlem residents were unaware of the issue,

and that in fact half of those who knew about the plan supported it. What of their experiences and concerns?

Without more complete analysis, we watch history happen without always understanding who is responsible and why. Gill tells us what his eighteenth-century subjects ate and how they celebrated but not how they regarded slavery. As we watch the new nation grow through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, we learn nothing of the systematic exploitations of race and class on which its development relied. When we reach the 1970s and 1980s, Gill depicts Harlem's sense of hopelessness — its crime and high rates of illness — but fails to explore the deeper causes of these problems. Gill's tendency to end discussions with questions that he never answers (was the Harlem Renaissance "really a bona fide artistic movement or was it simply a fortuitous gathering of individual talent . . . ?") only reminds us that the author has given us no framework that we can use to interpret historical events.

Nevertheless, the book is an impressive compilation of material and an evocative story of a place so central to the American imagination. While Harlem's history may not always be coherent — "change is Harlem's defining characteristic," Gill writes — certain overarching themes emerge: a multiethnic population, art and vice, economic challenges, political maneuvering. These tensions, Gill argues provocatively, "have always allowed Harlemites to define themselves not just as apart from all other New Yorkers but as the divided soul of the city itself."

Cheryl Greenberg '88GSAS is a professor of history at Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut. Her books include "Or Does It Explode?": Black Harlem in the Great Depression.

The Commuting Type // By Joshua J. Friedman

Helvetica and the New York City Subway System

By Paul Shaw (MIT Press, 144 pages, \$39.95)

"Flubway," as the *Daily News* called the disastrous opening of the Chrystie Street Connection in 1967, was supposed to inaugurate a brighter era for the New York City subway system. After decades of torturing commuters and baffling tourists with a jumble of poorly marked routes and transfer points, the transit authority had engineered an enlightened rebirth: a newly commissioned system of color-coded, numbered and lettered route designations, with accompanying signs, maps, and train emblems. But on opening day, travelers found a bewildering mixture of new signs, old signs, and no signs at all. The grand attempt at order had produced, as

New York magazine put it, "a battlefield filled with typographers and color-experts locked in mortal combat."

We are still near the beginning of an era when a publisher might hope to tempt non-expert readers with even the most dramatic story about design. A generation ago, a layperson could not be expected to name a single typeface; suddenly, a flawed redesign of an orange-juice carton can spark a consumer revolt. In *Helvetica and the New York City Subway System*, Paul Shaw '80GSAS — a lettering artist and design historian — has a story to tell that is more obscure than most: he wants to dispel the misconception



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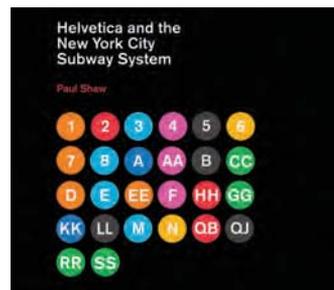
Subway signs before Unimark's redesign, 1968.

that the iconic mid-century Swiss-modern typeface Helvetica created the subway's distinct graphic look. In fact, Helvetica was a Johnny-come-lately replacement for a lesser-known cousin, Standard, which prevailed between the late 1960s and 1980s.

Thankfully, this esoteric inquiry leads Shaw to a development of broader importance: the transit authority's 1960s effort to modernize its aging labyrinth. Originally built as three competing rail companies between 1904 and 1940, the New York City subway remained so

fragmented, as historian Clifton Hood '86GSAS explains in the book's foreword, that one company's trains did not fit in another's tunnels. The Chrystie Street Connection was to finally link disparate lines underground. But making them navigable would mean taking a new approach to signs. On the advice of a Museum of Modern Art curator, the transit authority hired the design firm Unimark, which spent weeks tracing commuters' steps. In the end, Unimark recommended simple, clear signs that replaced route descriptions with colored icons. The new system's clumsy debut can be blamed on the transit authority's sign shop, which initially lacked the conviction to carry out Unimark's vision. It was a culture clash that, as Shaw writes, "reflected fundamentally different expectations between craftsmen and designers."

Type enthusiasts are obsessive by nature, ruled by grids and fine measurements. While Shaw painstakingly catalogs the evolution of the transit authority's graphic-standards manual and canvasses the world's transit design schemes of the 1960s, the reader can happily float above the text and enjoy photographs of early-century mosaic signs, bygone graffiti-strewn interiors of subway cars and stations, and archival maps and documents. The book does not dwell on the signs' beauty, but this is an essential, implicit theme. It is an everyday beauty, the kind that catches you for a moment before you go on your way.



Unchained Malady // By Rebecca Shapiro

[sic]: A Memoir

By Joshua Cody (Norton, 266 pages, \$24.95)

These are the facts: when Joshua Cody '06GSAS was thirty-four, he was diagnosed with a rapidly metastasizing cancer, took a leave of absence from his doctoral program in music composition at Columbia, and was forced down an excruciating path of chemotherapy, radiation, and bone-marrow transplants.

The facts are distressing, certainly, but Cody's memoir, *[sic]*, succeeds by transcending them. In recent years, memoir has become a kind of genre of default — the expected response to any unexpected situation — and the repetitive weight of the ensuing bounty has begun to dull the narrative effects of some of the most horrifying human experiences: September 11, the Holocaust, abuse, addiction, and perhaps most commonly, cancer.

When Cody was first diagnosed, he, like many other patients, turned to the now-crowded shelves of cancer memoirs, hoping for a bit of comfort. What he found, he writes, left him cold: "pale pastel book after book, each one the same, the three-act structure of (I) diagnosis, and (II) the discovery of how beautiful life actually is and how there's more to it than my hedge fund job ever told me it was and look at how lovely this flower is and this butterfly and this herbal tea, and (III) recovery and a book deal and getting a little place in Vermont maybe."

There were no butterflies during Cody's recovery, and only a single box of herbal tea, which he drank begrudgingly. Instead, he chased his chemo appointments with beers at a dark Tribeca bar, one-night stands with strangers he met on the street, and even a



Tales of an American Dreamer

The book: *We Others: New and Selected Stories* (Knopf)

The author: Steven Millhauser '65CC, Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist and short-story writer

Columbia Magazine: Your new collection is called *We Others*, which is apt because the shifting voices within communities seem so much a part of your work, and because in the phrase *we others*, the familiar *we* brushes up against the strange. How is community and its space important to your writing?

Steven Millhauser: Community is important to my writing in a peculiar way. I often like to begin a story with a community, either an entire town or a representative group from within the town, and then disrupt it. Sometimes the disruption comes from the outside, sometimes from within the community. I enjoy the clash, the battle of opposed psychologies. My impulse toward this kind of disruption is encouraged by the use of *we*. The *we* generally represents the group that will suffer disruption. But apart from that, *we* is an exciting pronoun, because it hasn't been explored the way *I* and *helshe* have been. The possibilities beg to be explored.

CM: Would you revisit any of the fabulous spaces you've invented?

SM: In short stories, I sometimes return to a town very similar to other towns — despite small differences, they're really the same town. This is a deliberate plan. I do the familiar thing so that the unfamiliar can enter.

CM: You have such vivid story titles in this collection, like "The Wizard of West Orange" and "A Protest Against the Sun." How do you find a title for a story?

SM: I have no idea. But I do know that a title feels absolutely crucial, and that I can't begin a story until I have its title. Sometimes I think of the title as the first sentence of a story. After all, it's the first set of words a

reader sees; when you read a story, you've already been influenced by the title. Think of Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice*. The first sentence opens in Munich, but you already know that Munich is a place the character will leave, for some deadly event in Venice. The title penetrates every sentence in a story, but its effect is particularly charged in the first sentence. But quite apart from this little drama at the beginning of every story, the title itself needs to be seductive in some way. It has to make you desire to continue.

CM: What makes a set of stories a collection?

SM: Here are two ways of thinking about this. One is that a story collection must display a clear unity. Examples are collections like Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio*, in which all the stories are about the same place and often feature the same protagonist, or Ernest Hemingway's first collection, *In Our Time*, in which half the stories are about Nick Adams and the other half, directly or indirectly, are about World War I. The other way of thinking about a collection is that it should include stories written within a span of years. It represents the work of the writer over those years, despite the apparent diversity of settings and characters. The unity, such as it is, comes from the fact that the stories have been produced by the same mind.

CM: As an example of the second category, *We Others* offers something unusual: new work along with work that's been previously published. Why did you choose to do this? How did you think about writing or selecting new work to accompany the earlier stories?

SM: The idea for a collection of new and selected stories wasn't mine. It was my edi-

tor's. The idea was presented as a kind of honor — aging writer, time to prepare the coffin. I didn't choose stories that deliberately connected with earlier stories in the collection. I'd argue that connections of this kind are, in fact, inevitable, since all the stories of a particular writer flow out of the same imagination. I'm always a little skeptical about collections that are praised for their "wide range": that may be admirable, but it also may indicate a desperate and superficial desire to seem varied. A genuine writer's sentences are stamped with a spiritual mark as surely as a sheet of fine paper is stamped with a watermark. In this sense, every sentence written by a true writer is the same sentence. The logical consequence is that every story by such a writer is the same story. Do I believe this? Yes and no.

CM: Have your writing habits changed over the years?

SM: They're the same as always, except that the final version is now on a computer instead of a typewriter. I write by hand, using a yellow hexagonal pencil, in a spiral-bound notebook. When the handwritten revisions threaten to become illegible, I type up a clean version on a typewriter and then make penciled corrections on the typed pages, which I retype and correct, through many versions. Finally, I type the last version into a computer, instead of my old manual Underwood. It ought to stop there, but it doesn't. I print out the pages, make corrections in pencil, enter the corrected version in the computer, print it out, make more corrections, and so on. It's a form of madness, though it feels necessary every step of the way. At some point, the madness stops.

— V. V. Ganeshanathan '07JRN

noseful of cocaine here and there: “After the amount of poison I’d dumped into my body for the last few weeks,” he writes, “what on earth could be harmed by a half a gram of cocaine?”

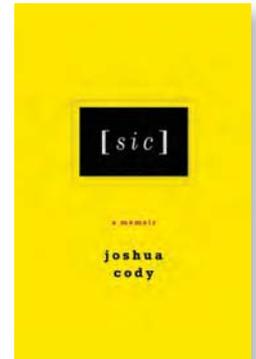
Cody is equally cavalier about his relationships with women, and discards several over the course of his illness. Caroline the stripper is replaced with Sophie the recovering addict, who sticks with Cody through his radiation only to leave his bedside abruptly after a misunderstanding that he chooses not to correct. An extended morphine-fueled fantasy provides the next leading lady, an imaginary Bulgarian wife named Valentina, before Cody falls into a deep, disastrous real relationship with the unnamed, unstable pain-management doctor who provided him with the morphine in the first place.

If Cody’s unorthodox approach to healing seems shallow, it is punctuated by raw anger and surprising tenderness, both far more effective than the typical life-is-beautiful revelations. Some moments are internal, as at the beginning of the book, where he tries to sort through his feelings about being sick: “Because you hate the disease, you hate yourself for having the disease. You don’t want to die: it’s the opposite of suicidal; the source of the rage and shame is in the will to live itself.” Even more involve his family, to whom he gives a strong voice, though his father died of emphysema just before Cody was diagnosed. The book includes scanned entries from the journal that his mother kept at his hospital bedside, as well as old letters and stories written by his father. His parents’ calm, compassionate voices serve as antidotes to Cody’s own sometimes manic prose — sentences that run a whole page, for example, or frenetic, tangential footnotes — but even more, they replace the often maudlin realizations of patients just beginning to value their relationships. Cody doesn’t need to resort to sentimentality to describe the importance of family during his ordeal; the journal entries and letters are hard evidence.

Cody’s influences are clear: Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, and W. H. Auden pop up in the text as regularly as his friends, family,

and lovers do, while the postmodern memoirists Susan Sontag, Dave Eggers, and especially David Foster Wallace sit (heavily, at times) on his shoulders. Like them, Cody doesn’t always confront his experience head-on, but meanders around it with the help of photographs, letters, poems, paintings, and diagrams, a style that makes the punning title particularly apt.

One influence is clearly dominant, though, and it ultimately sets this memoir apart. Cody, who now works in New York as a composer and filmmaker, doesn’t think of himself as a writer, at least in the traditional sense of the word (“I’m just writing this one thing, and that’s it,” he insists). It is not surprising, then, that the man with “no memory of not knowing how to read music,” turns not to Pound or even Wallace for ultimate inspiration, but rather to the French composer Claude Debussy. At the beginning of the book, Cody describes an important principle in music composition called the golden ratio: “the way in Debussy (just to pick one) the music can be wandering along for a while and you find yourself drifting . . . and then all of a sudden the music does something: it asserts its presence and opens up to take you in and it feels like the pilot has moved the throttle and you feel motion again.” Cody clearly uses this concept as a metaphor for his illness, and, indeed, there is a point in the book when everything converges and wakes him from what seemed like certain death. Likewise, it is easy to get lost in Cody’s bizarre journey, to drift through his rantings about literature and art and music and love and sex and family and illness and death, barely remembering what you’re reading at all. But when the text asserts itself, it is bold, brilliant, and entirely clear.



Here Come the Brides // By Julia M. Klein

The Buddha in the Attic

By Julie Otsuka (Knopf, 129 pages, \$22)

Julie Otsuka ’99SOA opens *The Buddha in the Attic* with an epigraph from the apocryphal biblical work Ecclesiasticus: “And some there be, which have no memorial; who are perished, as though they had never been.”

Her short, precise, poetic novel, nominated for the 2011 National Book Award, aims to correct this melancholy situation for one such forgotten group — the Japanese “picture brides” who

journeyed to California in the early twentieth century. Often relying on outdated or otherwise deceptive photographs and letters, they left everything they knew in order to wed Japanese laborers and farmers they had never met.

Otsuka writes in the unusual first-person plural, interspersed with apparent quotations from historical and autobiographical sources. Combining epic sweep with telling detail, she recovers

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these women's sacrifices, their American lives, and the memories they left behind in a narrative that is wistful, elegant, and, in the end, perhaps deliberately unsatisfying.

The book begins with the guarded optimism of the brides-to-be venturing toward their linked but disparate fates:

Most of us on the boat were accomplished, and were sure we would make good wives. We knew how to cook and sew. We knew how to serve tea and arrange flowers and sit quietly on our flat wide feet for hours, saying absolutely nothing of substance at all . . . We knew how to pull weeds and chop kindling and haul water, and one of us — the rice miller's daughter — knew how to walk two miles into town with an eighty-pound sack of rice on her back without once breaking into a sweat.

These women, so well-meaning and so naive, would need many of these skills and unforeseen others besides. But most important would be their capacity for endurance. On their first night in America, Otsuka's narrator, who is at once omniscient and implicated in the actions she describes, depicts the brutality of the marriage bed:

That night our new husbands took us quickly. They took us calmly. They took us gently, but firmly, and without saying a word . . . They took us greedily, hungrily, as though they had been waiting to take us for a thousand and one years. They took us even though we were still nauseous from the boat and the ground had not yet stopped rocking beneath our feet.

After these shocking introductions to their stranger-husbands, the picture brides would face the more mundane challenges of carving out a living in a new country. Most of the men they married were poorer than advertised, and they put their wives to work, often for abusive white employers, as domestics or farm hands. The relationship between the Japanese immigrants and their white neighbors was emotionally complex: "We loved them, we hated them, we wanted to *be* them."

At home, the picture brides, however tired, faced the inevitable second shift, cooking and cleaning and, eventually, caring for children. The men "never changed a single diaper" and "never washed a dirty dish," Otsuka writes, using lyrical prose to tell a homely story. The husbands "sat down and read the paper while we cooked dinner for the children and stayed up washing and mending piles of clothes until late."

The children, who might have brought joy, certainly brought heartache. If they didn't die in infancy, they grew up, like most immigrant offspring, to reject Old World traditions and embrace American ways. "They gave themselves new names we had not chosen and could barely pronounce," Otsuka writes. They forgot the Japanese language and Japanese gods and acquired American-sized

ambitions. Still, their mothers nurtured them: "Even though we saw the darkness coming we said nothing and let them dream on."

This is Otsuka's masterfully delicate foreshadowing of the historical cataclysm that would shatter the acceptable rhythms of so many lives. The bombing of Pearl Harbor unleashed an anti-Japanese hysteria, a dismal outpouring of American xenophobia amped up by the war in the Pacific.

Otsuka chronicles the encroaching threat to Japanese-American immigrants and their families, the rumors that began somewhere far away and moved ever closer. However stark their innocence, individual Japanese were detained, and disappeared. Fear haunted the community, along with hope that the threat would pass. When the deportation orders came, homes, businesses, and possessions were sold off at bargain-basement prices. The forced exodus to the now-infamous internment camps followed, brutally interrupting thousands of lives. (Otsuka's 2003 debut novel, *When the Emperor Was Divine*, chronicled the life of one family in an internment camp.)

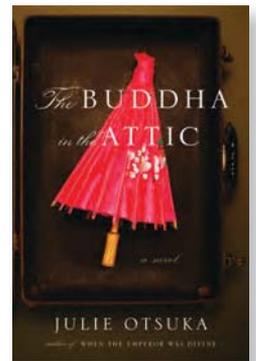
Otsuka's sensual prose conveys the resulting tumult, as looters took advantage of the departures: "Most of us left in a hurry. Many of us left in despair.

A few of us left in disgust, and had no desire ever to come back. Curtains ripped. Glass shattered. Wedding dishes smashed to the floor." It is from the residue of the exodus that the novel draws its title. One of the brides, in her haste, left behind "a tiny laughing brass Buddha up high, in a corner of the attic, where he is still laughing to this day."

The Buddha in the Attic challenges shibboleths about the American immigrant experience, illuminating some of its most troubling strands. And though the narrator predicts that "it would be only a matter of time until all traces of us were gone," in fact the traces of this dark era arguably have remained, shaping Japanese-American — and American — culture.

The book ends with a startling narrative pivot, a choice to dispense with the potential drama of following the picture brides into the camps. Instead, in a chapter titled "Disappearance," Otsuka shifts to the perspective of the whites, left to contemplate the boarded-up houses and overflowing mailboxes of their onetime neighbors. Where once there were dry cleaners, Japanese restaurants, and harvest festivals, there is now mostly quiet and absence, forgetfulness, and the vague lineaments of grief. We're left with a slow ebbing of tension, the beginning of a long cultural silence that will, in time, be broken.

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



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FINALS



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Václav Havel (1936–2011) in Low Library, 2006. Below, the Fall 2006 issue of *Columbia Magazine*, signed by Havel.

Blue Velvet

Václav Havel, who died in December at seventy-five, spent seven weeks at Columbia in the fall of 2006 as artist in residence. The Czech playwright, essayist, intellectual, humanist, rock-music lover, and dissident was jailed in the 1970s and 1980s, and later led the nonviolent Velvet Revolution that toppled Communist Party rule in 1989. He reluctantly accepted the post of president of Czechoslovakia and then of the Czech Republic.

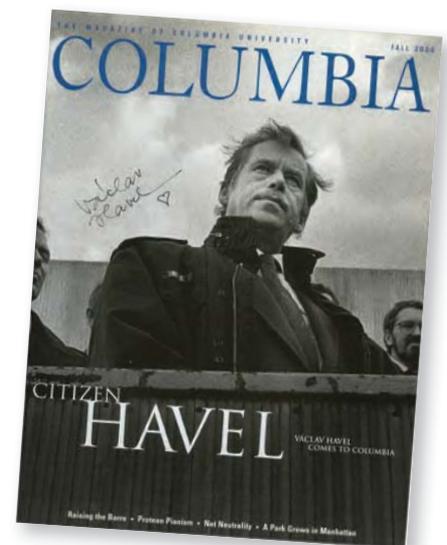
In his Core Contemporary Civilization Coursewide Lecture, Havel reminded the audience that democratic change sometimes comes in peculiar packages.

“As a dissident, I was many times visited by Western journalists,” he said in his halt-

ing English. “And they asked me, ‘What is the sense in what you do? It has not any chance to win or have some results, because you are a small group of a little bit crazy people, and how can you change this big system?’ Or, ‘Where are the millions of workers who support you?’ And I always answered them, ‘Pay attention: something is happening under the surface. You don’t know what, but one day you could be very, very surprised.’

“And they *were* surprised when the situation began to change.”

To learn more about Havel’s semester at Columbia, visit havel.columbia.edu.



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