

Columbia's Inferno



By Sophia Kolak

Introduction:

When I had journeyed half of last semester's way
I found myself within a shadowed meme page
for I had lost the path of focus that should not stray.

Ah, it is hard to tell of what it was,
that savage meme page, dense and dark,
which even in recall renews my fear:
so bitter--Butler is hardly more severe!
But to retell the laughter discovered there,
I'll also tell the other things I saw.

I cannot clearly say how I had entered
the page; I was so full of sleep just at
the point where I abandoned my flashcards,
its virtues summoned me.

And right where the memes
reached their most stale state,
a shadow appeared
with persona quite frail.

When I saw him protruding from that
jungle of lackluster memes,
"Please like my post," were the words I cried,
"whatever you may be--a meme, a man."

He answered me: "Not man; I once was memelord.
and I sang the woes,
of Columbia students from near and far.

But why do you return to distraction?
Why not climb up the Pupin-esque towers of your studies?"

"And are you then that Rafael Ortiz¹, you the fountain
That freely pours so rich a sea of memes?"

I answered him, my shame showing from behind the keys.

"O joy and muse of all other memelords,
may my long admiration, which made me adore
your many memes serve me now.

You are my inspiration--the one from whom my own memes spawned.

To meet you now is an honor I do not deserve."

"The direction you must take with your mind,"

¹ Rafael Ortiz is one of the most active members of the Facebook Group Columbia Buy-Sell Memes

He answered when he saw my hysterical state,
“if you would leave this depraved spiral of distraction;
the beastly memes that are the cause of your joy, and despair
which allow no man or woman to pass them by unamused.
must be foregone--left to the others for consumption and creation;
their nature is glutinous, insatiable.
They will never relent their forceful grip;
when they are liked, they demand more likes than ever.
Therefore, I conclude it is best for you
to follow me, and I shall guide you, taking
you to the depth of inspiration behind the most unruly memes
where you shall hear the primal scream of desperation
and the ancient GS students in their pain
memes so clever and poignant, they could extract laughter
from even the most stringent of engineers.
I shall guide you through
the darkness cowering below Columbia
which inspires these caption image pairs
that escape from my unkempt mind
like students from a Frosci lecture.
come now, and we shall set out on this journey through
the belly of the beast.”
And with that, my eyes became heavy
as I fell, into the unknown.

First Circle: Limbo

~Avery Library~



AVERY

- hates capitalism but shops at Urban Outfitters
- 70% coffee 30% smoke
- has a stick-n-poke tattoo



BUTLER

- wears Columbia apparel unironically
- lowkey loves the core
- Sweetgreen is their favorite restaurant



C.V. STARR

- triple major
- nerdy but in a cool way
- never been to Brooklyn



NOCO

- interned at Google
- wears shorts in winter
- neurotypical



LAW

- brags about how stressed they are
- secretly wants to murder someone just to see if they'd get away with it



GEOLOGY

- small
- not a city person
- goes to bed at 10pm

The heavy sleep within my head was crushed
by an enormous pile of books, dropped forcefully beside me.
Awakened so uncannily, I stood, perplexed
waiting to learn what place it was surrounding me.
That building, archaic, brick, and ivy-ridden,
with four pillars surrounded the loosely etched word, "Avery."
Suddenly, a voice, the memelord,
"let us descend into the blind world now,
I shall lead, and you shall follow."
Here, for as much as hearing could discover,
there were no wails, only the droning sound
of fingers slapping keys.
The typing arose from surroundings without personal evil,
out of the endless tables--the many multitudes--
of architects, and of artists.
The kindly guide said: "Do you not ask
who are these students who you see before you?
I'd have you know, before you go ahead,
that they are trapped in a library that is not meme-able,
and yet, not un-meme-able.
However, because Avery is still a Columbia library,
the portal of faith it embraced made it
unable to achieve redemption.
And even if the building were repurposed--
or if it had another function before it became a Columbia library,
those who work here could not attain salvation.
Of such souls who study in Avery,
I myself am one."
Great sorrow seized my heart on hearing him,
for I had seen some respectable memes
about this vessel we call Avery,
my kindly guide began by saying:
"Give likes to those memes about this cellar,
those who reached the ranks of the greatness by
Acquiring more than one thousand likes,
some were based on the employability of art majors,
others on the stereotypes of the place,
but all are trapped in limbo, because
Any part of columbia that inspires a meme,

no matter how benevolent,
cannot let its inhabitants ascend to His kingdom.”
And so I saw the splendid display of artists across Avery
who, forced to stare at humanity’s most magnificent art
for all of eternity,
are unable to analyze its beauty
as simpletons paralyzed before greatness.
I saw James Franco and Kate McKinnon,
and, on the other side, saw Alicia Keys
who sat beside Rodgers and Hammerstein,
and so many others,
so many I cannot describe them all in full;
my knowing guide drags me another way,
beyond the silence, into open air.
And I have reached a part where no person smiles.

Second Circle: The Lustful ~Mel's Burgers~



Matthew Petti ▸ columbia buy sell memes

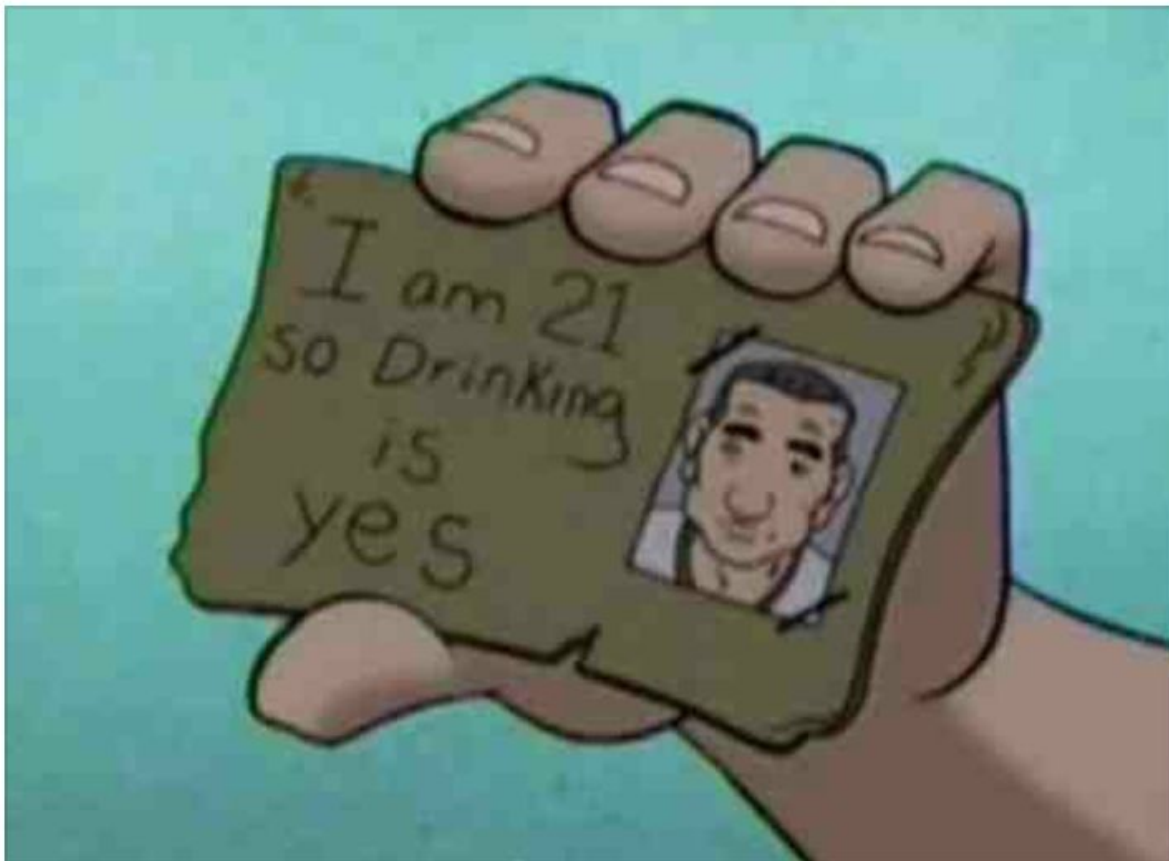
September 14, 2017 · 🌐



The crowds outside Mel's every September

\$21

📍 New York, NY



So I descended from the first enclosure
down to the second circle, that which takes up less time
but grief more great, such that it leads to drinking.
I glance around this new terrain.
The hellish bouncer, who never rests,
drives on the spirits with his violence:
wheeling and harassing them
with prods and pokes
about the legitimacy of their ID's,
all outside the striped awning of Mel's Burgers.
I learned that those who undergo this torment
are damned because their memes were cheap,
subjecting horatian humor to juvenile jests.
For memes that take no wit,
are like love that takes no time,
and so forever in line for the fast-love of Mel's
these tortured souls will wait.
Prods at campus bars,
"Columbia hook-up culture"
and the lack of frequent parties,
all cliches run into the ground.
For those who make such effortless jeers
could the wretched dungeon of Mel's
truly be a warranted fate?
Were my own memes free of such
low-brow humor?
With this pure fear my mind was overcome
and like a GPA after midterms, I dropped
straight towards the ground in grief.

Third Circle: The Gluttonous, Avaricious, and Prodigal ~JJ's Place~

Getting mozzarella sticks at JJ's



"We must stop eating!" cried Toad
as he ate another.

Upon my mind's reviving--it had closed
with remorse for those trapped in Mel's--
I saw misery of a whole novel form,
wherever I positioned my weary eyes.
The massive sky had opened up
above the ruins of John Jay Hall,
leaving the greasy basement known as JJ's Place
exposed before the relentless clouds
which pellet mozzarella sticks, french fries, and deep-fried twinkies
upon the poor souls who memed about gluttony, avarice, and prodigality.
Above those submerged in a sea of heart disease,
stood a vicious beast; doglike. An econ major.
His eyes were bloodshot from binge reading the Wall Street Journal,
His hair; slicked back, his suit; expensive.
As souls slowly climb out of the rubble one by one,
he professes the difficulty of attaining his Goldman Sachs internship,
until they voluntarily crawl back into the dark abyss from which they came.
Gluttony and avarice to a Columbia memmer, are perhaps,
as ubiquitous a topic
as salt to its dining halls.
Canada Goose jackets to its torsos.
Which encompass prodigality beyond all known constraints,
finance sellouts embody avarice aplenty,
and even pure jokes about the gluttonous portions
offered thrice daily to every student,
make the ebb and flow of tireless minds
ceaselessly stream towards the like button,
in shame and self awareness.
That downpour of shame, the econ majors wrath,
makes the sinners howl like injured fawns.
Out of the whining masses abruptly came an outstretched hand
upon my shoulder,
"O you who are conducted through this special Hell,"
he said to me, "You may not know me, but I know you.
You see, your university--
one so full of envy that its desks are always filled--
was one that I once inhabited.
the name I held while on this Earth, was
Warren Buffett, and for the damning sin of embracing

the Columbia gluttony that memes sprung from,
as you can see, I too, was buried beneath this mountainous
array of fried delights.” After this brief remark,
he spoke no more.

I answered him, “Warren, your suffering is a shame to me--”
But I could say nothing else, for I was filled with remorse so great
That my body told me it was high time,
to transition from one circle to another
with a dramatic faint.

Fourth Circle: the Wrathful and the Sullen

~Butler Library~



Mahzabin Hasnath ▶ columbia buy sell memes



February 7 at 7:53pm · 🌐

asking friends to join you in butler

\$209

📍 New York, NY



💬 Message Seller

👍 Like

💬 Comment

I awoke on a boat,
upon, what at first appeared to me
as the river Hudson,
but with more stern a gaze,
I noticed there were bodies
piled upwards
which formed a demonic swamp
that bore the name of Butler.
As I glanced upon the dreary faces,
which all blurred into one monotonous
swirl of dejection,
I saw majors of all types
clawing at each other for internships, grades, and praise
as they did 24 hours a day,
striking each other not just with hands alone,
but with coffee mugs and laptops.
For seats at non-existent desks they toiled,
unable to recognize their aimless folly.
The kindly guide, noticing my fear at these vixens,
told me: “friend, now see
the souls of those who memed on Butler,
that river wedged in slime,
That hell too great for words,
they say: ‘we had been sullen
In the sweet air, that’s gladdened by sun on Lowe steps,
we bore the mist of depression in us:
now we are bitter, in Butler’s blackened mud.”
My fear relented, for suddenly it seemed to me
that such detestable souls deserved their place here.
As our boat reached the real muck of Butler ref,
our eyes had risen upwards, towards its dark ceiling
where images
of sleep; avoided, and desks; reserved,
all nighters; pulled, and stacks; avoided
reverberated forever.
The memes they inspired--bouncing
back and forth
between such ancient walls.
My soul was lightened,

for just as athletes belong in Dodge,
and seniors belong in East Campus,
these souls surely deserved this endless battle
for what they could not abandon in life.

Fifth Circle: Heresy

~Pupin Laboratories~



The Columbia Physics Major Starter Pack



Yo, did you get a research position yet?



Hi,

The mean for Exam 2 was 9.5 out of 20. And the standard deviation was 5.3.



As onward down the dreary stream
Our boat continued flowing
we reached a tower strange and foreign
whose exterior perplexed my cowardly mind.
“O guide” I asked,
“what can this be? A building shaped so strangely?”
Just as the wise professor responds to a question,
my knowing guide replied;
“here enter we, Pupin Laboratories, where
Physics and other such sinful
sciences are studied. Upon this devilish building
stands a telescope, technology designed
to undo our faith in God’s heavenly creation.
Those who make memes about the science in Pupin,
Physics,
Astronomy,
Engineering,
acknowledge the work
which contradicts His divine plan.
For asking questions where none are due,
they are punished with endless questions asked back.
a perpetual final exam of impossible difficulty,
for every soul at every moment.
And if, a rare burst of genius ever allows one burst of understanding
in that question’s place appears another,
of even greater complexity.”
I saw this in the flesh before me,
test takers pitifully attempting to shred exams,
all in vain, for the parchment, indestructible, always returned.
As did the memes from Buy-Sell,
inspired by unsolvable problem sets,
code that won’t compile,
and median scores above or below
which all patrons fell.
Now in great equality, they finally stood.
And in the middle of this mayhem, gazing at his chest,
is mighty Neil deGrasse Tyson,
host of the show Cosmos.

When he'd uncovered his enormous mouth,
he said to his fellow heretics,
“look, before you, friends, is a soul who
does not know our endless pain. If only
we had not taken Frosci, declared STEM majors
or applied to SEAS
we could have landed
safely in Limbo.”
To this, I had no true reply,
I only worried,
because I myself had taken such a course.
and again I was overcome
by a feeling of heavy sleep,
And--surprisingly,
like rain for most of February 2018
I fell to the ground.

Sixth Circle: Treachery

~Bollinger's Lake~

her: come over

Bollinger: can't, stuck in low

her: I'm gentrifying harlem

Bollinger:



When I awoke in this final circle
the place before me was so cruel,
so brutal, I nearly cannot tell of it.
Now, although I speak with fear
I bring myself to speak
for it is no light task
to describe what awaited me
in the lowest layer of hell--
the most perverse source of inspiration
for any meme this university
has ever seen.

Down in this cell
as dark as Furnald after 8pm,
was a frozen lake, clear--
as the choice between John Jay and Carman.
And as the drowning student tries to keep their head
above water during the Columbia swim test,
were those desperate souls who memed betrayal,
teeth chattering like keys rattling out
comments of dissent.

Forever into a frozen lake,
forced to gasp for breath in stinging winter
with whatever spurned them most severely.

When I had looked around, I saw
memes spanning such topics as
graduate student rights,
Harlem's gentrification,
depression, suicide,
stress culture,
and our beloved administration.

Among these deadly topics was a man,
whose glasses stuck upon his face so tightly
I could not observe where the spectacles ended and his nose began.

"Do tell me, you whose glasses are so small and puny, who are you?"

He peeled the glasses from his gaunt face, revealing a stream of black tears
that froze as they rolled from his eyes.

"I am Lee Bollinger, and I am the
embodiment of Columbia memes
regarding treachery, the cover photo of the meme page,

I was first to be thrown into this annex of suffering.
'Fair Wages', my employees cried
but I,
did not heed their word."

The inflection with which he spoke
strangely implied no regret
of any kind.

"But Lee," I inquired, perplexed,
"your whole career stood on pillars of
Liberal freedom, how could you have
betrayed your school in a manner
so damning?"

"That's why my friend," he spoke,
after a pause for consideration
quite brief,

"I inhabit the sixth circle and not
the third. It was not greed or ignorance,
I knew quite well what
rights were deserved, and yet,
deprived still I left my workers,
for in my dark soul,
it gave me joy to watch them grade endlessly
before the dying candle light.

But now, the tides have turned, and I must suffer too."

And with that last remark, he shriveled away
into the solid statue known to us as
Alma Mater, where his soul would remain
gazing over college walk for all eternity.

Reflecting on his words, my own mind concluded
that he was, the most tortured of them all.

I was certain at this moment,
that God Almighty does not ere,
for if Alma inhabits the lowest circle of hell,
then Justice, as I know it, surely
prevails.

Disclaimer: These poetic words do not reflect the sincere views of the author about anything and the events described are purely fictional (except for the rainstorm of Mozzarella sticks).

