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by John Cassidy

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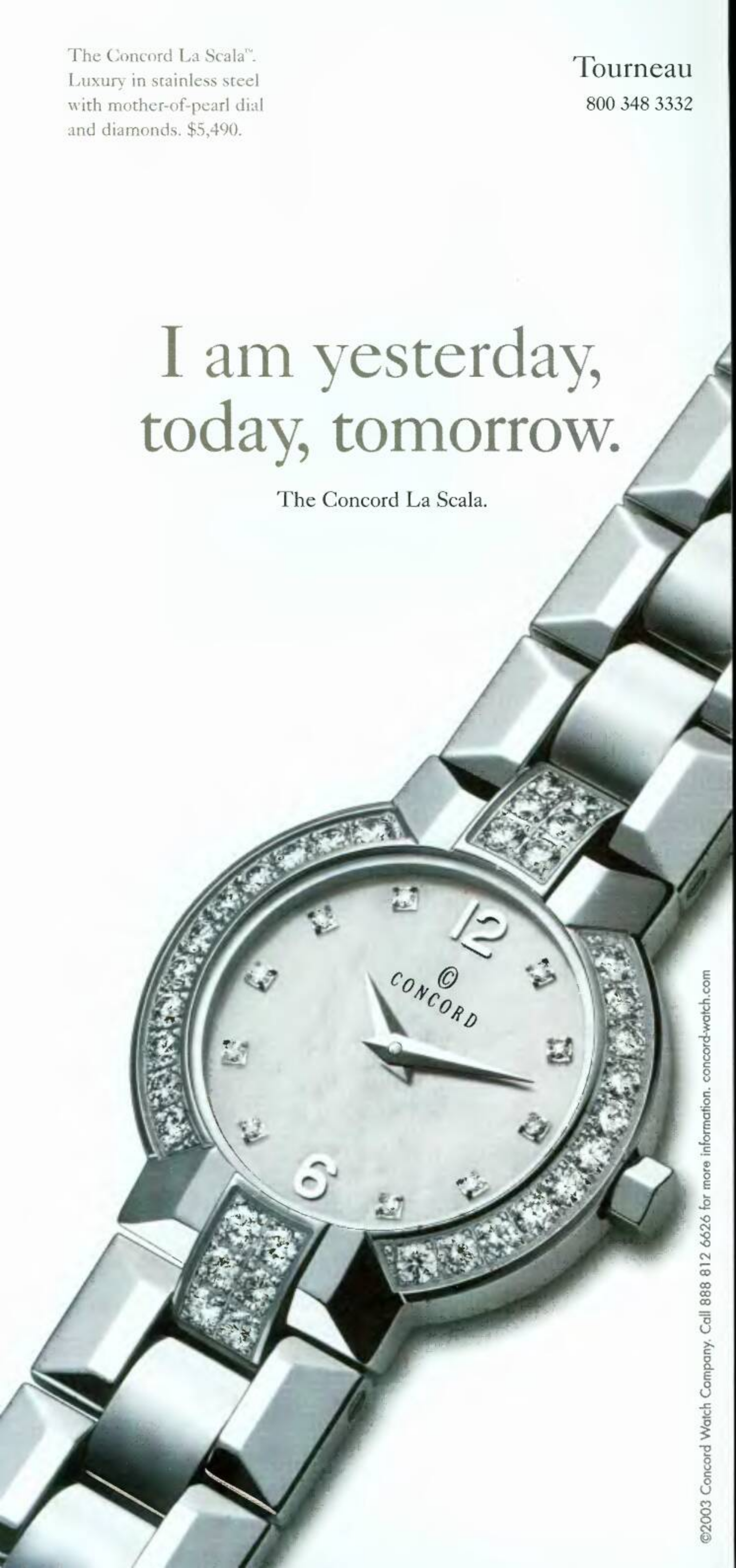

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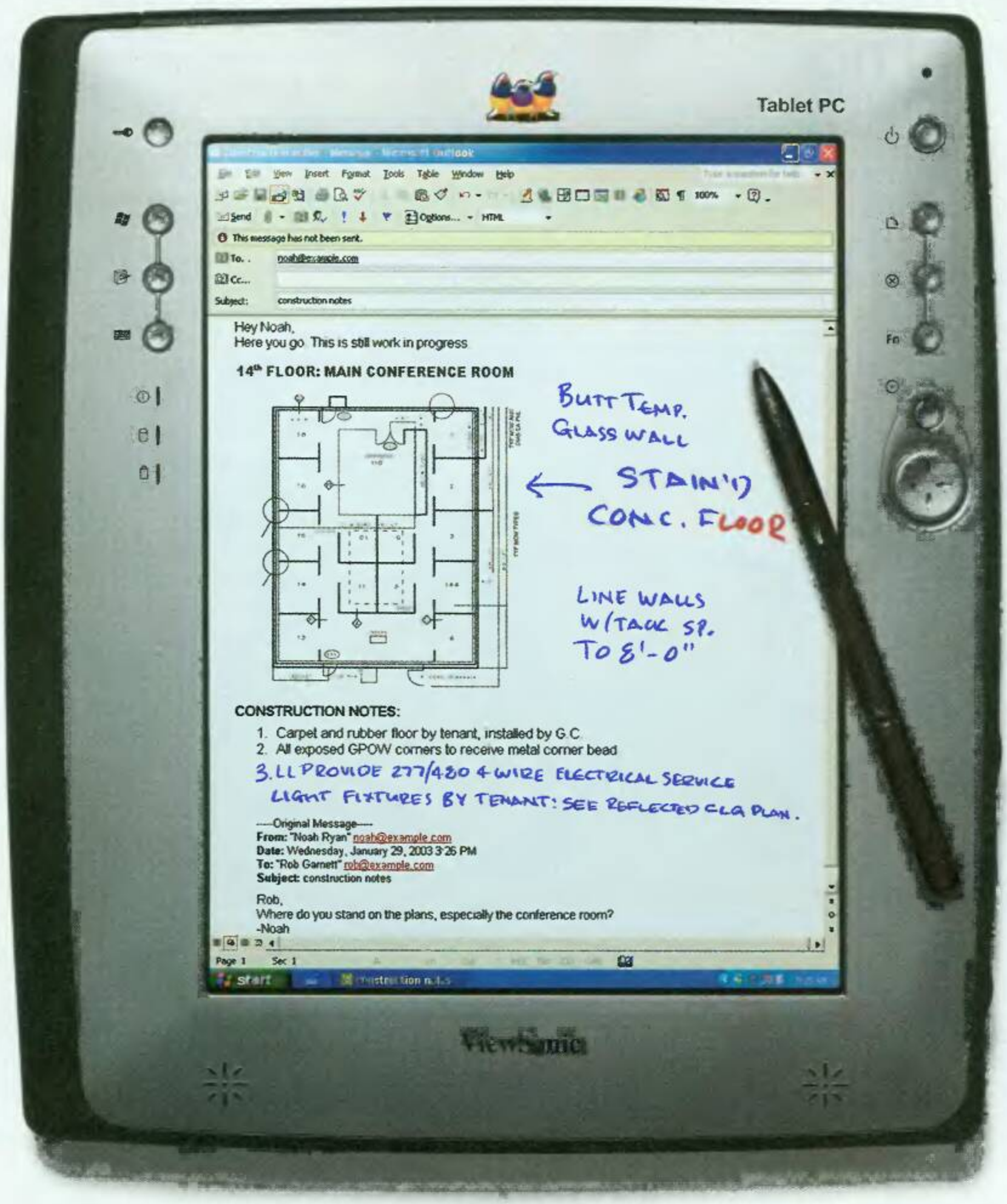

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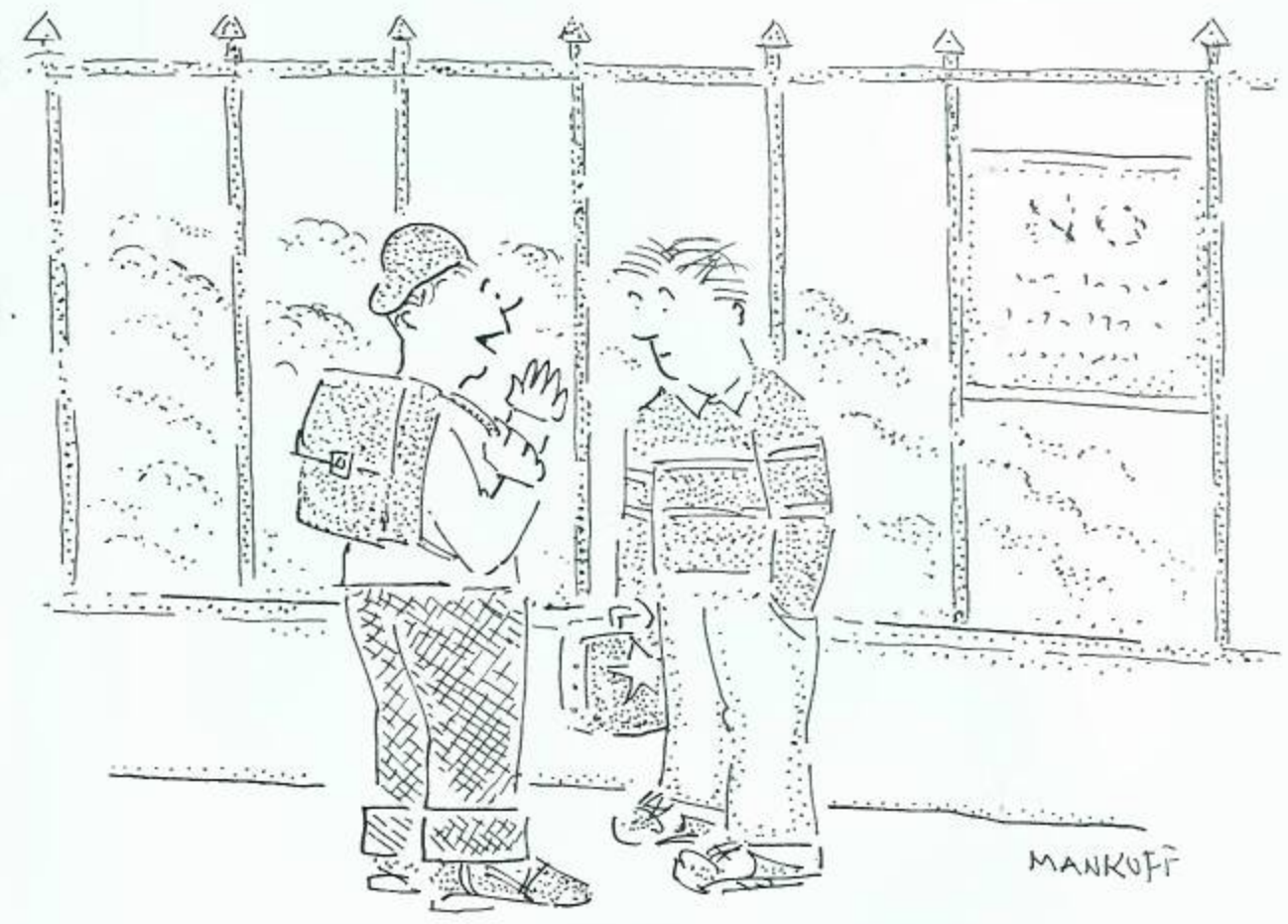

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THE MAIL

THE WOMAN FROM PETA

Michael Specter, in his article on Ingrid Newkirk, the founder of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), gives PETA credit for much of our society's increased awareness of animal cruelty—and rightly so ("The Extremist," April 14th). However extreme and often distasteful the methods, Newkirk's influence, and that of her organization, is undeniable, and has been mostly positive. Suddenly, it's not so hard to imagine a day in the future when mistreating animals will provoke the same rebuke from our children and grandchildren that smoking or driving without seat belts does today.
David Hemenway
New York City

At the moment, I am participating in a clinical trial for a cancer drug and, as such, carrying on work begun by lab animals. After reading Specter's article, I wondered about how Newkirk puts into practice her conviction that human lives are not worth the sacrifice of the life or comfort of even a single animal for medical research. Does the same rigor that dictates the limits of her diet and her clothing also extend to her health? I hope that Newkirk never faces the wrenching choice between taking drugs that could save her life and refusing them on the ground that animals were used to develop them.
Diana Slickman
Chicago, Ill.

Perhaps the many people who are, as Specter writes, appalled by Newkirk's rhetoric and the passions of her fellow PETA activists are unaware of the scientific findings that no longer allow us to accept the Cartesian notion that animals do not suffer. Indeed, there is evidence, such as stress hormones in their blood, that animals suffer not only physiologically but also psychologically. And it is possible that, precisely because animals lack abstract reason—they cannot understand what is happening to them, cannot appeal to a Supreme Being to help them, and so forth—their physical suffering may consume the whole of their experience in ways we cannot imagine.
Priscilla N. Cohn
Villanova, Pa.

I am not about to become a vegetarian, nor am I sure that I can throw away my leather footwear and belts. But I can affirm that Specter's article has opened my eyes to the maltreatment of animals and the reasons for not eating them. It made me question whether or not it is really worth it to order meat in restaurants or cook it myself. Perhaps the fact that someone like me could even begin to question my eating habits may be enough for Newkirk to feel that her lifelong crusade has accomplished something.
Julie A. Varughese
New York City

Specter's Profile of Ingrid Newkirk reminded me of another article about her, one that I read twenty years ago. It was in a major newspaper and all but ridiculed Newkirk and her work on behalf of animals. (The title was "She's a Portrait of Zealotry in Plastic Shoes.") I especially remember the dismissive tone in which the reporter told the story of how Newkirk cupped her hands with water to give to chickens who were dying of thirst and heat on the holding dock of a Maryland slaughterhouse on a hot summer day. Her act of compassion—and the way the writer made sport of it—eventually led to my decision to become a full-time advocate for chickens. Specter's article, by taking Newkirk and her ideas seriously, shows how far we've come since then.
Karen Davis
President, United Poultry Concerns
Machipongo, Va.

•

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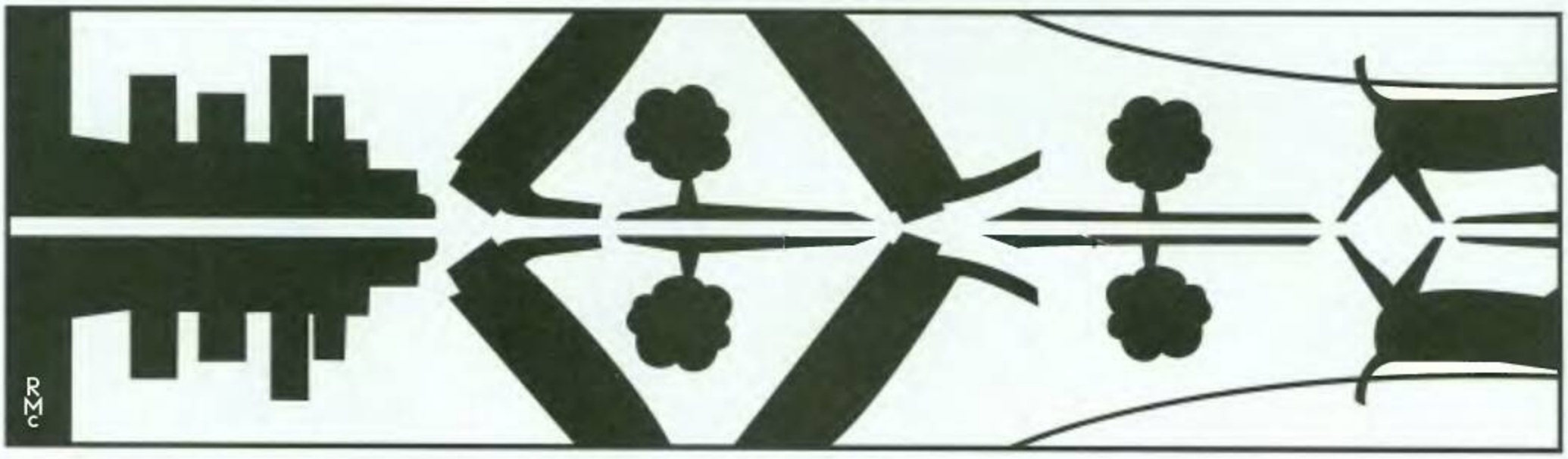

THE THEATRE
OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

AMERICAN MAGIC
In a satiric new play by Gil Kofman, a mind reader at a birthday gala for the President of the United States plies his art too well and falls victim to the post-9/11 clash between civil liberties and national security. Directed by Matthew Wilder, with original music by Lee Ranaldo of Sonic Youth—and with the voice of the President supplied by the playwright Richard Foreman. In previews. Opens May 8 at 8. (Altered Stages, 212 W. 29th St. 212-352-3101.)

CAVEDWELLER
Kate Moira Ryan's new play, about a female rock star who tries to reclaim her neglected daughters when her career begins to fade, is based on the novel by Dorothy Allison. With original music by Stephen Trask ("Hedwig and the Angry Inch") and Julia Greenberg. Michael Greif directs. In previews. Opens May 8 at 7. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 212-239-6200.)

HUMBLE BOY
Manhattan Theatre Club presents the American première of a play by Charlotte Jones, loosely based on "Hamlet" and set in Cambridge, England. Blair Brown, as Flora Humble, and Jared Harris, as her son, Felix, lead the cast, which also includes Mary Beth Hurt and Paul Hecht. Directed by John Caird. Sets and costumes by Tim Hatley. In previews. (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212.)

I AM MY OWN WIFE
Jefferson Mays stars in a new play by Doug Wright ("Quills"), directed by Moisés Kaufman, based on the life story of a German transvestite named Charlotte von Mahlsdorf, who managed to avoid persecution under both Nazi and Communist regimes. In previews. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

IN WHAT LANGUAGE?
A series of interior monologues by travellers at an international airport dramatize contemporary fears and race prejudices. With music and poetry by Vijay Iyer, a libretto by Michael Ladd, and a seven-member orchestra. Rachel Dickstein directs. May 8-11. (Asia Society, Park Ave. at 70th St. 212-517-2742.)

MASTER HAROLD . . . AND THE BOYS
Danny Glover returns to Broadway in a revival of Athol Fugard's 1982 play about a white South African boy's friendship with two black servants. Directed by Lonny Price (who played the boy, Hally, back in 1982) and starring Glover as Sam, Michael Boatman as Willie, and Christopher Denham as Hally. In previews. (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

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NEW YORK GILBERT & SULLIVAN PLAYERS
"H.M.S. Pinafore" docks at Symphony Space, directed by Albert Bergeret. May 8-11. (Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-5400.)

NO STRINGS
The latest revival by City Center Encores! is a lightly staged production of Richard Rodgers' 1962 musical about an interracial romance between a fashion model and a Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist, with music and lyrics by Rodgers and a book by Samuel Taylor. Directed and choreographed by Ann Reinking, with a full orchestra conducted by Rob Fisher. May 8-11. (131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212.)

RAIN DANCE
The Signature Theatre Company presents the New York première of a new play by Lanford Wilson, set in Los Alamos, New Mexico, 1945, on the eve of the creation of the atom bomb. The cast includes Randolph Mantooth, Suzanne Regan, James Van Der Beek, and Harris Yulin. Guy Sanville directs. In previews. (Peter Norton Space, 555 W. 42nd St. 212-244-7529.)

WRITER'S BLOCK
Woody Allen directs a double bill of his two new one-act comedies, "Riverside Drive" and "Old Saybrook," with an ensemble cast that includes Bebe Neuwirth, Paul Reiser, and Jay Thomas. In previews. (Atlantic, 336 W. 20th St. 212-239-6200.)

OPENED RECENTLY

AVENUE Q
This uproarious new musical tells the story of a group of neighbors struggling to make it in New York City. Unlike another musical with a similar theme—"Rent"—the show doesn't deal with life-and-death issues, and many of the neighbors are cloth puppets. This could sound like a recipe for juvenilia, but the end product is wicked fun—and definitely for grownups. Subversive, cheerful songs by Robert Lopez and Jeff Marx address drunkenness, promiscuity, and racism with winking matter-of-factness, and the director, Jason Moore, guides the absurdity with zest. With a band led by Gary Adler, puppets designed by Rick Lyon, and a book by Jeff Whitty. (Vineyard, 108 E. 15th St. 212-239-6200. Closes May 11.)

CARA LUCIA
Mabou Mines achieves a rare feat in this new production: intelligibly dramatizing a human consciousness. The consciousness in question belongs to Lucia Joyce, daughter of James, who spent her youth in Paris and the last forty-five years of her life institutionalized for a severe mental illness. Her psychiatric state has a certain prurient appeal, but the drama is more concerned with the role Lucia had in her father's art (some of Joyce's experiments with language may have been an attempt to communicate with his daughter). Sharon Fogarty, who wrote and directed, together with Clove Galilee as Young Lucia and the splendid Ruth Maleczech as Old Lucia, compellingly conveys Lucia's predicament. With attractive sets and lighting by Jim Clayburgh. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 212-647-0202. Closes May 11.)

DAISY MAYME
The Pearl presents a revival of George Kelly's 1926 comedy about an irrepressible spinster (Robin Leslie Brown) who shakes up the lives of an aging bachelor and the grasping relatives who hope to take possession of his estate. Russell Treyz directs. (80 St. Marks Pl. 212-598-9802. Closes May 11.)

A DAY IN THE DEATH OF JOE EGG
In the Roundabout's revival of Peter Nichols's 1967 semiautobiographical play, the unreliable narrator, Bri—a droll, bored schoolteacher, is brought to magnificent life by the comedian Eddie Izzard, who treats the audience as if it were his rowdy classroom, and chases his sweet-natured wife, Sheila (the expert Victoria Hamilton), around the sofa in vain pursuit of a little rumpy-pumpy. Bri's jollity has a manic, almost slapstick edge, but when the doorbell rings and the couple's brain-damaged ten-year-old daughter enters or, rather, is wheeled in, the smile is wiped off the audience's face. Directed by Laurence Boswell. (Reviewed in our issue of 4/14/03.) (American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-719-1300.)

DREAM A LITTLE DREAM
In the two years leading up to the Summer of Love, the Mamas and the Papas ruled the airwaves with hits like "California Dreamin'." But then the group disintegrated, frazzled by Mama Cass's psychedelic sugar cubes and singed by Mama Michelle's red-hot hippie-femme-fatale act. As Denny Doherty, a founding member of the band, puts it in this musical happening, "Our hearts just weren't in it anymore, man . . . it was just too weird." A backup band (including young doubles for Cass, Michelle, and John Phillips) accompanies Denny as he reminisces about his heyday, singing in his well-preserved sweet tenor, in a play that blends the reverential gusto of a "Loser's Lounge" covers show with a rambling dramatic structure that is part Elaine Stritch and part twelve-step confession. With a video montage of sixties moments by Jan Hartley. Directed by Randal Myler. (Village, 158 Bleecker St. 212-307-4100.)

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ENCHANTED APRIL
If you've seen the 1992 movie, with Miranda Richardson, Polly Walker, and Joan Plowright, then you've seen this play, which apes it in shape and tone. It's strange that Matthew Barber, the relatively young author of this comic drama—here making his Broadway début—would have constructed a play redolent of mothballs. Based on a book by Elizabeth von Arnim, about four Englishwomen who seek wisteria and romance in Italy, the story is a mishmash of Maugham and Forster, with a sprinkling of Waugh. Jayne Atkinson stars as the middle-aged wife of a prig (the funny Michael Cumpsty), Molly Ringwald

LONG DAY'S JOURNEY INTO NIGHT
Vanessa Redgrave and Brian Dennehy are Mary and James Tyrone, and Philip Seymour Hoffman and Robert Sean Leonard are their sons, in a new production of Eugene O'Neill's family drama, directed by Robert Falls. (Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE LOOK OF LOVE
The Roundabout Theatre Company presents a musical revue of the songs of Burt Bacharach and Hal David. Directed by Scott Ellis and choreographed by Ann Reinking. (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 212-307-4100.)

George Kelly's nineteen-twenties comedy "Daisy Mayme," at the Pearl.

is the wife of a cheesy biographer (Daniel Gerroll), the talented Dagmara Dominczyk is a disillusioned aristocratic flapper, and Elizabeth Ashley is a formidable dowager. The cast overexerts itself to no end under Michael Wilson's confused direction. Still, such lines as "Is the wisteria guaranteed?," which Ashley delivers with her customary growl, could propel the play into the canon of camp. (Belasco, 111 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

GOLDA'S BALCONY
In William Gibson's one-woman show about Golda Meir—the Russian immigrant from Wisconsin who helped create the state of Israel and eventually became its prime minister—Tovah Feldshuh demonstrates how national and family passions blend in the heart, making dispassionate judgment impossible. Scott Schwartz directs. (Manhattan Ensemble Theatre, 55 Mercer St. 212-239-6200. Closes June 1.)

GYPSY
Bernadette Peters plays Mama Rose in the musical by Jule Styne, Stephen Sondheim, and Arthur Laurents. Directed by Sam Mendes. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

LADIES OF THE CORRIDOR
Arnaud d'Usseau and Dorothy Parker's pointed observations of social dynamics at a New York hotel get an airing in the Peccadillo Theatre Company's revival of their 1953 play. Dan Wackerman directs. (Bank Street Theatre, 155 Bank St. 212-561-9635.)

MARY TODD . . . A WOMAN APART
Carl Wallnau III has collected a great many facts about Mary Todd Lincoln and arrayed them in support of the idea that she was mistreated by her son and by history. But that's hardly news, and the script offers little else, not even a coherent take on Mrs. Lincoln. A vivacious performance by Colleen Smith Wallnau (yes, the author's wife; she plays Mrs. Lincoln and, briefly, a dozen or so other characters) cannot transform this agglomeration of information into a play. Directed by Mr. Wallnau. (Samuel Beckett, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200. Closes May 17.)

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM
The acclaimed Aquila Theatre Company brings Shakespeare's comedy to the New Victory, set during the fin de siècle, with a French-impressionist-influenced lighting scheme. Robert Richmond directs. (209 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200. Closes May 18.)

NINE
In this elegant revival of Arthur Kopit and Maury Yeston's 1982 musical—an adaptation of Fellini's "8½"—Antonio Banderas plays Guido Contini, a film director whose genius is inextricable from his childlike narcissism. Good-looking, confident, and amusing, Banderas has a European restraint that only magnifies his passionate nature. He doesn't have to strain to make the audience believe that he is catnip to women. He also has a fine voice. The other characters are satellites around Planet Guido: his put-upon wife (Mary Stuart Masterson), his battle-axe producer (Chita Rivera), and his tenacious and lubricious mistress, Carla (Jane Krakowski), who descends seminude from the rafters. Directed by David Leveaux, with a high-tech set (featuring an impressive spiral staircase) by Scott Pask. (4/21 & 28/03) (Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200.)

NOTES FROM UNDERGROUND
Jonathan Ames reprises Eric Bogosian's role in a revival of the playwright's 1994 solo play about a neurotic urban loner. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 212-477-5288. Closes May 25.)

THE PLAY WHAT I WROTE
This sketch-comedy soufflé, starring the British comedy team Sean Foley and Hamish McColl, with Toby Jones as their hilarious gofer, Arthur, is a goofy tribute to the English double act Eric Morecambe and Ernie Wise. The show was a hit in London, but to American audiences unfamiliar with the departed duo the soufflé sags a bit, although it offers plenty of lighthearted tidbits to savor. The gimmick is that each night, Jones lassos a big star to act with McColl in a play-within-the-play called "A Tight Squeeze for the Scarlet Pimple." So far, Glenn Close and Liam Neeson have joined in the frolic. Directed by Kenneth Branagh. (Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

PRIVATE JOKES, PUBLIC PLACES
A new comedy by Oren Safdie—son of the architect Moshe Safdie—takes aim at the pretense and sexism of the contemporary architectural community. With M. J. Kang, as a female architecture student, and Fritz Michel, Graeme Malcolm, and David Chandler, as turf-protecting male jurors on her thesis committee. Craig Carlisle directs. (La Mama, 74A E. 4th St. 212-475-7710.)

SALOME
Oscar Wilde wrote this play in 1893, just as his dramatic reputation had been secured with "Lady Windermere's Fan" and "A Woman of No Importance." Written in French and translated by Wilde's lover, Lord Alfred Douglas, "Salome" falls somewhere between Tennessee Williams at his most hyperbolic and Jean Genet at his most obscure. ("How strange the moon seems! She is like a woman rising from a tomb. . . . You would fancy she was looking for dead things.") Marisa Tomei plays Salome, who lusts after the prophet Jokannan (David Strathairn), who rejects her, repelled by her decadence and that of her stepfather, Herod (Al Pacino), and her mother, Herodias (Dianne Wiest). Denied Jokannan's lips, Salome seeks his head. Tomei's ultramodern Salome suggests a girl from the F train who's stumbled into the theatre from a hip-hop club; her dance of the seven veils looks like power yoga. But Estelle Parsons has directed Pacino wonderfully; he gives power to dated material with humor, not histrionics, and seems completely comfortable in the role of the perverse, greedy king—a lovable monster. (Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200.)

STONE COLD DEAD SERIOUS
Adam Rapp's latest show is a dark new American Gothic: a portrait of a family floundering in the heartland. On the outskirts of Chicago, an alienated teen computer genius (Matt Stadelmann) decides to try to save his unemployed, pain-pill-popping dad, his overworked waitress mom, and his drug-addicted sister by hopping a bus to Manhattan and competing for the million-dollar prize in a video-game tournament. Irony notwithstanding, the script shows surprising tenderness. Carolyn Cantor directs the well-knit cast. (Chashama, 135 W. 42nd St. 212-206-1515. Closes May 17.)

TALKING HEADS
In six exquisite cameos translated from television to the stage and divided into two separate shows, the British actor and playwright Alan Bennett's skills as a miniaturist are on display, and he misses nothing. Each monologue conjures up a desiccated universe with scrupulously observed detail. Directed by Michael Engler. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 212-307-4100.)

TRUMBO
Dalton Trumbo wrote sixty-one screenplays and has the invidious distinction of having won two Academy Awards under pseudonyms, because he was blacklisted, jailed, and deprived of a livelihood under his own name during the McCarthy era for his outspo-

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ken political views and his refusal to coöperate with questioning by the House Un-American Activities Committee. This is a staged reading in which a different actor plays Trumbo each night, including, so far, Tim Robbins, Chris Cooper, Richard Dreyfuss, and Alec Baldwin. Paul Giamatti plays Trumbo's son, Christopher, and narrates the piece, commenting on his father's letters. What comes across in this powerful evening is the eloquence, wit, curmudgeonly stubbornness, and downright bravery of a unique soul. Directed by Peter Askin. Mondays only. (Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 212-239-6200. Closes June 16.)

URBAN COWBOY
This musical is big, brash, eager to please, and none too subtle. The story is the same as in the 1980 film with John Travolta and Debra Winger: small-town Texan comes to Houston, meets girl, falls in love, marries girl, then gets spooked by her need to ride the mechanical bull at the local beer hall. The savvy director, Lonny Price, keeps the action going, leaving out the explication. What the show lacks in depth the singers and dancers make up for with energy, verve, and well-toned calves and abs, but it's hard to feel anything strongly about the performers except that they are too heavily miked. With Matt Cavenaugh as Bud, Sally Mayes as his funny Aunt Corene, Jenn Colella as his girl, Sissy, and Marcus Chait as Wes, a sexy spoiler. Choreographed by Melinda Roy, with musical direction by Jason Robert Brown. (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

ZANNA DON'T
All the students at Heartsville High are gay, so calamity ensues when the football quarterback and the female lead in the school play (about heterosexuals in the military) notice that they have feelings for each other. This perky and adorable musical is so bubblegum flavored that it could almost cause sugar shock—but the wit of the script cuts the sweetness. Directed and choreographed by Devanand Janki. (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.)

DANCE

AMERICAN BALLET THEATRE
Angel Corella, Gillian Murphy, Marcelo Gomes, Julie Kent, Ethan Stiefel, Xiomara Reyes, and the other dancers of A.B.T. sharpen their pointes as the spring season begins. The first week includes a guest appearance by Alina Cojocaru of the Royal Ballet, dancing in "La Bayadère" on Saturday night and Monday night, and a performance of a pas de deux from "The Leaves Are Fading" by the principal dancer Amanda McKerrow and her husband, John Gardner, a former A.B.T. soloist. ♦ May 6 and May 8 at 8 and May 7 at 2: "Offenbach in the Underworld," "Clear," "Diana and Actaeon" pas de deux, and "Harrison Tribute." ♦ May 7 at 8: "Offenbach in the Underworld," "Clear," "The Leaves Are Fading" pas de deux, and "Harrison Tribute." ♦ May 9 and May 12-13 at 8 and May 10 at 2 and 8: "La Bayadère." (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000. Through June 28.)

NEW YORK CITY BALLET
May 7-9 at 8, May 10 at 2 and 8, May 11 at 3, and May 13 at 7:30: "Swan Lake." (New York State Theatre, Lincoln Center. 212-870-5570.)

651 ARTS
The first week of the company's fourth annual "Black Dance: Transition and Transformation" program includes an evening-length work about the roaring nineteen-nineties by Ronald K. Brown/Evidence. (BAM Harvey Theatre, 651 Fulton St., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100. May 9-10 at 8.)

"HIGH TIDE"
Lava's season at Dance Theatre Workshop continues with Sarah East Johnson's thrilling choreography, in which six brawny women use acrobatics as a metaphor for emotional connection, flinging themselves fearlessly into feats of daring: two performers wrapped back to back in Ace bandages flip over like a human Slinky; dancers jump through hoops in intricate and accelerating variations and stack up in a perfectly spaced line of headstands. With a fluid video backdrop of Lava lamps and waterfalls, designed by Nancy Brooks Brody. (Bessie Schönberg Theatre, 219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. May 8-11 at 7. Through May 18.)

MARK ULRIKSEN

BOBBY'S SALOON *Bobby Short opened at the Café Carlyle in the spring of 1968 as a replacement for the pianist George Feyer; this spring he celebrates his thirty-fifth anniversary in the room with his favorite songs, from Cole Porter to Bessie Smith. Short admits that his elegant bravado doesn't always come easily. "I sometimes arrive with dread," he says. "But then the overture raises my spirits, seeing the crowd raises my spirits, and if that's not enough, two drops of cognac in a glass of water will do it."—Charles Michener*

LIMÓN DANCE COMPANY
Carla Maxwell celebrates her twenty-five years as custodian of the graceful vision of José Limón and Doris Humphrey in the second week of her company's season at the Joyce, featuring "Psalm," "The Moor's Pavane," "The Unsightful Nanny," and other works. (175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. May 7-9 at 8, May 10 at 2 and 8, and May 11 at 2 and 7:30. Please call theatre for full program details.)

BEAUTEEZ 'N THE BEAT
French-born freestyle tapper Roxane Butterfly earns her stage name with each improvisation, floating across the floor with grace and speed. Especially speed. Butterfly fires out her sounds at such a fast clip that it's easy to miss the precise nuances in her long, space-gobbling phrases. Her spoken-word monologues honoring ancient Mesopotamian priestesses are less fluent, but her all-female ensemble—including the break-dancer Rokafella, the Afro-Cuban dancer Goussy Celestin, the sprightly Charon Aldredge, and an adorable eight-year-old named Hannah Leah—demonstrates enough feminine power to make the invocation superfluous. With music by the jazz saxophonist "Sweet" Sue Terry and the singer Kyra Gaunt. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-5400. May 8-9 at 8:30.)

YASMEEN GODDER
The five characters in "Hall," Godder's newest work, look like mental patients on an outing. In a

dance hall, under a revolving disco ball, they try out various couplings, sit on the sidelines, or moan into corners. Shy then bold, jerky then sinuous, flailing then caressing, their behavior is constant only in its desperation. Someone croaks "My Favorite Things" in Hebrew; someone else shouts out, "I love riding my horse." The oddity is by turns boring or bewildering, amusing or disturbing: "Strictly Ballroom" as directed by David Lynch. (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 212-255-5793. May 7-10 at 8.)

3RD RAIL DANCE

Not nearly as hazardous as its name suggests, 3rd Rail Dance is a showcase of premières by three choreographers, Tom Pearson, Brian Weaver, and Jennine Willett, who use conventional movement that shimmers with unusual psychic static. In "Ceremony," the evening's standout piece, Pearson (who is part Cherokee and Muskogee) grapples with his Native American heritage. Emerging from an oversized dream catcher, he twists abruptly, responds to the chants of a drum circle, hinges backward to the ground, and finally returns to his dream-catcher sanctuary, where family photographs rain down on him. (Merce Cunningham Studio, 55 Bethune St. 212-591-2786. May 10-11 at 8.)

SALLY SCHUILING DANCE

Fresh, coltish young dancers dressed in white underpants and vests fling their dryad hair about in "Where the Distance Overflows," an exploration of young women's search for identity and community. With original music by Paula Balsamo Prestini, costumes by the designer Shannon Iliadis, and lighting by Chenault Spence. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 212-674-8194. May 8-11 at 8:30.)

DANCE THEATRE WORKSHOP

A trio of smart, risk-taking choreographers converge in "SplitStream." In Paul Matteson's frenetic quartet "Failing Me Now"—set to a score by Edmund Mooney that sounds like underwater accordion—every move or utterance is intentional, never precious, but ends up discarded. Lisa Gonzales performs a Circean solo of psychotic gestures and raspy pleas that leads into a group dance with manically fast leg work and flung partnering. When the dancers cry out "Hooray!" in the midst of their hyperspeed airborne intricacy, it comes as a humorous reminder that the moving parts have psyches and voices. The evening's other pieces are "Worthless Limbs," by Luciana Achugar and Levi Gonzalez, and "I Succumb," by Miguel Gutierrez and the Powerful People. (Bessie Schönberg Theatre, 219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. May 6 and 13 at 7. Through May 20.)

"LINK"

Luis Lara Malvacías choreographs performances with four dance companies from Venezuela, Mexico, Chile, and Colombia, as part of Danspace's "Out of Space" series. (Clemente Soto Vélez Cultural Center, 107 Suffolk St. 212-674-8194. May 8-11 at 8.)

NIGHT LIFE
CONCERTS

JANN ARDEN

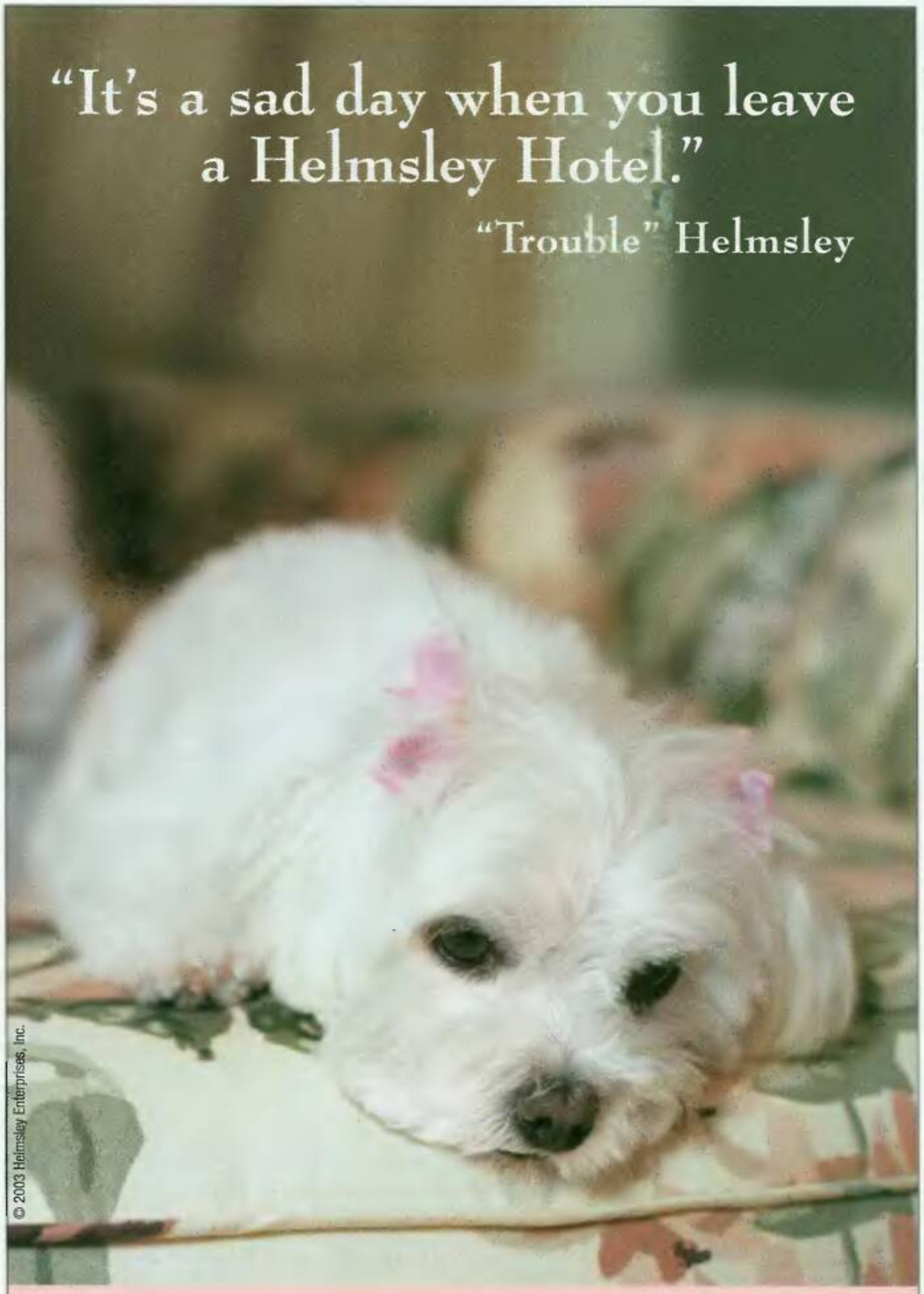
One of Canada's most popular singers, Arden is a forty-one-year-old Calgary native with a silken voice whose shows are often one part performance, one part lighthearted therapy session. This nine-night residency is being filmed for a Canadian documentary. (Upstairs at Studio 54, 254 W. 54th St. 212-307-7171. May 7-9 at 8 and May 10 at 8 and 10:30. Through May 17.)

AMERICAN SONGBOOK

The Lincoln Center series closes its season with three evenings with the vocalist Ann Hampton Callaway—a master class, a night of requests (via e-mail), and a night with Polly Bergen, Rupert Holmes, and other friends in which Callaway promises to write a song on the spot for each of her guests. (Kaplan Penthouse, Rose Building. 212-721-6500. May 8 at 8 and May 9-10 at 8 and 10.)

PETE YORN

This young singer-songwriter in the fine tradition of Elliott Smith and the late Jeff Buckley mines a middle ground between folksy mannerisms and impas-



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sioned rock hooks. (Hammerstein Ballroom, Manhattan Center, 311 W. 34th St. 212-307-7171. May 9 at 7:30.)

WORLD MUSIC INSTITUTE
Presenting a Gypsy festival with Vera Bila & Kale and the Kolpakov trio. Bila, who's been called the Ella Fitzgerald of Gypsy music, hails from Rokycany, a small village outside of Prague. The Kolpakov trio, which is led by the singer, dancer, and seven-string-guitar master Sacha Kolpakov, is from Russia. (Great Hall, Cooper Union, Third Ave. at 7th St. For more information, call 212-545-7536. May 9 at 8.)

MARIZA
A fado singer making a big mark in Portugal, this Mozambique-born artist is stirring passions with her sensational voice and electrifying performances. Her innovative take on the melancholic form includes gospel, soul, and jazz touches. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 212-840-2824. May 9 at 8.)

respectively. Where Fishbone infuses its manic ska with funk, punk, and soul, King's X brightens its heavy rock with flecks of Beatlesque pop and dizzying virtuosity.

IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (212-777-6800)—May 7-8: On the heels of their major-label début, "Fever to Tell," the furiously hyped **Yeah Yeah Yeahs** treat their local fans to their confrontational clamor. Whether the trio's raucous, No Wave-ish fare lives up to the buzz remains to be seen, but their status as a bizarre and dynamic live act remains unchallenged. May 10 and May 12: The pounding drum machines, flat vocals, and ever-present synthesizers of the Omaha fivesome the **Faint** revive the New Wave sound of the early eighties with a dark vengeance.

KNITTING FACTORY
74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (212-219-3055)—May 10 in the Old Office: The songwriter **June Panic** twists folk-rock to fit his endearingly adenoidal voice and esoteric sensibility. His latest album, "Baby's Breadth," a conceit in five chapters, leads the listener from birth to death with a stop along the way for an anti-circumcision protest song. With the anti-folk local hero **Jeffrey Lewis.** May 11: **Sky Saxon and the Seeds,** cult favorites from the psychedelic garage-rock scene in the mid-sixties, left an indelible mark on rock culture with their sneering signature track, "Pushin' Too Hard." Though the band split at the tail end of the decade, leaving Saxon to pursue both an erratic solo career and a life as a reclusive mystic, Saxon has recently rounded up a gang of veteran Los Angeles musicians for another shot at the firmament.

MERCURY LOUNGE
217 E. Houston St. (212-260-4700)—May 11: Chicago's **Fruit Bats** make summery folk-rock that's easy on the ears. With **Holopaw,** a five-piece band from Florida whose music is perfect for Sunday drives on wide-open highways: solid, rhythmic guitar work underpins sweeping country vocals while slightly disturbing electronics burble underneath.

PIANOS
158 Ludlow St. (212-505-3733)—May 9: The tender Dublin-based singer-songwriter **Adrian Crowley** transcends the limitations of his chosen genre thanks to a deep and captivating voice and a light touch. His latest release, "A Strange Kind," benefits from sparsely arranged guitars, cello, and piano. The effect, and this is a compliment, is that of a kind of poor man's Coldplay.

VILLAGE UNDERGROUND
130 W. 3rd St. (212-777-7745)—May 8: **Lucky Peterson,** a former blues prodigy (he recorded his first album at the age of five) and a master of the guitar, organ, and microphone, stops by with songs from his new album, "Black Midnight Sun." May 9: The streetwise singer-songwriter **Willy DeVille.**

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

ALGONQUIN HOTEL
59 W. 44th St. (212-840-6800)—Through May 24: The ever-elegant vocalist **Karen Akers** may be doing an evening of theatre songs, but don't expect to hear chestnuts. Her imaginative program touches on rarely heard gems from "Nine," "Applause," and other personal favorites. Dining.

MELLOW YELLOW *Amy Sillman has as dab a hand as any current painter and a dizzying sense of humor you might call heartfelt false modesty. Her new show of cartoonish fantasies at Sikkema, "I Am Curious (Yellow)," through May 23, disburses scrumptious paint-handling, ambrosial color, and cascading virtuosities of drawing as if they were nothing much. A very long band of abutted horizontal canvases, "Letters from Texas," tells droll tales of droopy metaphysical beings with almost gruelling inventiveness. Sillman can't help herself. It's as if she were afflicted with genius.—Peter Schjeldahl*

CLUBS

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

BOTTOM LINE
15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (212-228-6300)—May 9 and May 11: Best known for their elegiac if lyrically obtuse classic-rock radio standard, "Whiter Shade of Pale," the landmark British progressive psychedelic band **Procol Harum** is back with a new album, "The Well's on Fire," their first in more than a decade.

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—May 9: The native New Yorker **Jesse Malin,** retreating from the adrenalized velocity of his early-eighties hardcore band Heart Attack and ditching the glam trappings of D-Generation, has turned over a new leaf as an alternative-country troubadour without losing the stubborn ferocity of his punk-rock days. With the former Replacements bassist **Tommy Stinson,** the ex-Del Fuegos guitarist **Warren Zanes,** and **Izler,** a rangy young Liverpudlian guitarist whose biggest fan is his ex-boss, the Brit-pop star Robbie Williams.

DON HILL'S
511 Greenwich St. (212-219-2850)—May 11-12: **Fishbone** and **King's X,** two wildly influential yet undersung genre-blurring bands, have broadened the parameters of alternative rock and heavy metal,

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (212-581-3080)—May 7-10: The saxophone deities **Phil Woods** and **Frank Wess** can get no better support than from the pianist **Bill Charlap** and his polished trio; for his part, the superlative Charlap could have few more simpatico guests. They tore it up at last year's J.V.C. jazz festival, so why not see if lightning strikes twice? Dining.

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—Through May 11: **Marcus Miller.** If his new live album, "The Ozell Tapes," is any indication, this Miles Davis vet enjoys mixing up fusion, R. & B., and straight-ahead jazz, all the while leaving plenty of room for his slippery electric-bass lines.

CARLYLE HOTEL
Madison Ave. at 76th St. (212-744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound murals, and starting May 6, **Bobby Short.** On Mondays the café is home to **Woody Allen** and the **Eddie Davis New Orleans Jazz Band.** ♦ Across the hall, in Bemelmans Bar, **Loston Harris** is in attendance.

CUTTING ROOM
19 W. 24th St. (212-691-1900)—May 10: **Stanley Jordan.** It's been a good twenty years since Jordan showed what could be done with all ten fingers, an unorthodox technique, and an electric guitar. The bloom may be off the rose, but Jordan remains sui generis.

DANNY'S
346 W. 46th St. (212-265-8133)—Saturdays and Sundays: Fifty years ago, no one sounded like **Blos-**

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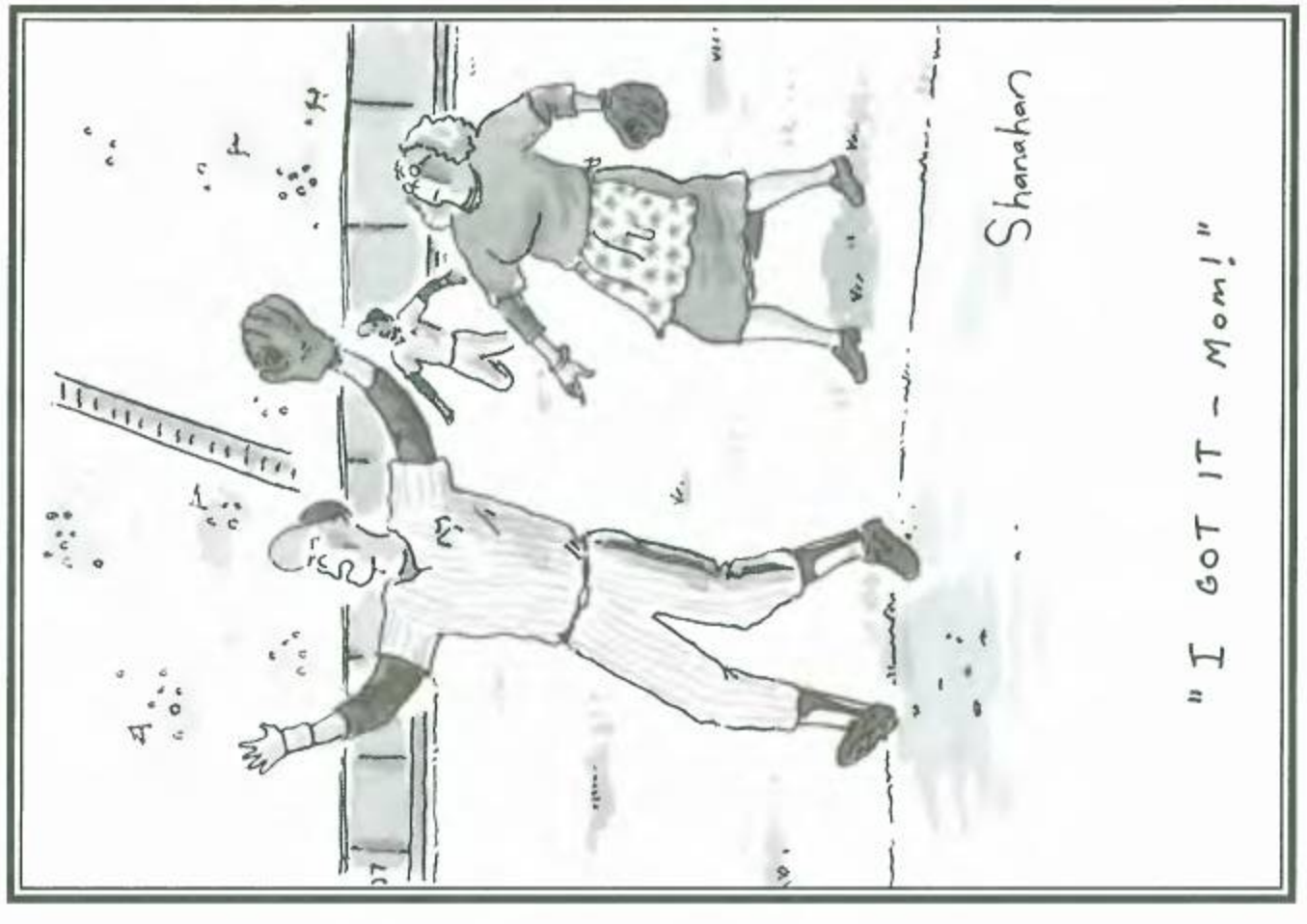

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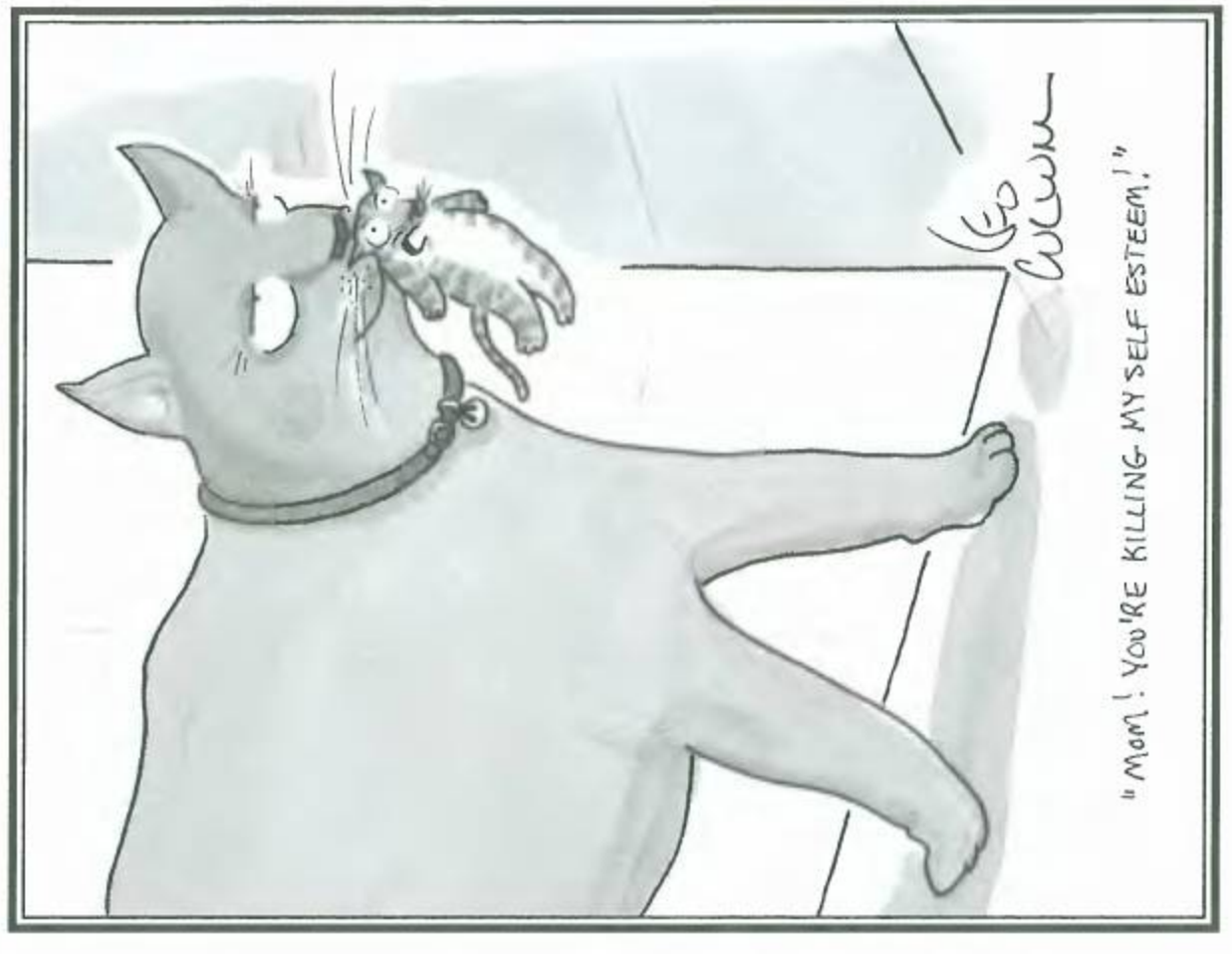

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som Dearie, and no one sounds like her today, except, miraculously, Dearie herself, who has retained the dew-on-the-grass freshness of her crystalline voice.

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—May 9-11: The **Frank Morgan** quartet. We haven't heard from the altoist Morgan in quite some time, and it's good to have him back. An amalgam of Charlie Parker, Johnny Hodges, and Art Pepper, the sixty-nine-year-old Morgan has a beautiful sound and an authentic bebop sensibility. He can be both extravagantly heated and touchingly reticent; his New York appearances are now official events.

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—May 9: The recent interest in Latin jazz must come as old news to Michele Rosewoman, a resourceful pianist and composer who's been mating tropical rhythms and new-jazz improvisation in her **Quintessence** bands since the late eighties.

TONIC
107 Norfolk St. (212-358-7503)—May 8: Count on the pianist **Anthony Coleman** to come up with smart ideas. One of his most successful projects, the Sephardic Tinge trio, strained Jewish melodies through the mind-set of Monk, Jelly Roll Morton, and Ellington. His tangents are worth following. Also on May 8: The **Susie Ibarra** quartet. Ibarra used to raise the roof with the unhinged rhythmic contusions of her drumming for David S. Ware's quartets. On her own, this wildly inventive percussionist has yet to put the brakes on her energy or imagination. At midnight on May 8: Another former Lounge Lizard made good, the saxophonist **Michael Blake** has been on a roll of late, creating vibrant music with his new-jazz ensemble Free Association.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—Through May 11: The **Barry Harris** trio. Where most bop pianists approach their keyboard like Secretariat on a good day, Harris is a seducer, easing into his runs with a satin touch, always placing melody before rampant virtuosity. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-879-5500)—**"Manet/Velázquez: The French Taste for Spanish Painting,"** a ravishing and keenly illuminating show, marshalls great paintings to demonstrate a miracle in art history: the rebirth of Spanish Baroque painting in nineteenth-century Paris, brought about by Édouard Manet. At one end of its two-century leap, the show is augmented with works by Zurbarán, Murillo, and other Spaniards, and, at the other, by relevant figures from Delacroix to Sargent. But the summit meeting of Velázquez and Manet dominates. Through June 8. ♦ A mid-career retrospective of the photographs and video portraits of the German photographer Thomas Struth. Through May 18. ♦ **"Art of the First Cities: The Third Millennium B.C. from the Mediterranean to the Indus."** Opens May 8. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART (MOMA QNS)
33rd St. at Queens Blvd., Long Island City (212-708-9400)—Even what's wrong with **"Matisse Picasso,"** the magnificent show that deploys a hundred and thirty-three works by the twin godheads of modern painting, is revelatory. It is a double-barrelled blast of an exhibition with a popgun thesis: that Picasso and Matisse goaded and influenced each other. So do most artistic contemporaries. In any case, trying to absorb fine curatorial points of comparison between such stunners as Picasso's "Les Demoiselles d'Avignon" and Matisse's "Bathers with a Turtle" is like trying to check the oil in a speeding truck. The show's payoff comes from the jagged, overwhelming sense it gives of how different the two were as men and artists—as antithetical, and evenly matched, as Ali and Frazier. Through May 19. (Open Thursdays, Sundays, and Mondays, 10 to 5, and Fridays and Saturdays, 10 to 9.)

POP NOTES

MY BACK CATALOG
Bob Dylan's late-seventies turn toward fundamentalist Christianity alienated much of his audience, but even many of those who were confused by Dylan's spiritual moves have come to reappraise the songs he wrote during that time. The rigid demands of the genre focussed his talent rather than dissipating it, and yielded a surprisingly strong body of work, as with country music a decade before. **Gotta Serve Somebody** (Columbia) sends Dylan's gospel compositions back to their roots, assigning eleven songs from "Slow Train Coming" and "Saved" to contemporary gospel acts. Sometimes the results are heavenly: Rance Allen testifies over organ accompaniment on "When He Returns," and Dottie Peoples just sings the hell out of "I Believe in You." Other tracks are more sanitized than sanctified: Aaron Neville warbles his way through "Saving Grace" to no particular effect, and Sounds of Blackness's fussy, overproduced "Solid Rock" squanders backing by the same musicians who played on Dylan's born-again tour, including Fred Tackett and Jim Keltner. Dylan himself duets with Mavis Staples on a rewrite of "Gonna Change My Way of Thinking"; loose and ferocious, it includes a sly skit in which Staples knocks on Dylan's door and spends a few minutes chatting about fried chicken, insomnia, and the Pacific Ocean before the band tucks into the groove again.

Underappreciated compositions by rock-and-roll Olympians are in vogue these days. **From a Window: The Lost Songs of Lennon and McCartney** (Rph Productions) collects songs written during the early days of the Beatles and given to artists such as Billy J. Kramer, Cilla Black, Tommy Quickly, and Mary Hopkin. Here they're performed by a rotating cast of singers that includes Graham Parker, Kate Pierson of the B-52's, and Bill Janovitz of Buffalo Tom. Although the reasons for this compilation aren't immediately apparent (maybe Beatles completists needed something new to buy other than the "Anthology" DVD set), the renditions here, especially Parker's, are pleasant, spirited reminders of early Merseybeat.

—Ben Greenman

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—**"Matthew Barney: The Cremaster Cycle."** Through June 11. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (212-570-3676)—Elie Nadelman, the Polish-American sculptor, had his first major success in 1909 in Paris with an exhibition of classically inspired heads and statues. Around the same time, Nadelman was beginning to update fourth-century Greek sculpture with contemporary touches such as bowler hats, bow ties, and exaggerated contours. In this retrospective, more than two hundred sculptures, arranged chronologically, trace the evolution of Nadelman's concerns: from his early busts, which speak to ancient ideals of beauty, to his jazz-era middle works, folksy wooden genre figures of dancers and circus performers with sinuous bodies and gessoed features, to his final postwar efforts, rows of plaster figurines that look like toy-size gods and monsters. Through July 20. ♦ **"Paul Sietsema: Empire"** presents the chef d'œuvre of an experimental filmmaker: a ragged twenty-four-minute silent 16-mm. film that bristles with pans, fades, jump cuts, and so on of static objects in negative black and white or red and white. The main subjects are beautifully made models of an eighteenth-century French rococo interior and of Clement Greenberg's art-filled living room in 1964—shrines of extreme taste, which Sietsema's camera explores like a tongue probing broken teeth. (The models and some related drawings are displayed elsewhere.) The film's her-

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AND: A calendar of *New Yorker* events across the country

metic fervor becomes as disquieting as urgent warnings in a language that you don't quite understand. Sequences of dizzying geometric animation and ominous closeups of a grasshopper vary the spell. Through June 8. ♦ **"Scanning: The Aberrant Architectures of Diller + Scofidio,"** a retrospective featuring the designs of the husband-and-wife team. Through May 25. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6; Fridays, 1 to 9.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM AT ALTRIA

120 Park Ave., at 42nd St. (212-878-2550)—The New York début of Dario Robleto, a Texan artist whose work combines the obsessive craft of Tom Friedman (homemade marbles), the d.j. sampling of Christian Marclay (butterfly antennae made from melted-down Peggy Lee and Pulp records), and an interest in alchemical transformation (materials include glass formed by meteorites and by nuclear explosions). The show's centerpiece is a set of ten sculptures displayed in a cluster of vitrines atop flashing lights that conjure both discothèques and spacecraft. Nearby, a series of digital photographs re-create a botanical experiment aboard the space shuttle Challenger. Robleto's deceptively whimsical, labor-intensive art carries a serious message about the mysterious relationship between destruction and redemption. Through July 3. (Open weekdays, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 7:30.)

BRONX MUSEUM OF THE ARTS

1040 Grand Concourse (718-681-6000)—Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, born in Korea, was a poet, filmmaker, performance artist, and prolific producer of artist's books who was raped and murdered in New York in 1982 at the age of thirty-one. Since that event, her legacy in Conceptualism, feminism, and poetics has acquired a quiet but fierce following, and her experimental novel, "Dictée," has become an underground classic. But her visual art works have gone largely unremembered, and **"The Dream of the Audience,"** a small but elegant exhibition of videos, prints, books, sound pieces, and performance documentation, addresses this inequity. The works are delicate, primarily black-and-white, and demanding to look at. But hours and even days later, their wit will still be resonating in your mind. Through June 15. ♦ The curators of **"Commodification of Buddhism"** begin with a catchall premise: that as American culture becomes more and more accustomed to Buddhist philosophy, it adds its own brand of hucksterism to the enlightenment. This focussed and often funny show illustrates their idea: there's Mariko Mori's vision of *anime* cutie pies floating in the Pure Land of Buddhist heaven; Jennifer Zackin's mandala of metallic happy-face stickers; and "Empty," Michael Joo's grid of clear-plastic blister packs for a Buddha action figure (with detachable head). Through June 15. (Open Wednesdays, noon to 9; Thursdays through Sundays, noon to 6.)

NEUE GALERIE

1048 Fifth Ave., at 86th St. (212-628-6200)—Christian Schad (1894-1982) painted portraits until his final days, but he was at his gimlet-eyed best for two short years, from 1927 to 1929. A sinister elegance suffuses his razor-sharp paintings of Weimar Republic café society; they suggest "The Berlin Stories" by way of Bronzino. You can spot a shadowy side to all the erotic glamour: dirt collects under polished fingernails, and fine blue veins fissure alabaster breasts. These portraits hang beside an excellent selection of works by better-known members of the Neue Sachlichkeit ("New Objectivity"), including Otto Dix, George Grosz, and Max Beckmann. Through June 9. (Open Fridays, 11 to 9, and Saturdays through Mondays, 11 to 6.)

P.S. 1 CONTEMPORARY ART CENTER

22-25 Jackson Ave., at 46th Ave., Long Island City (718-784-2084)—Yoko Ono's **"Freight Train,"** a boxcar pierced by what looks like bullet holes and parked on its own piece of track in the P.S. 1 courtyard, is a taciturn and plaintive piece; strong white light and haunting music stream out of it. Despite its minimalist formality, the metal oblong has an almost documentary cast, with its generalized allusions to boxcar tragedies from Nazi deportation to the death of Mexican immigrants locked in shipping containers. Ono takes her role as designated public mourner seriously, perhaps too much so. Still, it's hard to find fault with expressions of grief over collective death, especially now. Through May 31. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, noon to 6.)

GALLERIES–UPTOWN

Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.

FRANZ KLINE

These graphic black-and-white canvases by Kline (1910-62) still have the seductive quality that made them so popular back in the James Dean era: they're tough, tender, and full of the misunderstood pain of the good-looking. The two Homasote panels of "Mahoning II" look like a yin-yang symbol on a bender, while the calligraphic "Rue" shows the feathery influence of Japanese drawing. "Green and Black" blinks with turquoise and red, which fade into pastels without dampening the testosterone that still rages there fifty years later. Through June 7. (C&M Arts, 45 E. 78th St. 212-861-0020.)

GEORGE SEGAL

The quietly iconic sculptor (1924-2000) of Sheridan Square's "Gay Liberation" and the Port Authority's "Commuters" begins a new era of posthumous productivity. Each piece here, from the small bronze bust "Wendy with Chin on Hand" to the enormous plaster model for "Street Crossing," with its seven sleepwalking pedestrians, represents an edition ready to be cast. Segal's found objects—a rocking chair, a square of hardwood floor, and street signs—could've been harvested yesterday, but the increasingly dated (or, if you will, timeless) figures entwined with them look more and more like pedestrians uncovered in Pompeii. Through June 14. (Mitchell-Innes and Nash, 1018 Madison Ave., at 78th St. 212-744-7400.)

"Atelier Féau, Paris, Paris XVIIième, 1998," by Robert Polidori, at Pace/MacGill (see Photography).

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Short List

JOHN DUBROW
Salander-O'Reilly, 20 E. 79th St. 212-879-6606. Through May 31.

GALLERIES–CHELSEA

NUNO DE CAMPOS
If you were a child in the seventies, you'll recognize the views in de Campos's luminous tempera paintings: the cozy-looking lap of a woman wearing a bright, floral-print dress, and a man's arms crossed over a red T-shirt bearing the handsome, scowling face of Che Guevara. There are signs that the mom and dad in this series aren't destined to stay together: in one, the woman fingers a Matchbox-size Volkswagen bus, and interspersed with the portraits—whose faces we never see—are images of a Jacques Brel album cover bearing the title "Ne Me Quitte Pas" ("Don't Leave Me"). Through May 10. (LFL, 530 W. 24th St. 212-989-7700.)

EMILY JACIR
Jacir asked a series of émigrés, refugees, and displaced persons this simple question: "If I could do anything for you, anywhere in Palestine, what would it be?" Their answers were simple: eat *kinafa* in a particular café, go visit my mother, play soccer with the first little boy you meet. What's extraordinary is that the artist did everything her respondents asked her to. Her actions are recorded in color photographs, with adjacent black-and-white text explaining the request. Enormous complexity, of course, underpins the project, but its simplicity could make you weep. Through May 17. (Debs, 525 W. 26th St. 212-643-2070.)

SHIRLEY KANEDA
Thirty watercolors whose process is as complicated as their pleasures are direct. A painting is created in the computer, digitally altered, and printed on watercolor paper, and then the watercolor is added with a single-hair brush. The decorative results range from candy-stripe swirls to intricate refractions that could be closeups of the cellophane on a Rosenquist "Gift Wrapped Doll." A recurring striped disk suggests Duchamp's "Rotary Glass Plates" (a motorized optical illusion: the five striped-glass propellers, whose stripes, when the motor is on, appear to form one continuous bull's-eye), perhaps a reference to the long-standing but uneasy alliance between art and technology. Through May 24. (Feigen Contemporary, 535 W. 20th St. 212-929-0500.)

JEAN-FRANÇOIS MORICEAU AND PETRA MRZYK
Salon-style installation goes berserk in this playful fusion of mural and drawing. Framed black-and-white drawings lean against the wall, lie on the floor, and, in one case, sprout arms and legs. Some are disrupted by a multicolored stripe painted directly on the wall. The imagery zigzags from Zap Comix (a pair of R. Crumb legs dense with hair) to Raymond Pettibone (noirish figures in silhouette) to Walt Disney (an owl sprouts Mickey Mouse ears). Through May 17. (Ritter, 453 W. 17th St. 212-463-7375.)

TAKASHI MURAKAMI
What happens when you inject the Pop obsession with brand names into traditional Japanese decorative art? Murakami's answer is a mutant style he calls "Superflat," a hypercommodified proliferation of gilded folding screens, sculpted *anime* creatures, wallpaperlike paintings, and actual video animation, all produced in a post-Warholian atelier archly named the Factory. The current version fixates on the Louis Vuitton logo and includes, at times, a Walkman-wearing young studio assistant on a scaffold, putting the finishing touches on a mural. It's elegant and crass, annoying and amusing, and nothing made in the U.S. approximates it. Through May 10. (Boesky, 535 W. 22nd St. 212-680-9889.)

ALYSON SHOTZ
Shotz, who's best known for sculptures that put a cyborganic spin on landscape, tries her hand at painting in a series of ornamental abstractions embedded in high-gloss resin. Arcing swaths of paint in a vernal palette of violet, apricot, and yellow alternate with collaged elements, cut-up drawings, and photographs of lily pads, cacti, and what looks like plumbing valves. (The symmetrical compositions suggest happy, shiny Rorschach tests.) The works have a breezy appeal but lack the enigmatic complexity of one single sculpture on view: a green grove of stalks sprouting translucent moon-colored clusters. Through May 24. (Eller, 526-30 W. 25th St. 212-206-6411.)

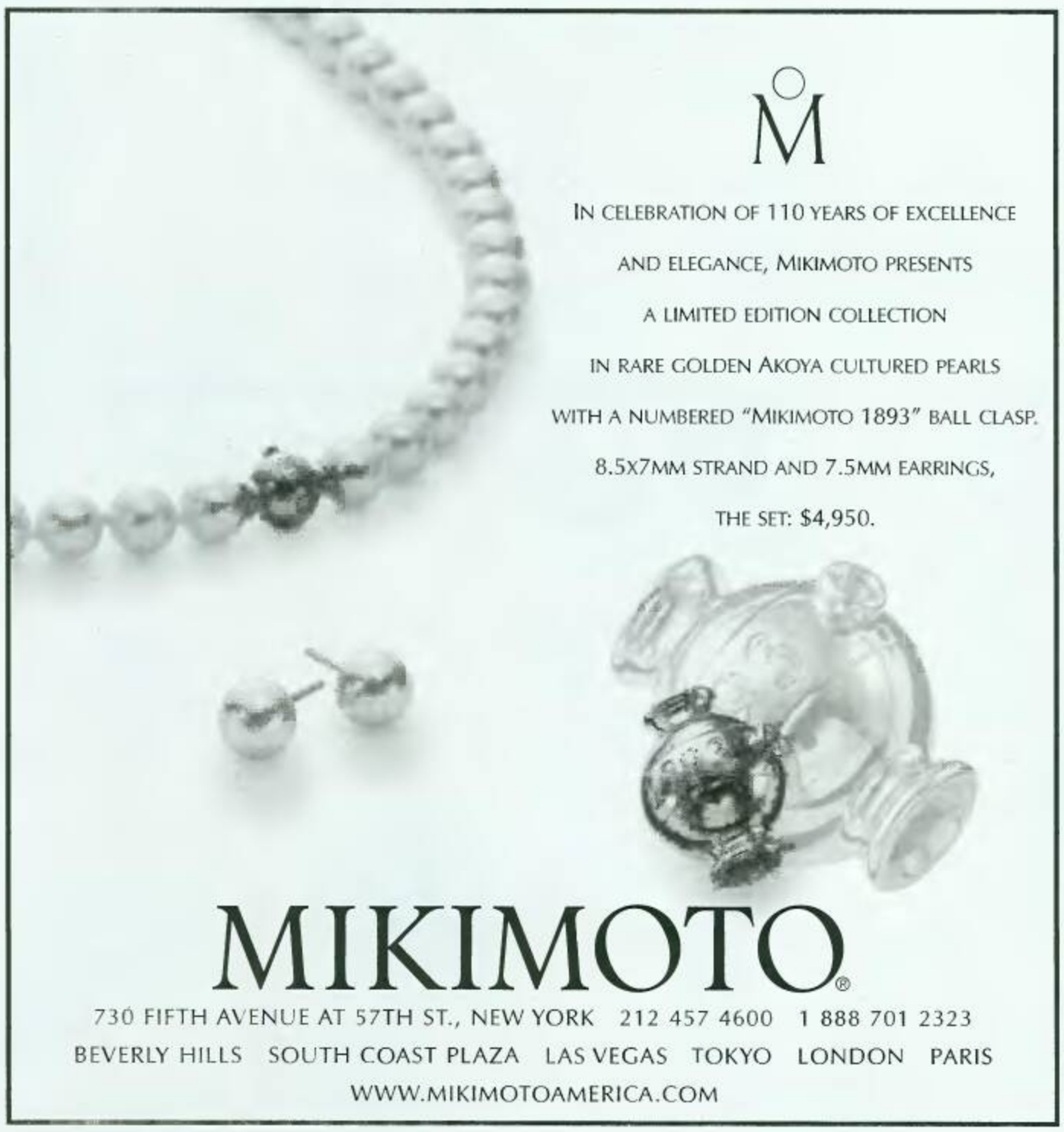
JODI
Joan Heemskerk and Dirk Paesmans (a.k.a. JODI) developed a cult following in the mid-nineties for smart digital art works that transformed computer code and error messages into mind-bending visual displays only viewable online. Now they make their bricks-and-mortar début in the cavernous galleries of Chelsea's Eyebeam. Anyone who has ever used a computer will laugh out loud at the four-part projection at the heart of the show. Folders, files, and help balloons replicate at slapstick speeds, accompanied by a cacophony of alert sounds, including a series of grunts that sound alternately like a frustrated computer user and a fugitive from a kung-fu fight scene. Through June 14. (540 W. 21st St. 212-252-5193.)

TABLES FOR TWO

JOE AND PAT'S
1758 Victory Blvd., Staten Island (718-981-0887)—Best-pizza arguments may be as tedious as they are futile—there's the Patsy's contingent, the Grimaldi's contingent, and those lucky few who claim to know the exact identity of Original Ray—but the honor of being nominated, at least, should go to this semi-legendary pie-and-slice operation on Victory Boulevard in the Castleton Corners section of Staten Island. A post-fire renovation four years ago gave the dining area an Artie Bucco sheen—cream color-washed walls, framed prints of grapevines and ancient urns—but the place still has a little Tony Manero left over. A few weeks ago, on Good Friday, you had cops on lunch break, waitresses on loan from the Wagner High cheerleading squad, and counter guys grooving to the Bee Gees' "More Than a Woman" as they tossed the dough. Joe Pappalardo, the owner, whose salt-and-pepper hair system deserves to be mentioned on the chalkboard alongside the specials, greeted the regulars, most of whom seemed to be named Joe, too. (Pat Pappalardo, Joe's brother, left the business in 1974 to start up a Century 21 real-estate office down the street.)

Let the record show that Joe and Pat's doesn't just serve pizza. There are nine spaghetti entrées and six varieties of veal, and Joe's son Angelo, who trained at Esca in Manhattan, makes a mean whole roasted bronzino. But the pizza's the thing, and the plain cheese pie is the proving ground. Needless to say, it passes the napkin test: there's no grease to soak up. The crust is crisp and very thin, with little moons of mozzarella (and a supposedly heretical dusting of Romano cheese) floating in a fresh, slightly sweet tomato sauce. One good thing about pizza like this is that you can eat a lot of it, which means you can guiltlessly take a shot at, say, a Joe and Pat's Royal (pepperoni, sausage, meatballs, mushrooms, anchovies, peppers, hold the scungilli). The Royal manages to stay fresh even after it has cooled for an hour in its "God Bless America" box. Good thing, too, because apparently there is something of a tradition among men returning home after a visit to Joe and Pat's: you bring your wife a pie or you get locked out. (Open daily for lunch and dinner. Entrées $7.95-$27.95.)

—Nick Paumgarten



Short List

RICHARD BOSMAN
Elizabeth Harris, 529 W. 20th St. 212-463-9666. Through May 23.
AMY SILLMAN
Sikkema, 530 W. 22nd St. 212-929-2262. Through May 23.
RICHARD TUTTLE
Sperone Westwater, 415 W. 13th St. 212-999-7337. Through May 31.

GALLERIES–BROOKLYN

"DECADE"
Just inside the door to the gallery's ten-year anniversary show, "Decade," hangs the "Williamsburg Time Line Drawing," by Ward Shelley. Structured like a map of the geological record, it traces the multifarious curatorial, amorous, and incidental relationships that have shaped the local scene since that antediluvian era in 1979 when, according to the drawing, "Giants Walked the Earth." Works by more than fifty artists in all media fill the room, from such eye-catching numbers as a trippy, colorful gouache by Bruce Pearson and a polyethylene blob sculpture by Roxy Paine to a confection of crocheted paper by Seong Chun and dense but delicate word drawings by Michael Waugh. It's a mini-lesson in history that's still happening. Through May 19. (Schroeder Romero, 173A N. 3rd St. 718-486-8992.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

ROBERT RICHFIELD
These photo assemblages—views of placid English landscapes ranging from 180 to 360 degrees—scroll across the walls of the gallery in long, ribbony stretches. Only a few of the pictures are dotted with people, and they, like the unpeopled landscapes—an abandoned amusement park in Lancashire or a topiary garden in Cumbria—feel hushed and expectant. In one of the show's best pieces, a triple-tiered, many-panelled scene of a Yorkshire train station, a train speeds by and barely ruffles the waiting passengers' staunch reserve; it seems the perfect visual metaphor for a countryside dreamily oblivious to the fast-paced whir of the outside world. Through May 31. (Klotz/Sirmon, 511 W. 25th St. 212-741-4764.)
"SYLVA"
With their sculptural branches and fantastic, unexpected shadows, trees have always been a favorite subject for photographers. This crowded but pleasing show, which gathers pictures taken from the eighteen-fifties to last year, appears to include images of every incarnation of the tree, from stolid redwoods to shaggy, bushlike heaps of leaves. Many of photography's famous tree enthusiasts, including Michael Kenna, Josef Sudek, and Lynn Geesaman, are included, though others—most notably David Armstrong and Robert Adams—are not. Still, there are some wonderful pictures here, from a Sally Mann photo dominated by a tree as fluffy as cotton candy to Joel Meyerowitz's plastic Christmas tree blazing in a twirl of blurred lights. Judy Dater's 1974 portrait of a beautiful Teutonic girl and a leering, camera-wielding crone flanking an exhausted-looking trunk looks as if it were set in the enchanted forest of some slightly louche fairy tale. Through May 31. (Meyerowitz, 120 Eleventh Ave. 212-414-2770.)

Short List

ROBERT POLIDORI
Pace/MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. 212-759-7999. Through June 14.
"BRONZEVILLE"
International Center of Photography, 1133 Sixth Ave. 212-857-0045. Through May 25.
"OBJECTS THAT CREATE A POETIC RESPONSE"
Banning, 64 N. Moore St. 212-966-4144. Through May 10.

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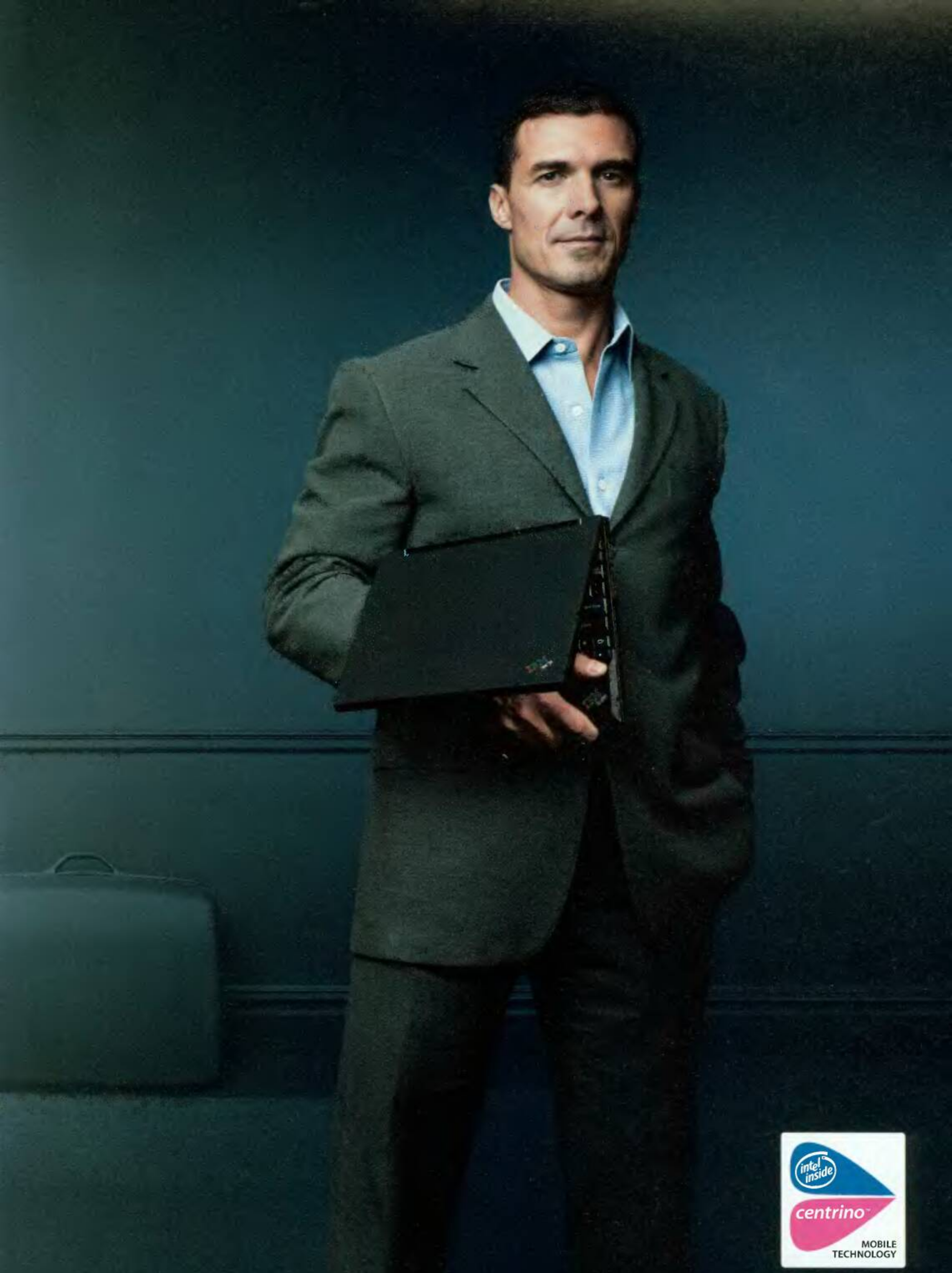
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AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

SOTHEBY'S
May 7 at 10:15 A.M.: Part Two of a three-part sale of Impressionist and modern art features paintings, drawings, and sculptures by such artists as Rodin, Archipenko, Jawlensky, Le Sidaner, Foujita, and Picasso (a pair of life studies and a bullfight scene, from his early Spanish years). ♦ May 13 at 7: Robert Rauschenberg created "Minutiae," a combine made of oil, paper, metal, and other materials, in 1954 for Merce Cunningham's company, not as a set but as a "third element" (along with music by John Cage) for the dancers to interact with onstage. As the highlight of an evening sale of contemporary art (it's expected to bring up to eight million dollars), it joins an impressive lineup of paintings by such artists as Pollack ("Number 17, 1949"), Mitchell, Richter, and Kline. The final two sessions of the sale follow on May 14. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.)

CHRISTIE'S
May 7 at 7: "Portrait de Paul Cézanne," a self-portrait circa 1895 never before offered at auction (and estimated to sell for up to twenty million dollars), is the highlight of the evening sale of a two-part auction of Impressionist and modern art which also features works by Degas, Mondrian, and Monet ("Poste de Douaniers à Dieppe," from 1882). (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC

OPERA

NEW YORK CITY OPERA: "VOX 2003"
City Opera's long-standing commitment to new American music has always set it apart from the behemoth next door; its "Vox" concerts (now in their fifth year), in which the company provides a showcase for a mongrel mix of composers young and old, are particularly adventurous. Excerpts from previously unperformed operas are presented in full orchestral readings with City Opera personnel, with lunch breaks separating the two sessions. The singers include Adina Aaron, Caroline Worra, Joseph Kaiser, and Charles Robert Stephens; George Manahan, Steven Osgood, Brent McMunn, and Steven Gross conduct. May 7 at 10 A.M.: Excerpts from Bernard Rands's "Belladonna" are featured in the first session, which also includes music by Joel Feigin ("Twelfth Night") and Harold Blumenfeld. ♦ May 7 at 3: The late Lou Harrison's "Young Caeser," a pioneering gay-themed opera from 1971, is the highlight of the afternoon session, which also includes music by Patrick Soluri (from "The Inferno of Dante: Canto V"). ♦ May 8 at 10 A.M.: Excerpts from Nancy Van de Vate's "All Quiet on the Western Front," based on the Remarque novel, lead off a session that also includes works by James Stepleton and the composer-critic Greg Sandow (Act I of "Frankenstein"). ♦ May 8 at 3: The sessions conclude with works by Chandler Carter ("Strange Fruit," based on the novel by Lillian Smith) and Robert X. Rodriguez. (Church of St. Paul and St. Andrew, West End Ave. at 86th St. No tickets required.)

ABSOLUTE: "THE BARBER OF SEVILLE"
Unlike his better-known father and brother, Kristjan Järvi has eschewed the symphony-orchestra business, making his mark on the avant-garde scene with his classical-rock-jazz ensemble, Absolute. He conducts Amy Trompetter's renowned production, in English, of Rossini's comedy, in which opera singers (including Chris Pedro Trakas and Julia Anne Wolf) share the stage with papier-mâché and shadow puppets in all shapes and sizes; Järvi will ditch Rossini's recitatives, with flamenco and pop-music riffs underlining the dialogue instead. (St. Ann's Warehouse, 38 Water St., Brooklyn. 718-858-2424. May 8-10 at 8 and May 11 at 3.)

AMERICAN OPERA PROJECTS: "LOST CHILDHOOD"
A première concert reading of Act II of Janice Hamer's opera; Mary Azrael's libretto is based on the Holocaust memoir of Yehuda Nir (with contributions by Gottfried Wagner). The singers include Sofia Daulatzai, Jake Gardner, Peter Kazaras, and Ben Sosland; Steven Osgood conducts. (Temple B'nai Israel, 33 E. 12th St. May 8 and May 10 at 8. For information about tickets, call 718-398-4024.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
Kurt Masur, returning to his old orchestra for a three-week stint, has generously put the spotlight on new music instead of on himself, offering a trio of premières. In the first of his two final programs, he conducts the première of "Concerto for Two," for trumpet and trombone (played by the orchestra's principals, Philip Smith and Joseph Alessi), by Siegfried Matthus, a deft and resourceful composer whose friendship with Masur goes back to their days as young musicians in East Berlin. The program also includes music by Schumann and Brahms (the First Symphony). (May 7-8 at 7:30.) ♦ Masur concludes his residency with a concert of Beethoven (the "Emperor" Concerto, with the pianist Nicholas Angelich) and Brahms (an encore performance of the Symphony). (May 9-10 at 8.) (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5656.)

Michael Lowenstern, at MATA 2003.

BAVARIAN RADIO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
Lorin Maazel decamps to Carnegie Hall to lead a series of Brahms concerts with this storied Munich ensemble, for which he serves as chief conductor. May 7: Brahms's piano concertos are designed to be difficult; the soloist's struggle to conquer their technical infelicities becomes a major part of his interpretation. Yefim Bronfman, the Russian bravura pianist par excellence, doesn't seem to find anything difficult—which should make his performances of these works especially revealing. He plays the stormy Concerto No. 1 in D Minor on a program that concludes with the pastoral sounds of the Symphony No. 2 in D Major. ♦ May 8: Bronfman returns for the Concerto No. 2 in B-Flat Major, in a concert that begins with the Symphony No. 3 in F Major (a secret homage to Wagner), one of Brahms's most mysterious works. ♦ May 9: Maazel wraps things up with the Violin Concerto (featuring Gil Shaham) and the Symphony No. 4 in E Minor. (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. All concerts begin at 8.)

THE MET ORCHESTRA: MUSIC BY BERLIOZ
James Levine conducts. May 10 at 8: The "Benvenuto Cellini" and "Roman Carnival" Overtures, along with the cantata "La Mort de Cléopâtre" (with the mezzo-soprano Olga Borodina) and the "Symphonie Fantastique." ♦ May 11 at 3: A repeat performance of the "Fantastique," offered along with the "Corsaire" Overture and "Harold in Italy" (with the violist Michael Ouzounian). (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800.)

BROOKLYN PHILHARMONIC: "THE POWER OF SHAKESPEARE"
The orchestra's final concert of the season is a tribute to the Bard, whose work continues to fire the imaginations of our best composers. The English composer George Benjamin's "Sometime Voices," a powerful choral overture on a text from "The Tempest," is followed by Hans Werner Henze's Symphony No. 8, three movements inspired by scenes from "A Midsummer Night's Dream"; the evening concludes with a concert performance of Act III of "Falstaff," Verdi's ultimate Shakespeare opus, with the formidable Thomas Allen—straight from BAM's "Così"—taking the title role. (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 718-636-4100. May 9-10 at 8.)

RECITALS

MATA 2003 FESTIVAL
This seven-year-old festival, executive-produced by Philip Glass, presents new and recent works by both established and emerging composers; the stylistic range is broad, but an adventurous, downtown sensibility prevails. May 7 at 8: "Solitary Confinement IV," a concert that celebrates the tradition of the composer-performer. Michael Lowenstern, New York's premier bass clarinettist, is the featured artist, playing his own music in addition to a commissioned work by Jeff Herriott; among the other composers are Matthew Welch (on bagpipes) and Elizabeth Brown (on shakuhachi flute). (St. Peter's Episcopal Church, 346 W. 20th St. 347-296-0190.) ♦ May 8 at 6: Opening night of "Setting the Tone," an exhibition of sculpture, live music, video, and sound installations that highlights composers from both the club scene and the concert hall. (Gale Gates et Al., 37 Main St., Dumbo, Brooklyn. No tickets required. Through May 31.) ♦ May 10 at 8: The festival closes with "String Theory," a performance by Sonyc (String Orchestra of New York City), a conductorless ensemble that will sink its teeth into a challenging program of Penderecki, Webern, Lisa Bielawa, and Joshua Penman. (St. Peter's Episcopal Church. 347-296-0190.)

"ON WINGS OF SONG": JENNIFER AYLMER AND TROY COOK
The young soprano and baritone team up with the pianists Kathleen Kelly and Kenneth Merrill for the Marilyn Horne Foundation's end-of-season blowout, an evening of songs by such composers as Purcell, Schumann, Poulenc, Bernstein ("Arias and Barcarolles"), and Paul Moravec (a première). (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 212-501-3330. May 7 at 8.)

MUSIC AT THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
May 8 at 8: Musicians from Marlboro, a collective of recent and well-established alumni of the Vermont summer festival, play Shostakovich's Two Pieces for String Octet, Op. 11 (an early scorcher), along with music by Dutilleux and Mendelssohn (the Octet in E-Flat Major). The performers include the cellists Marcy Rosen and Clancy Newman. ♦ May 9 at 7: Frederic Chiu discusses and performs Prokofiev's Piano Sonata No. 8, the last of the composer's "War Sonatas." (Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. 212-570-3949. These are the final concerts of the season.)

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ST. LAWRENCE STRING QUARTET
The stylish, hot-blooded young Canadian band (along with two friends from the Ying Quartet) performs music by Mozart (the Quintet in G Minor, K. 516), Osvaldo Golijov, and Schoenberg ("Verklärte Nacht"). (Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. May 9 at 8.)

ANDRÉ WATTS / MURRAY PERAHIA
Two great veterans of the keyboard offer concerts on the same day, each with a healthy dose of Schubert. May 11 at 3: Watts brings his firm, straightahead style to the "Wanderer" Fantasy and the Sonata in A Minor, D. 784, in a concert that also features music by Chopin, Debussy ("Estampes"), and Ravel. (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-721-6500.) ♦ May 11 at 8: The elegant and disciplined Perahia plays the Sonata in A Major, D. 959, along with music by Beethoven (the Sonata No. 28 in A Major) and Bach. (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800.)

"FREE FOR ALL AT TOWN HALL": EDGAR MEYER AND AMY DORFMAN
In the second installment of a new series of free concerts (organized by two renowned producers, Jacqueline Taylor and Omus Hirshbein), Dorfman accompanies the preëminent double-bassist in music by Vivaldi, Schubert (the "Arpeggione" Sonata), Kreisler, and Meyer himself. (123 W. 43rd St. May 11 at 5. Tickets, which are limited to two per customer, will be available at noon on the day of the concert.)

"BREAKING THE SILENCE"
A clutch of dovish musicians—including such celebrated performers as Gilbert Kalish, John Zorn, Eugene Drucker, and the string quartet Ethel—offer an evening of musical dissent, hosted by Peter Schickele and Fred Sherry. The proceeds will be contributed to relief efforts in Iraq. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 212-854-5400. May 12 at 7.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

READINGS
May 7 at 7:30: The artists Linda St. John and Barbara Robinette Moss read from their memoirs. (Joe's Pub, 425 Lafayette St. 212-539-8778.) ♦ May 8 at 7: *The New York Review of Books* celebrates the hundredth volume in its Classics series of reprints with readings by Louis Menand (from Edmund Wilson's "To the Finland Station"), Francine Prose (Mavis Gallant's "Paris Stories"), Grace Paley (Harvey Swados's "Nights in the Garden of Brooklyn"), and Alastair Reid (Álvaro Mutis's "The Adventures and Misadventures of Maqroll"). (Great Hall, Cooper Union, Third Ave. at 7th St. No tickets necessary.) ♦ May 12 at 7: Penny Wolfson reads from "Moonrise," her account of raising a child with muscular dystrophy. (Half King, 505 W. 23rd St. No tickets necessary.) ♦ May 12 at 7:30: Billy Collins, Sarah Manguso, Paul Violi, and other poets read from their contributions to the new anthology "Great American Prose Poems." (K.G.B., 85 E. 4th St. No tickets necessary.) ♦ May 13 at 7: Henri Cole, Marie Howe, Vijay Seshadri, and other poets read the original, 1855 edition of Walt Whitman's "Leaves of Grass" in its entirety. (Bowery Poetry Club, 308 Bowery. For more information, call 212-254-9628.)

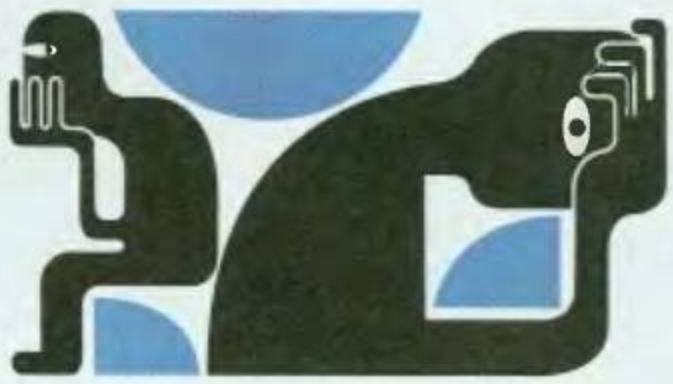
TALKS
May 10 at 11 A.M. and 1: The drummer Ali Jackson, the trombonist Ron Westray, the pianist Bill Charlap, and other musicians join the trumpeter Wynton Marsalis for a "Jazz for Young People" talk and performance titled "What Is Rhythm?" (Alice Tully Hall. 212-721-6500.) ♦ May 10 at 2: The economist Paul Krugman inaugurates "Worklore: Brooklyn Workers Speak," an exhibition about the history of the borough's labor force, with a lecture on the fate of the middle class. (Brooklyn Public Library, Grand Army Plaza. For more information, call 718-230-2100.) ♦ May 13 at 6:30: The artist Vanessa Beecroft discusses her work. (New School, 66 W. 12th St. 212-980-3942.)

TOUR
May 10 from 1 to 5: The Brooklyn Heights Association offers a self-guided stroll through the neighborhood's nineteenth-century homes. (For more information, call 718-858-9193.)

BOOK CURRENTS

Fathers and Sons

The Yale professor of medicine Sherwin Nuland begins **LOST IN AMERICA: A JOURNEY WITH MY FATHER** (Knopf) by evoking the depression that in his forties so debilitated him that only one doctor protested against his being lobotomized.



This was, he thinks, the culmination of his unresolved relationship with his father, who "walks with me through every day of my life, in that unsteady, faltering gait that so embarrassed me when I was a boy." Meyer Nudelman cowed his family with his rage, but a mysterious, crippling illness also made him insecure and dependent. Only later, in medical school, did Nuland guess that his father had suffered from syphilis.

It is hard to imagine men with more to hide from their sons than those who participated in the Third Reich. Sigfrid Gauch's 1979 memoir of his Nazi father has been translated into English by William Radice, under the title **TRACES OF MY FATHER** (Northwestern). Gauch describes his "schizophrenic" situation, in which he had to learn "to love my father as a person but to be horrified by his personality."

Happy childhoods also have secrets, as Samuel Hynes' **THE GROWING SEASONS: AN AMERICAN BOYHOOD BEFORE THE WAR** (Viking) attests. What did Hynes' father mean when he took his sons driving, without their stepmother and stepsiblings, and asked if they would like to be "just us three" again? What did he mean by saying, on his deathbed, that he "gave up a lot"? The answers are as unrecoverable as Hynes' prewar innocence, which ended when he was called up to the Navy; boarding the train, he looked back at his father, who was already "moving rapidly away through spots of light and shadow toward the dark street."

—Kate Taylor

RICHARD McGUIRE

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MOVIES
OPENING

DADDY DAY CARE
Steve Carr ("Dr. Dolittle 2") directs this comedy in which an unemployed advertising executive (Eddie Murphy) opens up a day-care center in his house. With Anjelica Huston, Regina King, and Steve Zahn. Opening May 9.

MAN ON THE TRAIN
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening May 9. (Cinema 1 and Sunshine Cinema.)

ONLY THE STRONG SURVIVE
Chris Hegedus and D. A. Pennebaker's documentary about soul singers of the sixties and seventies, including Mary Wilson, Sam Moore, Wilson Pickett, and Isaac Hayes. Opening May 9.

THE SHAPE OF THINGS
Neil LaBute adapted his play about an art student (Rachel Weisz) who seduces a shy English major (Paul Rudd) and sets him on a course of self-improvement. Also with Gretchen Mol and Frederick Weller. Opening May 9. (Lincoln Square and Village Theatre VII.)

WASHINGTON HEIGHTS
The début feature of the writer-director Alfredo de Villa is about an aspiring comic-book artist living with his Dominican family in the titular New York neighborhood. Opening May 9.

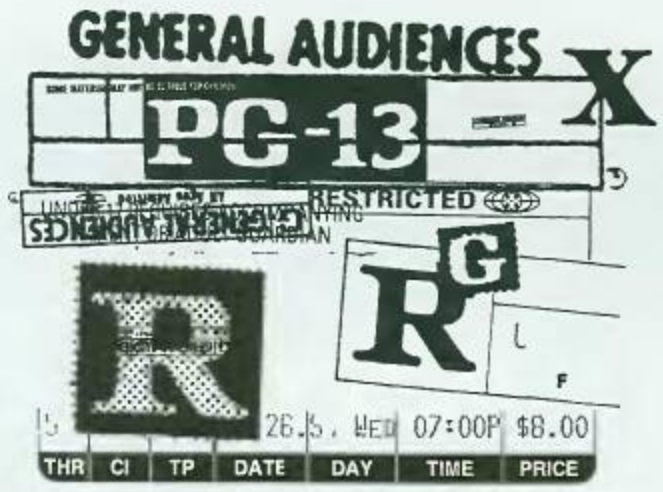
FILM NOTES

ANGER MANAGEMENT
Another high-concept comedy brimming with low-brow humor. Adam Sandler is a Milquetoast who is court-assigned to anger-management classes, and Jack Nicholson plays his unorthodox therapist, a human Looney Toon who has a field day with his charge's mild-mannered behavior. The script is funny at times, but the antics of the celebrity actors mostly drag where they should delight.—*Bruce Diones* (Astor Plaza, Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Metro Twin, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

BEND IT LIKE BECKHAM
A crowd-pleasing British movie devoted to the radical idea that girls can play soccer and sprain their ankles. Jess (Parminder Nagra) is a Sikh who hides her love of the game from her conservative parents, while Jules (Keira Knightley) is a tomboy who defies her English mother. Both have a thing for their Irish coach, Joe (Jonathan Rhys-Meyers)—he of the wounded knee and the watery eyes. The movie is a hodgepodge: nicely barbed scenes with Jess's family bump against weird practice montages that play like sports-bra ads. What it all adds up to is multicultural empowerment for the pre-teen shin-guard crowd.—*Michael Agger* (Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kew Gardens Cinema, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Sunshine Cinema.)

BULLETPROOF MONK
A by-the-numbers script about an immortal monk who must protect an ancient scroll is given some Hollywood gloss in the director Paul Hunter's martial-arts movie. Chow Yun-Fat is partnered with Seann William Scott, whose role as a pickpocket and Hong Kong-film enthusiast gives him the opportunity to learn all the proper East-meets-West life lessons. Thin, to be sure, but there is fun to be had: the film is effortlessly generic, and Chow glides through his scenes as if he were walking on water.—*B.D.* (Battery Park 16, East 85th Street, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Street Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, 19th Street East 6, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

CITY OF GOD
Just how far into your face can a movie get? This one has every intention of leaving you scalded and bruised. Set in Rio de Janeiro, it was directed by Fernando Meirelles, who tries every trick known to cameramen: freeze frames, whip pans, multiple dissolves, slow motion, double motion, any kind of motion. The object is to keep pace with his characters, the young and dispossessed of the

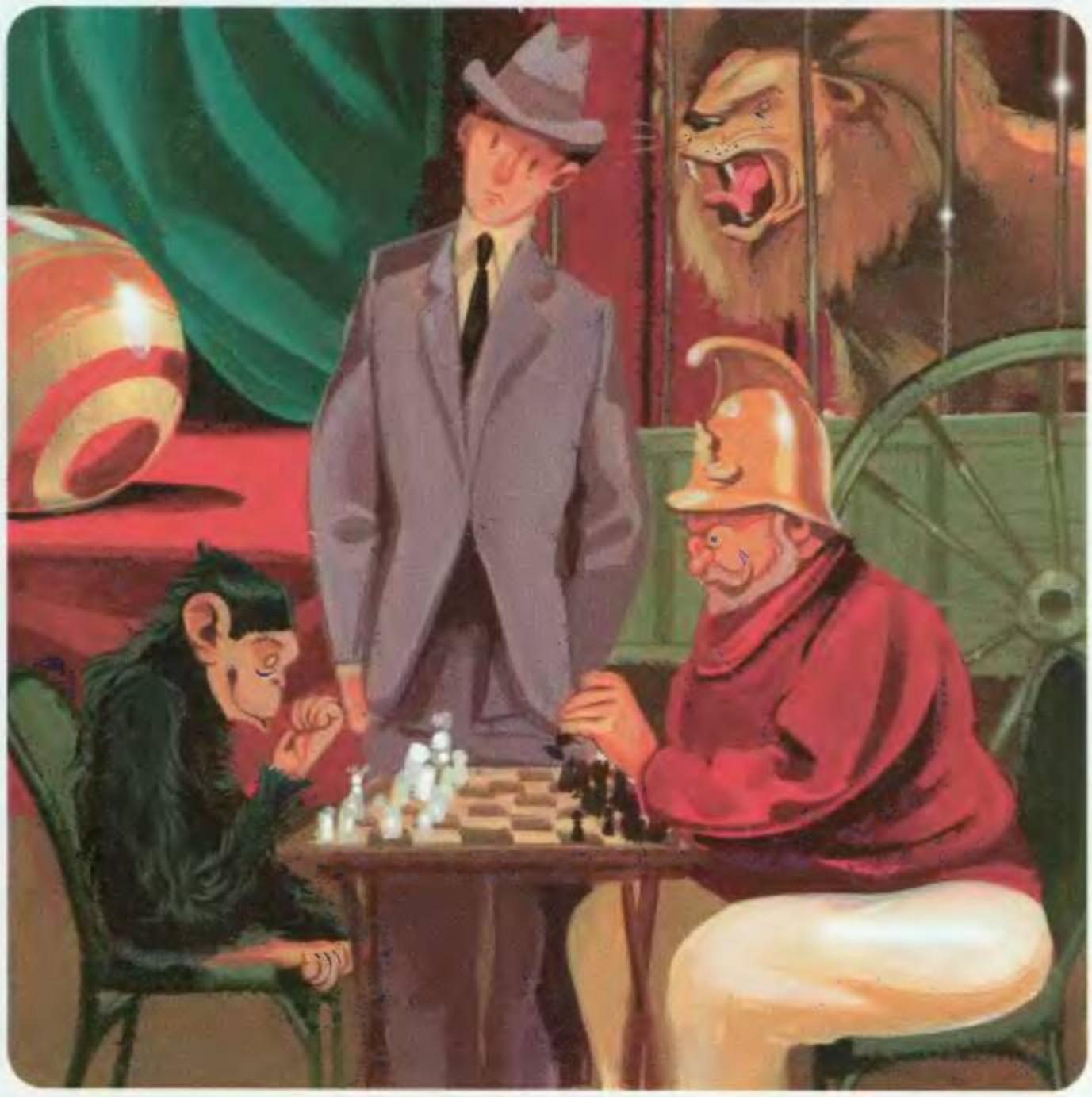


Brazilian slums. The movie hastens roughly from the nineteen-sixties to the eighties, as we watch the boys either die or grow old before their time. The result is a jolting ride, but such is the skill on show that we run the risk of being too exhilarated to notice every death; does the film convince in its plea for the forgotten poor, or are we encouraged to forget them as they fall? In Portuguese.—*Anthony Lane* (Reviewed in our issue of 1/20/03.) (Angelika Film Center, Chelsea Cinemas, and Empire 25.)

CONFIDENCE
A talky, fun grifter picture that may test your tolerance for Ed Burns, who stars, narrates, and, yes, even gets the girl. Surprisingly, Burns didn't direct; that honor went to James Foley ("Glengarry Glen Ross"), who signed up Dustin Hoffman to play a Mob boss with an aesthetic side. (He likes to give his strippers acting tips.) Paul Giamatti, Rachel Weisz, and Andy Garcia all provide able support, and the puzzle is a good one. Foley lets the sting play out without overloading it with hardboiled philosophy, and Burns is a convincing Mr. Cool.—*M.A.* (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, New York Twin, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

THE DANCER UPSTAIRS
John Malkovich's premier effort as a movie director, an adaptation of Nicholas Shakespeare's 1995 novel about the hunt for a Shining Path terrorist in Peru, is at times rather vague. Malkovich rushes through some of his scenes, and his Spanish, French, and Argentinean actors fail to sound colloquial and relaxed in English. But the movie has a sinister atmosphere that begins to work on you. In the nameless capital city (i.e., Lima), cryptic, intimidating posters show up on the street and dead dogs with menacing signs around their necks are found hanging from lampposts. The revolutionaries are everywhere and nowhere, a murderously mischievous presence; they are like artists of revolution, staging their gruesome acts at their own convenience, and Malkovich doesn't prepare us for the horrors or underline them with ominous music. With Javier Bardem as the civilized policeman who pursues the terrorist for years and Laura Morante as a ballet teacher who may be involved in dangerous activities.—*David Denby* (5/5/03) (Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, and Sunshine Cinema.)

FELLINI: I'M A BORN LIAR
In this superb documentary fantasia, Fellini is seen directing an erotic scene from "Fellini Satyricon," shaping the performances of three beautiful young people with his hands, caressing the air as he croons instructions to first one and then another. His control of the scene is remarkable, but it makes one laugh,



At Film Forum, a revival of Philippe de Broca's 1966 cult comedy, "King of Hearts."

too, because in so much of the surrounding interview material, the director describes himself as a kind of medium through which a given movie passes, a mere craftsman in the service of reverie. His actual practice, as we can see from the many scenes of him at work, is consciously to shape every breath of air in his films, to dominate, terrify, seduce, and to dream and suffer for everyone. This Franco-Italian-Scottish co-production, directed by Damian Pettigrew, is an extraordinary piece of film in its own right. Pettigrew and his collaborators surround the interview material with a texture of film excerpts and freshly shot footage that has the density of one

ZOHAR LAZAR

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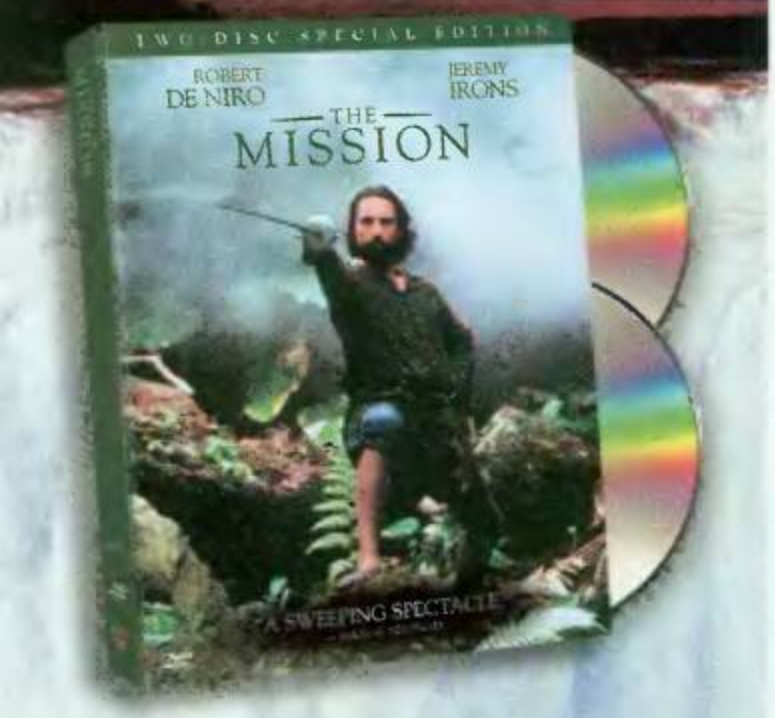

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of the maestro's own movies, without the excess. In English and Italian.—*D. D.* (4/14/03) (Film Forum.)

GATTACA

The writer-director Andrew Niccol's first movie (he went on to write "The Truman Show") is a stark conceit stretched out into a two-hour dystopia. The 1997 film stars Ethan Hawke as a "traditionally conceived" human in a genetically engineered future where all births are planned in the laboratory. He must hide his multitude of flaws if he is to ever get a shot at becoming a spaceman on a voyage to one of Saturn's moons. Uma Thurman plays his near-perfect lover, but the movie's charge comes from Jude Law's bitter glitter as the genetically gifted yet paraplegic gentleman who barters his D.N.A. identity in exchange for booze. Niccol's work is artful but self-important and thin; "The Twilight Zone" did more with these themes in two classic episodes, "The Eye of the Beholder" and "Number Twelve Looks Just Like You."—*Michael Sragow* (Thalia Theatre; May 10-11.)

THE GOOD THIEF

Nick Nolte plays Bob, half French, half American, whose days—and, more spectacularly, his nights—are spent in Nice. He is a chronic gambler and a heroin addict. He also used to be a thief, and Neil Jordan's movie shows him circling back to his old ways, as a sumptuous collection of paintings lures him into action—Bob is a bear, and his honey is fine art. With him are a bunch of henchmen, notably the smooth Raoul (Gérard Darmon); against him is a local detective (Tchéky Karyo), although the two of them are old, if not trusted, friends. The movie comes alive in the hero's presence: the camera frame is crammed with Nolte's shambling bulk, and we watch the wasting of his powers and his lunges at respectability. As a heist movie, however, this is a dud, the plot splintering badly in the middle. With Nolte to rely on, why does Jordan allow his attention to be distracted by lesser figures? Happily, the finale is a smooth run, as Bob and a young companion (Nutsa Kukhianidze) make hay at the tables of a casino. The material is heavily adapted from Jean-Pierre Melville's "Bob le Flambeur," with some patches of dialogue preserved intact.—*A.L.* (4/7/03) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Cinema 1, Empire 25, Kew Gardens Cinema, Lincoln Square, and Village Theatre VII.)

HOLES

Louis Sachar's entertaining children's novel is given a snappy, faithful treatment by the director Andrew Davis and his boisterous cast (which includes Sigourney Weaver, Jon Voight, and Shia LaBeouf). The story, about a young Texan boy unjustly sent to a work camp for delinquents, happily retains all the magic realism of the book (the author wrote the screenplay). Flashbacks to the Old West, deadly lizards, family curses—Davis combines all of the movie's disparate pieces with enormous skill. It's an emotional tall tale, intelligent and original.—*B.D.* (Empire 25, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, and Union Square.)

KALPANA

Uday Shankar, the older brother of the sitarist Ravi, was trained as a painter, then lured into dance by Anna Pavlova. He became the first internationally famous Indian dancer. This 1948 movie, which he directed, choreographed, and starred in, is a two-and-a-half-hour ragbag of everything that was on his mind as India achieved independence. Partly, it's an autobiography, telling of the companies he founded, the hopes he nursed for his native land, and also the ladies who fought over him. (The virtuous one is played by Shankar's wife, Amala, who dances gorgeously throughout and in one excellent scene beats the crap out of a rival for his affections.) It's also an anthology of the experimental film techniques of the day—montage, noir lighting, Busby Berkeley girl parades—and of Indian dance, both classical and modern. The acting is stylized—mustaches are twirled—and the narrative is jumpy. No sooner does Shankar denounce capitalism or call for women's education than we get a protracted ballet on that theme. Still, the movie is serious and fascinating: an early essay, in dance, on the postcolonial quandary. In Hindi.—*Joan Acocella* (Walter Reade Theatre; May 10-12.)

THE KILLER

Both sides of the John Woo debate (is he a visionary synthesist or an idiot savant?) get ammunition from this key 1989 work. Danny Lee plays a cop who can see the heroic dimensions of a murderer—the redoubtable Chow Yun-Fat, a professional assassin who accidentally blinds a night-club singer and then devotes himself to her care. As Chow tangles with both the police and his employers (they want him offed for blowing his cover), slick gunplay meets Victorian sentimentality and idealism, often in the same scene. The furious shooting is halted for declarations of friendship or statements of principle. Woo aficionados swallow this whole hog; the rest of us applaud the virtuoso staging, snicker at the histrionics, and generally find ourselves unwilling to suspend disbelief. In Cantonese.—*M.S.* (Moving Image; May 11.)

LAUREL CANYON

After the solemnities of "High Art," the director Lisa Cholodenko has turned to lighter matters: specifically, what to do if your mother is an unreconstructed hippie. Sam (Christian Bale) takes his fiancée, Alex (Kate Beckinsale), home to California to meet his mom, Jane (Frances McDormand), a record producer whose walls of photographs bear testament to a life misspent in rock. She is all the family that Sam has but far more than he wants, especially since Jane's idea of quality time is to come within an inch of seducing her son's girlfriend while bringing a shameless young rock star (Alessandro Nivola) along for the ride. The movie has poise and a lightly perspiring sexiness, but also an uncertain sense of humor, and you end up rooting for the squares—especially Sam and his colleague Sara (Natascha McElhone), who have more fun in the front of a Volvo than seems either practical or legal. The soundtrack is full of ersatz British pop, so tuneless and squally that it could almost be the real thing.—*A.L.* (3/10/03) (Battery Park 16, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Union Square.)

LILYA 4-EVER

Lilya (Oksana Akinshina) is a chirpy girl of sixteen, sunk in a stagnant backwater of what used to be the Soviet Union. She is, to all intents and purposes, orphaned when her witch of a mother abandons her to seek a life in America. Lilya starts with practically nothing and goes downhill from there, winding up selling her body to the vulpine patrons of a bar; what redeems the movie—what renders a squalid experience quite sacred in its intensity—is the vehemence with which the writer and director, Lukas Moodysson, asks whether his heroine has also sold her soul. The caustic portrait that he paints of his native Sweden, to which the deluded Lilya is transported in her quest for a future, has brought him both outrage and acclaim; what is beyond doubt is the brio of his storytelling and the branding of the girl's misfortune onto our hearts and nerves. With Artiom Bogucharski as the artless dodger who becomes her only friend. In German, Swedish, English, and Russian.—*A.L.* (4/21 & 28/03) (Cinema Village and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

THE MAN WITHOUT A PAST

A huge Finn (Markku Peltola), unnamed and undemonstrative, is beaten up and left for dead. Knowing almost nothing of his former life, he begins a new one—living in a converted storage container on the Helsinki waterfront, befriending a dog, and cooking regrettable meals for a quiet blonde (Kati Outinen) from the Salvation Army. The director is Aki Kaurismäki, and even by his rigorous standards this is laconic fare—long, peaceful silences broken by tentative conversation and the steady puff of cigarettes. The result is oddly affecting: you come to feel not just sympathy for the hero, with his bandaged brow and utter want of self-pity, but even a mild envy for his uncluttered existence. In Finnish.—*A.L.* (4/7/03) (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.)

A MIGHTY WIND

The latest satirical documentary from the writer-director-actor Christopher Guest and his wonderful stock company. This one, set in the present day, is about a reunion of schlock commercial folksingers (of the Peter, Paul, & Mary or Ian & Sylvia type) from the sixties, and though the movie is not as funny as "This Is Spinal Tap" or "Best in Show" it's brighter and more revivifying than anything else around these days. Guest's subjects, in all these

films, are people from the drearier corners of show business who are so deep within whatever it is they do that they have lost all traces of self-consciousness. The films are, in the end, not so much mock documentaries as records of a deep-down dorkiness that becomes a form of blessedness. Guest is a realist who loves his subjects. With Eugene Levy, Catherine O'Hara, Michael McKean, Parker Posey, et al. Ed Begley, Jr., is particularly good as the Swedish-born public-television executive who drops Yiddish into every sentence in order to remain a success in New York.—*D.D.* (5/5/03) (Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, Kew Gardens Cinema, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, and 72nd Street East.)

RAISING VICTOR VARGAS

A lovely small-scale comedy about the commonplace mating rituals in a Dominican section of Manhattan. It's summer, and everyone is on the prowl, but the neighborhood is friendly and peaceful; chickens run through the alleys, and small gardens pop up here and there among the projects. The boys act cocky even when they're unsure of themselves, and the girls pretend they don't need boys. Nothing very important happens, but, moment by moment, the movie is alive with the play of gestures and glances, the faces of aggression and withdrawal. Victor Rasuk is well cast as the good-looking local Casanova, perhaps eighteen years old, and Judy Marte is the wary young beauty who gets him to change his style. The writer-director Peter Sollett stays close to the actors, all nonprofessionals, and they greet the camera with a modest but exploratory willingness.—*D.D.* (3/31/03) (Chelsea Cinemas, Eastside Playhouse, Empire 25, and Sunshine Cinema.)

SPELLBOUND

Jeffrey Blitz's charming documentary follows eight elementary students competing in the 1999 National Spelling Bee; he rode the bus to school with them, interviewed their teachers, checked out their rooms, and, in one case, listened while a kid talked like a robot. The sample of children is appropriately diverse—in region, in race, in the intensity of their preparations. Some of their parents see the spelling bee as representing the immigrant dream of America in miniature, while others seem amazed at the intensity of their nerdy offspring. The competitions are tense, and Blitz cobbles together a series of heartbreaking reaction shots of errant spellers. His direction shows a clever, occasionally flippant, selection of detail—the dog-eared unabridged dictionaries, the congratulatory sign posted outside Hooters, the prodigy who signs his autographs "Trust in Jesus."—*M.A.* (Film Forum.)

THIS IS SPINAL TAP

Plato and Aristotle held that laughter was a form of gloating, a way of expressing superiority and mocking the stupidity of others. Kant and Schopenhauer focussed on the role of incongruity in generating comedy. Though entirely dead, all four philosophers served as consultants for this 1984 mockumentary about an aging British heavy-metal band. Arguably the funniest movie ever made, the film—directed by Rob Reiner but masterminded by the Tap trio of David St. Hubbins (Michael McKean), Nigel Tufnel (Christopher Guest), and Derek Smalls (Harry Shearer)—is both a sure-shot parody of rock music and a lesson in improvisational brilliance. This remixed and remastered version includes fifteen minutes of new footage, but fans will be more interested in the eighty-three minutes of old footage, which include Guest's interrogation of a pimentoless olive, the least intimidating Stonehenge replica in history, and the legendary amplifiers that do, indeed, go to eleven.—*Ben Greenman* (Sunshine Cinema; May 9-10.)

X2

Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Battery Park 16, Chelsea West, 84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Metro Twin, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, Union Square, and Ziegfeld.)

XX/XY

Austin Chick tries to serve up something frisky and French in his début film, which chronicles, in claustrophobic detail, the love triangle between

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two bohemian college girls and a New York City artist (Mark Ruffalo). It's nice to see Ruffalo back on the screen (he made this film before brain surgery kept him out of acting for almost two years), and he plays much the same sort of lost boy he did in "You Can Count on Me," but without any of that character's redeeming qualities and without a script by Kenneth Lonergan. The conversations feel hackneyed and precious, and Ruffalo outclasses the other actors, who are trying to pin him down.—*M.A.* (Sunshine Cinema.)

Jean Rochefort and Johnny Hallyday in "Man on the Train," opening May 9.

ALSO PLAYING

BETTER LUCK TOMORROW
Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, and 34th Street Theatre.

BLUE CAR
Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Square.

IT RUNS IN THE FAMILY
Battery Park 16, Beekman, Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.

THE LIZZIE MCGUIRE MOVIE
East 86th Street Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, and Village East Cinemas.

MAROONED IN IRAQ
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.

OWNING MAHOWNY
Empire 25, First & 62nd Street Cinemas, 62nd & Broadway, and Village Theatre VII.

WINGED MIGRATION
Paris.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

Unless noted, call 212-777-FILM for show times.

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn.
Battery Park 16, West St. at Vesey St.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinemas 1, 2, and 3, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (212-924-3363).
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
Empire 25, on 42nd St. near Eighth Ave. (212-398-3939).
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
42nd Street E Walk, 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
Kew Gardens Cinema, 81-05 Lefferts Blvd., Queens (718-441-9835).
Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St. (212-757-2280).
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 66th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (212-688-3800).
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
The Screening Room, 54 Varick St. (212-334-2100).
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
Sunshine Cinema, 139-143 E. Houston St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
34th Street Theatre, 312 W. 34th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Through May 11: "Home and Away," pairings of an international film and an American film by the same director. May 10 at 2: "Distant Voices, Still Lives" (1988, Terence Davies). ♦ May 10 at 4: "The Neon Bible" (1995, Davies). ♦ May 11 at 2: "The Killer" (†). ♦ May 11 at 4: "Face/Off" (1997, John Woo). ♦ Repertory nights. May 10-11 at 6:30: "The Last Metro" (1980, François Truffaut; in French).

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES
32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5181)—May 8-11: The Bicycle Film Festival, a four-day celebration of two-wheeled transportation, including Jorgen Leth's "Stars and Water Carriers" (1973) and the première of Erik van Empel's "Tour of Legends" (2003). For the complete schedule, see www.bicyclefilmfestival.com.

BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-777-3456)—May 7-11: New films from Slovenia. May 7 at 6:30 and 9:30: "Sweet Dreams" (2001, Saso Podgorsek). ♦ May 8 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Rustling Landscapes" (2002, Janez Lapajne). ♦ May 9 at 2 and 6:50: "Bread and Milk" (2001, Jan Cvitkovic). ♦ May 9 at 4:30 and 9:10: "Ode to the Poet" (2001, Martin Srebotnjak). ♦ May 10 at 2 and 6:30: "Blind Spot" (2002, Hanna A. W. Slak). ♦ May 10 at 4:30 and 9:30: "Ljubljana" (2002, Igor Sterk). ♦ May 11 at 2 and 6:50: "Idle Running" (1999, Janez Burger). ♦ May 11 at 4:30 and 9:10: "Fortress Europe" (2001, Zelmir Zilnik). ♦ A tribute to Sergei Bodrov, Jr. May 12 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Prisoner of the Mountains" (1996; in Russian). ♦ Films featuring the cinematography of Conrad Hall. May 13 at 7: "Incubus" (1965, Leslie Stevens).

FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—May 8 at 1, 5:50, and 10:30: "The Night of the Hunter" (1955, Charles Laughton) and a talk at 2:50 and 7:40 by the film preservationist Robert Gitts, who will present footage of the making of the film. ♦ May 9-13 at 1:20, 3:20, 5:20, 7:20, and 9:20: "King of Hearts" (1966, Philippe de Broca).

FLORENCE GOULD HALL
55 E. 59th St. (212-315-6160)—Through May 20: The films of William Klein. May 13 at 12:30 and 6:30: "The Little Richard Story" (1980). ♦ May 13 at 1:30 and 9: "The French" (1981; in French).

GRAMERCY THEATRE
127 E. 23rd St. (212-777-4900)—Through May 25: Films supported by the Hubert Bals Fund. May 8 at 3: "Violet Perfume" (2000, Maryse Sistach; in Spanish). ♦ May 8 at 6: "The Servant's Shirt" (1998, Mani Kaul; in Bengali). ♦ May 8 at 8:15 and May 9 at 4: "Life on a String" (1991, Chen Kaige; in Mandarin). ♦ May 9 at 2: "The Deserted Station" (2002, Ali-Reza Raissian; in Farsi). ♦ May 9 at 6:15 and May 10 at 3:30: "Waiting for Happiness" (2002, Abderrahmane Sissako; in French). ♦ May 9 at 8:15 and May 10 at 1: "The Little Girl Who Sold the Sun" (1999, Djibril Diop Mambéty; in French and Wolof) and two other shorts. ♦ May 10 at 6: "Killed by Lightning" (2002, Yevgeni Yufit; in Russian). ♦ May 10 at 8: "Bab El-Oued City" (1994, Merzak Allouache; in Arabic). ♦ May 11 at 2: "Three Brothers" (2000, Serik Aprymov; in Russian). ♦ May 11 at 3:45 and May 12 at 6: "Date Wine" (1998, Radwan El-Kashef; in Arabic). ♦ May 11 at 6: "The Wrestlers" (2000, Buddhadeb Dasgupta; in Bengali).

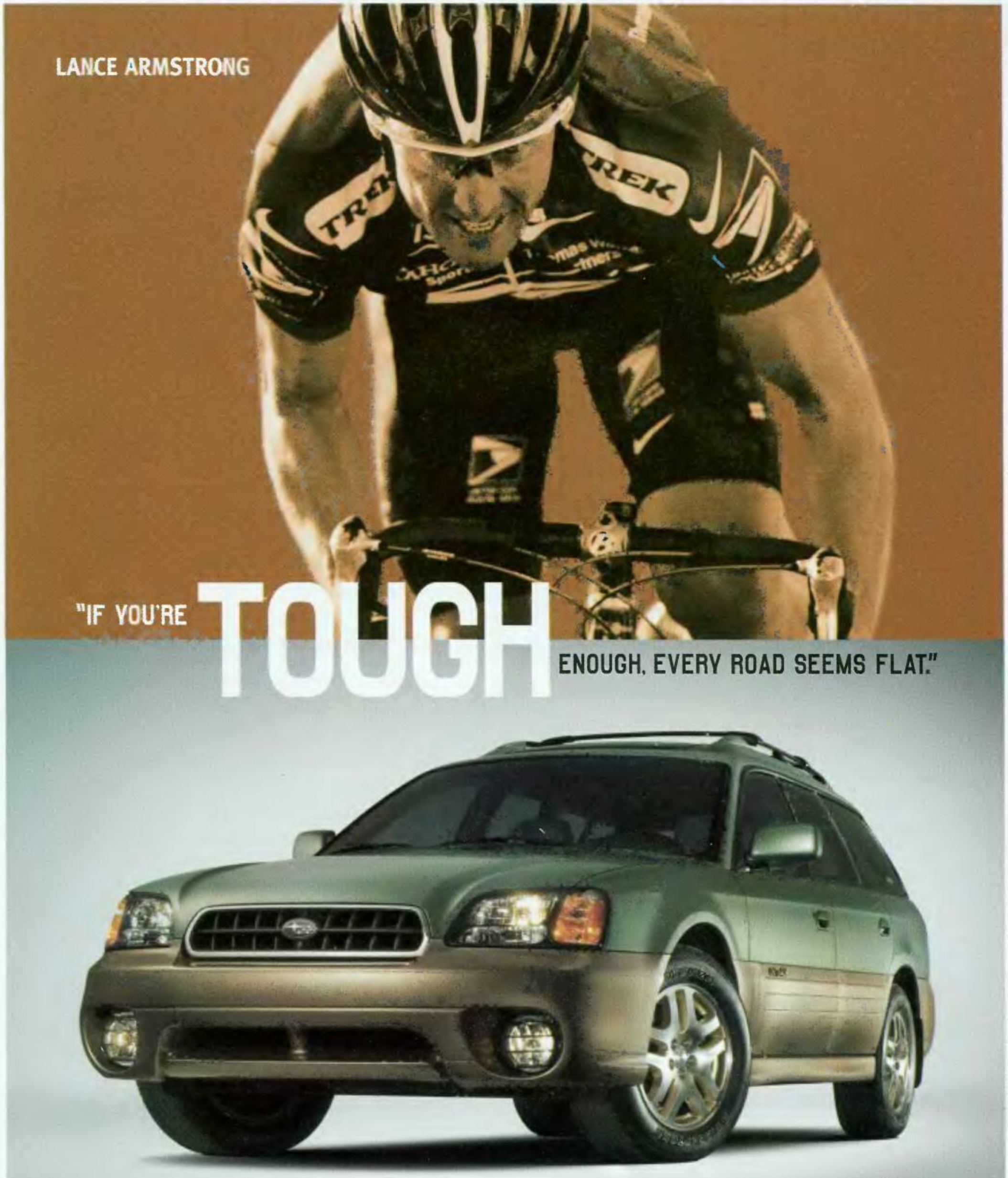
SUNSHINE CINEMA
139-143 E. Houston St. (212-358-0573)—Midnight movies. May 9-10: "This Is Spinal Tap" (†).

THALIA THEATRE
Symphony Space, 2537 Broadway, at 95th St. (212-864-5400)—Through July 13: Sci-Fi Flick Fest. May 10 at 2 and May 11 at 7:45: "Fahrenheit 451" (1966, François Truffaut). ♦ May 10 at 4 and May 11 at 9:45: "Gattaca" (†). ♦ May 10 at 6:30 and 9:30 and May 11 at 2 and 4:45: "2001: A Space Odyssey" (1968, Stanley Kubrick).

THE TRIBECA FILM FESTIVAL
Box-office headquarters, 387 Greenwich St. (866-265-8499)—Through May 11: Feature-film premières, documentaries, special presentations, and more. See http://www.tribecafilmfestival.org for details.

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—A special "Dance on Film" event. May 10 at 8 and May 11-12 at 1: "Kalpana" (†). ♦ Through May 29: "Films from Along the Silk Road." The movies are listed with their country of origin. May 7 at 1: "Kairat" (1991, Darezhan Omirbaev; Kazakhstan). ♦ May 8 at 1 and 5: "Don't Cry" (2003, Amir Karakulov; Kazakhstan). ♦ May 8 at 3 and 7: "Last Holiday" (1996, Karakulov; Kazakhstan). ♦ May 8 at 9: "Boys in the Sky" (2002, Zoulfikar Musakov; Uzbekistan). ♦ May 9 at 1 and 6 and May 12 at 6: "My Brother Silk Road" (2001, Marat Sarulu; Kyrgyzstan). ♦ May 9 at 4, May 10 at 6, and May 11 at 4:30: "The Last Stop" (1989, Serik Aprimov; Kazakhstan). ♦ May 9 at 9 and May 11 at 6:45: "Revenge" (1987, Ermek Shinarbaev; Kazakhstan). ♦ May 10 at 1:30, May 12 at 9, and May 13 at 2 and 6: "Killer" (1998, Omirbaev; Kazakhstan). ♦ May 10 at 3:30, May 11 at 9:15, and May 12 at 4: "The Mystery of Ferns" (1992, Rachid Malikov; Uzbekistan). ♦ May 13 at 4: "Little Angel, Bring Me Joy" (1993, Usman Saparov; Turkmenistan).

LARA TOMLIN



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THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT

BUSHONOMICS

Economics has never been the Bush family's thing. The first President Bush was so bored by financial briefings that he sometimes dozed off during them. The second hasn't been caught napping yet, but it's fair to say that the economy isn't his favorite topic. George W. Bush is well aware, however, of the fate that befell his father after he waged a successful war in the Gulf—"It's the economy, stupid"—so he briefly turned his attention away from foreign policy to defend his controversial tax-cut plan, which is fighting for survival in the Senate.

"With a robust package of at least five hundred and fifty billion dollars in across-the-board tax relief, we will help create more than a million new jobs by the end of 2004," he declared in his weekly radio address. "Some members of Congress support tax relief but say my proposal is too big. Since they already agree that tax relief creates jobs, it doesn't make sense to provide less tax relief and, therefore, create fewer jobs. I believe we should enact more tax relief so that we can create more jobs, and more Americans can find work and provide for their families."

There is a pressing need for more jobs—another forty-eight thousand vaporized last month—but the link between tax policy and payrolls is a lot murkier than the President made it out to be. If tax cuts automatically created jobs, businesses would be scouring the streets for workers right now, and nobody's twenty-five-year-old children would still have to live at home. Two years ago, after all, President Bush persuaded Congress to pass the biggest tax cuts in a generation. But since then a million and a half jobs have disappeared. By contrast, between 1993 and 2000, President Clinton raised taxes to reduce the budget deficit, and the economy created more than twenty million jobs. Of course, this doesn't mean that higher taxes create jobs, either. The number of people working is determined by the over-all state of the economy, to which fiscal policy is just one contributor. Other things being equal, tax cuts can help the economy by putting more cash in consumers' pockets, but they are an expensive and unreliable way to raise employment, especially when they are aimed at people who tend to save their windfalls rather than spend them.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

More than half the President's tax cuts would come in the form of abolishing the taxation of corporate dividends. The primary recipients would be rich people and senior citizens, since they own most of the dividend-yielding stocks. For example, Sanford Weill, the chairman of Citigroup, would get a tax cut of about six million dollars. Based on 2001 figures, Vice-President Dick Cheney would save about a hundred thousand dollars. The dividend plan might persuade yacht builders and assisted-living communities to hire some extra help, but it won't do much for the rest of the nearly nine million unemployed.

In view of this problem, the White House has put forward a more subtle rationale for the dividend-tax cut: It will cause the stock market to rise, which will make consumers and businesses feel more confident. This, in turn, will boost spending, which will generate more hiring. But if any of these links fail to materialize, so will the new jobs.

Even taking the President at his word, each new job would cost the government five hundred and fifty thousand dollars in lost revenues, which is about seventeen times the salary of the average American worker. It would be far cheaper for the federal government to give private firms subsidies to hire more people, or to give

money to the states, which are facing their worst financial crisis since the Second World War, and which at this moment are being forced to fire teachers, troopers, and health workers. Parks, museums, and libraries are closing; cultural programs are being cut. College-tuition fees are rising, and scholarships are vanishing. Hundreds of thousands of people stand to lose their state-provided health-care coverage. (Meanwhile, taxpayers will be laying out billions of dollars to reconstruct Iraq.)

None of this factors in the Bush tax plan's impact over the long term. A few years back, the big debate in Washington was what to do with the surplus, which was projected to be five trillion dollars over the coming decade. Now, after the stock-market crash, a prolonged economic downturn, and the 2001 tax cuts, the deficit for this year alone could reach five hundred billion dollars, a figure that even Ronald Reagan and David Stockman failed to match during the last disastrous experiment in "supply-side" economics. And phasing in the tax cuts, which the White House is considering to alleviate the concerns of Republican moderates, will do nothing to reduce their long-term cost. The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities calculates that a dividend-tax cut would deprive the federal government of some seven hundred and fifty billion dollars between 2014 and 2023, just when the baby boomers will be lining up for Medicare and Social Security.

What's more, the President's tax cuts may in the end destroy more jobs than they create. As tax revenues fall and the deficit increases, interest rates will rise, and the higher cost of borrowing will impede business investment and hiring. The reborn supply-side economists who devised the President's plan would dispute this, except that many of them were fired or encouraged to quit in the Administration's recent purge of its financial team. N. Gregory Mankiw, the Harvard professor who was recently nominated as chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers, is more realistic. In his popular textbook "Principles of Economics," he explains that when a government runs a budget deficit it "pulls resources away from investment in new capital and, thereby, depresses the living standards of future generations." Alan Greenspan, whom the President plans to reappoint for a fifth term as Federal Reserve chairman, said essentially the same thing last week. Kenneth Rogoff, the I.M.F.'s chief economist, went even further. He recently told journalists, "Suppose for a minute that we were talking about a developing country that had gaping current account deficits year after year . . . a budget ink spinning from black into red . . . open-ended security costs, and a real exchange rate that had been inflated by capital inflows. With all that, I think it's fair to say we would be pretty concerned." When I.M.F. types start talking about the United States as if it were a banana republic on a bad day, it's probably time to change course.

—John Cassidy

INK

UNNECESSARY ROUGHNESS

The grisly tableau in the window of the Mysterious Bookshop, the store that Otto Penzler has owned for the past twenty-four years, features a reclining corpse with a pair of scissors plunged into its leg. The shelves inside the shop, which occupies two floors of a brownstone on West Fifty-sixth Street, hold thousands of tales of murder, torture, and other macabre goings on. But it wasn't until last year that Penzler came across something really scary: a lawsuit.

David Boies

The story began, as they say, innocently enough. "I always wanted to publish a series of anthologies of mysteries about sports," Penzler said the other day in his office, a dark, Victorian-looking room in the back of the store. He made a deal with a Los Angeles publisher named Michael Viner, and together they brought out collections about baseball ("Murderers' Row") and boxing ("Murder on the Ropes") in 2001. With his white hair and beard, Penzler looks a bit like Santa Claus, and his chipper demeanor has made him many friends among the writers in his genre. Although Penzler was offering only token payments, he was able to sign up several big names for his anthologies, including one for his football collection, which was to be called "Murder in the End Zone." David Baldacci, a popular mystery writer who has sold twenty-eight million books, gave Penzler a novella-length story called "The Mighty Johns" in return for just two thousand dollars.

Early last year, Penzler learned that Viner's company, New Millennium, planned to call the football anthology "The Mighty Johns" and had put Baldacci's name in big block letters on the cover. Baldacci sued New Millennium to stop publication, claiming that the cover would trick his readers into believing that he had come out with a new novel. (Baldacci declined to comment.) Last May, a federal judge in New York ruled for the author, stopped the publication of the book, and found that Viner's company "was attempting to deceive the public into buying a misrepresented book." (Eventually, Viner and Baldacci agreed on a cover, and the football anthology was published.) Viner, meanwhile, sued Penzler for breach of contract and other claims in connection with the book.

"I didn't know what to do," Penzler said. "I've had a lawyer for years, and he told me that I couldn't lose the case but that it would cost me between a hundred and two hundred thousand dollars to fight it. I refinanced my house in Connecticut, but I just didn't have the money." Then, last July, Penzler had a sixtieth-birthday party, and among his guests was a longtime customer of the bookstore, Sir Howard Stringer, the chairman of the Sony Corporation of America. When Stringer offered his customary greeting—"How are you, dear boy?"—Penzler took the opportunity to tell him about the law-

suit. Stringer replied that he thought he could get his friend David Boies to take the case, without charge. Penzler thought that sounded great, but he did have one question: "Who's David Boies?" Penzler was quickly reminded that Boies is the famous litigator who finished first in the Microsoft antitrust trial and second in Bush v. Gore. A few months later, Boies agreed to take the case. "Fighting for the right side is the best game ever invented, and I like that," he said last week.

Viner, for his part, has earned a reputation for litigiousness, which he says has served him well. "I don't mind being called litigious because it keeps me from having to be," he said. "Otto is a legend, but he has left me completely in the lurch. He turned in all of his manuscripts late, he allowed some of our stories to be used in Best American Mystery Stories, which he edits, and now all of our company's profits have gone to fighting this case. He has David Boies on a pro-bono basis. We've mortgaged our house to pay for our lawyers." Viner and Penzler both describe the dispute as a David and Goliath struggle, but they disagree, of course, about who's who.

The trial is scheduled to begin June 17th, in Los Angeles federal court. Penzler has sold his share of legal thrillers, and he has tried to find a certain rueful interest in ending up in the middle of one. "One of the things I keep saying to my legal team is that this would all be fascinating if I weren't personally involved and scared to death."

—Jeffrey Toobin

"Don't think of them as terrorist states. Think of them as terrorist markets."

STICK 'EM UP DEPT.

THE JOB

As banks go, the HSBC at 265 Broadway, across the street from City Hall Park, is fairly inviting. A sign—"Welcome to the City Hall Branch"—greets you as you walk in, and a TV hangs from the ceiling, broadcasting CNBC. Four red chairs face the screen. If market analysis isn't your thing, you can always just sit and chat on a cell phone while you wait, as one woman was doing the other day. There wasn't anyone at HSBC to receive her; nor was there anyone sitting at the Customer Service station, or at the Investment Services desk. But then if you were a bank robber this, too, might seem welcoming.

Bank robbers are surprisingly abundant in the city these days. Through the first four months of this year, New York has averaged more than one and a half bank heists a day—a threefold increase over last year. The threat to our cash deposits hasn't yet reached the peak levels of the nineteen-seventies, when there were well over a thousand *armed* bank robberies a year, but banking and security officials have described the current situation as "epidemic" and "systemic."

A few weeks ago, Mayor Bloomberg held a morning press conference in which he effectively declared war on bank robbers. The police commissioner, he explained, would be meeting with bank executives that afternoon to address the branches' apparent negligence in defending themselves. Before the Mayor was through, thieves had slipped out of a Ridgewood Savings Bank in Queens with a quick four hundred dollars. Shortly after lunchtime, a man without a savings or checking account at HSBC walked into the City Hall branch and passed the teller a handwritten note requesting cash. He walked out with ninety-five bucks.

"This is a new or unique element," Michael Smith, the president of the New York Bankers Association, said last week. "It is not what you or I would view as the typical bank robbery." (Among other things, it's not very lucrative.) Instead of carefully targeting a building and then seizing control of it, with masks on and guns drawn, like Sonny Wortzik or the Dead Presidents, these bandits work quickly and quietly. They wield pieces of paper more often than guns (although one recent culprit did employ a banana reinforced with tape), and tend to emerge only with what was in the teller's tray. Sometimes other customers don't even know that a robbery has taken place.

Here's how it works: "I'd just go in and grab a deposit slip, and I'd write the note right there on the deposit slip—demanding the twenties, fifties, and hundreds, no dye packs, no bait money—and slide it in front of the teller," Troy Evans said the other day. "It was like taking candy from a baby." Evans, speaking by phone from Arizona, was describing his own experience as a serial bank robber more than a decade ago. Eventually, he got busted and was sentenced to thirteen years in prison. ("I've got one ear that sticks out a little further than the other, and I've got a crooked middle finger on one hand," he said. "The thing that made me end up taking a guilty plea was one particular teller, she had me down from head to toe.") Evans is now supporting himself as a motivational speaker ("Bringing lessons

from the big house to your house"), but, given his background, and the tips he picked up from the more than three hundred other bank robbers he met in jail, he is perhaps as good an authority as any on what New York's would-be bank robbers might be looking for.

"You'd be surprised how many bank robberies could be foiled just by somebody looking you directly in the eye and inquiring what your business is that day—'How can I help ya?'" Evans said. "A bank robber always takes the path of least resistance, and if there's any kind of male presence within an institution, anybody that looks like they could be a threat, who could play Joe Hero—it could be an off-duty policeman standing in line, could be a teller—the guy's going on down the road to the next bank."

If the next bank happens to be two stories tall, it's also likely to be passed by. "What are they going to do, wait for an elevator?" Evans said. "They're going to move on down the road to where it's a bunch of weak and feeble females who aren't going to give any trouble."

Last week, near closing time, a novice emboldened by Evans's motivational guidelines set out to case a few joints on Madison Avenue. He stopped briefly outside the Merchants Bank, at Fortieth Street, and peered through the window, where his gaze was met immediately by that of a large man with a mustache, who was standing in the middle of the room, with his arms crossed. Male Presence. Eye Contact. Joe Hero. The would-be bandit moved on, to the Bank of New York branch on Thirty-ninth Street, which had been visited by a note-passer the previous morning. He decided to fill out a fake deposit slip. Five minutes later, none of the five employees seated near the front had even glanced up; the four tellers behind a bulletproof window talked among themselves. The only other customer, a woman, departed, and a female employee finally got up from her desk and began locking the doors from the inside. Perfect.

After a moment, the novice politely asked to be let out, and headed across the street, where Signature Bank was advertising free A.T.M. withdrawals, which, though not quite a steal, were a bargain compared with the dollar-fifty surcharge at the Bank of New York.

—Ben McGrath

DEPT. OF INVENTION
AN INSTRUMENTAL MAN

Mark Stewart rarely leaves his apartment in Brooklyn without an instrument of his own design, usually a chaladoo. A chaladoo is a version of a chalumeau, a Baroque clarinet with finger holes instead of keys. The chaladoo has the profile of a bass clarinet, but it is made of plastic plumbing pipe and plastic plumbing fixtures, to which Stewart has attached the mouthpiece of a saxophone. Because he is often interrupted while playing the chaladoo by people who want to know what it is, he has drawn on one side of a four-by-seven-inch card a schematic diagram of the chaladoo and, on the other side, instructions for how to build one. He carries a stack of the cards, which he calls recipe cards. He began building instruments about four years ago and guesses that he has built about four hundred. He hopes someday to have recipe cards for all of them, but only the chaladoo has one now.

Stewart would be pretty easy to notice even without the chaladoo. He has a round face, a high complexion, and long red hair that falls nearly to his waist. He is forty-two. He grew up in Wisconsin, and designing instruments is a sideline for him. His day job is as a guitar player in Paul Simon's band. He has worked in the pit of several Broadway shows, and he is also a member of the Bang on a Can All-Stars, the Fred Frith Guitar Quartet, and Arnold Dreyblatt's Orchestra for Excited Strings, and, with Rob Schwimmer, he performs as the brainy, downtown cabaret act Polygraph Lounge, in which many of his instruments find a place.

Stewart builds his instruments in a tenement apartment on Rivington Street, which he calls the lab. He describes the lab as "a sonic salon." Leaning against the walls or hanging from nails are layers of wood and coils of plastic and metal tubing, along with a little bugle of a kind used at cricket matches in India. The lab has three bedrooms, connected by a footpath. Materials in the lab are piled on top of each other. Every now and then, they shift and something falls, the way things occasionally let loose in the woods. Stewart describes the lab as "scary but not dangerous."

Stewart classifies the instruments he makes as either macrosonophones or microsonophones. Macrosonophones can be heard. The loudest microsonophones are faintly audible to the person playing them. The rest can be heard only with a sounding board or a stethoscope. The cheapest stethoscopes, which sell for about six dollars in drugstores, work best on microsonophones. For some reason, expensive stethoscopes, while more sensitive, have poor fidelity. A typical microsonophone is one Stewart calls a travel bass, because it is good for playing privately on airplanes and trains. A travel bass consists of a flat piece of wood, like a yardstick, to which Stewart has attached three guitar strings and some split shot sinkers to color the sound. He connects a stethoscope to the stick with rubber bands.

Stewart is fond of what he calls private moments in public spaces. "Say you're waiting for a subway train and you're standing next to an electric signal box humming at sixty cycles per second—which, by the way, is a B-flat. You might walk away because you don't like the hum. But if you look at it in a John Cage way it's a sound to work with, and if you have an instrument with you, you can play with it, and you're treating the space differently."

Recently, Stewart took the subway from the lab to midtown for a rehearsal. On the train, he sat and played the chaladoo softly. (The chaladoo can be either a macrosonophone or a microsonophone, depending on which way its bell is facing.) From a foot away, the instrument could barely be heard. "You don't disturb anyone with it," he said. "As opposed to, say, 'That guy's bugging me playing free jazz.'" As the train approached Stewart's station, a man asked about the chaladoo, and Stewart gave him a recipe card. "When you have an instrument with you," he said, "you become more aware of the noises around you. Cage said that he gave up his piano because the sounds of Sixth Avenue had become more interesting to him. It seems esoteric, but in practice it's almost mundane. You don't have to be a raging aesthete to get on board." The train stopped, and the doors opened. "That doesn't mean I'm not a raging aesthete," he added, "but you don't have to be."

—Alec Wilkinson

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THE FINANCIAL PAGE
THE HIGH COST OF ILLNESS

From the moment news of the SARS epidemic broke, analysts have been busy trying to calculate its economic costs. The absence of tourists and shoppers in places like Hong Kong and Singapore means billions of dollars in lost sales. Beijing has closed its theatres and discos, and Shanghai and Shenzhen have shut down their stock exchanges. A recent Goldman Sachs report said that if SARS remains a problem in East Asia it has "real potential to disrupt industrial production and foreign trade." If the disruption were to become bad enough, it could hobble the global economy, since everything we buy these days seems to be made in that part of the world.

Still, epidemics aren't what they used to be. No modern epidemic is likely to reshape social and economic systems in the manner of premodern plagues. The Black Death helped undermine feudalism. The population decline was so severe that the individual's labor grew more valuable, which enabled serfs to abandon their lords and become tenant farmers or urban workers. And a couple of centuries later smallpox transformed the Western Hemisphere by wiping out native populations and clearing the way for European settlement.

Starting in the late eighteenth century, though, epidemics tended to hit economies with containable shocks. In 1793, yellow fever cut off Philadelphia from world trade and brought its economy to a near-standstill, but the city bounced back soon enough. In the nineteenth century, a series of cholera pandemics virtually emptied New York, shut down London's river trade, and in Hungary prompted riots by peasants who believed that their landlords were poisoning them. A century ago, breakouts of bubonic plague stalled San Francisco's economy and threatened to isolate it from the rest of the country. The Spanish-flu epidemic of 1918, which killed more than twenty million people worldwide, caused waves of business failures across the nation and helped provoke a short recession. And in the past two decades, despite the great advances in public health since the Second World War, infectious diseases have become a problem again. In 1994, for example, an outbreak of pneumonic plague in the city of Surat, in western India, curtailed trade and tourism, crippled the city's diamond-cutting industry, and cost India more than a billion dollars.

Devastating as modern epidemics can be, the economic damage they do—much of it the result of panic and of restrictive public-health measures—is usually short-lived. Modern economies are remarkably resilient. (Not long after the Spanish-flu epidemic, the U.S. economy entered one of the biggest booms in its history.) At least in economic terms, epidemics are much less destructive than endemic diseases like malaria and tuberculosis, which afflict hundreds of millions of people in the developing world. Epidemics may have a kind of dark glamour, but it's the old workaday diseases that do the real harm.

ERIC PALMA

Unlike epidemics, endemic diseases—diseases that are more or less permanently established in a region—eat away, day after day, at an economy's foundations. Sick people miss work more often than healthy people, and are less effective when they show up. People are less likely to invest in things that yield long-term benefits—like education—because they imagine they won't be around to reap those benefits. Parents often have more children as a kind of insurance policy, which makes it harder for them to feed and care for each child. Sick and hungry children have a harder time in school. Finally, countries where disease is endemic have a harder time attracting foreign investment, not only because their workers are less productive but also because foreign companies are less inclined to do business in places that might prove fatal to foreign managers.

In recent years, economists have started to pay greater attention to disease. Having long assumed that wealth leads to health, they have come to recognize that health is essential to wealth, too. The economist Robert Barro has estimated that every ten-per-cent increase in life expectancy boosts a country's gross domestic product by 0.4 per cent a year. The news that SARS may reduce China's gross domestic product by one per cent this year has provoked alarm, yet, according to the economists Jeffrey Sachs and John Gallup, malaria reduces gross domestic product by 1.3 per cent every single year in countries where it has a significant presence. You can quibble over the numbers, but no one will deny that the persistence of tropical diseases in Africa and in parts of South Asia has seriously hampered economic development in those places. Getting rid of malaria may not turn Zambia into Taiwan, but it's worth remembering that Taiwan's economic boom didn't get started until after malaria was eradicated there.

Why, then, do we devote so little energy and attention to fighting endemic tropical diseases while we devote so much to fighting SARS? The cynical answers are that people in the West are afraid of catching SARS, and that East Asia, unlike Africa, is integral to the world economy. But there's another argument: that it's economically sensible to stop SARS now so that it doesn't become another endemic disease, a malaria for the Far East, which, of course, is what has happened to AIDS in the developing world. If it does, and if a vaccine is years away, the economies of East Asia could be transformed, and Western companies would have to rethink their dependence on the region. Before SARS, China was going to be the factory floor to the world. Now it has to worry about becoming the sick ward of the East. The best advice for China may also be the simplest: get well soon.

—James Surowiecki

Richard Davidson, Morgan Stanley Strategist

Blowing bubbles in a post-bubble economy.

How do you know when you're in a bubble? It's easy to see one in the rear-view mirror, but few people identify bubbles at the time. Various surveys taken in early 2000 showed a majority of investors didn't believe there was a bubble back then.

And how do you define when you're back in rational territory? Today, investors face the most uncertain valuation environment since the 1950s, when dividend yields flipped below bond yields and stayed there. In the last few years, the correlation between bond yields and stock prices has gone from negative to positive; absolute valuations have moved to ten-year lows; and valuation spreads between US and non-US equities have widened out to near extremes. Here's my take on the post-bubble environment:

Equities are no longer the asset class of preference. After a 20-year bull market when asset allocation and macro were increasingly sidelined, the change in economic volatility, a severe bear market and liability risk have led to bonds becoming the preferred asset for investors.

While the bear market ultimately will lead to a return to investor rationality, on the way new bubbles will develop. Portfolio decisions in the asset-liability mismatch world will be guided not by the need to maximize returns for a certain level of risk, but instead to cover liabilities at all costs. This will lead to a preference for bonds, and their bias to trade at overvalued levels compared to historical trends. It will also lead to decisions to sell equities that have higher yields than the assets replacing them. The creation of potential new bubbles in property, commodities and long bonds has already been under way.

Valuation is always important, but works less well for timing short-term gyrations. Forced investor selling and technical moves take short-term prominence. The valuation-driven investor should be lengthening their time horizon and focusing on the 12–24-month outlook.

Certainty equivalents are likely to retain their popularity. We think this points to a continuing reliance on dividends and free cash flow. It also points to the emergence of a New Nifty Fifty group of true growth stocks that leads the equity market as investors flock to the companies that can deliver in a tough environment.

It's a changed world, but one still full of opportunities for finding new bubbles. The most successful investors will be those who go against the risk-control crowd at the right times, in my view, as the money-making potential could be higher today for the brave and the good than the returns achieved over the last ten years.

Richard Davidson
Strategist

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ANNALS OF NATIONAL SECURITY

SELECTIVE INTELLIGENCE

Donald Rumsfeld has his own special sources. Are they reliable?

BY SEYMOUR M. HERSH

They call themselves, self-mockingly, the Cabal—a small cluster of policy advisers and analysts now based in the Pentagon's Office of Special Plans. In the past year, according to former and present Bush Administration officials, their operation, which was conceived by Paul Wolfowitz, the Deputy Secretary of Defense, has brought about a crucial change of direction in the American intelligence community. These advisers and analysts, who began their work in the days after September 11, 2001, have produced a skein of intelligence reviews that have helped to shape public opinion and American policy toward Iraq. They relied on data gathered by other intelligence agencies and also on information provided by the Iraqi National Congress, or I.N.C., the exile group headed by Ahmad Chalabi. By last fall, the operation rivalled both the C.I.A. and the Pentagon's own Defense Intelligence Agency, the D.I.A., as President Bush's main source of intelligence regarding Iraq's possible possession of weapons of mass destruction and connection with Al Qaeda. As of last week, no such weapons had been found. And although many people, within the Administration and outside it, profess confidence that something will turn up, the integrity of much of that intelligence is now in question.

The director of the Special Plans operation is Abram Shulsky, a scholarly expert in the works of the political philosopher Leo Strauss. Shulsky has been quietly working on intelligence and foreign-policy issues for three decades; he was on the staff of the Senate Intelligence Committee in the early nineteen-eighties and served in the Pentagon under Assistant Secretary of Defense Richard Perle during the Reagan Administration, after which he joined the Rand Corporation. The Office of Special Plans is overseen by Under-Secretary of Defense William Luti, a retired Navy captain. Luti was an early advocate of military action against Iraq, and, as the Administration moved toward war and policymaking power shifted toward the civilians in the Pentagon, he took on increasingly important responsibilities.

W. Patrick Lang, the former chief of Middle East intelligence at the D.I.A., said, "The Pentagon has banded together to dominate the government's foreign policy, and they've pulled it off. They're running Chalabi. The D.I.A. has been intimidated and beaten to a pulp. And there's no guts at all in the C.I.A."

The hostility goes both ways. A Pentagon official who works for Luti told me, "I did a job when the intelligence community wasn't doing theirs. We recognized the fact that they hadn't done the analysis. We were providing information to Wolfowitz that he hadn't seen before. The intelligence community is still looking for a mission like they had in the Cold War, when they spoon-fed the policymakers."

A Pentagon adviser who has worked with Special Plans dismissed any criticism of the operation as little more than bureaucratic whining. "Shulsky and Luti won the policy debate," the adviser said. "They beat 'em—they cleaned up against State and the C.I.A. There's no mystery why they won—because they were more effective in making their argument. Luti is smarter than the opposition. Wolfowitz is smarter. They out-argued them. It was a fair fight. They persuaded the President of the need to make a new security policy. Those who lose are so good at trying to undercut those who won." He added, "I'd love to be the historian who writes the story of how this small group of eight or nine people made the case and won."

According to the Pentagon adviser, Special Plans was created in order to find evidence of what Wolfowitz and his boss, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, believed to be true—that Saddam Hussein had close ties to Al Qaeda, and that Iraq had an enormous arsenal of

chemical, biological, and possibly even nuclear weapons that threatened the region and, potentially, the United States.

Iraq's possible possession of weapons of mass destruction had been a matter of concern to the international community since before the first Gulf War. Saddam Hussein had used chemical weapons in the past. At some point, he assembled thousands of chemical warheads, along with biological weapons, and made a serious attempt to build a nuclear-weapons program. What has been in dispute is how much of that capacity, if any, survived the 1991 war and the years of United Nations inspections, no-fly zones, and sanctions that followed. In addition, since September 11th there have been recurring questions about Iraq's ties to terrorists. A February poll showed that seventy-two per cent of Americans believed it was likely that Saddam Hussein was personally involved in the September 11th attacks, although no definitive evidence of such a connection has been presented.

Rumsfeld and his colleagues believed that the C.I.A. was unable to perceive the reality of the situation in Iraq. "The agency was out to *disprove* linkage between Iraq and terrorism," the Pentagon adviser told me. "That's what drove them. If you've ever worked with intelligence data, you can see the ingrained views at C.I.A. that color the way it sees data." The goal of Special Plans, he said, was "to put the data under the microscope to reveal what the intelligence community can't see. Shulsky's carrying the heaviest part."

Even before September 11th, Richard Perle, who was then the chairman of the Pentagon's Defense Policy Board, was making a similar argument about the intelligence community's knowledge of Iraq's weapons. At a Senate Foreign Relations subcommittee hearing in March, 2001, he said, "Does Saddam now have weapons of mass destruction? Sure he does. We know he has chemical weapons. We know he has biological weapons. . . . How far he's gone on the nuclear-weapons side I don't think we really know. My guess is it's further than we think. It's always further than we think, because we limit ourselves, as we think about this, to what we're able to prove and demonstrate. . . . And, unless you believe that we have uncovered everything, you have to assume there is more than we're able to report."

Last October, an article in the *Times* reported that Rumsfeld had ordered up an intelligence operation "to search for information on Iraq's hostile intentions or links to terrorists" that might have been overlooked by the C.I.A. When Rumsfeld was asked about the story at a Pentagon briefing, he was initially vague. "I'm told that after September 11th a small group, I think two to start with, and maybe four now . . . were asked to begin poring over this mountain of information that we were receiving on intelligence-type things." He went on to say, "You don't know what you don't know. So in comes the daily briefer"—from the C.I.A.—"and she walks through the daily brief. And I ask questions. 'Gee, what about this?' or 'What about that? Has somebody thought of this?' " At the same briefing, Rumsfeld said that he had already been informed that there was "solid evidence of the presence in Iraq of Al Qaeda members."

If Special Plans was going to search for new intelligence on Iraq, the most obvious source was defectors with first-hand knowledge. The office inevitably turned to Ahmad Chalabi's Iraqi National Congress. The I.N.C., an umbrella organization for diverse groups opposed to Saddam, is constantly seeking out Iraqi defectors. The Special Plans Office developed a close working relationship with the I.N.C., and this strengthened its position in disputes with the C.I.A. and gave the Pentagon's pro-war leadership added leverage in its constant disputes with the State Department. Special Plans also became a conduit for intelligence reports from the I.N.C. to officials in the White House.

There was a close personal bond, too, between Chalabi and Wolfowitz and Perle, dating back many years. Their relationship deepened after the Bush Administration took office, and Chalabi's ties extended to others in the Administration, including Rumsfeld; Douglas Feith, the Under-Secretary of Defense for Policy; and I. Lewis Libby, Vice-President Dick Cheney's chief of staff. For years, Chalabi has had the support of prominent members of the American Enterprise Institute and other conservatives. Chalabi had some Democratic supporters, too, including James Woolsey, the former head of the C.I.A.

There was another level to Chalabi's relationship with the United States: in the mid-nineteen-nineties, the C.I.A. was secretly funnelling millions of dollars annually to the I.N.C. Those payments ended around 1996, a former C.I.A. Middle East station chief told me, es-

"They beat 'em—they cleaned up against State and the C.I.A.," an adviser to the Pentagon's new intelligence operation said.

GUY BILLOUT

sentially because the agency had doubts about Chalabi's integrity. (In 1992, Chalabi was convicted in absentia of bank fraud in Jordan. He has always denied any wrongdoing.) "You had to treat them with suspicion," another former Middle East station chief said of Chalabi's people. "The I.N.C. has a track record of manipulating information because it has an agenda. It's a political unit—not an intelligence agency."

In August, 1995, General Hussein Kamel, who was in charge of Iraq's weapons program, defected to Jordan, with his brother, Colonel Saddam Kamel. They brought with them crates of documents containing detailed information about Iraqi efforts to develop weapons of mass destruction—much of which was unknown to the U.N. inspection teams that had been on the job since 1991—and were interviewed at length by the U.N. inspectors. In 1996, Saddam Hussein lured the brothers back with a promise of forgiveness, and then had them killed. The Kamels' information became a major element in the Bush Administration's campaign to convince the public of the failure of the U.N. inspections.

Last October, in a speech in Cincinnati, the President cited the Kamel defections as the moment when Saddam's regime "was forced to admit that it had produced more than thirty thousand liters of anthrax and other deadly biological agents. . . . This is a massive stockpile of biological weapons that has never been accounted for, and is capable of killing millions." A couple of weeks earlier, Vice-President Cheney had declared that Hussein Kamel's story "should serve as a reminder to all that we often learned more as the result of defections than we learned from the inspection regime itself."

The full record of Hussein Kamel's interview with the inspectors reveals, however, that he also said that Iraq's stockpile of chemical and biological warheads, which were manufactured before the 1991 Gulf War, had been destroyed, in many cases in response to ongoing inspections. The interview, on August 22, 1995,was conducted by Rolf Ekeus, then the executive chairman of the U.N. inspection teams, and two of his senior associates—Nikita Smidovich and Maurizio Zifferaro. "You have an important role in Iraq," Kamel said, according to the record, which was assembled from notes taken by Smidovich. "You should not underestimate yourself. You are very effective in Iraq." When Smidovich noted that the U.N. teams had not found "any traces of destruction," Kamel responded, "Yes, it was done before you came in." He also said that Iraq had destroyed its arsenal of warheads. "We gave instructions not to produce chemical weapons," Kamel explained later in the debriefing. "I don't remember resumption of chemical-weapons production before the Gulf War. Maybe it was only minimal production and filling. . . . All chemical weapons were destroyed. I ordered destruction of all chemical weapons. All weapons—biological, chemical, missile, nuclear—were destroyed."

Kamel also cast doubt on the testimony of Dr. Khidhir Hamza, an Iraqi nuclear scientist who defected in 1994. Hamza settled in the United States with the help of the I.N.C. and has been a highly vocal witness concerning Iraq's alleged nuclear ambitions. Kamel told the U.N. interviewers, however, that Hamza was "a professional liar." He went on, "He worked with us, but he was useless and always looking for promotions. He consulted with me but could not deliver anything. . . . He was even interrogated by a team before he left and was allowed to go."

After his defection, Hamza became a senior fellow at the Institute for Science and International Security, a Washington disarmament group, whose president, David Albright, was a former U.N. weapons inspector. In 1998, Albright told me, he and Hamza sent publishers a proposal for a book tentatively entitled "Fizzle: Iraq and the Atomic Bomb," which described how Iraq had failed in its quest for a nuclear device. There were no takers, Albright said, and Hamza eventually "started exaggerating his experiences in Iraq." The two men broke off contact. In 2000,

"When it's eternity here, it's still early morning on the West Coast."

Hamza published "Saddam's Bomb-maker," a vivid account claiming that by 1991, when the Gulf War began, Iraq was far closer than had been known to the production of a nuclear weapon. Jeff Stein, a Washington journalist who collaborated on the book, told me that Hamza's account was "absolutely on the level, allowing for the fact that any memoir puts the author at the center of events, and therefore there is some exaggeration." James Woolsey, the former head of the C.I.A., said of Hamza, "I think highly of him and I have no reason to disbelieve the claims that he's made." Hamza could not be reached for comment. On April 26th, according to the *Times*, he returned to Iraq as a member of a group of exiles designated by the Pentagon to help rebuild the country's infrastructure. He is to be responsible for atomic energy.

"Here's another one about Teddy bears."

• •

The advantages and disadvantages of relying on defectors has been a perennial source of dispute within the American intelligence community—as Shulsky himself noted in a 1991 textbook on intelligence that he co-authored. Despite their importance, he wrote, "it is difficult to be certain that they are genuine. . . . The conflicting information provided by several major Soviet defectors to the United States . . . has never been completely sorted out; it bedeviled U.S. intelligence for a quarter of a century." Defectors can provide unique insight into a repressive system. But such volunteer sources, as Shulsky writes, "may be greedy; they may also be somewhat unbalanced people who wish to bring some excitement into their lives; they may desire to avenge what they see as ill treatment by their government; or they may be subject to blackmail." There is a strong incentive to tell interviewers what they want to hear.

With the Pentagon's support, Chalabi's group worked to put defectors with compelling stories in touch with reporters in the United States and Europe. The resulting articles had dramatic accounts of advances in weapons of mass destruction or told of ties to terrorist groups. In some cases, these stories were disputed in analyses by the C.I.A. Misstatements and inconsistencies in I.N.C. defector accounts were also discovered after the final series of U.N. weapons inspections, which ended a few days before the American assault. Dr. Glen Rangwala, a lecturer in political science at Cambridge University, compiled and examined the information that had been made public and concluded that the U.N. inspections had failed to find evidence to support the defectors' claims.

For example, many newspapers published extensive interviews with Adnan Ihsan Saeed al-Haideri, a civil engineer who, with the I.N.C.'s help, fled Iraq in 2001, and subsequently claimed that he had visited twenty hidden facilities that he believed were built for the production of biological and chemical weapons. One, he said, was underneath a hospital in Baghdad. Haideri was apparently a source for Secretary of State Colin Powell's claim, in his presentation to the United Nations Security Council on February 5th, that the United States had "first-hand descriptions" of mobile factories capable of producing vast quantities of biological weapons. The U.N. teams that returned to Iraq last winter were unable to verify any of al-Haideri's claims. In a statement to the Security Council in March, on the eve of war, Hans Blix, the U.N.'s chief weapons inspector, noted that his teams had physically examined the hospital and other sites with the help of ground-penetrating radar equipment. "No underground facilities for chemical or biological production or storage were found so far," he said.

Almost immediately after September 11th, the I.N.C. began to publicize the stories of defectors who claimed that they had information connecting Iraq to the attacks. In an interview on October 14, 2001, conducted jointly by the *Times* and "Frontline," the public-television program, Sabah Khodada, an Iraqi Army captain, said that the September 11th operation "was conducted by people who were trained by Saddam," and that Iraq had a program to instruct terrorists in the art of hijacking. Another defector, who was identified only as a retired lieutenant general in the Iraqi intelligence service, said that in 2000 he witnessed Arab students being given lessons in hijacking on a Boeing 707 parked at an Iraqi training camp near the town of Salman Pak, south of Baghdad.

In separate interviews with me, however, a former C.I.A. station chief and a former military intelligence analyst said that the camp near Salman Pak had been built not for terrorism training but for counter-terrorism training. In the mid-eighties, Islamic terrorists were routinely hijacking aircraft. In 1986, an Iraqi airliner was seized by pro-Iranian extremists and crashed, after a hand grenade was triggered, killing at least sixty-five peo-

ple. (At the time, Iran and Iraq were at war, and America favored Iraq.) Iraq then sought assistance from the West, and got what it wanted from Britain's MI6. The C.I.A. offered similar training in counter-terrorism throughout the Middle East. "We were helping our allies everywhere we had a liaison," the former station chief told me. Inspectors recalled seeing the body of an airplane—which appeared to be used for counter-terrorism training—when they visited a biological-weapons facility near Salman Pak in 1991, ten years before September 11th. It is, of course, possible for such a camp to be converted from one purpose to another. The former C.I.A. official noted, however, that terrorists would not practice on airplanes in the open. "That's Hollywood rinky-dink stuff," the former agent said. "They train in basements. You don't need a real airplane to practice hijacking. The 9/11 terrorists went to gyms. But to take one back you have to practice on the real thing."

Salman Pak was overrun by American troops on April 6th. Apparently, neither the camp nor the former biological facility has yielded evidence to substantiate the claims made before the war.

A former Bush Administration intelligence official recalled a case in which Chalabi's group, working with the Pentagon, produced a defector from Iraq who was interviewed overseas by an agent from the D.I.A. The agent relied on an interpreter supplied by Chalabi's people. Last summer, the D.I.A. report, which was classified, was leaked. In a detailed account, the London *Times* described how the defector had trained with Al Qaeda terrorists in the late nineteen-nineties at secret camps in Iraq, how the Iraqis received instructions in the use of chemical and biological weapons, and how the defector was given a new identity and relocated. A month later, however, a team of C.I.A. agents went to interview the man with their own interpreter. "He says, 'No, that's not what I said,' " the former intelligence official told me. "He said, 'I worked at a fedayeen camp; it wasn't Al Qaeda.' He never saw any chemical or biological training." Afterward, the former official said, "the C.I.A. sent out a piece of paper saying that this information was incorrect. They put it in writing." But the C.I.A. rebuttal, like the original report, was classified. "I remember wondering whether this one would leak and correct the earlier, invalid leak. Of course, it didn't."

The former intelligence official went on, "One of the reasons I left was my sense that they were using the intelligence from the C.I.A. and other agencies only when it fit their agenda. They didn't like the intelligence they were getting, and so they brought in people to write the stuff. They were so crazed and so far out and so difficult to reason with—to the point of being bizarre. Dogmatic, as if they were on a mission from God." He added, "If it doesn't fit their theory, they don't want to accept it."

Shulsky's work has deep theoretical underpinnings. In his academic and think-tank writings, Shulsky, the son of a newspaperman—his father, Sam, wrote a nationally syndicated business column—has long been a critic of the American intelligence community. During the Cold War, his area of expertise was Soviet disinformation techniques. Like Wolfowitz, he was a student of Leo Strauss's, at the University of Chicago. Both men received their doctorates under Strauss in 1972. Strauss, a refugee from Nazi Germany who arrived in the United States in 1937, was trained in the history of political philosophy, and became one of the foremost conservative émigré scholars. He was widely known for his argument that the works of ancient philosophers contain deliberately concealed esoteric meanings whose truths can be comprehended only by a very few, and would be misunderstood by the masses. The Straussian movement has many adherents in and around the Bush Administration. In addition to Wolfowitz, they include William Kristol, the editor of the *Weekly Standard*, and Stephen Cambone, the Under-Secretary of Defense for Intelligence, who is particularly close to Rumsfeld. Strauss's influence on foreign-policy decision-making (he never wrote explicitly about the subject himself) is usually discussed in terms of his tendency to view the world as a place where isolated liberal democracies live in constant danger from hostile elements abroad, and face threats that must be confronted vigorously and with strong leadership.

How Strauss's views might be applied to the intelligence-gathering process is less immediately obvious. As it happens, Shulsky himself explored that question in a 1999 essay, written with Gary Schmitt, entitled "Leo Strauss and the World of Intelligence (By Which We Do Not Mean *Nous*)"—in Greek philosophy the term *nous* denotes the highest form of rationality. In the essay, Shulsky and Schmitt write that Strauss's "gentleness, his ability to concentrate on detail, his consequent success in looking below the surface and reading between the lines, and his seeming unworldliness . . . may even be said to resemble, however faintly, the George Smiley of John le Carré's novels." Echoing one of Strauss's major themes, Shulsky and Schmitt criticize America's intelligence community for its failure to appreciate the duplicitous nature of the regimes it deals with, its susceptibility to social-science notions of proof, and its inability to cope with deliberate concealment.

The agency's analysts, Shulsky and Schmitt argue, "were generally reluctant throughout the Cold War to believe that they could be deceived about any critical question by the Soviet Union or other Communist states. History has shown this view to have been extremely naïve." They suggested that political philosophy, with its emphasis on the variety of regimes, could provide an "antidote" to the C.I.A.'s failings, and would help in understanding Islamic leaders, "whose intellectual world was so different from our own."

Strauss's idea of hidden meaning, Shulsky and Schmitt added, "alerts one to the possibility that political life may be closely linked to deception. Indeed, it suggests that deception is the norm in political life, and the hope, to say nothing of the expectation, of establishing a politics that can dispense with it is the exception."

Robert Pippin, the chairman of the Committee on Social Thought at Chicago and a critic of Strauss, told me, "Strauss believed that good statesmen have powers of judgment and must rely on an inner circle. The person who whispers in the ear of the King is more important than the King. If you have that talent, what you do or say in public cannot be held accountable in the same way." Another Strauss critic, Stephen

Brooklyn Bridge, 1921

www.swissre.com

"...and the bridge made music through the shining air."

Thomas Wolfe

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Swiss Re

Holmes, a law professor at New York University, put the Straussians' position this way: "They believe that your enemy is deceiving you, and you have to pretend to agree, but secretly you follow your own views." Holmes added, "The whole story is complicated by Strauss's idea—actually Plato's—that philosophers need to tell noble lies not only to the people at large but also to powerful politicians."

When I asked one of Strauss's staunchest defenders, Joseph Cropsey, professor emeritus of political science at Chicago, about the use of Strauss's views in the area of policymaking, he told me that common sense alone suggested that a certain amount of deception is essential in government. "That people in government have to be discreet in what they say publicly is so obvious—'If I tell you the truth I can't but help the enemy.' " But there is nothing in Strauss's work, he added, that "favors preëmptive action. What it favors is prudence and sound judgment. If you could have got rid of Hitler in the nineteen-thirties, who's not going to be in favor of that? You don't need Strauss to reach that conclusion."

Some former intelligence officials believe that Shulsky and his superiors were captives of their own convictions, and were merely deceiving themselves. Vincent Cannistraro, the former chief of counter-terrorism operations and analysis at the C.I.A., worked with Shulsky at a Washington think tank after his retirement. He said, "Abe is very gentle and slow to anger, with a sense of irony. But his politics were typical for his group—the Straussian view." The group's members, Cannistraro said, "reinforce each other because they're the only friends they have, and they all work together. This has been going on since the nineteen-eighties, but they've never been able to coalesce as they have now. September 11th gave them the opportunity, and now they're in heaven. They believe the intelligence is there. They want to believe it. It *has* to be there."

The rising influence of the Office of Special Plans has been accompanied by a decline in the influence of the C.I.A. and the D.I.A. One internal Pentagon memorandum went so far as to suggest that terrorism experts in the government and outside it had deliberately "downplayed or sought to disprove" the link between Al Qaeda and Iraq. "For many years, there has been a bias in the intelligence community" against defectors, the memorandum said. It urged that two analysts working with Shulsky be given the authority to "investigate linkages to Iraq" by having access to the "proper debriefing of key Iraqi defectors."

A former C.I.A. task-force leader who is a consultant to the Bush Administration said that many analysts in the C.I.A. are convinced that the Chalabi group's defector reports on weapons of mass destruction and Al Qaeda have produced little of value, but said that the agency "is not fighting it." He said that the D.I.A. had studied the information as well. "Even the D.I.A. can't find any value in it." (The Pentagon, asked for comment, denied that there had been disputes between the C.I.A. and Special Plans over the validity of intelligence.)

In interviews, former C.I.A. officers and analysts described the agency as increasingly demoralized. "George knows he's being beaten up," one former officer said of George Tenet, the C.I.A. director. "And his analysts are terrified. George used to protect his people, but he's been forced to do things *their* way." Because the C.I.A.'s analysts are now on the defensive, "they write reports justifying their intelligence rather than saying what's going on. The Defense Department and the Office of the Vice-President write their own pieces, based on their own ideology. We collect so much stuff that you can find anything you want."

"They see themselves as outsiders," a former C.I.A. expert who spent the past decade immersed in Iraqi-exile affairs said of the Special Plans people. He added, "There's a high degree of paranoia. They've convinced themselves that they're on the side of angels, and everybody else in the government is a fool."

"The big news around here is that Ned's gone all digital."

More than a year's worth of increasingly bitter debate over the value and integrity of the Special Plans intelligence came to a halt in March, when President Bush authorized the war against Iraq. After a few weeks of fighting, Saddam Hussein's regime collapsed, leaving American forces to declare victory against a backdrop of disorder and uncertainty about the country's future. Ahmad Chalabi and the I.N.C. continued to provoke fights within the Bush Administration. The Pentagon flew Chalabi and hundreds of his supporters, heavily armed, into Iraq, amid tight security, over angry objections from the State Department. Chalabi is now establishing himself in Baghdad. His advocates in the Pentagon point out that he is not only a Shiite, like the majority of Iraqis, but also, as one scholar put it, "a completely Westernized businessman" (he emigrated to England with his parents in 1958, when he was a boy), which is

one reason the State Department doubts whether he can gain support among Iraqis.

Chalabi is not the only point of contention, however. The failure, as of last week, to find weapons of mass destruction in places where the Pentagon's sources confidently predicted they would be found has reanimated the debate on the quality of the office's intelligence. A former high-level intelligence official told me that American Special Forces units had been sent into Iraq in mid-March, before the start of the air and ground war, to investigate sites suspected of being missile or chemical- and biological-weapon storage depots. "They came up with nothing," the official said. "Never found a single Scud."

Since then, there have been a number of false alarms and a tip that weapons may have been destroyed in the last days before the war, but no solid evidence. On April 22nd, Hans Blix, hours before he asked the U.N. Security Council to send his team back to Iraq, told the BBC, "I think it's been one of the disturbing elements that so much of the intelligence on which the capitals built their case seemed to have been so shaky."

There is little self-doubt or second-guessing in the Pentagon over the failure to immediately find the weapons. The Pentagon adviser to Special Plans told me he believed that the delay "means nothing. We've got to wait to get all the answers from Iraqi scientists who will tell us where they are." Similarly, the Pentagon official who works for Luti said last week, "I think they're hidden in the mountains or transferred to some friendly countries. Saddam had enough time to move them." There were suggestions from the Pentagon that Saddam might be shipping weapons over the border to Syria. "It's bait and switch," the former high-level intelligence official said. "Bait them into Iraq with weapons of mass destruction. And, when they aren't found, there's this whole bullshit about the weapons being in Syria."

In Congress, a senior legislative aide said, "Some members are beginning to ask and to wonder, but cautiously." For now, he told me, "the members don't have the confidence to say that the Administration is off base." He also commented, "For many, it makes little difference. We vanquished a bad guy and liberated the Iraqi people. Some are astute enough to recognize that the alleged imminent W.M.D. threat to the U.S. was a pretext. I sometimes have to pinch myself when friends or family ask with incredulity about the lack of W.M.D., and remind myself that the average person has the idea that there are mountains of the stuff over there, ready to be tripped over. The more time elapses, the more people are going to wonder about this, but I don't think it will sway U.S. public opinion much. Everyone loves to be on the winning side."

Weapons may yet be found. Iraq is a big country, as the Administration has repeatedly pointed out in recent weeks. In a speech last week, President Bush said, "We've begun the search for hidden chemical and biological weapons, and already know of hundreds of sites that will be investigated." Meanwhile, if the American advance hasn't uncovered stashes of weapons of mass destruction, it has turned up additional graphic evidence of the brutality of the regime. But Saddam Hussein's cruelty was documented long before September 11th, and was not the principal reason the Bush Administration gave to the world for the necessity of war.

Former Senator Bob Kerrey, a Democrat who served on the Senate Intelligence Committee, has been a strong supporter of the President's decision to overthrow Saddam. "I do think building a democratic secular state in Iraq justifies everything we've done," Kerrey, who is now president of New School University, in New York, told me. "But they've taken the intelligence on weapons and expanded it beyond what was justified." Speaking of the hawks, he said, "It appeared that they understood that to get the American people on their side they needed to come up with something more to say than 'We've liberated Iraq and got rid of a tyrant.' So they had to find some ties to weapons of mass destruction and were willing to allow a majority of Americans to incorrectly conclude that the invasion of Iraq had something to do with the World Trade Center. Overemphasizing the national-security threat made it more difficult to get the rest of the world on our side. It was the weakest and most misleading argument we could use." Kerrey added, "It appears that they have the intelligence. The problem is, they didn't like the conclusions." ♦

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European cut diamond 2.71 cts (H, SI_1) and pair pear shaped rubies 1.45 cts $22,000

Cushion cut diamond 4.12 cts (F, VS_1) and pair pear shaped diamonds 1.15 cts $65,000

European cut diamond 4.02 cts (H, VS_1) and pair tapered baguette diamonds $48,000

Cushion cut diamond 2.03 cts (I, VS_1) and small diamonds $18,000

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COME BACK, *SUCKERS*!

BY IAN FRAZIER

What we said was true. You have to admit that. You got mad about it, when all we were telling you was the facts. We very much regret that you took what we said in the manner that you did. But let's have a little acceptance of responsibility here—if you invest in a company that goes bust, and you lose your money, whose fault is that? The investor's fault: your fault. The loyal employees of YessCo who put all their money in YessCo stocks, what were they thinking? *Were* they thinking? People like that, of course they're going to get robbed. Did they sniff around, read some interoffice e-mail, ask a few questions about why the bosses were dumping stock? Did they even try to find *out* the bosses were dumping stock? They did not. So they lost everything they had. These folks were not on the ball.

It takes two to make a pump-and-dump stock scheme, don't forget. It takes an ordinary person who wants to get some money and an idiot willing to lose it. Sorry—an *investor*, like yourself. But, hey, when you play, play to win. Find out who's making calls to his broker from his jet, detect by your own native street smarts which financial analyst whose high-paying job it is to tell you the truth is actually lying to you. Measure the stress level in his voice on the telephone with a common device you can buy in any surveillance-equipment store. Use plain old common sense. We don't have to paint you a picture. If you don't keep these people honest, by knowing the same information they know and tracking them every minute, they're going to get away with what they can. They're gonna rip you off, if you let 'em. And . . . what can we say. *You let 'em.* We apologize if this truth is painful for you.

The market's a self-correcting situation, you see, and you're the one who self-corrects it. If you watch these people, then you can invest *smart*. Invest in a company on the basis of what a company says? What dummy would do that? Of course they'll *say* anything.

We're talking about only a few bad apples (as we call them), anyway. No more than five or seven, or maybe three dozen, that flat out want to swindle the dumb clucks who don't happen to live in the Hamptons and go to the same parties they do. At the very most, eighty or maybe a hundred and some, or even a couple-three hundred crooked individuals in all. That's a tiny number when you view it in perspective. Say there's even as many as eight or ten thousand ready to clean you out down to your parking stubs. Still, that leaves—what?—seven *billion* people on the planet? By comparison, we're talking about a very, very small number here. We heard that most of them were seasonal help and temp C.E.O.s who weren't affiliated with us in an official capacity. And you don't have to worry, because they're basically all gone now, owing to the law of supply and demand.

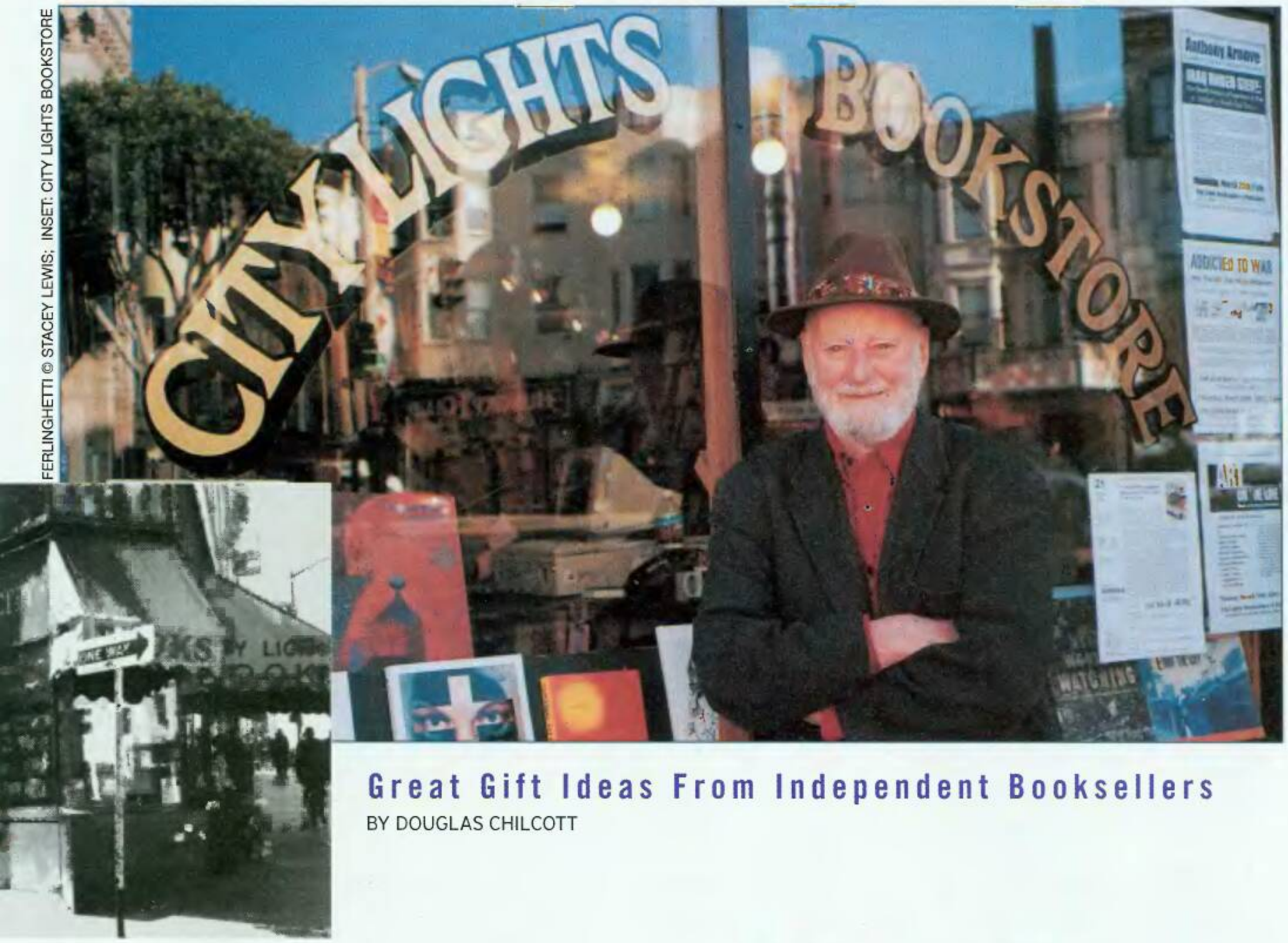
It's the nature of the animal, unfortunately. In any human community, be it a used-car lot or a street gang in L.A. or a Moroccan open-air bazaar, or anywhere, you're going to have some unscrupulous people who abuse the public trust. Always has been, always will be. Investing is a crapshoot. We don't have to tell you that. You accepted those terms from the beginning. With investing, maybe you win or, then again, maybe your 401(k) shrinks down to two weeks' paid vacation before your final trip to Mass. General. We have always been up front with you. At no time did we give you reason to think this arrangement was anything other than what it is. You know the score. We always acted like grownups, you and us.

Right? Or are we wrong? Tell us. It feels like you can't confide in us anymore. There's a . . . remoteness. O.K., you need time to yourself. Regroup, lick your wounds—we can understand that. But don't take it to an extreme. That would be highly irresponsible of you. When you allow yourself to lose confidence in us, you run the risk of destroying everything. If you don't have confidence in us, force yourself to. Work hard on that particular goal. We will help you to attain it. That's what we're trying to do, with all our heart, right now.

Listen, we brought you something. G'head, open it. Ever see one of those before? That's right, it's a dividend. Try it on. Oh, that looks beautiful on you, with the chestnut brown of your portfolio. It brings out the color. You're one of the most beautiful investors in the whole world, no kidding. We know, we haven't been too attentive in the past about the little details, dividends and things, that mean a lot to an investor. We thought you understood how we felt and we didn't need to do all that. Now we see that we do. Too often we omitted those small but important displays, and we learned our lesson. We'll be better about giving you more of those from now on, we promise. Oh, and by the way—they'll all be tax free. Already taken care of. Don't mention it. It's a change that's long overdue.

We feel funny telling you this—we don't even know if we should—but what the heck: the other day, on the street, we were talking to some associates and acquaintances whom we happened to bump into, and suddenly we said we loved you. For real. It just popped out. Everybody standing there listening, big as life, and we don't know what came over us, we blurted out that we loved you. If you don't believe us, ask Eliot Spitzer. He was standing right there.

Do we have to get down on our knees? If that's what it takes, we will. We want you back. We're asking in all sincerity and humility. From the opening bell every morning, you're our whole world. Yes, accounting errors were made. No one disputes that. Life savings were misappropriated, regrettably. It will never, ever happen again, we swear to you. Increased anti-swindling safeguards are in place today because of the respect we have for you. You were hurt, and you had a right to be, but no amount of giving up yesterday's mansions bought with stolen money can ever restore what's gone. A wonderful future lies ahead, and we want you with us as a part of it. We need you to be there, with your boundless abundance and enthusiasm. So pick up the phone. Authorize the wire transfer. There will never be a better time to get back in than now. You know you still care for us. Please place the call. Please. ♦



FERLINGHETTI © STACEY LEWIS; INSET: CITY LIGHTS BOOKSTORE

Great Gift Ideas From Independent Booksellers

BY DOUGLAS CHILCOTT

BOUND TO PLEASE

The sage recommendations of America's independent booksellers can provide hours of entertainment and a welcome respite from daily headlines. From war histories to novels revealing the passions of people from disparate cultures to the analyses of politics and diplomacy, books can provide meaningful insights not always gleaned from today's mass media.

"People are also looking for an escape," says bookseller Tom Campbell of **The Regulator Bookshop** in Durham, North Carolina. "They want to get lost in a book to forget about everything going on." On the other hand, Campbell concedes that the store "can't keep Chris Hedges' 'War is a Force that Gives Us Meaning' in stock." Located just off the Duke University campus, the store's clientele has a liberal bias, though current stock tends to reflect the whole political spectrum. Says Campbell, "We've had people ask us why we were selling titles that differ from the popular political bent of the store. But obviously, there are other viewpoints, and we need to make all of them available."

"There's nothing virtual about this community; it's wonderfully real."

While already established as town centers of intellectual life, independent bookstores now serve as focal points for community colloquy. At San Francisco's **City Lights**, the famed "home away from home" of the fifties Beats (it gave voice to

"A raucous and moving first novel... Vivid."
—Benjamin Swett,
The New York Times Book Review

"Forget Holden Caulfield—here's the real deal on growing up....Not only is *Green Grass Grace* the best book about Philly that I've ever read, it's also one of the best about adolescence."
—Frank Wilson,
The Philadelphia Inquirer

"Hilarious"
—Mark Rozzo,
Los Angeles Times Book Review

"Shawn McBride is a hoot and a half."
—Richard Russo,
Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *Empire Falls*

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Ginsberg and Kerouac, among others), banners outside the bookstore declare its position on the war. City Lights co-founder and Beat poet-laureate Lawrence Ferlinghetti notes, "We've gotten notes thanking us and saying that they make people feel not so quite alone."

Originally conceived as a literary meeting place, the landmark bookstore continues to fill a need that Ferlinghetti sees as increasingly important. "These days, any form of community is rare. Most people go home and turn on the TV. At City Lights," he says, "people turn out for readings and to share ideas. There's nothing virtual about this community; it's wonderfully real." This June, City Lights celebrates it fiftieth anniversary. Meanwhile, tomes on politics and the rhetoric of Noam Chomsky can be found in its muckraking section.

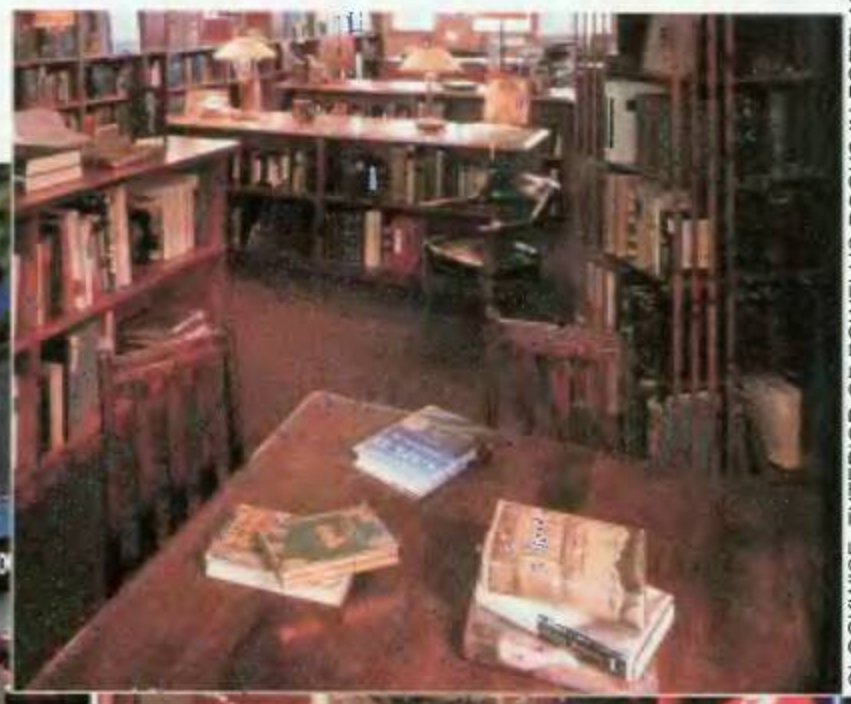
Gathering the authoritative insights of more than a thousand independent booksellers coast to coast, The Book Sense 76 list offers topical and informed recommendations. Some of their selections are presented below.

WORLDLY WISE

This year's graduates confront one of the most challenging economies in years as well as the attendant difficulties of a nation at war. Often written off as mere entertainment, literature can be a force of incandescent power not only for Americans but for those blanketed by oppression.

Azar Nafisi's "Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books" (Random House) demonstrates how this power was wielded in post-revolutionary Iran. For two years starting in 1995, Nafisi invited seven young women in Tehran to gather at her home every week to discuss forbidden works of Western literature. Unaccustomed to sharing their thoughts and opinions, the young women discovered that such classics as "Pride and Prejudice," "Lolita," and "Washington Square" opened their minds and challenged them to explore their own dreams and disappointments. Notes Lynn

"Literature can be a force of incandescent power not only for Americans but for cultures blanketed by oppression."

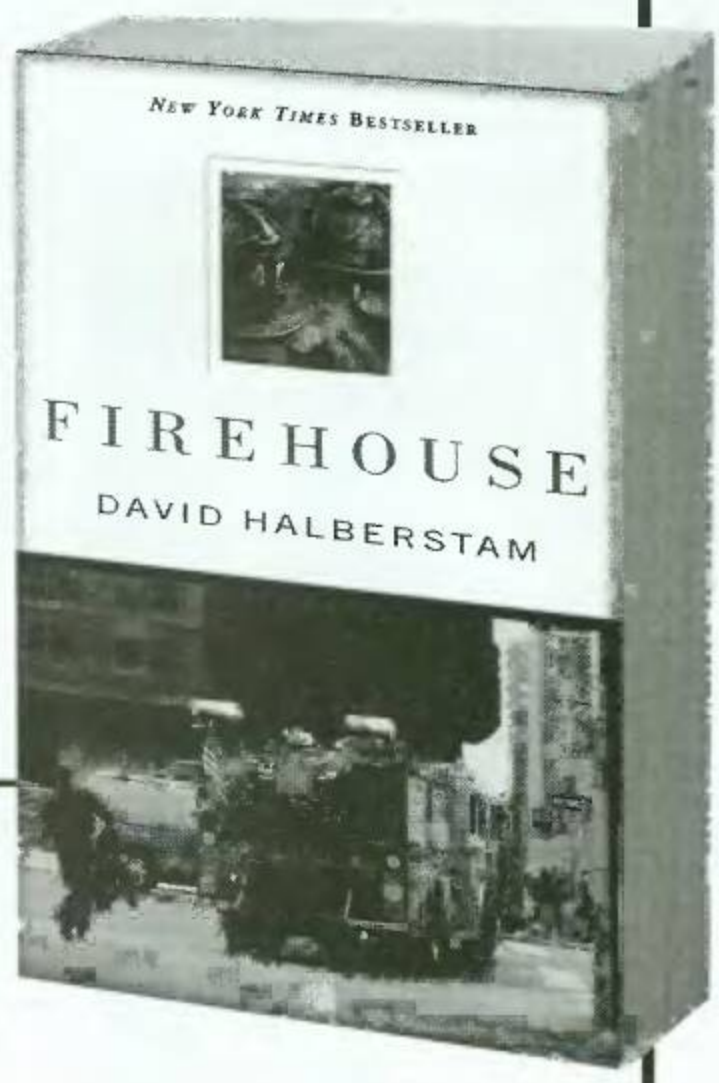


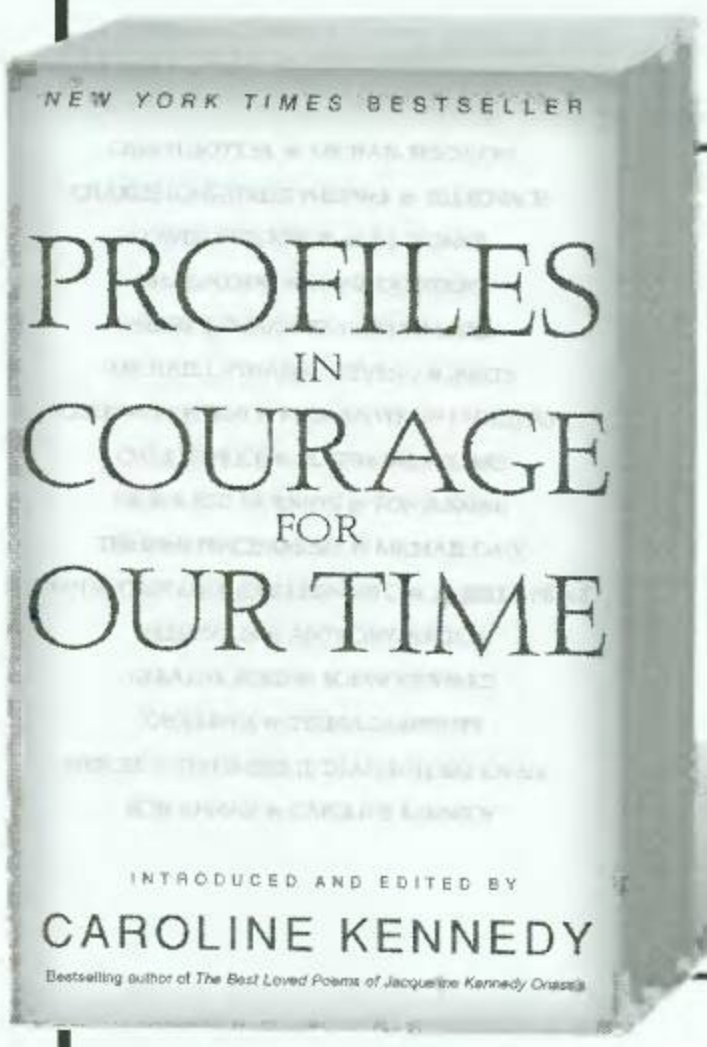
CLOCKWISE: EXTERIOR OF POWELL'S BOOKS IN PORTLAND; POWELL'S RARE BOOK ROOM; DIESEL'S IN OAKLAND

HEROES

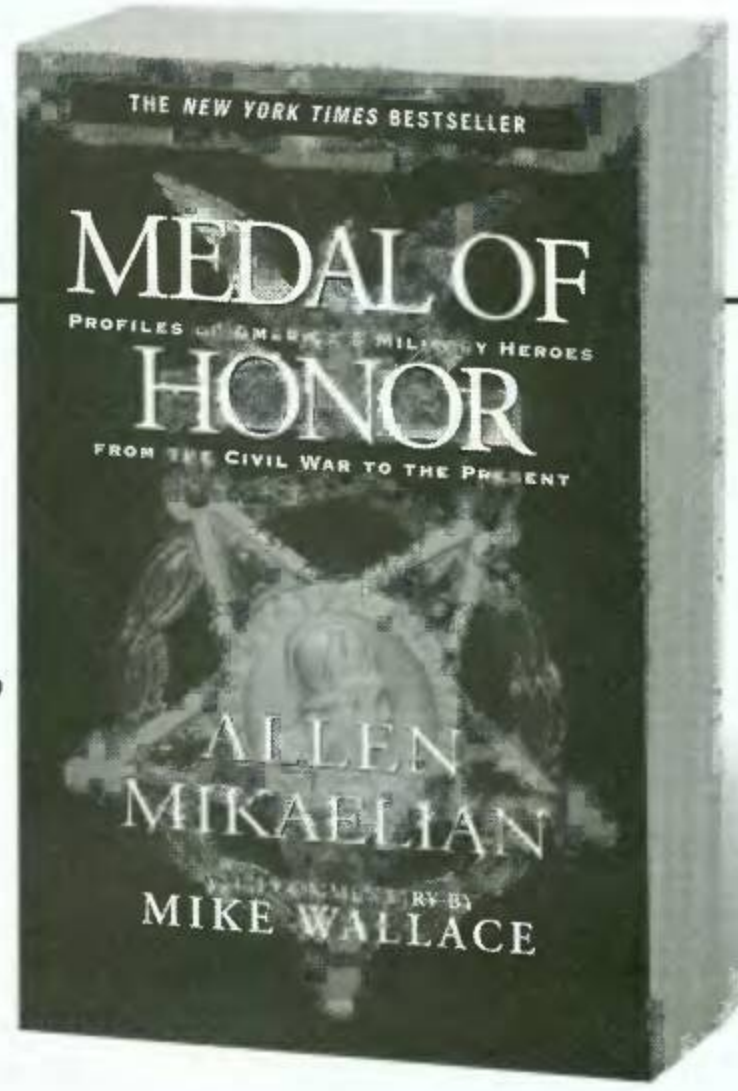
NOW IN PAPERBACK

"Firemen do what they do because they love doing it....
The contrast between their world and some of the other, more ego-driven and materialistic worlds that I have covered in recent years is striking."
—DAVID HALBERSTAM





"I hope that the stories here will inspire another generation to believe in **the power of words**, the importance of public service, and the necessity of political courage."
—CAROLINE KENNEDY



"Their personal courage helped make history."
—MIKE WALLACE

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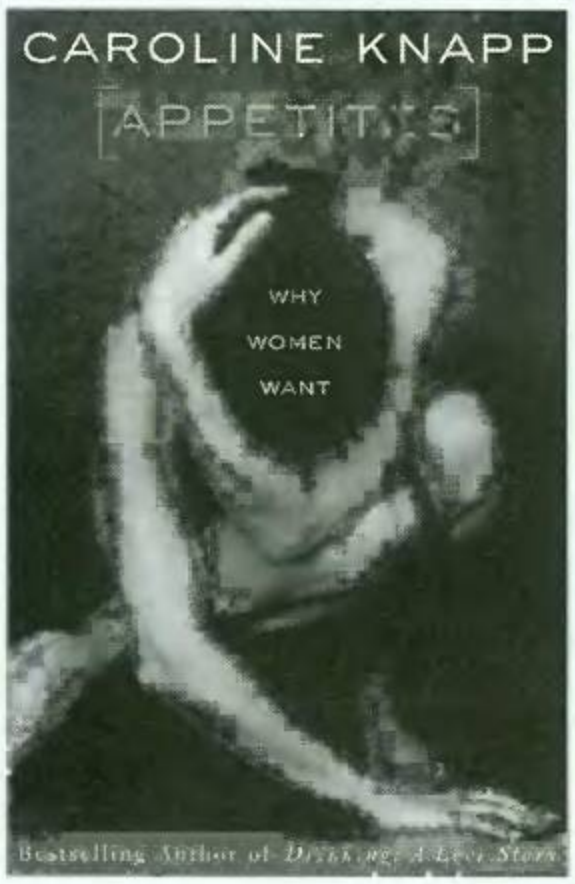

BOOKSELLERS PRAISE APPETITES

"A rally call for women to question our society's ambiguous divisions between satisfaction and excess, guilt and gratification."—TARA MATHISON
CANTERBURY BOOKSELLERS • MADISON, WI

"A meaty read about what feeds (or starves) women's spirits."
—ANNE LENERS
LEFT BANK BOOKS • ST LOUIS, MO

"Knapp takes her bitingly personal story of wrestling with the nature of desire and denial and extends it to examine the role they play in all women's lives. A book to read with friends—not a diatribe, yet incendiary." —JEAN WESTCOTT
OLSSON'S BOOKS & RECORDS
WASHINGTON, DC

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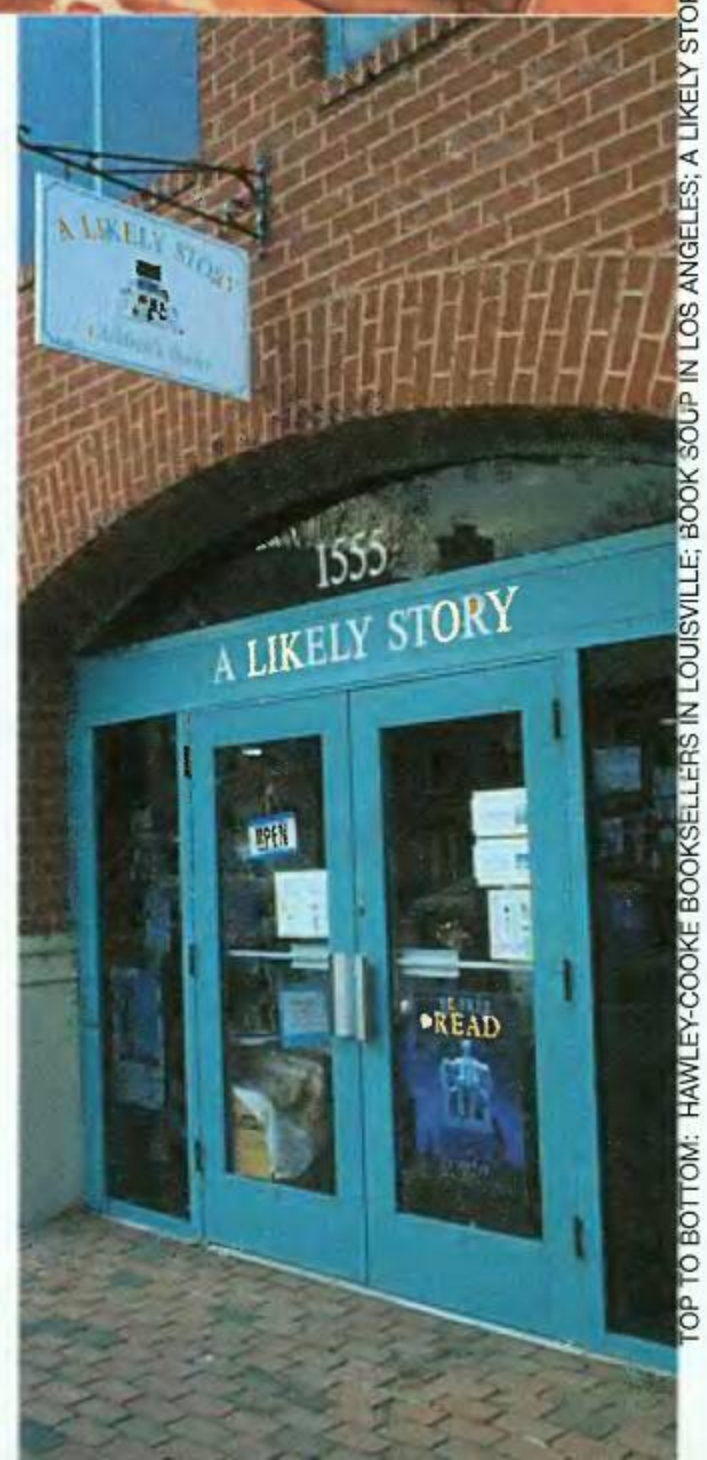
Farquhar of Denver's **Tattered Cover Book Store**, "This memoir is chock full of insights into the lives of women in Iran, and it provides an astute literary commentary on Nabokov, Fitzgerald, and others."

The spirit of Erich Maria Remarque's battlefield classic "All Quiet on the Western Front," Stephen Crane's "Red Badge of Courage" and Michael Herr's "Dispatches" is reflected in Anthony Swofford's "Jarhead: A Marine's Chronicle of the Gulf War and Other Battles" (Scribner). Depicting the searing realities

of modern-day warfare, "Jarhead" (slang for the austere haircuts given to Marine "grunts"), the book "bluntly describes the pride, stupidity, bravery, fear, and waste of war," writes Will Peters of **Annie Bloom's Books** in Portland, Oregon. "It's a powerful and unsettling book, and Swofford writes with honesty and courage."

Offering a reassuring look at life off campus, "The Dirty Girls Social Club" by Alisa Valdés-Rodriquéz (St. Martin's Press) relates the experiences of six Latina graduates from Boston University who reunite every six months to dish on life and love. Rita Moran of **Apple Valley Books** in Winthrop, Maine, calls it "a spicy *menudo* of Latina life. Readers share the confidences of a group of girlfriends, along with their joys and sorrows."

While they may have immersed themselves in foreign languages and exotic cultures, new college graduates can find themselves out of step with the clan of the "painfully hip"—that most exclusive of peer groups. Rest assured, there's no need to languish in outré ignorance thanks to



TOP TO BOTTOM: HAWLEY-COOKE BOOKSELLERS IN LOUISVILLE; BOOK SOUP IN LOS ANGELES; A LIKELY STORY IN ALEXANDRIA, VA

Robert Lanham's "The Hipster Handbook" (Anchor Books), with art by Bret Nicely and Jeff Bechtel. In the tradition of "The Preppie Handbook," Lanham quantifies the cultural DNA of cool. It's hysterical, according to Hannah Cox, **Diesel, A Bookstore** in Oakland, California, who immediately took the book under her wing. "Before all the hype and all the write-ups—when this book felt like my own secret, hilarious child—I loved it tenderly, for all its irony and all its truth."

especially in Hay-on-Wye, a famous hamlet where fifteen-hundred townspeople can choose from more than forty bookstores. In Paul Collins' "Sixpence House: Lost in a Town of Books" (Bloomsbury), we learn of the adventures that ensue when his family moved from northern California to this rather eccentric village. "Alternately cuddly and curmudgeonly, Collins takes us on a picaresque tour of Hay-on-Wye," says Joe Pilla of **Paperbacks Plus** in the Bronx. According to Pilla, the author's "inspired rants on books, bookselling, writing, and the myriad differences between Britain and America," are invariably entertaining.

"Lanham quantifies the cultural DNA of cool."

Few sagas loom as large in the American historical canon as that of the Lewis and Clark expedition to the Pacific. Howard Frank Mosher's "The True Account: A Novel of the Lewis & Clark & Kinneson Expeditions" (Houghton Mifflin)

MAJOR INFLUENCES

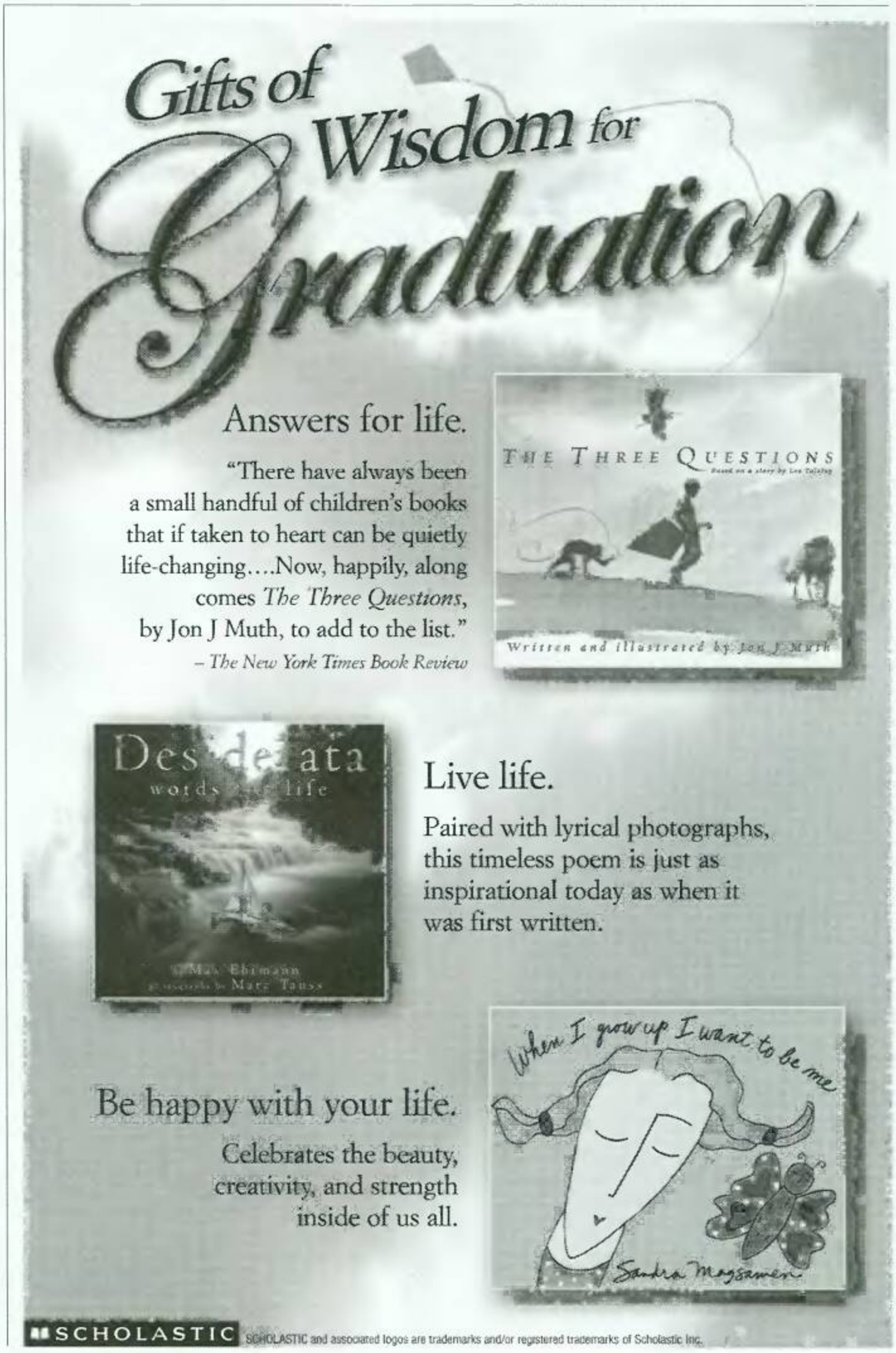
Mother's Day throws into relief the impact that a certain special someone has had on our lives. Two new books about formidable women are sure to capture the imaginations of mothers everywhere.

Winner of the 2002 Pulitzer Prize for her play "Topdog/Underdog," Suzan-Lori Parks has now penned her first novel. "Getting Mother's Body" (Random House) chronicles the tale of the Beede family, barely eking out a living in a tumbleweedy Texas town. Salvation appears on the horizon when the family hears that the grave of their no-account matriarch is to be upended to make way for a new supermarket. The twist? A fortune in jewels is believed to be sharing the casket with mom. "The members of the Beede family, living a hardscrabble life in a small Texas town, will sneak into your heart and stay there," promises Susan Wasson of **Bookworks** in Albuquerque.

The inspiration for Puccini's "Madame Butterfly," as well as the celebrated muse of Debussy, Degas, and Rodin, among others, Madame Sadayakko was the most famous geisha in Japan before embarking for Europe and America to pursue a career on the stage. Lesley Downer relates the little-known story of this alluring actress in "Madame Sadayakko: The Geisha Who Bewitched the West" (Gotham Books). Ginny Coulter, of **Humpus Bumpus Books**, in Cumming, Georgia comments, "What a fascinating woman! Why has she never been named when the roll of great actresses is called?"

TALL TALES

Scotland may beckon fathers with its ancient-golf lore, but nearby Wales boasts some of the most colorful literary exploits,



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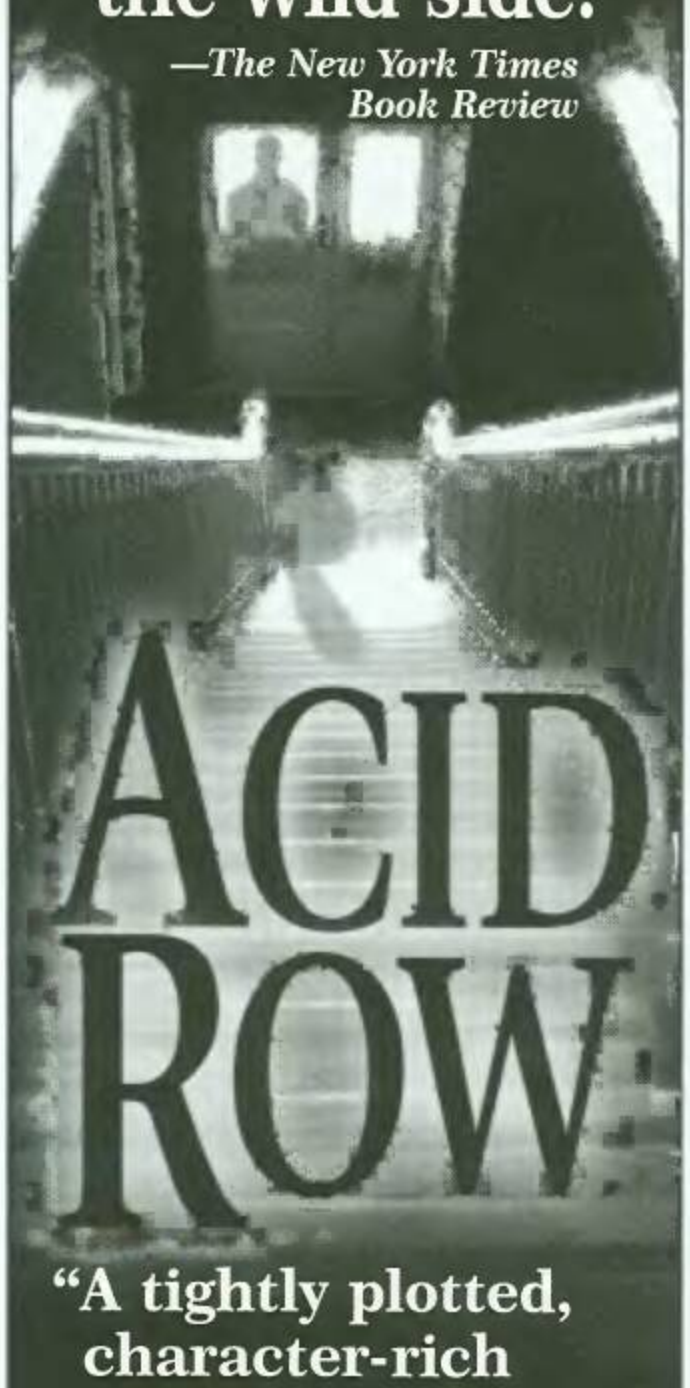
—*The New York Times Book Review*



"A tightly plotted, character-rich thriller."
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"Explosive."
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"Frightening."
—*Publishers Weekly*
"Powerful." —*Booklist*

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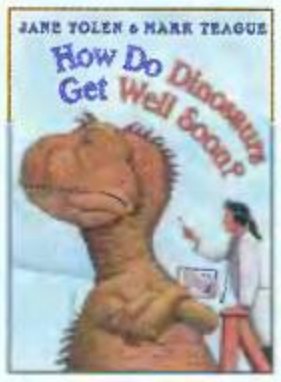


• Time spent with a child and a magical picture book can rout the blues and make any day a special one. In Jane Yolen and Mark Teague's "How Do Dinosaurs Get Well Soon?" (Blue Sky Press), a trip to the doctor's office features gargantuan sneezes, a conciliatory styracosaurus, and plenty of mischief.

• When school's out, engaging book selections will keep youngsters reading all summer long. In S.F. Said's fantasy novel, "Varjak Paw" (Dave Fickling Books), with illustrations by Dave McKean, a young Mesopotamian Blue kitten confronts the dangerous world outside its home after mastering a secret feline martial art.

• In award-winning author Alice Hoffman's haunting new young adult novel, "Green Angel" (Scholastic Press), a fifteen-year-old girl who has lost her family in a tragedy struggles to survive both physically and emotionally. In a ravaged landscape, isolated and alone, she finds solace in her ruined garden.

• The glamorous life of Grace Kelly seemed to embody the ultimate Cinderella story. The reality of Monaco and its royalty proved otherwise, judging from "Once Upon a Time: Behind the Fairy Tale of Princess Grace and Prince Rainier" by J. Randy Taraborrelli (Warner Books).

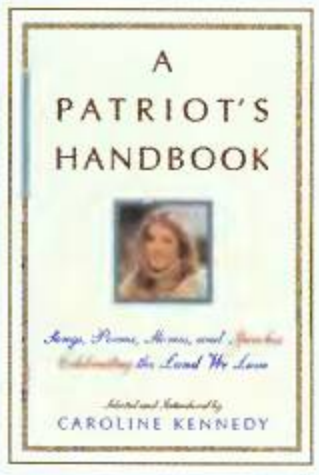
• The Dust Bowl during the Great Depression is the setting of Barbara Wright's "Plain Language" (Touchstone). The book chronicles the life of a newly married couple (a thirty-three-year-old Quaker woman with a spouse ten years her senior) and their struggle to survive the rugged life of a Colorado ranch.

• Written with the probing and often bemused eye of a Soviet émigré in the nineteen-nineties, "The Russian Debutante's Handbook" by Gary Shteyngart (Riverhead Books) captures all the quirks and absurdities of post-cold war America.

• The random violence of teens sparks new rounds in the nature-versus-nurture debate. In Lionel Shriver's novel, "We Need to Talk About Kevin" (Counterpoint), the mother of a troubled teen who has been convicted of gunning down nine people in his school struggles to discover the source of her son's murderous rage.

• In "Playing Partners: A Father, A Son, and Their Shared Addiction to Golf" (Warner Books), George Peper proves that, instead of pubescent-driven discord, a strong bond between parent and child can be par for the course. Peper, the editor in chief of *Golf* magazine, examines the powerful friendship he developed with his teenage son on the links.

• On the field, Ted Williams, Bobby Doerr, Dom DiMaggio, and Johnny Pesky wrote history for the Boston Red Sox. In "The Teammates: A Portrait of Friendship" (Hyperion), David Halberstam relates how these legendary figures also forged bonds that would hold fast for more than six decades.



• Caroline Kennedy has compiled a perfect companion for anyone wishing to reflect on the complex collage that is our national persona. "A Patriot's Handbook: Songs, Poems, Stories, and Speeches Celebrating the Land We Love" (Hyperion) features everything from Washington's farewell and Robert Frost's poems (so beloved by JFK) to Joni Mitchell's "Big Yellow Taxi" and Lillian Hellman's "Scoundrel Time."

stands out as one of the tallest tales of recent history. Mosher portrays the quixotic adventurer, True Teague Kinneson, and his epic race to beat Lewis and Clark to the Pacific. "Full of flamboyant characters and outrageous deeds, 'True Account' honors Cervantes and Twain in spirit and style," notes Jean Matthews of **Chapter One Book Store** in Hamilton, Montana. "It's humorous, heroic, and expansive of horizon and heart."

THE MYSTERIES OF IT ALL

The gift of a great mystery novel is like a present the keeps unwrapping itself as the plot unfolds. A new noirish gumshoe caper and an inspiring medical adventure may seem worlds apart, but they share the beloved characteristics of action, suspense, and impenetrable mystery.

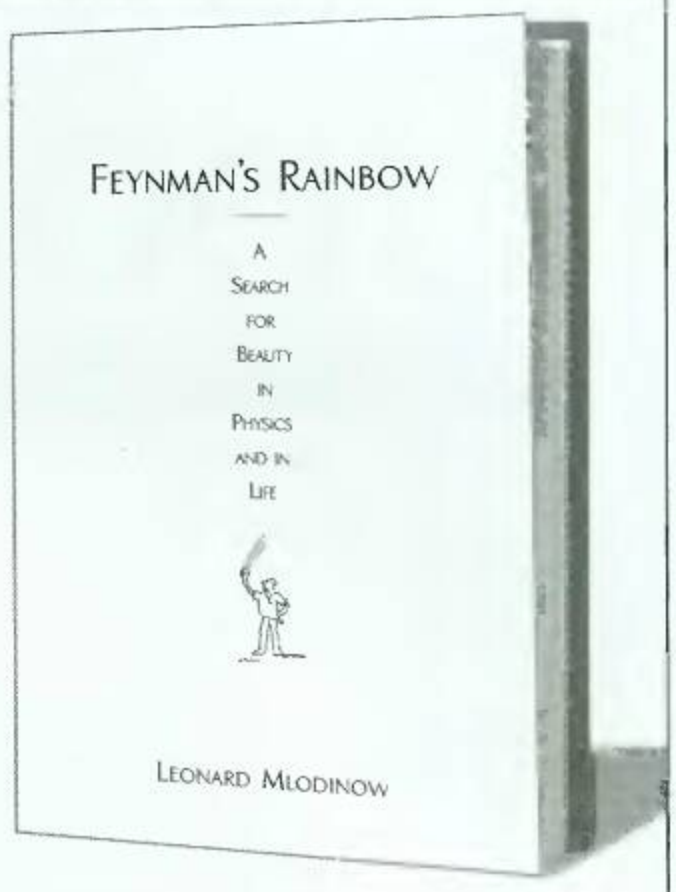
In James Swain's "Sucker Bet" (Ballantine Books), a hardened ex-cop makes a good living busting card hustlers for casinos. Life gets particularly interesting when he gets mixed up in nasty case of a crooked dealer gone missing. "Read this in one sitting!" says Megan Scott O'Bryan at **Scott's Bookstore**, in Mt. Vernon, Washington. "When he's hired by a casino in Florida with a problem at its blackjack tables, Tony Valentine finds the case exploding around him. Dealers end up dead; gators (live) are stuffed in his car; and a ukelele-playing primate with a really bad temper keep Tony on his toes. Even if you don't gamble, you'll appreciate learning the inside scoop on casinos," says O'Bryan.

In Michael Byers' "Long for This World" (Houghton Mifflin), writes Stan Hynds of **Northshire Bookstore** in Manchester Center, Vermont, "What could have been a serviceable medical thriller becomes, in this talented writer's hands, a moving elegy to family and humanity." Byers' first novel tells the suspenseful story of a geneticist who specializes in a congenital disease that causes children to age drastically while still young. Says Hynds, "Byers takes a rare and heartbreaking childhood disease and shows us how life is both fragile and brimming with promise."

For more information on the Book Sense 76 list, visit www.BookSense.com.

Mentor.
Physicist.
Party Crasher.
Richard Feynman
and the unified theory of everything.

In this funny, inspiring homage to his mentor, physicist Richard Feynman, the author looks back at the time they shared, the views exchanged, and the life lessons learned from one of the most brilliant thinkers of our time.



"An accessible portrait of a brilliant man." —Stephen Hawking, author of *The Theory of Everything* and *A Brief History of Time*

"A rare glimpse into a fascinating world." —Fritjof Capra, author of *The Tao of Physics*

"An exhilarating book...one that reflects the radiance of its subject and so warms even as it instructs." —David Berlinski, author of *A Tour of the Calculus*

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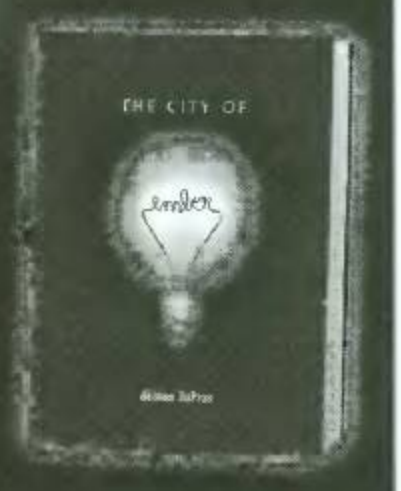

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Book Sense 76

INDEPENDENT BOOKSELLER RECOMMENDATIONS

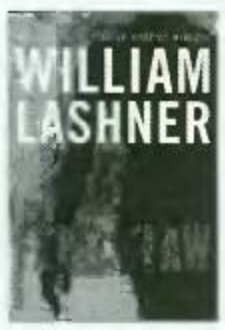
The Top Ten recommendations from the May/June Book Sense 76, as voted by independent booksellers

1. SIXPENCE HOUSE: *Lost in a Town of Books*, by Paul Collins (Bloomsbury, $23.95, 1582342849) "Alternately cuddly and curmudgeonly, Collins takes us on a picaresque tour of Hay-on-Wye, the celebrated Welsh 'Town of Books.' He indulges in discourses and inspired rants on books, bookselling, writing, and the differences between Britain and America."—**Joe Pilla, Paperbacks Plus, Bronx, NY**

2. A KISS FROM MADDALENA: *A Novel*, by Christopher Castellani (Algonquin Books, $23.95, 1565123891) "A touching story of love and war. Castellani's description of the small Italian towns makes me want to go there. He brings the reader into the lives of those trying to survive the war and shows the hardship of not knowing what was happening to their loved ones."—**Dina Matson, Book Garden, Lake City, MN**

3. GETTING MOTHER'S BODY: *A Novel*, by Suzan-Lori Parks (Random House, $23.95, 1400060222) "*Getting Mother's Body* has at its center the wild and beautiful Willa Mae Beede. The novel is told from the points of view of nearly a dozen characters, each as quirky as you'd want them to be."—**Linda Urban, Vroman's Bookstore, Pasadena, CA**

4. CRESCENT: *A Novel*, by Diana Abu-Jaber (Norton, $24.95, 039305747X) "Combining the mystery and exoticism of *The God of Small Things* with the poetic nuance of Garcia Marquez, *Crescent* is delicately sensuous and gripping from beginning to end. It's a multidimensional love story infused with the aromatic scents of the Middle East. Abu-Jaber's prose is exquisite."—**Steven Fidel, Powell's City of Books, Portland, OR**



5. FATAL FLAW, by William Lashner (Morrow, $24.95, 0060508167) "This book grabs you from the very first page. Suspenseful to the end—a real page-turner! I am recommending this to everyone who enjoys Grisham, Meltzer, or Coben. I know that my customers will enjoy this book as much as I did."—**Lee Musgjerd, Lee's Book Emporium, Glasgow, MT**

6. THE TRUE ACCOUNT: *A Novel of the Lewis & Clark & Kinneson Expeditions*, by Howard Frank Mosher (Houghton, $24, 0618197214) "Mosher's very American tall tale chronicles the quixotic adventurer True Teague Kinneson's epic race to beat Lewis and Clark to the Pacific. *The True Account* is humorous, heroic, and expansive of horizon and heart."—**Jean Matthews, Chapter One Book Store, Hamilton, MT**

7. NO SECOND CHANCE, by Harlan Coben (Dutton, $24.95, 0525947299) "I thought I could read just a chapter or two before bed, but, no, I stayed up all night to finish the book. How does Coben do it? As always, his book is gripping and smart."—**Elizabeth Cook, Emerson and Cook Book Co., Old Saybrook, CT**

8. SIGNAL & NOISE: *A Novel*, by John Griesemer (Picador, $26, 0312300824) "The laying of the transatlantic cable in the 1850s and 1860s provides an interesting story, which is only part of the pleasure of reading this book. Griesemer is a terrific writer."—**Susan Porter, Maine Coast Book Shop, Damariscotta, ME**

9. EAT CAKE: *A Novel*, by Jeanne Ray (Crown, $19.95, 060961004X) "*Eat Cake* presents, with warmth and clarity, a snapshot of you and your neighbors. You will laugh out loud, and you'll pass this book on to everyone you know in this same boat. Comfort food for what ails us!"—**Jenn Fontaine, Book Rack and Children's Pages, Essex Junction, VT**

10. SHUTTER ISLAND: *A Novel*, by Dennis Lehane (William Morrow, $25.95, 0688163173) "It is 1954, and two U.S. marshals are summoned to Ashcliffe Hospital on Shutter Island to track down an escaped patient. A frightening window on the darkness always threatening to seep from the human soul."—**Todd Morgan, DIESEL, A Bookstore, Oakland, CA**

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ANNALS OF GASTRONOMY

DEATH OF A CHEF

The changing landscape of French cooking.

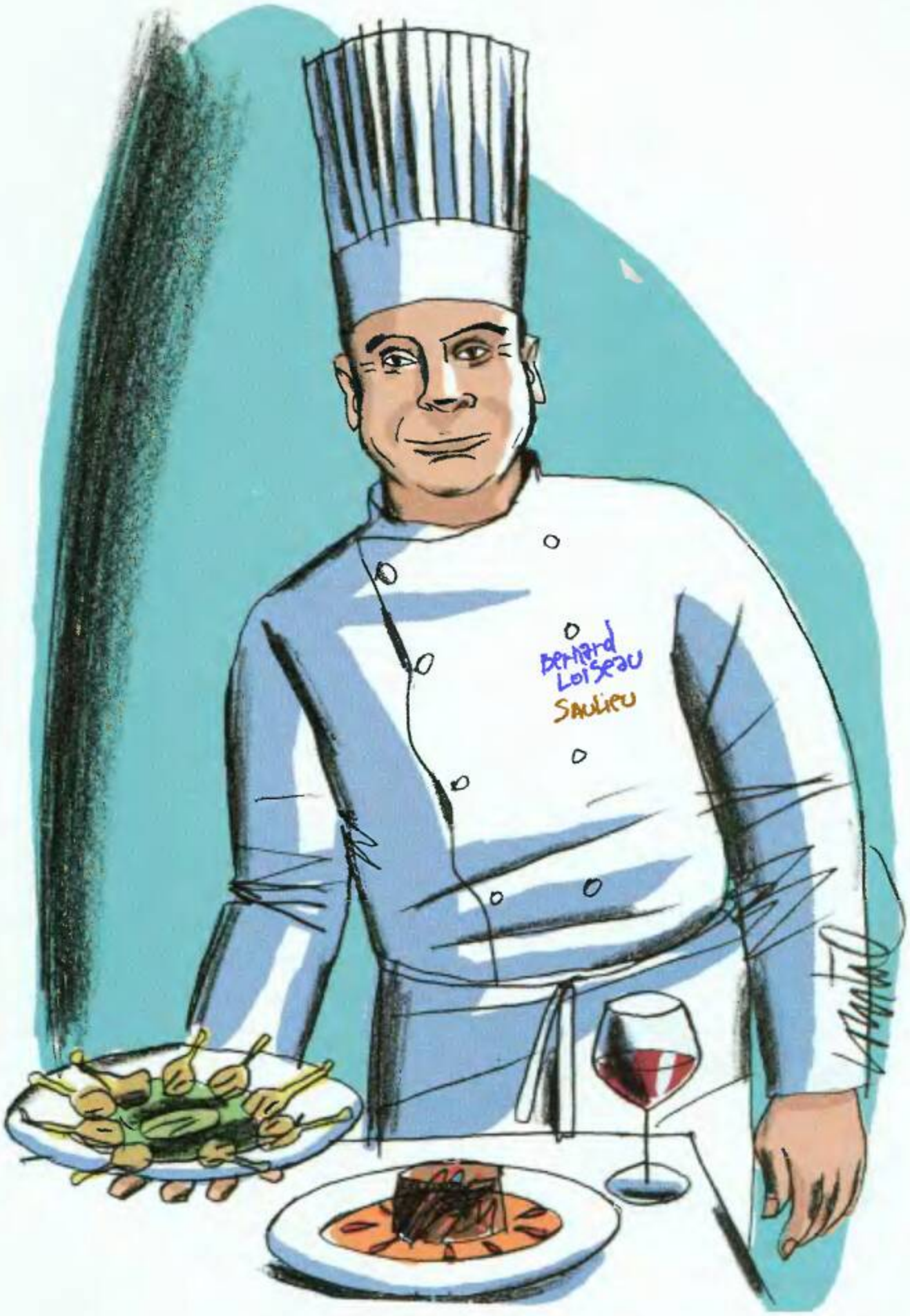
BY WILLIAM ECHIKSON

Poularde Alexandre Dumaine, a two-hundred-and-sixty-seven-dollar chicken offered at La Côte d'Or, Bernard Loiseau's gastronomic temple in Burgundy, is filled with julienned leeks and carrots, lightly basted and seasoned with salt and pepper, and baked in an earthenware pot. Truffles inserted under the skin give the bird an earthy flavor, and the meat is tender and pungent. Early on the afternoon of February 24th, Loiseau watched his team of a dozen chefs prepare the *poularde* for two American chefs who were completing internships in France. After the dish was served, he went home for a siesta. Sometime later that day, he shot himself in the mouth with a hunting rifle. He was fifty-two.

Loiseau was one of only twenty-five French chefs to hold Europe's highest culinary award: three stars in the *Michelin Red Guide*. He often pointed out that, unlike other chefs, he had not inherited his restaurant: he had built a multimillion-dollar culinary empire, Groupe Bernard Loiseau, himself. A poll published a few years ago in *L'Hôtellerie*, a trade magazine, showed that nearly nine out of ten Frenchmen recognized Loiseau by sight, making him the most famous chef in France. He revamped a line of soups for the French division of Unilever, a fifty-billion-dollar corporation, and created twenty-five varieties of vacuum-packed prepared meals, such as zucchini gratin with Roquefort, for Agis, a French company. A large photograph of Loiseau—ruddy face, bald head, wide smile, wrinkles cascading from the corners of his eyes—dominated the packages. He was the "international ambassador" for Perrier-Jouët champagne, and designed menus for overseas promotional events. He published eight cookbooks, ranging from "My Recipes from the Land," an expensive book with glorious photographs of Burgundy in different seasons, to a collection of recipes for children called "Cooking Like a Chef."

Loiseau's suicide startled the culinary world, and, because he left no note of explanation, theories proliferated. For more than a decade, he had suffered from bouts of depression, and colleagues said that he appeared particularly morose in the weeks leading up to his death. Business at La Côte d'Or was stagnant, and Loiseau feared that his restaurant was losing its place at the forefront of French cooking. Earlier in February, the *GaultMillau* guidebook had downgraded him from nineteen points out of twenty to seventeen, and an article in *Le Figaro* suggested that La Côte d'Or was close to losing its third Michelin star.

The *GaultMillau* isn't highly regarded—it accepts advertisements and has a limited circulation—but the loss of a Michelin star can mean financial strain: business can drop by as much as twenty-five per cent. (When Loiseau got his third star, in 1991, business at La Côte d'Or increased by sixty per cent.) Even when the 2003 *Red Guide* for France was published, in mid-February, and La Côte d'Or maintained



JACQUES DE LOUSTAL

Bernard Loiseau was one of only twenty-five French chefs to hold three Michelin stars.

its three-star rating, Loiseau despaired.

Jacques Pourcel, another chef whose restaurant was demoted by *GaultMillau*, and was also reported by *Le Figaro* to be in danger of losing its third star, sent a letter to his colleagues blaming "terrible media pressure" for Loiseau's death. Loiseau's mentor, the seventy-seven-year-old chef Paul Bocuse, said, "*GaultMillau* took away two points, and, along with two or three press articles, that is what killed Bernard."

Several weeks after Loiseau's funeral, I travelled to Burgundy. A hundred miles south of Paris, there is an exit off the highway for the Nationale 6, the old north-south artery, which passes through farmland and villages marked by yellow and red tiled roofs. Gradually, the landscape gives way to groves of birch, beech, oak, and pine. The French describe this region, the Morvan, as the heart of *civilisation lente*—unindustrialized, "slow" France.

Saulieu, population 2,917, is the commercial center of the Morvan. In the era of horse-and-carriage transportation and early automobiles, the town provided a pleasant rest stop on the main road between Paris and Lyons, and it has always had a number of small restaurants. When a highway bypassing the town was completed, in 1970, however, Saulieu went into decline.

La Côte d'Or, a two-story structure covered in golden stucco, with large letters on the façade that spell "Bernard Loiseau," is the town's main attraction. In the course of twenty-one years, Loiseau spent roughly ten million dollars on renovations. There are four dining rooms, each with large bay windows that look out onto a neat English garden with fountains and a swimming pool, and thirty-two guest rooms, decorated in antique wood and stone. (The nightly rates range from two hundred and fifty dollars to four hundred and fifty; the average dinner for two costs between two hundred and forty and three hundred and forty dollars, without wine.) There's a fitness center with a small indoor pool, a wine-tasting cellar, a spa, and a billiards room. Other restaurants of this calibre are outfitted with marble floors, gold fixtures, and crystal chandeliers, but La Côte d'Or—which has terra-cotta floors, exposed beams, and a large stone fireplace in the main sitting room—resembles a country manor. Next door, there is a gourmet boutique, which sells hand towels, cutlery, aprons, Loiseau cookbooks, and locally made mustards and preserves.

It was a melancholy trip for me. A decade ago, I spent a year in Saulieu in order to write a book about Loiseau's quest to attain three stars. He was an exhilarating if exhausting presence, a boisterous, broad-shouldered man who smiled relentlessly and would often chant to his kitchen staff, "You're the best, you're the best, you're the best." (Of course, being a chef, he also spent a fair amount of time issuing curt, militaristic orders.) Loiseau frequently greeted me with a robust hug or slapped me on the back, asking, "I'm the best, right?" With his customers, too, he was childishly insecure. When a diner didn't finish a plate of food, he would ask, "What's wrong? What's wrong?" Once, I heard the restaurant manager, Hubert Couilloud, reassuring him that the customer liked the food but wanted to leave room for dessert.

I preferred Loiseau's company away from the restaurant—on short hunting excursions, on day trips to Paris, or at a cheap local bistro, where we would eat lunch sitting on plastic chairs. Without picking up the menu, Loiseau would order a *gras double*, a traditional dish of grilled pig's intestine, followed by a thick, juicy steak, served blood-rare. "This is my favorite type of meal," he announced happily on one occasion. Though he boasted that he lived "at a hundred and eighty kilometres an hour," he seemed truly comfortable only in his old-fashioned, sleepy town. He told me that he became physically ill when he left Saulieu for more than four or five days.

Loiseau, I learned, suffered a nervous breakdown in 1992, when he went to Kobe, Japan, to open a branch of his restaurant in the city's Sheraton Hotel. (The restaurant closed after the earthquake in 1995.) Loiseau was allergic to certain raw fish. When his hosts treated him to a traditional Japanese meal, he forced Couilloud, who was with him,

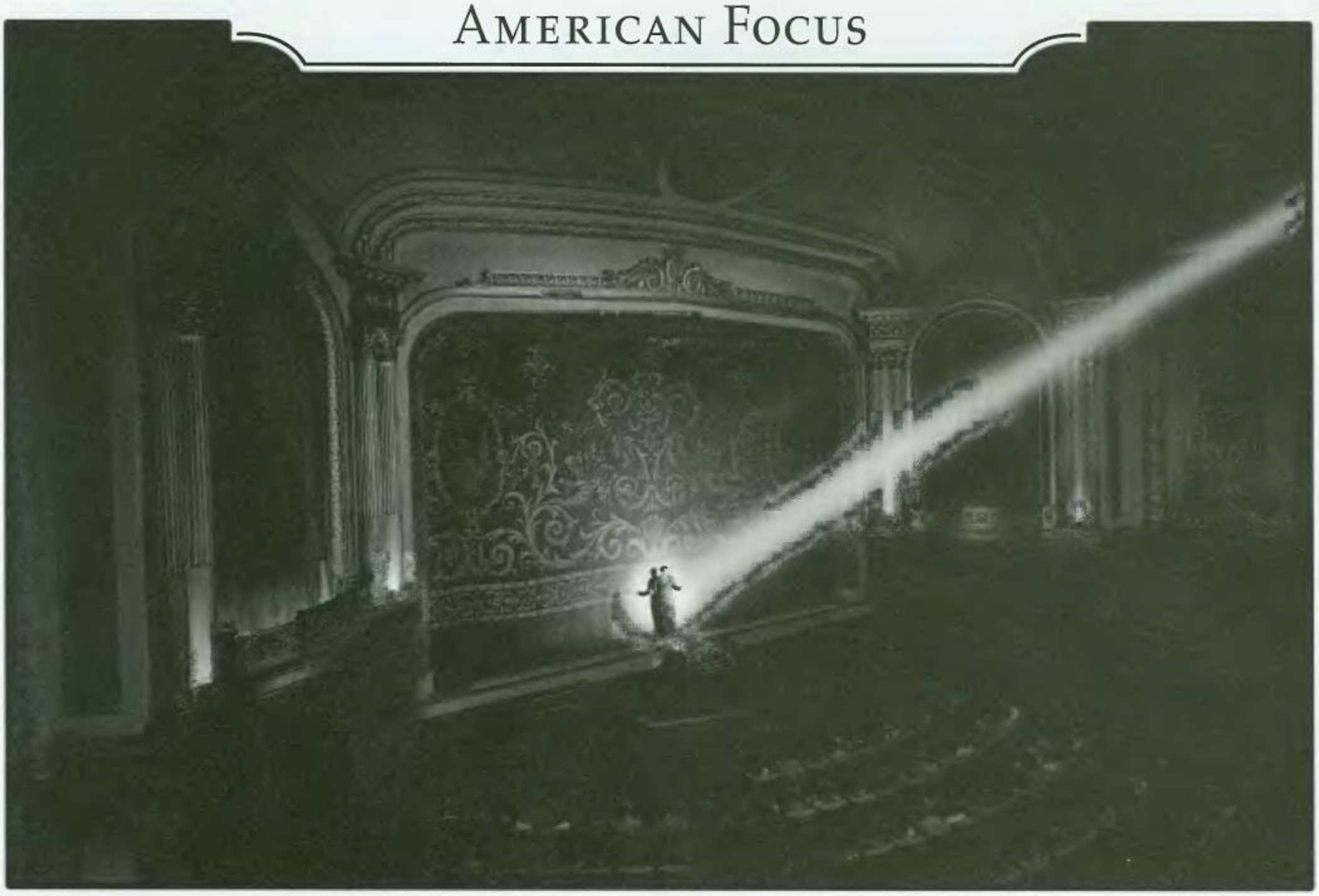
to taste every dish first. What Loiseau could eat, he dismissed as too fussy. He was "like a scared rabbit," Couilloud said, and one night he insisted that Couilloud sleep in his room with him. Back in France, Couilloud suggested that Loiseau see a psychiatrist. The doctor prescribed Prozac, and Loiseau took it for three months.

When I arrived at La Côte d'Or in February, I went straight into the kitchen, a silvery affair of shining stainless-steel ovens and countertops and walk-in refrigerators. It was Saturday night, and twelve chefs in white tunics, aprons, and toques were moving around frantically. Loiseau's widow, Dominique Loiseau, an immaculate, precise woman who was wearing a red suit, greeted me. "*GaultMillau* didn't kill him," she said, without prompting. She told me that her husband suffered from "*le mal du siècle*—he was depressed." She also mentioned, as did many others I spoke to, that her husband was severely overworked. Dominique has taken over as the C.E.O. of Groupe Bernard Loiseau. She is a handsome woman, with thin lips and taut skin. Before meeting Loiseau, she was a journalist in Paris for *L'Hôtellerie* and wrote several books, including a technical one about restaurant sanitation, which is now a standard text. She and Bernard were married in 1989. They had three children, who are six, eleven, and thirteen.

Patrick Bertron, who served as Loiseau's chef de cuisine for many years and has replaced him as the head chef, led me to an office at the far end of the kitchen. He said that Loiseau had been overwhelmed by the changes taking place in the cooking world. These days, he told me, the economics of French haute cuisine make it difficult for even the shrewdest entrepreneurs to survive, and chef-owned restaurants, which have defined the French dining experience since the nineteen-sixties, are disappearing. The country's rigid labor laws, which include a mandatory thirty-five-hour work week for the employees of most firms, mean that every diner at La Côte d'Or costs about seventy-five dollars, before he even orders anything.

The best food in Paris is now found in luxury hotels, such as the George V, the Hôtel Balzac, and the Plaza Athénée—businesses owned by multina-

American Focus



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"How do you stay so calm about the stock market?"

• • •

tional corporations that can afford to lose money in their restaurants. At the Plaza Athénée, fifty-five chefs and waiters serve fifty-five diners. On a busy Saturday night at La Côte d'Or, a staff of twenty-five serves as many as a hundred and twenty diners. "Bernard saw that the playing field no longer was level," Bertron told me. He remembered Loiseau saying, just before he died, "I've only gone up in my life. Now I'm on the top. How do I come down?"

The following morning, a Sunday, a Mass honoring Loiseau was held in a modest church at the cemetery where he is buried, just outside of town. Saulieu's shopkeepers paid for the service. "If we are the town's railway wagons, our locomotive has gone," Maïte Taverna, the owner of Auberge du Relais, a dim, dark-panelled bistro, said. Several hundred worshippers, including Dominique Loiseau and many other employees of La Côte d'Or, attended. After the service, the crowd filed past Loiseau's gravesite, which was covered with fresh flowers.

In addition to being one of the town's largest employers (La Côte d'Or has a staff of sixty-five), Loiseau bought produce from local farmers, promoted them on television, and sold their wares in the restaurant's boutique. "He would tell me that I was the best cheesemaker in the world," Colette Giraud, who supplied the restaurant's goat cheese, said. On Loiseau's recommendation, she was able to sell her cheese in supermarkets, and eventually built a new *fromagerie*. "Loiseau brought a lot of people to the region," Giraud said. "But what's going to happen now?"

Bernard Loiseau grew up in Clermont-Ferrand, in central France, which is the headquarters of the Michelin tire company, publisher of the *Guide*. His father was a travelling salesman for a clothing company (a middle-class occupation in France at the time), and his mother worked in her family's butcher shop. She cooked delicious traditional meals, sometimes with the help of her son. In March, 1968, when he was fifteen, Loiseau dropped out of school. He was sent by his father to apprentice in the kitchen of Pierre and Jean Troisgros, brothers who, with Paul Bocuse, were among the founding fathers of nouvelle cuisine, the movement that, in the late nineteen-sixties, changed French cooking. (Loiseau *père* had discovered the restaurant on his route.)

Nouvelle cuisine—characterized by lightness and freshness, and by a new breed of chefs who owned their restaurants—aimed at turning cooking from a trade into an art, and the chef into a celebrity. "Bocuse taught us that we are no longer servants," Loiseau once told me. "The cook used to be hidden in the basement. Now he goes into the dining room, and the Rothschilds call him up to ask favors." Nouvelle chefs used only fresh ingredients, and they sautéed them quickly in their own juice, avoiding the heavy sauces, breading, battering, and stewing long associated with French cooking. At a time when even the finest traditional restaurants were still serving hearty "family style" platters, the new chefs carefully apportioned the elements of each dish—a zigzag of sorrel sauce, a spoonful of carrot purée, a coil of lemon zest, a shapely cut of meat.

"It was the most marvellous time—we felt we could remake the world," Pierre Troisgros recalls. In his restaurant's best-known recipe, *saumon à l'oseille*, the chef scalloped the fish and poached it in white wine to a rosy pink. (In traditional French cooking, salmon is rolled in flour and baked with butter.) A few weeks after Loiseau started working at Troisgros, the restaurant won its third Michelin star. Loiseau was impressed: "Celebrities suddenly were coming to eat, and there was a click in my head. I said, 'Someday, I will get three stars.' " Loiseau left Troisgros in 1972 and worked as a chef in a Paris bistro for two years, and then was hired as a chef at La Côte d'Or.

The century-old establishment—originally a posthouse with a few bedrooms—had been a three-star restaurant in the nineteen-thirties, under Alexandre Dumaine, the namesake of the *poularde*. But by the time Loiseau arrived, in 1975, the kitchen was barely functional and the restaurant had lost all its stars.

Loiseau knew that he needed a manifesto, like the Troisgros brothers' and Bocuse's nouvelle cuisine, to interest critics. He radicalized nouvelle, cutting out cream, egg yolks, and liquor, which is often used to deglaze pans. For example, in classic French cooking, frogs' legs are deep-fried in butter and garlic and covered with parsley leaves. Loiseau fried the frogs' legs lightly and served them with purées of garlic and parsley. "You have the garlic taste without the force, you have the natural juice of parsley without the butter," he once explained to me.

Pike perch is traditionally cooked in a stew, and served with a creamy wine sauce. Loiseau sautéed the fish, cooking the skin side for five minutes with a touch of oil and serving it with a Burgundy sauce thickened with puréed carrots. "*Paf*," he would say as he watched you eat, anticipating the moment when the concentrated sauce exploded in your

mouth. The flavor was intensely pure.

At one point early in his career, Loiseau based his sauces on water, and so his style became known as *cuisine à l'eau*. Not everyone was enthusiastic about the results. Patricia Wells, the critic at the *International Herald Tribune*, called it "tiddlywinks cuisine," discrete morsels that didn't add up to much. Some people complained that Loiseau's *poularde* was just a boiled chicken in a pot. Even Bocuse, his good friend, teased him. "What a pity," Bocuse said to me a decade ago, while we were strolling along the banks of the River Saône, in Lyons. "If only Bernard could see all that sauce going to waste." Loiseau preferred to call his cooking *cuisine de jus*, the cuisine of essences, and, over the years, he regularly used small quantities of butter and cream.

Loiseau's style generated the publicity that he needed, but he knew that the only way to insure success was to earn Michelin stars. The *Guide*, first published in the spring of 1900, as a sourcebook for motorists, is the standard by which haute cuisine is judged. The hundred or so Michelin *inspecteurs* are inscrutable and incorruptible, like good spies. They never identify themselves to the restaurant staff before eating and are forbidden to accept a free meal, but there are ways of picking them out: a conservative suit, a poker face. Loiseau examined every solitary male who took a table at La Côte d'Or. "Aha," he would say when someone fit the profile, "a Michelin man."

In 1977, Loiseau won his first Michelin star; in 1981, a year before he bought the restaurant from his boss, with the help of a large bank loan, he earned a second; and, finally, in 1991, he obtained the third. Loiseau took his entire staff to celebrate at Bocuse's three-star restaurant outside Lyons.

With the third Michelin star, La Côte d'Or became solidly profitable for the first time. More important, the award gave Loiseau a platform. He began the restless self-promotion that resulted in face recognition by nearly ninety per cent of his fellow-Frenchmen. In 1995, President François Mitterrand awarded Loiseau the Legion of Honor, the second time in history that a French head of state had personally decorated a chef. (The first chef to receive this honor was Bocuse, in 1975.) In 1998, Loiseau became the first haute-cuisine chef ever to list his company on the stock exchange. The operation raised about $4.5 million and allowed him to pay off most of the debts acquired in the early renovations of La Côte d'Or. He used $2.5 million to open three bistros in Paris—Tante Louise, Tante Marguerite, and Tante Jeanne, names intended to evoke traditional home cooking. Groupe Bernard Loiseau posted double-digit annual advances in sales from 1997 through 2001, with earnings of about $11.5 million.

Haute cuisine prizes invention. Loiseau was dismayed to realize that his famous frogs' legs—once avant-garde—had become a "classic." "He always wanted to be in the pole position," Paul Bocuse recalled. As Loiseau

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The Economist

saw himself slipping from this spot, he became increasingly unhappy. In the past few years, friends who visited La Côte d'Or told me that they came away disappointed. Frogs' legs and pike perch in red-wine sauce still featured prominently on the menu. One new dish consists of a lamb chop, lamb filet, and lamb kidney, served au jus. I tried it recently: it was perfectly prepared but rather boring, and appeared on the same beige plates with brown piping that I remember Bernard picking out in 1993.

The latest wave in cooking incorporates ingredients from all over the world, in unlikely combinations. The emblem of this movement is Ferrán Adrià, the chef-owner of El Bulli, on the Costa Brava, in Spain, who has taken the mandate for constant renovation to an absurd extreme. His restaurant is open only six months of the year; Adrià spends the rest of his time in a laboratory kitchen in Barcelona, experimenting with new recipes. He changes the menu at El Bulli constantly, adding dozens of new items each year.

Adrià's influences are overtly scientific: using a nitrous-oxide cannister, he prepares "foams" out of cod, pine nuts, asparagus, and mushrooms; he injects warm olive oil into dinner rolls with a syringe; he gives cooking times in seconds rather than in minutes or hours; waiters at El Bulli instruct how and when and in what order to eat the food, as if choreographing a complex chemical reaction. Temperature is an important variable.

From black-truffle lollipops to polenta ice cream—through twenty-nine tapas-size courses that sometimes include seawater mousse and pulverized Fisherman's Friend lozenges and spaghetti noodles made from Parmesan cheese—meals at El Bulli can last six hours. The menu is prix fixe, a hundred and fifty dollars, without wine. Adrià designs new plates every year to complement his latest dishes. Foie-gras sorbet and foie-gras consommé sit side by side on a white porcelain dish, an oval with two shallow depressions. Loiseau served a traditional grilled foie gras on a traditional round plate.

Loiseau felt threatened by these developments and the attention they attracted. A number of his employees told me that, unable to grasp the notion of a Spanish celebrity chef, he focussed his jealousy on Marc Veyrat, the most passionate advocate of Adrià-style creativity in France. Veyrat owns two three-star restaurants near Switzerland, in Megève and on Lake Annecy. Veyrat, who is fifty-four, has always been eccentric, and originally became known in culinary circles for his habit of searching the countryside for indigenous herbs, which he served with rare local cheeses and sausages, and for wearing a black alpine farmer's hat. Nowadays, he offers eighteen-course meals, for three hundred and seventy-five dollars per person, without wine, that are self-consciously Surrealist: Cubist Fois Gras, Caramelized Frogs and Bizarre Salad, Whim of the Sea, Sorbets and Cones from Our Master Dali. Nostalgic provincialism—My Grandmother's Bugnes and Yesterday's Forgotten Vegetables—is found alongside Adrià-inspired items like a potato cappuccino and anise froth.

Loiseau scorned this kind of food. "Bernard called it 'world cuisine' and he had no interest in it," Stéphane Nouailles, a waiter at La Côte d'Or, recalled. A decade ago, I followed Loiseau and Eric Rousseau, the maître d'hôtel, as they travelled through Burgundy looking for the most pungent varieties of goat's-milk and cow's-milk cheese. When I returned this year, the same cheeses were on the menu. "I tried to tell Bernard that we had to evolve, to vary our cheeses, but he said, 'No, these are the cheeses I like and these are the cheeses I will serve,' " Rousseau said. Veyrat, who was friendly with Loiseau, also saw his limitations. "Bernard was more of an artisan than an artist," he told me.

When the 2003 edition of *GaultMillau* was published, in February—the issue that gave Loiseau only seventeen points—it awarded Veyrat's restaurants the first perfect scores ever. "Veyrat's world is not about food. It is totally artistic," the reviewer asserted, comparing his influence on cooking to "Picasso's on art." The assessment of La Côte d'Or was notably tepid. "When Bernard Loiseau forces his smile on the cameras, hammering each syllable as if he were driving in a stake, his desire to seduce seems accompanied by a subliminal fear that he is not succeeding," the reviewer

"It's not what you think."

wrote. The cooking was described as "not exactly dazzling, but simply very well done and pleasant."

The negative review prompted François Simon, a food writer for *Le Figaro*, to investigate whether the *Red Guide* might also punish La Côte d'Or for its staidness. He discovered that Bernard and Dominique Loiseau had visited the *Guide's* headquarters, in Paris, in late 2002. "Bernard Loiseau received a big scare, because it's been rumored that he's going to lose his third star," Simon wrote on February 22nd, two days before Loiseau's death. "Loiseau was used to a press that acted like courtesans in front of the king," Simon told me. "I ate at La Côte d'Or, didn't find it glorious, and had been hearing others say the same."

The *Red Guide* is slow to adjust to fashions in food, but recently it has been honoring new-wave restaurants. Its new director, an Englishman named Derek Brown, is an admirer of internationalist "fusion cooking." When the Loiseaus made their visit, Brown paraphrased a number of letters from diners. The visit, he told me, was not unusual; many chefs come in annually for evaluations, and Loiseau had visited a number of times. "Bernard was his usual charming, warm, dynamic self," Brown told me. "We didn't and never would threaten to take away a star, and we didn't advise him what to do. We are not a consultancy, after all." Dominique Loiseau didn't find the meeting alarming. "Derek told us that the mail suggested there were things to watch out for, but no fire to extinguish," she said.

After the meeting, Loiseau told Bocuse that he would kill himself if he lost a star. "*La vie est belle*," Bocuse wrote to Loiseau, believing that his emotional friend was, as usual, exaggerating. Colleagues suggested that Loiseau seek treatment, but he refused. "He kept saying, 'I'm a nothing, I'm a nothing,' " Rousseau, the headwaiter, recalled. "After you've been saying for a while, 'No, Bernard, no, Bernard, don't be foolish, look at all you have accomplished,' you can't find any more words." Groupe Bernard Loiseau's financial director, Bernard Fabre, told me, "Bernard started to think that, if he didn't change, next year he'd lose a star, then reservations would go down, debts would accrue, and he would go bankrupt." The reality was quite different. "It would have taken a decade of losses before we were bankrupt," Fabre said. "The real problem for Bernard was that he couldn't accept being like Picasso or Dali, living off his fame, doing the same thing again and again."

Since Loiseau's death, there have been more vacancies at the hotel and the restaurant, and five cooks have resigned. "They don't see time here as any good for their C.V.s anymore," said Bertron, the new head chef. Some of the dining-room staff, dependent on tips, are threatening to leave. "We feel like orphans," one waiter said. "Alexandre Dumaine once remarked, 'The chef's face is part of the bill,' and this was true here. Bernard was one big smile, and people want to see his smile." He and other staff members fear that the restaurant has little chance of keeping the three Michelin stars next year.

But Loiseau remains a powerful brand. The Tante restaurants in Paris still have an average occupancy rate of eighty per cent, and the contract for vacuum-packed prepared foods will remain in force for seven years. "At most, we'll reduce the size of Bernard's photo on the packaging," Bertron said. Bertron, who has been at the restaurant for twenty-one years, is the embodiment of the strength of the Bernard Loiseau franchise: Loiseau used to tell him that he knew how to "cook Loiseau" better than Loiseau himself.

On my last day in Saulieu, I went to see Dominique at her home. We spent a few hours talking in the living room. She was gentler than I remembered her, but very controlled. She was careful not to blame the guidebooks for the tragedy; without them, she said, Loiseau would never have succeeded on the scale he did. Of course, she hoped that the restaurant would keep its three stars—and planned to speak to Derek Brown in the coming weeks—but she thought that La Côte d'Or could prosper in any case.

"I am determined to keep Bernard's legacy alive," she said. The menu has already changed in one significant way: Dominique has added a prix-fixe meal, "Bernard Loiseau's Classics," consisting of her husband's most famous recipes. She says that it's extremely popular. ♦

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PROFILES

THE CONTROLLER

Karl Rove is working to get George Bush reëlected, but he has bigger plans.

BY NICHOLAS LEMANN

Politics is a field with a lot of former practitioners: there is a high failure rate, and success comes tinged with a gnawing nervousness that makes it not worthwhile for everybody. Robert Edgeworth, a Virgil scholar who teaches at Louisiana State University, in Baton Rouge, is in politics purely avocationally these days. Edgeworth is practically a museum-worthy example of what is connoted by the word "professorial": at fifty-six, he has white hair and parchment skin, he wears tweed, and he speaks with great precision. It's hard to imagine him as a budding politico, but, then, his most active period ended nearly thirty years ago, when he placed himself in the onrushing path of Karl Rove, President Bush's chief political adviser. This has never been a smart thing to do, but Edgeworth, as one of the first of many to find that out, had the excuse of not having been as well informed on the subject as people in Washington are now.

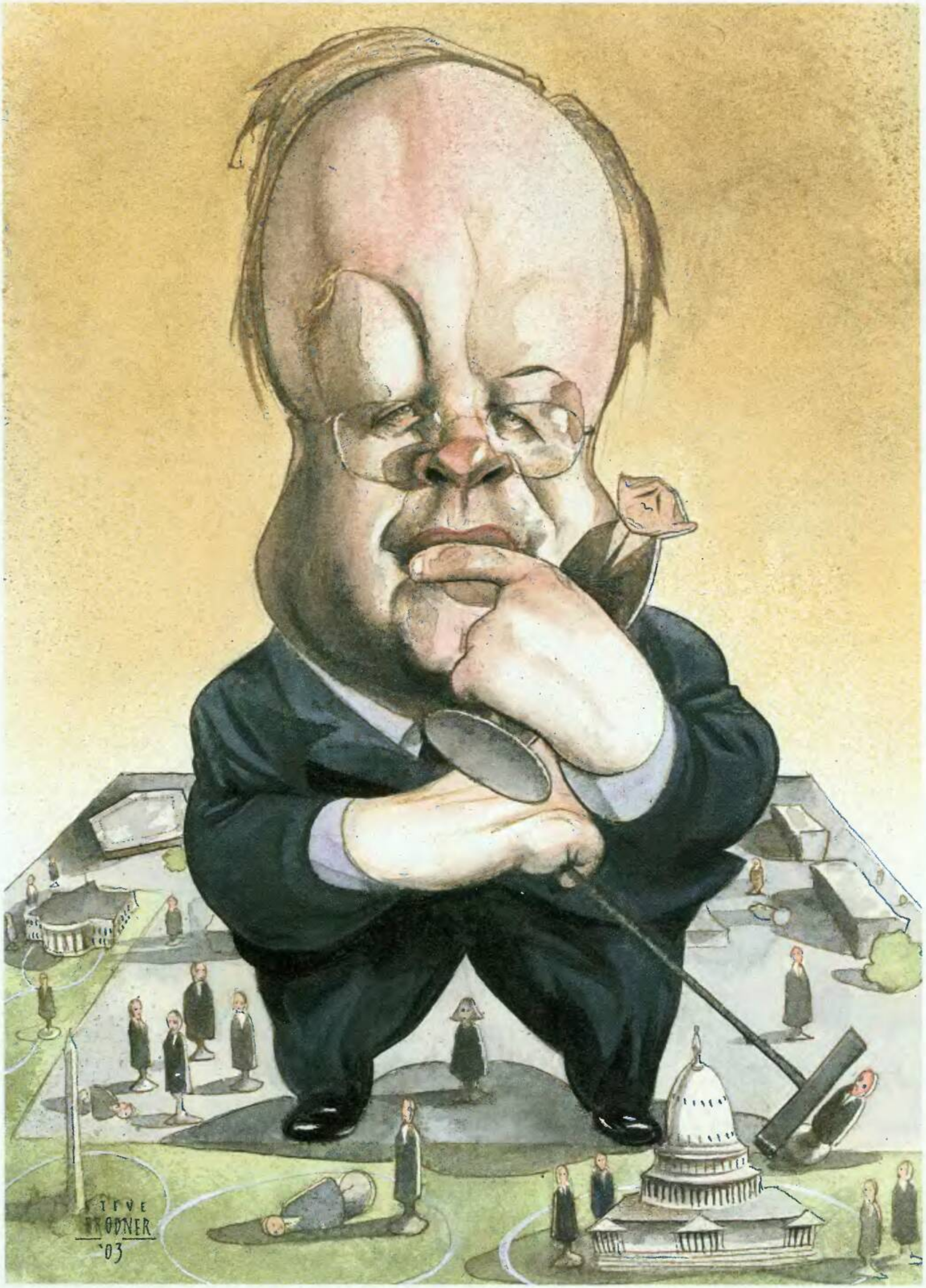
The story of Edgeworth and Rove is a well-burnished legend within a very small circle—well burnished enough that just saying "Lake of the Ozarks" is enough to evoke it. The circle is made up of people connected with College Republicans, a group tight enough (it became an independent organization in 1971) that all its significant figures at least know one another's names. Theirs is a subculture that took form in the mid- to late sixties, at a time when what was officially going on in the United States was a great uprising of rebellious youth and a flowering of liberal politics. The College Republicans were young people who believed that the coming thing was a resurgence of the political right. They felt this so strongly, and loved politics so much, that they devoted a ruthless, all-consuming effort to gaining advantage in a small student organization that today seems a little eccentric. The history of College Republicans is like that of a left-wing group, full of coups and counter-coups and intrigue. And the most College Republican of all College Republicans was Karl Rove.

Rove had come out of nowhere—to be specific, Utah, from a nonpolitical and not very well-established family that he didn't talk about much. As a seventeen-year-old, Rove made the leap beyond high-school politics by volunteering in a United States Senate campaign. In 1969, at the University of Utah, he signed up for the College Republicans, and showed enough promise that the organization dispatched him to Illinois the following year to work as a campus organizer in the unsuccessful United States Senate campaign of Ralph Tyler Smith, who had been appointed to the seat of the Senate's Republican leader, Everett McKinley Dirksen, after Dirksen died. This amounted to hitting the big time, because Illinois was the most active College Republican state. In 1971, Rove became a protégé of Joe Abate, the College Republican chairman, who hired him as the organization's national executive director, a position that paid very modestly.

Rove, who is fifty-two, has always appeared to be affable and extroverted—he has a foghorn voice and an innocent face, with pale-blue eyes, a tuft of flyaway blond hair, and light skin that flushes when he's angry—while, at the same time, being very hard to know well. His few close friends knew that in the period preceding his roaring entry into the College Republican world he had been through a tough, even searing, time. His parents' marriage had ended on his nineteenth birthday—Christmas Day, 1969—when his father walked out. Then, shortly afterward, Rove received a second and more unexpected blow. In Illinois, he had dinner with an aunt and uncle, and, during a discussion of his parents' divorce negotiations, they casually mentioned that the man he thought of as his father actually wasn't. "I literally, I think, dropped my soda," Rove told me, in one of three long interviews we had in his office in the West Wing of the White House. In a family of five siblings, he and an older brother were the children of another man, whose connection to his mother had been kept secret, at her insistence, all the time he'd been growing up. Among his friends in College Republicans, the story, to the extent that it circulated, took the form that he had been adopted—which is somehow not quite as upsetting. One person remembers Rove saying to him, "Whose birthday is on Christmas Day? You have to be kidding! They didn't know exactly when I was born, so they just took a guess." But when I asked Rove about it he said the real story is that he was, as it were, half-adopted. I asked him if he'd ever found out who his real father is, and he said that he had, but didn't meet him until many years later, when he was in his forties. He got in touch with the man, arranged to visit him, and was greeted with a chilly reception. Rove spoke of his adoptive father in a tone of fierce admiration, love, and loyalty, for, as he put it, "how selfless his love had been," as shown by his willingness to play, persuasively, the part of a blood parent for two decades. The bond between Rove and his adoptive father became even more important, no doubt, after Rove's mother committed suicide, in Reno, Nevada, in 1981.

Edgeworth was the head of College Republicans in the Midwest, and later the vice-chairman of the organization. Not long ago, he and I had lunch at a quiet restaurant in Baton Rouge. Edgeworth told me that he'd had it in mind that, in 1973, Joe Abate would step down, Edgeworth would become chairman of College Republicans for a two-

STEVE BRODNER



"I think we're at a point where the two major parties have sort of exhausted their governing agendas," Rove said.

year term, and Rove would become vice-chairman; then, in 1975, Edgeworth would step down and hand the chairmanship over to Rove. For Rove, as Edgeworth saw it, this would not only be gentlemanly; it would mean that if he was willing to invest two years in being patient he would be rewarded with a coronation as chairman. He wasn't willing. A race for the chairmanship began, between Rove, Edgeworth, and Terry Dolan, who went on to found the National Conservative Political Action Committee. Of the three, Dolan was the most conservative and Rove the least. "If you asked a question like what to do about the United Nations," Edgeworth told me, "Terry would say, 'Withdraw immediately.' I'd say, 'Scale it down and pay less in dues.' Karl would say, 'Leave it alone, the voters won't understand the issue.' He put pragmatic considerations higher than us."

A campaign for the College Republican chairmanship was a serious matter; Rove left his job as executive director in order to spend five months, without pay, campaigning full time. (Rove was consumed with College Republicans for so many years that he didn't spend much time actually going to college; he never graduated.) Rove and his chief assistant, Lee Atwater, later another famous hardball-playing Republican strategist, drove across the South lining up delegate support. Meanwhile, Terry Dolan and Bob Edgeworth decided to form a ticket, with Edgeworth as chair and Dolan as vice-chair. So it became a two-man race: Edgeworth versus Rove.

The national convention was in June, in the mountain resort of Lake of the Ozarks, Missouri. All through the late spring, Edgeworth and Dolan were hearing stories about the Rove forces staging credentials challenges at state and regional conventions, using some technical pretext. Shortly after the Midwest regional convention, for example, according to Edgeworth, the Rove forces, in order to justify the unseating of the Edgeworth delegates on procedural grounds, produced a version of the Midwestern College Republicans' constitution which differed significantly from the constitution that the Edgeworth forces were using. The net result of all the challenges was that a number of states sent two competing delegates to Lake of the Ozarks, one pledged to Edgeworth, the other to Rove, each claiming to be legitimate. Then the meeting of the credentials committee, before the convention itself, turned into a donnybrook. Edgeworth told me that when the Southern regional chair of the College Republicans, who was officially uncommitted, cast his first pro-Edgeworth vote in one of the credentials disputes, a Rove person left the room for a minute. After he returned, another Rove person announced that a different person was actually the Southern regional chair, and proposed and passed a resolution to have Southern Regional Chair No. 1 thrown out. It went on like that until morning, with the person running Rove's convention operations, John Zemaitis, an ostensibly above-the-fray Republican figure from Illinois, secreted in a room at a Holiday Inn in Jefferson City, thirty miles away. "It was so *raw*," one venerable College Republican figure told me, shaking his head wonderingly at the memory. In the end, there were two votes, conducted by two convention chairs, and two winners—Rove and Edgeworth, each of whom delivered an acceptance speech. After the convention broke up, both Edgeworth and Rove appealed to the Republican National Committee, each contending that he was the new College Republican chairman.

The R.N.C. had a relatively unseasoned chairman: George Herbert Walker Bush, a man thought to be on the downhill slope of a once promising political career. Bush was a former member of the United States House of Representatives who had lost two successive Senate races in Texas, in 1964 and 1970, and then accepted an assignment that did not seem very stature-enhancing, as the public face of the R.N.C. during the Watergate scandal. During the summer of 1973, while Bush's staff was conducting an inquiry into the Lake of the Ozarks affair, Terry Dolan, promoting the Edgeworth cause, leaked to the Washington *Post* a tape recording in which Rove and another College Republican are heard recounting at a training weekend some amusing stories about minor campaign espionage they had engaged in during various campaigns. The *Post* published a story about the tape under the headline "GOP PROBES OFFICIAL AS TEACHER OF TRICKS."

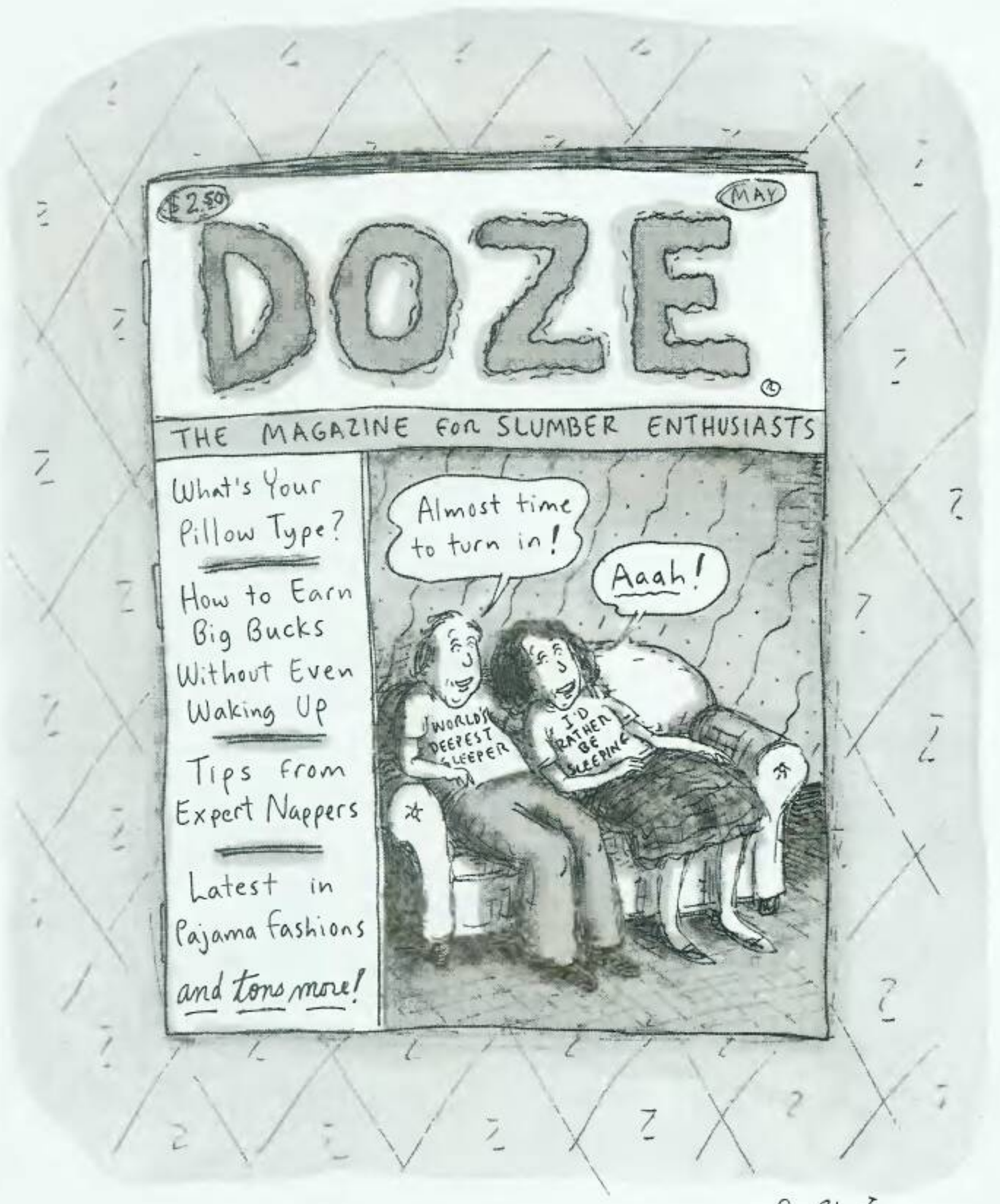
At the end of the summer, Bush wrote Edgeworth a letter saying that he had concluded that Rove had fairly won the vote at the convention and was therefore being installed as the new chairman of the College Republicans. Edgeworth wrote back, asking on what basis he had ruled. Not long after that, Edgeworth told me, "Bush sent me back the angriest letter I have ever received in my life. I had leaked to the Washington *Post*, and now I was out of the Party forever. That letter is a family heirloom." Edgeworth moved to Australia for several years. And George Bush, evidently impressed with what he had learned about Karl Rove in the course of supervising the Lake of the Ozarks inquiry, gave instructions that Rove be offered a full-time job at the Republican National Committee. The connection has been unbroken ever since.

I asked Rove if he remembered his first impression of the Bushes. "The father was incredibly gentle," he said. "Great character. Very thoughtful. Really generous in his openness and attitude. Clearly pained by Watergate as it unrolled." His first memory of George W. Bush was more precise. "It was the day before Thanksgiving, 1973," Rove said. "Chairman Bush's chief of staff called me and said, 'I've got to be at a meeting on the Hill, the chairman's got to be at a meeting at the White House, the other people in the office have already gone, and the eldest son's going to be coming down from Harvard. He's going to arrive at the train station, early afternoon. He'll call over here when he gets to the train station. Meet him down in the lobby and give him the keys to the family car.' I can literally remember what he was wearing: an Air National Guard flight jacket, cowboy boots, blue-jeans, complete with the—in Texas you see it a lot—one of the back pockets will have a circle worn in the pocket from where you carry your tin of snuff, your

tin of tobacco. He was exuding more charisma than any one individual should be allowed to have."

Edgeworth told me that one night in 1984, after he'd moved to Baton Rouge, he got a call from John Zemaitis, whom he hadn't heard from in years. During the Lake of the Ozarks affair, Zemaitis had ostensibly been an impartial figure. "I have come to the Lord," Edgeworth remembers Zemaitis saying. "I need to settle my accounts." Then Zemaitis admitted that he had secretly been in league with Rove all along, and he apologized for the conduct of the campaign. Edgeworth's reminiscences of Karl Rove were not without fondness, though. He presented Rove as a smart, funny, supercompetent young man with an obsession with political campaigning and a need to win which trumped social niceties. It was as if Rove's mind were devoted to a permanent, hyperactive search for anything—any contact, any thought, any bit of information—that might serve the cause of political victory. Rove was an autodidact intellectual, and often talked about books. According to Edgeworth, he once told Rove about the dialectic (thesis, antithesis, synthesis), and Rove called him a few days later and said—this was memorable because Rove does not readily admit that somebody else knows something important that he didn't know already—"You know that tripartite deal? Where'd you find that?" (Rove disputes this account, saying that he wrote an elementary-school paper on dialectical materialism and so did not have to be enlightened by Edgeworth.) Rove's favorite book at the time was Eric Foner's "Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men," a history of the early days of the Republican Party, which he read less as a dispassionate analysis of the early Republicans' strengths and weaknesses than as a guidebook on how to broaden the appeal of the Party. Another book Rove had read recently was Leonard Lurie's "The King Makers," a history of the battle between the conservative Robert Taft and the pragmatic Dwight Eisenhower, at the 1952 Republican National Convention. While talking about this, Edgeworth, otherwise serene, suddenly did a double take and slapped the table. "Oh, my God!" he said. "I'm Taft! He's Eisenhower! I never made that connection before. Karl's whole strategy in 1973—it's all in that book."

In his office in the White House, a meticulously neat room with a view of the Washington Monument, pictures of Abraham Lincoln and Theodore Roosevelt, and a framed autograph of James Madison on the walls (as well as a spread from a children's book about American Presidents, called "Great Moments in History," which is the first thing he can remember reading), Rove seems to spend much of his time doing what the people who work for him call "multitasking." This means answering e-mail while simultaneously talking on the phone, conducting a meeting around a big table that occupies most of the empty space in the office, and fielding queries from his assistant, Susan Ralston, and members of the White House staff who poke their heads in. Rove has an omnipresent quality. Everybody seems to have just heard from him—he's a master of the little note or phone call on important occasions. His response to e-mails is often instantaneous. Every White House has a political operative, but Rove has a much bigger charter than his predecessors. He appears to have supervisory authority over the Republican National Committee. Inside the White House, after Karen Hughes, the primary keeper of the Bush image, left, last year, her role was taken over by a protégé and former employee of Rove's, Dan Bartlett. The head of the White House domestic-policy operation, Margaret Spellings, is another Rove associate from Texas. She sees him almost every day, and Rove plays a much heavier role in domestic policy than any previous occupant of his position. (This is not a White House in which the "policy shop" constantly tussles with the "poli-



tics shop," as has usually been the case.) He functions as a national personnel director for the Republican Party, hand-selecting candidates for governorships and seats in the Senate and House. His people are widely scattered around the executive departments. He closely supervises political fund-raising. And, of course, the President is someone whose entire political career Rove has masterminded, beginning, if not at that memorable first meeting, then certainly years before Bush's first successful race for office.

As if all this weren't enough, people in politics love to speculate that Rove is up to much more than is apparent. In the same way that prophetic fundamentalists are always on the lookout for emblazonings of the number 666, the Mark of the Beast, in Washington everybody is highly attuned to the possibility that most of what goes on bears the Mark of Karl Rove. There are many cases where Rove is suspected of having engineered a brutal bit of political business without leaving any fingerprints, in the manner of the Lake of the Ozarks affair. In Texas, where Rove was a dominant Republican political consultant, Mark of Rove speculation has filled many an evening in places where politicians and lobbyists hang out. Probably the two leading Texas stories, out of dozens, or even hundreds, are the one that has him bugging his own office on the eve of a crucial campaign debate, so that by "discovering" the dastardly deed he could distract attention from his candidate's poor debating skills, and the one that has him inducing an F.B.I. agent named Greg Rampton to investigate employees of the Texas Department of Agriculture on rather slight grounds, in order to help his candidate for Agriculture Commissioner—Rick Perry, now governor of Texas—defeat the very popular Democratic incumbent, Jim Hightower. (Three of the employees were tried and convicted.) In Washington, Rove gets conversational credit for everything up to and including the war in Iraq, and Democrats, at least, use "Rove" as shorthand for "the Bush Administration," as in, "Is Rove going to invade Syria?"

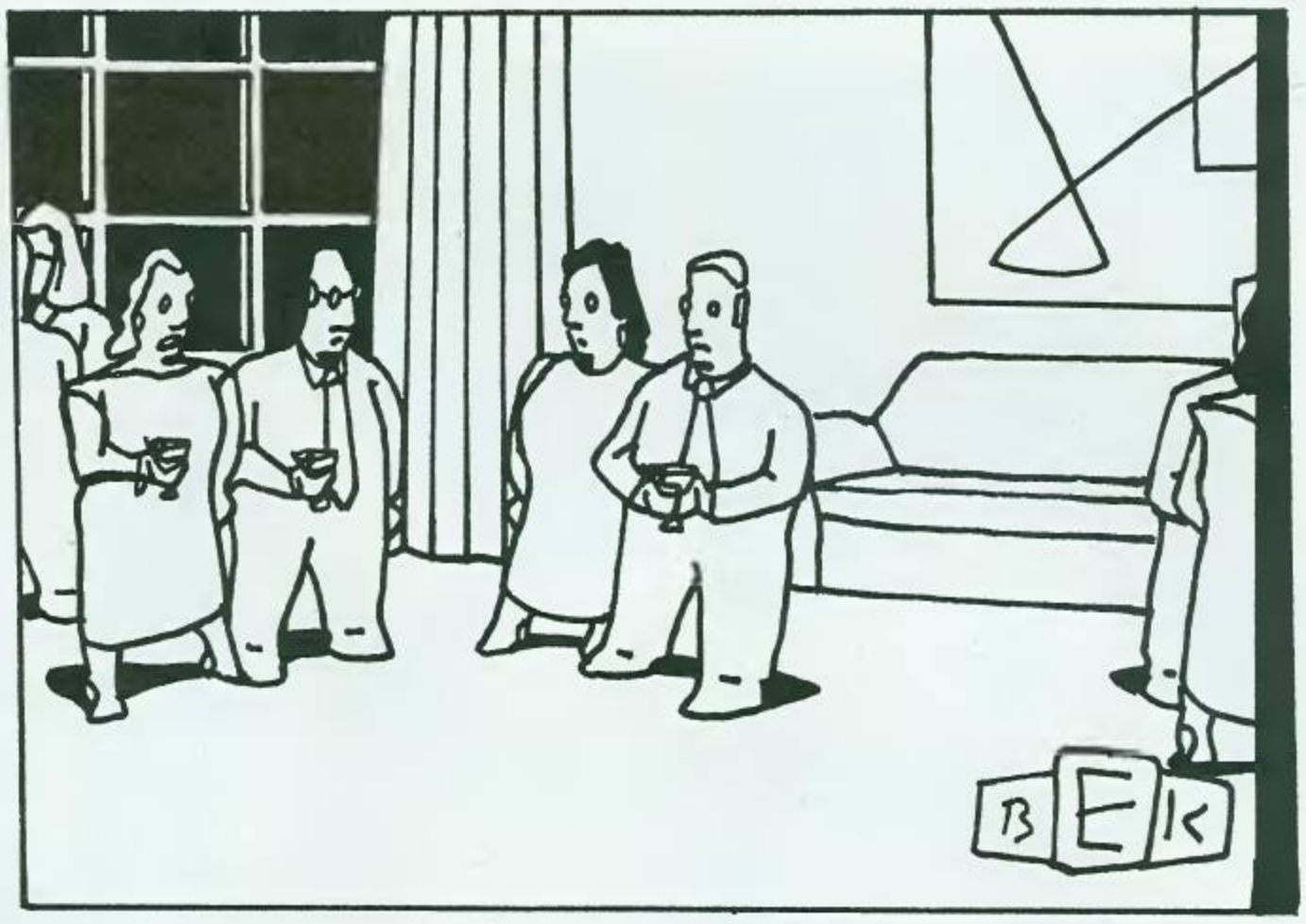
Rove has many times looked people in the eye and stoutly denied the Mark of Rove stories. On the other hand, it doesn't seem to torment him that he's the center of attention and speculation, or that he's thought of as all-powerful. Rove is complicated. His usual mode is one of irony—sometimes there seems to be a twinkle in his eye as he professes outrage over the unfair attribution of enormous influence to him. At the same time, he seems to be genuinely thin-skinned. People who come from backgrounds suffused with love, praise, and security often have the ability to dismiss criticism out of hand; people who don't, especially if they're as smart as Rove, often devote great effort to building structures of refutation. If you mention any possible lacuna or shortcoming, his face reddens and he offers a well-thought-through rebuttal. One day, I mentioned his decision to send Bush to California late in the 2000 campaign, something that in retrospect looks like a costly mistake, since Bush was never going to win California and since the election turned out to be so close. Rove shot back, "Well, the late trip to California is—As long as you're going to drag yourself out to fight for Washington and Oregon, drag yourself all the way out to the West Coast, you might as well stop in California. You can create news there. Out of our hundred-million-dollar campaign, we spent a million and a half in California. The rest of the effort was a gigantic effort funded by the Californians, who raised thirteen million for their victory-committee effort." Sorry!

Also, Rove's pride in his knowledge of politics is so great that he has an evidently irresistible impulse to dispute, correct, or improve upon virtually anything anybody says on the subject, in a tone that's half rehearsed lecture, half teasing one-upmanship. Mention that West Texas is conservative, and Rove will come right back and say no, there are actually four subregions in West Texas, each with its own distinct history and ideology, and then he'll give detailed, decades-old election results in each one from memory. Point to Rove. But, although the No. 1 occupational disease in the field of political consulting is a conversational tendency to run up one's own brilliance while, either subtly or overtly, running down the candidate, Rove manages to combine a manner that has no trace of self-effacement with an attitude toward his boss which appears to be truly worshipful.

I asked Rove if it was true that he had engineered the demise of Trent Lott, of Mississippi, as Senate Majority Leader, and Lott's replacement by the more Bush-friendly Bill Frist, of Tennessee—it would be hard to find any-

"Now, this is just a simulation of what the blocks will look like once they're assembled."

one in Washington who believed he hadn't. (In 1990, Lott publicly criticized President George H. W. Bush for raising taxes, and the Bushes have long memories.) "No," Rove said, flatly. Then he mentioned, in what I thought was a less than entirely sombre tone, that on the day the Lott affair reached its dramatic peak, when Lott was scheduled to appear on Black Entertainment Television to defend himself, Rove had got a call from his friend Bill Frist: "Monday morning, Frist calls me and says, 'You know, on Friday we're supposed to take our boys and go hunting in South Texas together—you think we ought to go?' I said, 'I don't know, let me think about it. Can I call you tomorrow?' And the next day"—after Lott's performance on BET, which came across as abjectly liberal, and failed to save him—"I call Frist and say, 'I don't think it's going to be good for you or for me to be seen in South Texas, hunting with our boys.' I think the world of Bill, but I don't take credit." That certainly settles that!



"We thought it was a rough patch, but it turned out to be our life."

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A variant of the Mark of Rove is what might be called the Arabesque of Rove, in which the Administration openly makes a political move, but its meaning is presumed to be something else. A policy that looks like an appeal to one group is actually an appeal to another—the locus classicus being Bush's promise to "leave no child behind" in education, which gestures, not disingenuously, toward ghetto kids but drives up Bush's poll numbers with suburban women. (Rove, who salts his conversation with election and poll results, told me, "Remember, in 1996, if education's your No. 1 issue, you vote for Clinton-Gore over Dole-Kemp by 76-16. By 2000, you vote for Gore-Lieberman over Bush-Cheney by 52-44.") Or something will be aimed simultaneously at both "base" voters, on the right, and "swing" voters, in the middle, like the slogan "compassionate conservatism," which moderates hear as "not all that conservative" and fundamentalists hear as "conservative and dedicated to serving Jesus Christ." Or the Administration will propose something that receives the universal approbation of respectable opinion and also fails to pass, but that actually has hidden benefits, such as distracting liberal attention from something else, or propitiating an important Republican interest group.

The idea of eliminating taxation on individuals' dividend income, for example, is probably never going to become the subject of some future term paper entitled "How a Bill Becomes Law." But proposing it may help win the hearts of senior citizens, the group most heavily dependent on dividend income, and of the securities industry. "Fifty-two per cent of all American households own equities," Rove reminded me. "Nearly two-thirds of all voting households own equities." The recent nomination of Miguel Estrada for a federal appellate judgeship is in trouble, too, but it sends a signal to Latinos, a group the Administration is eager to woo, and it soaks up most of the available supply of liberal energy for opposing the Administration's judicial nominees. All through the Estrada fight, the Senate has been confirming, on average, six federal Bush judicial nominees a month.

The way Rove talks publicly about these maneuvers is influenced by a desire not to give away trade secrets and by what appears to be a sincere belief (one common, however, in aggressive people) that it is his bad fortune to be up against unusually ruthless, unfair opponents—the likes of Jane Fonda and Barbra Streisand and the N.A.A.C.P. I asked him if the liberal editorial pages would have liked the dividend-tax cut better if it had been applied to corporations rather than to individuals, as most economists have advocated. "No, they wouldn't!" Rove shot back. "No, they wouldn't! No, it wouldn't! 'Corporate giveaway!' If you're against tax cuts, if you believe that the way for a strong economy is for the government to hold on to every dime it can get its hands on and spend it, then you'll find a way to be against any proposal that ends the double taxation of dividends." When I asked Rove about the Estrada nomination, he said, "In anything but the current hypercharged partisan environment in Washington, Miguel Estrada would be the kind of person that would come out of the United States Senate 98–2, or 98–0. Great American success story. Comes to the country as an immigrant. Doesn't speak English. Graduates from two of America's leading universities and law schools. Serves in the Administrations of both Democrats and Republicans. Look, if it wasn't Miguel Estrada that they fought about, they would have fought about somebody else. It's their choice that they picked Miguel Estrada."

Rove is both a fox and a hedge-

NOSE DIVE BY MARY ELLEN MARK *UniverSoul Circus, the first African-American-owned circus in America in more than*

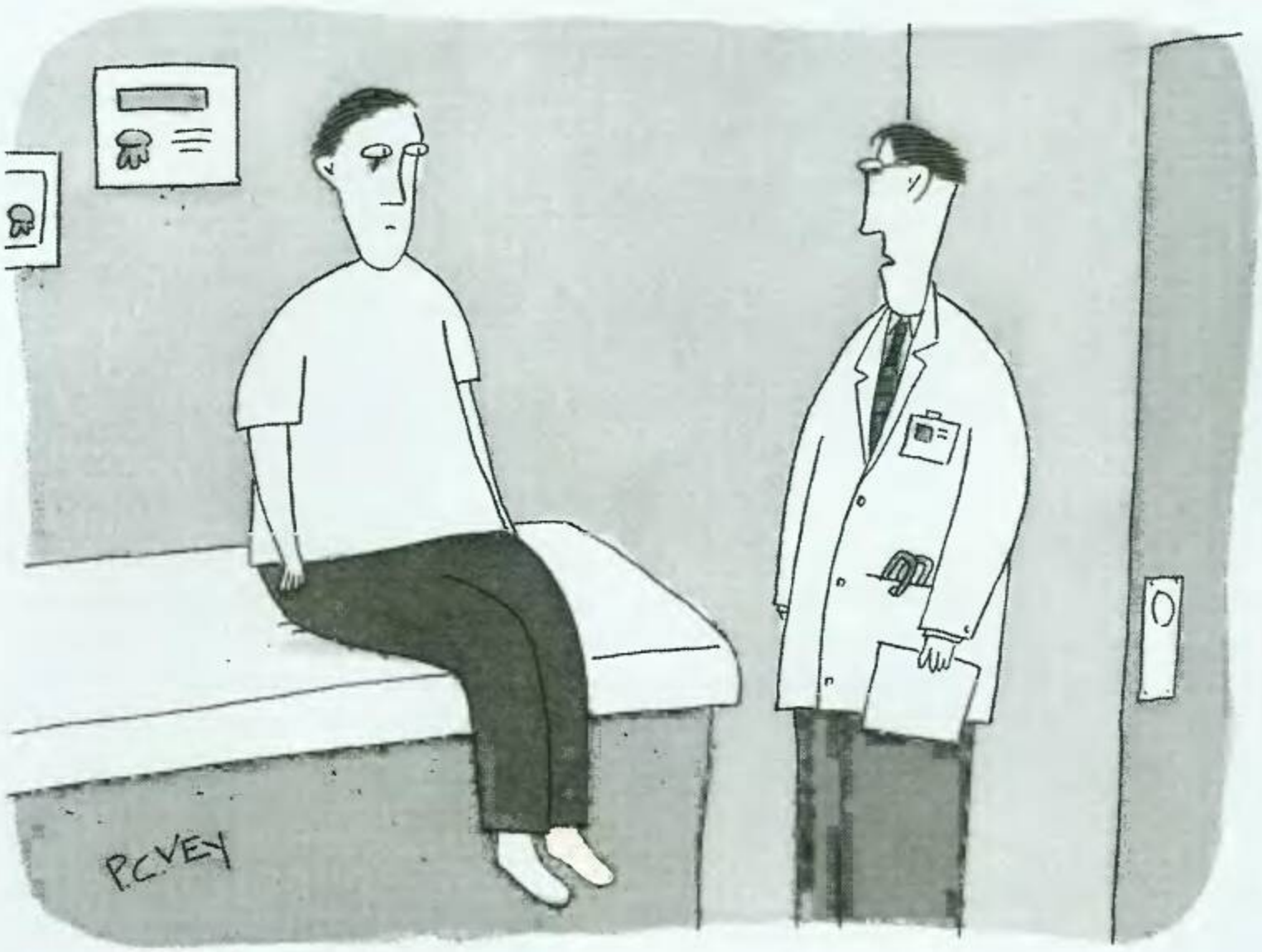
a century, in Prospect Park, Brooklyn.

hog. He is the detail man of all detail men, but he also makes a point of doing more long-term strategic planning than other political consultants. For especially important campaigns, he produces written plans far in advance, mapping out the race in its entirety, and he's famous for sticking precisely to the plan no matter what. Rove's main goal over the next year and a half is making George W. Bush what his father wasn't, a reëlected President—when I asked if he had mapped out the campaign, he said, "Don't expect me to answer this question"—but he is too ambitious to want only that. The real prize is creating a Republican majority that would be as solid as, say, the Democratic coalition that Franklin Roosevelt created—a majority that would last for a generation and that, as it played itself out over time, would wind up profoundly changing the relationship between citizen and state in this country. "I think we're at a point where the two major parties have sort of exhausted their governing agendas," Rove told me. "We had agendas that were originally formed, for the Democrats, in the New Deal, and, for the Republicans, in opposition to the New Deal—modified by the Cold War and further modified by the changes in the sixties, the Great Society and societal and cultural changes. It's sort of like the exhaustion of two boxers fighting it out in the middle of the ring. This periodically happens. This happened in 1896, where the Civil War party system was in decline and the parties were in rough parity and somebody came along and figured it out and helped create a governing coalition that really lasted for the next some-odd years. Similarly, somebody will come along and figure out a new governing scheme through which people could view things and could, conceivably, enjoy a similar period of dominance." Karl Rove clearly wants to be that somebody, and his relentless pressing for every possible specific advantage is in service of the larger goal.

In 1977, Rove moved to Houston to become the second employee of what appeared to be a quixotic enterprise, the Fund for Limited Government, a political-action committee dedicated to making George H. W. Bush President. Rove married a young woman named Valerie Wainright, whose family was in the Bush social circle in Houston. (The marriage didn't last long, and Rove remarried in 1986; he and his wife, Darby, have one son.) Texas was an important Democratic state that Republicans saw as an arena of opportunity, but the opportunity hadn't materialized yet. It had one Republican United States senator, John Tower, but no Republican state officeholders. Jimmy Carter had carried Texas in the 1976 Presidential election. James A. Baker III, the future Secretary of State, ran a well-financed race for Texas attorney general in 1978, and lost.

Rove left the Bush pre-Presidential operation to work in the gubernatorial campaign of Bill Clements, an oilman who in 1978 became Texas's first Republican governor since Reconstruction. Rove was appointed Clements's chief of staff. In 1981, he left to set up a direct-mail business in Austin called Karl Rove + Company. This put him in a position to make more money than you can as a politician's full-time employee, and allowed him to work for many Republican candidates at the same time. Rove had the imprimatur of Texas's Republican aristocracy from the beginning, through his connection to the Bush family and to Clements. An early financier of Karl Rove + Company was Tobin Armstrong, the owner of a Texas ranch (it was on land leased from Armstrong Rove and Bill Frist were planning to go hunting) and the husband of Anne Armstrong, a former Republican Cabinet officer. Becoming chairman of the College Republicans provided Rove with an introduction to such people, which may be one reason that winning mattered so much to him; it also seems that Rove, the self-made man, gets pleasure as well as practical advantage from his association with the Texas upper crust, people who give off the glow of ease, charm, and connection which he detected in George W. Bush the first time they met.

That Rove got his start in the direct-mail business, a technical and unglamorous political subspecialty, is important in understanding the way he thinks and operates today. Television gave



"Which do you want first, the good news that sounds better than it is or the bad news that seems worse than you expected?"

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birth to political consulting as an organized business, and the royalty of political consulting has been made up of people who create television advertising for candidates. Media consultants tend to think in terms of "message"—they look at poll results and decide what note a short television advertisement should strike so as to affect the voting behavior of a large audience made up of people who are only lightly affiliated with politics.

Direct-mail consultants are trained to think in quite a different way. Their communications medium is a long letter that conveys many points in printed form, rather than a single "message" in visual and aural form. (One media consultant who worked with Rove remembered his counting the number of syllables in a thirty-second spot, and then proposing a rewrite of the spot in which it would make half a dozen additional points using the same number of syllables.) Media consultants tend to think of raising money as somebody else's job, but direct-mail consultants are fund-raisers—there's that little envelope in each letter—and are more closely attuned to where the money is. Most important, direct-mail consultants are in the business of narrowcasting rather than broadcasting. They have to be on perpetual patrol for new groups with intense opinions about politics. James Moore and Wayne Slater, the authors of a new and generally unfavorable Rove biography called "Bush's Brain," found a memo he wrote Clements in which he suggested renting the subscriber list of *Krugerrand Buyer*, a magazine for investors in the South African gold currency, because they'd be good Republican donor prospects. That's direct-mail thinking. (And, not surprisingly, after Rove read "Bush's Brain" before publication, Slater received a fifteen-page single-spaced letter of refutation from him.)

During Clements's term as governor, Rove expanded his business, from direct mail to general strategic consulting. In 1982, during the Reagan recession, the Democrats had what turned out to be their last great election season in Texas, unseating Clements and sweeping all the state elective offices. In 1984, Rove worked in the campaign of Texas's second modern Republican United States senator, Phil Gramm, who had recently defected from the Democratic Party. In 1986, Clements, an ornery old man, ran again, with Rove advising him, and beat the governor who'd beaten him four years earlier. The apotheosis of Rove really began in 1988, when he orchestrated the election of Texas's chief justice, Tom Phillips, a young judge in Houston who was both very smart and very well connected. Phillips went to see Rove and said he was thinking about running for the state Supreme Court. Shortly afterward, Texas's sitting chief justice had a series of private conversations with Governor Clements, at the end of which he resigned and Clements appointed Phillips as his temporary replacement. Phillips was sworn in at noon on the last day on which Supreme Court candidates could file for election. By this time, he had hired Rove as his consultant and filed his candidacy. "Karl, then as now, was a master of the numbers," Phillips told me not long ago, when I went to see him in his chambers. "He wrote a *book* outlining the campaign: exactly how many votes I needed and where they'd come from. And then how much money it would take and where it would be spent, and how to raise it." Phillips and Rove gave me a copy of this document, which provides a good example of the kind of specificity that Phillips was talking about. It contains a statistical formula for determining the efficiency of campaign spending, which Rove applies to a hundred and seventy-eight Texas counties likely to vote Republican, based on weighted averages of the Republican vote in recent elections. Phillips became the first Republican elected to a statewide office below the governorship, and his victory created an important new issue in Texas politics: "tort reform"; that is, limiting the ability of plaintiffs' lawyers to obtain huge damage awards from the courts. Not all issues that resonate with voters also resonate with interest groups, but tort reform does, and it

became a signature issue in Rove campaigns. Today, the Texas Supreme Court, of which Phillips was the first Republican chief justice in the modern era, has no Democratic members—and by the time Rove left for Washington seven of the nine justices were his clients.

After the Phillips race, Rove and George W. Bush gave some thought to Bush's running for governor in 1990. "I met with him a couple times about it," Rove told me. "But he thought it would be awkward as long as his dad was President. He decided this wasn't the time." (In 1992, Bush made an unsuccessful try for the position of commissioner of Major League baseball.) By the time Bush did run for governor, in 1994, Rove had engineered the demise of two of Texas's most promising Democratic politicians, Jim Hightower, the Agriculture Commissioner, and Lena Guerrero, a young commissioner of a state agency, who, Rove revealed (in a rare fully owned-up-to Mark of Rove incident), had lied about her academic credentials. He had helped Rick Perry, the future governor, win his first state office. And in 1994 he helped get Kay Bailey Hutchison, a protégée of Anne and Tobin Armstrong whom Rove had known for years, elected to a full term in Texas's other United States Senate seat, even though she had just been indicted and acquitted for misusing state resources. When Bush won, after an extensive training period supervised by Rove that included briefings on policy issues and out-of-town speaking engagements, Texas's final Democratic political star, Governor Ann Richards, was history. Rove clients held Texas's governorship, both its Senate seats, a majority of the seats on its Supreme Court, and most of the other statewide offices.

By the mid-nineties, Rove had got himself into a highly unusual position for a political consultant—functioning more in the manner of an old-fashioned political boss than of a for-hire member of the service sector. Rather than his pitching candidates for their business, candidates pitched him for his commitment. The key to his power was that he had a particularly solid connection to the money side of politics. He carefully cultivated Texas's biggest Republican donors, people like Peter O'Donnell and Louis Beecherl, in Dallas, and Bob Perry and Kenneth Lay (before the fall of Enron), in Houston; they saw him as someone whose clients usually won, and made their decisions about whether or not to invest in a candidate partly on the basis of Rove's decision whether or not to work for the campaign. The Rove operation, at its peak, was like an old-fashioned Hollywood studio, with Rove as the mogul. Rove and his aides, the people behind the camera, were smart, geeky, ruthless, and workaholic; the candidate-clients were handsome, forthright, vigorous, friendly, and easy, with firm jaws and great hair. After they made it through the auditioning process, they'd be sent around the studio lot for buffing and polishing—a stop in Message, a stop in Fund-Raising—before they were given their public début.

Robert Duncan, a state senator whose victory in 1996 gave the Republican Party the majority in the Texas Senate, described the process. More than a year before his race, Duncan told me, he went to see Rove and successfully pitched him; Rove offered his services if Duncan decided to run. Then Rove arranged for introductions to some of his funding sources, such as Enron and the tort-reform movement, one of whose political-action committees paid for Duncan's first poll. "I was in favor of talking about higher education and judicial selection," Duncan said. "Karl said, 'You may be right, but people don't *care*. It doesn't *compel* people to vote for you. You have to stay with the issues that *compel* people.' " So Duncan, like most Rove candidates, stayed relentlessly "on message," using the same issues Bush had used in 1994. The most nervous moment of the campaign, Duncan said, came when his fund-raising effort seemed to be going poorly. He went to the Governor's office for a meeting with Rove and Bush, at which they expressed concern about the slow pace of his fund-raising, and then, with Rove, he went to a second meeting, with a group of lobbyists. "About twenty people were there," Duncan remembered. "I asked those guys, 'Are you with me or against me?' Would they support me, would they raise the money necessary from their clients? That was a pivotal point." The lobbyists ponied up, Duncan won, and in 2000 he was reëlected with no opposition.

As aggressively as Rove played in politics generally, he played even more aggressively inside the particular subculture of Republican political consulting. After a special 1991 election in Pennsylvania, Rove sued Richard Thornburgh, the former governor of Pennsylvania and former Attorney General, for not paying his Karl Rove + Company bill after he lost the race—even though the Republican National Committee, worried that the suit would make it hard to recruit good candidates, urged Rove to back off, and, when he wouldn't, hired Kenneth Starr to write an amicus brief on Thornburgh's behalf. Rove put Thornburgh through the humiliation of a trial in Austin, and won the case.

Other Republican consultants in Texas often found themselves in conflict with Rove. An oft-told story involved Rove and a Republican consultant named John Weaver. At one time, Rove and Weaver were so close that they planned to go into business together. Then the plans were dropped, and shortly afterward Rove called Weaver in and accused him of a personal misdeed. Lots of people in Texas heard the story—thanks to Rove, it seemed. The bitterness between the Bush and the John McCain campaigns during the 2000 Republican primary season was in part a continuation of that feud, since Weaver played the same role in McCain's campaign that Rove played in Bush's. After Bush had been badly beaten by McCain in the New Hampshire primary and his campaign moved on to South Carolina, its back against the wall, the McCain people thought they were seeing the Mark of Rove when scurrilous material started

circulating—dark suggestions that McCain had committed treason while a prisoner of war, and had fathered a child by a black prostitute. But there were no fingerprints, Bush won the primary, and that was the end of the McCain campaign.

"Karl's relationships with people are based on mutual interest, or mutual use," says John Deardourff, a veteran Republican media consultant whom Rove brought to Texas to work in the 1986 Clements campaign, and who then worked with him in all the Supreme Court races. "You just sort of accept that. If you're useful to him, he'll be perfectly nice to you. But when that mutual interest is no longer there the relationship does not continue." For Deardourff, that point came after Rove brought him in to help do with the Alabama Supreme Court what they had done together with the Texas Supreme Court—change it from a Democratic body friendly to tort claims into a Republican one unfriendly to them. Deardourff, an old-fashioned good-government liberal Republican, began to feel uncomfortable when, at Rove's request, he accompanied Rove to a meeting at the Washington headquarters of the American Council of Life Insurance. At the meeting, there was a discussion of the national insurance-industry lobby making contributions, in the form of "soft money" donations, to the Republican National Committee, with the presumption that the money would be passed on to the Alabama Republican Party and then used to support candidates in judicial races there—a technique that was legal but was designed to evade campaign-spending limits. Later, Deardourff recalled, "Karl said, 'I want you to sign on now for three more races, but we don't know who two of the candidates are yet.' I said, 'Karl, I can't do that. You're telling me to sign up before I know who the candidate is.' He said, 'John, this is easy money. What do you mean, you can't do it?' We had an odd conversation where, at the end, he seemed to be congratulating me for saying no. I don't think I've ever heard from Karl since then."

The premier achievement of Rove's Texas years, of course, was George W. Bush's Presidential race. It may not have occurred to Bush himself that his first race for the governorship was merely a prelude to something much bigger, but, according to people in Austin, it had certainly occurred to Rove. One consultant told me that he'd mentioned to Rove early in the Bush governorship that he wasn't so sure Bush was going to run for President. Rove blew up at him. "He intimated that I didn't know what I was talking about," the man said. "What the fuck was I thinking? I was making people unhappy by being stupid."

Years before the 2000 campaign was under way, Rove began orchestrating a procession of politicians, lobbyists, intellectuals, journalists, and organizers to Austin to meet Bush—a stratagem that echoed the "front-porch campaign" in Canton, Ohio, that the supposedly reluctant William McKinley, one of Rove's favorite historical figures, ran before the 1896 Presidential election. Rove helped design the enormous fund-raising effort that enabled Bush to announce, well in advance, that he would forgo federal funding because of the spending limits it entailed—an announcement that dissuaded several potential opponents from running. Rove had the wit to lock up the support of most of the key figures on the religious right, such as Ralph Reed, whom Rove arranged to be put on retainer by Enron. And the campaign itself bore Rove's stamp in every particular.

"Oh, I still make good money, but I used to make sexy money."

Karl Rove is not a man to whose lips the words "I made a mistake" spring easily, and, as regards the 2000 election, he has often pointed out (and did to me) that his candidate far outperformed all those predictive models that posited Al Gore, as the nominee of the party in power during peaceful and prosperous times, as unbeatable. Still, Rove was heard during the last month of the campaign saying that Bush was going to win by six points. That the election was, instead, a tie seems to have come as a surprise to him. "I don't know what we were going to win by," he said, when I asked him about it. "I mean, toward the end it was bravado. But particularly after that last, after the D.U.I."—the revelation during the campaign's last week that Bush had been arrested in Maine for drunk driving years earlier—"it was closing, as these things tend to anyway, and then that just accelerated it." He added that the Republicans had been "grossly out-

spent" by groups affiliated with the Democratic Party.

The Democrats believe that the reason for their late close was an unusually intense and effective get-out-the-vote effort, and there is evidence that Rove agrees. Ten days after the election, Morton Blackwell, a former national executive director of the College Republicans, who had been out of touch with Rove for years, picked up the phone and heard that familiar booming voice on the other end of the line: "Morton, how does it feel to have advocated something for decades and have it come true?" What Blackwell had been advocating for decades, ever since he trained the teen-age Karl Rove to be a field organizer, was that people in politics should pay less attention to consultants, television advertising, polls, and "message," and more attention to the old-fashioned side of the business: registering voters, organizing volunteers, making face-to-face contact during the last days of a campaign, and getting people to the polls on Election Day. Soon, Rove had launched a project called the 72-Hour Task Force, which conducted scientific experiments in grassroots political organizing during the three days before Election Day in five geographically scattered races in 2001.

For Democrats who spend a good deal of their time looking for the Mark of Rove, an exciting moment came in June, 2002, when a backup computer disk was found in Lafayette Park, across from the White House, containing two PowerPoint presentations, one by Kenneth Mehlman, Rove's deputy and the White House political director, called "The 2002 Challenge," and the other by Rove himself, called "The Strategic Landscape." (Inevitably, speculation has begun over whether the Lafayette Park PowerPoint, as it has been referred to, is the Rosetta stone to the mind of Karl Rove or a piece of deliberate disinformation designed to throw the Democrats off the scent.)

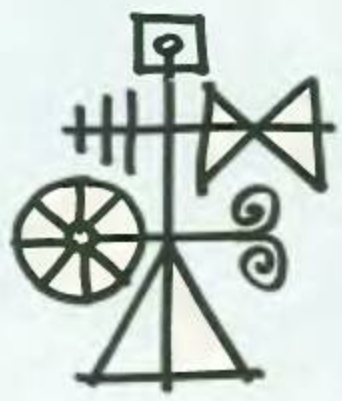
Since that discovery, an even more interesting PowerPoint presentation has fallen into Democratic hands, and from there into mine. This one outlines, in ninety slides, the work of the 72-Hour Task Force. It acknowledges, much more freely than Rove does in conversation, that in the 2000 Presidential election the Democrats outperformed the final opinion-poll predictions in state after state, and attributes this to their superior organizing. In 2001, the presentation says, the Republicans conducted more than fifty separate tests, in New Jersey, Virginia, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Arkansas, often using paired venues, one for experimenting, the other as a control. The over-all finding was that grassroots efforts work, and that grassroots efforts by local volunteers work especially well.

The 2002 elections, which represented a high-water mark of Rove's career, in that he pulled off the feat of picking up seats in Congress for the party in the White House during an off-year election, were treated in the press as having turned on Rove's making all congressional races into referenda on Bush's handling of the war on terrorism. But people in politics think it was the 72-Hour Task Force's work paying off—that is, the Republicans had moved ahead of the Democrats in last-minute organizing skills. In politics now, everybody is trying to figure out twenty-first-century means of achieving the nineteenth-century goal of establishing face-to-face relationships between political parties and voters. Turnout, which was falling for decades, is now rising slightly. Television advertising has reached the saturation point. (Rove said that voters have become so media-aware that television advertising is losing effectiveness: "I can remember focus groups in 2000 where you thought you had a room full of directors. People were talking about the production values of the spot.")

Meanwhile, technological developments—in general, the personal computer, the Internet, and e-mail, and in particular a data technology called XML—have made it possible for political organizations to have much richer information about individual voters. It used to be that you could find registered Republicans and registered Democrats, or heavily Democratic and heavily Republican precincts, but that was about it; now, because XML cross-references previously incompatible databases, you can easily blend electoral and commercial information (gleaned, for example, from mail-in product-warranty cards) and identify the people in Republican precincts who are most likely to vote Democratic, or Republican voters who can be moved by a specific appeal on one issue but not by the Party's main over-all TV-ad pitch. (In the 2002 Georgia governor's race, the Republicans were able to use pro-Confederate-flag material with rural voters without the major media markets noticing.) Both in Rove's shop in the White House and in the Democratic National Committee and A.F.L.-C.I.O. offices,

the air is thick with buzzwords like "niche marketing," "micro-modelling," "targeting," and "granular information." National politics, in other words, is turning into a very large version of the direct-mail business.

That development is good news for Karl Rove. Most of the reliable indicia of what he's up to involve his cultivating close political relations with specific groups, in particular locales, that know exactly what they want from government. If you have an idea involving a hitherto undiscovered but distinct group of voters that the Republican Party might be able to attract, chances are that you have heard from Rove. Deal Hudson, for example, is the editor and publisher of a small-circulation Catholic magazine called *Crisis*. In 1998, he published an article called "The Catholic Vote," in which he said that Catholic voters who attend Mass once a week or more—thirteen and a half million people—have more conservative political views than other Catholics and represent an incipiently Republican voting group. A few weeks after the article came out, Hudson got a call from Rove, who invited him to Austin for a long talk, which was followed by a meeting with Governor Bush, and then a lengthy visit by Rove to Hudson's office in Washington. Rove and Hudson remained in frequent touch through Election Day, 2000, and after the election Hudson got something he cared about tremendously and the general public didn't notice—the nomination (unsuccessful, it turned out) of a devoutly Catholic abortion opponent, John Klink, as the head of the State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration. Rove's attentiveness to emerging voter blocs caused a minor embarrassment not long ago, when it turned out that Sami al-Arian, a Kuwaiti living in Florida who was recently indicted for terrorist activities, had been to the White House as part of a Muslim group and met with him. Rove is interested in courting the Arab vote, especially in Michigan, the state with the biggest percentage of Arabs.



Everybody in politics thinks of Rove as an expert pursuer of interest groups, but whenever I asked him about this he resisted. I got the sense that this aspect of his reputation wounds his vanity, because it implies that he is engaged merely in, as he put it, "stringing together a group of associations that you found in the Washington Yellow Pages," rather than something more imaginative. Also, one of the rules with Rove is that anything he's been criticized for must be denied. He was widely condemned last year when the Bush Administration granted trade protection to the steel industry (which was thought to be an attempt to carry Pennsylvania in 2004) and big subsidies to farmers (to carry Iowa). Late last year, *Esquire* quoted from a long, indiscreet e-mail that John DiIulio, the short-tenured head of the White House effort to launch faith-based anti-poverty initiatives, had sent to Ron Suskind, a writer profiling Rove. DiIulio complained bitterly about the lack of "meaningful, substantive policy discussions" in the Bush White House. Therefore Rove is highly invested in countering the charge that he puts politics ahead of policy.

Every time I interviewed someone close to Rove, that person first checked with him to make sure it was O.K. to talk to me, and then, in the interview, made a point of offering a testimonial to Rove's deep and sincere interest in public policy. It's true that Rove is far more knowledgeable about the details of government than most other political consultants. But the idea that he performs Brookings Institution-style policy evaluations, never sullying himself with considerations of the politics of an issue, is probably a stretch; it would perhaps be better to say that Rove is unusually adept at using government policy as a political tool—in the same way that he is unusually adept at using books as a political tool. A friend of mine happened to be talking to Rove during the Presidential transition when Andrew Card, soon to be the White House chief of staff, looked in to say that the Associated Press was reporting that a New Jersey Republican congresswoman named Marge Roukema had been given the obscure position of Treasurer of the United States. Card noted that Dennis Hastert, the Speaker of the House, had suggested the appointment because he wanted to avoid Roukema's becoming chairman of a committee. This news provoked an outburst from Rove: absolutely not. (And, if you take a look at the lower-left-hand corner of a dollar bill, you'll see that the signature is not Marge Roukema's.) I asked Rove about it, and he said, "It's not an important job, but she had been of no help to us on the campaign and had been a net negative, and what they were attempting to do was give her a chance to leave Congress so they could fill her seat with somebody else, and solve a committee-chairman problem. But we had people. Rosario Morin, who is the Treasurer of the United States, had been a loyal warrior for Bush." Is that policy, or politics? I asked one of Rove's associates, Maria Cino, an Assistant Secretary of Commerce, for an example of his interest in policy, and she said that the Bush education slogan "Leave no child behind" "cuts across every demographic of race and sex." Exactly.

I asked Rove why he thought George H. W. Bush had lost the 1992 election. "If you go back and read President Bush's State of the Union address in 1992, it is a fabulous speech," he said. "But where was the government, where was the Administration, where were the people to execute it? This great man was let down by a campaign and an Administration that simply didn't measure up to what was needed to help him." Rove, obviously, is going to be riding herd on this Bush Administration to make sure that kind of thing doesn't happen again. It's also obvious, though, that Rove knows better than to allow the reëlection campaign to come across as the sum of a million hectoring telephone calls and group-outreach efforts. In another interview, Rove offered this formula for winning elections: "Have a robust domestic and foreign agenda. Don't trim your sails. Be bold. People want to hear big, significant changes. They don't want to be fed small micro-policy." The reëlection effort will position Bush as the steward of the war on terrorism. (Last year, Rove wrote a fan letter to a junior academic who had published a book pointing out that dur-

ing the Civil War the Republican Party developed a "tendency to conflate Republicanism with loyalty and Democracy with treason.") While the war in Iraq—which probably wasn't Rove's idea, but which he has been skillful at playing for maximum political advantage—was still going on, I asked him how voters might see the war during the 2004 campaign. "They will see the battle for Iraq as a chapter in a longer, bigger struggle," he said. "As a part of the war on terrorism." To assist people in seeing it that way, the 2004 Republican National Convention has been planned so as to recall the September 11th attacks to the maximum possible extent: the location is New York City, and the time is unusually late for a convention, extending into September.

In one of our interviews, I asked Rove to lay out the basic American political correlation of forces—who's a Republican and who's a Democrat. He started with Republicans. "First of all, there is a huge gap among people of faith," he said. "You saw it in the 2000 exit polling, where people who went to church on a frequent and regular basis voted overwhelmingly for Bush. They form an important part of the Republican base. It's easy to caricature them, but they're essentially your neighbors who go to church on a regular basis and whose life is a community of their faith and who are concerned about values. Another part of the coalition is the growing entrepreneurial class, which is increasingly nonwhite. A majority of new businesses in California last year were created by African-Americans, Latinos, and women. More women formed new small businesses in California last year than did men. I'm not sure exactly why, but if you're married and with kids you are far more likely to be a Republican than to be a Democrat."

He moved on to the Democratic base: "Somebody with a doctorate." This he said with perhaps a suggestion of a smirk. "What was Daniel Bell's phrase? The information class. Some elements of labor, particularly those that are in government-employee unions or those that are in the hospitality industry, but not the traditional trades. The traditional trades and crafts are increasingly independent—I wouldn't say Republican, but independent and willing to vote for a Republican. And people who are socially and economically liberal, who imbibed the values of the sixties and seventies and stuck with them. In some instances, inherited them from their parents." And then, besides the Democrats and the Republicans, there are the swing voters, the people in the middle—except that Rove hates that frame of reference, with its implication that politics entails persuading wishy-washy centrists by offering them broad, vague, moderate sentiments. "There is no middle!" Rove told me once; his mind is engaged in looking for groups that other consultants haven't discovered yet, and then figuring out what their particular passions are. In another conversation, he said, " 'Middle' is the wrong word. 'The unattached' is a better way of putting it. Because to say 'the middle' implies that they are philosophically centrist in outlook, and they aren't. Some of the people who are unaffiliated are on the left. Some of the people who are unattached are on the right. Some of the people who are unattached are hard to characterize philosophically at all on the traditional left-right continuum."

This makes for a much more complicated picture than the old one of better-off Republicans and worse-off Democrats. There is, however, still a brutally simple division between the parties, concerning government. Bigger government strengthens the Democratic Party. It generates federal employees who will mostly vote Democratic and government programs whose beneficiaries will have reason to feel grateful and protective toward a large central government. (There are nearly fifty thousand fewer federal postal workers today than in 1999.) Conversely, smaller government helps the Republicans. The more taxes are cut, the more programs are privatized, the fewer strictures there are on economic activity, the more people feel that their security and well-being depend on markets and not government or unions, the more the fundamental rationale of the Democratic Party erodes. This year's Economic Report of the President even

"Fetching is for losers."

"If anyone tries to come through that door, I want you to blast away—unless, of course, it's Becky with the coffee."

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toyed with the idea of eliminating the income tax. One of Rove's signature moves is to be unusually nonconfrontational, for a Republican, on some things—no Draconian budget cuts in programs for the poor in this Administration—so as to be better positioned to accomplish a much more important thing: fundamentally changing the social compact in order to enthrone the Republican Party as firmly as possible for as long as possible.

Karl Rove reads mostly American history, but that doesn't tell you much—everybody in Washington who reads reads American history. It's possible, though, to derive from the specifics of his reading preferences a sense of his over-all ideas about politics. He often mentions a book edited by Michael Novak, the Catholic theologian and conservative intellectual, called "Democracy and Mediating Structures: A Theological Inquiry." In conversations with me, Rove cited with great enthusiasm the work of Robert H. Wiebe, a historian at Northwestern who died not long ago. Ken Mehlman, Rove's deputy, mentioned Wiebe, too, and also a book called "Populism and Elitism: Politics in the Age of Equality," by Jeffrey Bell, a conservative who ran for the United States Senate from New Jersey in 1978. Rove is also a big fan of "Our Country," by Michael Barone, the conservative Washington journalist. All these works fit together. Wiebe's two best-known books, "The Search for Order 1877-1920" (1967) ("Yeah!" Rove said, when I mentioned this one. "There we go, baby! There we go!") and "Self-Rule: A Cultural History of American Democracy" (1995), are attacks on early-twentieth-century Progressivism; Wiebe presents the Progressives' enshrinement of "good government" and "public policy" as replacements for spoils-system party politics as having been a way for an educated élite to take more than its fair share of power. In the Rove schema, the large, centralized, public structures of the modern, regulated welfare state are to be mistrusted, and smaller, more private, more local forms of human organization are to be admired. It's this view that accounts for his conviction—and that of many other Republicans—that their party is anti-élitist: they define élite status in non-economic terms. In a memo about Tom Phillips's first campaign for Texas chief justice, Rove wrote, "No Republican has won by running as an establishment candidate. Our party's candidates have won by appearing as champions of the little man and not the big boys. . . . By nature, Texans are voters with chips on their shoulders. . . .Texans are drawn to candidates who, like them, believe there is a small group of insiders who run things for their personal benefit." One might find it curious that Rove, of all people, would see himself and his party as the dispossessed outsiders, but this identification of government with élitism rather than with democracy lies at the core of Rove's ideology. It explains why Rove's Republican-majority America would be not just pre-Great Society, and not just pre-New Deal, but pre-Progressive era.

Rove's intellectual hero is James Madison; his only child is named Andrew Madison Rove. The first time we spoke, I asked him about Madison's Federalist No. 10, which is about "curing the mischiefs of faction" (by "faction," Madison meant, roughly speaking, what we'd call "interest groups"). "*Very* good! *Very* good!" Rove boomed out, and then he elaborated, defending interest groups as being supportive of the national interest: "I think this goes back to the definition of 'faction.' I don't think Madison was contemplating, you know, the American Dry Cleaners Association. I think he was thinking about farmers, or tradesmen, or people who lived in the mountains, or planters, or seacoast dwellers, or townspeople, or land speculators, or stockjobbers. So I think he was thinking of it in a different way, much closer to what I'm suggesting is the proper way to think about it, than in the way that some look at modern American politics. It's not so much that the farmer says, 'I have to have $5.6 billion in drought relief,' as it is 'Do you recognize the importance of animal husbandry and of rural America?' and 'Do you have something that gives me hope for my future and for the future of my children?' The implication that, in No. 10, Madison is saying that groups are driven by their interest and there's only one way in which their interest can be satisfied, I think, is incorrect."

The next time I saw Rove, he had a copy of the Federalist Papers on the

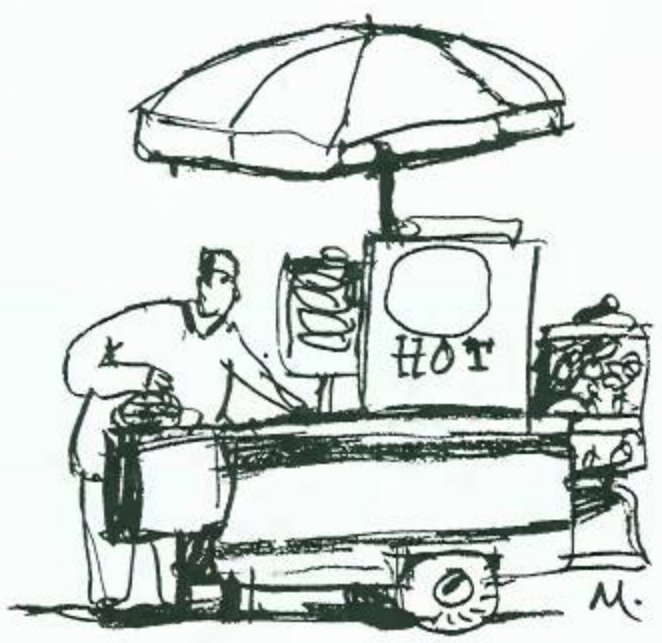
table in his office, with scraps of paper marking No. 10 and No. 51, which is also by Madison, and lays out the principle of separation of powers. (It contains the line "If men were angels, no government would be necessary.") In both essays, Madison is concerned with devising structural means to prevent any one force in American society from becoming too powerful. I asked Rove to talk more about the Federalist Papers.

"No. 10 is about how do you avoid the dangers of majority domination," he said, "which Madison characterizes as 'faction.' Which isn't necessarily the same as 'party,' or even 'interest.' He means, by 'faction' "—here Rove opened the book and began to read from it—" 'a number of citizens, whether amounting to a majority or minority of the whole, who are united and actuated by some common impulse of passion or of interest adverse to the rights of other citizens, or to the permanent and aggregate interests of the community.' And you can't say that interests are automatically bad. The issue is, is it adverse to the permanent and aggregate interests of the community? So what he's looking at is how do you, in a society, keep the majority from dominating?"

Rove flipped forward in the book. "And in No. 51 he says there are two ways to go about doing this. One is by creating 'a will in the community independent of the majority'—that is, of society itself. Heredity or self-appointed authority. The other is 'by comprehending in the society so many separate descriptions of citizens as will render an unjust combination of a majority of the whole very improbable, if not impracticable.' Again, it's not that he's against majorities—he says 'an unjust combination of a majority of the whole.' Well, that means there could be a *just* combination of a majority of the whole. But how do you guard against permanent, oppressive domination by a group, a majority, over all others? And he says you can try it two ways. One is by heredity or self-appointed authority, and that's precarious. The second way is the federal republic." Here he picked up the book and read aloud again. " 'The society itself will be broken into so many parts, interests, and classes of citizens that the rights of individuals or of the minority will be in little danger from interested combinations of the majority.' "

So, I said, Rove was saying that if we had to choose, for our protection against the perils of democracy, between a benign élite, of the sort that the Progressives imagined themselves to be, and an intricate Madisonian balancing of groups—Rove cut in: "Groups balancing!" I asked what he thought of Alexis de Tocqueville. "Tocqueville all the way!" Rove replied. "I think he's more Madison than Madison, because I do think Madison, to some degree, views the utility of competing interests as exactly that: competing, and through their competition they will weaken the drive of anyone for dominant majority status, oppressive majority status. But I think Tocqueville values the little battalions"—here the ever-ambitious Rove was unconsciously enlarging Edmund Burke's idea of "the little platoon we belong to in society"—"for the sake of being little battalions."

Karl Rove presents what would be an interesting theoretical problem, only it isn't theoretical. What happens when someone who believes that the best society is one in which many groups compete and counterbalance each other, to the point of perfect political equipoise, is also in a position to work with tremendous aggressiveness and skill to stitch these groups together in such a way as to create the very thing that Madison most feared: a single, permanent, crushingly powerful majority group, in the form of the Republican Party, which, after all, is where most people who have power already, economically, make their political home? Rove genially dismissed the idea. As important as building a long-lasting, dominant Republican majority is to him in practice, in the abstract he sees one-party domination as a problem that would automatically correct itself. He communicates the feeling that he's having a great time trying to make the Republican Party dominant, and appears to believe that, if he succeeds, some Democratic Karl Rove will probably come along in a few decades and figure out how to undo his handiwork—so, no worries. His project, for now, involves the practical task that he has set for himself, not the abstract concerns that a good Madisonian ought to have about his succeeding at it.



In our last interview, I tried out on Rove a scenario I called "the death of the Democratic Party." The Party has three key funding sources: trial lawyers, Jews, and labor unions. One could systematically disable all three, by passing tort-reform legislation that would cut off the trial lawyers' incomes, by tilting pro-Israel in Middle East policy and thus changing the loyalties of big Jewish contributors, and by trying to shrink the part of the labor force which belongs to the newer, and more Democratic, public-employee unions. And then there are three fundamental services that the Democratic Party is offering to voters: Social Security, Medicare, and public education. Each of these could be peeled away, too: Social Security and Medicare by giving people benefits in the form of individual accounts that they invested in the stock market, and public education by trumping the Democrats on the issue of standards. The Bush Administration has pursued every item on that list. Rove didn't offer any specific objection but, rather, a general caveat that the project might be too ambitious. "Well, I think it's a plausible explanation," he said. "I don't think you ever kill any political party. Political parties kill themselves, or are killed, not by the other political party but by their failure to adapt to new circumstances. But do you *weaken* a political party, either by turning what they see as assets into liabilities, and/or by taking issues they consider to be theirs, and raiding them?" The thought brought to his round, unlined, guileless face a boyish look of pure delight. "Absolutely!" ♦

SKETCHBOOK BY MARK ULRIKSEN

PURE PLEASURE

Baseball joy can be fleeting—just ask George Steinbrenner—but there's a lot of it around in May. Just now, the Cubs, under their new manager, Dusty Baker, are in first place in their division; the Red Sox hang a bare three games behind the Yankees, in spite of the Bombers' early 18–3 bolt from the blocks, the best start in franchise history; and the Kansas City Royals—the *Royals*?—are undefeated at home and are on top of the American League Central. For all that, the surest way to search joy out might begin at the corner of Second and Market Streets, in downtown San Francisco, where you can catch a glimpse of Pacific Bell Park's low bricky façade, there by the edge of the Bay, an easy downhill fifteen minutes away. Let's walk. The Giants are in first place, too, but their inbound fans today are also warmed by the conviction that their three-year-old landmark has become the best address in baseball: a place where the game and the celebration of the game have found convergence. Outside, Pac Bell has the utilitarian, semi-shabby air of a bygone urban ballyard. It is squeezed onto thirteen acres, a small footprint in this era of parking-lot palazzos, and presents the quirky angles and back-alley vistas of a playground stuffed down inside some old city geography. All this is deliberate, for Pac Bell was modelled from the fanly visions of the president, Peter A. Magowan, a former Safeway C.E.O., who grew up in New York. (The back of this year's Giants Media Guide bears a full-page photograph of the curving, beflagged entrance to Ebbets Field, under the message "Cathedral.") This place is trafficky and noisy, too, with streetcars way outnumbering the limos. Water is near, you sense, but you won't find it until you join the crowds pouring in from MoMo's bar, across King Street. Go with them past O'Doul Gate and along an unexpected walkway and suddenly the scents and sights and fresh breezes of the Bay are in your face. To the left, there's a brick wall with curved classic arcades and, up on top, fans walking to and fro. If you step inside one of the shaded openings and up to a chain-link fence, you're in right field, or just behind it, with the thick grass stretching away toward home and the dugouts and the curve and rise of the stands. You can stay here all day if you want—it's free—and without much company until Barry Bonds, tiny only from here, steps up to bat again.

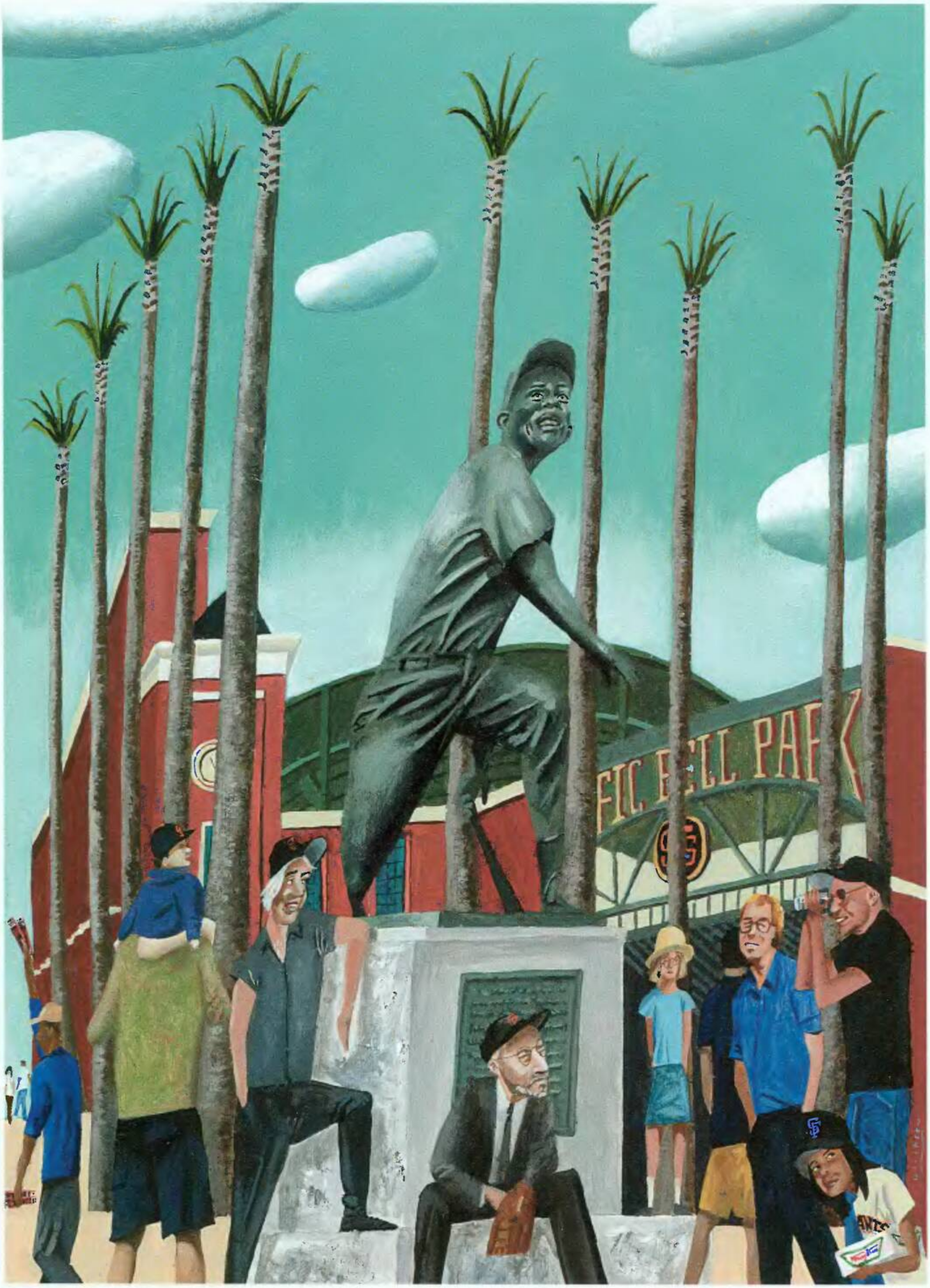
For local fans, pride in Pac Bell also includes a smug knowledge that the price tag for all this, three hundred and sixty million dollars, has been borne by Magowan and a consortium of partners, and not by the city. Not by the fans, that is, who rejected such an idea in several referendums, and brought about baseball's first privately financed ballpark since 1962. There is a sense, too, that the fans must have had a hand in the building as well. "I run here all the time," Stephanie Salter, a writer with the *Chronicle*, said the other day. "The old warehouses and run-down docks of this China Basin district were almost my favorite part of town. All the time they were building the park, I kept thinking, They're going to mess it up—only they didn't. Now I run all the way to Pac Bell, then out onto the pier beyond McCovey Cove, and back again. I always stop at the Willie Mays statue, in front, which is so full of motion and emotion. Sometimes I follow his eyes and try to find the ball in the sky."

Going to a ballgame with a crazy local fan is never a bad idea. Here it's the friendly Mark Ulriksen, a native San Francisco artist, who has grouped some of his regular Giants gang around the Mays icon in his painting (opposite) while he snaps a photo. (That's his daughter Emma with the Krispy Kremes safe in hand.) They've arrived, as usual, on the N-Judah Muni car from the Haight, and soon they'll take their regular seats in Section VR 304. Overleaf, Ulriksen has captured the essentials from the View Level sector of Pac Bell: the sweep of the Bay Bridge toward Oakland, the late shipping news, the morning fog clouds dispersing, and another glorious Splash Hit homer by Barry Bonds. "I like it that there have been so few of these," Ulriksen observes. "Only twenty-five, ever, and twenty-three of them by Barry. And I really like the unsymmetrical outfield wall, with all those strange angles in it. This place is really built for defense. Those are trained Portuguese water dogs jumping into the cove—they're sort of a joke here. They almost never get to the ball before the kayakers. I don't know what all those boats are, but, if we were watching at home, Jon Miller"—the Giants' TV announcer—"would tell us. He's sort of boaty."

Ulriksen has recovered from last October's heartbreak (he's a *fan*), when the Giants departed Pac Bell one up in the World Series, only to drop the last games to the Angels in Anaheim. His favorite evening here was the last National League playoff game against the Cardinals, and third baseman David Bell sliding into home in the bottom of the ninth for the pennant. "All this place needed when it opened was a little history, and Barry has given us plenty of that," he offers. "Now we have a new manager"—Felipe Alou—"and he's even got the Giants running the bases a little. Maybe that's historic, too."

Ulriksen hasn't depicted a particular game in his eloquent spread, but the hapless Mets (and a pathetically shifted infield defense) are clearly the visitors. He isn't gloating. "San Francisco has always been famous for its hills and views," he says as Barry figuratively rounds the bases, "and what's great is that now we've been given a new one."

—*Roger Angell*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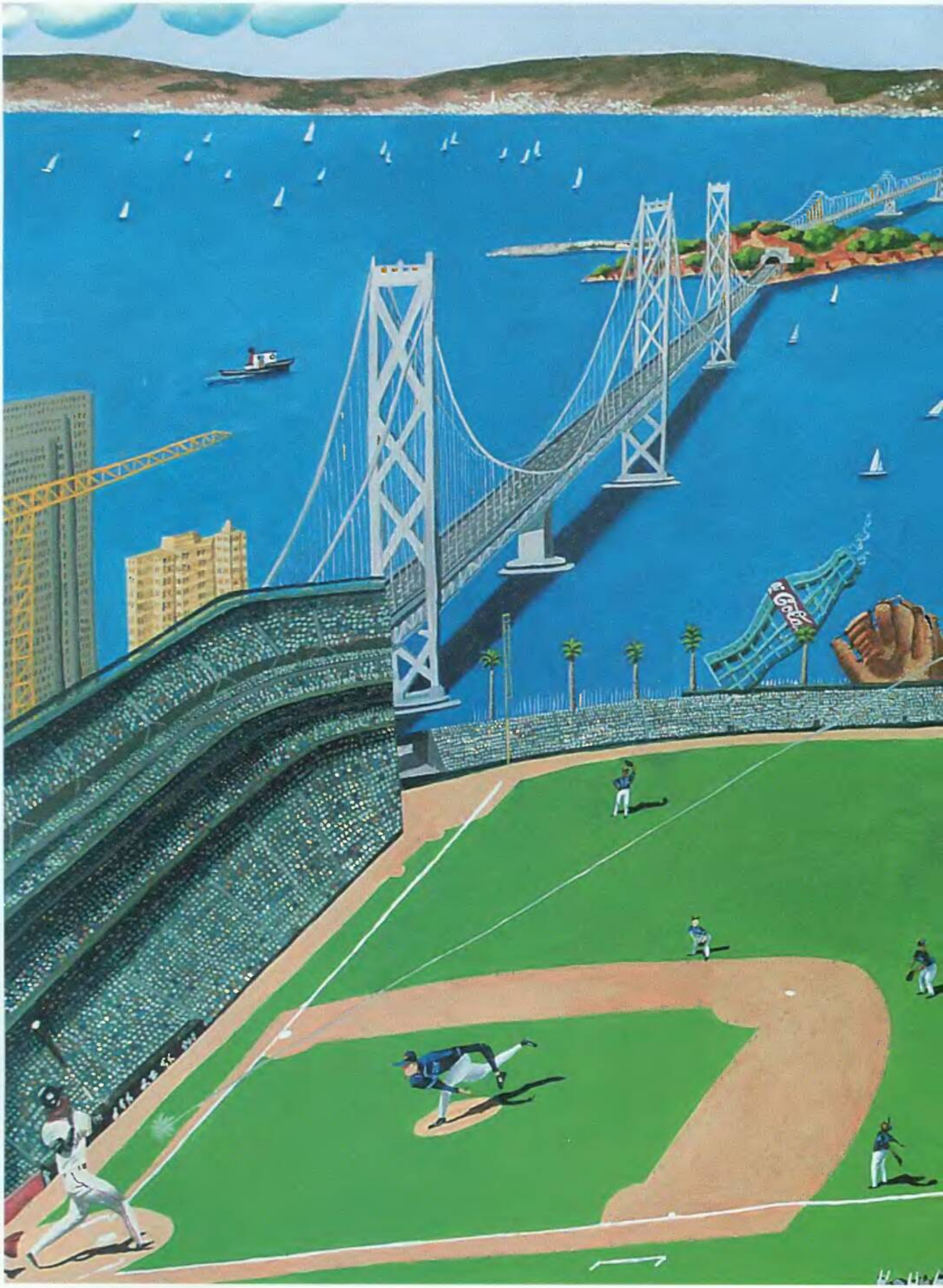


Budweiser
PACIFIC BELL PARK

FICTION

WALTER JOHN HARMON

BY E. L. DOCTOROW

When Betty told me she would go that night to Walter John Harmon I didn't think I reacted. But she looked into my eyes and must have seen something—some slight loss of vitality, a moment's dullness of expression. And she understood that for all my study and hard work the Seventh Attainment was still not mine.

Dearest, she said, don't be discouraged. The men have more difficulty. Walter John Harmon knows that and commends your struggle. You can go see him if you wish—it is the prerogative of husbands.

No, I said, I'm all right.

After she had gone, I went walking in the evening light across the pastures. It is beautiful country here, a broad undulant valley with brooks and natural ponds and no ground light to dim the stars or the moving lights of the jets up among them. This is where the Holy City will descend. The Community has in just two short years assembled the parcels of this valley. I did some real-estate law back in Charlotte, and I am proud to say that I have had no small hand in our accomplishment. It is in the nature of a miracle that Walter John Harmon has, in his effortless way, drawn so many of us to his prophecy. And that we have given everything we possess—not to him, to the Demand that comes through him. We are not idiots. We are not cult victims. In many quarters, we are laughed at for following as God's prophet a garage mechanic, who, in his teens, was imprisoned for car theft. But this blessed man has revolutionized our lives. From the first moment I was in his presence I felt resolved in my soul. Everything was suddenly right. I was who I was. It is hard to explain. I saw the outside world darkened, as in a film negative. But I was in the light. And that I was blessed seemed to be established in his eyes. Walter's pale-blue eyes are set so deep under the ridge of his brow that the irises are occluded at the top, like half-moons. It is almost a chilling gaze you feel upon you, as gentle as it may be—something not of this world but ineffable, expressive of God, like the gaze of an animal.

So I knew the failing within me when Betty was this night summoned for Purification. Walter is at a level beyond lust. This is apparent, since all the wives, even the plainest, partake of his communion. His ministry annuls the fornications of a secular society. Betty and I, for example, made love many times before we were married. And the Community's children, the children in white who have never known carnal sin, are not permitted to look at Walter John Harmon, lest he inspire them to confusion. They are the precious virgins, girls and boys, whose singing brings him such joy. He says nothing to them, of course, but smiles and closes those remarkable eyes and the tears stream from them like rain down a windowpane.

Betty and I learned about Walter John Harmon from the Internet. I found myself reading someone's Web log—how that happened I can't remember. I think of it now as the beginning of His summons, for nothing is without significance in this world made by God. I called Betty and she came into my study, and together we read of this most remarkable event of the tornado that had occurred the year before in the town of Fremont, in west Kansas. There were links, too, all from this locality and all telling the same story. I logged on to the archives of the regional newspapers and confirmed that there had been a series of tornadoes throughout the state at that time, and that a particularly destructive twister hit Fremont head on. But, beyond that, not one newspaper reported the key thing. Not even in the Fremont *Sun-Ledger* was there an account of this one inexplicable occurrence of the cyclone that came through the middle of town, flinging cars into the air, shattering storefronts, lifting houses off their foundations, and, among other disasters, setting off a gas-and-oil fire that pooled on the floor of the repair shop of the Getty station on the corner of Railroad and Division Streets, where Walter John Harmon worked as a mechanic.

I hold in my mind a composite account of what happened from the Web logs and from what we have since heard recounted by the townspeople who witnessed this or that particular moment and who followed Walter in his ministry and are now the Community Elders. Walter John Harmon himself has not been persuaded to write down a testament, nor has he permitted anything to be written in the way of documentation. "It is not the time for that," he says. And then, "May it never be the time, for the day we falter and lose our way, that will be the time." In fact, nothing in the Community is written. The Ideals, the Imperatives, the Assignments and Obligations are all pronounced, and, once spoken by the prophet, are carried and remembered by means of daily prayer. The miracles of the tornado are held in the imaginations of our minds and we speak of them to one another in our workday or social gatherings, so that as the years pass there will be a Consensus of the inner truth and its authority will be unquestionable.

As he stood by the pool of fire, the garage doors, first, and then the roof and then the collapsed walls were lifted and spun into the black funnel. Only Walter John Harmon stood where he stood, and then was slowly raised in his standing and turned slowly in his turning, calmly and silently, his arms stretched wide in the black shrieking, with the things of our lives whirling in the whirlwind above him—car fenders, machines from the Laundromat, hats and empty coats and trousers, tables, mattresses, plates and knives and forks, TV sets and computers, all malignantly alive in the black howling. And then a child flew into Walter John Harmon's left arm and another fell into his right arm, and he held them steadfast and was lowered to the ground where he had stood. And then the dreaded wind that takes all breath away was gone, having blown itself to bits. And the fields beyond the town were strewn with the several dead and dying among their possessions. But the pool of fire in the Getty garage was nothing but a ring of blackened concrete, and the sun was out as if the tornado had never been, and the mothers of those two children came running and found them bruised and bleeding and crying but alive. Only then did Walter John Harmon begin again to breathe, though he stood where he stood, unable to move, as if in a trance, until

BERNARD FAUCON, "LA DOUZIÈME CHAMBRE D'AMOUR" (1987)/AGENCE VU

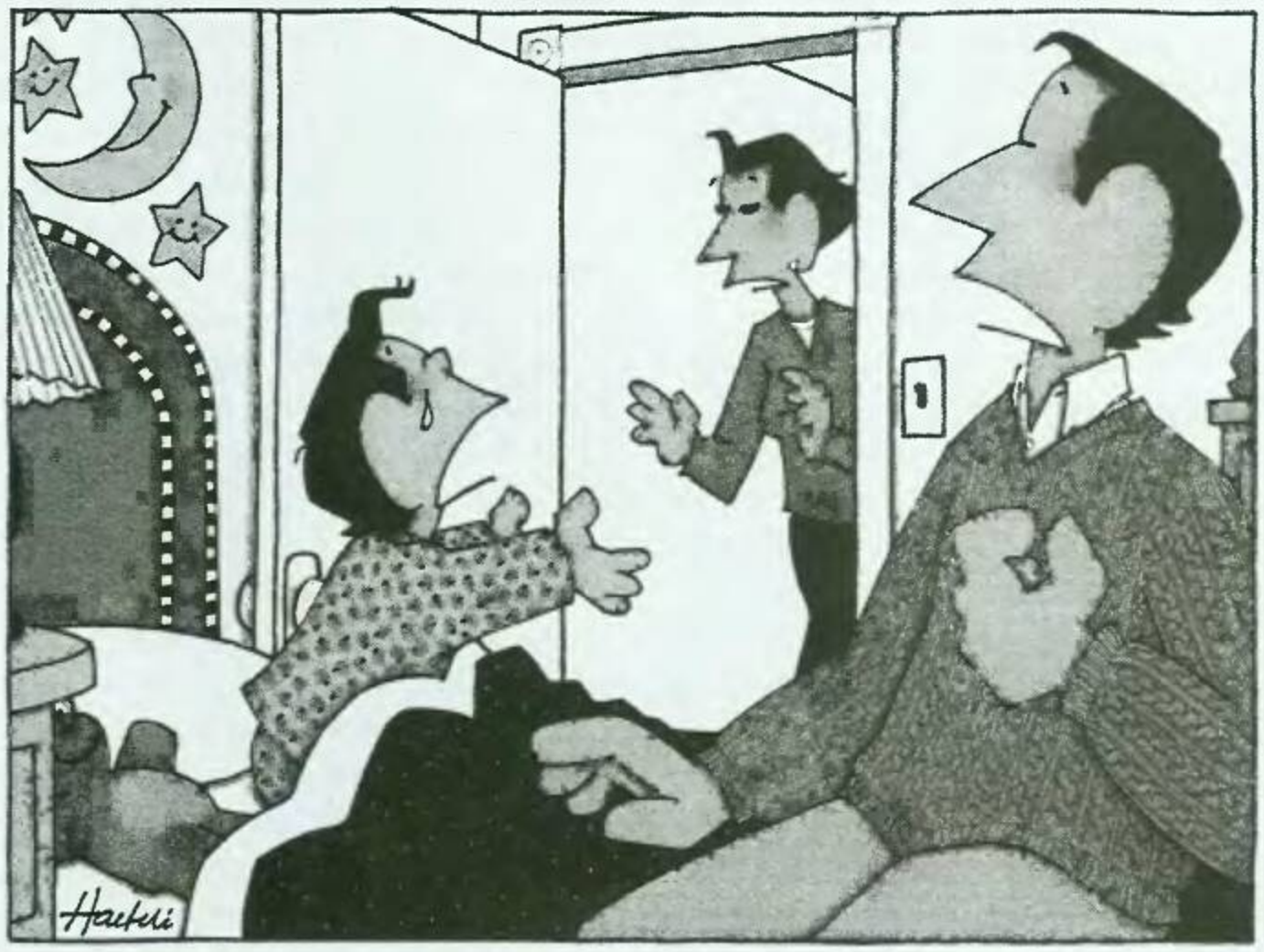
he collapsed and lost consciousness.

All of this is in the Consensus. Other elements of the miracle are still debated by the Community and, I suppose, come under the heading of apocrypha. One of the Elders, Ansel Bernes, who had owned a clothing store, claims that seven mercury street lamps on the walking street in the Fremont business district came on and stayed on when the tornado hit. I can't quite accept this. According to the *Sun-Ledger*, Fremont's power outage was total. It took the local utility two days to get everyone back on line.

When Betty and I came here, we had been married a dozen years, with no children to show for it. One of the appeals of the Community is that we are all parents of all children. While the adults live in quarters of their own, as in the outer world, the children room together in the main house. At present, we are fifty families with a human treasury of seventy-eight children, ranging in age from two to fifteen.

Except for the main house, which was once a retreat for elderly nuns of the Roman Catholic persuasion, and to which we have added a new wing, all the Community buildings were built by members, according to the specifications of Walter John Harmon. He called for square, boxlike structures with gable roofs for the adult houses, each of which contains two apartments of two rooms each. His own residence is slightly larger, with a gambrel roof that gives it the appearance of a barn. All buildings in the complex are painted white—no colors are permitted, exterior or interior. Metal fixtures are not allowed, window frames are wood, all water is drawn by hand from wells, there is no indoor plumbing, and communal showers, men's and women's, are jerry-rigged in tents. Walter John Harmon has said, "We praise what is temporary, we cherish the impermanent, for there can be no comparison with what is coming that is not an impiety."

But in the business suite in the new wing of the main house we do have computers, faxes, copiers, and so on, powered by a gasoline generator behind the building—though we intend when it is practical to switch to solar cells. All of this is by dispensation, because, regrettably, we do have necessary business with the outside world. We handle legal challenges from state and county officials and must deal also with private suits brought by unthinking or opportunistic relations of our family members. But only the Community lawyers, and Elder Rafael Altman, our financial officer and C.P.A., and his bookkeepers, and the women who provide clerical help may enter these premises. Three of us practice law, and after morning prayers we go to work just like everyone else. By dispensation we own the habiliments of the legal profession—suits, shirts, ties, polished shoes—which we don for those occasions when we must meet with our counterparts in the world outside. We are driven by horse and wagon to the Gate, down at the paved road some two miles away. There we have the choice of the three parked S.U.V.s, though never the Hummer. The Hummer is reserved for Walter John Harmon. He does not proselytize but he does schedule spiritual meetings on the outside. Or he will attend ecumenical or scholarly conferences on this or that religious or social issue. He is never invited to participate, but is eloquent enough sitting quietly in the audience in his robe, his head bowed, his face almost hidden in the fall of his hair, and his hands folded under his chin.



"Apparently, he's not ready for stories filled with moral ambiguity."

Betty returned early the next morning, the sun coming with her through the door, and I welcomed her with a hug. I meant it, too—I loved seeing her face in the morning. She is very fair and rises from her sleep with her cheeks flushed like a child's and her hazel eyes instantly alert to the day. She is as lithe and fit as she was when she played field hockey in college. If you look closely, you can see tiny lines radiating from the corners of her eyes, but this only makes her more attractive. Her hair is the color of wheat, and she still wears it short, as she did when I met her, and she still has that spring to her step and her typically energetic way of doing things.

We prayed together and then we had our bread and tea, chatting all the while. Betty served as a Community teacher, she had the kindergarten, and she was talking about her day's plan. I felt better now. It was a beautiful day dawning with coverlets of white webbing on the grass. I had a renewed confidence in my own feelings.

All at once, the most hideous carnal images arose in my mind. I wanted to speak but could not catch my breath.

What is it, Jim, what?

Betty held my hand. I closed my eyes until the images disappeared and I could breathe again.

Oh, my dear one, she said. Last night was not the first time, after all. And have our lives changed? I'm telling you that it is not a normal human experience with any of the normal results.

I don't want to hear about it. It is not necessary for me to hear about it.

It is no more, or no less, than a sacrament. It is no more than when the priest placed the wafer on our tongues.

I held my hand up. Betty looked at me inquiringly, as in the old days, a pretty bird with its head cocked, wondering who I could possibly be.

You know, she said, I had to tell Walter John Harmon. You should go see him. Look how your mouth is set, so hard, so angry.

It was not for you to tell him, I said.

I recognized an Obligation.

Outside in the sun, I breathed the sweet air of the valley and tried to calm myself. Everything around me was a vision of serene life. We are the quietest people. You will never hear a loud argument or see a public display of temperament anywhere in the Community. Our children never fight, or push each other, or band together in hurtful cliques the way children do. The muslin we wear that suggests our common priesthood quiets the heart. The prayers we utter, the food we grow for ourselves in our fields provide an immense and recurring satisfaction.

Betty followed me. Please, Jim, she said. You should talk to him. He will see you.

Yes? And what if I am excused from my work, if I am remanded, who can argue the case?

What case is that?

You're not entrusted to know. But believe me it's critical.

He will not remand you then.

How can you know that? I may not be an Elder, but I'm approved to go beyond the Gate. And doesn't that presuppose the Seventh?

Why was I having to defend myself? Please, I said, I won't talk about this anymore.

Betty turned from me, and I felt her coldness. I had the maniacal thought that the Purifications wouldn't be a problem for me if I no longer loved my wife.

At our supper at the end of the day, she asked me to do something, some minor chore that I would have done without her asking, and I thought her tone was officious.

To what extent was my legal work in the outside world holding me back from the prophetic realization offered by Walter John Harmon? Didn't I have one foot in and one foot out? But wasn't that my Imperative? He himself had said that the higher Attainments were elusive, difficult, and, as if they had personalities of their own, they were given to teasing us with simulacra of themselves. So there was no shame in being remanded. Perhaps for my own sake I should have requested it. But then would I not be putting myself before the needs of the Community? And wouldn't that be to relinquish the Sixth Attainment?

The following morning, before work, I went to the Tabernacle to pray.

Our Tabernacle is no more than a lean-to. It stands at the high end of the lawn bordering the apple orchard. On a wooden table of our own making and without any ornamentation or covering sit a white stone and a common latchkey. I knelt in the grass in the sun, with my head bowed and my hands clasped. But, even as I uttered the prayers, my mind split in two. As I mouthed the words, all I could think of was this question: Had I come to the Community from the needs of my own heart, or had I merely gone along out of deference to the convictions of my wife? That's how badly the doubts were assailing me.

When I looked up, Walter John Harmon was standing in the Tabernacle. I had not seen him approach. Nor was he looking at me. He was staring at the ground seeing nothing but his own thoughts.

Walter does not deliver sermons because, as he maintains, we are not a church, we are an Unfolding Revelation. He will appear at the Tabernacle unannounced at any time of the day, any day of the week, as the spirit moves him. At such times, the word goes out and the members who can manage it run to hear him, and those whose work prevents this will hear his words later, as committed to memory by those in attendance.

People came running now. Because Walter John Harmon is so soft-spoken, it became apparent to the Elders at one point that a dispensation had to be made for a wireless microphone and a loudspeaker. As he stood in the Tabernacle in his characteristic way, with the fingertips of one hand touching the wooden table, and as he began to speak, as he would have even if there were no one there to listen, someone arrived with the speaker and set up the microphone on a stand in front of him. Even amplified, the prophet's voice was barely more than a whisper. There was such a diffidence about him, for, as he had told us more than once, his was a reluctant prophecy. He had not sought it, or wanted it. Before God came to him in that cyclone, he had not even thought about religion. He had led an unruly life in his youth and had done many bad things, and he felt that perhaps that was why he'd been chosen—to demonstrate the mysterious greatness of God.

What Walter John Harmon said on this morning was along these lines: Everywhere and at all times, numeration is the same for all mankind. This is because, no less than the earth or the stars, numbers are the expression of God. And so as they add and subtract and divide and multiply, as they combine and separate and conclude, they are the same always to the understanding of human beings, no matter who we are or what language we speak. God, in the form of numerical truth, will weigh the fruit on the scale, He will measure your height, He will give you the tolerances of your engine parts, and tell you the length of your journey. He will offer you numbers to go on forever without end, and we call this infinity because our mathematics count up to God. And when Jesus the Son of God died for our sins, He took to Himself the infinity of them, because He was of God and could die for the sins of the dead and the living and the unborn for generations to come.

A prophet is not the Son of God, he is one of you, he is an ordinary man of remorse, like you, and so his numbers are no more infinite than the years of his life are infinite. He cannot die for mankind's sins, he can only work to remove the sin of this or that soul, taking it into himself, and adding it into him-

self. Whatever faults you in the eyes of God—your carnal desires, your greed, your attachment to what is unworthy—your mortal prophet lifts from you and takes unto himself. And he does that until the weight of the numbers will bury him and he is welcomed in Hell. For he is an ordinary mortal, and if he takes on your sins they become his own, and it is to Hell he will go—not to God at his Right Hand but to the Devil in the depths of Hell's eternal torment. "Only the adults purified by this prophecy will join the virgin children in the Holy City to come," Walter John Harmon said. "And I will not be among them."

There was consternation at those words. We knew that because the Transference of Sin was the key to his teaching Walter risked exclusion from the Holy City. We had discussed this at our Meetings. The prophecy was Jesus-like but not Jesus, it was Moses-like but not Moses. Yet to hear it put in mathematical terms was shocking—people stood and cried out, because now Walter John Harmon was speaking of something as incontestable as a sum, as measurable as a weight or a volume, and the reality of such a cut-and-dried formulation seemed almost too much for us to bear.

He did not walk away but looked over us with a faint smile on his lips. Was he suggesting that his doom was imminent? His blond and graying hair was tied this morning into a ponytail, which made him seem younger than his thirty-seven years. And at this moment his pale-blue eyes were those of a youth unaware of the tragedy of his life. As he stood and waited, the members were slowly calmed by his silence. We went to him and knelt and kissed his robe. Perhaps I was the only one this day to feel that his words were a personal communication. They seemed to be responding to my torments, as if, having intuited my reluctance to seek his counsel, Walter John Harmon had chosen this way to remind me of his truth and to restore the strength of my conviction. But that was the effect, always, after all, for the power of his word was in its uncanny precise application to whatever had been in your own mind, though you might not have before realized it.

All who heard him this day knew the truth of his prophecy and the resolution and peace of surrendering to it. I felt once again secure in the privilege of the Seven Attainments. I loved Walter John Harmon. How then could I fault my wife's love for him?

A week or so later, I dressed for the outer world and drove one of our S.U.V.s to the state courthouse in Granger, a trip of some sixty miles. Whenever I walked into a courthouse now, I felt a great unease, as an alien in a strange land. Yet I had passed the bar exams of three contiguous states and had spent my adult life in the general practice of law, and so there was, simultaneously, a professional sense of belonging to such buildings as this old red stone horror with its corner cupolas, which dominated the square at the city's center. It spoke to me as the native architecture of my own American past, and when I climbed the worn steps and heard my heels clicking on the floor of the entry hall I had to remind myself that I was an envoy from the future, about to address in their own vocabulary the denizens of the dark ages of secular life.

This was to be a hearing before an Administrative Judge. The State Commissioner of Education had moved to suspend the Community's license to school its children. A failure to comply with the statutes requiring mandatory literacy for every child was said to be grounds for a suspension.

We were met not in a courtroom but in a room used mostly for jury empanelling in tort cases. It had big windows and dark-green shades pulled against the morning sun. The State had a trio of lawyers. The Judge sat behind another table. There were chairs around the walls for spectators—all filled. As far as I knew, there had been no public announcement of this morning's hearing. A couple of policemen stood by the doors.

The State argued that in using only the Book of Revelation to teach our children to read and write and, further, that in permitting them ever after to read nothing else than the Book of Revelation, or write nothing but from its passages, we were in default of the literacy statutes. The distinction was made as between education and indoctrination and that the latter as practiced by our cult (I rose to object to that derogatory label) contravened the presumption of literacy as a continuing process, generating ever-widening reading experiences and access to information. Whereas in our close-ended pedagogy, when one text and one text only was all the child was going to read, or recite, or intone, or chant forever after, the open-ended presumption of literacy was negated. The child would learn the text by heart and by rote repeat it with no further call on linguistic skills.

I argued that literacy had no such open-ended presumption, it merely meant the ability to read—that when the State's own inspectors had sat in on our first- and second-grade classes they had been

MAY

Look. May has come in.
It's strewn those blue eyes all over the harbor.
Come, I haven't had word of you in ages.
You're constantly terrified,
Like the kittens we drowned when we were little.
Come and we'll talk over all of the old same things,
The value of being pleasant,
The need to adjust to the doubts,
How to fill the holes we've got inside us.
Come, feel the morning reaching your face,
Whenever we're saddened everything looks dark,
When we're heartened, again, the world crumbles.
Every one of us keeps forever someone else's hidden side,
If it's a secret, if a mistake, if a gesture.
Come and we'll flay the winners,

Laughing at our self leapt off the bridgeway.
We'll watch the cranes at work in the port in silence,
The gift for being together in silence being
The principal proof of friendship.
Come with me, I want to change nations,
Change towns. Leave this body aside
And go into a shell with you,
With our smallness, like sea snails.
Come, I'm waiting for you,
We'll continue the story that ended a year ago,
As if inside the white birches next to the river
Not a single additional ring had grown.

—Kirmen Uribe

(Translated, from the Basque, by Elizabeth Macklin.)

satisfied that the principles of reading and writing were being taught, in terms of word recognition and phonetics, spelling and grammar, and that it was only when they had discovered, in the upper grades, that the Book of Revelation was the children's sole reading material that they had found the Community at fault. Yet the children as taught by us are, in fact, able to read anything and are literate. Because we direct their reading and contemplation to the sacred text that is the basis of our beliefs and social organization, the Commissioner would impinge on our right of free religious expression, as set forth in the First Amendment. Every religion teaches its tenets from one generation to the next, I said. And every parent has the right to raise his child according to his beliefs. That is what the parents of our Community were doing and had every right to do, whereas the State's claim of failed literacy was, on the face of it, an attempt to interfere with a minority's religious practice of which it does not approve.

The Judge ordered a suspension of our license, but declared at the same time that, the issues being substantive, he would defer his order so as to allow time for a court challenge. It was what I had expected. The lawyers and I shook hands, and that was it.

But as I was leaving the room one of the spectators stopped me, an older man, with gnarled hands and a cane. You are working for the Devil, sir, he said. Shame on you, shame, he called after me. And then, in the corridor, a reporter I recognized was at my side, walking with me at my pace. Playing the freedom-of-religion card, eh, Counsellor? You know, they'll really be down on you now. Studies, tests, videotapes, school records. Process of discovery.

Nice to see you, I said.

Anyway, you bought yourself six months. Six more months of doing what you do. Except, of course, if your boy is nailed before then.

Christ was nailed, I said.

Yeah, the reporter said, but not for having a Swiss bank account.

I was as relieved to get back to the great valley as a soldier is to get back to his own lines. There was a lovely sense of bustling anticipation as the weekend approached: we were to have an Embrace.

This was a once-a-month occasion when we received the visitors who had heard of us, and made inquiries, or had perhaps attended one of Walter John Harmon's outside Meetings and found themselves interested enough to spend the day with us. They parked their cars at the Gate and were brought up by hay wagon. In our early days, we didn't think of security. Now we copied down driver's licenses and asked for signatures and the names of family members.

On this Saturday morning in May, perhaps two dozen people arrived, many with children, and we greeted them with heartfelt smiles and coffee and cake under the two oak trees. I was not on the Hospitality Squad, but Betty was. She knew how to make people feel comfortable. She was pretty and compassionate, and altogether irresistible, as I well knew. She could immediately spot the most needful tender souls and go right to them. Of course, no one who appeared on these days was *not* needful or they wouldn't have come. But some were skittish or melancholic or so on the edge of despair as to be rudely skeptical.

In the end, no one could withstand the warmth and friendliness of our Embrace. We treated all newcomers like long-lost friends. And we knew how to keep them busy. There was the tour of the residences and the main house, where the children put on a sing. And there was the Enrobing. All the guests were given the muslin robe to wear over their clothes. This had the effect of delighting them as a game would delight them, but it also acclimated them to our appearance. We didn't seem so strange then. Several long refectory tables were brought out from the carpentry shop, and the guests helped lay the cloths and carry out the bowls and platters with all the wonderful foodstuffs—the meat pies, the vegetables from our gardens, the breads from our bakery, the pitchers of cool well water and homemade lemonade. All the children sat down together at their tables, and all the adults at theirs, there in the warm sun. Every guest was placed between two members, with another directly across. And our Elder Sherman Beasley stood who had a naturally booming voice and he said grace, and everyone tucked in.

It was such a beautiful day. I was able to sit in my place at the end of one of the long tables and forget for a while the threats to our existence and feel blessed to be here under a blue sky and to feel the sun on my face as God's warmth.

The conversation was lively. We were instructed to try to answer every question

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as diplomatically as possible. We were not to give doctrine or theology—only the Elders were entrusted to do that.

A shy young woman on my right asked me why she had not seen any dogs in our Community. She was physically unprepossessing, with thick glasses, and she held herself on the bench as if to take up as little space as possible. This is sort of like a big farm, she said in her thin voice, and I've never been on a farm that didn't have a dog or two.

I told her only that dogs were unclean.

She nodded and thought awhile and after a sip of lemonade she said, Everyone here is so happy.

Do you find that odd?

Yes, sort of.

I couldn't help smiling. We are with Walter John Harmon, I said.

After lunch came our big surprise. We took everyone to the West Section, where, on a pre-laid concrete base, a house was going up for a recently sworn-in couple. The framing was done, and now, as everyone sat in the grass and watched, we men arose and, under the guidance of our carpenters, some of us went to work on the board-and-batten siding, while others were up on the roof beams, laying out the planking, and the skilled among us were fitting out the doors and the windows. Of course, none of the inside finishing would be done that day, but the thrill our guests had was in seeing so many of us making such quick work of building a home. It was a lesson without words. In fact, it was a kind of performance, because we had built the identical home many times over and each man knew what he had to do and where each nail went. There was a natural music to all the hammering and sawing and hauling and grunting, and we could hear our audience laugh and occasionally applaud with delight.

At the end, as we all stood by, Elder Manfred Jackson presented a scroll to the new first-floor occupants, the Donaldsons, a gray-haired couple, who held hands and wept. After the Donaldsons were embraced by several members and brought to sit down among them, Elder Jackson turned to the visitors and explained what they had witnessed: they had witnessed the Third Attainment.

Manfred Jackson was our only black Elder. He was an imposing figure, tall, his shoulders as squared as a young man's, though he was in his eighties. His hair was white, and he wore the muslin robe like a king. With the Third Attainment, he said, these communicants of the Unfolding Revelation have forsworn all their personal property and given their wealth to the prophet. The Third Attainment is a considerable step up, for it is no small matter to abjure the false values of the world and rise from its filth. The prophet teaches us that there are seven steps to God-worthiness. Ours will be the kingdom of the chaste and the absolved, because whatever is ours, whatever we possess, whatever we think we cannot do without, we give to the prophet as his burden. He has brought us to live apart from the clamor and lies of the unbelieving. We wear his muslin to declare ourselves in transit. We live in homes to be blown away in the tornado of God. Manfred Jackson pointed out over the valley where the Holy City would descend. We wait upon the glory that needs no sun, he said.

All this time, Walter John Harmon had not been seen. As the day went on, heads turned this way and that, as our guests wondered where was the man who had drawn them here in the first place. By midafternoon, all the organized events, the choir recital, the walking tour of the sacred land, and so on, were concluded, and the visitors began to think of leaving. We had collected their muslin robes as if to give them leave to depart. They were indecisive. Some of their children were still playing with ours. The parents were looking for someone to make the first move toward the hay wagons. In the meantime, we Elders and members continued to walk with them and express pleasure at their coming, gradually drifting with them back toward the Tabernacle. We knew what to expect but we let them discover for themselves the prophet sitting quietly there beside the wooden table. A child saw him first and called out, and it was the children who ran ahead, their parents following, and a murmur of awe went through them as they slowly gathered in the grass and looked upon Walter John Harmon.

This was always a thrilling moment

for me, a culmination of the day's Embrace. See? I wanted to call out, Do you see?, a great surge of pride filling my breast.

The prophet's custom was to speak to the visitors, but this day he was lost in thought. His eyes were lowered. He sat slightly forward in the chair, one ankle tucked behind the other and his hands folded in his lap. His feet were bare. People settled down in the grass waiting for him to speak, and even the children grew quiet. The ground was cool. The afternoon sun was beginning to throw shadows, and a small breeze blew across the grass and played in the hair of the prophet. More and more members joined us, and there was absolute silence. Betty was suddenly beside me, dropping to her knees, and she took my hand and squeezed it.

Minutes passed. He said nothing. The silence passed the point of our uneasiness or expectation and became significant. A great peace entered me, and I listened to the breeze as if it were a language, as if it were the language of the prophet. When a cloud passed over the sun, I saw the moving shadow on the ground as his writing. It was as if his silence had been transmuted to the language of the pure world of God. It said that all would be well. It said that suffering would cease. It said that our hearts would be healed.

As the silence went on, it became so unendurably beautiful that people began to weep. Someone stepped past me and went to the prophet, as he sat there in his impassive loneliness. It was one of the visitors, a chubby blond child who couldn't have been more than fifteen or sixteen. She lay down before Walter John Harmon and, curling herself into a fetal position, she touched her forehead to his feet.

"Adding to the tragedy was the fact that no one caught it on tape for your amusement."

• •

Six families among the visitors that day would pledge to the nonresidential tithing that is the First Attainment. But as our Community continued to grow, in a kind of perverse linkage, the attentions of a vindictive world were growing, too. Unfortunately, one of the registrants at the Embrace turned out to be a columnist from a Denver newspaper, who must have got in under an assumed identity. She described the events of the day accurately enough—such was her craftiness—but the tone of the piece was condescending, if not contemptuous. I could not understand why a columnist would want to come all the way from Denver to sneer at us. The column was not libellous in the legal sense, but I felt personally betrayed when I recognized from the columnist's photo the unprepossessing young woman with thick glasses who had sat next to me at the midday luncheon and asked how everyone could be so happy. How underhanded she had been, and with such animosity in her mousy being.

At a steering-committee meeting, the Elders Imperatived that the monthly Embraces should thenceforth be limited to families with children. I thought, given the needful of this world, that such a restriction was unfortunate, but the fact was that we were beginning to feel embattled. Allegations that we were all familiar with, having heard them many times over, were regularly communicated to us—by relatives, friends, or professional contacts on the outside—as if we had to be enlightened: *Your prophet is an alcoholic. He abandoned a wife and child. He has grown rich at your expense.* How could any of this have been news to us, inasmuch as our prophet was what, in our entirety, we had been? As Walter John Harmon took our evil unto himself, we had emerged newborn, with our addictions, our concupiscence, and our depthless greed lifted from us.

His life was no secret. Every moment of it was a confession. But, as the outer world was as darkly inverted as the negative of a photograph, so was its logic.

Each instance of bad publicity seemed to encourage another suit or investigation. Elder Rafael Altman, our C.P.A., informed us one morning that the I.R.S. had applied for a court order to subpoena the Community books. One of our lawyers was dispatched to apply for an injunction. Those others of us with skills still practiced on the outside met in extraordinary session with the Elders to come up with some overall strategy for dealing with an increasingly impinging world. Up to this point we had met all bad publicity with a pious silence. Now we decided that, for the prophet's sake, we must speak out on his behalf, we must give wit-

ness. We would not proselytize but we would respond. Judson Berglund, a high Attainist who before coming to us had run his own public-relations firm in California, had the Imperative to organize this effort. When a national newsweekly questioned the miracle of the Fremont, Kansas, tornado, Berglund saw to it that they printed Elders' testimony in their Letters to the Editor. An attack by a well-known anticultist we boldly duplicated on our Web site, along with the countervailing responses of dozens of our members. And so on.

It only became us, though, to respond to everything patiently, resolutely, and in the spirit of forgiveness.

Walter John Harmon was typically stoic about the problems mounting up, but as the summer drew to an end and the leaves of the oak trees began to turn he seemed more and more withdrawn, as on that day of the Embrace. He seemed irritated that nothing he did went unnoticed, as if our devotedness were pressing on him. Yet he was called by God to have no private life, no private feelings, and so we worried about him. Our joyful life of peace and reconciliation, the exultant knowledge infused in all our beings of an exquisite righteousness in the sight of God, and the prayerful anticipation of the coming to our green earth of God's Holy City was shadowed now by our concern for the spirit of His prophet. When the children sang he was inattentive. He took long walks alone in the holy site. I wondered if it was possible that the weight of our sins had already become too burdensome for his mortal soul.

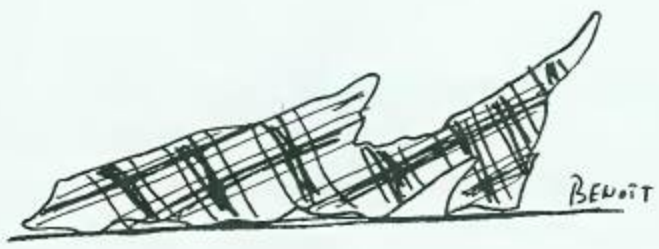
What I remember now is Walter John Harmon standing with my wife, Betty, in the orchard above the Tabernacle on a chilly gray afternoon in October. Clouds dark with rain sailed through the sky. A wind blew. The orchard trees were only three or four years old, the apple, pear, and peach trees not much higher than a man. Only the apple trees were in fruit now, and on this windy gray day, as Betty's charges ran about picking apples off the ground or reaching for them on the lower branches, I watched her hold an apple out to Walter John Harmon. He took her wrist in his hand and leaned forward and bit into the apple she held. Then she took a bite, and they stood looking into each other's eyes as they masticated. Then they embraced, and their robes, whipped by the wind, clung to their shapes, and I heard the children laughing and saw them running in circles around my wife and Walter John Harmon in their embrace.

Some mornings after this, members who had gone to pray noticed a robe lying on the ground beside the Tabernacle table. It was his, the prophet's. We knew that because, for ceremonial occasions, he wore not muslin but linen. Now it lay as if he had dropped it at his feet and walked away. The latchkey was still on the table, but the white stone was on the ground. The Elders were quickly summoned to study the scene. Carpenters placed stanchions around the site so that the gathering members would not disturb anything.

Efforts were made to locate Walter John Harmon. We had never ventured past his front door. This was now found to be open. Inside, the place was a shambles. Empty liquor bottles, broken dishes. His closet was empty. Down at the Gate, someone reported that the Hummer was gone.

At noon, with all work stopped, the Elders announced to the stunned Community that Walter John Harmon was no longer among us. There was absolute silence. Elder Bob Bruce said that the Elders would convene shortly to make a determination as to the meaning of the prophet's disappearance. He led us in prayer and then urged everyone to go back to their tasks. The teachers were told to take their children back to their classrooms, but as everyone dispersed one group of children stood where they were, there being no teacher to lead them. These were Betty's charges. Her puzzled colleagues took the children in hand. Everyone was distracted, unsettled.

I could have told them all that the prophet was gone when, the night before, I heard Betty rise from her bed, dress, and slip out the door. I listened and, in a while, in the darkness, I heard through the clear cold night the distant sound of an engine turning over, revving up.



When it was discovered that the prophet had left with my wife, I was called before the Elders. I was invited to join them in their councils. Perhaps they believed that the cuckolded husband was enlightened, as they were not. Perhaps they thought that he was important in other ways. Surely the challenge to no member's faith could have been greater than the challenge to mine, and if I could forbear and sing the praises of God, who would not sing with me?

Whatever their reasoning, I took solace in their dispensation. My personal grief was subsumed. For the sake of my sanity, I wanted to find resolution and strength from this crisis. But I also understood quite clearly and unemotionally that were I to think of Betty's betrayal with a forgiving spirit, and concentrate on its larger meaning, I would both ease my heart and put myself forward in the minds of the Elders as an exemplar of our Ideals. In a community such as ours one's moral currency may someday be exchanged for an executive role.

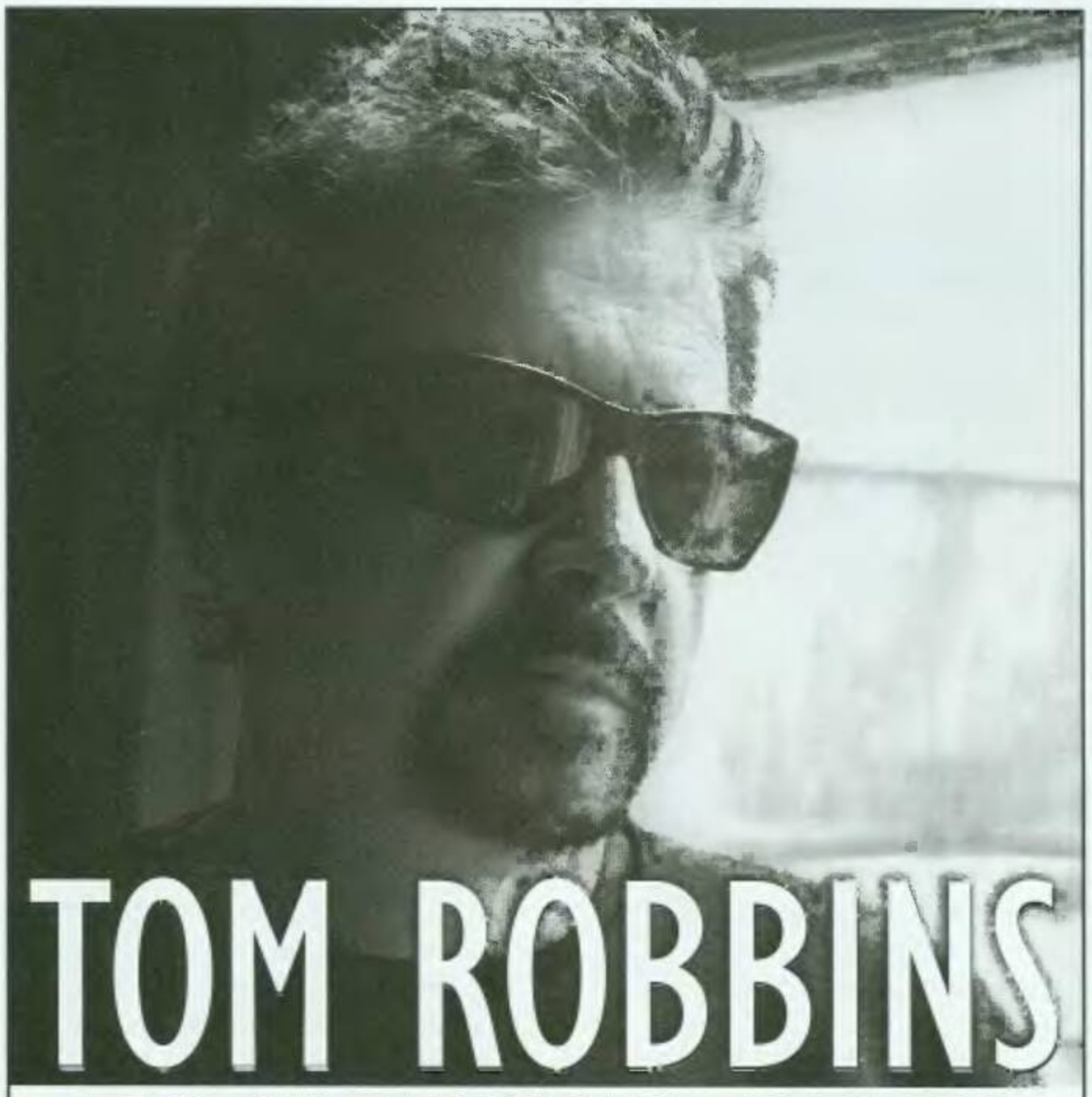
The discussion went on for three days. I spoke with increasing confidence and have to admit that I had no small part in the deliberations. We came to the following consensus: Walter John Harmon had done what was both required and foreordained by the nature of his prophecy. Not only had he forsaken us who had loved him and depended upon him by running off with one of the purified wives; he had also cast doubt upon the central tenet of his teaching. What further proof did we need of the truth of his prophecy than his total immersion in sin and disgrace? It was thrilling. Elder Al Samuels, a tiny, bent-over octogenarian with the piping, scratched voice of the very old, was also the most philosophically inclined. He said that we were confronted with the beautiful paradox of a prophecy fulfilling itself by means of its negation. Elder Fred Sanders, known and loved for his ebullience, stood up

and shouted, Glory be to God for our blessed prophet! We all stood and shouted Hallelujah!

But while all of this was being worked out the Community languished. There was a good deal of crying and wandering about listlessly on the part of many. People could not do their work. Extra prayer sessions were called but went sparsely attended. And a few of the members, poor souls, even packed their meagre belongings and walked down the road to the Gate, heedless of all pleas. I think that is how word got out about our situation—through our dispirited defectors. It did not help that a TV news broadcast showed a picture of the Community from a helicopter flying over us, while an announcer spoke of us as collectively duped, robbed of our estates, and left humiliated and penniless in the middle of nowhere.

It was time to act. On the advice of Judson Berglund, who had so far managed our public relations effectively, a great celebration was prepared, with music from our string musicians and tables of good food and a goodly supply of our ceremonial wine. Work and school were suspended for the people of the Community to gather and be together. Thanks be to God, the weather softened into one of those October days when the sun, low in the sky, casts a golden patina over the land. Yet the sense of irresolution, of bewilderment, did not entirely lift. People wanted to hear the Elders. I noticed that some of the children had sought out their natural parents and now clung to them.

After lunch, the musicians retired, and everyone gathered before the Tabernacle. The Seven Elders arranged themselves on wooden chairs, facing the assemblage. One by one, they rose to speak. Their pronouncement was along the following lines: The prophet has all but warned us that this would come to pass. He said that he would not be among the blessed who would reside in the Holy City. That he has gone so soon is a stunning blow to those of us who loved him, as we all loved him, but we must love him more now that he has done this thing. That is our Imperative. We cannot question what he has done, for it is nothing else but his final sacrifice. He has taken into himself our wealth, our concupiscence, all the sins of



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the world that we had accumulated, and returned with them to the world, that we might be made righteous in the eyes of God. Nor should we mourn him: if we live as we have lived, and learn as we have learned, wherever he is, will he not still be in our midst? For this reason, from this day forward, we Elders will speak in his voice. We will say his saying and think his thinking. And the prophecy that was is the prophecy that is, as we anticipate the eternality of our life to come. For he has cast the stone down, and the key is here on the table that will open up the door to the Kingdom of God. And when the Four Horsemen come riding over the land and the plagues rise like a miasma from the earth, and the sun turns black and the moon blood red, and when firestorms engulf whole cities, and the nuclear warriors of the world consume one another, the prophet shall be with us, and amidst the carnage and devastation we will be untouched. For God came to earth one day as a whirlwind that spun around this humble man, whose goodness and moral stature only God could see to be His prophet. And we who are your Elders saw it with our own eyes. And we tell you that when God comes down again He will not be a whirlwind, He will be the resplendent self-illuminating city of His glory and His peace, and we who have lived to the prophecy of Walter John Harmon will walk down these pastures and reside there forever.

The Elders were effective. I could see resolution firming up in the postures and facial expressions of the members. Many glances were sent my way. I found myself basking in the reflected glory of my faithless wife who had been chosen by Walter John Harmon to join him in the ultimate sin, his betrayal of the Community.

A day or two later, when one of the women went into the prophet's house to clean it up, she noticed something under a chair that had been overlooked in all the excitement: a pencil.

Our prophet had never wanted anything written.

The Elder who was summoned discovered something else: in the fireplace, half buried in the ashes, were three sheets of paper that had curled and were slightly charred on the edges but still, miraculously, intact.

On these pages, Walter John Harmon had laid out plans for a wall to be built around our Community. He'd provided sketches and measurements. The Gate down by the highway was to be drawn back to just a hundred and ten yards from our buildings. The wall was to be of stone three cubits thick and four cubits high. The stones were to be gathered from the pasture and from brooks and streams. They were to be bonded with a cement mixture whose propor-

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tions he had carefully indicated. And then a cryptic sentence written at the bottom of the last page of instructions added to the mystery: This wall for when the time comes, is what it said.

Clearly this was a discovery of unsettling magnitude. It brought forth only questions. A wall of stone did not accord with the Ideal of impermanence that had guided all our previous construction. What did that mean? Did it amount to a new Ideal? And when would what time come? But he had thrown the plans into the fire. Why?

We simply didn't know what to do about these plans. Had they not been discarded, almost certainly they would constitute a Demand.

The pages were preserved in a clear plastic folder and put in the safe of the business office pending further study.

In the meantime, we had to sort out our over-all situation. We had been left with very little operating capital. All surrendered estates of members were made liquid through a succession of trusts, and routinely placed in the prophet's name in several numbered Swiss bank accounts to protect against legal incursion. He had personally dispensed sums as they were applied for by our financial Elder Rafael Altman. We grew our own food and clothed ourselves humbly but we were in arrears for the material costs of our building program, which had gone on more or less continuously as new members arrived. Perhaps we would not have many more new members for a while. But several of our parcels of valley land for the descent of the Holy City were heavily mortgaged. And were we to lose even one of the standing civil suits against us we would be terribly vulnerable.

As the weeks went by, it became apparent that we faced a long cold winter of untold hardship. Our infirmary, with its one doctor and two nurses, tended to a host of ailing children. There were a number of cases of flu. Elder Al Samuels succumbed to pneumonia and we buried him in the rise behind the orchard. The little bent-over man with the piping voice had been well loved, and the fact that he was almost ninety when he passed was no consolation to the Community. My own sadness was only slightly appeased when the surviving Elders elevated me to their company. We need younger blood, Elder Sanders said to me, as he gripped my arm. Our witness is passed to you by decree.

It is now January of the New Year and I write secretly at night in the privacy of my house. Perhaps, as the prophet says, the time for documentation comes only when the world overtakes us. So be it. This has not to do with a loss of faith—mine is strong and does not give way. My belief in Walter John Harmon and the truth of his prophecy does not falter. Yes, I say to the skeptics: It is entirely unlikely that someone as uneducated and hapless and imperfect as this simple garage mechanic can have designed such an inspired worship. And only the sacred touch of God upon his brow can explain it.

The Community as it huddles on these snowy plains is smaller, but by that fact tighter and more resolute, and we gather each morning to thank God for our joyous discovery of Him. But the world is overwhelming, and, if we do not survive, at least this testimony, and others that may be written, will guide future generations to our faith.

Given the general age and infirmity of the Elders, I now function as the managing partner functions in a law office. And Walter John Harmon has come to live through me and will speak in my voice. I have studied the three pages of his plans and I have made the decision that in the first days of thaw we will send our people out to the holy pastures to collect the rocks and boulders for our wall. And one of the newer members, a retired Army colonel to whom I've given the plans, has gone out and paced the land. He says it is amazing that our prophet has no military experience. For, as designed, these breastworks take every advantage of the terrain and give us positions for a devastating enfilade.

We are assured of a clear and unimpeded field of fire. ♦

CONSTABULARY NOTES FROM ALL OVER

From the Grass Valley (Calif.) Union.

A Dorsey Drive convalescent facility reported that one Alzheimer's patient struck another Alzheimer's patient, but neither of them remembered the incident or wanted medical attention.

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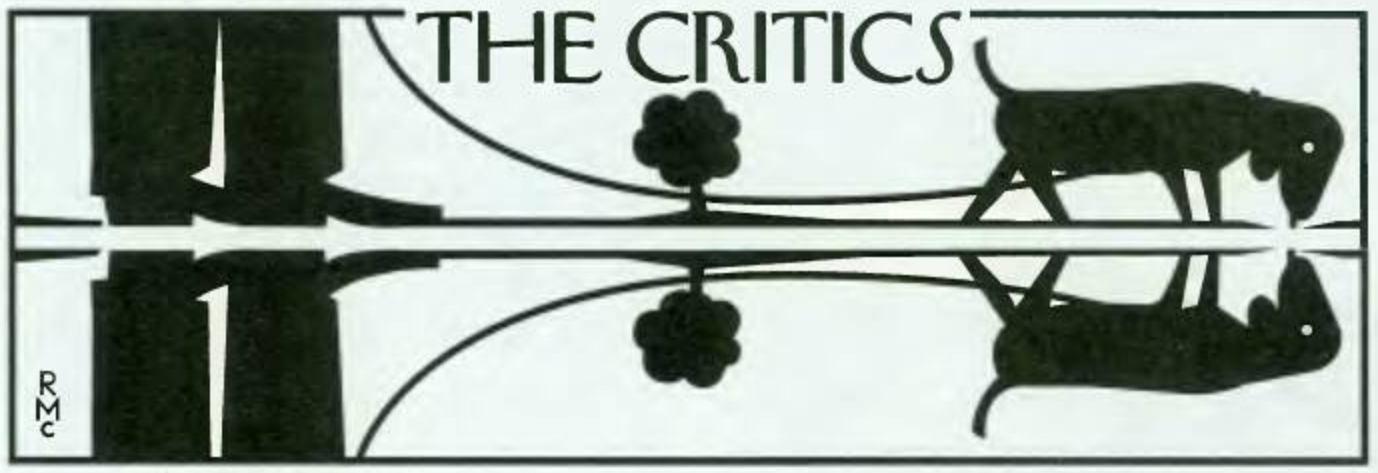

THE THEATRE

THE FAMILY ACT

Bernadette Peters as the ultimate stage mother.

BY HILTON ALS

By the end of "Gypsy" (now in revival at the Shubert), the show's heroine, Louise (Tammy Blanchard), has triumphed over the odds that appeared to be stacked against her—lack of money, lack of encouragement, and the blind fidelity of her mother, Rose, to her other, seemingly more talented daughter, June (Kate Reinders). Under the stage name Gypsy Rose Lee, Louise has metamorphosed from a sweet, timid little girl into the most popular draw in burlesque. She has invented and perfected the strip-as-tease—turning it into an early form of performance art—and in doing so she has catapulted herself beyond the fading glitz of vaudeville, her mother's world, and beyond her mother as well. At the theatre where Gypsy Rose Lee performs, a sign backstage announces that Rose (Bernadette Peters) is not welcome on the premises. But Rose pays no attention to the sign. She's incapable of hearing "no." Nor does she take kindly to being chastised for her arrogance by Louise's maid, who knows nothing of the hell that Rose has endured to hold on to the greatest role of all: mother. Still, to rule the roost you need a chick, and Louise refuses to be one. She's a woman of quality now: she speaks French, she has a bathtub in her dressing room, and she hobnobs with the intellectuals who sit through her shows with their raincoats folded in their laps. Rose is furious at the abandonment. When Louise responds to her interference by telling Rose that she's not Louise, Rose cries out, "Oh, yes, I am! More than you." It's a line that, on the night I saw the show, made the audience gasp. Not only because of the way Peters delivered it—which was nearly operatic in its intensity—but because it was a public declaration of a private fear: that we can never break free of our mothers and truly own ourselves.

Part of what has made "Gypsy" so durable—this production, directed by Sam Mendes, is the third Broadway revival since the show's première, in 1959—is its ability to build on that fear. Adapted from Gypsy Rose Lee's autobiography, in a three-month sprint of enviable inspiration, by Arthur Laurents (book), Jule Styne (music), and Stephen Sondheim (lyrics), "Gypsy" is a horror movie with a fantastic soundtrack—life with Mother as a Grand Guignol escapade. Much has been made of Lee's mythomania, particularly by her sister, the actress June Havoc, who spent the two volumes of her own memoirs pointing out inaccuracies both in Gypsy Rose Lee's book and in the show. But we don't always read a memoir for historical truth. We read it to find out how the author escaped the bonds of family and became the hero of his or her own life—a star.

When the show opens, Madame Rose, as she is known professionally, is a stage mother of fierce ambition. Her two daughters—"Dainty June" (played, as a child, with captivating hysteria by Heather Tepe) and Louise (the slow-moving, dreamy Addison Timlin)—are part of an act that Rose manages, produces, and directs. June, with her "What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?" curls, is the main attraction. She can sing and dance. Louise, it seems, can do neither. Instead, she dresses up as a boy to partner June, and later, when Rose drops a rustic motif into the act, appears as the front end of a cow. "I have a moo cow, a new cow, a true cow named Caroline," June sings, as Louise moos in the background. While June thrives on attention and dreams of becoming an actress, Louise would happily give up her "career" in show business. But, when she suggests that she has no talent, her mother won't hear of it. Rose's optimistic drive is relentless—"You'll be swell, you'll be great, gonna have the whole world on a plate!" she sings. The two girls are the star players in the circus of Rose's imagination, and it's up to them to keep their mother's emotional balls in the air.

One gets the sense, though, that, even if the girls were fêted and adored, their success would do little to quell Rose's ambition. What keeps her going is the struggle, the salt rubbed in her wounds which makes her stronger. She meets and becomes involved with Herbie (the sweet John Dossett), who takes over as the girls' agent, thereby providing a modicum of parental stability, but he hardly seems to matter to Rose. It isn't love that she's after; it's retribution—retribution for not having been born a man, for not having found a place of her own in the spotlight. Bernadette Peters gives Rose's resentments less play than previous interpreters of the role have. In the 1962 movie version, Rosalind Russell's energetic narcissism was overwhelming. And it was plucky fight, an aggression born of insecurity, that made Ethel Merman such a powerful—and, for those who were fortunate enough to see her in the show's première, the definitive—Rose. Peters, on

PHOTOGRAPH BY RICHARD AVEDON

Julie Halston, Kate Buddeke, and Heather Lee as the Three Graces of burlesque in "Gypsy."

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"Don't worry, Howard. The big questions are multiple choice."

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the other hand, seems intent on humanizing her character. Instead of competing with the girls—or with anyone else in the cast, for that matter—she invites everyone to share the stage, and she is visibly delighted when the others tear it up.

Peters's Rose is still a monster, but she's a human monster, vulnerable and occasionally decent, a woman who has been only partly corrupted by a corrupt world. Once you manage to shake your entrenched notions of how the role *should* be played, Peters's performance becomes a marvel, a startling reinvention of a musical warhorse. (And one that may have had something to do with her own background: Peters's mother was a first-generation Sicilian-American who had been forbidden to perform, and she didn't want her daughter to be limited by the social conventions that had trapped her.) Peters's voice is one of the great instruments in the world of musical theatre—dulcet but full of attack, slightly mournful around the edges. With her bow-shaped mouth, her wide, round eyes, and her fair skin, she has the retro look of a gutsy Depression-era beauty like Carole Lombard. But she isn't hard. She loves to perform, yet you never get the impression that she'd kill for the opportunity. And, like many artists who are naturally gifted, she's as surprised by what she can do as we are.

Her decency seems, at times, to be at odds with Sam Mendes's direction. Mendes does his best to resolve the enigma of Peters's performance, to push Rose closer toward what she was in previous incarnations—more vulgar and more "sexual" (he has her flirt with the orchestra leader, flash her legs at Herbie, and so on). But Peters doesn't need that kind of obviousness, and she tries to get it out of the way as quickly as possible. What is more important to her is showing us a Rose whose self-interest is indistinguishable from her self-sacrifice—a kind of musical Mildred Pierce. And, by making Rose more complex, Peters seems to inspire a greater complexity in the characters around her, from the appropriately named old stripper Electra (electric lights frame her derrière and genitals)—whom Julie Halston plays with such wit that you can't help wishing she'd perform an after-show, maybe across the street, where

THE MESSENGER

What is it you had meant to say? What had
I said?

And the snow fell to the same as usual
transfigurational effect, making the world seem
not the world, very briefly, and then what it
always is again: just the world—changed,
changeable.

What happens, I think, is we betray
ourselves first—our better selves, I'd have said once—
and the others after, as if that made knowing
what to call it somehow easier, meaning less
unkind.

Why give it a name? What makes me
want to?

There's a bell tower near here
I'd meant to show you, how there's still a music
hearable, despite the bell itself missing—lost,
or stolen, though it is difficult to steal a bell
so large, presumably,

and a shame to lose one.
I'd meant to show you that.

Wind enters and leaves
the tower like a thing that lives there—but nobody
lives there, no one, I keep meaning to say.

—Carl Phillips

they serve drinks—to Blanchard's Louise.

Here, for the first time, Gypsy Rose Lee makes sense. It has always been difficult to grasp how Louise, a simp in the first two-thirds of the show, could become such a swan in the final act. But now that we can see Rose's battered heart we can also see where Louise got both her sweetness and her genius for survival. As a child, Louise watches and waits to be needed—the only way she can feel that she exists is by being of use. Gypsy Rose Lee, as Blanchard plays her, is a coquette, but a nice one, reminiscent of such ingénues as Dorothy McGuire and Teresa Wright, whose girlish lyricism was offset by surprising strength. Blanchard doesn't seem entirely comfortable in her role—she lacks a fully developed sense of humor—but that may be a flaw more of the script than of her performance (the part has always seemed a trifle underwritten). Blanchard, at least, makes her awkwardness work: we love her all the more for it.

In the end, it is Mendes, perhaps, who will generate the most confusion in "Gypsy" fans. He treats the show more as a play with music than as a musical. The actors don't ingratiate themselves with the audience; they don't try to knock your socks off at every turn. Mendes wants us to think, instead—and perhaps too much—about the world that he has created for the characters. The action of the play begins on a bare stage lit by a work light. The wonderful sets by Anthony Ward are moved into this space, but they never fully obscure the emptiness. Marquees on either side of the stage announce the places and the emotional states that the characters are meant to pass through in each scene. The entire world, it seems, is vaudeville. But Mendes's insistence on calling attention to his auteurism has him competing with his own cast for our attention. It's Brecht by way of David Merrick, and Mendes's point—that the characters are always performing? that all their world is a stage?—seems mundane when compared with the delicacy and rigor of the performances themselves. ♦

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THE ART WORLD

WHISTLER'S CHIC

Transcendent artifice at the Frick.

BY PETER SCHJELDAHL

James McNeill Whistler is among the greatest of painters when you are in the mood for him and oddly daunting when you aren't. He was a radical dandy, who imbued the nuances of style with something like moral zeal. Taking him seriously, as he should be taken, requires a willed suspension of incredulity. After flunking out of West Point, in 1855, when he was twenty-one, he turned his back on America for good and abandoned himself to modish longueurs of London and Paris; he died a hundred years ago, in 1903. For him, the trivial—the just-so fall of a feather boa, say—bordered on the sublime. Some people dote on such socially charged arcana, which upholster Victorian literature; in serious painting, however, a heavy emphasis on manners and mores of a vanished world can perturb, especially when the painting is generally marvellous. (Fashion-intensive portraiture befits the more modest gifts of Whistler's contemporary James Tissot, who was content to simper winningly.) Edgar Degas put his finger on the problem of Whistler when he reportedly remarked to the brash expatriate, "You behave as though you have no talent"—a cruise missile of a bon mot that might have annihilated a man of feebler self-esteem.

Now is the time to come to terms with Whistler's subtle, opulent caprices. "Whistler, Women, and Fashion," an intensely rewarding show at the Frick Collection, arrives on the heels of "Manet/Velázquez," at the Met, a grand exploration of the impact of the Spanish Baroque on nineteenth-century France, which ends with works by Whistler, as well as by Eakins, Sargent, and Chase. (Meanwhile, the New York Public Library has chipped in with a show of Whistler's etchings, drypoints, and lithographs.) Those fin-de-siècle Americans look joltingly good at the Met. Their works make vigorous sense when sighted along a stylistic trajectory that goes from Velázquez through Goya and Manet. They have seemed antique to us only because modern art developed in contrary ways. Whistler and his fellows, including Henri Fantin-Latour in France, proved to be a dead-end generation, embedded in social milieus that became anathema to the avant-garde. To reignite the spark of Whistler's contemporaneity, the Frick gives couture subliterates like me a crash course in nineteenth-century women's wear. Four actual dresses, close kin of those in his portraits, join a display of magazine fashion plates that track dress styles from the colossal bell shapes of 1860 to the relatively tailored looks of the nineties. As I walked through the show, these aids served me the way a phrase book does in a foreign country. I found that I could converse with the paintings, albeit haltingly, in pidgin chic.

Whistler's "Arrangement in Black: Lady Meux" (1881).

COURTESY HONOLULU ACADEMY OF ARTS

One of the masterpieces on view, the Frick's own "Symphony in Flesh Colour and Pink: Portrait of Mrs. Frances Leyland" (1871-74), stars a dress that may or may not have existed. As attendant drawings attest, Whistler designed the flowing tea gown in diaphanous fabric, spotted with embroidered rosettes, over a simple white underdress. (A mildly risqué fashion of the day, the tea gown derived from the French peignoir and featured a top-to-bottom "Watteau pleat.") Mrs. Leyland, who was perhaps a lover as well as a patron of the artist, stands full length in three-quarters view from the rear, her hands clasped behind her and her introspective, trusting face in profile. The infinitely nuanced colors of the fabric are continuous with those of a Japanese-flavored room. No one knows what the front of the garment looked like, or whether Whistler bothered to complete it. As always with him, the picture entailed endless posing—a "martyrdom," Frances's husband said, but she insisted that she enjoyed it. (The couple later divorced.) Whistler's Velázquez-influenced, breathtaking portrait of the young Cicely Alexander, done in 1873, when she was eight or nine years old, took seventy long sessions, which often reduced the child to tears; the painting faithfully conveys her grumpiness. Afterward, she and the artist became good friends. Few females could stay mad at Whistler.

He was a lover of women and a hierophant of art for art's sake. Those passions merged in his treatments of clothing, which amount to reversible masks for the sitters and for himself. Fashion gave him the further advantage of access to the dials and levers of high popular

taste, where women wielded a power that was denied them in most other spheres. Whistler was the kind of score-keeping narcissist who seeks less to do something—though he worked extremely hard—than to be seen as having done something. He was his own ideal audience. "Wonderful," he exclaimed when he saw one of his own paintings twenty years after its creation. "Such pots and plates and fans!"

The work, "Purple and Rose: The Lange Leizen of the Six Marks" (1864), depicts his model and mistress of the time, Joanna Hiffernan, an Irish redhead who is best known for her appearances in torrid paintings by Courbet. She wears several richly embroidered Chinese robes and pretends to paint a Chinese blue-figured jar. (Whistler was a leader in the period's craze for things Oriental.) The colors are amazing, but the paint is overworked and gummy. The young Whistler was in thrall to the social and artistic romance of French Realism, which led him into back-alley bohemias (his first Parisian girlfriend was a gamine called Fumette, who, to make a point, tore up his drawings) and into ways of painting, with Manet-like éclat, that didn't really suit him. After a subsequent, brief association with the fussily Realist Pre-Raphaelites, he hit his stride as a militant aesthete—the pictorial poet of London's salons and foggy twilights—and a fop's fop.

Whistler was so aggressive a butterfly that it's a bit embarrassing even now. He foolishly crossed swords with Oscar Wilde, who easily outclassed him in wit. But his famous, disastrous lawsuit, in 1877, against John Ruskin for a grotesque review—the great critic had written, "I never expected to hear a coxcomb ask two hundred guineas for flinging a pot of paint in the public's face"—addressed a real injustice. It is still shocking that Ruskin refused to recognize, in Whistler's consummate stylistic synthesis, the refinements on his own particular hero, J. M. W. Turner. Contemptuously awarded a farthing in damages, ostracized, and soon bankrupt, Whistler learned cruel lessons about the city that he had sought to enchant. Henry James noted in 1877 that "the taste for art in England is at bottom a fashion, a need of luxury, a tribute even . . . to propriety, not an outgush of productive power." Thrillingly, Whistler rebounded with outgushes to remember—notably, two portraits, painted in 1881 and 1882, of the formidable Mrs. Valerie Meux, later Lady Meux. Humbly born and with a shady past, she married a beer baron and became one of the wealthiest women in England. She didn't give a damn about social opinion, and she was rewarded with the stunningly modern-looking "Arrangement in Black: Lady Meux" (in a starkly simple gown, with a huge white fur cape and icy diamonds) and the outrageous "Harmony in Pink and Grey" (voluptuously seductive in a dress that seems corseted from the outside).

Whistler and Mrs. Meux had a falling-out during sittings for a third portrait, but they stayed in touch. In 1892, she wrote to him, "I suppose we are both a little *eccentric* and *not* loved by *all* the world, personally I am glad of it as I should prefer a little hate." A few years earlier, in 1888, Whistler had married his perfect match, the widowed artist and decorator Beatrice Philip Godwin. They became happy fixtures of upper bohemia, intimates of the poet Stéphane Mallarmé and of Proust's paragon of the dandy, the Comte Robert de Montesquieu-Fezensac. After a period of terrible suffering, Beatrice died of cancer, in 1896. Whistler's lithograph of her from that year, wasting in bed but mustering a wan smile, strikes a renewed realist note with a depth of feeling that, one realizes upon reflection, was always present in him. His last years were spent in the company of two of Beatrice's sisters, who appear in cracklingly inventive late portraits that look back to Goya and forward to Expressionism.

No matter how much esoteric frou-frou enters into Whistler's calculations, early or late, his art is emotionally grounded, fully integrated, and often transcendent. Its open secret is a wedding of Eros and artifice such as was achieved by a literary contemporary of Velázquez, Robert Herrick, in "Upon Julia's Clothes":

> Whenas in silks my Julia goes,
> Then, then, methinks, how sweetly flows
> The liquefaction of her clothes!
>
> Next, when I cast mine eyes and see
> That brave vibration each way free,
> —O how that glittering taketh me! ♦

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BOOKS

STANDUP GUYS

What were the rebel comedians rebelling against?

BY ADAM GOPNIK

Anyone can make jokes about books on comedy. Even the grumpy-belletrist-in-a-bow-tie type can tap the dottle out of his pipe long enough to harrumph out the old one about how Mr. Murkle seems to have got comedy down and broken its arm, while the post-modernist professor makes garlicky puns about the subversion inherent in garlicky puns. Everyone feels smug about books on jokes, because we all know that there's no explaining jokes—though perhaps we wouldn't be so smug if we stopped and tried to explain why it so often takes a joke to explain *us*.

But comedy, like cooking, is a great subject, and should not be avoided just because it is also a hard one. This is especially true of books about the growth of a new comic style in mid-century America, of which Gerald Nachman's "Seriously Funny: The Rebel Comedians of the 1950s and 1960s" (Pantheon; $29.95) is the example at hand. If any movement has changed the inside of our mind—or, at least, lined its cage with a different kind of newspaper—it is the movement in comedy which began in the mid-fifties, crested in the early sixties, and, in one form or another, is still with us today. In one neat formulation, popular American comedy changed then from wit to humor—from nicely packaged aphorisms about life (for that, when the pickle juice is shaken off, is what a one-liner like "Take my wife, please" is) to shapeless commentary on events and manners.

A terrific book might be written tracing the birth, dissemination, and eventual decadence of this manner, from coffeehouse to our house. This book is not that book. Instead, Nachman has given himself the narrower task of talking to the surviving comics of the fifties and sixties, and writing from clips and earlier interviews about the ones who aren't around or who won't talk to him. Drawing the line overtight at 1970, he tells the story of how the style started, leaving out the really interesting story of how the style spread. George Carlin and Robert Klein, for instance, are excluded, on the debatable ground that neither was much of anything in the sixties, even though they were surely the key figures in communicating coffeehouse humor to a television audience. (And Carlin, in his early infantry-standup mode, had become a regular on Mike Douglas and Merv Griffin by 1966.)

Nachman is, on his own terms, though, extremely thorough: there is a full recounting of what happened to Shelley Berman's career (he was seen, in a documentary, losing his temper and yanking a telephone receiver off the hook, and never recovered) and more than you probably need to read about the over-in-an-afternoon career of Vaughn Meader, the John Kennedy impersonator. One ought to protest the minutiae, but the minutiae are all the fun. It's like watching a summer-replacement show circa 1966. David Frye turns up to imitate Nixon and William F. Buckley, Jr.; Jonathan Winters is wild and wacky. Stan Freberg commercials play in the background. Alan Sherman sings a funny folk song. Godfrey Cambridge makes a cameo appearance. If at times the whole thing leaves us wondering at the ease with which our parents were entertained (Nachman delightedly revives some of Steve Allen's pet phrases: "You're under arrest!" "How's your fern?" "Kreel!" "Watch it, Charley!," and "his trademark bird cry 'Shmock-shmock!' "), the book also works hard to restore some reputations too long lost. There is the marvellous satiric songwriter Tom Lehrer, serenely retired to the academy for forty years, and the strange, crazy-sentimental radio man Jean Shepherd, a kind of local, Beat Generation Garrison Keillor. What's amazing is that nearly everyone is still around. Here you've spent thirty-five years feeling sorry for the Smothers Brothers, only to find out that the Brothers are running a vineyard and working Vegas and making a nice living.

In fact, everyone is so around that some of the rebel comics didn't have time to talk to Nachman at all. The lives of Bill Cosby and Mel Brooks are produced from clips and interviews with contemporaries, and that of Joan Rivers from a brief phone conversation. A volume of "American Comedians" like Whitney Balliett's "American Singers" would be wonderful, but the form depends on observing and listening, and when the figures won't sit still to be listened to there's nothing for it but the library. Even Mort Sahl, the book's cover subject, refused to speak to Nachman, although in his case he was not too busy but too bitter. "It pains me to say no," he explained. "I just don't want to be in there with all those other guys. Who are those other guys? I don't consider them in the same league." With some exceptions (Bob Newhart, Phyllis Diller), the tone is of wounded narcissism, embattled jealousy, and an ill will so extreme that it would make a table of writers, or English professors, blanch. Sahl again: "All the stuff in 'Annie Hall' is really me." Jackie Mason: "As soon as I walk into the Friars Club, you never saw such hostility. Alan King with venom, full of vicious hate. . . . Henny Youngman was hated." Henny Youngman, hated? (Apparently so; the observation is made several times.) The forgotten impressionist Will Jordan wanders in and out, so embittered that he seems to be trying out for a role in one of Philip Roth's Zuckerman books, at one moment explaining how Mel Brooks stole the Hitler musical-comedy idea from him, and at another how Ed Sullivan stole his Ed Sullivan impression. ("Now, I didn't own Ed Sullivan, I didn't own Sabu, but I hope I would own the mannerisms and the phonetics. You get very little sympathy from the public when you say you invented 'ooo.' But I did invent the 'ooo' and the 'ooo' is what makes it funny. Without that 'ooo' you have nothing.")

That the artist is different from his art, the shpritzer from his shpritz, is not surprising enough to stop one from talking sensibly about why and how the art took the shape it did. Nachman's gifts of analysis, however, are limited, and he can be, at times, unfortunately breezy: "I concluded that the comedy renaissance, like all artistic flowerings—the French Impressionists, the Bloomsbury circle, the Italian and French New Wave cinema, Tin Pan Alley . . . was just a lucky accident." (Well,

Elaine May and Mike Nichols, Lenny Bruce, and Mort Sahl: their real target was not right-wing excesses but liberal pieties.

EDWARD SOREL

that's settled, finally, and all the cultural historians can go find honest work as piano movers.) But, just as baseball writers suspicious of statistics end up using the wrong ones, critics suspicious of "theory" end up using someone else's. Nachman's story, therefore, shares some of the elements of myth, or of cliché. In a country whose satiric tradition was paralyzed by the twin spectres of the blacklist and the Borscht Belt—Joe McCarthy and Milton Berle—a tiny band of comics rose up in rebellion. Mort Sahl, an awkward, untrained commentator, put on a sweater, held a newspaper, mumbled brightly, and changed the shape of comedy, making it both political and collegiate: "Joe McCarthy doesn't question what you say so much as your right to say it." Lenny Bruce—whom Nachman calls "the Elvis of standup," but who seems more like its Jesus, dying for Henny's sins—found Sahl significant but very square, and made war on the taboos of sex and racism which even Sahl respected, showing what might happen if one could be released from all inhibitions. A generation of comedians broke through behind them, some keeping the faith, most making necessary compromises with commerce, a few trying and failing to be true. (The earlier television eccentrics Steve Allen, Sid Caesar, and Ernie Kovacs, like the Prophets on the Sistine ceiling, wonderingly anticipate the main action.) They left behind a legacy of "subversive," or anti-establishment, humor, which is very fitfully kept alive by their successors. The courage and commitment lapsed, and now comedy is an easier business of attitude and apolitical indifference.

Searching the welter of voices and vendettas for a slightly finer pattern than this, you can catch the outlines of two related but distinct movements. One, the

hard edge, which connects Mel Brooks and Joan Rivers and Lenny Bruce and even, in her own way, Phyllis Diller, is the release of Jewish verbal overkill, outrageous shpritzing, into popular entertainment. (Albert Goldman—that strange mixture of Theodor Adorno and Kitty Kelley—offered a precise account in his Lenny Bruce biography of how this style moved from Brooklyn to the night club, which remains one of the best things ever written about American comedy.) The funniest and most memorable, because least dated, of these explosions is surely Carl Reiner and Mel Brooks's "Two-Thousand-Year-Old Man," but it is the will to explode that connects Brooks to Bruce and Sid Caesar, who are also manic and mostly concerned with sex. The other was the softer satire boom, among whose exponents were secular Jews and, just as much, Gentile comedians. Jonathan Winters is much drier about his country-club airheads than Brooks ever is on his Jewish oldsters. With the coming together of hard and soft, a coalition against entrenched power got made.

And right around here the trouble arrives. For what is really striking about all the "rebel" comedians of the time, hard and soft, is that their main target was almost never the excesses of the right wing in power. From Tom Lehrer's "Love, love love me, I'm a liberal" and Shelley Berman's nervous flier to Woody Allen's mockery of CUNY ethics and Nichols and May's sublime catalogue of the sounds of tolerance ("Well, Al Schweitzer is just a great guy. Al is a lot of laughs. I personally have never dated him"), their subject was liberalism and its pieties. As Nachman sees quite clearly, though he seems not always to see the centrality of his own observation, the bulk of Mort Sahl's material, beyond a couple of anti-McCarthy jokes long after McCarthy was out of power, wasn't political—and, to the degree that it was, it mostly mocked liberal saints like the Kennedys. Rather, it was social and sexual: "There are no women in the Beat Generation, just girls who have broken with their parents for the evening." Lenny Bruce may have been victimized by the police and the judiciary, but he seldom made fun of them—partly because he had a twisted, junkie's respect for anyone who had contempt for him, but mostly because there wasn't enough life in what they did to be very funny. "What can a man Eisenhower's age say to me?" he shrugged memorably and then joked about liberal hypocrisies and liberal conventions ("I used to go to civil-rights marches, but Stevie Wonder and Ray Charles keep bumping into people"). Nichols and May are funny because they have perfect pitch for the holy words of progressive culture ("I can never believe that Bartók died on Central Park West"). Well past the high-water mark of McCarthyism, the comedians were mocking liberalism, implicitly recognizing that this was the ideology in cultural ascent.

Though it is an article of faith in pop histories that satire is for the oppressed against the oppressor, if there is a single continuous thread running through the history of satire it is this natural affinity for familiar order. Comedy is a criticism not of ideas, or even of life, but of the space between an idea and life. Neither right wing nor left wing in a narrowly partisan sense, it is conservative inasmuch as it compares an ideal of conduct with the limits of human behavior. It exists to remind us of the difference between the rhetorical and the real. "Not the way things oughta be or the way they're supposta be but the way they are" was Bruce's own motto in his last years. Aristophanes, in "The Clouds," thought Socrates was ridiculous because his head was in them. Shakespeare is funny about pompous idealists like Malvolio and Jaques not because they are the ones with the power but because they are the ones with the thoughts. (Comedy does not make fun of power; it makes fun of the pieties of power. Lear's fool does not mock him for being King. He mocks him for apologizing for being King with a phony and elaborate, "enlightened" ritual of retirement.) Even Dickens, a true political radical, makes fun of Mrs. Jellyby, not of Lord Dedlock: the mindless reformer with the unkempt family can be made funny in a way that the heartless aristocrat, armored in his traditions, cannot.

The real genius of the "new" comedians lay in spotting, intuitively, and before anyone else did, the sudden rise of the wide-eyed optimism of liberalism—the rhetoric of rights, personal growth, acceptance, and ostentatious tolerance. What their comedy traced, in this sense, was the true phenomenon of the time: not "rebellion" but the spread of college education and in-group conformity, and the growth of the university as a central symbolic switching station of American life.

Then a funny thing happened. The comedians of the fifties and early sixties unconsciously assumed that both political power and popular piety would come to rest in the hands of liberals, in a kind of complacent family compact. But after the Kennedy assassination the great

divide began, in which America turned to the right politically while becoming increasingly liberated in its personal manners. By the time Ronald Reagan was President, you could say "cocksucker" in any comedy club in Philadelphia; or, rather, by the time you could say "cocksucker" in any comedy club in Philadelphia, Ronald Reagan was President. This left the comedians making fun of the pieties while looking past, or not caring very much about, the politics. The personal or apolitical tone of so much post-sixties comedy is, in this sense, not a betrayal but a simple tracking of the scent to the place where liberal pretension has gone, mainly the bedroom and the living room. The object of comedy remains the absurdities of the new liberal order—but since its power has been largely relegated to private life, that, too, has become the subject of the comedy. (Nachman details how Mort Sahl's career was destroyed by the Kennedy assassination: perhaps because it removed his subject, liberal foolishness, from his arena, which was what you could find in the morning paper. Sahl, whose comedy depended on a seamless blending of what's in the news and what's in the neighborhood, and whose life would make a better movie than Lenny Bruce's did, both hated the Kennedys and needed them.) The liberal cultural pieties were so strong, and affected people's lives so directly—the way we eat, sleep, date, make love, and so on—that, as one or two conservative pundits may have pointed out somewhere or other, they have managed to persist in power even after they were rejected politically.

What really happened to the new comedy was not that it was defanged but that, as its audience broadened, it necessarily became less intellectual. The Two Dumb Guys who are the dominant figures of comedy today—in everything from "Beavis and Butt-Head" and "Wayne's World" to "Saving Silverman"—are distant, unwashed descendants of Lenny Bruce. Those with decent hearts, a faith in their own hipness, and a few shreds of pop culture enlist the affection of the viewer because, in a culture obsessed with sensitivity, they are too stupid to be sensitive to the effect they have on other people. In a culture obsessed with apology, this seems wonderfully free. (Falstaff didn't apologize, either, for being a drunk, a powerful freedom in a guilt-and-whiskey culture.)

Yet, though we laugh at the *bien-pensant*, it does not mean that the *bien-pensants* are not *bien*. A joke is not an empowered heresy; a joke is merely an emboldened doubt. By doubting liberalism, the new comedians reinforced its essential message, which is that extreme self-consciousness is a social good. The great comedians of the first half of the century—the Marxes, Chaplin, Fields—had all been, in one way or another, lords of misrule, outside the normal bounds of society, tramps and scamps and carnival barkers. They represented Everyman but, expressing themselves in dance and acrobatics and vaudeville stylization, were not like any man. Their intuitive alliance was with the avant-garde, who discovered and rediscovered them again and again.

The "new" comedians of the fifties and sixties were, instead, part of our moral modernity. They were their audience, asking questions that had increasingly tricky answers: how to be a good person, and how to be seen as a good person. Stammering in sweaters, they were led to the skeptical self-reflection that is the common ground of comedians otherwise as unlike as Woody Allen and Lenny Bruce, and to the obsessiveness about the minutiae of social presentation that connect Nichols and May to Seinfeld. For the older generation of comedians, the question wasn't how to be a good person but how to break free of an order in which goodness was something forced on you. (Even Lenny Bruce, for all his reputation as an agitator, presents himself not as an outsider but as a hipster, a knowing and essentially well-wishing insider speaking to others.)

The curious thing is that, forty years on, what was meant as a mockery of conventional wisdom has become itself another kind of wisdom. We cannot laugh quite as easily at Nichols and May or even Lenny Bruce as we do at Chaplin or Keaton, because their subjects are too narrowly circumscribed, but their comic reflections on our urge to be comically self-reflective still resonate. Even Mel Brooks's Two-Thousand-Year-Old Man's mock folk wisdom has become, at some level, real wisdom. The accumulated certainty of his two thousand years—"Never run for a bus. There'll always be another"—is, after all, about as much wisdom as any comedian, or critic, chasing the cultural moment can hope to find. ♦

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A memoir takes addiction, recovery, and rage to a new level.

BY LAURA MILLER

It's one thing merely to ruin your life; to turn it into a mangled, fuming heap of wreckage requires something special—a taste for the theatrical. In fact, part of the genius of the Twelve Step recovery program lies in its ritualized center-stage confessionals, which provide assurance that sobriety need not prevent you from making a spectacle of yourself. But, now that such performances have become routine, what can a high-wattage, drug-addled drama queen like James Frey do to stand out in the crowd?

Frey begins his new memoir, "A Million Little Pieces" (Nan Talese/Doubleday; $22.95), with an account of waking up on an airplane, at the age of twenty-three, with a broken nose, a hole in his cheek large enough to accommodate a finger, two black eyes, his clothes "covered with a colorful mixture of spit, snot, urine, vomit and blood," his four front teeth knocked out, no idea where he's going, and no memory of how he got there. His stricken parents meet him at the airport and whisk him off to a high-end treatment center in Minnesota.

Once at the center, Frey proceeds to prove himself better, or at least more profligate, than the average drunk. He astonishes a resident physician, who has "never seen so much and such extensive damage in someone so young." He vomits up "blood and bile and chunks of my stomach" a couple of times a day. He faces down menacing fellow-patients who are reduced to gibbering terror by his capacity for violent rage. He impresses a burly dentist when he endures two root canals without benefit of anesthesia. He befriends the toughest guys in his unit and, in particular, earns the fatherly protection of two other recovering addicts, a Las Vegas mobster and a federal-appeals-court judge. He finds true love with Lilly, a female patient, in romantic defiance of the center's intolerable "Rules or Regulations," and storms through a crack house to rescue her when their affair forces her to leave.

But Frey's most attention-grabbing move is his utter rejection of the Twelve Step approach, despite the fact that every staff member at the center insists that "A.A. and the Twelve Steps are the only real options" for anyone who wants to stay clean. Frey will have none of A.A.'s crypto-religious talk of a "Higher Power." Instead, he weds himself to a regimen of Nietzschean self-reliance: "I don't accept excuses for failure or deflect what is essentially a problem I have caused. . . . Every time I want to drink or do drugs, I'm going to make the decision not to do them. I'll keep making that decision until it's no longer a decision, but a way of life."

James Frey

RICCARDO VECCHIO

This is the Dirty Harry model of recovery, and the cinematic quality of some of Frey's exploits makes you wonder whether the facts in this memoir have been enhanced. What's genuine is the propulsive energy the book shares with earlier chronicles of overgrown-adolescent angst and misbehavior, like Elizabeth Wurtzel's memoir "Prozac Nation" or Chuck Palahniuk's novel "Fight Club." Although, like Wurtzel, Frey writes about events that happened when he was no longer a teen-ager, conventional wisdom has it that the emotional development of an addict remains stalled at the age he started using. Frey—who began getting drunk at ten, expanded into cocaine, LSD, and speed at fifteen, and by twenty-two had a crack habit—actually beats the formula by a few years; he's got more or less the temperament and insight of a sixteen-year-old.

Like most sixteen-year-olds, Frey is preoccupied with matters of manhood and how it might be proved. He cycles through an assortment of positions, from mawkish bravado ("I have lived alone, I have fought alone, I have dealt with pain alone. I will die alone") to a territorial defense of addiction itself, against anyone who dares to present an insufficiently horrific picture of the condition. There's a rock star he'd like to beat up for "spewing his bullshit fantasies in Public," and there are the creators of an unconscionably sanguine television show whom he dreams of hunting down, locking in a room, and feeding drugs until they plead "no no no please what I do now no fuck me I'm fucked no please help me no no no no." The emotional peak of "A Million Little Pieces" arrives when the mobster—a man who can frighten a fellow-patient simply by mentioning his full name—announces, "I would like you to be my son."

And throughout there is the crafty narcissism of self-hatred, which permits its adepts to indulge in an unlimited amount of self-regard without risking the accusation of vanity. Frey grandiosely entertains the notion that he might possibly be the worst human being who has ever lived. "I'm realizing what a truly hor-

rible Person I am," he tells his parents after he's revealed to them the full history of his substance abuse. "I can't imagine what it must have been like for you to have to sit through the details of my monstrous existence." Actually, he spends a lot of time speculating on just that, telling himself that "my Family is ready to write me off, my friends are ready to write me off" and "I know I won't be forgiven and I'm not going to bother to ask," despite abundant evidence to the contrary. To convey all this, Frey has chosen a prose style that alternates between perfervid run-ons and that variety of conjunction-heavy terseness which provides such a sturdy vehicle for masculine self-pity: "I go to the Bathroom and I shower and I brush my teeth and I shave. I avoid the mirror. I don't look at my eyes and I don't look at myself. I shower brush my teeth shave."

"A Million Little Pieces" is not a reflective or thoughtful book, and Frey seems oblivious of his own contradictions. On the one hand, "I have never wanted to be alone"; on the other, "Belonging is not something I have ever concerned myself with and is not something I give two shits about." He tells a counsellor he's not sure he's willing to do whatever it takes to get sober, then agrees to dental surgery without painkillers because to use them would violate the rules of his treatment. It's hard to sort out why Frey puts himself through such an ordeal (and none of the possible reasons reflect well on the author), but the result is a frenzied, electrifying description of the experience that's harder to forget than many a more judicious self-assessment. A writer with more self-knowledge would have delivered a pithier book, but never, surely, have put on such a good show. ♦

From the Los Angeles Times.

A "Counter Intelligence" review in the Food section March 19 quoted the owner of Mr. Pickles Deli in Los Angeles recalling a radio comment by talk show host Laura Schlessinger about the restaurant's brisket. Schlessinger said that the brisket does not need to be adulterated by ketchup, not that the brisket is the first step before adultery.

Why not both?

BRIEFLY NOTED

The Life You Save May Be Your Own: An American Pilgrimage, *by Paul Elie (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $27).* This long, unusual book consists of interleaved biographies of four mid-century American writers—Dorothy Day, Thomas Merton, Walker Percy, and Flannery O'Connor—who, though they rarely, if ever, met, are connected by the fact that they were all serious Roman Catholics and therefore alone: isolated both from literary circles (anti-religious) and from the Church (anti-literary). Except for O'Connor, they were converts; they "read their way" to religious experience, and then became writers, so that others could pick up the trail. They were very different—Day was devoted to social service, Percy to philosophy, O'Connor to literature, Merton to the inner journey—and Elie doesn't love them all equally. O'Connor is his favorite. Merton is the one he struggles with, but, by virtue of his warm, clear writing (better than Merton's), he makes us care about the self-involved friar, too.

The Last Good Season, *by Michael Shapiro (Doubleday; $24.95).* Does the world really need another book about the Brooklyn Dodgers? Happily, Shapiro's account of Brooklyn's last pennant-winning season, in 1956, mostly eschews traditional nostalgia for "da Bums" and, instead, provides a glimpse of nineteen-fifties urban politics, as it came to bear on a pro baseball team. The much reviled Walter O'Malley, who abandoned Ebbets Field and moved his Dodgers to Los Angeles, gets something of a reprieve in this account; it is Robert Moses who really deserves our scorn. O'Malley, faced with declining attendance and a crumbling, outdated ballpark in a deteriorating neighborhood, sought repeatedly to build a new Brooklyn stadium—a geodesic dome—at the corner of Flatbush and Atlantic Avenues. Shapiro, using archived letters, shows how Moses, who secretly had plans for a new ballpark in Flushing (i.e., Shea Stadium), thwarted O'Malley at every turn. The model of O'Malley's proposed dome sat in the basement of its designer's parents, in Tennessee, for years until it was thrown away.

The Light of Day, *by Graham Swift (Knopf; $24).* Swift's heroes tend to be extravagant brooders, circling around the sins of the past as the reader tries to piece together what, exactly, happened in the first place. The private investigator who narrates Swift's latest novel is haunted by an unusual job: two years ago, a beautiful woman hired him not to confirm that her husband was having an affair but to witness its demise. Her husband's lover, a Croatian refugee, was finally returning home, and the wife wanted someone present at their airport parting. All this becomes clear early on. So why is the private investigator now visiting his former client in jail every fortnight? "The Light of Day" is filled with intelligent meditations on everything from the frustrations of talking to the dead to the magical properties of dreaming in prison. Yet the meandering nature of the detective's narration seems coy and artificial, and too often our involvement is interrupted by a flicker of impatience.

The Wife, *by Meg Wolitzer (Scribner; $23).* On the way to a big literary-award ceremony, the wife of a famous New York Jewish novelist—sick of his philandering, his self-importance, and his limited talent—decides on divorce. Her stingingly comic story of their marriage shows why. They met in 1956, when she was his writing student at Smith and he was the author of one very bad published story. Only after running off with his talented and self-effacing pupil does he burst into literary stardom. Although they have three (variously unhappy) children, he has always been the real child in the family, dragging her along to the fêtes at which he is flattered and flirted with while she drinks her jealousy away. Wolitzer never really develops her characters and savvy readers will guess her surprise ending quite early on, but she has great fun satirizing an all too recognizable stratum of literary life.

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THE CURRENT CINEMA

UNUSUAL SUSPECTS

"X2" and "Man on the Train."

BY ANTHONY LANE

The sequel to "X-Men" is entitled "X2," which cunningly suggests that we may be getting double the pleasure for our money. The first film, which came out in 2000, concerned a team of "mutants"—creatures who, more often than not, resemble human beings, but each of whom possesses an unusual or protuberant talent. Why Warren Beatty was not asked to join the club, I cannot fathom, although some moviegoers would advance an even stronger claim for his sister, the spirited Shirley MacLaine. Her psychic powers would slot in nicely beside those of Jean (Famke Janssen), who telepathically diverts air-to-air missiles; Mystique (Rebecca Romijn-Stamos), who sounds like a cut-price perfume and changes shape as the mood takes her; and Rogue (Anna Paquin), who can suck out all your energy with the merest touch of her hand. We had a word for that at school.

All these dainty women return for the latest installment, as does Halle Berry, who reprises the role of Storm, the climate-warper, with the faintly distracted air of one who has an Oscar on her mantelpiece and better things to do. Also present are Professor Xavier (Patrick Stewart), the good genius who is confined to a wheelchair, and Magneto (Ian McKellen), the naughty genius who was confined to a "plastic prison" at the end of the first film. This time, they join forces to confront Colonel Stryker (Brian Cox), who combines mutantphobia with a career in Special Operations. (I can't help feeling sorry for Special Ops. The poor guys drop into Iraq, secure the oil fields, and live on lizards and stale water for six weeks, and *still* Hollywood uses them as shorthand for the black arts.) Stryker's plan unfolds first at a school for mutant children in New York State, which he attacks by night, and then in an underground bunker, tucked behind a hydroelectric dam, where he tries to make the planet safe for purebred humans.

"X2," directed by Bryan Singer, is a curious mixture. On the one hand, the plot is tangled to the point of obscurity—willfully so, if you never saw the original picture. Entanglement in itself is no sin; if anybody has confidence in the complex, it must be Singer, who reminded us, with "The Usual Suspects," what a joy it is to be snarled in the narrative net. Here, though, there are simply too many characters to get a handle on, and the sheer proliferation of special effects offers him a license so unfettered that most of the mutants act not according to their natures but purely on the ground of what, at that juncture, looks most groovy. When A can read B's mind, and B can turn into C, and C can vanish in a puff of smoke, the old logic of means and motive seems hopelessly antique, yet nothing takes its place. If Jean has such a crush on Scott (James Marsden), for instance, why do they meet in a force field of telekinetic flame? What's wrong with a kiss?

At the same time, for all the scything violence of the effects, there is something a little wet about "X2." Its liberal exhortations, nudging us at regular intervals toward interspecies tolerance, play so heavily on the nerves that the temptation to root for the villains is all but overwhelming. According to Kurt Wagner (Alan Cumming), the movie's resident Nightcrawler, "Most people will not see anything beyond what they see with their own two eyes." Well, for goodness' sake, man, you can hardly

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blame them. Wagner himself is a Bible-quoting devil with ridged skin, yellow eyes, lashing tail, and a German accent as heavy as rusted iron, whose opening gambit is to cause fear and mayhem in the Oval Office, thereby intimidating the President himself. If I were Henry Kissinger, I would call my lawyers.

So what survives the devastation of this film? As in the first outing, the answer is: Hugh Jackman. He plays Wolverine, who divides his days between hirsute solitude and bursts of decisive activity, aided by garden shears that sprout from his hands at moments of high emotion. He gets to fight with his opposite number, the boringly named Deathstrike (Kelly Hu), who is a kind of Edwina Scissorhands in a business suit,

Hugh Jackman returns as Wolverine in Bryan Singer's new movie.

JOHN RITTER

and who, in Singer's loveliest image of fantastical poetry, weeps tears of molten metal as she fades. One of Jackman's recent roles was that of Curly in the London production of "Oklahoma!," but, if it was a wrench to switch from a bright golden haze in the meadow to the bright silver blades on his knuckles, he doesn't show it, and he has carefully measured out the exact pinch of salt with which these comic-strip shenanigans need to be taken. The most winning sight, in an overblown picture, is the tiny tremor of amusement on Wolverine's face as he hands a bottle of Dr. Pepper to his young sidekick, Iceman (Shawn Ashmore), who chills it with a single breath. Cool. If that isn't an argument for allowing mutants to stay on earth, I don't know what is.

Long before the current waves of rage began to beat against the French, one aspect of that great nation was an unfailing wellspring of caustic mirth. I refer, of course, to Johnny Hallyday, whom the French have for decades regarded as their answer to Elvis. There may have been nothing to touch France in its food and wines, in the range of its landscape and lingerie, but at least it had the decency to be dreadful at something. French pop music was one of the most enduring of European fiascoes, and, even for the severest Francophile, the success of M. Hallyday was hard to explain away. Moreover, just to twist the knife, he appeared to be eternal, smiling bleakly from every issue of *Paris-Match* since the founding of the Fifth Republic. And now look what happens. He turns up in a movie, and he's great.

The film is "Man on the Train," and Johnny is that man. He plays Milan, a lonesome figure who alights in a provincial town with nothing but a suitcase and a headache. Buying aspirin at a drugstore, he meets an aging local, a former teacher named Manesquier (Jean Rochefort), who offers him a glass of water and a place to stay. It is to the credit of the director, Patrice Leconte, that this turn of events feels neither peculiar nor creepy; both men are at a loose end, and they duly shrug and settle into each other's life. In short, this is a study of friendship—the most widespread of human transactions, far more common than love, but treated by the movies with comparative disdain. We get heaps of children and teen-agers becoming friends on film, but adults tend to be shovelled, with indecent haste, into enmity and lust. Is that why we are so heartened, even as love is snapped off at the root, by the final, companionable line of "Casablanca"?

Whether the friendship is a beautiful one is hard to tell, but it manages, with singular grace, to be at once grouchy and uncomplaining. Milan may teach Manesquier to drink brandy and to shoot a revolver, but he also asks to borrow a pair of slippers. Better still, he finds and lights a pipe, thus confirming that the two men are trading places, or, at any rate, watching their various penchants tilt and touch. Hallyday is wolfish, weathered and sullen, his eyes of a blue that could either be deadened or dangerous. As for the drooping Rochefort, he is like an elderly artist who, after a lifetime's practice, can sketch his appointed character with the deftest of flicks. Of one undistinguished ancestor, he remarks, "His regiment was not required at Austerlitz," and you catch the rueful pride of the congenital non-achiever, with his tendency "to undermine the highlights of my life."

The problem is that movies rarely thrive on lowlights alone. It can be done, but Leconte lacks the austerity to complete a film in which nothing much occurs. And so, with some reluctance, we are bustled toward a climax, in which the guns that Milan secreted in a drawer are brought into service, while Manesquier enters the hospital for an operation. The film splices their fates together, but the neatness feels melodramatic. I prefer those quiet patches where Leconte relies on light alone to illuminate his heroes—steely dusks and dawns for the secretive Milan, warmer tones of wood and leather for his autumnal pal. Above all, I wish that I could have seen "Man on the Train" in its native land. Oh, to have been part of a Parisian audience for that delectable moment when Johnny Hallyday is asked whether he plays any music. With a modest murmur and half a crinkled grin, he replies, "I had a harmonica once." Spoken like a rocker. ♦

THE BACK PAGE BY ROZ CHAST

a Close Call

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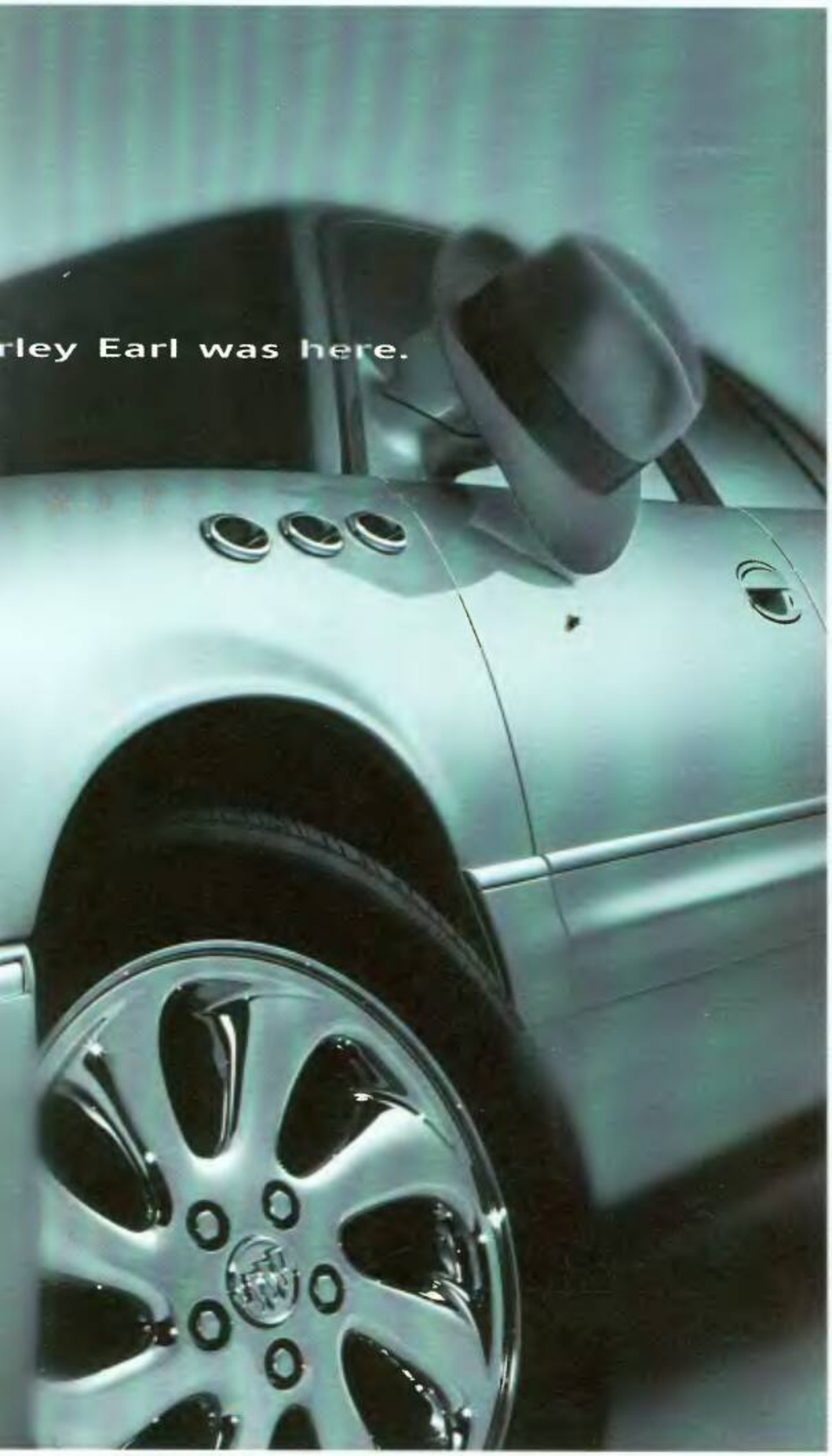

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