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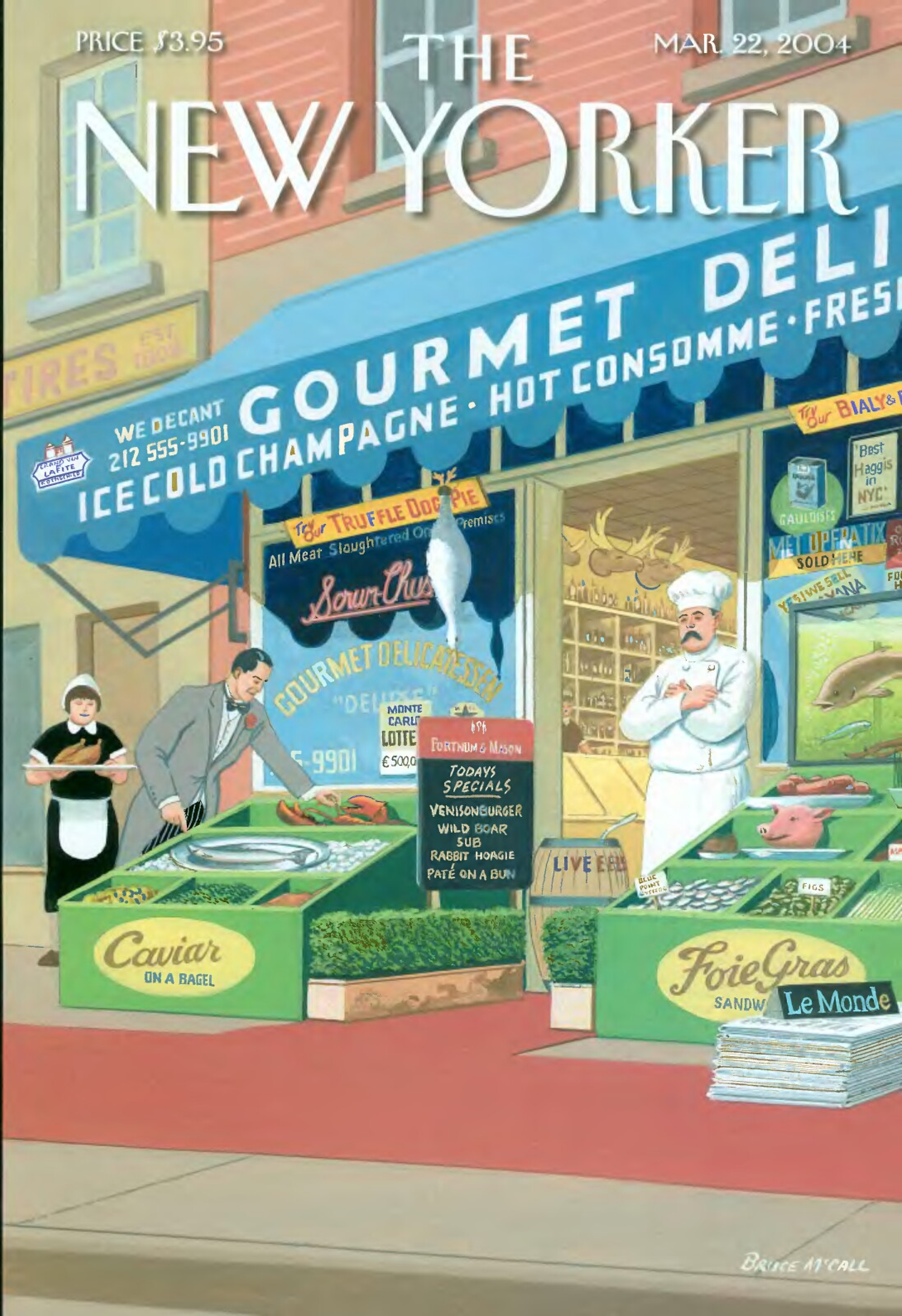
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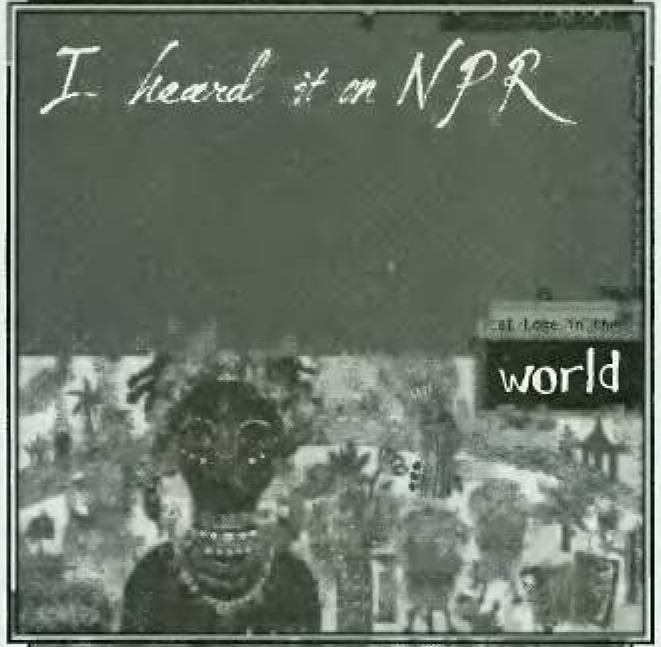

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CONTRIBUTORS

Kathy Gannon ("Road Rage," p. 40) is the Associated Press bureau chief for Afghanistan and Pakistan and the Edward R. Murrow Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations.

Adam Gopnik (The Talk of the Town, p. 39; A Critic at Large, p. 90), a staff writer, is the author of "Paris to the Moon."

Andy Borowitz (Shouts & Murmurs, p. 49) has just published the humor book "Governor Arnold: A Photodiary of His First 100 Days in Office."

Mark Singer ("Homecoming Queens," p. 50) is a staff writer. His new book, "Somewhere in America," will be out in June.

Galway Kinnell (Poem, p. 64) is the author of thirteen books of poetry, including "A New Selected Poems."

Bruce McCall (Cover) has been a contributor since 1979. His most recent books are "The Last Dream-o-Rama" and "All Meat Looks Like South America."

Jeffrey Toobin ("A Bad Thing," p. 60) is a staff writer and the senior legal analyst at CNN. His books include "A Vast Conspiracy" and "Too Close to Call."

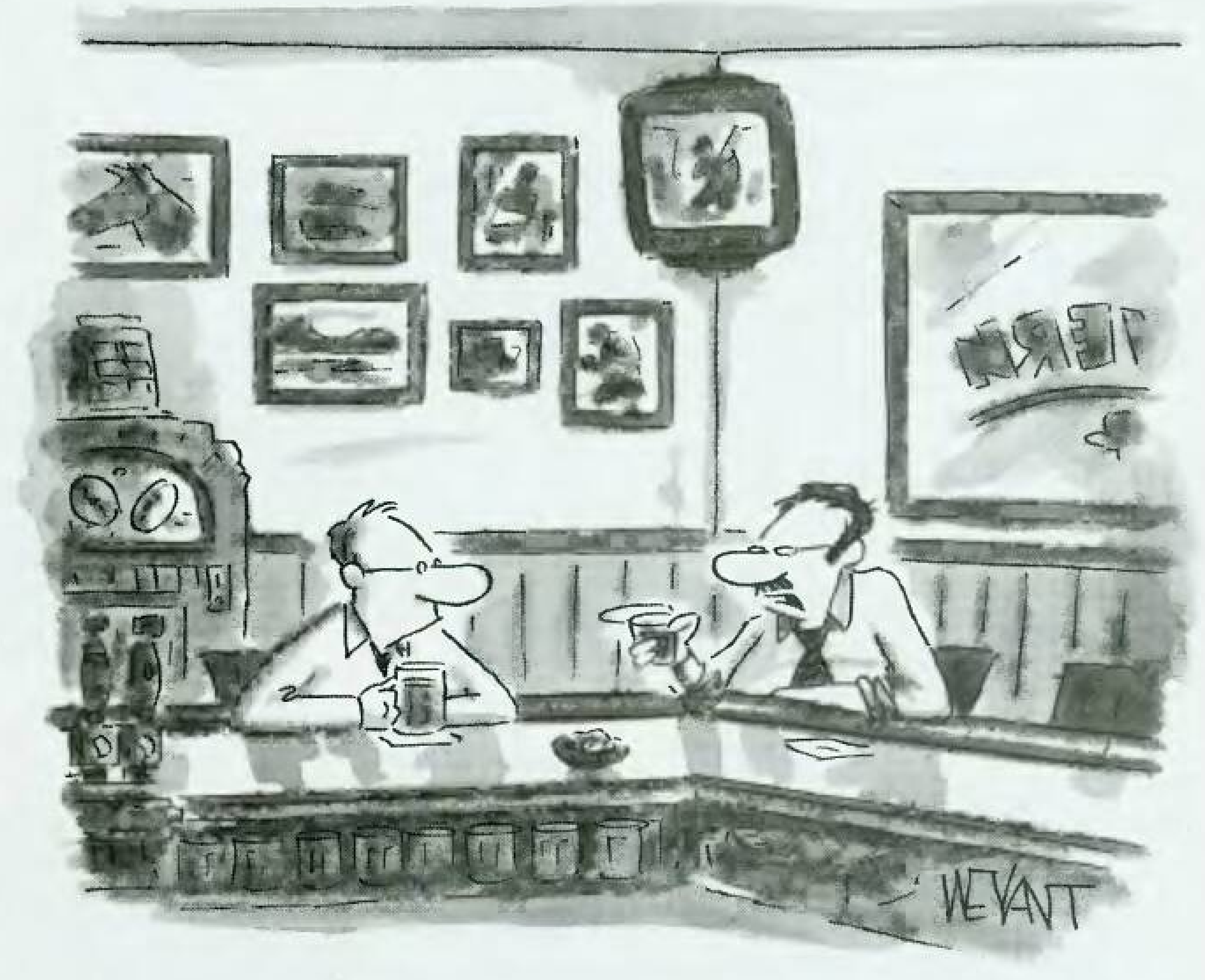
Aline & R. Crumb (Comic Strip, p. 73) have been working together, and also on individual projects, for thirty years. Their collaborations include "The Complete Dirty Laundry Comics" and "Self Loathing."

Alice Munro (Fiction, p. 76) has a new book of short stories, "Runaway," which will be published in the fall.

Alex Ross (Musical Events, p. 96), the magazine's music critic, is writing a book about the history of twentieth-century music.

Dana Goodyear (Tables for Two, p. 21; The Talk of the Town, p. 35) is an editor at the magazine.

Lee Lorenz (The Back Page, p. 104) is a former art editor of *The New Yorker*. His cartoons have been appearing since 1958. ◆



"No, but I do think there should be a law against no-sex marriages."

THE MAIL

THE VICE-PRESIDENT'S BUSINESS

Readers of Jane Mayer's article "Contract Sport" were denied vital information given to *The New Yorker* about Iraq policy, executive-branch decision-making, and Vice-President Dick Cheney's association with Halliburton (February 16th & 23rd). Vice-President Cheney has played no role whatsoever in government-contract decisions involving Halliburton since he left it in 2000 to campaign for Vice-President. He has, of course, spoken about Iraq with officials of the Coalition Provisional Authority as part of his responsibilities on the National Security Council. He is not, however, involved in contract decisions.

Mayer suggests that the Vice-President still has a financial interest in Halliburton, which is not true. The deferred compensation that he earned years ago has been guaranteed through his purchase of insurance—thus, the payments will be made whether the company succeeds or fails. She also writes that he "retains" stock options; in fact, he has signed an irrevocable agreement to donate any after-tax proceeds to charity. Under the agreement, he divested himself of all economic benefits and control over the options. As a business leader, Vice-President Cheney, despite what Mayer implies, opposed doing business in Iraq. That's why Halliburton, after it acquired Dresser Industries, sold Dresser's interests in two joint ventures that participated in the U.N.'s oil-for-food program as soon as it was legally permissible. With respect to his dealings with Halliburton before leaving government, as the Secretary of Defense Cheney was involved in broad decisions of procurement policy, not specific decisions about individual contracts.

Finally, Mayer repeats the myth that the Vice-President had a "conviction that the occupation of Iraq would be a tidy, easily managed affair"—without backing it up. Now, even though she has kept them in the dark, surely *The New Yorker's* readers won't let that go by unchallenged.

Kevin Kellems
Press Secretary to the Vice-President
Washington, D.C.

Jane Mayer replies: Vice-President Cheney was given several opportunities to be interviewed directly, and declined. My account relied on the public record and on other informed sources. As his spokesman concedes, Cheney receives deferred compensation from Halliburton—whether or not he's indemnified. The stock options are another tie, even if, as I reported, he will be donating the proceeds to favored charities. Is it a "myth" that Cheney's statements about Iraq were Panglossian? The best answer lies in his own words. On March 16, 2003, he was asked by Tim Russert on "Meet the Press" if the public was prepared for "a long, costly, and bloody battle with significant American casualties." Cheney said, "I don't think it's likely to unfold that way, Tim, because I really do believe that we will be greeted as liberators." That same day, on "Face the Nation," he said that the fight in Iraq would last "weeks rather than months." A year later, the war has cost more than a hundred billion dollars, more than a hundred thousand American soldiers are still in Iraq, and more than five hundred and fifty have been killed.

DEATH IN MINNESOTA

David Grann writes that, if the federal prosecution of members of the Aryan Brotherhood succeeds, it may yield twenty-three death sentences—"more than any in U.S. history" ("The Brand," February 16th & 23rd). In the wake of the Dakota War of 1862, a military court sentenced three hundred and three Dakotas to death by hanging. Even after President Lincoln commuted two hundred and sixty-five sentences, thirty-eight were carried out on December 26, 1862, in Mankato, Minnesota.

Tom McMillin
Kellogg, Minn.

•

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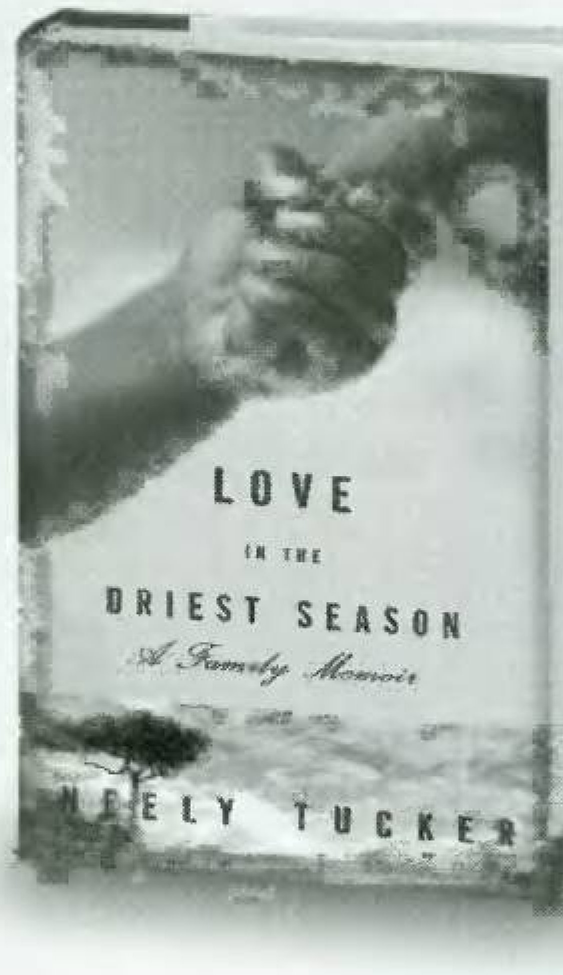

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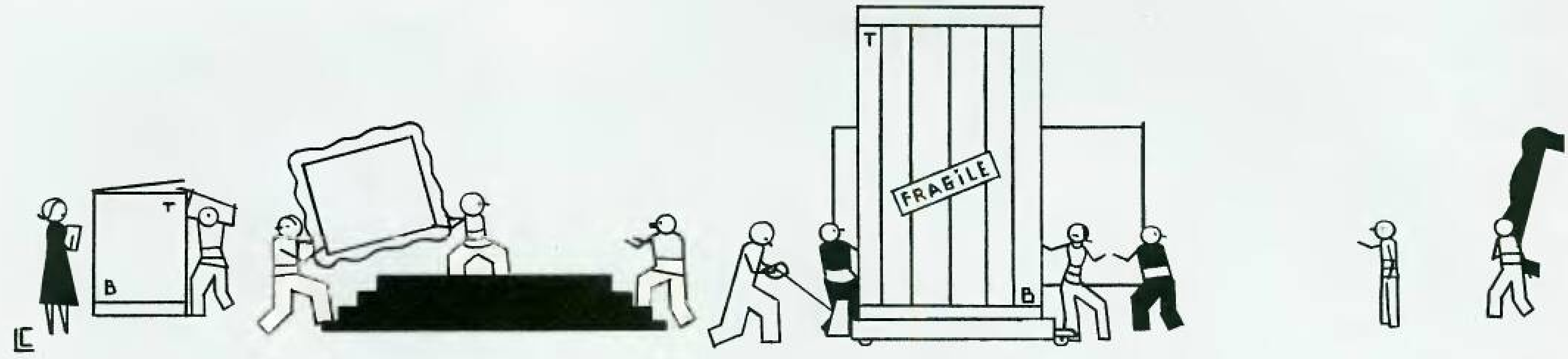

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THIS WEEK

PAS DE DEUX

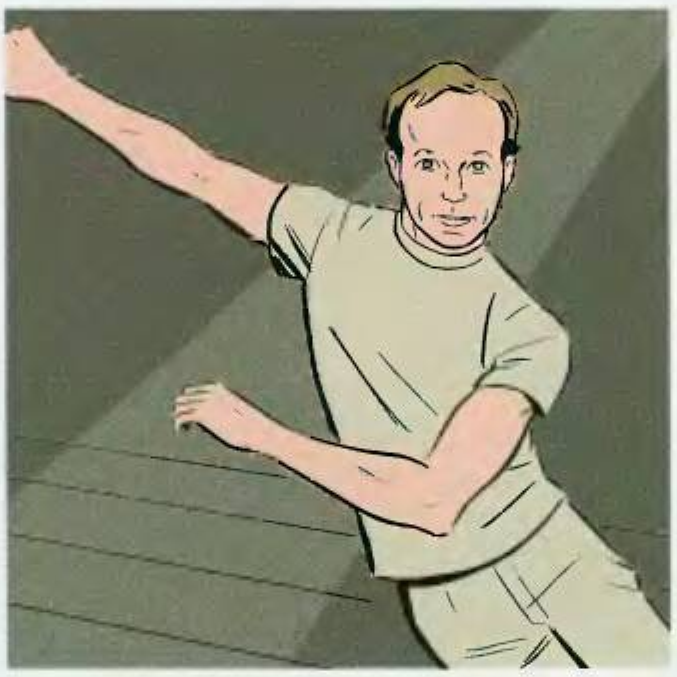
Dancers have short careers, but, if they are very interesting, choreographers will make dances not just for them but about them, and then, in a way, they can dance forever. The work gets passed on to others, and the dancer's personality becomes part of the art's permanent wisdom. Twyla Tharp created the long solo "Pergolesi" in 1993 for Mikhail Baryshnikov. With its golf swings and barrel turns, its bugaloo and "Swan Lake," it is a portrait of that great Russo-American classico-popular dancer. This week, for the first time, "Pergolesi" is being performed by someone new, Peter Boal, in the début season of his small troupe, and two beautiful but different artists will meet in one dance. (Joyce Theatre, March 16-21; see Dance.)

THE RETURN OF THE RING

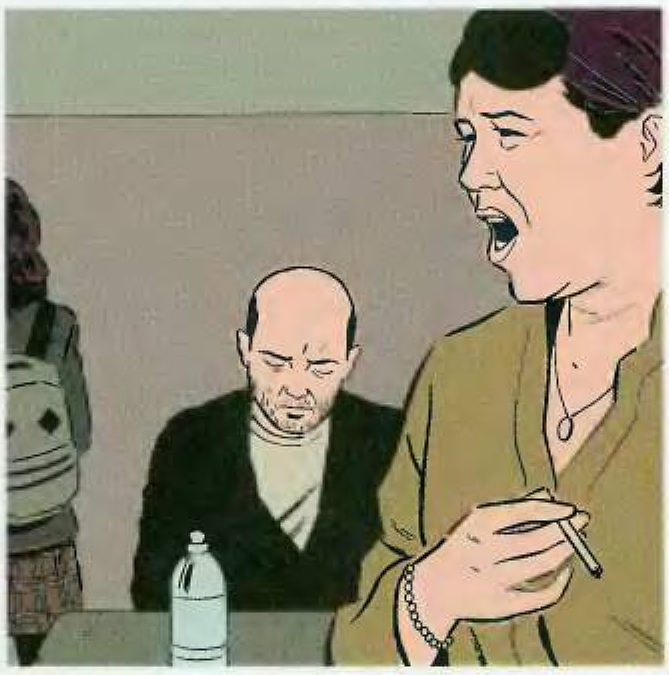
Two years ago, the Eos Orchestra presented "The Rhinegold," the first installment of Jonathan Dove's English-language "Ring," a condensed version of Wagner's Nordic epic rescored for chamber orchestra. It was a wild, in-your-face American soap opera, intimate and risqué. Now it's time for "The Valkyrie." The fine-grained baritone Sanford Sylvan (usually found singing Adams, Harbison, or Bach) will go radically against type as Wotan. (Skirball Center, N.Y.U., March 18 and March 20; see Classical Music.)

MONK BUSINESS

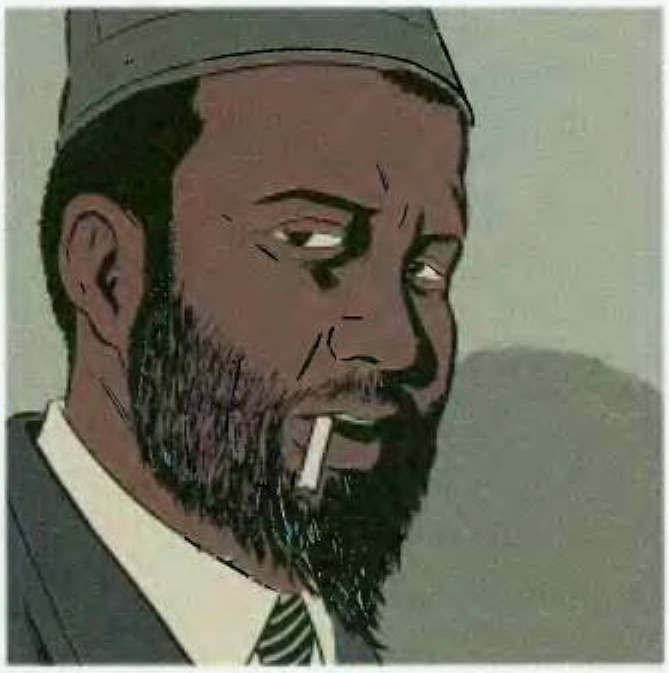
The witty, chiselled compositions of the pianist Thelonious Monk are such a part of the current jazz scene that it's hard to envision a time when they weren't familiar. But in 1961, before Monk's work had gained broad acceptance, the soprano saxophonist Steve Lacy and the trombonist Roswell Rudd led a band strictly devoted to Monk tunes. This week, the pair reunite in the Monkisland project, playing with the the modernist trumpeter Dave Douglas. (Iridium, through March 21; see Night Life.)



Peter Boal performs Twyla Tharp's "Pergolesi," created for Baryshnikov.



The Eos Orchestra presents "The Valkyrie" at N.Y.U.'s Skirball Center.



Steve Lacy, Roswell Rudd, and Dave Douglas pay tribute to Thelonious Monk.

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THE THEATRE

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

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

CIRQUE JACQUELINE
Andrea Reese performs her one-woman show about Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis. Directed by Charles Messina. Opens March 17 at 7:30. Through April 21. (Triad, 158 W. 72nd St. 212-352-3101.)

The members of Enon, who play the Bowery Ballroom this week (see Night Life).

KYOKO HAMADA

FROZEN
The New York première of a work by the British playwright Bryony Lavery, starring Swoosie Kurtz, Brían F. O'Byrne, and Laila Robins. Directed by Doug Hughes. One preview on March 17. Opens March 18 at 7. (MCC at East Thirteenth Street Theatre, 136 E. 13th St. 212-279-4200.)

INTIMATE APPAREL
The Roundabout Theatre Company presents a new play by Lynn Nottage, set in 1905, about an African-American lingerie seamstress who puts her business at risk when she marries a mysterious stranger from the Caribbean. Directed by Daniel Sullivan. Previews begin March 17. (Laura Pels, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300.)

JOHNNY GUITAR
A new musical based on Nicholas Ray's film has a book by Nicholas van Hoogstraten, music by Martin Silvestri, and additional music and lyrics by Joel Higgins, who directs. In previews. Opens March 23 at 6:45. (Century Center for the Performing Arts, 111 E. 15th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE JOURNALS OF MIHAIL SEBASTIAN
Stephen Kunken stars in a play about the life and times of the Romanian novelist and playwright, adapted by David Auburn ("Proof") from the diaries that Sebastian wrote during the Second World War. A Keen Company production. Directed by Carl Forsman. In previews. Opens March 23 at 8. (Theatre at 45th Street, 354 W. 45th St. 212-868-4444.)

MATCH
In a new play by Stephen Belber ("Tape"), starring Frank Langella, Ray Liotta, and Melora Walters, a husband and wife interview a once famous dancer about his past. Directed by Nicholas Martin. In previews. (Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

MY KITCHEN WARS
Dorothy Lyman stars in her adaptation of Betty Fussell's memoir about her thirty-year marriage to the Princeton professor Paul Fussell. Directed by Elinor Renfield. Opens March 17 at 7. (78th Street Theatre Lab, 236 W. 78th St. 212-868-4444.)

OPEN HEART
Robby Benson ("Ice Castles") wrote the book, score, and lyrics for this new musical comedy about open-heart surgery, in which he also stars. He has undergone the procedure twice. Directed by Matt Williams. Opens March 17 at 8. (Cherry Lane, 38 Commerce St. 212-239-6200.)

SILENT LAUGHTER
A farce inspired by silent movies, performed by a cast of ten and accompanied by movie-house organ music, written by Billy Van Zandt and Jane Milmore. Van Zandt directs. Two previews on March 17. Opens March 18 at 8. (Lamb's Theatre, 130 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE SLUG BEARERS OF KAYROL ISLAND; OR, THE FRIENDS OF DR. RUSHOWER
An absurdist rock musical conceived, directed, and designed by the cartoonist Ben Katchor ("Julius Knipl, Real Estate Photographer"). With music by Mark Mulcahy. Opens March 19 at 8. Through March 27. (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 212-255-5793, ext. 11.)

SLY FOX
Arthur Penn directs a revival of Larry Gelbart's comedy, an update of Ben Jonson's "Volpone" that transplants the action to Gold Rush-era San Francisco. With Richard Dreyfuss, Eric Stoltz, and Elizabeth Berkley. In previews. (Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200.)

TWENTIETH CENTURY
Alec Baldwin and Anne Heche lead the cast in the Roundabout Theatre's revival of Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur's comedy about a man who transforms a chorus girl into a leading lady. Directed by Walter Bobbie. In previews. (American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-719-1300.)

WAVE
Will Pomerantz ("Tatjana in Color") directs the Ma-Yi Theatre Company in a new play about an Asian-American family bedevilled by a fascination with fame and firearms. In previews. Opens March 21 at 5. (Ohio Theatre, 66 Wooster St. 212-352-3101.)

WELL
Lisa Kron presents a new play, a "solo show with other people in it," in her trademark wry, garrulous vein. Directed by Leigh Silverman. In previews. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-239-6200.)

YEARDLEY SMITH: MORE
Smith, the actress who provides the voice of Lisa on "The Simpsons," has written an autobiographical solo play, in which she stars. Directed by Judith Ivey. In previews. Opens March 22 at 8. (Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 212-307-7171.)

OPENED RECENTLY

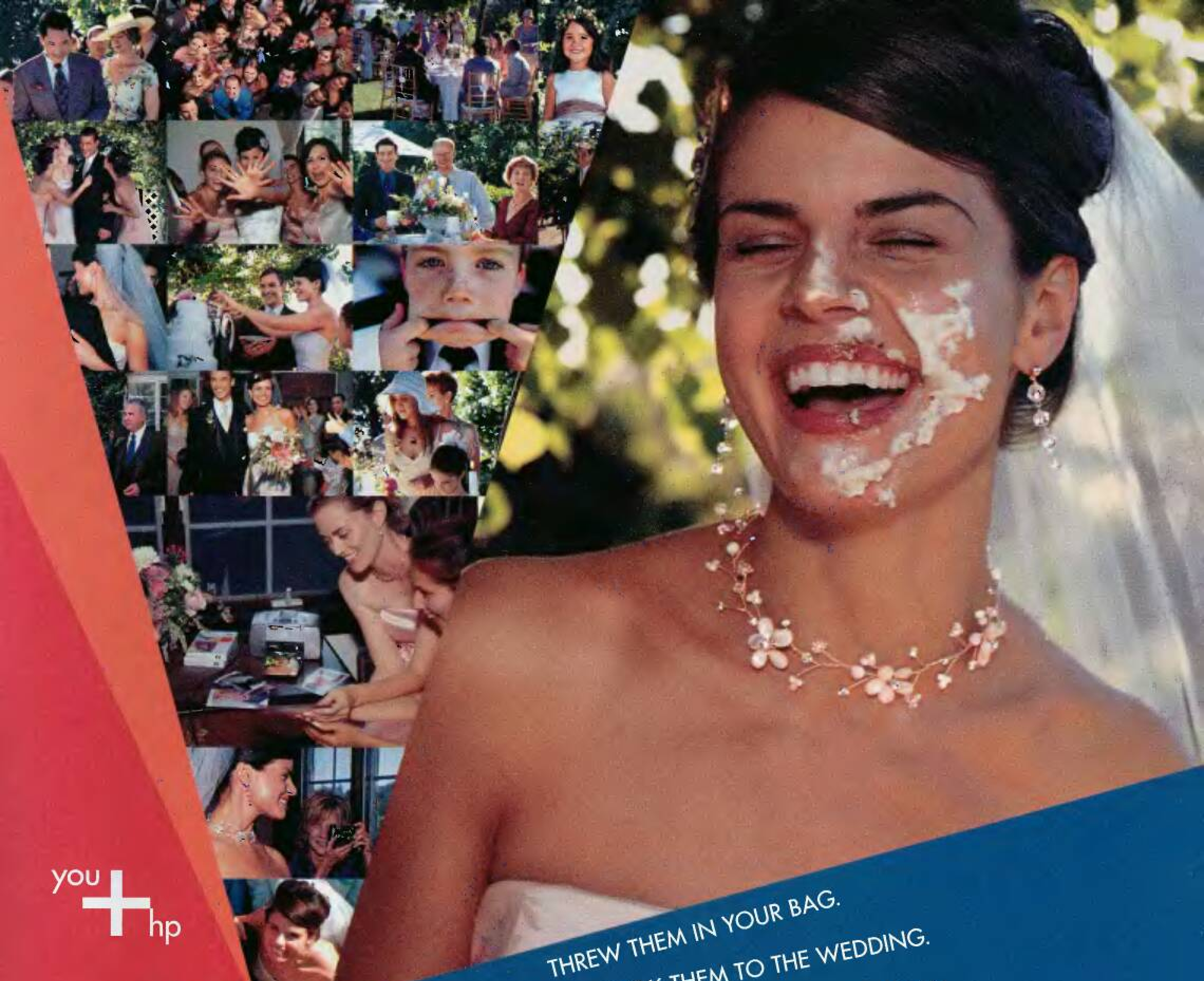
BIG BILL
Bill Tilden almost single-handedly transformed tennis from a nineteen-twenties garden entertainment for the upper classes to a spectator sport and an intellectual pursuit. But in 1953, after serving two prison terms for contributing to the delinquency of male minors, he was found dead in his shabby Hollywood apartment. A. R. Gurney's gallant new play, ably directed by Mark Lamos, explores the duality of Tilden's character—genial, masculine sports hero versus sensitive and optimistic Peter Pan—in a series of scenes that shift in perspective with near-cinematic fluidity. John Michael Higgins, who plays Tilden, is a wonderful actor, bathed in a quiet and respectable kind of decency. You can tell that he's thrilled by the emotional trajectories Gurney gives him to play with. Still, his characterization is flawed in exactly the way that this moving play is flawed: by too much politesse and not enough cringe-inducing darkness. (Reviewed in our issue of 3/15/04.) (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200.)

BRIDGE & TUNNEL
Sarah Jones, a sort of multicultural mynah bird, lays our mongrel nation before us with gorgeous, pitch-perfect impersonations. The conceit of her eloquent one-woman show is that we are in a café where an evening of poetry is being presented by a punning Pakistani called Mohammed Ali. Each participant called to the mike is of a different background—Dominican, Chinese, Jewish, Russian, Vietnamese, Jamaican, Mexican, Jordanian. Their stories shed refracted light on the struggle to be an American and to make society deliver its promise. (3/8/04) (45 Bleecker Street Theatre, at 45 Bleecker St. 212-307-4100.)

BUG
A new dark comedy by Tracy Letts ("Killer Joe") rests on the gimmick of a sci-fi conspiracy theory. A consortium of higher-ups have planted microbes under everyone's skin. Peter, a self-mutilating paranoid schizophrenic (played by Michael Shannon), meets Agnes (Shannon Cochran), the loneliest woman in Oklahoma, and turns her fleabag motel room into an entomology lab. In the name of love, she joins his campaign for the extermination of the ubiquitous parasites. Dexter Bullard directs. (Barrow Street Theatre, 27 Barrow St., at Seventh Ave. 212-239-6200.)

EMBEDDED
In a timely satire written and directed by Tim Robbins, media frenzy and front-line blunders attend a conflict in the Middle East. A production of the Actors' Gang. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-239-6200.)

FIDDLER ON THE ROOF
In this elegant revival, the star (Alfred Molina), the director (David Leveaux), the costume designer (Vicki Mortimer), and the set designer (Tom Pye) are English; they bring to the production a certain cultural detachment, which imposes a powerful lucidity on the story and allows its moral debate to gather proper poetic momentum. The production's panache reverses the English joke "Look British, think Yiddish"; in this "Fiddler," it's indubitably a case of "Think British, look Yiddish." Every well-sculpted second has within it a sense of both regret and release, which makes the comic and tragic elements of the story at once nostalgic, evergreen, and adult. (3/8/04) (Minskoff, 200 W. 45th St. 212-307-4100.)



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POSTMARK ARIZONA

HotMamas

By Kathryn Jones

The desert, studded with towering saguaro cactus, made a big impression on me when I visited Arizona twenty years ago. But other than a few good Mexican restaurants, I couldn't find much in the way of creative cooking. On recent trips to the Grand Canyon State, however, I've witnessed its cuisine evolving on a grand scale. Some of the most innovative chefs are women and they're crossing culinary borders.

"Arizona's restaurant scene has finally grown up," says Donna Nordin, a veteran chef who owns **Café Terra Cotta**, a Southwestern restaurant in Tucson. "We're trying to bring our own contemporary style into American regional cuisine." Regional ingredients, especially chiles, make many of her dishes distinctive. Grilled duck breast, for instance, gets a spicy-sweet spark from an ancho chile and ginger sauce. Syrup made from prickly pear cactus jazzes up a specialty margarita.

The savory cuisine coming from the kitchens of Arizona draws inspiration from the Mexican state of Sonora, to the south, and New Mexico, to the east. Mole, a rich Mexican sauce made from a paste of chiles and flavored with chocolate, as well other ingredients, does both classic and modern turns on many menus.

At **El Charro Café**, a Tucson institution that claims to be the nation's oldest Mexican restaurant in continuous operation by the same family, Chef Carlotta Flores cooks in the Sonoran style. For enchiladas she uses three kinds of mole: Colorado, a red mole; tomatillo, a green mole; and a classic chocolate mole.

Other chefs, such as Suzana Dávila of **Café Poca Cosa** in Tucson, look beyond Sonora for inspiration. Dávila, a former model, hails from Sonora, but she regularly travels to other regions of Mexico for culinary ideas. Lunch and dinner offerings change every day at Poca Cosa; they are listed on a chalkboard that a waiter explains—first in Spanish, and then in English. The café makes twenty-six varieties of mole, any one of which Davila likes to pair with chicken. But she goes beyond traditional recipes; for example, she simmers Oaxacan black mole in red wine. "Every day I'm inventing something," she confides.

COURTESY OF MOSAIC

Another chef who travels widely in Mexico is Silvana Salcido Esparza, chef and co-owner of **Barrio Café** in Phoenix. This neighborhood restaurant puts a modern spin on Mexican cuisine from the Yucatán, Oaxaca, Mexico City, and Puebla areas. Her guacamole casero, prepared tableside, is flavored with pomegranate seeds, in addition to using onion, tomato and cilantro. Esparza spices up a New York strip steak with tequila-grilled onions and a roasted poblano pepper sauce.

COURTESY OF CAFÉ TERRA COTTA

"My food is my inheritance," claims Esparza, who was raised in a Mexican bakery in central California. "It's the legacy that the females in my family have passed on. But unlike my mother, who took her mother's recipes and copied them, I take those recipes and say, 'let's add this' or 'let's change that.' Then they become your own."

Mother-daughter chefs Victoria and Cheryl Chavez of **Los Dos Molinos** in Phoenix focus their cooking on the flavors of New Mexico. On busy Saturday nights, diners often queue up for more than two hours for the restaurant's trademark fiery salsas and signature dishes, such as adovada ribs simmered in spicy Hatch Valley red chiles and blue-corn enchiladas stacked and topped with a fried egg.

Victoria Chavez sold tamales and tacos on a street corner in Springerville before opening her first restaurant there. Today Los Dos also is housed in the rambling old Phoenix hacienda that was once the home of Tom Mix, star of early Westerns. Three years ago, in a big leap, Los Dos opened a spicy outpost in New York's Gramercy Park area.

Borders pose no obstacles at **Mosaic**, an elegant restaurant in Scottsdale, east of Phoenix, with views of Pinnacle Peak. The menu is adventurous and global, as is its extensive wine list. "People were interested in expanding their horizons and developing more of a dining culture here," says chef/owner Deborah Knight who opened the restaurant three years ago. Her continent-hopping cuisine ranges from Vietnamese shrimp and coconut soup to tamarind-glazed pork tenderloin with smoky red posole, corn, jicama, and chayote.

On the other side of Phoenix, in Glendale, Margaret Okula samples from abroad on a smaller scale. **A Touch of European Cafe**, which Okula owns with her husband, Waldemar, features Polish specialties such as pierogi, goulash, kielbasa, an apple pastry called *szarlotka*, and her special recipe for borscht. Even though the café has only been open since last August, it already has a loyal following. Borscht in the desert? It's yet another sign that Arizona's culinary scene is thriving.

(Kathryn Jones is a freelance restaurant critic for *The Dallas Morning News* and a contributing editor to *Texas Monthly* magazine.)

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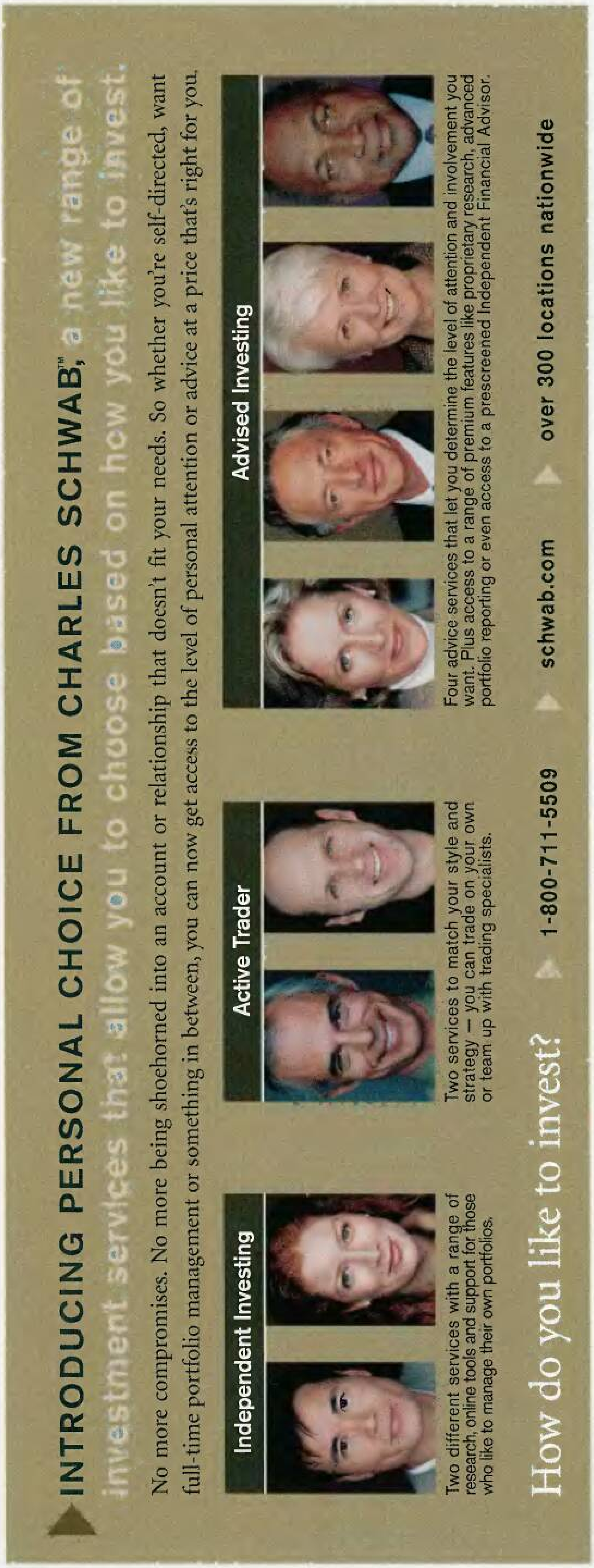

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IN THE BELLY OF THE BEAST REVISITED
The playwright Adrian Hall has reworked his 1985 play about the convicted killer Jack Henry Abbott (whose correspondence with Norman Mailer made him a star of the Manhattan literary scene for a time, until he murdered again) in the wake of Abbott's suicide, in February of 2002. Leo Farley directs. (29th Street Repertory, 212 W. 29th St. 212-868-4444.)

KING LEAR
You get the sense, watching this tepid production, that Christopher Plummer has simply grown too comfortable with the part of the great actor to bother harnessing his energy to this Mt. Everest of a role. The director, Jonathan Miller, seems intent on bringing a little more humor to this bare-bones "Lear" than is customary, but in the process he has neglected to cast actors who could tear through Shakespeare's passion and grief with anything approaching passion and grief of their own. The one exception is Barry MacGregor, as the Fool, who marries his own physique to the lyricism of the language, and turns in a magical performance. (3/15/04) (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200.)

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM
The British director Edward Hall makes his New York début with the Watermill Theatre production of Shakespeare's comedy, performed by Hall's all-male company, Propellor. (BAM's Harvey Theatre, 651 Fulton St. 718-636-4100. Through March 28.)

THE MOONLIGHT ROOM
Tristine Skyler's critically lauded play, about two teen-agers at a hospital who are waiting for news about a friend who has overdosed, has reopened on Theatre Row. Directed by Jeff Cohen. (Beckett, 242 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.)

NOH AND KYOGEN: MASTERS OF PERFORMANCE
The highly stylized Japanese theatre arts of Noh and kyogen—one poetic and austere, the other broadly comic—are traditionally presented in tandem, although American audiences usually see them separately. This weekend, to celebrate fifty years of sponsoring the performing arts, the Japan Society brings the two genres together. The chief glory of this production is the cast of masters: their careers span decades, and the artistic dynasties they represent reach across centuries. (333 E. 47th St. 212-752-3015. Gala performance on March 18 at 7:30; performances continue March 19-20 at 7:30.)

POOR THEATER
The Wooster Group performs a work in progress. (Performing Garage, 33 Wooster St. 212-966-3651.)

ROULETTE
A shrewdly written drama of familial dysfunction by the Hollywood screenwriter Paul Weitz. In the play's most compelling moment, the paterfamilias (Larry Bryggman) starts his day with a game of Russian roulette at the breakfast table. Then he goes to work. The disconnected characters revolve around one another like planets whose orbits never intersect. But in Weitz's sendup of suburbia, even suicide can be fun. Directed by Trip Cullman. (3/1/04) (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.)

THE STENDHAL SYNDROME
In Terrence McNally's twin bill at Primary Stages, the playwright displays his narrative skill, his sense of fun, his love of music, and his ability to turn a threadbare trope into a surprising, complex gesture. (3/1/04) (59E59 Theatre, 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)

WINTERTIME
Charles L. Mee's latest is a zany fireside entertainment loosely patterned on "The Winter's Tale." An unconventional family, composed of a wife, her husband, her French lover, her husband's gay lover, her son, her son's would-be fiancée, and the lesbian couple next door (this is a partial list), converge on a snowbound country house. Sexual jealousy tears the group apart, until the death of the wife (Marsha Mason) teaches them to value love over pride. The director, David Schweizer, keeps the physical comedy going and going, with slamming doors, smashing plates, and bathetic

opera arias. Michael Cerveris eats up the role of the preening, overwrought French lover. (Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St. 212-246-4422. Through March 28.)

DANCE

"WALL TO WALL BALANCHINE"
Tributes to George Balanchine on the centennial of his birth continue with twelve hours of performances and discussions at Symphony Space. The program includes productions of "Apollo" (by the Dance Theatre of Harlem) and "Renard" (by the Kansas City Ballet) and appearances by dancers from New York City Ballet, including Alexandra Ansanelli, Charles Askegard, Maria Kowroski, Jennie Somogyi, and others. Isaiah Sheffer coördinates the marathon. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-5400. For the complete schedule, see www.symphonyspace.org. March 20 at 11 A.M.)

"THE ISLAND OF MISFIT TOYS"
The Stephen Petronio Company celebrates its twentieth anniversary with the New York première of a thirty-minute work that brings together choreography by Petronio, original music by Lou Reed, a set designed by Cindy Sherman, costumes by Tara Subkoff, of Imitation of Christ, and lighting by Ken Tabachnick. The program also includes last season's "City of Twist," with original music by Laurie Anderson, and "Broken Man," a solo performed by Petronio with music by Blixa Bargeld. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. March 23 at 8. Through March 28.)

PETER BOAL & COMPANY
The New York City Ballet principal dancer Peter Boal introduces his new dance company at the Joyce (see This Week). (175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. March 16-20 at 8. March 21 at 2 and 7:30.)

WORK & SHOW FESTIVAL
Two productions share the first week of the Tribeca Performing Arts Center's annual festival. "Dope: A Dance for Rebels," by SuarezDanceTheater, is an exploration of California skateboarder/surfer culture that incorporates low spirals, acceleration, spinning, and other board moves, without boards. "Haereticus," by Ellis Wood Dance, is a meditation on Joan of Arc. (Borough of Manhattan Community College, 199 Chambers St. 212-220-1460. "Dope": March 18 at 7 and March 20-21 at 3. "Haereticus": March 19-20 at 7.)

DANCE THEATRE WORKSHOP
Last summer, the Vietnamese choreographer Le Vu Long was planning a trip to New York to work with his frequent collaborator, the New York choreographer Maura Nguyen Donohue, when he discovered that he was on a U.S.-government watch list. After clearing his name, he came to town for one week (he had intended to stay for a month). Long and Donohue have folded this experience into "Enemy/Territory," a confrontational piece about American attitudes toward immigration and toward Vietnam. Part of the "Carnival" lineup, which this week also includes Andrea E. Woods's "At the Soul Level." (219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. "Enemy/Territory": March 17-18 at 7. Through March 27. "At the Soul Level": March 19-20 at 7.)

WALLY CARDONA QUARTET
"Him•There•Them," a triptych presented in the 92nd Street Y's Harkness Dance Project. The first section features one dancer (Cardona) and a lot of noise (eight live snare drummers); the second, "There," includes four dancers and gentle sounds: piano music by Brahms and the rustle of artificial grass flooring. Held balances and methodical patterns alternate with bursts of floppy action. The third segment, "Them," is a duet for Cardona and Joanna Kotze, set to electronic music. (The Duke on 42nd Street, 229 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200. March 17-18 at 8, March 20 at 8, and March 21 at 2 and 7.)

"131"
The choreographer Katherine Profeta, known for her work with the theatre group Elevator Repair Service, strikes out on her own with an interpretation of Beethoven's String Quartet in C-Sharp Minor,

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Op. 131. Four dancers in a living room listen to a recording of the quartet and act out what they hear. One of them reads aloud from nasty letters that Beethoven wrote to his nephew, Karl, while he was composing the work, but most of the evening is devoted to whimsical music visualization. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 212-477-5288. March 18-20 at 7:30 and March 21 at 5.)

DANSPACE PROJECT
The British choreographer Charles Linehan presents two works, "New Quartet," set to original music by William Basinski and Julian Swales, and "Grand Junction," a duet performed by Greig Cooke and Andreja Rauch, set to a cycle of acoustic-guitar samples by Swales. With lighting by Mikki Kunttu. (St. Mark's In-the-Bowery, Second Ave. at 10th St. 212-674-8194. March 18-21 at 8:30.)

"CROSSING BOUNDARIES"
Marcia Monroe curates an evening of performances by Monica Bill Barnes, Jasmine Ben-Reuven, Daria Fain, and Luis Lara Malvacias. (Dixon Place at Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 212-219-0736. March 22 at 8.)

"BLIND SUMMIT"
Leslie Satin and Dancers interpret the grids and spatial tensions of Agnes Martin's taupe and gray paintings. With a video backdrop by Andrew Gurian. (Joyce SoHo, 155 Mercer St. 212-334-7479. March 19-21 at 8.)

NIGHT LIFE

CONCERTS

NEIL YOUNG AND CRAZY HORSE
Promoting "Greendale," his ecologically minded concept album and film, Young appears with Crazy Horse, a force of nature if there ever was one. (Radio City Music Hall, Sixth Ave. at 50th St. 212-247-4777. March 17-18 and March 20 at 8.)

"HIGHLIGHTS IN JAZZ"
Three patriarchs of jazz percussion—the swing master **Louie Bellson,** the mainstream giant **Chico Hamilton,** and the Latin-jazz pacesetter **Ray Barretto**—share the billing. (Tribeca Performing Arts Center, 199 Chambers St. 212-220-1460. March 18 at 8.)

JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER
March 18-20 at 8: The pianist **Gerri Allen,** working with the bassist **Darryl Hall** and the drummer **Billy Hart,** interprets the music of the pianist and composer Mary Lou Williams. (Kaplan Penthouse, Rose Building.) March 20 at 8: A few years before **Dave Brubeck** assembled his classic quartet with the alto saxophonist Paul Desmond, the pianist led a short-lived octet that featured advanced arrangements blending cool jazz and modern classical music. Among the band's gifted soloists was the clarinettist **Bill Smith,** who will be on hand for this intriguing repertory program. (Avery Fisher Hall. For more information about both shows, call 212-721-6500.)

ALLMAN BROTHERS
The front end of a nine-night stand with the boys from Macon. (Beacon Theatre, Broadway at 74th St. 212-496-7070. March 18-20 and March 22-23 at 8. Through March 28.)

"BARBARA COOK'S BROADWAY"
The grande dame of musical theatre and cabaret celebrates music of the Great White Way from the fifties to the seventies. (Vivian Beaumont Theatre, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200. March 19 at 8 and March 20-21 at 2. Through April 18.)

CLUBS

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

BAM CAFÉ
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-636-4139)—March 19: **Femm Nameless,** a seven-piece all-female Afro-beat band.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (212-997-4144)—March 17: The longtime local Irish-American favorites **Black 47** help ring in St. Patrick's Day. Their latest album, "New York Town," celebrates the Irish-American experience in inimitable fashion. March 21: The bluesman **Buddy Guy** brings in his acoustic ensemble. March 22: Though recently in trouble with the law for drug possession, **George Clinton** continues to pilot the Mothership. He's here with his **P-Funk Allstars.**

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—March 20: The **Black Heart Procession** is a San Diego-based ensemble that crafts brooding, romantic compositions. With **Enon,** a trio of madmen who bridge the gap between clever indie rock and experimental noise. Their quirky, hard-edged pop is rife with squeaks, buzzes, electronic hisses, and other found sounds. March 21: Mark Kozelek spent more than a decade fronting the mopey rock band Red House Painters, but he has undergone a creative resurgence with **Sun Kil Moon,** and he is producing his best work: introspective lyrics complemented by stirring arrangements.

"The Slug Bearers of Kayrol Island; or, the Friends of Dr. Rushower," a musical by Ben Katchor and Mark Mulcahy (see Theatre).

POP NOTES

BLUE MOODS

"Double V" (Telarc), Otis Taylor's fifth album in as many years, is yet another intense, rewarding recording by the Colorado bluesman. Earlier albums, including "When Negroes Walked the Earth," "White African," and last year's "Truth Is Not Fiction," showcased Taylor's instrumental versatility (he plays a variety of guitars, the banjo, and the mandolin), smoky vocals and single-chord vamps that recall the hypnotic boogie blues of John Lee Hooker, and gimlet-eyed lyrics about race relations in America. "Double V" still plays to Taylor's storytelling skills, but while earlier albums resembled collections of short fiction, this one is something of a memoir. Songs like "Mama's Selling Heroin" and "505 Train" have autobiographical elements, and the sense that this record is a more personal project is amplified by the fact that it's more or less a solo outing. The only other musician who makes a substantial contribution to the record is Taylor's teenage daughter Cassie, who plays bass, supplies the backup vocals, and sings lead on "Buy Myself Some Freedom."

While artists like Taylor are trying to keep the blues afloat with new ideas, Eric Clapton keeps bringing the genre down. **"Me and Mr. Johnson"** (Reprise), his new album, is a fourteen-song torpedo with a high-concept charge: it's the British blues/rock veteran's tribute to the Delta-blues legend Robert Johnson. The songs, which sound agile, funny, and dangerous in Johnson's idiosyncratic originals, come off as swollen and silly here. "Milkcow's Calf Blues," a sweet little come-on, is outfitted with a preposterous Zeppelin-style riff. The terrifying, theatrical "Hellhound on My Trail" is now only theatrical; it sounds like a showstopping number from "Blues! The Musical." And how does Clapton demonstrate his grasp of "Come On in My Kitchen," one of the most desolate, solitary, and beautiful laments that Johnson (or anyone else) ever recorded? He dresses it up with slick backup vocals. Song after song is misunderstood, mishandled, or meanly mistreated, and only a few, like the jivey novelty "They're Red Hot," escape unscathed. Clapton's playing is impeccable and his singing is strong, but rarely has technical mastery mattered so little. "Me and Mr. Johnson" offers conclusive proof of Johnson's inimitability, though not in the way Clapton intended.

—*Ben Greenman*

IRVING PLAZA

17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (212-777-6800)—March 18: In the mid-nineties, the Ninja Tune record label threw some of the best electronica parties in the world. **Kid Koala's** incessant scratching and **Amon Tobin's** jazzy, psychedelic beats may seem somewhat dated now, but the Zentertainment tour also features the up-and-coming d.j.s **Blockhead** and **Sixtoo.** March 19: The revved-up pop and chanteys of **Great Big Sea.** March 20: **Gogol Bordello.** Led by the sallow-faced, darkly charismatic Eugene Hutz—equal parts Sid Vicious and Bertolt Brecht—this local favorite specializes in what it calls "Ukrainian Gypsy surrealistic punk cabaret."

JOE'S PUB

425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—March 17: The former Talking Heads front man **David Byrne,** backed by a band that's fleshed out by a string section, performs songs from "Grown Backwards," his first album for the Nonesuch label. March 23: **Carmen Consoli,** a top-selling Italian alternative rocker, makes her New York City début.

KNITTING FACTORY

74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (212-219-3055)—March 17: The Celtic outlaw

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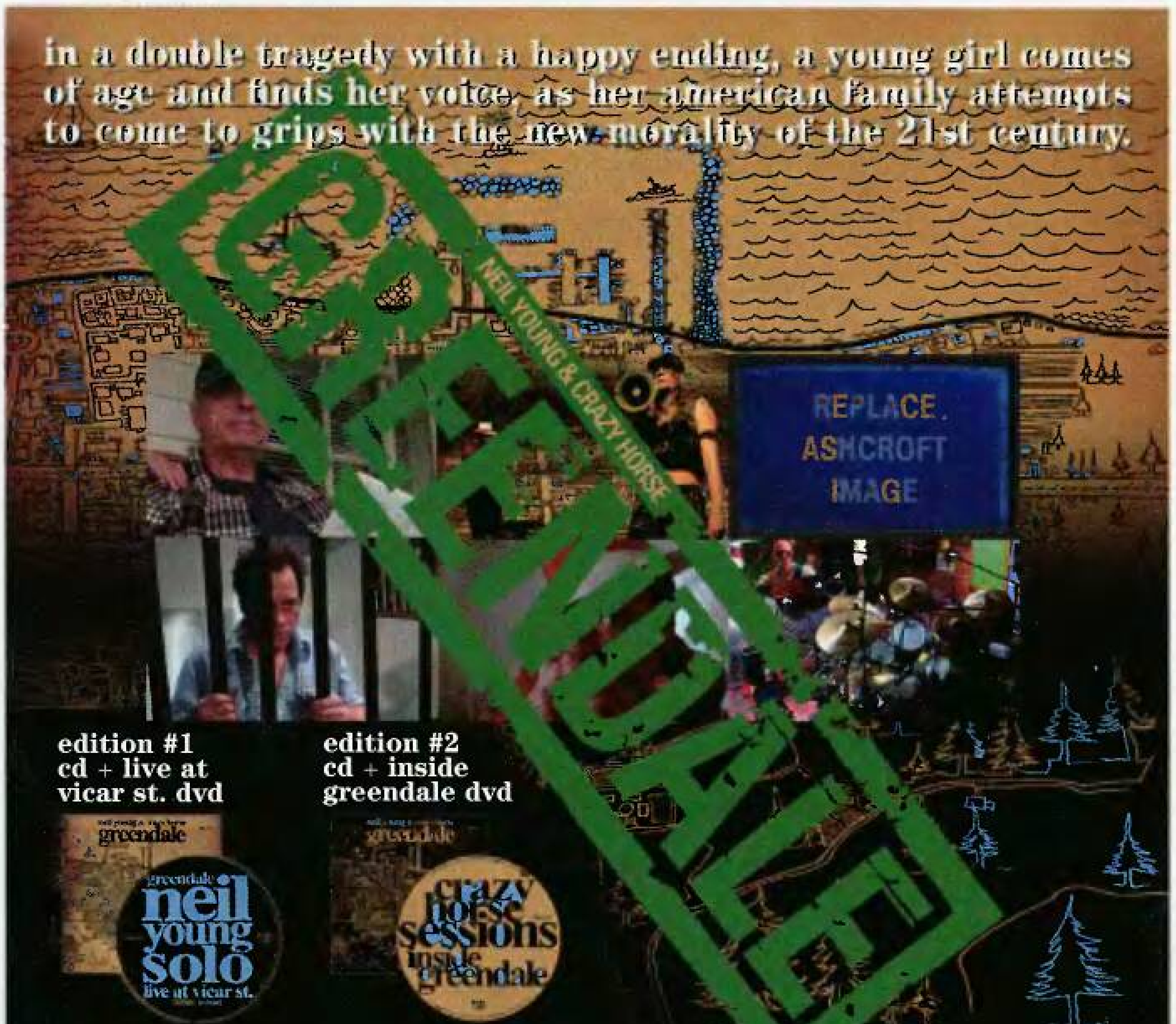

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Spider Stacey, revered by many for his service as the tin-whistle player in the Pogues, takes a solo turn. With the **Tosses.** March 18: Maria Taylor and Orenda Fink, the front women of the Omaha, Nebraska, group **Azure Ray,** deliver achingly beautiful indie-pop songs.

PIANOS
158 Ludlow St. (212-505-3733)—This piano showroom turned duplex club has a big following. Masses of the fashionably bedraggled have packed the back room for loud shows by indie-rock bands like the Thrills, A.R.E. Weapons, the Witness, and Gina Gershon, with Girls Against Boys. The club became so hot last year that it incited a backlash among its hipster clientele. "Anywhere But Pianos" T-shirts appeared across the river in Williamsburg (the club countered by starting "Anywhere But Pianos" events featuring Brooklyn bands). The club and its music live on, and the performance schedule is slated to get more diverse, with blues and world-music acts. Starting next month there will be acoustic music shows on Sunday nights in the upstairs lounge. On March 23, the **Moonlighters**—a local band that performs swinging Hawaiian tunes from the twenties and thirties such as "Hula Blues" and "Honolulu March," along with originals in the same style—headline a program of mostly unplugged entertainment. With **Jose Flatfix,** a quintet featuring the banjo picking of Sean Condron, and the rootsy group **Wormwood.**

SATALLA
37 W. 26th St. (212-576-1155)—March 17: A night of Celtic music with the Irish band **Teada** and the Scottish ensemble **Wolfstone.**

SHOW
135 W. 41st St. (212-278-0988)—March 18: Members of the art world, including the mistress of ceremonies Karen Finley, descend upon this midtown dance club, in the company of Miss Dirty Martini and other burlesque stars, in a benefit for the non-profit arts organization Creative Time. For more information, call 212-206-6674, ext. 2.

SOUTHPAW
125 Fifth Ave., Park Slope (718-230-0236)—March 18: **Brant Bjork and the Bros** features two of the leading purveyors of stoner rock: the versatile drummer Bjork (formerly of Kyuss and Fu Manchu) and the bassist Nick Oliveri, recently of the celebrated outfit Queens of the Stone Age. March 20: The PG-13 burlesque of the **World Famous Pontani Sisters.**

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—Through March 21: Latin music may have been one of the few musical genres Miles Davis didn't fully explore, but that hasn't stopped Latin jazzmen from embracing Davis. **"Another Kind of Blue: The Latin Side of Miles"** features a consortium of exceptional players including Conrad Herwig, Dave Valentin, and Brian Lynch.

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, through March 27, the big, unabashed voice of **Betty Buckley.**

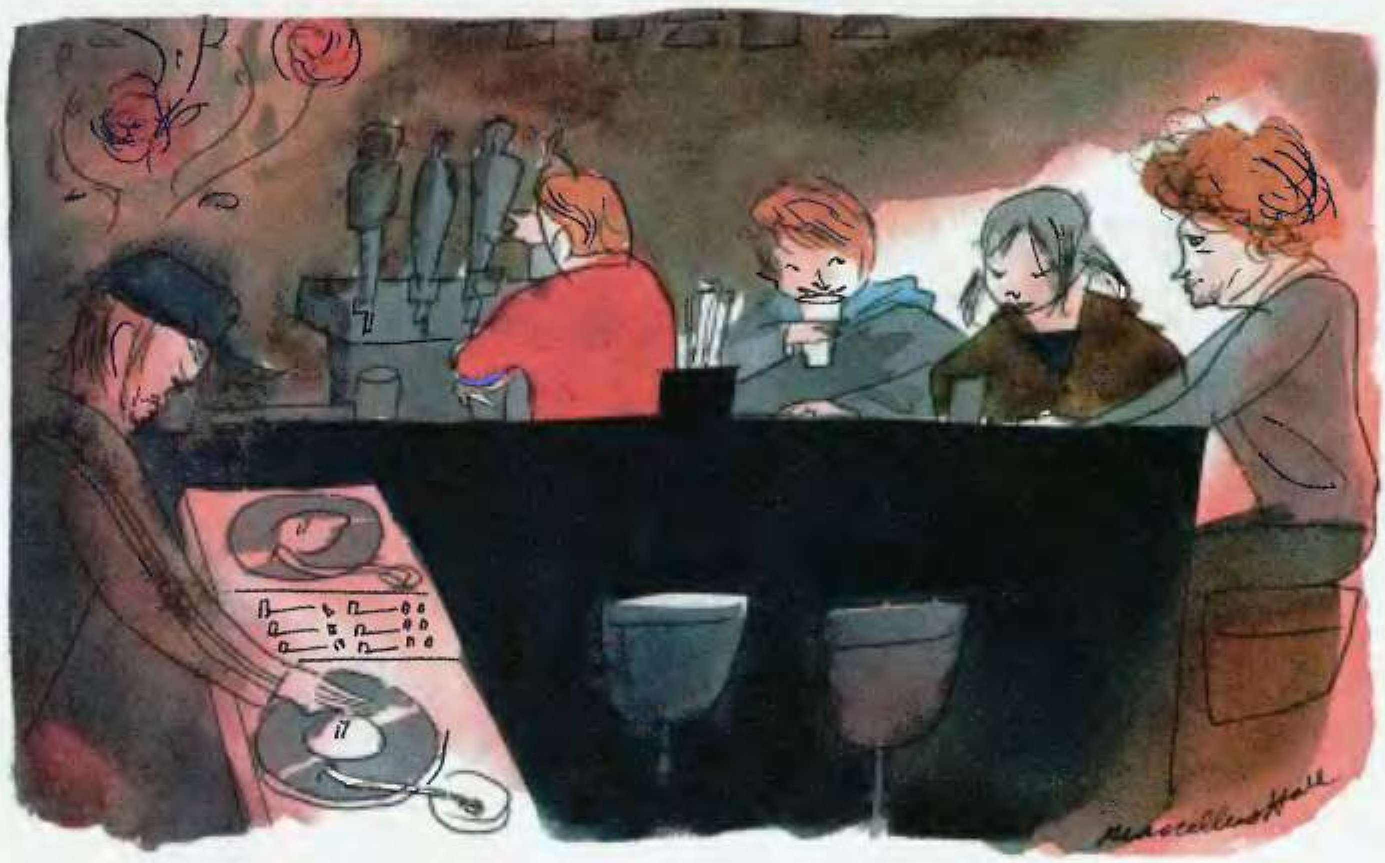
FEINSTEIN'S AT THE REGENCY
540 Park Ave., at 61st St. (212-339-4095)—Through March 20: **Rita Moreno,** who has a Tony, an Emmy, a Grammy, and an Oscar to her credit.

55 BAR
55 Christopher St. (212-929-9883)—March 19: The swing music of the thirties gets delightfully twisted by the reeds player Matt Dariau and his group **Ballin' the Jack.** March 23: **Hard Cell** is the saxophonist Tim Berne's band, with the new-jazz provocateurs Craig Taborn, on keyboards, and Tom Rainey, on drums.

IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—Through March 21: **Monkisland** (see This Week). Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.**

LE JAZZ AU BAR
41 E. 58th St. (212-308-9455)—March 19-21: **Gloria Lynne** will always be remembered for the 1964 hit ballad "I Wish You Love," but she's no nostalgia act. Here she gets support from the alto saxophonist **Antonio Hart.**

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—March 16-17: **The Fresh Sound Big Band,** led by trumpeter David Weiss, a smart player with an ear for jazz repertory, investigates the durable, beautifully crafted compositions of the saxophonist Wayne Shorter. March 18-21: The **Charles Tolliver** big band. The trumpeter Tolliver was famous in the seventies but then dropped off the scene. He's back, with an ambitious ensemble that includes the pianist **George Cables** and the saxophonist **Gary Bartz.**


The upstairs lounge at Pianos, a club on the Lower East Side.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—**Jeff (Tain) Watts** (here with his quartet through March 21) is a drummer who answers to an extroverted muse. He's played with both Wynton and Branford Marsalis and continues to be the most in-demand percussionist of his generation. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-879-5500)—The name Chuck Close instantly conjures images of giant gridded portraits, tight and deadpan in Photo-Realist black-and-white in the seventies, with more recent versions dissolving in loose lozenges of color. **"Chuck Close Prints: Process and Collaboration"** shows that all the portraiture of self and others went along with constant experiments in the practice of printmaking. Etching, silk screen, linoleum and woodblock prints, and hand-constructed pulp-paper multiples are tracked through various proof states, and actual woodblocks, etched copper panels, and other studio paraphernalia also appear. Through April 18. ♦ The work in **"Echoing Images: Couples in African Sculpture"** comes from twenty-eight sub-Saharan cultures, with dates ranging from the twelfth to the twentieth centuries. Though themes—fertility, harmony, complementary opposites—are consistent, there is a variety of media: wood, bronze, beadwork, and ivory made to represent idealized men and women. Many of the pieces are graceful. Some are frightening, like a terra-cotta pair from the Djenne civilization, who are captured in flagrante, their entwined bodies welted by ceremonial raised scars. Through Sept. 5. (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)—**"Roth Time: A Dieter Roth Retrospective"** showcases nearly three hundred and fifty works spanning five decades, including drawings, sculptures, videos, installations, and paintings. Through June 7. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, 10 to 5, and Friday evenings until 7:45.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—**"Singular Forms (Sometimes Repeated)"** fills the museum with classic minimalist and post-minimalist art of the last half-century, exalting what is still the chief aesthetic of our age. Emphasizing "reductive" sensibility—a qualifier rarely used since the nineteen-sixties—the curators smooth over theoretical antagonisms between sculpture (Judd, Andre, Flavin) and painting (Kelly, Ryman, Marden), thus giving weight to latter-day hybrid modes (Richter, Ray, Gober). Californian hedonism (Irwin, Turrell, McCracken) registers as strongly as phenomenological tough stuff (Morris, Serra, Nauman). Sumptuously seductive for all of its austerities, the show reminds us that minimalism brought about a revolution in the decorative arts. Through May 19. (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)—The 2004 Whitney Biennial is the museum's seventy-second survey of contemporary American art. (Reviewed in this issue.) Through May 30. (Open Wednesdays through Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

AMERICAN FOLK ART MUSEUM
45 W. 53rd St. (212-265-1040)—One of the visionary poem-drawings in **"Tools of Her Ministry: The Art of Sister Gertrude Morgan"** bears the title "Alpha Be Poem Rote by Me the Lord's Wife Prophetess Morgan Missionary." What seems semi-literate is in fact a compressed linguistic package, loaded with puns equating reading and writing with God and religious ecstasy. Such allusive elegance rather outdoes most of the other drawings, which tend to be populated by ghostly white angels with long crimson hair. But Sister Gertrude—who ran the Everlasting Gospel Mission in New Orleans for some fifteen years—is nothing if not engaging. Through Sept. 26. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Friday evenings until 7:30.)

ASIA SOCIETY
Park Ave. at 70th St. (212-517-2742)—**"Paradise Now? Contemporary Art from the Pacific."** Through May 9. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6, and Friday evenings until 9.)

DAHESH MUSEUM
580 Madison Ave., at 57th St. (212-759-0606)—**"Staging the Orient: Visions of the East at La**

MARCELLUS HALL

Scala and the Metropolitan Opera" traces Western conceptions of Asia and the Middle East through opera-design archives. Works on paper from Milan's La Scala range from its founding, in the eighteenth century, through the twentieth century, and include both working sketches scribbled with notes and pristinely decorative watercolors like those for Giuseppe Palanti's Art Deco "Salome," from 1912. For those used to seeing the Met's costumes under stage lights, there is the illusion-destroying, respect-enhancing pleasure of a closer look. Cecil Beaton's designs for a nineteen-sixties production of "Turandot" (in hot pink, red, and yellow floral and paisley motifs) are paired with the Franco Zeffirelli version from the eighties (icy blue-white, with rhinestones and hornlike shoulder pads); both are absurd and lovely. Through May 30. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 11 to 6.)

GROLIER CLUB
47 E. 60th St. (212-838-6690)—**"Volvelles: The Magnificent Art of Circular Charting."** Through April 24. (Open Mondays through Saturdays, 10 to 5.)

MUSEO DEL BARRIO
Fifth Ave. at 104th St. (212-831-7272)— **"MOMA at El Museo"** distills from the collections of the Museum of Modern Art a parallel Latin-American history of Mexican muralists, Caribbean Surrealists, Venezuelan geometricians, and Brazilian Conceptualists. For a change, works by José Clemente Orozco, Joaquín Torres-García, and Wifredo Lam appear as not just honorably marginal to Paris and New York but as touchstones of an independent tradition characterized by intense fantasy, intimations of tragedy, and utopian yearnings. Familiar things, such as paintings by Frida Kahlo and Matta, feel fresh; underknown artists (notably, the Brazilian abstractionists Hélio Oiticica and Lygia Pape, with works from the late nineteen-fifties and sixties) retroactively surprise; and strong contemporary artists like Gabriel Orozco and Doris Salcedo exude and inspire confidence. Through July 25. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 5, and Thursday evenings until 8.)

P.S. 1 CONTEMPORARY ART CENTER
22-25 Jackson Ave., at 46th Ave., Long Island City (718-784-2084)—In **"Drawn from Life: 1961-1971,"** the rediscovered feminist, Conceptualist, and Newark native Lee Lozano (1930-99) is given a posthumous retrospective of drawings, notebooks, and vitriolic paintings. Her repertoire included Expressionist crayon drawings, perforated paintings with titles like "punch, peek & feel," and walls of text that served as the basis for performances. Master of the grand gesture, she stopped talking to women (permanently) for "Boycott Women," and in 1971, when she'd had it with the art world, she created a work called "Dropout Piece." Through May 1. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, noon to 6.)

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

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

CARL ANDRE
Andre's "Lament for the Children," produced in 1976 for an abandoned playground at P.S. 1, is a regimented field of a hundred concrete blocks; here, it's shown with a series of wordplay drawings on graph paper. The drawings mournfully repeat phrases like "am not willing," or "woods woods lands woods lands meadows," and the blocks suggest tombstones. Through April 3. (Cooper, 534 W. 21st St. 212-255-1105.)

LYNDA BENGLIS
This mini-survey of sculpture from 1969 to the present showcases Benglis's protean post-minimalist range. "Bikini Incandescent Column" (2004) is a giant paper lantern in the shape of a phallus, or perhaps a tapered mushroom cloud—take your pick. Chunky abstractions in silver, silicon, bronze, and crystal look like skulls or webs or fists, while softer mesh pieces from the seventies, tied in loose knots, conjure Eva Hesse's supple Process works. Only one of her poured-polyurethane-foam sculptures is included, the exuberantly pigmented "Night Sherbert A" (1968), which visitors can't seem to resist bending down to touch. Through April 3. (Cheim & Read, 547 W. 25th St. 212-242-7727.)

ALIGHIERO E BOETTI
Thirty years of work by an Italian artist (1940-94) who resisted a singular identity by putting "and" between his first and last names. Grids of cancelled postage stamps show Boetti's roots in Arte Povera, which celebrated the use of everyday materials. "Untitled (January-December)" is a twelve-panel re-creation of international magazine covers from 1986, all drawn in pencil—and, like most of his work, by assistants. "Tutto," a tapestry with colored silhouettes of animals, people, and all manner of objects, demonstrates what Boetti embraced as art: everything. Through March 27. (Gladstone, 515 W. 24th St. 212-206-9300.)

ANYA GALLACCIO / DOUG AND MIKE STARN
The charming Gallaccio, a sweet contemporary of the sour Young British Artists, continues to mix up nature and artifice, with cast-bronze, silver-berried branches; a gilded bronze potato plant; actual decaying gerbera daisies smushed between panes of glass set in antique doors; and draped fishnets made of gold lamé. The results are opulent, frail, and poetic. New works by the Starn twins, who are known for melodramatic effects in vast, grainy photographs, explore the pretty and sinister aspects of the moth in various formats, including sleek C-prints mounted on aluminum. Through March 20. (Lehmann Maupin, 540 W. 26th St. 212-255-2923.)

AMELIE VON WULFFEN
Von Wulffen's roughly crafted collages refer to the German Expressionist and Romantic traditions. Expressionist brushstrokes surround cutout photographs of an Egon Schiele drawing, a fax machine, furniture, and stuffy ancestral portraits from her haut-bourgeois childhood home; Romantic intensity is spoofed in a portrait of a young John Travolta beneath northern pines. Von Wulffen inserts her own image alongside those of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn and a white horse meant to represent Robert Rauschenberg. Through March 20. (Greene Naftali, 526 W. 26th St. 212-463-7770.)

Short List

SLATER BRADLEY
Team, 527 W. 26th St. 212-279-9219.
Through March 27.

ALAN SARET
James Cohan, 533 W. 26th St. 212-714-9500.
Through March 27.

KATE SHEPHERD
Lelong, 528 W. 26th St. 212-315-0470.
Through March 20.

LAURIE SIMMONS
Sperone Westwater, 415 W. 13th St.
212-997-7337. Through March 27.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

BILL ADAMS
Adams treats his shaggy anthropomorphic line drawings as psychological research, bringing to mind a latter-day Maurice Sendak. A Redonesque creature emerges from behind a heap of doodled lines in one untitled drawing, and a field of disembodied eyes peer out of the abstract "Forest." Through March 27. (K.S. Art, 73 Leonard St. 212-219-9918.)

Short List

AMAR KANWAR
Peter Blum, 99 Wooster St. 212-343-0441.
Through March 20.

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"SUBURBAN HOUSE KIT"
Deitch Projects, 18 Wooster St. 212-343-7300.
Through March 27.

PHOTOGRAPHY

DIANE ARBUS
This show has three galleries' worth of Arbus's work, which is rare enough, but it also offers an unprecedented chance to see previously squirrelled-away contact sheets and an unpublished portfolio of photographs of an Upper East Side family, the Mattheis, taken over two days in 1969. Few of the pictures of the family are truly interesting, but the ones that do leap from the contact sheets—a couple of portraits of the eldest daughter, staring at the camera through poker-straight hair, and the younger daughter, leaning against a couch, her free hand and foot ready to slam a nearby door—rival Arbus's best. To meet expectations that might arise from the show's title, "Family Albums," and its attendant catalogue, the curators have included other portraits, including one of a kohl-eyed Jayne Mansfield and her fresh-faced daughter, another of the bookish Jane Jacobs and her bookish son, and some pretty boring shots of Ozzie and Harriet Nelson. Through March 27. (Grey, 100 Washington Sq. E. 212-998-6782.)

RICHARD BARNES
Barnes's stark photographs of disarticulated animal skulls have a self-assured elegance. The way the skulls are mounted gives them an air of mystery as well as an unexpected kineticism; a hare's skull, broken into irregular, irreproducible chips, appears as a flock of ragged, white birds in flight. The remains of a grinning human skull are both chilling and oddly exuberant. Through March 27. (Urbach, 526 W. 26th St. 212-627-0974.)

LEE FRIEDLANDER
Friedlander's black-and-white pictures of olive and apple trees possess many of the qualities of his earlier, iconic work: formality masquerading as casualness; nuanced, silvery tones; unexpected compositions. Several of the pictures were taken under the trees' canopy of branches, rather than at a distance, and the result—a tangle of bristling, silvery, fruit-heavy limbs against a sun-white sky—is intimate without being claustrophobic. Through April 24. (Borden, 560 Broadway. 212-431-0166.)

LOTTE JACOBI
A fourth-generation photographer (her great-grandfather opened the Atelier Jacobi in Prussia in the early eighteen-forties), Jacobi, who was born in 1896, chronicled Weimar-era Berlin when she was young, making emotionally complex portraits of Lotte Lenya, Wilhelm Furtwängler, Karl Kraus, and many other artists and intellectuals. Her 1934 photograph of the dancer Harald Kreutzberg—a bald man with downcast, heavily made-up eyes, outstretched hands, and a slightly twisted posture—is an elegant elegy for the Weimar era. Jacobi visited the Soviet Union in the early thirties, returning to Berlin with street scenes of Moscow and rare views of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. After her father died, in 1935, she left Germany and arrived in New York with a tiny portion of her substantial portfolio. The subjects of the portraits she made at her studio here include Albert Einstein (in a leather biker jacket), whom she had known in Germany, Chaim Weitzman, Paul Robeson, and Eleanor Roosevelt. Jacobi moved to New Hampshire in the fifties and continued to experiment with her cameras until her death, in 1990. Through April 11. (Jewish Museum, 1109 Fifth Ave. 212-423-3200.)

ANDREA MODICA
The muse of Modica's "Treadwell" photographs, which were first published as a book eight years ago, was a young girl named Barbara. Intensely pliable and arresting in her form—the best description is puffy—Barbara was a perfect subject, and Modica's pictures of her, posed in an odd manner in hardscrabble upstate-New York settings, are both surreal and beautiful. The photographs here, made over the fifteen years Modica knew her subject, are now an elegy; Barbara died in 2001, from the diabetes that made her body so memorable. The final two-thirds of the exhibition, details and distortions of Barbara's body and face, sometimes peaceful, sometimes asleep, form an overwhelmingly intimate portrait of her final years. Through April 17. (Houk, 745 Fifth Ave. 212-750-7070.)

ANDREA STERN
Family is the theme, subject, and driving force in these twenty large color photographs. Stern belongs to a wealthy Jewish family (she's a pet-food heiress), which she chronicles at weddings, funerals, bar Mitzvahs, and on the beach. Her father tries on a new sports jacket; her grandmother wears a silly hat at her birthday party; a couple on a Disney cruise stare blankly into the middle distance; a man touches his wife's cheek. Stern's images are intimate and perhaps a little voyeuristic, but not cruel—the blue veins and sun-damaged skin notwithstanding. Through March 20. (Ricco/Maresca, 529 W. 20th St. 212-627-4819.)

Short List

DAVID HILLIARD
Yancey Richardson, 535 W. 22nd St.
646-230-9610. Through March 20.

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

SOTHEBY'S
March 18 at 10:15 A.M.: A sale of Judaica that exalts the pious life (including such items as a fifteenth-century Hebrew translation of Avicenna's medical encyclopedia, which was the first medical text published in Hebrew, and a fourteenth-century manuscript of Maimonides' "Mishneh Torah," one of the first systematic codes of Jewish law) without condemning earthly bliss (there's an eclectic array of ornate marriage contracts). ♦ March 18 at 2: Israeli Art Week, which features exhibits, screenings, and performances, draws to a close with this sale of Israeli and European Jewish art. Much has been made of the invigorating influence of the singular Mediterranean light that suffuses Israel's landscape on the techniques of Israeli art, but the auction's bolder works—Henri Hayden's Picassoesque Cubist masterpiece "Composition," Moïse Kisling's rapturous eruption of lilies in "Fleurs Blanches," Marc Chagall's awestruck rabbi clutching a Torah scroll in "Juif à la Thora"—come from Jewish artists who immigrated to Paris in the first half of the twentieth century. ♦ March 23 at 10:15 A.M. and 2: Chinese ceramics and works of art. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.)

CHRISTIE'S
March 19 at 10 A.M. and 2: A sale of wine. ♦ March 23 at 10 A.M., 2, and 3:30: For those in whom "Kill Bill" inspired a passion for the aesthetics of Japanese combat, this sale of Japanese and Korean art includes a vast selection of swords dating from the fourteenth to the nineteenth centuries, all being sold to benefit the Department of Arms and Armor at the Metropolitan Museum. For admirers of less violent pursuits, there are prints, screens, and paintings, including a pair of delicate, monochrome hanging scrolls depicting birds in a lotus pond by Geiai, the fifteenth-century painter from Kyoto, as well as an eighteenth-century erotic scroll in intense blues, red, and plum depicting an older man seducing a young woman next to an elegantly suggestive screen. The Korean section of the sale features ceramics, bronzes, and modern paintings. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.)

TRIPLE PIER ANTIQUES SHOW
"Restoration '04," a show-within-a-show devoted to vintage home renovation, is a special feature of this year's Stella spectacular, which includes six hundred exhibitors offering art, furniture, silver, and much more. (Piers 90, 92, and 94, Twelfth Ave. between 50th and 55th Sts. 212-255-0020. March 20-21.)

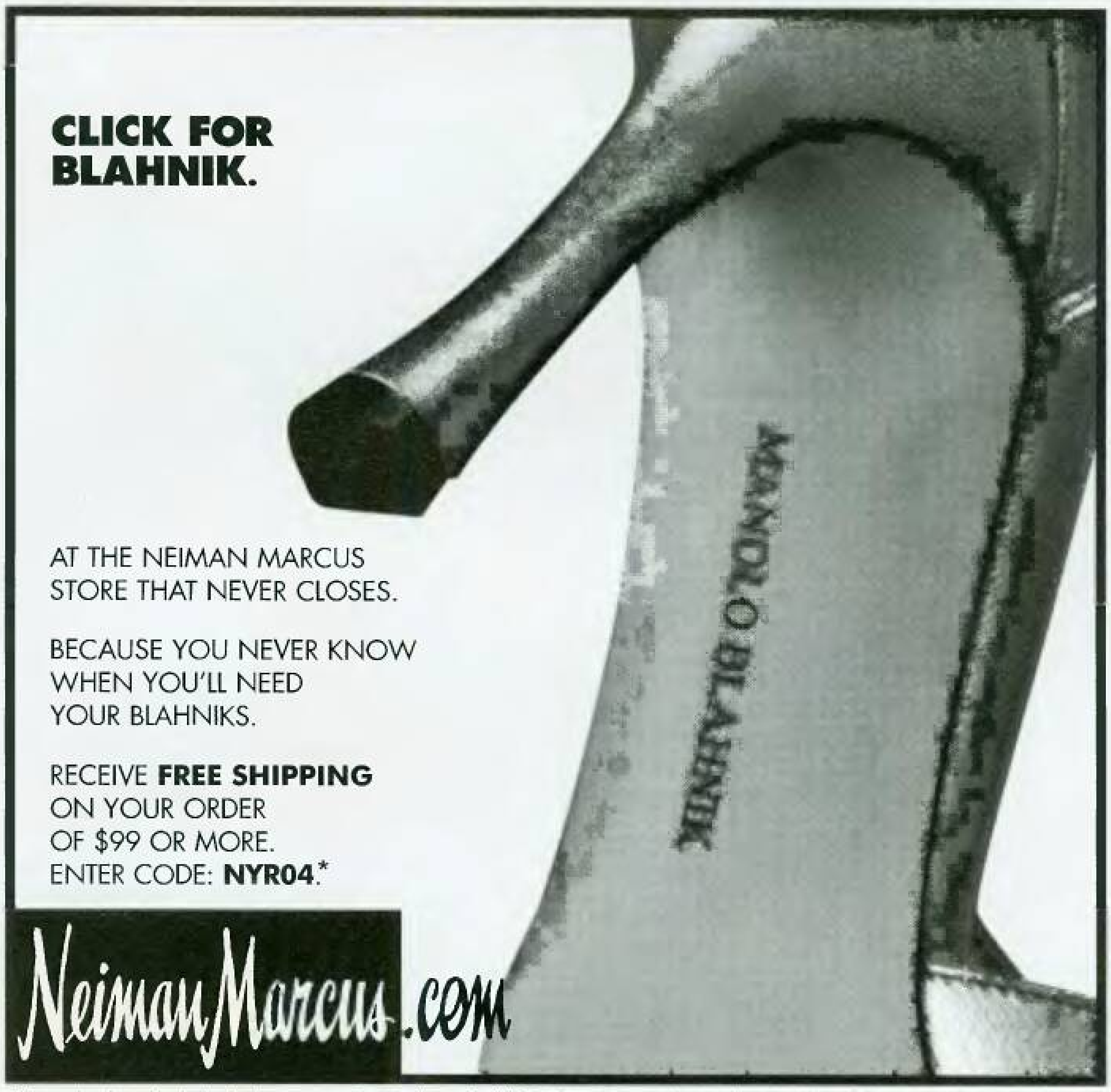
CLASSICAL MUSIC
OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA
The final performance of **"L'Italiana in Algeri,"** featuring such excellent Rossinians as Olga Borodina, Juan Diego Flórez, Earle Patriarco, and Lyubov Petrova; James Levine conducts. (March 17 at 8.) ♦ Otto Schenk's traditionalist production of **"Rigoletto"** may be easy on the eyes, but its literal approach makes the corniness of the plot even more obvious. The singers have to save it, and fortunately the Met has slated an impressive cast for this revival, with Ruth Ann Swenson and Ramón Vargas singing Gilda and the Duke and Franz Grundheber taking the title role; Marco Armiliato. (March 18 at 8 and March 22 at 7:30.) ♦ Jürgen Flimm—the architect of the Met's bracingly unsentimental production of "Fidelio"—has returned to craft a new staging of **"Salome,"** graced by the gorgeously cool-tempered singing of Karita Mattila and the uninhibited conducting of Valery Gergiev; Larissa Diadkova (as Herodias), Siegfried Jerusalem (as Herod), and Albert Dohmen (making his house début in the role of John the Baptist) are along for the ride. (March 19 and March 23 at 8.) ♦ Otto Schenk's production of Wagner's "Der Ring des Nibelungen" returns this spring for three cycles of performances beginning with **"Das Rheingold,"** which features (among others) James Morris as Wotan, Richard Paul Fink as Alberich, Jennifer Welch-Babidge as Freia, and Yvonne Naef as Fricka (a début); Levine. (March 20 at 2.) ♦ For a Met début, the actress Marthe Keller's production of **"Don Giovanni"** curiously lacks intensity; independent-minded women (Anja Harteros's regal Donna Anna, Christine Goerke's stentorian Donna Elvira) give themselves over to Thomas Hampson's subdued, plush-voiced Don in trancelike swoons. The singing is rich and lyrical all around, but the standout is the strapping René Pape's Leporello, who seems almost too confident to play sidekick to Hampson's Don; Gareth Morrell. (March 20 at 8.) ♦ The Met celebrates the fiftieth anniversary of its National Council Auditions in a concert with the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, the competition's young finalists, and guest performances by Thomas Hampson, Deborah Voigt, and others. Frederica von Stade hosts; Armiliato. (March 21 at 3.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000.)

NEW YORK CITY OPERA
"Le Nozze di Figaro," with Christine Brandes, Pamela Armstrong, Rinat Shaham, Kyle Ketelsen, and Brett Polegato; Steven Mosteller conducts. (March 18 at 7:30 and March 20 at 8.) ♦ **"Sweeney Todd,"** featuring Mark Delavan as the demon barber of Fleet Street and Elaine Paige as Mrs. Lovett, his partner in crime; George Manahan. (March 19 at 8.) ♦ With Timothy Nolen replacing Delavan. (March 20 at 1:30.) ♦ Marvin David Levy's **"Mourning Becomes Electra"** is one of the great lost works of American opera: after its successful première by the Metropolitan Opera in 1967, it migrated to European stages and then pretty much disappeared (along with its composer). Now this revised and lyrically enriched version has drawn raves in Chicago and Seattle. Lauren Flanigan, who has made the part of the murderous Christine Mannon (O'Neill's New England Clytemnestra) her own, leads the cast of City Opera's new production, which also features Emily Pulley and Kurt Ollmann; Manahan. (March 21 at 1:30.) (New York State Theatre. 212-870-5570.)

NINE CIRCLES CHAMBER THEATRE: "WHEN SAMSON MET DELILAH"
The writer Jonathan Levi, the violinist Gil Morganstern, and the composer Bruce Saylor reimagine Saint-Saëns's "Samson et Dalila" as an English-language dialogue for soprano (Klara Uleman) and violin. (Thalia Theatre, Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-5400. March 18-19 at 8.)

EOS ORCHESTRA: "THE VALKYRIE"
Jonathan Sheffer conducts a freewheeling adaptation of the second opera of Jonathan Dove's con-



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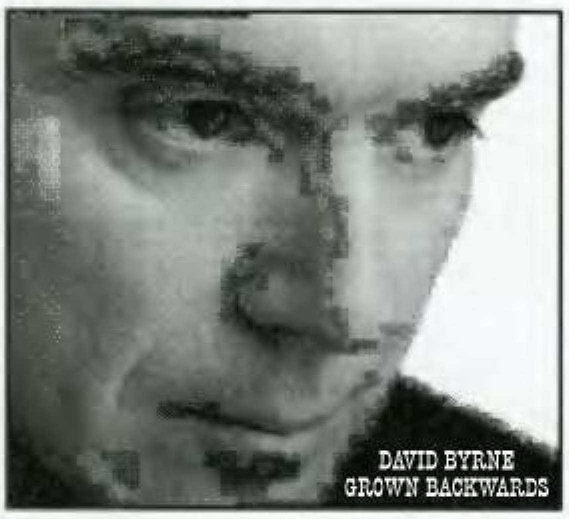

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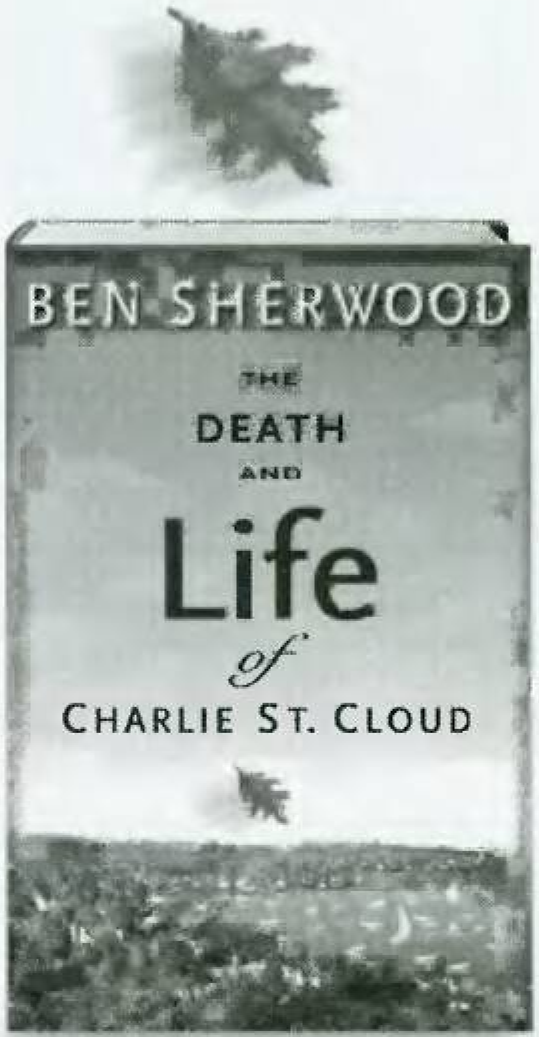

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densed English-language "Ring" cycle, directed by Christopher Alden (see This Week). (Skirball Center, New York University. 212-992-8484. March 18 and March 20 at 8.)

OPERA ORCHESTRA OF NEW YORK
For many, Verdi's "Il Corsaro" (with a libretto based on a poem by Byron) is among the weakest of his operas. But that won't stop the conductor Eve Queler, who has a long history of digging the musical truffles out of bel-canto scores. She devotes her latest concert performance at Carnegie Hall to this 1848 work, which features the sopranos Maria Dragoni and Rossana Potenza (in their company débuts) and the tenor Francisco Casanova. (212-799-1982. March 21 at 8.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
Itzhak Perlman, as genial a presence on the podium as he is with violin in hand, plays and conducts a mostly light program of Bach (the Concerto in A Minor), Mozart, and Dvòrák (the Symphony No. 8 in G Major). (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5656. March 18 at 7:30, March 19 at 2, and March 20 at 8.)

RIVERSIDE SYMPHONY
The composer-critic Arthur Berger, a centering presence in American music until his death, last year, will be honored by the conductor George Rothman's intrepid group with the first New York performance of his "Prelude, Aria, and Waltz," a charming neoclassical work from 1945. Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto in D Minor (a rarely heard piece from the composer's thirteenth year, with Jennifer Frautschi) and Tchaikovsky's Serenade in C Major complete Rothman's string-orchestra program. (Alice Tully Hall. 212-721-6500. March 18 at 8.)

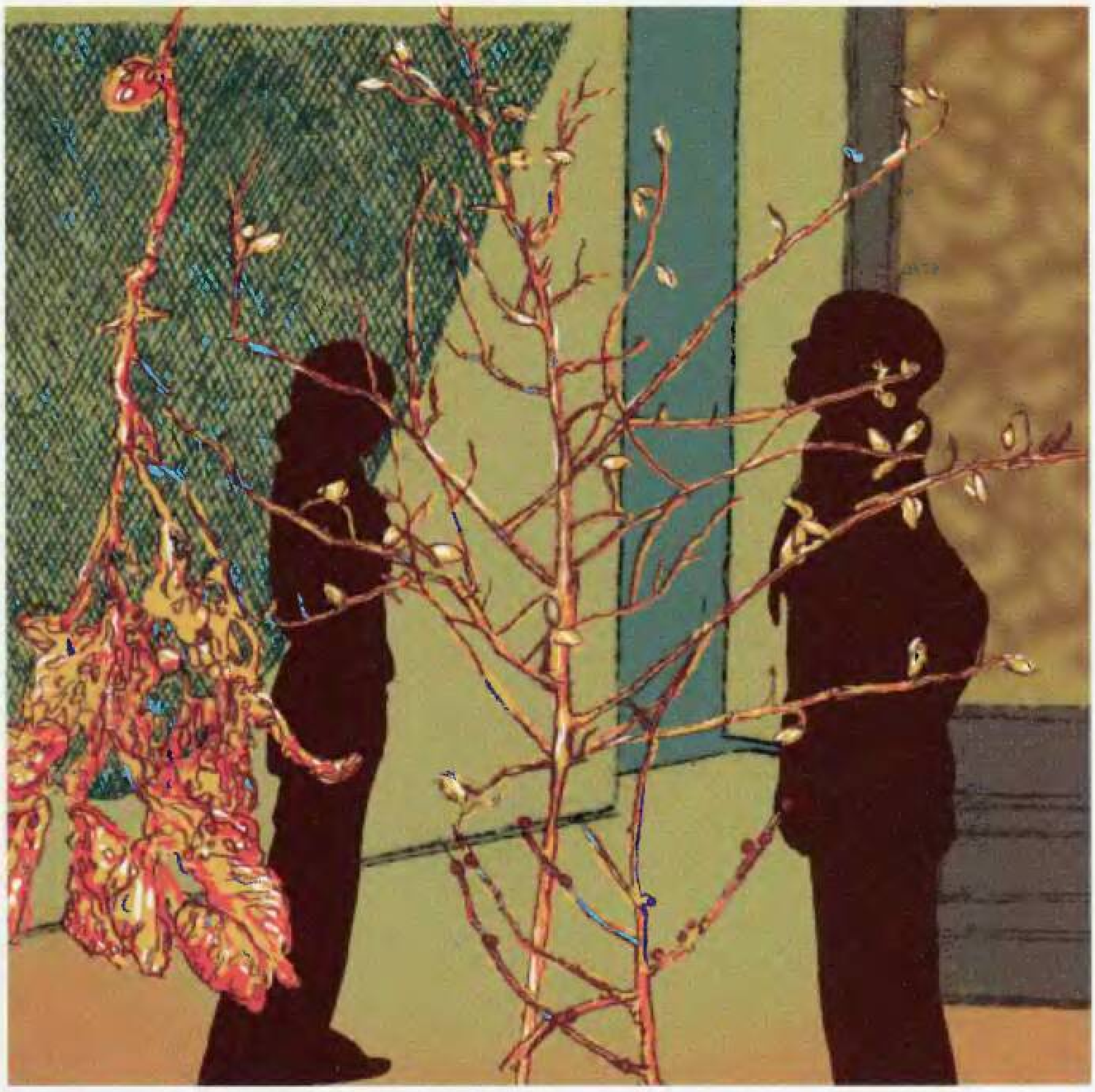
JUILLIARD CHORAL UNION
Judith Clurman conducts the New York première of a new edition of Rossini's "Petite Messe Solenelle" (in its piquant chamber version, with the accompaniment of two pianos and harmonium) prepared by Philip Gossett from the original manuscript. (Alice Tully Hall. March 19 at 8. For free tickets, which are required, call 212-769-7406.)

CZECH PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA
Dvořák's Piano Concerto in G Minor—an awkwardly written but compelling work from a composer whose piano skills were decidedly second-rate—has become a favorite of Pierre-Laurent Aimard, the French pianist renowned for his Messaien and Debussy. It forms the center of Andrey Boreyko's all-Dvořák program with this storied Prague ensemble, which also includes the "New World" Symphony and a slate of "Slavonic Dances." (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. March 22 at 8.)

SAN FRANCISCO SYMPHONY
Under Michael Tilson Thomas's tenure as music director, this orchestra has acquired a glowing sound and a relaxed style that suits its laid-back locale, and its trips to Carnegie Hall are welcome events. In the first of two programs, Thomas conducts the New York premières of Robin Holloway's arrangement of Debussy's two-piano suite "En Blanc et Noir" and John Adams's "My Father Knew Charles Ives," along with Rimsky-Korsakov's "Scheherazade." (212-247-7800. March 23 at 8.)

RECITALS

CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER: "DOUBLE EXPOSURE"
In an intimate concert at the Rose Studio, the Imani Winds (a noted young African-American wind quintet) perform two runs through recent works by Tania León, Valerie Coleman, and the always unpredictable Fred Ho ("Josephine Baker's Angels from the Rainbow"); there'll be refreshments and conversation between sets. (Rose Building, Lincoln Center. 212-875-5788. March 18 at 6:45.)



Anya Gallaccio's gilded flora, at Lehmann Maupin, through March 20 (see Art).

TABLES FOR TWO

T SALON

11 E. 20th St. (212-358-0506)—Miriam Novalle, the uninhibited owner of this higgledy-piggledy tea shop, is prone to spontaneous disclosure. Taking a reservation over the phone, for instance, she commented, "When I went to perfuming school in France they said, 'You're never going to sell anything with the name Nunberg!' So when I was eighteen years old they changed my name to Miriam Novalle." Novalle is a colorful figure. She is known to berate employees loudly if they, say, spill the precious Angel Pearls (jasmine-scented tea leaves hand-woven into balls, which sell for $7.75 an ounce), and even when she's not around, her tempestuous energy is palpable. Like the other day, when a giant stone Buddha head that was perched precariously on a ledge dropped to the floor with a concussive thud. Or when one of the waxen Buddhas that line the stairs up to the second floor, where the tea is sold in bulk, came tumbling down, rattling the stacks of china piled up here and there. Nevertheless, Novalle has placed a hopeful little epigram on the menu: "Allow tea and faith to elevate your spirit. Sit and enjoy a moment of heaven."

Teatime finds a line of people out the door, with impatient husbands pawing the ground like bulls about to charge. (The walls are provokingly red.) For those who order proper tea, a waiter flourishes a pink tablecloth and sets it with purple napkins and pansy-patterned china with a fading gilt edge; then he brings an epergne laden with all that is good about English food: Devon cream and raspberry jam and fresh scones and cucumber sandwiches and countless other delicious items. The surprise is a dry but appealing Earl Grey chocolate cake, and a smattering of peanuts, which seem like the afterthought of a compulsively generous hostess.

The tea selection—well over four hundred choices deep—includes such exotica as Tibetan Tiger (flavored with vanilla, caramel, and chocolate, but somehow not sweet), Snowbud with Rosepetals, and Oolong Ti Kuan Yin ("Iron Goddess"). It would be a pity to order Earl Grey to go with the chocolate cake, but, if you must, there are ten different kinds of Earl Grey to choose from. (Open daily for lunch and tea. Entrées $14-$35.)

—*Dana Goodyear*

NEW YORK WOODWIND QUINTET

Five of the city's front-rank wind players perform works by Taffanel, Ligeti, Knussen, Neidich (the group's clarinettist), and Dvořák (a transcription of the String Quartet in F Major, "American"). (Paul Hall, Juilliard School of Music, Lincoln Center. March 18 at 8. For free tickets, which are required, call 212-769-7406.)

ARTEK: MARCELLO'S "THE FOUR SEASONS"

The harpsichordist Gwendolyn Toth's early-music band performs the Venetian master's oratorio in the Renaissance library of the House of the Redeemer. (7 E. 95th St. 212-967-9157. March 18-19 at 8.)

CARNEGIE HALL RECITALS

One night, three stages, an excruciating choice. March 19 at 7:30: Bring your pocket scores. The Kuss Quartet, a fine young German group, offers Haydn's gallant Quartet in E-Flat Major (Op. 1, No. 2) as a prelude to a beast of a recital—Beethoven's "Grosse Fuge" and Schoenberg's criminally underplayed String Quartet No. 1 in D Minor, a dizzying one-movement fantasia of late-Romantic excess. (Weill Recital Hall.) ♦ March 19 at 7:30: Dietrich Henschel's voice may conjure up shades of Fischer-Dieskau, but the baritone's crisp delivery and suave lyricism are individual enough for the cognoscenti to take notice. The pianist Fritz Schwinghammer accompanies him in lieder by Beethoven, Schubert, and Wolf (a sheaf of Mörike songs). (Zankel Hall.) ♦ March 19 at 8: The violinist Maxim Vengerov has everything—a gorgeous tone, a fierce interpretive intelligence, and the stylistic instincts of a born showman. He brings it all to sonatas by Bach, Beethoven (the "Kreutzer"), and Brahms (the dulcet Sonata in A Major, Op. 100), joined by another phenom, the pianist Fazil Say. (Stern Auditorium.) (212-247-7800.)

PETER HAMLIN

COOPER UNION: JO KONDO

The Japanese experimentalist master supervises the percussionists of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, among other performers, in an evening of his works. (Great Hall, Third Ave. at 7th St. 212-279-4200. March 20 at 7:30.)

MUSIC AT THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM

March 20 at 8: The Guarneri String Quartet plays the "Grosse Fuge" and other works by Beethoven. ♦ March 22 at 8: The magnificent flutist Emmanuel Pahud, who tours as a soloist when he's not in the principal chair at the Berlin Philharmonic, joins with the harpist Mariko Anraku for an evening of Bach transcriptions. (Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. 212-570-3949.)

CHRISTOPHER MALTMAN

The invaluable Malcolm Martineau, always ready to lend British singers a hand, accompanies the young baritone in a program of Purcell, Butterworth, Gurney, Loewe (the Romantic balladist, not the Broadway tunesmith), and Wolf. (Alice Tully Hall. 212-721-6500. March 21 at 5.)

DIRK JOERES

The German pianist offers a waltz-rich afternoon of Schubert, Borodin, Ravel ("Valses Nobles et Sentimentales," "À la Manière de Borodine"), Chabrier, and Stravinsky. (Frick Collection, 1 E. 70th St. 212-288-0700. March 21 at 5.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

BIG APPLE GRAPPLE

Professional arm wrestlers gather for the twenty-seventh annual Big Apple Grapple, to be held at the Intrepid Sea-Air-Space Museum on March 20th. The strong woman Cynthia Yerby, a ten-time world champion and the winner of last year's Queen of Arms title, is among the competitors, along with Mamuka Pajishvili, from the Republic of Georgia, the current King of Arms. The elimination rounds begin at 12:30, with the final decision (at 3:30) possibly coming faster than you can say Ernest Hemingway—the matches average between two and twenty seconds. (Pier 86, 46th St. at Twelfth Ave. 212-245-0072.)

"THE REJECTION SHOW"

Cartoonists, screenwriters, filmmakers, and comedians share work that never made it into the public eye. The *New Yorker* cartoonists Matt Diffee and David Sipress will be on hand. (The Tank, 432 W. 42nd St. 212-868-4444. March 17 at 8.)

READINGS

March 18 at 7: Poets House presents a tribute to the late American poet William Mathews, with Galway Kinnell, Sharon Olds, and Gerald Stern. (72 Spring St. No tickets necessary.) ♦ March 20 at 6: The finalists in Urban Word's Teen Poetry Slam battle for the New York title. The rapper Kanye West is the host. (Graduate Center, City University of New York, Fifth Ave. at 34th St. 212-691-6590, ext. 21.) ♦ March 21 at 2: The poets Sharon Krinsky, Samuel Menashe, and Suzanne Noguere read from their work. (NurtureArt Gallery and Emerging Curators' Resource Center, 475 Keap St., Brooklyn. For more information, call 718-782-7755.) ♦ March 23 at 7:30: Gini Alhadeff offers selections from her new novel, "Diary of a Djinn." (The Community Bookstore, 143 Seventh Ave., Park Slope, Brooklyn. 718-783-3075.)

TALK

March 22 at 7: Salman Rushdie hosts the inaugural event in the "PEN Foreign Exchanges" series, with the novelist Walter Mosley interviewing the Nigerian writer Chris Abani. (Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. 212-334-1660, ext. 107.)

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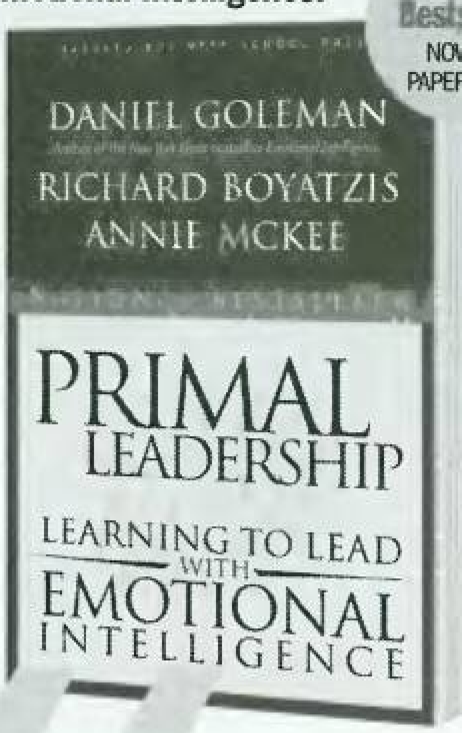

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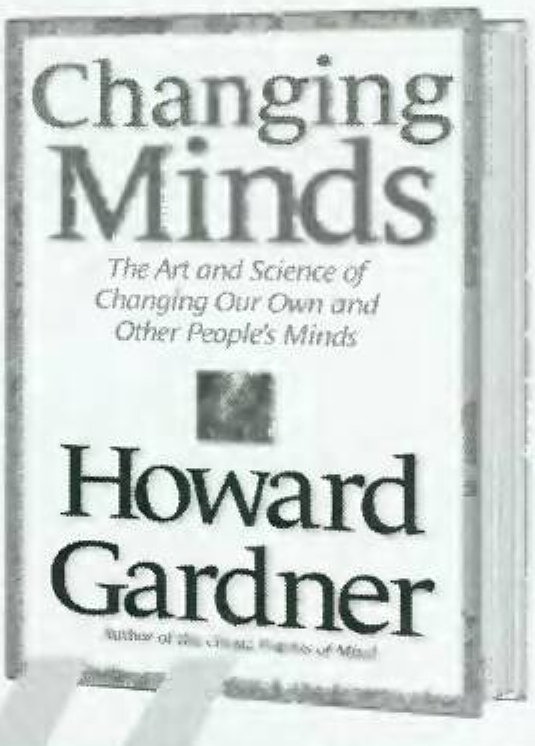
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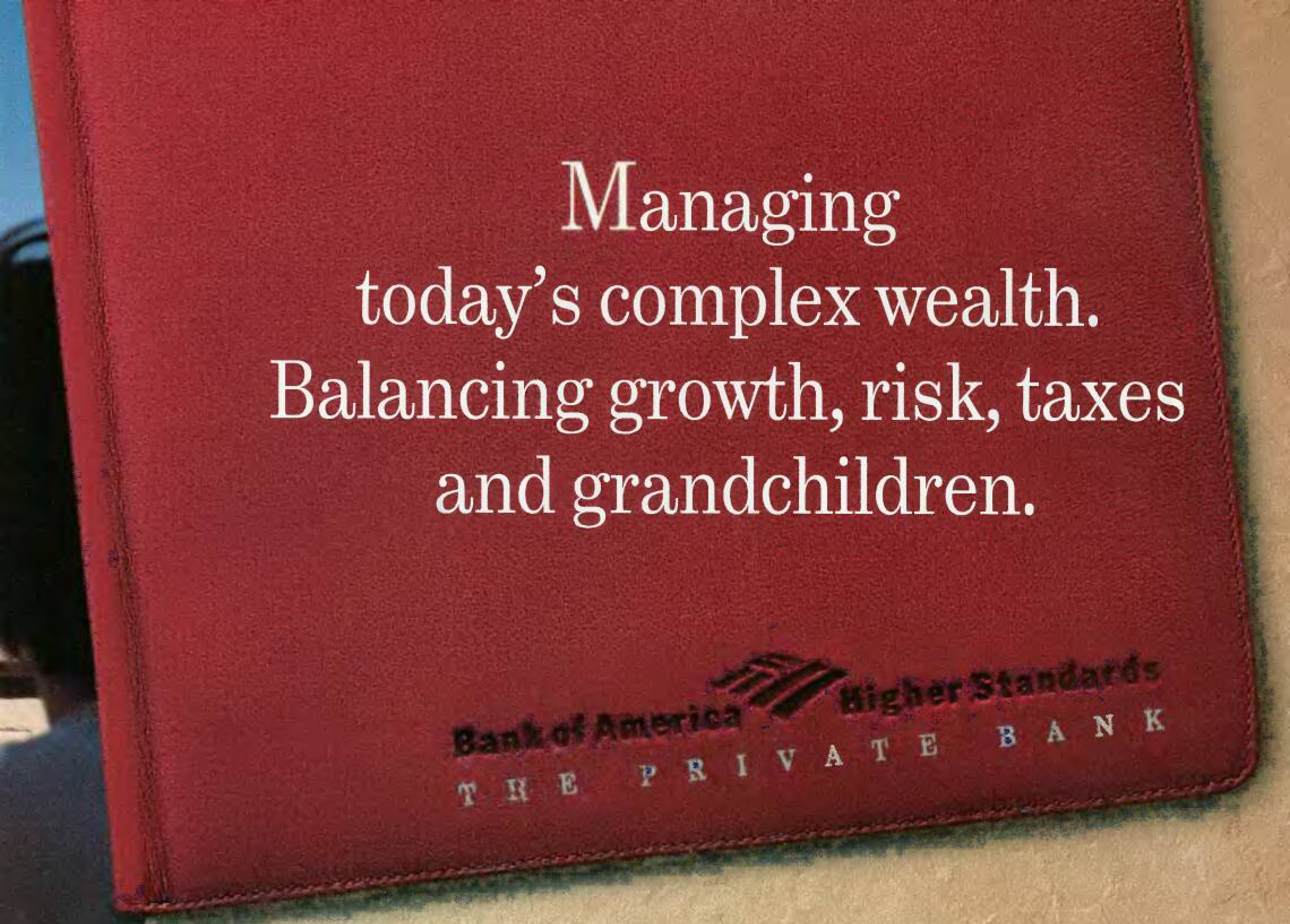
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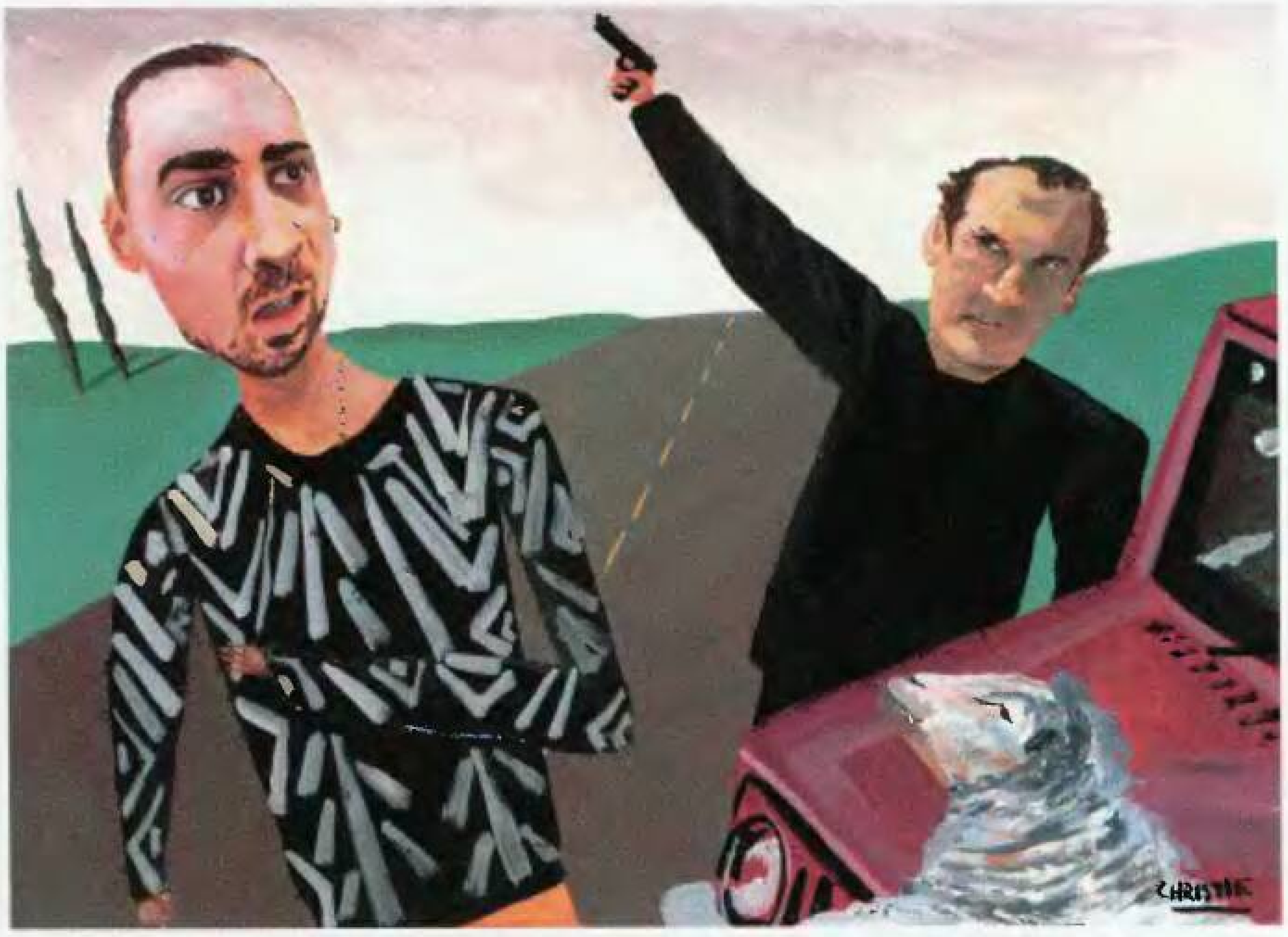
MOVIES
OPENING

BON VOYAGE
A farcical comedy set in Bordeaux during the Second World War that follows the fortunes of an actress (Isabelle Adjani) and a writer (Grégori Dérangère) fleeing the Germans. With Virginie Ledoyen, Yvan Attal, and Gérard Depardieu. Directed by Jean-Paul Rappeneau. In French. Opening March 19. (Paris.)

DAWN OF THE DEAD
A remake of the 1978 horror film in which the flesh-eating undead prey upon the living. The cast includes Sarah Polley, Ving Rhames, Jake Weber, and Mekhi Phifer. Directed by Zack Snyder. Opening March 19.

DIVAN
Pearl Gluck directed this autobiographical documentary, in which she travels to Hungary to retrieve a family heirloom in the hope of pleasing her Hasidic father. In English, Yiddish, and Hungarian. Opening March 17. (Film Forum.)



Colin Farrell and Colm Meany in "Intermission," opening March 19.

ETERNAL SUNSHINE OF THE SPOTLESS MIND
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening March 19. (Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, Lincoln Square, and Union Square.)

GREENDALE
Neil Young wrote and directed this film (shot on Super 8) that incorporates the songs from his recent album about life in a fictional small town. Opening March 19. (Sunshine Cinema.)

INTERMISSION
An ensemble romantic comedy set in contemporary Dublin with fifty-four speaking parts and eleven story lines. The cast includes Colin Farrell, Shirley Henderson, and Cillian Murphy. Directed by John Crowley. Opening March 19. (First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, and Village Theatre VII.)

NOI
A coming-of-age film about a seventeen-year-old boy growing up in a village alongside a remote fjord in Iceland. Dagur Kári wrote and directed. In Icelandic. Opening March 19. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

TAKING LIVES
In D. J. Caruso's thriller, Angelina Jolie plays an F.B.I. profiler who goes to Montreal to help track down a serial killer. With Ethan Hawke, Olivier Martinez, and Kiefer Sutherland. Opening March 19.

FILM NOTES

THE BARBARIAN INVASIONS
Rémy (Rémy Girard), the plumply boisterous philanderer of Denys Arcand's 1986 film, "The Decline of the American Empire," is now in his early fifties and dying of cancer in a Quebec hospital. His investment-banker son, Sébastien (Stéphane Rousseau)—a svelte, devastatingly efficient young man who disapproves of his reprobate father—shows up from London, arranges for Rémy's comfort as best he can, and reassembles the gang of gabby intellectuals who were Rémy's friends and colleagues in the earlier movie. The hospital room becomes the site of an ongoing party: sexual memories, bawdy jokes, political tirades, and regrets bang off the walls at all hours. Eventually, the entire group relocates to a house on the same lake that was the setting for "Decline"; as Rémy grapples with his failures and satisfactions, the movie shuts up and calms down. Arcand's film might be called an idyll of death, and the concluding scenes, in which Rémy tries to pass something on to the next generation, are intensely moving. In French.—*David Denby* (Reviewed in our issue of 11/24/03.) (Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, and Sunshine Cinema.)

DISTANT
An award-winning, pulse-slowing picture from the Turkish writer and director Nuri Bilge Ceylan. It is the tale of two relatives, Yusuf (Mehmet Emin Toprak) and Mahmut (Muzaffer Özdemir); the former hitches a ride from the provinces to Istanbul, where he lodges with the latter and tries to find employment. It must be said that his powers of initiative, in this respect, are not great, and if he spent half as much time filling in job applications as he does wandering the city under feathery falls of snow, he would be earning serious money within days. The movie, however, profits from his strollings, for what intrigues Ceylan is not success, or good companionship, but the chilly drift of melancholia. The two men never click, and even the cosmopolitan Mahmut finds less comfort in his love life than in his secret stash of porn. Nobody will come out of this movie singing—you are more likely to emerge with a scowl, or with the need for a cigarette—but the sheer cussedness of the project has a grace and conviction of its own. In Turkish.—*Anthony Lane* (3/15/04) (Cinema Village.)

THE DREAMERS
An American college student named Matthew (Michael Pitt) is in Paris in 1968 and soaking up as many movies as he can. When the government cracks down on the state-sponsored Cinémathèque Française, he gets caught up in the demonstrations and meets a red-bereted beauty named Isabelle (Eva Green) and her twin brother, Théo (Louis Garrel). The three argue endlessly about movies and see themselves as characters playing roles. As they embark on increasingly risqué sexual games, the director, Bertolucci, longs to re-create the moment when film, politics, and sex mutually reinforced each other as the preoccupations of youth. It's a saddening nostalgia, and the movie, despite its attempt to shock us with incest and perversities, has an air of inconsequence about it. The three aren't making a revolution in this hothouse, they're making a listless blue movie. In French and English.—*D.D.* (2/9/04) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, and Sunshine Cinema.)

GOOD BYE, LENIN!
Christiane (Katrin Sass), a saintly East German Communist, falls into a coma just before the Berlin Wall comes down, in 1989. When she awakens, her son, Alex (Daniel Brühl), creates a kind of ersatz reality for her—a living museum of Communism—in which nothing has changed. He gets his cranky sister and a group of embarrassed neighbors to take part in the charade, going so far as to work with a filmmaker buddy on fake news broadcasts about the unending triumphs of a regime that no longer exists. This social satire was directed by Wolfgang Becker, whose background is in TV, and the movie often plays like a series of television-comedy skits, some of them funny and incisive, some larkish and insubstantial. Yet beneath the slapstick surface lies a sombre German heart: the point of the fable is that Communism in Germany was always an ersatz reality—that for forty years Party leaders were creating a large-scale version of the fiction that Alex creates in his mother's bedroom. In German.—*D.D.* (3/8/04) (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

HENRY IV
Marco Bellocchio's 1984 adaptation of Pirandello's play about a contemporary Italian aristocrat (Marcello Mastroianni) who either believes or pretends that he's the eleventh-century German emperor Henry IV proves to be handsome, intelligent, and tame. Bellocchio initially enlivens things by flashing back twenty years to a carnival-like celebration where the aristocrat fell from a horse while wearing a Henry IV costume, apparently triggering a delusion. Scenes from this medieval masquerade flit through the memory of Matilda (Claudia Cardinale), the woman he then adored, as she travels with her daughter into the ersatz monarch's palatial private asylum. That's where a psychiatrist (Leopoldo Trieste) hopes to stage an event that will stun Henry back into sanity. But is he insane or just an extreme believer in the power of invented identities? The question doesn't resonate here as it does in more abstract stage productions; Bellocchio overemphasizes the hero's status as an artist figure and a martyr. What makes the movie mildly entertaining is Mastroianni. The film thrives on the actor's singular ability (in the words of his mentor, Fellini) to play someone "both inside and outside the story." In Italian.—*Michael Sragow* (BAM Rose Cinemas; March 19.)

HIDALGO
The supposedly true tale of a man, Frank Hopkins, his horse, Hidalgo, and a three-thousand-mile endurance race across the Arabian desert in 1890.

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Viggo Mortensen, late of Middle Earth, gives an old-fashioned and gently sexy performance as Hopkins in this overlong but impressively mounted epic. The director, Joe Johnston, films the desert landscapes of Morocco with panoramic grandeur and wisely gives Hidalgo, a beautiful mustang, some major closeup time. And while the storytelling is choppy—the movie is saddled with a subplot designed to add in some romance—the racing scenes are terrifically exciting, with plenty of Spielbergian obstacles (sandstorms, ambushes, quicksand) to keep the Indy crowd happy.—*Bruce Diones* (Battery Park 11, Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, 34th Street Theatre, Union Square, and Ziegfeld.)

JOURNEY INTO FEAR

Curt yet flaccid, this seventy-minute 1942 adaptation of Eric Ambler's famous suspense novel marks the low point of Orson Welles's Mercury troupe in Hollywood. Although Welles was working simultaneously on his second masterpiece, "The Magnificent Ambersons," he still managed to lift this film's energy level with his brief appearances as Colonel Haki, the chief of the Turkish Secret Police. No one ever did jaded better than Welles; he fills his line readings with a unique curdled zest, whether remarking that an assassin gets a rich fee "and expenses," or acknowledging that a foul little ship is carrying as its cargo "mostly cows." But Joseph Cotten, who would play a naïve American tremendously in "The Third Man" seven years later, comes off dunderheaded as the American arms specialist, who, during an overnight stay in Istanbul, becomes the target of a Nazi agent. His voice-over narration seems slapped on to assure viewers that he'd never be unfaithful to his wife (Ruth Warrick), not even with the gorgeous night-club dancer (Dolores del Rio) who shares his escape route. The one thriller coup is the use of Welles's rotund real-life business manager, Jack Moss, as a Nazi hit man, all the creepier because he doesn't say a word. Directed by Norman Foster; written by Cotten.—*M.S.* (Film Forum; March 17.)

MONSTER

To play Aileen Wuornos, the real-life prostitute and serial killer who was executed in 2002, Charlize Theron put on thirty pounds and endured an hour and a half of attention each shooting day from the makeup artist Toni G. What's remarkable about the film is not just Theron's transformation into a half-mad, beaten-up prostitute, but the disciplined performance that she gives. The actress twitches and shrugs as if her tendons were directed by will alone. She's telling the world to kiss off, yet, inevitably, she's reduced to sticking out her thumb on the highway in search of a paying customer. When a scuzzy client abuses her, she snaps, empties a revolver into his chest, and lets out a war whoop of triumph. The moment is truly frightening. Theron's ferocity pushes the material over the top, but her tenderness—the flashes of gentleness and vulnerability—retrieves it from tabloid exploitation and camp horror.—*D.D.* (1/26/04) (Battery Park 11, East 85th Street, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, 72nd Street East, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

OSAMA

The forty-one-year-old writer-director Siddiq Barmak, an Afghan film nut who never recovered from seeing "Lawrence of Arabia" as a boy, has gifts of vision and temperament equal to those of the finest directors now working. This lovely movie, the first feature to come out of Afghanistan since the fall of the Taliban, is about a twelve-year-old girl (Marina Golbahari) who dresses as a boy in order to get work and winds up with dozens of prepubescent boys in a madrassa, where she is subjected to non-stop Koranic recitation and bizarre lectures about sex. The movie is deeply shocking and understated, with an iconic use of such repeated imagery as the shots of men slowly keying elaborate locks that pen the women up. The groups of faceless women in their burkas are like fields of lavender swaying in the wind; the boys in their white turbans bobbing over the Koran are both beautiful and forbidding. Made for less than fifty thousand dollars (plus free use of camera and crew), the movie is an outright miracle. In Dari and Pashto.—*D.D.* (3/8/04) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Union Square.)

THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST

Mel Gibson's bloody re-creation of the last twelve hours in the life of Jesus is one of the cruellest movies in the history of the cinema. Gibson and the screenwriter Benedict Fitzgerald selected and enhanced incidents from the four Gospels and collated them into a single, surpassingly violent narrative in which the incomparable glories of Jesus' temperament—the joyousness, the brilliance, the heart-stopping eloquence—are all but effaced by the spectacle of his physical destruction. The lashing and flaying, often in slow-motion, go on forever, and Gibson displays a curious technical fascination with the details of crucifixion—huge nails being hammered into hands and feet, with James Caviezel's Jesus howling at each blow. Here and there, the movie has a kind of grim power, and Caleb Deschanel's even gray lighting at the Crucifixion is stunning, but this is a sickening, unilluminating, and ignorant show. The filmmakers have also changed in small ways a number of things from the Gospels and ignored what historians know of ancient Judea, all with the result of making the Jewish leaders more, and the Roman leaders less, responsible for the death of Jesus. It's a deeply angry film, and one wonders how believers can react to it with anything but guilt, fear, or loathing.—*D.D.* (3/1/04) (Battery Park 11, Chelsea West, East 86th Street Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Metro Twin, 64th and 2nd, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

THE RECKONING

Adapted from Barry Unsworth's novel "Morality Play," Paul McGuigan's film strives to be a brooding medieval drama. The fantastic sets and cinematography lure the audience into a sobering fourteenth-century story about a disgraced priest (Paul Bettany) who, after he joins a band of travelling actors (headed by Willem Dafoe), tries to solve the murder

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of a child. The action centers on the play the group of actors writes in an attempt to unravel the crime. The film begins promisingly, and Bettany provides another outstanding performance, but it bogs down when the focus shifts toward the making of the play rather than concentrating on the mystery itself.—*B.D.* (Angelika Film Center and First & 62nd Cinemas.)

THE RETURN

This first feature by Andrei Zvyagintsev has the startling, irrepressible quality of the best débuts. A pair of brothers, young Ivan (Ivan Dobronravov) and the teen-age Andrey (Vladimir Garin), live peacefully in a fatherless household in a brackish backwater of what used to be the Soviet Union. In the midst of an idle summer, their father (Konstantin Lavronenko) turns up from nowhere and starts, with minimum benevolence, to reëstablish his authority. Andrey responds well to such tyranny, while Ivan, a mother's boy, glowers at the treacherous interloper. Most of the film takes place on a fishing trip, which ripples with threat and thrill alike; we know that it cannot end well for father and sons, but we hardly dare to wonder what form the calamity will take. Zvyagintsev gets formidable concentration from his youthful actors, and his storytelling moves with the simplicity—calm, chiselled, and suggestive—of a fable. In Russian.—*A.L.* (3/15/04) (Cinema Village and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

STARSKY & HUTCH

The comedic teammates Owen Wilson and Ben Stiller send up one of the hallmark buddy-cop shows of the seventies. This was a fresh idea nine years ago when Spike Jonze and the Beastie Boys did it in the video for "Sabotage"; five minutes of ridiculous rooftop jumps and freeze-frame double takes are about all you need before the joke gets old. Still, Wilson and Stiller have an appealing, casual chemistry (as they did in "Zoolander"), and some of the scenes go in unexpected directions. For period detail, the 1974 Ford Gran Torino takes center stage, but cheers to the prop master who found the vintage rubber slingshot. Directed by Todd Phillips, who can't get enough of seventies television: his next announced project is an adaptation of "The Six Million Dollar Man."—*Michael Agger* (Astor Plaza, Battery Park 11, Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema 1, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

THE STRANGER

The only conventionally made narrative film that Orson Welles ever directed. He undertook it, apparently, in order to prove that he could stay on a schedule and make the same sort of movies that other directors did; he has said that there is nothing of himself in it, and that it's his "worst" picture. What he meant was, probably, that it's impersonal—that it has little of the specific Wellesian moviemaking excitement. It's a smooth, proficient, somewhat languorous thriller, handsomely shot (by Russell Metty), with some showy long takes. It's quite watchable, but the script (by Anthony Veiller and, though uncredited, John Huston) is clever in a shallow way: the people need more dimensions. Edward G. Robinson plays an F.B.I. war-crimes investigator on the trail of a Nazi archcriminal (Welles) who has taken a false identity and is living in a small town in Connecticut, teaching in a prep school; his wife (Loretta Young) knows nothing of his past. The small-town details are entertaining, especially the scenes involving Billy House as the canny, fat drugstore proprietor, and Welles introduces some baroque touches and a garish finale. His performance is so flagrantly, boyishly unconvincing—the Nazi seems preoccupied by his evil superman thoughts—that it's rather amusing. Originally released in 1946.—*Pauline Kael* (Film Forum; March 19-22.)

TOUCHING THE VOID

Kevin Macdonald's new film is a dismaying documentary account of what happened on the side of a mountain in 1985. Two young British climbers, Joe Simpson and Simon Yates, ascended the west face of Siula Grande, in the Peruvian Andes, and then began their descent. Simpson slipped and injured his leg, then fell again, this time off the brink of a ridge. He was hanging from the end of a rope; at the other end, sliding fast, was Yates, who cut the rope to save himself. You come out of the movie arguing hotly—as Macdonald wants you to do—about the rights and wrongs of that dire moment, and musing on the fact that Simpson survived his ordeal. The two men tell their story with a sang-froid verging on the comical, intercut with a dramatic reconstruction of the climb itself. The cinematography, all vertiginous horror and beauty, is by Mike Eley; it leaves us with a mad inkling of what drives a mountaineer, as well as a determination to stay, at all costs, on the level.—*A.L.* (1/19/04) (Empire 25, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Sunshine Cinema.)

ALSO PLAYING

BROKEN WINGS

Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.

THE FOG OF WAR

Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, Empire 25, 62nd & Broadway, and Sutton 1 and 2.

KITCHEN STORIES

Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Village East Cinemas.

SECRET WINDOW

Battery Park 11, Beekman, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.

SPARTAN

East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, 64th and 2nd, and Village Theatre VII.

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Battery Park 11, West St. at Vesey St.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinema Classics, 332 E. 11th St. (212-677-6309).
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).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
42nd Street E Walk, 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St. (212-757-2280).
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
Metro Twin, Broadway at 99th 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.
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)—World-cinema Fridays. March 19 at 7:30: "Passages Through Paradise" (2003, Yannis Lambrou; in Greek). ♦ Through March 28: A Lars Von Trier retrospective. March 20 at 1:30: "Epidemic" (1987; in Danish and English). ♦ March 20 at 4: "The Kingdom, Episodes 1 and 2" (1994; in Danish and Swedish). ♦ March 20 at 6:30: "The Kingdom, Episodes 3 and 4" (1994; in Danish and Swedish). ♦ March 21 at 1:30: "Medea" (1988; in Danish). ♦ March 21 at 3:30: "The Kingdom II, Episodes 1 and 2" (1997; in Danish and Swedish). ♦ March 21 at 6:30: "The Kingdom II, Episodes 3 and 4" (1997; in Danish and Swedish).

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES
32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5110)—Through March 23: The films of Jon Moritsugu. March 17-19 and March 22 at 7:30, March 20-21 at 5:30 and 7:30, and March 23 at 7:30 and 9:30: "Scumrock" (2002). ♦ March 17 at 9:30: Shorts program. ♦ March 18 at 9:30: "Terminal U.S.A." (1993). ♦ March 19 at 9:30: "Mod Fuck Explosion" (1995). ♦ March 20 at 9:30: "Fame Whore" (1997). ♦ March 21 at 9:30: "My Degeneration" (1990). ♦ March 22 at 9:30: "Hippy Porn" (1991). ♦ Films presented by *The Onion*. March 18 at 8: "Session 9" (2001, Brad Anderson). ♦ Through March 21: A Craig Baldwin retrospective. March 19 at 7 and March 20 at 9: "Rocketkitkongokit" (1986) and "Tribulation 99: Alien Anomalies Under America" (1991). ♦ March 19 at 9 and March 21 at 6: "Wild Gunman" (1978) and "Sonic Outlaws" (1995). ♦ March 20 at 7 and March 21 at 8: "¡O No Coronado!" (1992) and "Spectres of the Spectrum" (2000).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-777-3456)—"Cinema Tropical." March 17 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Momentos" (1981, Maria Luisa Bemberg; in Spanish). ♦ Repertory favorites. March 18 at 7:30: "The Adventures of Prince Achmed" (1926, Lotte Reiniger; silent). ♦ A tribute to the director Marco Bellocchio. March 19 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Henry IV" (†). ♦ March 20-21 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "My Mother's Smile" (2002; in Italian). ♦ British horror films. March 22 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "The Revenge of Frankenstein" (1958, Terence Fisher). ♦ March 23 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "The Creeping Flesh" (1973, Freddie Francis).

FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—Through April 15: An Orson Welles retrospective. March 17 at 2, 5:30, and 9: "Journey Into Fear" (†). ♦ March 17 at 3:30 and 7: "Black Magic" (1949, Gregory Ratoff). ♦ March 19-22 at 1, 4:35, and 8:10: "The Stranger" (†). ♦ March 19-22 at 2:50, 6:25, and 10: "The Lady from Shanghai" (1948, Orson Welles). ♦ March 23 at 1:30, 5:30, and 9:30: "The Southern Star" (1969, Sidney Hayers). ♦ March 23 at 3:30 and 7:30: "House of Cards" (1969, John Guillerman). ♦ Through April 8: Columbia 3-D Thursdays. March 18 at 1:40, 5:20, and 9: "The Stranger Wore a Gun" (1953, André de Toth). ♦ March 18 at 3:35 and 7:15: "The Nebraskan" (1953, Fred F. Sears).

FLORENCE GOULD HALL
55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—Through March 30: A tribute to the French studio Pathé. March 23 at 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, and 9: "Deadlier Than the Male" (1955, Julien Duvivier; in French).

GRAMERCY THEATRE
127 E. 23rd St. (212-777-4900)—Recent acquisitions. March 17 at 4: "The Band Wagon" (1953, Vincente Minnelli). ♦ March 18 at 2: "Family Nest" (1977, Béla Tarr; in Hungarian). ♦ March 18 at 4:15: "An-Magritt" (1969, Arne Skouen; in Norwegian). ♦ March 18 at 6:30: "Benjamin Smoke" (2001, Jem Cohen and Peter Sillen). ♦ March 18 at 8:30 and March 19 at 2: "The Cooler" (2003, Wayne Kramer). ♦ March 19 at 4: "The Lady Without Camelias" (1953, Michelangelo Antonioni; in Italian). ♦ Through March 24: "Pacific Street Films: 35th Anniversary Salute." March 19 at 6:30: "Red Squad" (1971, Howard Blatt, Steven Fischler, et al.) and two other documentaries. ♦ March 19 at 9 and March 23 at 6: "The Other Half Revisited: The Legacy of Jacob Riis" (1989, Fischler et al.) and "From Swastika to Jim Crow" (2000, Lori Cheatle). ♦ March 20-21 at 1: A two-day screening of Peter Watkins's fourteen-and-a-half-hour meditation on nuclear catastrophe, "The Journey: A Film for Peace" (1984-1987). ♦ March 22 at 6: Short films from international festivals. ♦ March 22 at 8:30: "Dieter Roth" (2003, Edith Jud; in German and English).

Tómas Lemarquis in the Icelandic drama "Noi," opening March 19.

SETH

SUNSHINE CINEMA
139-143 E. Houston St. (212-358-0573)—Midnight movies. March 19-20: "Blazing Saddles" (1974, Mel Brooks).

THALIA THEATRE
Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. (212-864-5400)—March 21 at 2, 4, 6, and 8: "Modern Times" (1936, Charles Chaplin).

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—Through March 21: "Rendez-Vous with French Cinema." All films are in French. March 17 at 1 and 6:30 and March 20 at 1:30: "Grande École" (2004, Robert Salis). ♦ March 17 at 3:30: "Who Killed Bambi?" (2003, Gilles Marchand). ♦ March 17 at 9 and March 18 at 6:15: "Time of the Wolf" (2003, Michael Haneke). ♦ March 18 at 1, March 20 at 4:10, and March 21 at 4:30: "Feelings" (2003, Noémie Lvovsky). ♦ March 18 at 3:15 and 9 and March 19 at 9: "The Cost of Living" (2003, Philippe le Guay). ♦ March 19 at 1 and 6:15 and March 20 at 9:30: "Not on the Lips" (2003, Alain Resnais). ♦ March 19 at 3:45 and March 21 at 7: "Chouchou" (2003, Merzak Allouache). ♦ March 20 at 6:30 and March 21 at 9: "Twentynine Palms" (2003, Bruno Dumont).

Photography by Andrew Eccles

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THE NEW YORKER

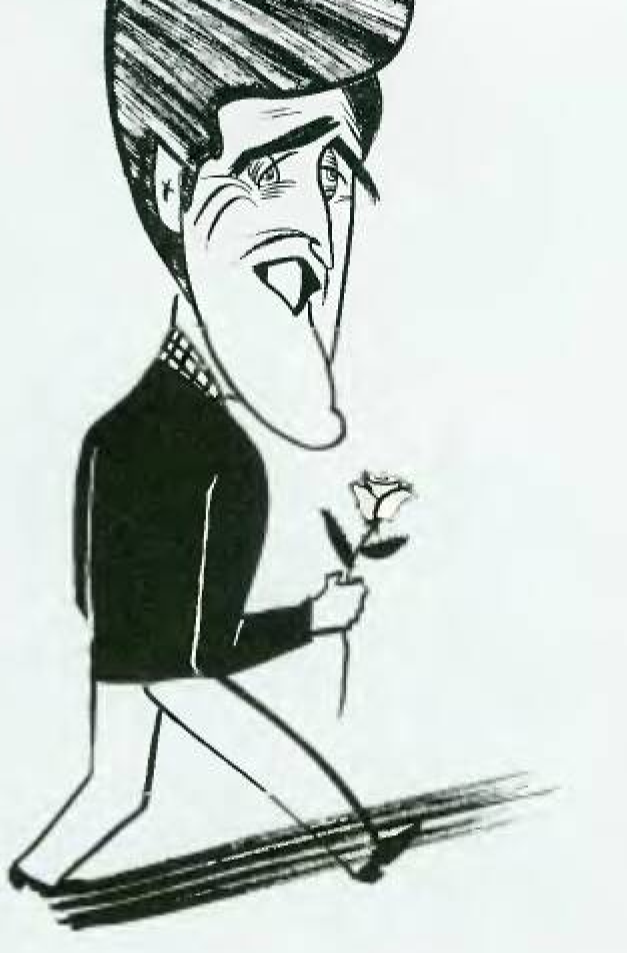
THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
VICE SQUADS

Goodness, that was exciting, wasn't it? We have a nominee! Two of them, in fact: a Democrat, John Kerry, and a Republican, George W. Bush. And it didn't take all that long—not even eight weeks from the eve of the Iowa caucuses, when Howard Dean was on the cover of *Time* as the all but inevitable Democratic standard-bearer, till March 3rd, the day after Super Tuesday, when Senator Kerry's last serious rival, John Edwards, dropped out. Of course, the candidates and their entourages had been at it longer, anywhere from a couple of years to a lifetime. But for normal people the Presidential semifinal round was short, stimulating, and (to the extent possible in a political era as fraught with dread and loathing as this one) fun.

All right, what happens now? What happens now is a general-election campaign that lasts eight months. No one would plan it that way, and no one did. America's outlandish method of picking Presidents is the product of haphazard historical accretions, two-hundred-plus-year-old constitutional compromises, ever-shifting political improvisations, shortsighted partisan schemings, and interstate jostlings for influence. (Thanks to that last factor, the date of the New Hampshire primary has migrated from the second Tuesday in March to the fourth Tuesday in January.) Fortunately for the stability and sanity of the planet, there is nothing like it anywhere else.

By contrast, our system of picking *Vice*-Presidents is simplicity itself. The Presidential candidate, once his own nomination is in the bag, picks a name. That's it. The role of the rest of us is to speculate. And this year, given that the Democratic Convention is still four months down the road, Vice-Presidential speculation looks like being an invaluable time-filler. Anybody can play this game. So let's get started: Who's it going to be? Edwards? Dick Gephardt? Bill Richardson? Bob Graham? Wesley Clark? If your guess is on that list, then your guess is as good as anybody's, including the insiders': those were the top five names in *National Journal's* pre-Super Tuesday "Democratic Insiders Poll." *National Journal*, a Washington weekly, is so inside that a subscription costs seventeen hundred dollars a year. The insiders it polled, some fifty of them, are so inside that their names are unfamiliar even to obsessive readers of political news. (Can you identify Tammy Baldwin, Eric Eve, Bob Slagle, and Mike Veon? Then you're an insider yourself.) By the time of last week's Insiders Poll, Tom Vilsack, the governor of Iowa, had displaced Clark. Bubbling under the top five were Senators Evan Bayh, of Indiana, Bill Nelson, of Florida, and John Breaux, of Louisiana. And, farther down, Hillary Clinton, of New York.



The job is no longer a joke, which is what it was for most of American history. "My country," complained its first occupant, John Adams, "has in its wisdom contrived for me the most insignificant office that ever the invention of man contrived or his imagination conceived." A century or so later, Woodrow Wilson chimed in, "The chief embarrassment in describing it is that in saying how little there is to be said about it one has evidently said all that there is to say." In "Of Thee I Sing," the 1931 Broadway hit musical by George S. Kaufman, Morrie Ryskind, and George and Ira Gershwin, the Vice-Presidential character is played for laughs. The party bosses who nominate him can't remember his name (though it's close to unforgettable: Alexander Throttlebot-

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

"Mom, dad, have a seat.
There's something we've got
to talk about.
Should you sell your house?
And get a smaller place?
Live with us?
Or travel forever
and ever and ever?
Don't worry.
We'll figure it
all out."

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tom), and he has to join a tour group to get inside the White House.

It took the invention of television for politicians to realize that the Vice-Presidency was worth a great deal more than what John Nance Garner, the first of F.D.R.'s three No. 2s, is famously said to have compared it to, "a bucket of warm spit." (Famously but incorrectly: Garner said a bucket of warm piss, which, though unquotable in the family newspapers of his day, makes more sense from the heat-retention angle.) The Vice-Presidency is a much, much better job than it was in the old days. Back then, you drowsed through endless sessions of the Senate, lived in a flyspecked boarding house on a muddy street, and nursed your resentments. Now you get a mansion, a staff, and a plane worthy of a Saudi arms merchant. And, if you like undisclosed locations, no longer have detectable Presidential ambitions of your own, and serve a callow President so in thrall to you that when you headed his Vice-Presidential search committee you felt free to find yourself, you can end up achieving total world domination.

The biggest reason people want to be Vice-President, though, is that it has become the royal road to the Presidency, even if one's boss remains in perfect health. After Adams and Thomas Jefferson, during the republic's first two centuries the only person ever to win a Presidential election while serving as Vice-President was Martin Van Buren, in 1836. (It didn't happen again until 1988, when George H. W. Bush won the election. And it happened a third time in 2000, when George W. Bush didn't.) In the modern era, being Vice-President gets you unparalleled name recognition and fund-raising clout. Four out of the last eight Presidents were ex-Veeps, only one of whom ascended on account of his predecessor's death.

So it matters who gets the nod. The star of last week's speculation was Senator John McCain, Republican of Arizona and probably the most popular politician in America. "John Kerry is a very close friend of mine," McCain said coyly on "Good Morning America," on ABC. "Obviously, I would entertain it." Democratic operatives started calling each other excitedly. With McCain on the ticket, Kerry would lose some votes to Ralph Nader, but he'd pick up many more on the other end. The frissons subsided that afternoon, when McCain sent his spokesman out to say firmly, "Senator McCain will not be a candidate for Vice-President in 2004." Even so, the idea is not completely outlandish. "It's impossible to imagine the Democratic Party seeking a pro-life, free-trading, nonprotectionist deficit hawk," McCain added on "G.M.A." It was an interesting choice of issues for him to mention. Kerry, after all, no doubt thinks of himself as a believer in free trade (within limits) and an opponent of protectionism (as opposed to "fairness," say); and being personally pro-life does not necessarily require being anti-choice. McCain has a long record as a conservative, and a switch would be the biggest flip-flop since the Road to Damascus. Still, nearly every time he thinks hard about an issue these days he ends up on the moderate-to-liberal side. So don't dismiss the notion out of hand. It just might . . .

More to come on the Vice-Presidency, right after these messages (insert ten million dollars' worth of negative attack ads here).

—*Hendrik Hertzberg*

HIGHER LEARNING
MAHARISHI PREP

Ben Pollack is a preternaturally self-possessed eleventh grader from Fairfield, Iowa, who is considering a career in public relations, because, he says, "I love speaking to people about what I feel, and what I believe in." Such a misapprehension of the publicist's usual relationship to sincerity will not get young Pollack very far at some of New York City's better-known public-relations establishments; but it stood him in good stead last week when he was flown into town to appear at a press conference advocating the use of Transcendental Meditation among schoolkids. Pollack has been a practitioner of Transcendental Meditation since he was ten years old, and he, along with a handful of other junior meditators, had been drafted by the New York Committee for Stress-Free Schools to demonstrate just how fantastically healthful and helpful a state of what was described as "restful alertness" could be for the city's teen-agers—who, New York parents will have observed, are more typically prone to a state of restless lethargy.

The press conference included testimony from a variety of educators and scientists touting the virtues of TM: Gary Kaplan, the director of clinical neurophysiology at North Shore University Hospital, on Long Island, spoke of the "coherence of activity between the hemispheres and the front and the back of the brain," while Jane Roman Pitt, a senior fellow at the Institute of Science, Technology and Public Policy, in Fairfield, Iowa, described benefits more easily comprehended by a layperson. "To walk into a room and see a hundred middle-school students in a state of silence—deep, pure silence that you can feel as well as hear—is wonderful," she said.

The highlight of the morning, though, was the demonstration by Pollack and half a dozen of his peers, who, on command, folded their hands in their laps, shut their eyes, and did a few minutes' worth of meditation in their chairs. All of them appeared immediately to achieve a state of restful alertness—except for one small boy who kept rubbing behind his eyeglasses and snatching quick squints at three TV cameramen who were circling the meditators, shining bright lights in their faces and trying to eke some B-roll dynamism out of the scene.

Afterward, the schoolkids attested to the transformative powers of TM—which, if their testimony was to be believed, was a treatment not just for stress but for the traumas of adolescence itself. Riva Winningham, an eleventh-grade student from the Maharishi School of the Age of Enlightenment, a high school named for the founder of TM, in Fairfield, Iowa (also the location of the Maharishi University of Management, which offers a curriculum based on "Higher Consciousness and Professional Excellence"), said that after she took up meditation her grade-point average increased substantially. Sixteen-year-old Leala Omansky, who is a student at Lawrence Woodmere Academy, on Long Island, said that TM "makes you more relaxed and, I have to say, friendly—you just attract people." Omansky's facility for attracting people may also have had something to do with the fact that, with long dark hair and perfect skin and shining eyes, she was transcendently pretty and uncannily composed, as if she were about to apply not for college but for a job on the "Today" show.

Ben Pollack, also of the Maharishi School, who wore a gold mezuzah around his neck and a beatific look on his face, likewise testified to meditation's ameliorative effects on the usual unpleasantnesses of teen-agerdom. TM got rid of cliques—"I used to have very few friends, but at this school everyone is friends with everyone," he said—and homework-induced exhaustion. At the suggestion that one way to reduce stress in students might just be to cut down on the size of homework assignments, Pollack said, "Transcendental Meditation makes my thinking clearer, so now I can get through any amount of homework. I can do five hours if I need to." While Pollack allowed that TM could not actually eliminate acne, he pointed out that it had been shown to have physiological benefits, such as reducing high blood pressure.

And Pollack showed an ability to stay on message which boded very well for his future career. Had the television-camera lights presented any obstacle to his achieving meditative transcendence during the demonstration, earlier? On the contrary. "I didn't even feel the cameras around me," he said. "In fact, it felt more like an inner light than an outer light."

—*Rebecca Mead*

DEPT. OF HOOPLA
REAL BOHEMIANS

The other night, at the National Arts Club, a couple of hundred admirers of the poet Jane Mayhall got together for a reading from her work. (Her previous book came out in 1973; her new book, "Sleeping Late on Judgment Day," has just been published by Knopf.) There were friends from Black Mountain, the experimental college in North Carolina, which Mayhall attended from 1937 to 1939; neighbors from the ten or twelve apartments that she had rented over the years in the Village; writers and artists whose work she and her late husband, Leslie George Katz, had published at the Eakins Press; set designers; ballet people; poets; musicians; photographers; psychologists; and professors. Harvey Simmonds, who helped assemble the press's authoritative catalogue of Balanchine's works, was there. He met Mayhall and Katz at May Swenson's house on Perry Street in 1966; he is now a Cistercian (Trappist) monk known as Brother Benedict. "Trappists are enclosed," he said. "It's very unusual that I'm here tonight." His monastery, in Virginia, makes fruitcake and creamed honey—"twenty-five thousand fruitcakes a year." Mary Brett Daniels, a petite woman who met Mayhall at Black Mountain, came up from Philadelphia. "She wrote a poem for our wedding," Daniels said. " 'Neal and Mary, may you be / gay as poets on a spree.' Leslie and Jane were the real bohemians—we had *children*." She added, "There's Elizabeth Pollet—she was married to Delmore Schwartz."

As the reading began, Daniels scooted a chair next to Mayhall, who was sitting in the front row. Ned Rorem, who is known for his musical settings of Yeats, Auden, Bishop, Crane, and many others, read a poem—he said it was the first time he'd read poetry in public. Ned O'Gorman, a poet and headmaster, also read, saying that Mayhall reminded him of "Louise Bogan, whom I adored, and of Sappho." Mayhall, whose poems are wry and forthright, listened attentively, smiling faintly every now and again. After everyone else had finished, she read a poem herself.

The next afternoon, Mayhall was in her apartment, on West Sixty-seventh Street, where she and Katz moved in 1976. The apartment still houses the offices of the Eakins Press, which was founded in 1966, with some of the proceeds from the sale of a collection of Thomas Eakins paintings owned by Katz's father. Mayhall was wearing a lavender blouse and had a yellow pencil tucked behind her ear. Furniture and books were scattered around the large living room, and paint peeled in voluminous curls from the double-height ceilings.

"My family came to Appalachia during the Irish potato famine," she said. "I got a lot from my mother and father's farm intonation. They said things backwards. It was a rich language—crackers." Mayhall was born in Louisville in 1918, and met Katz at Black Mountain. "My wedding dress cost five dollars. It was a little blue-and-white polka-dot print. We didn't have any big American ideas about love and marriage. We thought it was so corny to live together and have families." In "Notes for a Sixtieth Wedding Anniversary," from the new collection, Mayhall describes the simple service, in a parish house: "The cake I recall was Tastee brand." In a concession to their families, she converted to Judaism and he became a Baptist.

After Katz died, in 1997, Mayhall began writing with astonishing fluency—sometimes three or four poems a day. "I think it must happen to a lot of people that they really fall in love when someone is dying," she said. "You see what the quality of life is, and how desperate and terrible and real and true it is. Most people say, 'Oh well, you've got to get over it.' I don't want to get over death. My writing this book was trying to keep hold of Leslie. It was a daily way to speak to him and about him."

She gestured around the room, pointing out landmarks from the poems. "That's 'The corner in the apartment that puts me to sleep'—where the TV is, naturally. There's the 'Altar' "—a table piled with Eakins Press books (Carl van Vechten's Harlem photographs, Conrad Aiken's poems, a facsimile of the 1855 edition of "Leaves of Grass"), a sculpture by Gaston Lachaise, and a life mask of Abraham Lincoln, given to Katz by Lincoln Kirstein, their close friend, who founded New York City Ballet.

“We had remarkable lives, Leslie and I did. My first year at Black Mountain, I was walking down a country road, and coming around the bend was a very famous person. I knew instantly that it was Einstein. I thought, Life is going to be like this. He said, ‘*Guten morgen*,’ and I said, ‘*Guten morgen*.’ That night, there was a hot-dog party for Einstein, and the physics teacher interviewed him. He said, ‘Mr. Einstein, which is the most important, art or science?’ Einstein said, ‘No doubt about it in my mind, it’s art. Art must always come first, art and feeling.’ Life had this quality. I thought, If I’m starting with Einstein, where will it go? It was a feeling that everyone was together and was going to do the best thing. It was just being alive.”

Several congratulatory bouquets were lined up on the dining-room table. “I’m not a flower person,” Mayhall said. “I prefer hot dogs.”

—*Dana Goodyear*

THE BEAT
MAN BLAMES DOG

Pity the poor dog. In this time of heightened fear—of drugs, of bombs, of the things we humans might do to one another—man increasingly asks so much of him. Last week, dog crews patrolled New York’s subway tunnels, while along our borders new graduates of the Canine Enforcement Training Center—Belgian Malinois, German shepherds, Labrador retrievers—were out sniffing, in numbers and locations not to be disclosed, for chemical weapons. In return, man has had little to offer but gratitude. And these days even the gratitude seems to be in short supply. Last Monday’s news of a Hell’s Kitchen night-club drug sting was noteworthy, not least because of the revelation that the offending club, Sound Factory, had been busted before, and had been allowed to remain open on the condition that, among other things, it employ a dog to do what its human owners, out of common business sense, wouldn’t do: turn away seventy per cent of their potential customers—the portion of clubgoers, on an average night, who are drug users, according to police estimates.

In a triumphant press conference, Police Commissioner Ray Kelly announced that at the time of this most recent raid Sound Factory’s supposed detector dog had been found to be “asleep on the job, as usual,” while transactions for Ecstasy, cocaine, and other narcotics were conducted inside.

“The dog hasn’t been arrested,” Kenneth Aronson, Sound Factory’s attorney, was quick to point out. (The club owner and two associates have been.) But in the court of public opinion the pooch was as good as guilty, its reputation in the scent-detection community shot.

“I was very upset about that,” Stephanie Kramer, the culprit’s personal handler, said late last week. “I e-mailed the Commissioner about what he said. That was an unfair statement.” Kramer is a franchisee of Interquest Detection Canines, “the nation’s oldest and largest canine detection and drug dog firm.” She said the dog’s name is Fanta. Fanta is a she, a seven-year-old black Labrador of Eastern European descent. She has been “doing drugs” for a year and a half, ever since she completed her training, in Texas. She lives with Kramer in eastern Pennsylvania, about an hour and a half’s drive from Sound Factory. She does most of her scent work at schools and offices.

“You have to understand, the club was so slow that night,” Kramer explained. “There was something going on—a big party in Miami, I think—so there were maybe two hundred people inside.” (Keep in mind that Sound Factory has four floors and thirty thousand square feet.) “They started the raid at about six in the morning,” Kramer continued. By then, Fanta had already been on the job for five hours, on top of the long commute. “So, yeah, she was sleeping. There’s nothing for her to do. Am I supposed to tell her to stand at attention? I can’t explain to her that she must stay awake for no reason.”

And, anyway, “an adult dog sleeps seventy per cent of the time,” Kenneth Aronson, the attorney, said.

Fanta’s job, it turns out, was not to sniff people (that was up to the bouncers) but to sniff their bags. “We had a couple alerts that turned out to be residual odors,” Kramer said, reflecting on Fanta’s year of service with the club. (Kramer has not been paid for the night of the sting, and wants her seven hundred and fifty dollars.) But Fanta, for whatever reason, never found any drugs while stationed at this alleged “stash house.” Which does raise questions about her efficacy.

Kramer reports that, the same week Fanta got caught snoozing, she found six hundred dollars’ worth of marijuana in the parking lot of a high school in Pennsylvania. But Fanta is unable to recognize the scents of GHB (the so-called date-rape drug) or ketamine (Special K), and when it comes to Ecstasy “there has to be quite a lot of it, because she only smells the methamphetamine traces.” (“You and I go into someone’s home and they’re preparing beef stew—we smell beef stew,” Steve Browand, a drug-dog expert with the New York Security Service Group, explained. “The dog goes in, he recognizes the beef, he recognizes the carrots, he recognizes the peas, he recognizes the potatoes. He separates the ingredients.”) Pot is not exactly the chief concern of the nightlife police.

Fanta

“An important function of the dog is as more of a deterrent,” Aronson said. “If people see a drug-smelling dog, they turn around and they get rid of what they have. They put it back in their car, or they throw it down the sewer. Or maybe they take it.” And then, sufficiently giddy, perhaps they return to the line and greet the dog with affection.

“Most people wanted to pet her,” Kramer said. “She rolls right over on

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her back and you could rub her belly."

In the end, Fanta was probably not the right gal for the job, but "to me, she's a good dog," Kramer said.

—Ben McGrath

DEPT. OF DINING
AFTERTASTE

One last lunch at La Côte Basque. The classic, famous old restaurant was closing on March 7th, as its chef-proprietor, Jean-Jacques Rachou, neared seventy. Along with the deaths of Lutèce and Gage & Tollner, the event marked the end of something or other, at a time of who knows what—but it needed to be observed, and it was.

The Côte Basque that ended was not the Côte Basque that began. That one, familiar to readers of Truman Capote (who set a gossipy story there), was actually one block over, east of Fifth Avenue, in the space that is now the Disney Store. The entire operation—the tables, the banquettes, and the murals of the Basque coast, by Bernard Lamotte, which gives the place its name—was dislodged nine years ago, and replanted more or less successfully in the new space farther west.

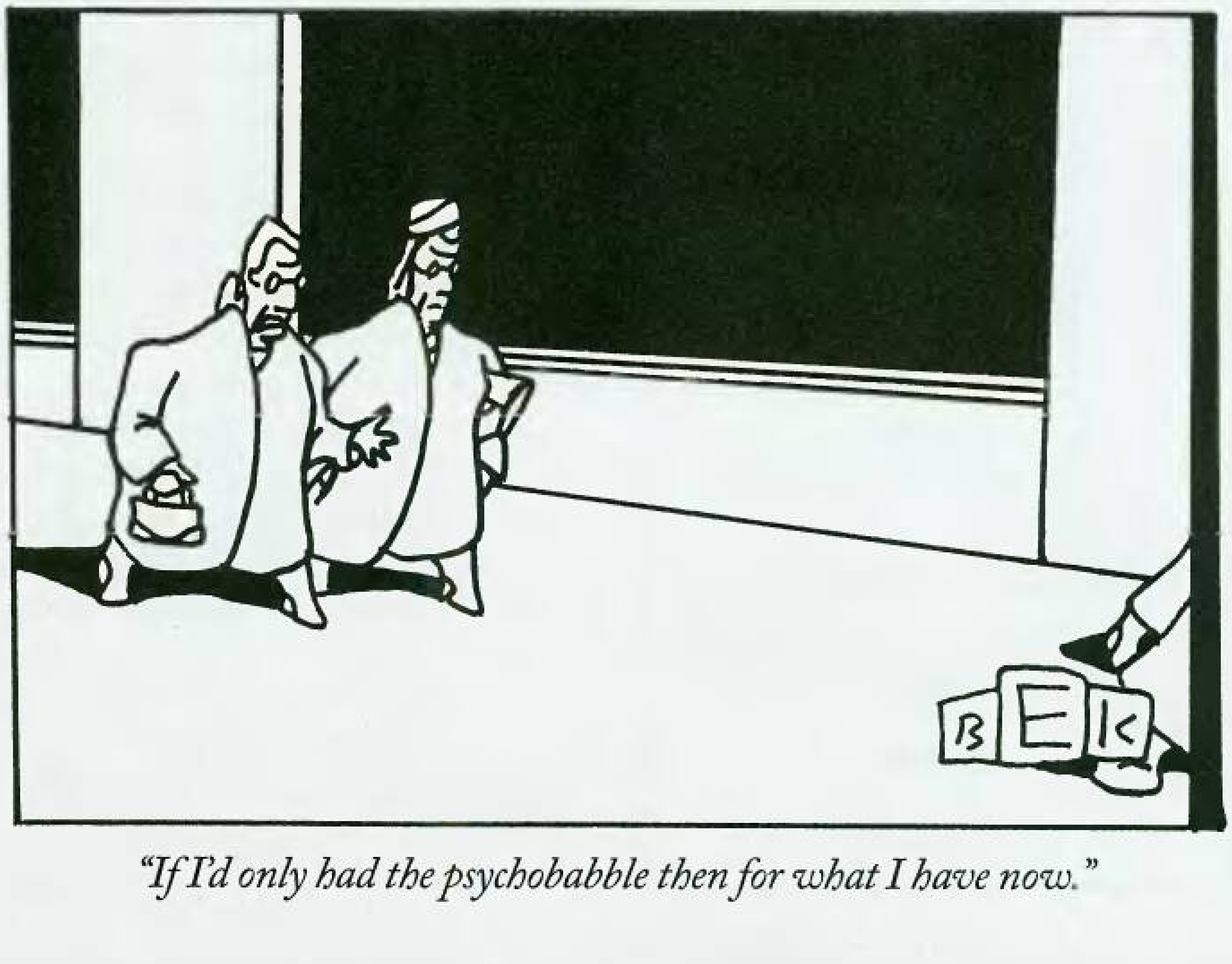
Historians, or, at least, chroniclers of the New York restaurant world, will also recall that the original Côte Basque was intended, rather defiantly, not to be what it ended up being—what's called a temple of haute cuisine. It was Henri Soulé's second restaurant, the "relaxed," bistro-ish alternative to his Le Pavillon, which was itself a relic of the 1939 World's Fair. As Joseph Wechsberg explained in these pages some forty years ago, the Pavillon was the first restaurant in New York to be emphatically and uncompromisingly major—three-star cooking, as they did it in Paris—and La Côte Basque was the first to be major in a minor way. (Reading Wechsberg now, one is struck by how tired the food sounds, much of it made earlier in the day and presented as a *buffet froid,* to be admired as people entered the restaurant.) La Côte Basque, however, became the fashionable place, on the universal principle that whatever is defined in advance as exclusive is uninteresting, while whatever is defined in advance as welcoming can have an overlay of exclusivity bestowed upon it.

La Côte Basque, which stumbled after Soulé's death, was revived in the early eighties by Jean-Jacques Rachou, who had earlier created what was for a spell one of the best places in New York, Le Lavandou, on East Sixty-first Street. Rachou was the master of a brief rococo interregnum. (This had to be a food-magazine cover line back then: "The Rococo Interregnum.") His chicken was still stuffed; his fish still imported; and if he met a tournedos he greeted it with a slice of foie gras and a truffle sauce. He was mostly famous for the free-form inventiveness of his plates, which often looked, one critic wrote, if memory serves, "like the flags of some effete nation." The style had its moment, and the restaurant got a cheerful second life, which is now over. There is a second life for institutions when people in their twenties arrive; and another second life when people in their fifties return—the second sort of second life was the kind that La Côte Basque had. (In one more, promised life, it is supposed to become a brasserie, sans murals, this spring.)

And yet, looking around the room of the red-faced and the silver-haired, the soon-to-be-thrombotic and the recently revalved, of women who still tie their scarves around their bags in the manner of Babe Paley and men who still dress in trim gray suits in the manner of her husband, one realized that it was the restaurant's thorough and even comic Frenchness that had made it so entirely New York. The black banquettes, the lovely red-and-white striped awning above the bar, the flow of penguined waiters, and above all those murals, showing Basque-harbor scenes—no truly French place could be so resolutely French any more than a truly New York restaurant would ever do itself up in pigeons and water towers. The colors, the open brushwork, and the sea beyond—all of which were intended, in 1962, to make you feel as if you had been transported to southwest France in 1905—now make you feel, one last time, as if you had been transported to New York in 1962. The Gotham Bar and Grill could be anywhere; La Côte Basque could only be in New York City.

And the food? It was O.K., yet weirdly disconnected. Things were roasted crisp and sautéed crisper, the truffles were black and the sauce Madeira gleaming, and it was all done with the rich and, if truth be told, slightly sick-making flavor of the old-style cooking. Had our palate changed, or had the cooking changed? More the first than the second, surely. The cobbler must stick to his last, but the chef must stick to his customers, and one generation's delights are the next generation's curiosities. At lunch the other day, someone said, apropos of Capote, that taste is the last thing that passes after talent is gone—it is the most mysterious of gifts, the one thing that lasts, and yet the one that always changes. It seemed a sufficiently elegiac thought to take back to the office, along with the memory of lunch.

—Adam Gopnik



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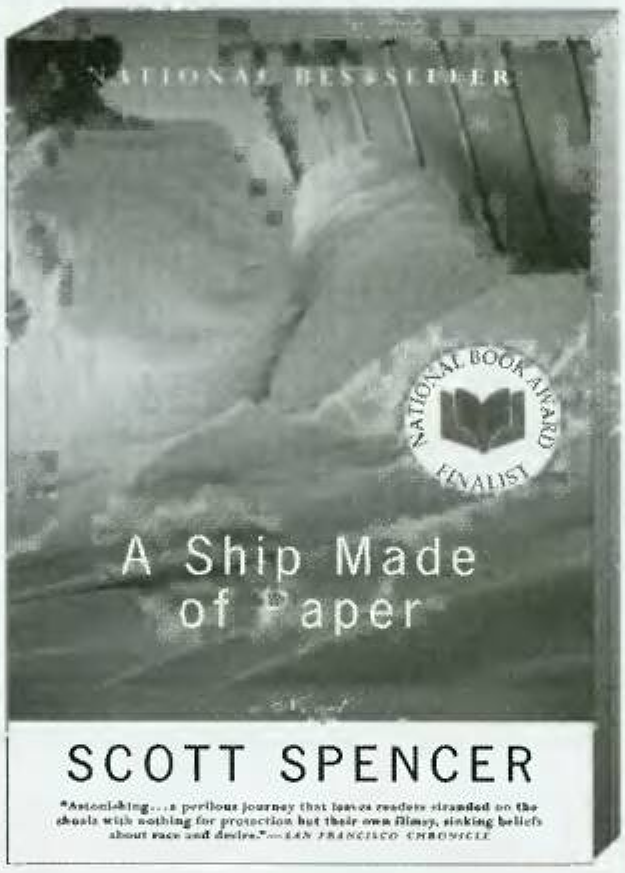

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LETTER FROM AFGHANISTAN

ROAD RAGE

Marauding Taliban and drug-dealing warlords on the road to Kandahar.

BY KATHY GANNON

Mullah Muhammad Khaksar is a burly man in his early forties with a thick, curly beard that falls halfway down his chest. He lives in a modest house in a poor suburb of Kabul, but he travels often to Kandahar, the largest city in southern Afghanistan, where he was born and where his family owns an electronics shop. When I first met Khaksar, in 1999, he had two grand houses in the center of Kabul, with servants and manicured gardens. The Taliban controlled the city then, and Khaksar was the deputy minister of interior. He was something of an oddity among the Taliban, in that he collected books and would furtively scour the few bookstores that were still open, looking for volumes written in Pashto, the language spoken by most Afghans in the south and the east. He also had a stash of photographs, which were forbidden under the Taliban, and he showed me pictures that had been taken of him when he was fighting the Soviets alongside one-eyed Mullah Omar. Khaksar is a heavy smoker, and even though Mullah Omar had ordered his ministers to give up cigarettes, Khaksar refused to quit. Like his smoking, our meetings were often conducted in secret.

Khaksar was a founding member of the Taliban movement, which arose in Kandahar in the early nineties. After the defeat of the Soviets by the Afghan mujahideen in 1989 and the collapse of the Afghan Communist government in 1992, Kabul had been taken over by mujahideen factions that fought bitterly. Meanwhile, Kandahar was at the mercy of violent, thieving warlords. Their militias stopped cars at every other intersection to demand money or weapons. Even Hamid Karzai, Afghanistan's current President, who is also from Kandahar, supported the Taliban's intervention in the anarchic post-Soviet period.

In the early years of the movement, Khaksar was the Taliban intelligence chief in Kandahar, but he lost power when he began speaking out against influential Afghan mullahs who had been trained at Pakistani religious schools and were manipulated by Pakistani intelligence officers. The mullahs and, later, Osama bin Laden had ingratiated themselves into Mullah Omar's inner circle. "I asked Mullah Omar, 'Why do we need these people?' " Khaksar recalled not long after I met him. " 'The jihad' "—against the Soviets—" 'is over. They should go back to their country.' " Many of the men who had helped found the Taliban could no longer even arrange a meeting with Mullah Omar.

The Taliban sent Khaksar to Kabul in 1996, shortly after they took control of the city, and he was demoted to deputy minister. In April, 1999, he travelled to Peshawar, in Pakistan, where he spoke with J. Peter McIllwain, the C.I.A. chief there. Khaksar told McIllwain that the Taliban could not be defeated militarily by the Afghan opposition, but that the leaders who were most closely aligned with Osama bin Laden and the Pakistanis could be undermined if more moderate elements within the Taliban were supported by arms and money from the West. Khaksar risked a great deal to make this overture to the United States. He knew that Osama's intelligence was good and that the meeting could cost him his life. Before Khaksar returned to Afghanistan, McIllwain gave him half of a five-rupee note and told him not to talk to anyone who claimed to represent the United States unless he had the other half of the note. The clandestine encounter, as Khaksar described it, sounded like an episode in a cheap spy novel, but McIllwain recently confirmed the details of the meeting, and Khaksar still has his now tattered half of the five-rupee note, along with a letter from McIllwain saying that the Americans were unwilling to do as he asked.

When the Taliban fled Kabul, after dark on November 13, 2001, Khaksar stayed behind. I was in Kabul then, too, and was for nearly three weeks the only Western journalist in the city. The Taliban had encircled Kabul with tanks, and on that last night checkpoints were manned by skittish young men with rocket launchers and automatic rifles. American jets circled overhead, and rockets from gunships slammed into pickup trucks carrying Arab fighters. Smart bombs hit several buildings, including one next to my office, which had been home to the Taliban's police chief and defense minister.

The construction of the Kabul-Kandahar road was completed two years early, in time for elections in the U.S. and Afghanistan.

AIJAZ RAHI/AP

Khaksar's decision to remain in Kabul identified him publicly as a traitor. This does not cause problems for him in Kabul now, since NATO forces police the streets. But in the south and the east, where the Taliban live and where they have been increasingly active in recent months, killing and kidnapping with impunity, Khaksar has to move more carefully. He drives to Kandahar perhaps once a month, even though many people along the route know who he is.

"It's my country," Khaksar said to me in December. "If God decides it's time, then it is time." His bravado seemed a little reckless, since on his most recent trip to Kandahar several men with Kalashnikovs had opened fire on his vehicle, a four-wheel-drive S.U.V. with a license plate and ownership papers supplied by the Afghan intelligence service. (Khaksar is vague about what he does in Kandahar, saying only that he meets with tribal leaders and "talks about the future of Afghanistan.") He described hitting the gas pedal and raising a blinding cloud of dust that caused him to smash into some road-construction equipment. Khaksar smiled as he talked about the attack. He was sitting on the carpeted floor of his house, propped up on red cushions that rested against a whitewashed wall, and his smile revealed that he had lost two teeth in the crash.

You don't have to be a Taliban defector to feel a little queasy about taking the road from Kabul to Kandahar. In the past year, an Italian tourist travelling on the road in a taxi was shot dead; four Afghans working for a Danish relief agency were killed; two Afghans working for the Afghan Red Crescent and four security guards working for the Louis Berger Group—an American firm that was hired by the United States Agency for International Development, USAID, to work on the road—were ambushed and killed; a Pakistani and a Turkish engineer were killed; two Turkish engineers, two Indian engineers, an Afghan driver, and an Afghan employee of an American aid organization, Shelter for Life, were kidnapped; and dozens of vehicles have been fired upon. Early in February, two men identified as Taliban were sentenced to death for murdering a Frenchwoman who worked for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. They had gunned her down in Ghazni, a town sixty miles south of Kabul, in the middle of the afternoon. A few weeks ago, one of Louis Berger's helicopters was attacked near Kandahar. The Australian pilot was killed, and an American engineer was seriously injured. Not long after that, the director of the Afghan Red Crescent office in Zabul province was shot by armed men on a motorcycle. Joseph Collins, a deputy assistant secretary in the U.S. Department of Defense, says that the attacks against aid workers and people employed by foreign contractors are part of a well-defined strategy. For the Taliban, "reconstruction is Enemy No. 1," he explained. The attacks are not being carried out by simple criminals. "People sometimes refer to them as brigands, but they are Taliban, Al Qaeda, and Hezb-e Islami"—the fighters of the vicious Pashtun warlord Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. (Hekmatyar, who received more money from the U.S. and Pakistan than any other jihadi during the Soviet occupation in the nineteen-eighties, was in exile in Iran during the years that the Taliban controlled Afghanistan, but he formally allied himself with them after September 11, 2001. He is now in hiding.)

The road was built in the early nineteen-sixties, with money and equipment contributed by the United States, during a period in which the Americans and the Soviets were vying for influence in Afghanistan, and it was destroyed during the Soviet occupation. In the late nineties, the Taliban laid asphalt on the first twenty-seven miles south of Kabul. I travelled on the road several times when the Taliban were in power, and then in the aftermath of the war, and it was a hellish experience. It took sixteen hours to drive the three hundred miles between the two cities. The road was like a dry riverbed, undulating and full of boulders, with blown-up bridges and craters that gouged the underbellies of cars. The last time I was on the road during the Taliban regime was in the spring of 2001. As my travelling companion, Amir Shah, a colleague working for the Associated Press, and I drove out of Kabul, we saw what had become commonplace in Afghanistan then: at a checkpoint, two steel girders on either side of the road were draped in yards of brown tape ripped from music cassettes that had been confiscated from travellers. We pulled up to the checkpoint just minutes after the minister of vice and virtue, Nooruddin Turabi, got there. Turabi, the author of some of the most ludicrous of the Taliban's edicts, like the one outlawing white socks on women, was sitting beneath a mulberry tree, out of sight, but the guards were still shaking. He had just slapped one of them hard across the face, as punishment for listening to music. The guards wore the unkempt beards demanded by the Taliban, but they were young and had been listening to a tape of their favorite singer, Naghma, a famous Pashtun songstress from Kandahar. They hadn't heard Turabi's pickup truck pull in. "Go—go quickly. Just go," they told us.

The checkpoint outside Kabul today is rather different from what it was three years ago. When Amir Shah and I set off for Kandahar recently, we were stopped by guards from the Interior Ministry commanded by a clean-shaven officer in a green wool uniform who watched as his men searched vehicles with music screaming from the dashboards. And there was a female guard, a soft-spoken young woman named Shafiqa, who wore a black shawl that sparkled with silver

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sequins. The shawl covered her face, so that only her eyes and a single strand of dark-red hair were visible. Shafiqa's job is to search female travellers. Mostly, she looks for drugs.

A marble slab on a gray stone pedestal stands at Kilometre 43 on the road to Kandahar, where the section of new highway completed by the Louis Berger Group was inaugurated in mid-December. The monument bears an inscription in Farsi, Pashto, and English: "In memory of those who gave their lives in the reconstruction of this road unifying all the people of Afghanistan." The new highway is the first big reconstruction project to be completed in Afghanistan since the Taliban were defeated. Most projects have been small—a school here, a well there, a clinic somewhere else. The road was not expected to be finished until 2005, but last spring President Bush decided that it had to be open by the end of 2003. The work was accelerated, Vikram Parekh, an analyst for the International Crisis Group, said to me, because the Bush Administration badly needs "a success story" this year. "Iraq is not a model of stability," Parekh noted. "And there are two political deadlines looming: the Afghan Presidential elections"—which will probably take place in the fall—"and the Presidential elections in the United States." When additional layers of asphalt are put down and further work is done, sometime later this year, the highway will have cost the United States two hundred and seventy million dollars. The American contribution was originally budgeted at eighty million, which included funds for the road from Kandahar to Herat—another three hundred and fifty miles. "It just goes to show what you can do when money is no object," an American official in Kabul said.

Almost no work had been done on the road when Bush set out the new timetable, and virtually no equipment was in place. Before construction could begin, the Indian and Turkish firms subcontracted by Louis Berger had to airlift in parts for their asphalt plants. More than a thousand mines and other ordnance, mostly left over from the war with the Soviets in the nineteen-eighties, were removed from the area.

The terrain along the road is starkly beautiful. There are no power lines, just sunbaked mud houses that disappear behind swirls of dust whipped up by the wind. Irrigation ditches feed water to a land seared by five years of drought, and farmers squat on their haunches and use handheld scythes to cut the dry brush that they burn for fuel. Occasionally, you come across a band of nomads who have set up tents. Their sheep and goats nibble lazily on the brush, while women stoke cooking fires. The women wear heavy dresses embroidered in bright colors and decorated with small pins and tin buttons—anything, it seems, that might make a soft jangling noise as they walk.

At Kilometre 109, which is marked by a tiny piece of cardboard attached to a stick, we stopped to talk to Wazeer Muhammad Mamel, a man in a cream-

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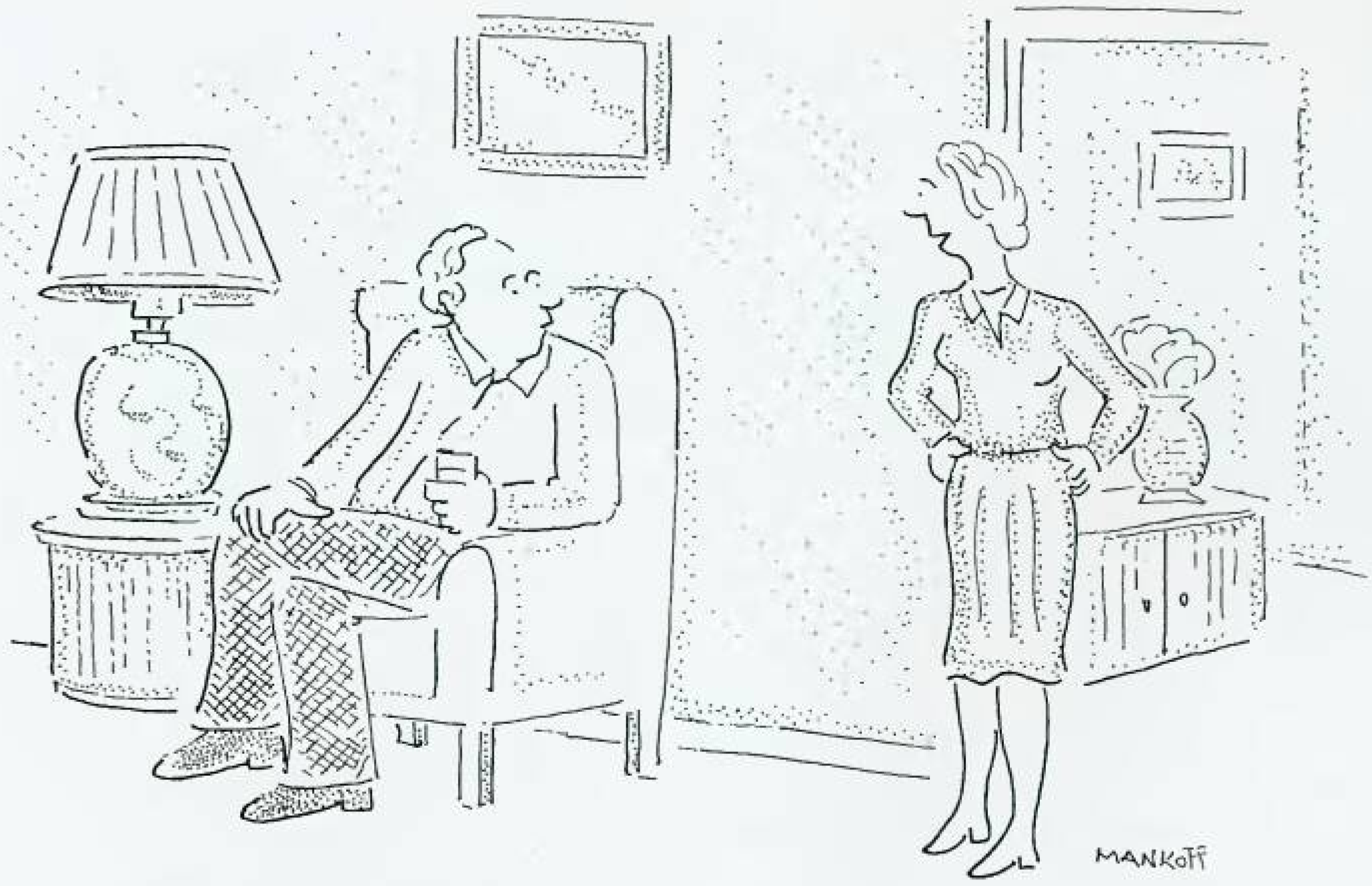


"I don't know about you, but I'm ready to take this marriage full-throttle."

• •

colored shalwar kameez. He was on a bicycle, and a few of his friends were walking along beside him. Mamel complained that the road was too narrow and that people were being killed by speeding drivers who had probably never seen a paved road before, didn't have a license, and most certainly had never taken a driving lesson. He said that a hundred and twenty people were killed in traffic accidents the first week the road was open. This figure seemed somewhat high, but as we talked cars sped past us, most of them going more than seventy miles an hour.

Mamel pointed a little farther on. "Look over there," he said. "It's a bus, although you can't tell."

What must have been a small van was sitting upright on the side of the road. Red and green tassels fluttered in the wind from its mangled roof. The windshield lay in a thousand tiny shards on the crumpled dashboard. The guts of the car spilled out—wires were twisted around one another, coils drooped down—and the engine, which had been smashed inward, was pressed against the crippled frame. Seats were shoved to the rear, and one was turned violently on its side. They were covered with bloodstains.

The van had collided with a truck and two people had died, we were told by a man in a black leather coat who said that his name was Agha Gul and that his cousin had been the driver. The cousin was badly injured. It was the truck driver's fault, Agha Gul said, although his cousin had been driving too fast. The cousin wasn't much of a driver, and when he saw the truck turning left he panicked and hit the gas pedal instead of the brakes. In keeping with Afghan tradition, the truck driver paid the victims' families the equivalent of two thousand dollars. "We forgave him the deaths when he paid the money," Agha Gul said.

We got back in our car and continued on—driving perhaps a little more slowly than we had before—and stopped at Abdul Ghaffar's Nawid Restaurant and Hotel, a dingy two-story building set away from the road at the edge of Ghazni. Small shops on the first floor were packed with biscuits, candies, cans of Coke, shampoo. Business had fallen off since the road opened, Abdul Ghaffar said. People travelled at night now, which they hadn't done before, and buses from Kandahar, which used to take two days to get to Kabul, no longer stopped. Ghaffar didn't mind. "The road is good for Afghanistan," he said. Prices of supplies hauled into Ghazni had gone down twenty per cent, because trucks made the trip from Kabul in a third of the time, with far fewer breakdowns. Ghaffar said that there were Taliban in the vicinity, but that they rarely came into town. He wasn't worried enough to hide his television set, which he had retrieved from where he stashed it when the Taliban took over the area in the mid-nineties.

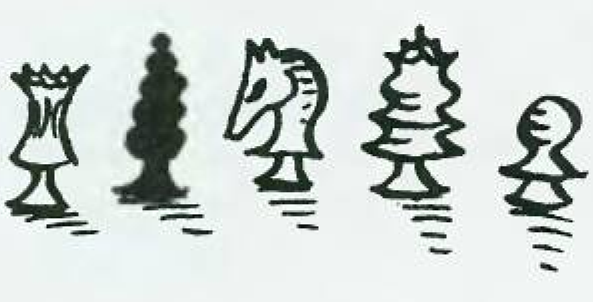
Perhaps a hundred thousand people live in Ghazni, most of them ethnic Pashtuns and Hazaras, who are mainly Shiite Muslims. It is a deeply conservative place. Women are rarely seen in the bazaar, a sprawling and congested area where horse-drawn carts rattle down the street, car horns blare, and shops are small and packed to the rafters. The governor of Ghazni, Azadullah, is a follower of Abdul Rasul Sayyaf, an extreme fundamentalist warlord who is now a power broker in Kabul. During the war with the Soviets, Sayyaf's mujahideen included more "Afghan Arabs"—foreign fighters—than any other mujahideen group. In the early nineties, after the mujahideen took Kabul, Sayyaf controlled the Afghan Ministry of Interior. During this period, fighting among the warlords who made up the government in Kabul led to the destruction of the city and the deaths of fifty thousand of its citizens. Many of the same warlords are again in power, and Karzai has been unable to do much about this. They are in large part responsible for the instability of the country, and the subsequent resurgence of the Taliban.

We were invited to stay in Azadullah's guesthouse, where a young boy pumped chunks of wood into a dirty black tin stove. Smoke seeped from cracks in a narrow pipe that twisted out of the room through an opening in the wall. The military commander of Ghazni, Ali Akbar Kasimi, a diminutive man with a wispy beard, sat with us, cracking his knuckles and talking about Taliban activity in the area. They disseminated warnings through *shabnamah*, night letters, he said, a tactic honed during the Soviet occupation, when mujahideen would scurry down from mountain hideouts with handwritten notes urging young men to fight against the infidel invaders.

Occasionally, the night letters are signed by Mullah Omar now. Their basic theme is "Fight against the foreign soldiers, don't support the government or work for it, don't send your girls to school." The penalty for ignoring the warnings is usually death. A batch of *shabnamah* were found in Kandahar recently. One of them showed a U.S. soldier searching the pockets of a fifteen-year-old girl. It carried a harsh admonishment: "This picture shows the cruelty of the U.S. forces and their behavior against humanity. Where are those brave Afghans, those who used to sacrifice themselves to save the honor of their sisters? Where are those brave Afghans who used to pull out the eyes of those who had an evil eye on Afghanistan? Why are the imprints of the swords of the brave Afghans not seen on the chests of the Americans? Wake up, Afghans. Otherwise you will lose your honor."

A building on the southern edge of town that housed a madrassa under the Taliban was now, we were told, the headquarters of an American military unit, and the next morning we left the new paved road and followed a dirt track toward an American flag that was flying over a low-lying cement structure. An armored personnel carrier was parked in front, and, as we approached, a soldier crouched behind the machine gun mounted on top of it. He relaxed a bit when I got out of the car and waved and called out in English, but he didn't put his rifle down or move away from the machine gun.

The soldier was a member of one of the Provincial Reconstruction Teams that operate outside Kabul. The P.R.T.s, which have been in Afghanistan for a little more than a year, are the central element in the new United States pacification strategy for the south and the east. The United States has ten teams, some of them in development and several more in the planning stage. New Zealand runs one in Bamiyan province; Britain has one in Mazar-i-Sharif; and the Germans recently took over in the northern province of Kunduz. There are more than twelve thousand American soldiers in Afghanistan, most of whom are hunting down Taliban and Al Qaeda fighters. The soldiers in the P.R.T.s, which have between sixty and a hundred members each, are assigned to work peacefully alongside civilians from agencies like USAID, trying to persuade the locals to coöperate. This is especially difficult in southern Afghanistan, among the Pashtun population, which has received little assistance from the Americans or from the new Afghan central government, even though Karzai and several other ministers are Pashtuns. The Americans won the war as the allies of northerners—Uzbeks, Tajiks, and Hazaras—and the northerners were influential in establishing American policy, which marginalized the Pashtuns. Most of the military operations against Taliban and Al Qaeda fighters have been carried out on Pashtun land, often by militias loyal to northern warlords. Milton Bearden, who was the C.I.A. chief in Pakistan in the late eighties—when Pakistan was the staging area for the anti-Communist mujahideen bankrolled by the United States—says that one definition of the current Taliban is "a lot of pissed-off Pashtuns."



The pacification and rebuilding process calls for constructing more than a thousand miles of roads, large hydroelectric dams, and civil-administration buildings, like courthouses. Security is to be improved by building new police stations and training village policemen. The Defense Department believes that the sight of U.S. soldiers rumbling through the region in Humvees and armored personnel carriers and fixing up Afghanistan's infrastructure will encourage people who want to resist the Taliban and are not sure that they will be protected if they do so.

We were invited into the Ghazni P.R.T. headquarters and sat down at a long table with three "civil affairs officers," Lieutenant Colonel Mark Schnur, Captain Dan Verich, and Staff Sergeant Laura Putze. They were Army reservists. Captain Verich said that villagers knew right away that they weren't combat soldiers, even though they wore khaki camouflage uniforms and were accompanied by heavy weapons. Sergeant Putze explained that their headgear made the difference. They wore baseball caps rather than helmets. Lieutenant Colonel Schnur, who has a patient, thoughtful demeanor, said that P.R.T. soldiers don't come into a village yelling and kicking in doors; they offer a friendly wave and try to find the local elder. "We want them to know that we are here to get rid of the bad guys and reward the good guys," Schnur said. But in southern and eastern Afghanistan war often intrudes on rebuilding efforts. There had been a particularly violent intrusion in Ghazni province recently, in the village of Peetai,

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when rockets from U.S. fighter jets killed nine children and a young man who had returned home from Iran just three weeks earlier to get engaged. The rockets were meant for someone who was described first as a terrorist and then as a murderer of two road workers. In any case, he wasn't in Peetai at the time of the rocket attack.

Captain Verich said that the P.R.T. had been to Peetai the day before we arrived in Ghazni, and that the villagers were not openly angry. The soldiers had offered their condolences and help. "We told them we would build a well, not as compensation or anything but because they needed one," Captain Verich said.

Peetai is a village of mud-brown houses surrounded by parched fields. We could see the graveyard as we drove up. Thin sticks draped in brightly colored pieces of cloth, a traditional grave marker that often indicates the burial place of a martyr, had been placed in the rocky ground around ten mounds of earth. In front of the graves, several small children and a few young women had formed a semicircle around a woman draped in a large black shawl. The youngest children pushed and shoved one another. Men stood nearby, protectively. The woman in the black shawl didn't move as we approached. The shawl covered her face, except for one eye, which was swollen and red. Her name, one of the other women said, was Aysha Bibi, and she was the mother of the young man who was killed after he came home to find a bride. He had been fetching water when the jets attacked.

Aysha Bibi wasn't crying anymore, and once she began speaking she talked in a steady stream, hardly stopping to take a breath. "We have nothing," she said. "No food, no money, no water. We are eating dust. What were they looking for? What have we done?" Aysha Bibi is a widow. Her husband was a mujahideen who was killed by the Soviets in the nineteen-eighties. She has two other sons, both in Iran, and three daughters, who live with their husbands in the village.

One of the village elders, a frail man with a white beard, described the jets flying in low over the fields where the children were playing. He, too, was angry at the Americans. "We want them to leave—we don't want their help," he said when I mentioned to him that the reconstruction team intended to build a well. The only well the villagers had now wasn't working. The pump handle had been missing for as long as anyone could remember. The elder didn't care. "Let them keep their well," he said.

"I'm retaining doughnuts."

The house of Mullah Wazeer, the man the fighter jets had been sent to kill, overlooks the field where the children died. There's a memorial there now: three tiny piles of rocks just outside Wazeer's house and, a few hundred feet away, six more piles. A tall, balding man was standing there, his head bent. His name was Zarwar Khan, and his only two sons had been killed in the attack. Hamidullah Khan, his brother and the father of another of the dead children, did most of the talking, slipping between anger and sadness. He said that two women had miscarried after the attack, and he raged about the soldiers who had taken control of the village and had refused to allow the children's parents to claim the bodies for twelve hours. Devout Muslims wash their dead and shroud them in a white cloth and bury them before sunset on the day they die.

Hamidullah Khan didn't let us get away easily. He was contemptuous of the soldiers who had visited the village the previous day. "They brought the children some balls and things, and clothes," he said. "What is that supposed to do for us?" His eight-year-old son stood close by him, listening. The boy seemed small for his age, but that might have been because of the oversized coat he wore, a bright pink-and-blue winter coat that came almost to his knees. His hands sank into the pockets. It had been given to him by the American soldiers. He also wore an adult's baseball cap, pulled tight at the back to fit his tiny head. The boy had to tilt his head slightly to see beyond the brim, which was emblazoned with a small American flag and the words "Columbus Ohio."

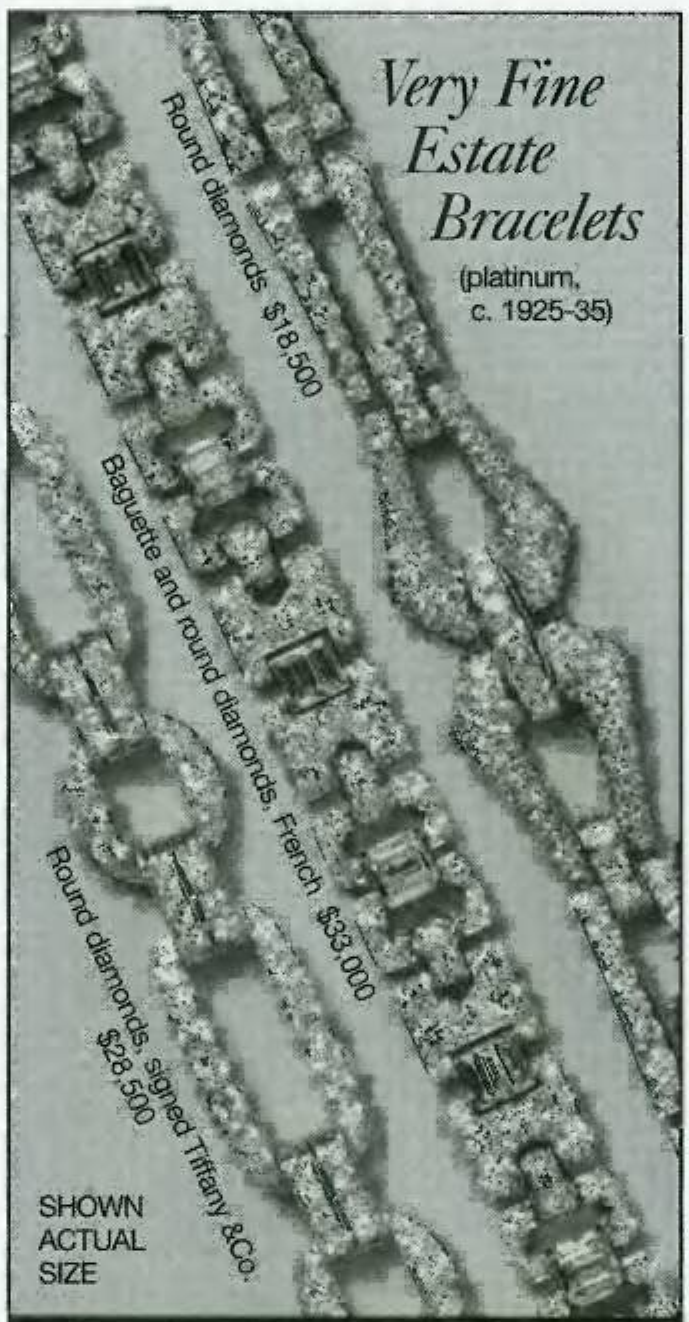
Zabul province, which is just south of Ghazni, is one of the most dangerous places in Afghanistan. Perhaps eight of its eleven districts are controlled by the Taliban, and the others are only nominally managed by the government. We left Ghazni for Qalat, the capital of Zabul province, early in the morning, and Amir Shah began speeding right away. By the time we got close to Shah Joy, where Mullah Muhammad Khaksar, the Taliban defector, had been attacked a few weeks earlier, the car was rattling. But we passed Shah Joy without incident, and soon could see the ancient mud fort that sits on a hill above Qalat, an old market town with rocky, unpaved streets. In the center of town, the big green steel gates of the governor's office were protected by a mesh of security barriers. The guards let us through, and we were ushered into the governor's office, which smelled of must. The governor, Haji Muhammad Hashim, a short man with a thick black beard, was flanked by four hulking military commanders wearing turbans with long tails. Hashim wore a karakul cap, like the one worn by Hamid Karzai, a portrait of whom hung over Hashim's desk. Hashim explained that they are related, and that he had been with Karzai in the mountains of Uruzgan province early in the war against the Taliban. They had moved from one safe house to another, fighting alongside U.S. Special Forces.

The four military commanders had come to collect the wages of their soldiers and policemen. There was no safe in the room, and Hashim didn't have a checkbook, but he pulled a packet of new thousand-afghani notes from an inside pocket of his leather jacket and divided them among the commanders, who counted the money and spoke to him for several minutes. Hashim turned to us and laughed. "It's always a negotiation," he said. "This one complains, 'What about our cars? We need repairs.' What can I say? I don't have anything more to give them." He said that—his relationship with Karzai notwithstanding—he wasn't getting enough money from the central government.

Hashim offered us accommodations in his guesthouse, and we were shown to a box-like cement room furnished with a broken-down cabinet and a steel bed that held a cushion crawling with tiny bugs. Two more cushions had been tossed on the floor, next to a potbellied woodstove. The washroom, which the governor's secretary explained was used only by special guests, was black with dirt, and the toilet, which had no seat, didn't flush. There were what seemed to be footprints on the rim of the toilet bowl.

The deputy governor, Muhammad Omar Khan, brought his brother-in-law, a lanky young man named Humdullah, in to meet us. Humdullah sat down on the floor slowly, easing himself against the sooty wall. He didn't speak at first, and Omar Khan explained that he had been beaten up recently by Taliban. Ten of them had stormed into his house with guns, their faces covered. Humdullah held a shawl over his mouth and nose to demonstrate to us what they looked like. Omar Khan said that the beating had gone on for several hours, and Humdullah pointed to his legs and his side. They had broken several of his ribs, and his legs were bruised and sore. The Taliban wanted to know what the government was planning. They wanted his phones, his guns. When it was over, they blindfolded his younger brother and shoved him into the back of a pickup truck and drove him to another relative's home, where they stole a motorcycle. Omar Khan said that this was all because he was the deputy governor, working for Karzai.

Omar Khan decided that the room in the governor's guesthouse was inadequate, and he took us to the Afghan Development Association office, on the outskirts of Qalat, across the street from the police station. We would be safe there, he said. The Afghan Development Association is a charity funded by the government and the European Union, and is one of only two international aid organizations still operating in Zabul province. The director, Abdul Ghani Tokhi, a quiet man with a long white beard, said that he and his colleagues built irrigation ditches and encouraged local councils to propose other construction projects. Omar Khan and Tokhi concurred about the increasing power of the Taliban. Omar Khan said when the Taliban collapsed, in December, 2001, more than two thousand men came to Qalat ready to work with the government and to fight with Karzai. They stayed for two months or so, but since there was no money for salaries, food, or shoes they returned to their villages. Now, Omar Khan



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said, most of them are with the Taliban.

The new Afghan National Army has the same problem. Yaqub Khan, the deputy commander of the Army in Qalat, said that only two of the forty-two men from Zabul he sent to be trained as professional soldiers are still with him. The other forty have joined the Taliban. "They're illiterate," he said. "They don't know. The Taliban are strong in their areas, and they join them."

The final thirty-one miles of the highway to Kandahar was built by the Japanese government. It's the worst stretch, with a thin layer of asphalt and in some places no new pavement at all. As you approach the city, there is what looks like a hopeful sign for Afghanistan's future. Steel beams peek through the cement girders of a nascent industrial park. A textile mill is being built next door to a new row of shops. But there are also monuments to the past: the rubble of Mullah Omar's elaborate compound, for instance, and the cavernous Eid Gah mosque and madrassa, supposedly commissioned by Osama bin Laden. Deadly bombings are another reminder that Kandahar was the Taliban's capital, and that they haven't gone away. In January, thirteen people were killed, many of them children playing in a soccer field, when a bomb exploded on the eastern edge of the city. Kandahar province, like Zabul, borders Pakistan, which has allegedly been letting Taliban fugitives come and go with impunity.

The province, which is one of the largest poppy-growing areas in Afghanistan, has a new governor, Yusuf Pashtun, who four months ago replaced the corrupt warlord Gul Agha Sherzai. The warlords who have run Afghanistan since the fall of the Taliban finance their private armies and prisons through extortion, theft, and the flourishing drug trade. (Poppy production is more widespread than ever before in Afghanistan, which is, once again, the world's leading producer of opium. The opium trade brought in $2.3 billion last year. The warlords, who are government ministers, military commanders, and regional administrators, receive the bulk of the profits.)

After Gul Agha Sherzai was removed from his job as governor of Kandahar, he was made the urban-affairs minister in Kabul. The new governor, Yusuf Pashtun, wants to make changes, to give people something they will want to protect. "They are apathetic," he says. "They have nothing to lose. No roads, no wells. Give them something to build, something to which they can be attached." For this, of course, one needs security. "It's not so much that the Taliban are in control," Pashtun said to me. "It's that we haven't established an alternative." The government can't get aid to the outlying areas because they are insecure, and they are insecure because no aid is getting to them.

"The situation is reminiscent of what was witnessed after the establishment of the mujahideen government in 1992," Lakhdar Brahimi said in December, shortly before the completion of a two-year stint as the United Nations special envoy to Afghanistan. "The spectacular rise of the Taliban then was a direct result of the hard, unjust, and chaotic rule of the mujahideen rather than due to any enthusiasm for Taliban ideology."

This, of course, is what the Americans have in mind as they deploy the new Provincial Reconstruction Teams. Joseph Collins, at the Defense Department in Washington, explained to me that one couldn't really think about "conflict" and "postconflict" anymore. Instead, you have "War A, followed by War B," which is the stage we are in now. "The complicating factor with War B is carrying out military operations and doing reconstruction work at the same time," Collins said. "But the mix is inevitable." Perhaps. Yet, even if the P.R.T.s manage to build dams and new roads, will people be able to use them freely? "Reconstruction projects may generate some good will, but they won't guarantee security," Vikram Parekh, the analyst at the International Crisis Group, said. "What's required is police training, judicial and civil-service reform, and the disarming of the militias." It's hard to imagine that this sort of rehabilitation will occur in Afghanistan as long as the fighting with the Taliban and Al Qaeda goes on, and unless enough money is available to underwrite more success stories—even relative ones, like the new road between Kabul and Kandahar. What's really needed is a strong national government that works and that can rein in the warlords and government ministers who threaten to turn Afghanistan into a narco state that rivals Colombia. ♦

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BY ANDY BOROWITZ

BAGHDAD—Iraq's US administrator, Paul Bremer, said Thursday that he had been taking daily Arabic language lessons but admitted he was finding it tough going.

"Salam aalekum," Bremer told journalists at the opening of a new press centre in Baghdad, using the Arabic greeting: "May peace be with you."

"I am taking Arabic lessons every day," he continued in Iraqi dialect, but said he found the language "very difficult."

—*Agence France-Presse.*

حتى تعود الكهرباء، هل من مشارك في لعبة التمثيلية التحزيرية؟	"Until the power's back on, anybody for charades?"
سينطلق القطار التالي الى البصرة سنة ٢٠٠٩.	"The next train to Basra will depart in 2009."
لا اسمعك بسبب الهتافات "الموت لاميريكا".	"I can't hear you over all that 'Death to America' chanting."
لا يوجد صابون في غرفتي بالفندق، وكذلك لا سقف ولا حيطان.	"There is no soap in my hotel room; also, no walls or ceiling."
هل ارشدتني على مكان اسلحة الدمار الشامل؟	"Could you please direct me to the weapons of mass destruction?"
يؤسفني سقوط تمثال صدام على بيتك.	"I am sorry that the statue of Saddam fell on your house."
قلت "هولي شيعيت." ماذا ظننت انني قلت؟	"I said, 'Holy Shiite.' What did you think I said?"
ساعطيك طعاما اذا رددت لي الادوات الصحية.	"I'll give you food if you'll give me back my plumbing fixtures."
صدقني فانا ايضا اريد اخراج مؤخرتي الكبيرة من بلادكم.	"Believe me—I, too, want my fat ass out of here."
افضل البيض مقليا وليس مرميا على سيارتي.	"I'd like my eggs fried, not thrown at my car."
لا يهمني ماذا كان لديك في القصر الرئاسي– لن تحصل على مدلكة.	"I don't care what you had at the Presidential Palace—you're not getting a masseuse."
معذرة، هل سمع احد منكم هنا عن احمد شلبي؟	"Excuse me, has anyone here heard of Ahmad Chalabi?"
حاولت تاسيس الديموقراطية في الشرق الاوسط وكل ما حصلت عليه هو هذا التيشرت الحقير.	"I tried to establish democracy in the Middle East and all I got was this lousy T-shirt." ♦

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U.S. JOURNAL

HOMECOMING QUEENS

Revamping a Midwestern tradition.

BY MARK SINGER

OMAHA, NEBRASKA

The most concise explanation I've heard for how and why the art of female impersonation has declined in Omaha was articulated not long ago by Davide Butson, an Omaha native and occasional drag queen who now lives in Hong Kong. "Back in the day," Butson said—he was referring to the late eighties, when he was in his mid-twenties and his career as a glamorous transvestite was ascendant—"people were clamoring for the spotlight. There was a lot of work that went into performing in drag, but it was worth it, because everybody felt it was special. Now you turn on 'Jerry Springer' and there's some drag queen who's sleeping with her father. It's all become so watered down. Before that happened, we owned it. It was ours. Now it's everybody's."

We were seated in the breakfast room of a downtown Omaha hotel a couple of blocks from the Max, a gay bar that, since 1985, has been the site of the Miss Max pageant, an annual event staged on Super Bowl Sunday—a deliberate coincidence of two elaborately conceived male-bonding spectacles. The previous afternoon, Butson had arrived in Omaha accompanied by a new boyfriend and several thousand dollars' worth of dresses and accessories on loan from a Hong Kong salon that sells cross-dressing couture. Butson's drag persona is a slinky six-foot-three-inch (plus six-inch heels) creature named Sable, who reigned as Miss Max in 1987, after which Butson headed to New York, where he lived for more than a decade (before moving to Asia to become the creative director for a publishing firm). His fondest drag memories are of Omaha. "People would drive eight or nine hours to Omaha just to go to the Max on a Saturday night," he said. "It would be packed every weekend, like Studio 54. For a couple of years after my reign ended, I would go back to visit, and when I would walk in people would start chanting my name—'Sable! Sable!' "

Compared with most cities and towns in the Midwest—or, for that matter, in the rest of the country—Omaha has an active gay demimonde that's not so demi. The Max happens to be across the street from the headquarters of the Omaha Police Department, and there are eight or so other gay bars in town, several of which offer occasional drag shows. Generally, these entertainments are exercises in lip-synching and exhibitionist verve; the music varies widely, from country to disco to torch songs, but it is always played at a painfully loud volume. This year, Omaha hosts the annual International Gay Rodeo Association finals, and it is perennially the site of the Heartland Gay Rodeo, the Ice Bowl (an annual tournament affiliated with the International Gay Bowling Organization), and the Closet Ball, sponsored by the Imperial Court of Nebraska, a gay community-support organization. To vie for the title of Miss Closet Ball, a contestant must be making his maiden public appearance in drag. One Miss Closet Ball has gone on to become Miss Max,

"One thing you find out quickly in Omaha is that everybody's a judge," said one drag enthusiast. "You can never wear a dress twice i

and former Miss Maxes have reigned as Miss Gay Omaha, Miss Gay Pride, Miss Heartland Gay Rodeo Association, Miss Ice Bowl, Miss Great Plains Gay America, Miss Gay Nebraska, and Miss Gay Nebraska-at-Large (limited to beauties who are at least six feet tall or weigh at least two hundred pounds). Or, as Don (Stosh) Moran, one of the co-owners of the Max, put it, "There are a lot of tiaras in this town."

Nevertheless, the evidence indicates that in recent years the supply of fresh talent in eastern Nebraska—new performers willing to devote the time, energy, and obsessive attention to detail necessary to elevate transvestism to an art—has diminished (in inverse proportion, perhaps, to the rise in the number of gay bowlers). The case could be made that, as gay culture has become increasingly assimilated into the mainstream, drag's function as a social elixir has waned. "Today, you can go online to find out who's gay in the neighborhood," Butson said. "In the fifties, you would go to the local park. Then it became the bars. The big club scene really isn't needed the way it used to be."

this town." Photograph by Sylvia Plachy.

What drag has in common with certain other art forms is that it invites a preoccupation not only with illusion but with the process of creating that illusion. Of course, beneath the big hair, false eyelashes, makeup, foam padding, panty hose, and evening gown is a man, not a woman. But to focus on a performer's gender somewhat misses the point—drag is about the quest for transformation.

A vestigial devotion to the art and the quest had brought Butson back to the Midwest, a journey that for him signified more than a casual homecoming. It had been four years since he'd worn a dress and high heels in public, but he was willing to emerge from retirement and make a full-regalia guest appearance at the twentieth pageant—as were a dozen other former Miss Maxes—because, frankly, the Miss Max pageant needed a shot in the arm.

The genesis of the Miss Max pageant was a conversation twenty years ago between Steve Koeller (a.k.a. Stella Dallas), who in his non-drag life works in the debt-collection department of an Omaha bank, and Dan Ostergard, an estate liquidator, who told me, "I've never put on a high heel, never donned a wig or a frock, but I've always had many friends who did." Koeller and Ostergard became regular patrons of the Max soon after it opened for business, in a converted taxi garage, in September, 1984. Though Stosh Moran and his partner, Bruce Barnard, the club's co-owner, didn't have a particular interest in drag performance themselves ("I've only been in drag once," Stosh likes to say. "It was for a charity benefit. I did an awesome Cher impersonation, but I kept my mustache"), Koeller and Ostergard correctly surmised that the idea for a Miss Max pageant would be well received, because drag shows meant bigger crowds at the door and a busier cash register.

The production values, everyone agreed, should aim higher than the typical a-song-a-dress-a-wig-and-the-winner-is format. "We decided we wanted to inaugurate a tradition that was more upscale," Koeller said. "So we started talking about the Miss America and Miss Universe pageants, and how they had the costumes, the interviews, the swimsuits, the talent."

"When it came to swimwear," Ostergard added, "rather than judging by the strictest terms—where, say, the Miss America pageant judges really care how the ladies look—we left it so that if

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someone wanted to wear a wetsuit or a barrel, that was allowed."

Otherwise, the standards were explicit and exacting. Unlike the anything-and-everything-goes drag scene in places like New York and San Francisco, the Omaha ideal—as if dictated by an indigenously Midwestern sense of prom-night propriety—was a Miss Max who not only could pass for a real woman but was also entertaining and personable. "We wanted to avoid the same-old same-old," Koeller said. "We really stressed the need for talent. The idea was that if you were Miss Max you presented a total package of entertainment in one person. That's where the prestige of being Miss Max really took hold, how it became so well known in the Midwest. We were looking for quality. We said the evening gown should be floor length and the shoes had to match. If necessary, you had to put in the effort to dye the shoes. How about the color of the hose? The dress—did it fit you well? Did it come off a rack or was it custom-made? Was the hair done right? Was the jewelry a good piece of rhinestone? The eyes—were they done with the dress in mind? Were the nails painted or a French manicure? If you came out in an evening gown that was backless and the judges noticed that you had hair on your back, that would cost you points. We also deducted points for lateness. Very strict on that. The costume had to represent a part of you—who you are, what you stand for, what you think you want to become. And, of course, no drugs, no drinking, no silicone—and, onstage, no bare buttocks, no frontal nudity, no fire, no live animals. And you had to prove you were really a man—so no transsexuals."

For the first several years, there was no shortage of willing contestants—usually eight or ten, occasionally a dozen or more. After one winner, who lived in Lincoln (sixty miles from Omaha), neglected to fulfill her Miss Max responsibilities, a thirty-mile-radius residency rule was invoked. Whether it was this particular stipulation or a perception that the Miss Max standards were excessively rigorous, over time the numbers gradually declined; the 2003 pageant drew only two contestants, down from three the previous year, and five the year before that. Which is what led Dan Ostergard, who has been the pageant director for the past four years, to propose turning the 2004 festivities into a reunion of previous winners. To encourage the Miss Max emeriti to show up, it was decided that the ceremonies shouldn't be limited to Super Bowl Sunday but spread over a four-day weekend. The upside was that a lot of old-school drag queens were given the incentive to return to the spotlight. The downside was that it wasn't a simple matter of rummaging through the closet. "One reason the art of drag is dwindling is because of the expense of being a female impersonator," Koeller said. "And one thing you find out quickly in Omaha is that everybody's a judge. You can never wear a dress twice in this town."

Three days before the pageant finals, I arrived in Omaha wondering why, exactly, I was in Omaha. Why not Des Moines or Duluth or St. Louis? How had a city best known for insurance, beef, and Warren Buffett become the home of a fastidiously choreographed drag-queen bacchanal? When, that evening, I paid my first visit to the Max, I heard many testimonials to the Max as an institution ("friendly people . . . a real sense of community . . . the cleanest bar bathrooms in Nebraska")—encomiums couched in the sort of boosterish language one might expect from a representative of the local Realtors' association. The pageant wasn't just any old drag show, I was told; it had "such prestige that people know about it in Nashville, Kansas City, Iowa, Minnesota, all those places." Likewise, the Max wasn't just a bar; it was a home—habituated by people who regard each other as family. Indeed, the official theme for the weekend was, à la Sister Sledge, "We Are Family." As with most families, the Max and the pageant shared a long and textured history woven with variegated strands of affection, sibling rivalry, self-absorption, and operatic mini-drama.

I was greeted at the door by Dan Ostergard, who led me to a room called Stosh's Saloon—a loftlike space with black walls decorated with homoerotic drawings, a high ceiling rigged with disco lights, a long L-shaped bar flanked by banks of television screens, and lots of chest-high café tables—where a cocktail-party gathering of former Miss Maxes was getting under way. The first people Ostergard introduced me to were Jim G., who, as Gloria Revelle, had been Miss Max No. 5, and the incumbent Miss Max, Domonique Divamoore (né Todd Magdaleno), a short, pudgy brunette

GETTING VALUE

My elderly friend of many years arrived
last winter at my door with his nose
dripping onto the floor, and shaking
so hard you could hear his teeth clatter.
It was hard to get his clothes off
and him into the sofa bed in my living room.
Filling me with memories of what
he used to be. What the French call
"monsters." (Like Rodin.) His poetry is
deeper now. Bigger, and more tender
than ever. We wonder about the newness
of the old. And how much is missing.
He forgets names and directions.
Surely there is a hollowing out,
but how much that is left is more than
the past was? The Shakespeare who stopped
writing. And the crippled Leonardo.
What about our very old god who is
now making his problematical children?

—*Linda Gregg*

who was dressed in a black pants suit. As she hoisted herself up onto a barstool and grimaced slightly, Ostergard asked, "Panty hose biting?"

"No, that's my cincher," Domonique said. "I don't wear panty hose. It's my cincher that helps me maintain my hourglass figure."

Jim G., a six-foot-three-inch, well-fed fellow in his early forties, said that he'd attended all nineteen previous pageants, and had often been involved in the planning. A decade had passed since he was last in drag, but he intended to return to action the next night, when he and the other former Miss Maxes would perform, in an honorary capacity, on the same program with this year's contestants in the costume, swimsuit, and evening-wear competitions.

"Being Miss Max was really one of the best things I've done in my life," Jim said. "During my interview, the judges asked me, 'What do you see when you look in the mirror?' I said, 'I see a six-foot-three-inch man in a dress and a wig and it's hard for me to see anything else. I don't think I'm real and I don't want to be a woman—I just want people to come down on a Sunday night and laugh and have a good time.' I meant that I wanted everyone, for a couple of hours, at least, to forget about their problems, forget about AIDS, forget all that stuff. I tried not to take myself too seriously. And the whole group of Miss Maxes are wonderful, wonderful friends. I'd say I get along with ninety per cent of them."

In that spirit of bonhomie, several other Miss Maxes wandered over during the next hour or so. I met Nos. 2, 4, 10, 12, 13, and 14 (respectively, Veronica O'Rourke, Katrina Kane, Vivian Cartwright, Dietra Snow, Ashley Simone, and Alexandra Stone) and found them to be a gregarious bunch—white guys (with the exception of Ashley, who was African-American) in their thirties and forties, most of whom had grown up in Omaha or found their way there after escaping from small towns on the prairie (Spearfish, South Dakota; Gering, Nebraska; Mead, Nebraska; Minot, North Dakota). They fondly reminisced about Gloria Revelle's jello-wrestling parties and Vivian (the Queen with No Spleen) Cartwright's miraculous recovery after her car accident. They recalled how, after Muffy Rosenberg's house burned down and she lost everything (furniture, wardrobe, wigs, tiara), there was a big fund-raiser at the Max, and Muffy lip-synched "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes."

Seated at an adjacent table, and, by comparison, seeming subdued, was Davide Butson (Sable, Miss Max Three), whom I'd corresponded with by phone and e-mail before coming to Omaha. When we met for breakfast the next morning, he said, "Last night, it was nice to see the old faces, but as a boy I was never one to jump in and be all that chatty. I'm much more at ease when I'm in drag. That persona can be more social—I can flit around, talk to everybody, be witty. Drag gives you that mask. You become somebody else and you don't have to worry about how you come across.

"I don't really know the recent Miss Maxes, but everybody came over and paid their respects, and I appreciated that. I felt like the Old Guard, like an old reigning queen. So I'm looking forward to tonight, although it's also going to be excruciating. I've already started shaving"—though not yet from the neck up; he still had a grunge-look beard—"and I'll shave the beard after breakfast. Around five o'clock, I'll shave again to get a little closer. Then the makeup begins. I use this base called Dermablend, which is for facial disfigurement or scars. Makeup takes about an hour, getting dressed about two hours. I don't need to shave my legs, because I wear two or three pairs of tights and, over that, panty hose. It's very painful, it cuts into your stomach and your hips, but I have to do that because I use foam for my hips, to give a nice shape. One thing I can't stand is a queen who goes out there without hip pads—unless you're a big girl and you can wear a corset. It might look like you have nice legs without the hip pads, but it ruins the illusion. All the elements have to be there. Some queens think they're pretty enough that they don't need so much makeup, but they do. Some don't think they need to pluck their eyebrows, but they do. You'll see tonight."

Heavy snow had fallen in Omaha earlier in the week, another big storm was on the way, and the temperature was refusing to move beyond the single digits—none of which made

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life less challenging for men in swimsuits and high heels. Sable was the first person I recognized when I arrived at the Max Friday evening. She wore a red-and-gold silk jacket, a black G-string and bra, and—with the exception of fake ruby earrings and rhinestone-studded bracelets—not much else. Her mood was animated. "I got here!" she said. "I drove. Totally in drag. It was a bitch, in these heels. By the time I walked from the car to the front door, my shoes were full of snow. But I made it."

We were back in Stosh's Saloon, which had a stage at one end and a crowd capacity of about three hundred. I planned to watch the proceedings from a balcony in the rear. As I headed toward the stairs, Jim G., having transformed himself into Gloria Revelle, a buxom, big-boned brunette in black sequinned pants and a zebra-striped jacket, greeted me. It took me a moment to register who was speaking to me; the last time I'd seen this face, it had a goatee. I asked whether she'd had a busy day, and she said, "I left work at noon, went home, kissed my husband goodbye—he's spending the weekend in Des Moines, because he hates to see me in drag—took a shower, shaved everything you can see, and packed my bags." Gloria interrupted our conversation to say hello to an acquaintance.

"You don't know who I am, do you?" she said.

"No, I don't."

"You'll have to figure it out."

"I still don't know who you are."

"I'll give you a hint: I was Miss Max No. 5."

"I give up."

"One more hint: we had a conversation two weeks ago."

Nothing.

"It's Jim."

"No way! Oh, wow. Bitch, if you'd have stood up I'd have known. Holy shit. This is the first time I've ever seen you in drag."

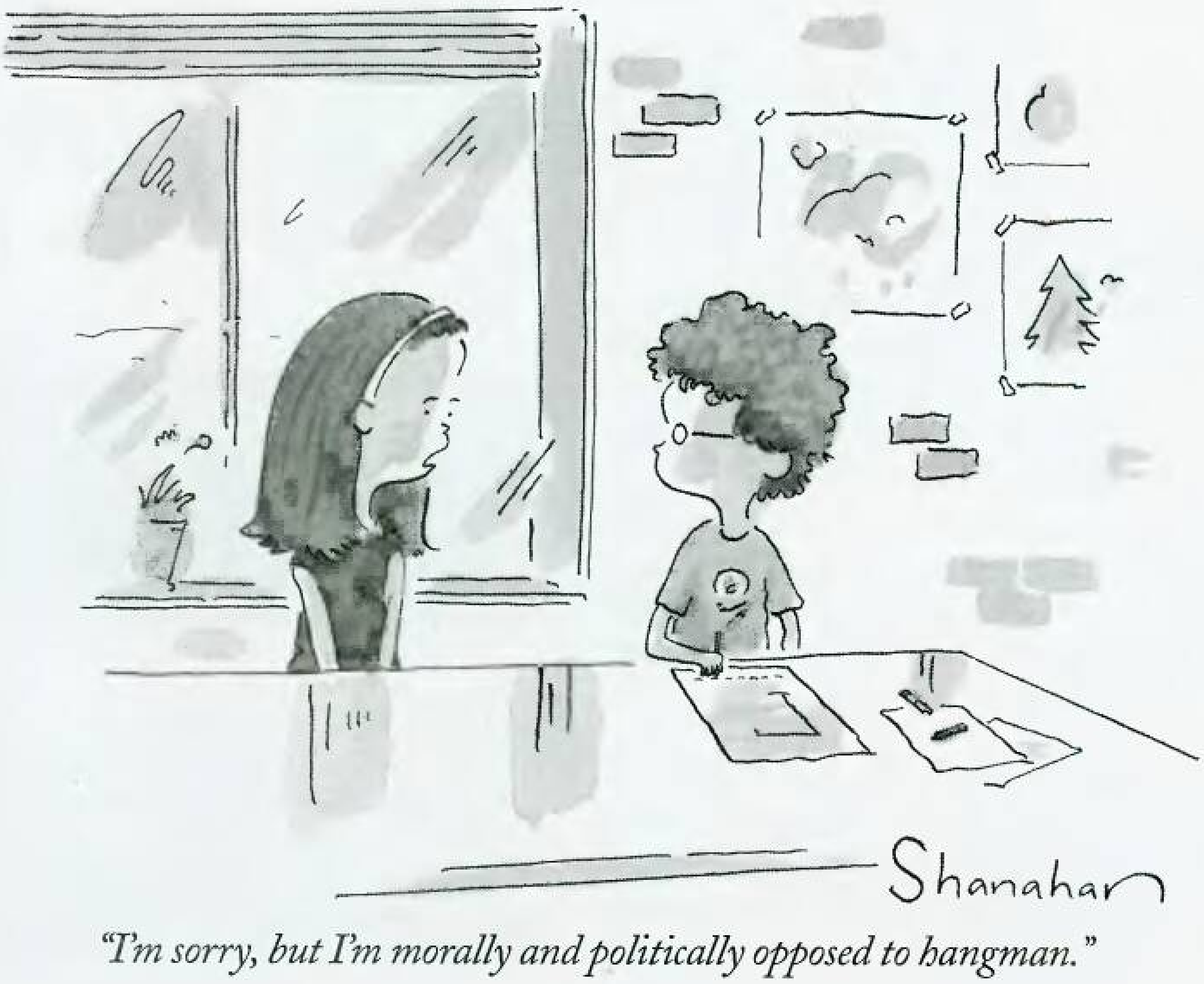
"Yeah, well, it's the first time I've been in drag in ten years."

Sable, who clearly had devoted perfectionist scrutiny to every detail of her performance and appearance—down to the dark-brown blush she'd used to accentuate her cheekbones and narrow the contours of her nose and neck—made the most memorable impression of the night. Her opening number was a Cher song called "Take Me Home," which she lip-synched while wearing a flowing curly black wig topped with a red stewardess's cap, a red-white-and-blue sequinned jacket with beaded epaulets and silver embroidery, and a gladiator-style bottom that draped over an embroidered bustle and crinoline. By the end of the song, the jacket had come off to reveal ruffled lace underwear and a red-and-white ruffled lace bra.

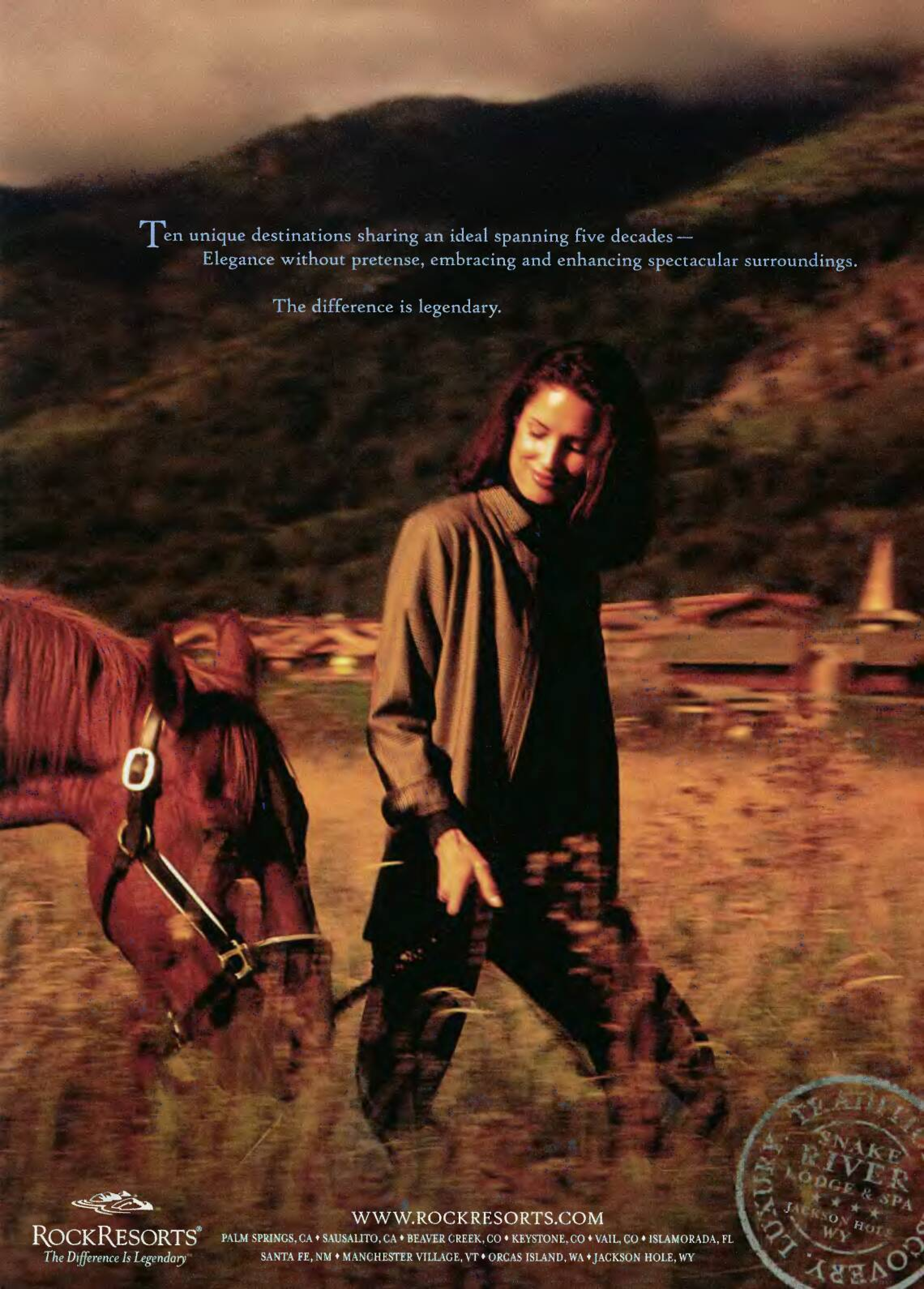
The other showstopper was courtesy of Ashley Simone, Miss Max Thirteen, who came out in a cinnamon wig, a white bathing suit, and a white latex jacket with white fur trim, and danced and lip-synched expertly to an unplayable-on-the-radio techno song by the Lords of Acid called "Pussy (Round)." I was seated in the balcony next to Tom C., the pageant's technical director, who I thought was about to lose control of the spotlight he was operating. "Boy, she is so close to real you almost can't tell," he said. "There's one you could take out to dinner in West Omaha. Wow! Look at that. Everything—she's got it down. She's a graduate—she has a *doctorate*—from the school of drag."

There were only three contestants for Miss Max Twenty—Paige Turner (Michael Toyne), Joyce Symone (John Flowers), and the uninominal Chandler (Daniel Fahrenkrug)—and each took three turns onstage. Tom provided an insightful running commentary. When Paige Turner, a full-figured redhead, appeared during the swimsuit competition in a leopard-print one-piece with a built-in battery attachment that caused her name to appear in lights on her midriff, he said, "She hasn't been doing drag very long. She's got the potential, but she's got to pay her dues. And that's what she's doing now." During the evening-wear competition, Chandler, who is six-seven and last year won the Miss Nebraska-at-Large title, came out in black satin pants and a flame-colored, jewel-encrusted jacket, and Tom said, "She has the most experience, and she can be really classy when she wants to be. She's down here whenever they ask her to be in a show. You ask somebody to do something, she'll show up. She's always been a bridesmaid, never the bride. So her chances are pretty solid."

This was an opinion shared by Chandler herself, a thirty-one-year-old retail-store manager. "To be Miss Max, you have to be dedicated," she told me. "You have to be willing to give up a lot. If they need you—for a drag show, a strip show, some other event where you have to represent the bar—you've got to be available around the clock. Do I think I'm going to win? Yes. Because I'm very confident. I have a big following. I've competed twice



"I'm sorry, but I'm morally and politically opposed to hangman."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before, and each time I haven't won I've taken what the judges said and used it to improve myself. If I don't win, I'll be very upset, because I give my dedication to this bar. And if I do win I'll probably cry."

When I spoke with Paige Turner during a rehearsal the afternoon of the pageant finals (at the time, she wasn't in drag, so, technically, I was having a conversation with Michael Toyne), I discovered that she, too, was quite optimistic and that she also anticipated crying (or fainting) if she won. The third contestant, Joyce Symone, a soft-spoken African-American in her mid-twenties, had a less expectant attitude. "I think winning is a possibility, but most people here have more seniority and I'm just a face out of the blue," she said. "This is basically making a start for myself. I saw the poster for Miss Max Twenty and I said, 'You have the outfits, you have the costumes, the jewelry. You know what you want to do onstage, so why not get started?' "

Shortly after nine o'clock that night, with a crowd-dampening fresh snowstorm blowing outside, the opening musical number—a version of "The Lady Is a Tramp" with custom lyrics ("Valerie Vortex was No. 15 / Her sense of humor was always obscene / We always loved her, we think she is keen / That's why the lady is Miss Max")—got under way, and a procession of former Miss Maxes took the stage. From where I was situated, I could simultaneously watch the pageant and follow the closing minutes of the Super Bowl, which was being shown on a wide-screen TV. As the parade of drag queens in evening gowns began, the New England Patriots were about to score a touchdown, and by the time the song was finished the Carolina Panthers had received a kickoff and marched downfield to the Patriots' fourteen-yard line and were about to tie up the game. Domonique Divamoore came out and lip-synched a disco tune called "Shackles" as the New England quarterback, Tom Brady, completed a pass that put the Pats at the forty-four-yard line, and by time she was finished they were within field-goal range. The crowd at the bar was unanimous in its opinion that Adam Vinatieri, the hero-of-the-occasion placekicker, was a hunk.

Men who preferred a silly old football game to a four-hour-long drag show stayed tuned for the post-game debriefings. I moved to the backstage area, where I spent much of the rest of the evening gleaning illuminating locker-room tips—for instance, how a linebacker-sized drag queen can create the illusion of cleavage (a duct-tape body wrap). I also witnessed Paige Turner's realization that, because her fake breasts had shifted and wound up around her navel during the talent competition (a many-chorused arrangement of "I Enjoy Being a Girl," an old beauty-pageant standard), she probably wasn't going to be crowned Miss Max after all, at least not this time around. Actually, that mishap might not have been the deciding factor, as Chandler had been rehearsing her routine three times a week for a month and a half. She wore a country-print cowgirl shirt and performed with four backup dancers a country-and-Western line dance that combined a polka and a slide-step shuffle. It was a definite crowd-pleaser. Chandler had also been on top of her game during the onstage interview with the judges, cleverly paraphrasing J.F.K.: "It's not what the Max can do for me but what I can bring to and do for the Max."

Finally, at 1:10 A.M., the three contestants, back in their evening gowns, gathered onstage with the former Miss Maxes and held hands as the judges' decisions were announced. Paige Turner won a consolation prize for "best interview" and Joyce Symone was singled out for "onstage presentation," but Chandler prevailed in every other category. She covered her face when she heard her name announced as the winner. Then, holding a bunch of red roses and wearing the "Miss Max XX" sash, she knelt to receive her tiara.

After Chandler had stopped crying, I asked her whether she had known she was going to win. "Not really," she said. "After the interview, I thought Paige had me. And our talents, I heard, were very close." She sounded like a Miss America; even in the glow of victory, she had remembered to compliment the other girls. "I'm just so shocked and excited. And I'm looking forward to telling my mom." ♦

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ANNALS OF LAW

A BAD THING

Why did Martha Stewart lose?

BY JEFFREY TOOBIN

The cult of the chief executive reached its apogee in the nineteen-nineties, a period when C.E.O.s seemed not so much to serve their companies as to embody them. Certainly, there was a Time Warner independent of Gerald Levin, and Disney and General Electric existed beyond Michael Eisner and Jack Welch. Yet these executives, and others like them, were compensated as if they single-handedly controlled the fates of their companies. In the late eighties, a seven-figure salary was a lot to pay a C.E.O.; by the late nineties, nine-figure fortunes were routine. The chairman of General Motors, for example, made five hundred and seventy-five thousand dollars in base salary in 1991 and just over two million in 2000. Michael Ovitz, at Disney, got a severance package worth somewhere between ninety and a hundred and thirty million dollars. But how much difference did most of these executives make? They took credit when the nation's economy made almost every business leader look good, and they blamed the fates when times turned hard. Many were, in essence, lavishly paid bureaucrats—caretakers more than creators.

Then, there was Martha Stewart. There was a cult around her, too, but for different reasons. Unlike most of the famous C.E.O.s of the period, she built her company, Martha Stewart Living Omnimedia, from scratch, and, unlike virtually anyone else, she herself was in many ways its singular product. (Jeff Bezos created Amazon.com, but it sold books and other merchandise.) The challenge for Martha Stewart Living Omnimedia was to define itself as something other than its leader's corporate alter ego. When I visited Stewart at her house in Westport, Connecticut, last year, she talked about her importance to the magazine, *Martha Stewart Living*, saying, "This is me, O.K., me, one hundred per cent." Sharing credit does not come naturally to her, but she said that she was trying to be less dominant in the company—to turn it into an institution. Her role model was Ralph Lauren. "When you see Polo, you don't see Ralph Lauren," she said. But when people saw Stewart's company, which at its peak employed more than six hundred people, they saw Martha Stewart. Besides, the company seemed to exist more to serve its founder than the other way around. She was surrounded by people whose jobs were to anticipate and meet her every need. At Stewart's trial, which featured testimony from several of her courtiers, her bookkeeper, Heidi DeLuca, said that she was employed by the company but that her duties included maintaining Stewart's personal checkbook, paying her bills—such as health, life, and automobile insurance—and overseeing the payroll for her personal staff of between thirty and forty people. (Stewart reimbursed the company for a portion of DeLuca's salary.)

Stewart's sale of 3,928 shares of stock in the biotech company ImClone, on December 27, 2001, and the legal disaster it led to, is in many ways a story of her support system in action. At every stage—from the transaction to the investigation by the Securities and Exchange Commission and the F.B.I. to, finally, her criminal trial—people mobilized to help her: assistants, brokers, lawyers, even other celebrities. Yet the more they tried to help, the more excruciating Stewart's problems became. With the guidance of her entourage, she invariably made the wrong decisions, and the result was humiliation and conviction. On March 5th, a jury in United States District Court in New York found Stewart guilty of all four charges against her: conspiracy, obstruction of justice, and two counts of making false statements. Her co-defendant, the stockbroker Peter Bacanovic, was convicted of four counts, too: conspiracy, perjury, obstruction of justice, and making a false statement.

On the scale of highly publicized misdeeds in the past decade, Stewart's trade must rank among the most trivial. She netted only about fifty thousand dollars more on the deal than if she'd held the stock for another day, and, as she told me, her ImClone holding constituted .03 per cent of her assets. It seems almost implausible that such a misstep could send Stewart to prison and lead her company to ruin—and that this happened with the help of the best and most loyal people that money could buy.

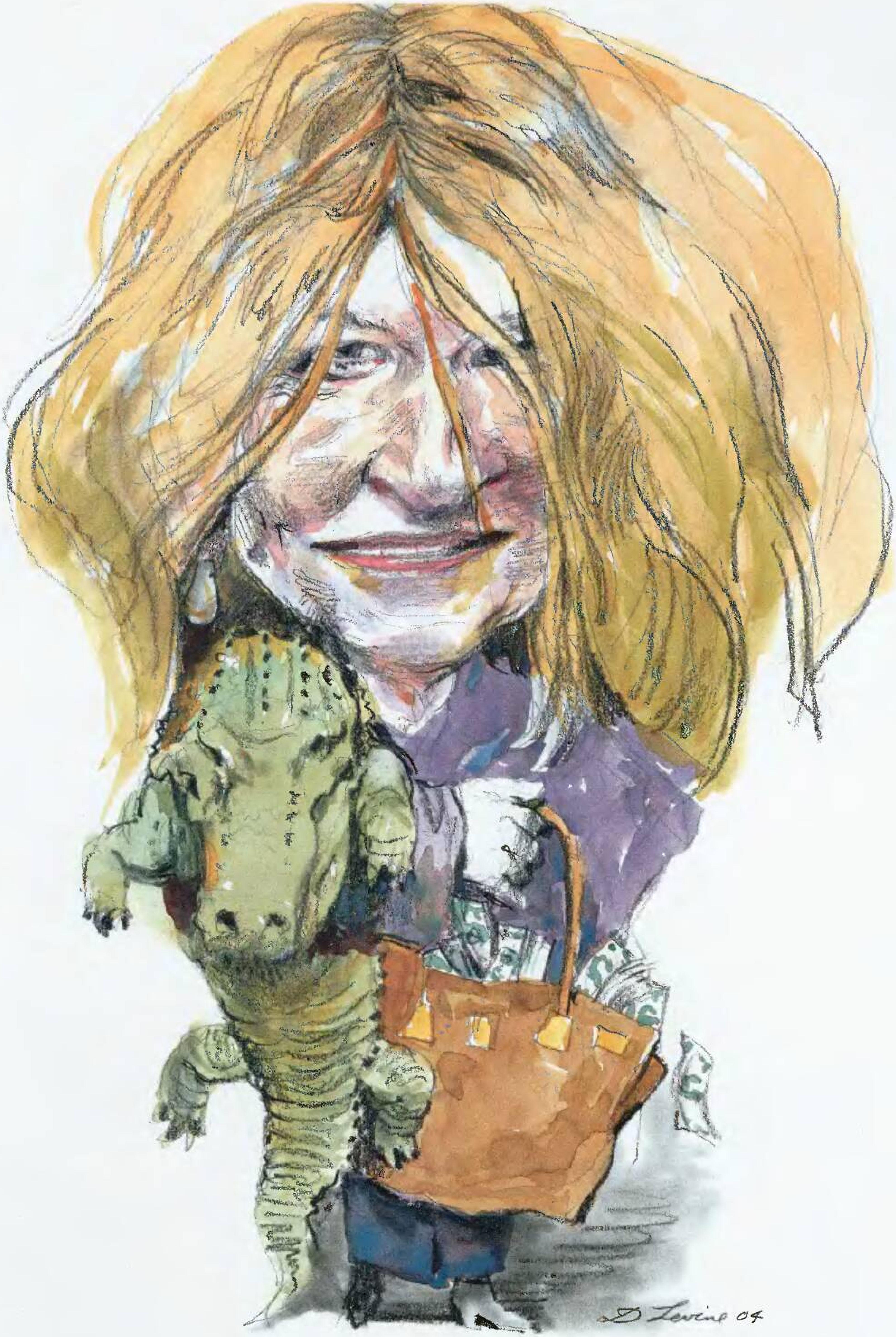
Peter Bacanovic, Stewart's broker at Merrill Lynch, was, like almost everyone else, just trying to keep Martha Stewart happy. On December 27, 2001, while he was on vacation in Florida, he heard from his assistant, Douglas Faneuil, that another of his clients, Sam Waksal, the chairman of ImClone, was trying to get rid of virtually all his own and his family's stock in the company. Bacanovic knew that Stewart owned ImClone stock—Stewart and Waksal were close friends—and he told Faneuil to call her and let her know.

What motivated Bacanovic? The decision to let Stewart know about Waksal's sale was, at the very least, a violation of Merrill Lynch policy; at worst, it was a felony—a violation of insider-trading rules. Stewart hadn't asked for the information. Why take such a risk on her behalf? (The government ultimately conceded that neither Bacanovic's tip nor Stewart's stock sale amounted to a crime. It was lying to the authorities about the transaction that brought them to trial.)

Bacanovic grew up in New York. His mother, an anesthesiologist, was born in

DAVID LEVINE

Stewart always yelled at underlings, Stewart's attorney Robert Morvillo explained. It wasn't bad—it was just part of her style.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Greece, and his father, a mid-level banker, came from Serbia. Peter went to the Lycée Français, a private school on Manhattan's East Side, then to Columbia (where he became friends with Stewart's daughter, Alexis), and, finally, to New York University's business school, from which he graduated in 1988. He bounced around for several years—working in the mailroom at the William Morris Agency in Los Angeles and, for a time, as a banker in Switzerland for the corporate raider Asher Edelman. He then took a marketing job at ImClone, where he met Waksal, but he left in 1992 to work as a broker at Merrill Lynch. There, for the first time, he thrived. He was, by all accounts, proficient at the job, but he excelled particularly at the social side of it. He was attractive, he followed the cultural scene, and, as a bachelor, he made a perfect extra man at dinner parties.

Martha Stewart may not have been Bacanovic's biggest investor, but the cachet of being her stockbroker was considerable. Although Bacanovic didn't testify at the trial, a tape-recorded interview he had with the S.E.C. was played, and there was a noticeable tone of starchy pride in his voice. "I do not discuss other clients' affairs with other clients," he said at one point. He sounded irritated—shocked—that someone would suggest otherwise. "I did not get to be a first vice-president of Merrill Lynch by discussing other people's business and by being indiscreet," he said. Stewart was demanding of Bacanovic, as she was of everyone in her life. "This is someone who gets irascible," he said of her in the interview. In late 2000, when the market started to sour, she e-mailed him, "I think it's time for me to give my money to a professional money manager who will watch it when I am too busy and will take a bit more care about overall market conditions and political and economic problems. We have just watched the slide and done nothing and I'm none too happy." She didn't withdraw her account then, but the message was clear.

By the time of the ImClone transaction, Bacanovic was even more vulnerable. In 2000, according to his S.E.C. testimony, he had made about five hundred and forty thousand dollars at Merrill Lynch. The following year, his income fell to about three hundred and fifty thousand, and the September 11th attacks made prospects for a turnaround appear bleak. His assistant, Faneuil, testified about waking Bacanovic up in Florida on the morning of December 27th and giving him the ImClone news. "Oh, my God," he told Faneuil, "get Martha on the phone." Faneuil, who reached Stewart while she was en route to a vacation in Mexico, passed along the word that the Waksals were selling, and she authorized the sale of her own shares.

"Can I get you anyone?"

Stewart's trades that day were small compared with Sam Waksal's. After learning that the Food and Drug Administration was going to reject ImClone's most important product, a cancer drug called Erbitux, Waksal tried to move 79,797 shares to his daughter Aliza's account through Bacanovic; Aliza herself sold 39,472 shares; his other daughter, Elana, sold 3,014. Waksal's father sold 135,000 shares, and his sister sold 1,336. Not surprisingly, in light of the F.D.A.'s decision, which was announced the following day, the Waksals' sales drew the attention of an internal auditor at Merrill Lynch, who asked to see Bacanovic as soon as he got back from Florida. The auditor, Brian Schimpfhauser, also noticed Stewart's sale of ImClone, and, he later testified, "that made me kind of suspicious."

A small problem now started to get bigger. Bacanovic had to come up with an explanation for why Stewart had sold at the same time as the Waksals. When Faneuil saw him after the New Year, Bacanovic first said that Stewart had sold ImClone as part of an end-of-year practice called "tax loss selling." But that made no sense, because she had sold at a profit. So Bacanovic decided to tell the investigators that he and Stewart had a preëxisting agreement to sell her ImClone stock when the price reached sixty dollars a share, which it did on December 27th.

For a while, it looked as though this story might hold. Merrill Lynch had referred the Waksal case to the S.E.C., and the government's investigators were putting together an easy insider-trading case against him. Because of the focus on the Waksal case, investigators were most concerned with whether he had tipped Stewart or anyone else about the imminent F.D.A. decision on Erbitux. Since Waksal himself hadn't told Stewart, she had every reason to think she had no problem. On January 16, 2002, Bacanovic and Stewart met for breakfast, and it's probable that they discussed the burgeoning investigation of the ImClone sales—and their possible culpability. Within a week, Stewart had decided to hire a criminal-defense attorney.

OUR LADY OF MEL GIBSON
mstevens

When Martha Stewart Living Omnimedia went public, in 1999, the company used the law firm of Wachtell, Lipton, Rosen & Katz for corporate work. Wachtell, Lipton is smaller than many of the better-known firms in the city, but it has the highest profits per partner of any law firm in the nation—on average, more than three million dollars a year. Lawyers there tend to be brilliant and arrogant; typical among them is John Savarese, the lawyer whom Stewart hired in January, 2002. Like Bacanovic, Savarese is good-looking and socially prominent. He had earlier been a prosecutor in Manhattan, and in 1986 he helped convict the reigning bosses of the city's five Mafia families. (Just before that trial, I worked for him as a summer intern.)

On January 25th, Michael Schachter, the Assistant U.S. Attorney in charge of the Waksal investigation, spoke to Savarese and asked to interview Stewart about the ImClone sale. Savarese had to evaluate this request in a transformed legal landscape of white-collar criminal law. Even before the Enron scandal, which was just then unfolding, the Justice Department and the S.E.C. had been placing tremendous pressure on corporate executives to coöperate with their investigations. The S.E.C., and even private auditors, might hesitate to certify the financial statements of a company headed by someone who wouldn't coöperate. A directive to prosecutors from Deputy Attorney General Larry D. Thompson suggested that companies should pressure senior employees to testify rather than refuse to answer on Fifth Amendment grounds.

Stewart was travelling a lot in late January, so there wasn't much time for her to talk to Savarese, but she seemed nonchalant about the prospect of sitting down with Schachter and his colleagues. She and Savarese tentatively agreed to meet with the prosecutors on February 4th. "There was a lot of pressure, including from Martha, that she go in there and show she had nothing to hide," one person close to the Stewart camp says. "All she thought they wanted to talk about was whether Waksal himself had tipped her about the F.D.A. decision. She knew she was in the clear on that one."

On January 31st, something happened that should have signalled the magnitude of the risk of letting the government question Stewart. Around five in the afternoon, Stewart and Savarese spoke for half an hour on the telephone. When Stewart hung up, she asked her secretary, Ann Armstrong, to call up her computer's phone log for December 26th through January 7th. As Armstrong later testified at Stewart's trial, Stewart examined the messages and noted the one from Bacanovic on December 27th, which read, "Peter Bacanovic thinks ImClone is going to start trading downward." Armstrong described what happened next: "Martha saw the message from Peter, and she instantly took the mouse and she put the cursor at the end of the sentence, and she highlighted it back up to the end of Peter's name, and then she started typing over it." She changed the message to "Peter Bacanovic re imclone."

Stewart then had second thoughts, Armstrong continued. "She instantly stood up, and still standing at my desk, she told me to put it back. 'Put it back the way it was.' She walked back to her office door, and by the time she got to her office door she asked me to get her son-in-law on the phone." Alexis's husband, John Cuti, was a litigator who sometimes worked for Stewart and her company. He said to Armstrong, who became increasingly upset, "Stop in your tracks," and told her not to change anything else. When Armstrong got home that evening, Stewart called and asked if she had been able to restore the message. Ultimately, with the help of a friend, Armstrong was able to find the original message and fax a copy to Savarese. The next morning, Stewart left for a quick trip to Germany, which would get her back just before her interview at the U.S. Attorney's office.

Cuti told Savarese about the altering of the document, which suggested that Stewart was worried about the appearance, at least, of the ImClone transaction, if not the legality of her actions. But she was out of the country, and there was no way to get her ready for the interview. To make matters worse, Savarese had not gone over her phone logs with her.

Savarese could have delayed Stewart's appearance. He could have gathered all the relevant documents and forced her to test her recollections against the physical evidence. "It's not easy telling someone like Martha Stewart to take the Fifth," a lawyer inside the Stewart camp says. "She would have gone ballistic." Instead, Savarese sent into the hands of prosecutors an underprepared witness, who may not have told him the whole story, and who had already tried to doctor evidence in the case. "What Savarese did was an unbelievable disaster," another person in the defense camp told me.

On February 4th, only four days after the incident at Armstrong's desk, Savarese and an inexperienced associate at Wachtell, Lipton accompanied Stewart to her interview at the U.S. Attorney's office in Manhattan. Confident that she could truthfully refute the charge that Waksal himself had tipped her, Stewart told investigators the fabricated story about the preëxisting agreement to sell ImClone at sixty. Worse, Savarese allowed a second interrogation, on April 10th, during which Stewart again lied about the sixty-dollar agreement and asserted, falsely, that she couldn't remember whether she was told on December 27th that the Waksals were selling. To be sure, it was Stewart, not her lawyer, who lied to the investigators, but Savarese had allowed his client to take an immense legal risk.

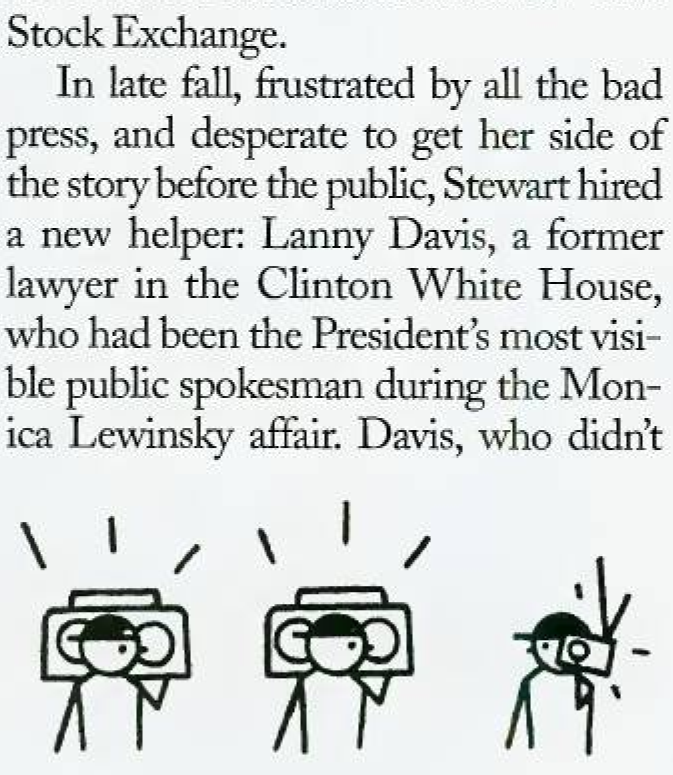
INSOMNIAC

I raise my head off the pillow and study
the half-frosted windows and the clock
with its reluctant to tumble robotic digits
to check on how the night is proceeding.
By the clock's green glow and the light
of the last quarter moon the snow
shines up into our bedroom, I see
that the half of the oceanic comforter
apportioned to her side of the bed
lies completely flat. The words
of the shepherd in "Tristan," "Waste
and empty the sea," come to me.
Where is she? Sprouting in the furrow
where the comforter overlaps her pillow
is a hank of brown hair—she's here, sleeping
somewhere down in the dark underneath.
And now in her sleep she rotates herself
a quarter turn—from strewn all unfolded
on her back to bunched in a bulky Z
on her side, with her back to me.

Savarese may not have realized how big a target Stewart had become, but Republicans in the House of Representatives did. In early June, 2002, the Energy and Commerce Committee, which had been examining Waksal's role at ImClone, decided to investigate possible insider trading by Stewart. Later that month, as the investigation continued to grow, Douglas Faneuil walked into the U.S. Attorney's office and made a deal: he admitted his role in the coverup and pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor. On June 13th, the F.B.I. arrested Sam Waksal on charges of insider trading. (Waksal eventually agreed to plead guilty to the insider-trading charges and also to obstruction of justice and tax fraud, among other charges. He is currently serving a seven-year federal sentence. As part of the bargain, his relatives avoided criminal prosecution.) On June 21st, Merrill Lynch suspended Bacanovic.

During the summer of 2002, leaks from Congress kept the Stewart story in the news—especially the tabloids, which saw Stewart as a perfect subject. Stewart's only public discussion of her predicament came during an embarrassing appearance on the CBS "Early Show" on June 25th. She was conducting one of her regular cooking segments and, with a large knife, was chopping a head of cabbage. "I think this will all be resolved in the very near future and I will be exonerated of any ridiculousness," Stewart told the show's co-host, Jane Clayson, when she was asked about the story. "I want to focus on my salad, because that's why we're here." Stewart stopped appearing on the show, because her lawyers, who now included the high-profile defense lawyer Robert Morvillo, as well as the Wachtell, Lipton team, didn't want her to answer questions, and CBS vowed to pursue the issue. On October 3rd, with pressure from the investigation increasing, Stewart resigned as a member of the board of the New York Stock Exchange.

In late fall, frustrated by all the bad press, and desperate to get her side of the story before the public, Stewart hired a new helper: Lanny Davis, a former lawyer in the Clinton White House, who had been the President's most visible public spokesman during the Monica Lewinsky affair. Davis, who didn't believe in the conventional wisdom that criminal suspects should remain silent in public, offered me an interview in which Stewart would speak about the case publicly for the first time.



On a frigid Sunday afternoon in January, 2003, I drove to Stewart's restored 1805 farmhouse, known as Turkey Hill. We had never met before. She seemed strangely nervous for a public figure, and I soon realized why: she had hired Davis, and arranged for this interview, without telling Morvillo or Savarese. (A couple of days before the article appeared, Savarese called and implored me to tell him what his client had said. I was also subpoenaed by the S.E.C. for my tape of the interview; when I declined to produce it, the agency dropped the matter.)

It was a peculiar afternoon. Stewart was obviously infuriated by the experience of being investigated, yet she never came out and said so. "My public image has been one of trustworthiness, of being a fine, fine editor, a fine purveyor of historic and contemporary information for the homemaker," she told me as we ate an almost comically elaborate Chinese lunch prepared by her chef, Lily. "My business is about homemaking. And that I have been turned into, or vilified openly as, something other than what I really am

I squirm closer, taking care not to
break into the immensity of her sleep,
and lie absorbing the astounding
quantity of heat a slender body
ovens up around itself, when need be.
Now her slow, purring, sometimes snorish,
perfectly intelligible sleeping sounds
abruptly stop. A leg darts back
and hooks my ankle with its foot
and draws me closer still. Soon
her sleeping sounds resume, telling me,
“Come, press against me, yes, like that,
put your right elbow on my hip bone, perfect,
and your right hand at my breasts, yes, that’s it,
now your left arm, which has become extra,
stow it somewhere out of the way, good.
Entangled with each other so, unsleeping one,
together we will outsleep the night.”

—*Galway Kinnell*

has been really confusing.” Davis’s team provided me with a summary of the ImClone trade from Stewart’s perspective. As I later learned, that version of the facts had crucial omissions.

By this time, prosecutors were talking to Douglas Faneuil and weighing the question of whether to indict Stewart. My article certainly didn’t help; rather, it let the prosecutors know that she was sticking with her original story—that she got rid of her ImClone stock pursuant to a preëxisting agreement to sell at sixty.

Stewart got one last chance to avoid prison. In the spring of 2003, Stewart’s lawyers were expecting an indictment in the first week of June; as a result, they entered plea negotiations on her behalf. On Sunday, June 1st, Stewart went to the Wachtell, Lipton offices, on West Fifty-second Street, to decide whether to accept a deal that Savarese and his partner Larry Pedowitz had worked out. Stewart would plead guilty to a single felony: making a false statement to federal agents. The agreed-upon sentencing guidelines would make probation or house arrest likely, although there was no guarantee that Stewart would avoid prison. Also, under this arrangement Stewart wouldn’t have to cooperate with prosecutors or give a proffer—an advance preview—of what she was going to say. During a speakerphone conversation with Stewart, Karen Patton Seymour, the chief of the criminal division of the U.S. Attorney’s office, and her colleague Richard Owens narrowed the issues down to this: Would Stewart admit that she had lied to the investigators? In the end, late Sunday night, Stewart decided that she couldn’t do it.

On Monday, Stewart and her defense team reassembled at Morvillo’s office, and continued to discuss the deal. Morvillo is sixty-five years old, three years older than Stewart, and she seemed to regard him not only as a lawyer but as a peer. He has been at or near the top of the white-collar-criminal-defense bar for three decades, and is, in a way, as prominent in his field as she is in hers. His firm of thirty-six lawyers is prosperous, but its offices, on two floors at Fifth Avenue and Forty-sixth Street, haven’t the splendor found at those of Wachtell, Lipton. And while Morvillo’s own office—cluttered with shabby baseball souvenirs and yellowing files from old cases—may have been a Martha Stewart nightmare, Stewart and Morvillo seemed to have a kinship as people who were self-made.

According to someone at the meeting, Morvillo, Savarese, and Pedowitz all told Stewart that she would never get a better deal. A trial was a risk. No doubt a felony plea would complicate her role at her company, but the alternative—indictment, trial, and possible conviction of multiple felonies—was far worse. But again Stewart said that she couldn’t do it. A grand jury indicted her two days later.

In a note to readers in the March, 2004, issue of *Martha Stewart Living*—the issue that was on newsstands when the testimony in her trial began—Stewart described the period leading up to the trial this way: “For the past several months, I have been happily immersed in scores of wonderfully written and beautifully illustrated garden catalogues.” The trilling adverbs are a touchstone of Stewart’s style. There was defiance in that “happily,” too—Stewart’s insistence that not even the power of the United States government could prevent her from extracting the soil’s bounty.

In a way, the prosecutors were no more pleased than Stewart’s team that the case had reached this point. By the day of opening statements, January 27th, the case had been reduced to a limited set of charges. The prosecution’s one attempt to broaden the case, by charging Stewart with securities fraud—on the theory that she was lying in order to inflate the value of her own company—looked dubious from the start. (Judge Miriam Goldman Cedarbaum, who presided over the trial, threw out that count before the jury could consider it.) Defenders of Stewart, and others, questioned whether a case based solely on her statements to federal agents merited such a major effort by the government—especially since she was accused of lying about something that wasn’t a crime. But the prosecutors felt that they had given Stewart two chances to tell the truth, then offered her what they considered a generous plea bargain. “We had no desire to prosecute this woman,” one investigator in the case told me. “But this was fairly egregious lying, worse than just asserting her innocence. She concocted a whole story, and we had to follow up to confirm or dispel it.” Another government official said to me, “What were we supposed to do? Just walk away?”

Karen Patton Seymour and Michael

Schachter, the prosecutors in the trial, were shrewd choices for the government in a case in which the defense was certain at least to suggest that the prosecution amounted to a government vendetta against a prominent person—and a particular kind of celebrity. Schachter, who is thirty-four, and who looked like Seymour's nerdy kid brother, barely changed his expression (or his boxy gray suit) during the entire trial. Seymour, who left a lucrative partnership at Sullivan & Cromwell to go to the U.S. Attorney's office, also came across as more thoughtful than passionate. (The magnitude of her financial sacrifice shouldn't be overstated; her husband is a partner at Sullivan.)

Morvillo, who has spent almost forty years in the courtroom, rarely tries cases anymore, preferring to use his blustering style to negotiate with (or browbeat) the city's prosecutors. He is not physically prepossessing; he has a greasy comb-over, a second chin bigger than his first, and a stomach that defies expensive tailoring, and he isn't a young sixty-five. Nevertheless, he had a commanding and wry manner in court, beginning his opening statement with a boast: "I tend to have a louder voice, so it should prevent you from dozing off." No one slept.

Still, the language of Morvillo's opening showed how weak a case his client had left him. There was no "direct" evidence against Stewart, he declared; her statements were not "deliberately" false. As Stewart herself had done when she and Savarese spoke with investigators almost two years earlier, Morvillo tried to shift attention to a subject more to his liking: the government investigation to determine whether Waksal had personally tipped Stewart about the bad news to come from the F.D.A. "Martha Stewart went to that meeting thinking that she had to convince the government that she was not tipped by Sam Waksal—that was her focus," Morvillo said. Even the government acknowledged that Waksal had not done that.

One passage in Morvillo's opening had an unexpected poignancy. He plainly knew little about Stewart's career or her business, but he did feel an obligation to try to give the jury a sense of who she was. "Martha Stewart initiated a catering business which by virtue of sixteen-hour days, fierce desire to put forward the best possible product, whether it deals with flowers, fixtures, food, furniture, expanded into a successful multimedia corporation run predominantly by women with similar goals and ideas and skills," Morvillo said. "Martha Stewart has devoted most of her life to improving the quality of life for others." He went on, "And because she stressed the notion of making things as good and as perfect as possible, she has often been ridiculed and parodied."

In the five weeks of the trial, these were the only words that addressed Stewart's accomplishments. Morvillo was right. Stewart did create a thriving business that allowed and encouraged its customers, mostly women, to improve their daily lives. Because of the trial, of course, that empire began to fall apart.

The rhythms of the trial, which took place in Room 110 of the federal courthouse in Foley Square, never varied. Stewart's S.U.V. arrived shortly before nine-thirty each morning, and the dozen or so photographers camped outside the courthouse got their arrival shots and then disappeared. Stewart and her bodyguard were excused from waiting in line for the front-door metal detector, but they did have to pass through it. From there, I saw them go to a fourth-floor war room, where, every morning, the team assembled. The group included Morvillo, three other lawyers (and assorted paralegals) from his firm, and John Cuti, Stewart's son-in-law. (Later each morning, a catered lunch was delivered for the group.) Alexis Stewart attended almost every day, and sat directly behind her mother, in the first row of spectator seats. The Stewart table was stocked with Evian water and bottled green tea from Japan. Compared with the Stewart entourage, the prosecutors and Peter Bacanovic's team (of three lawyers) drew little notice.

In a courtroom that had been the venue for many cases about organized-crime families, this case may have been the first about a clique. Few words were used more often than "friend"—a term that had a flexible definition. Bacanovic, Douglas Faneuil said, told him that he and Stewart "are close, we are very close friends and extremely loyal to one another," although Bacanovic wasn't

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ONSTAGE
BY RICHARD AVEDON

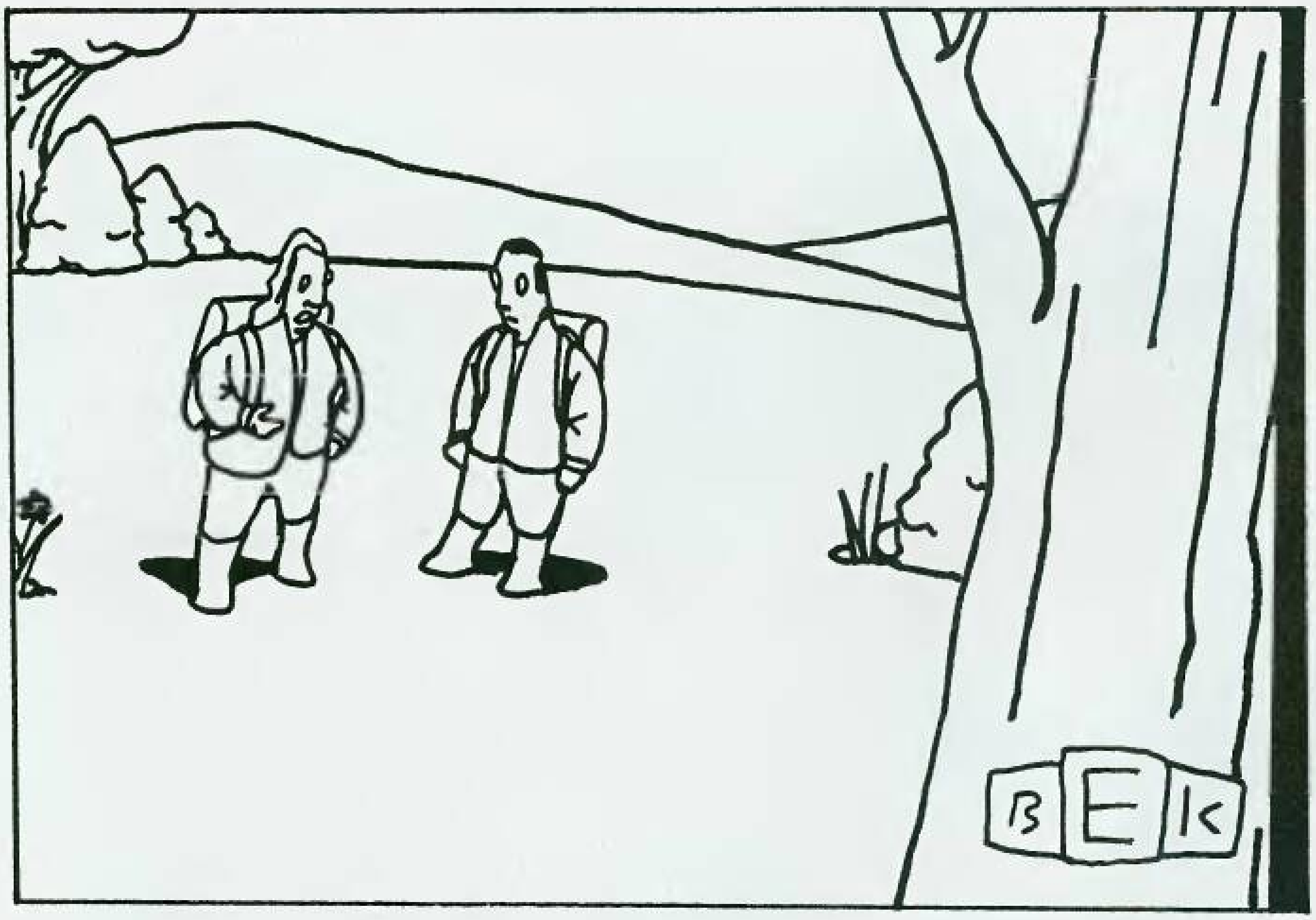
MEISTERSINGER

In a vocal category associated with ancient priests and irate giants, René Pape is an operatic rarity: the bass as romantic hero. Though it does no harm that Pape is young and appealing—goofy posing aside—his seductiveness derives from a voice that combines dark power with uncanny lyric grace, and from performances of intense emotional conviction. In recent Metropolitan Opera seasons, his noble portrayal of King Marke in "Tristan und Isolde" made the soprano's preference for the tenor seem sheer folly. When he took on the weary old knight Gurnemanz, in "Parsifal," a role that depends on lengthy narrative exposition, the rich colors of his voice—its blackest depths are tinted green and gold—turned declamation into song.

Pape, a native of Dresden, first came to the Met in 1995, and has been returning every season to expand his repertory before a frankly possessive New York audience. He has just recorded a rock-based song cycle by Torsten Rasch, but he made a far more exciting début singing Schubert in Carnegie Hall. Sharing the stage with three colleagues and accompanied by James Levine, Pape presented lieder's lonely wanderers and heart-sore poets with a simple truthfulness that changing styles in music or in sentiment cannot touch.

Pape is currently appearing at the Met as Don Giovanni's sidekick, Leporello, crashing into walls and completing a bout of pure Mozartean singing with an expert "Feet, do your stuff" vaudeville exit. He breaks through the heartless merriment, though, when he attempts to console the Don's betrayed lover, Donna Elvira. For a moment, the grave beauty of Pape's voice fills the theatre with compassion, warmth, and wisdom—all unheeded by the lady, of course, but drunk in by the audience like a shot of brandy on a cold, dark night.

—*Claudia Roth Pierpont*



"What about here? This looks like a good spot for an argument."

close enough to attend Stewart's annual Christmas dinner, at Chanterelle. (As for his own relationship with Bacanovic, Faneuil said, "I didn't consider us to be friends, but we did—we did things socially.") Heidi DeLuca, Stewart's bookkeeper, called her a "friend," but said that they never socialized. Sam Waksal, who is fifty-six, was at the center of the clique. Bacanovic had worked for Waksal at ImClone, and Alexis, who is thirty-eight, had dated Waksal for years. Waksal and Stewart were close friends who travelled together and spoke often. (For all his excesses, Waksal did truly believe in Erbitux, and it appears that his faith was justified. It was, of course, the F.D.A.'s rejection of Erbitux in late 2001 that set in motion the events leading to the criminal case. But ImClone kept working on the drug, and on February 12th, in the middle of Stewart's trial, the F.D.A. finally gave its approval for Erbitux to be used in treating advanced colon cancer.)

It was clear from the start that if the government was going to win its case it would be because the jury believed Douglas Faneuil. In court, Faneuil, now twenty-eight, looked like a gawky child who had borrowed his father's best suit. When he inched his chair toward the microphone in the witness box, his knees banged against the front of it. "My knees are long," he told Judge Cedarbaum.

"Did there come a time when you were working at Merrill Lynch that you did something illegal?" Seymour asked him.

"Yes."

"What did you do, briefly?"

"I told one client about what another client was doing in his account and then lied to cover it up." Faneuil's manner combined a studied meekness with a showy regard for the truth. Gravely, he noted that there was an "inaccuracy" in the résumé he submitted to Merrill Lynch, saying, "I wrote that my grade-point average was 3.5, when in fact the number was actually 3.44."

The most damaging moment in Faneuil's testimony was his account of his workday on December 27, 2001. He had been Bacanovic's assistant for just six months, but the day's events turned on him. Throughout the trial, there was a fairly straightforward class division between people who, like Faneuil and Schimpfhauser, had to show up for work between Christmas and New Year's, and those who, like Stewart and Bacanovic, left town. Shortly after Faneuil arrived on the morning of the twenty-seventh, the sell orders from the Waksal family came in, and early that afternoon, as Bacanovic had insisted, Faneuil and Stewart finally spoke. "Immediately she said, 'Hi, this is Martha, what's up with Sam?' " Faneuil recounted. "So I said, 'Well, we have no news on the company, but Peter thought you might like to act on the information that Sam Waksal was trying to sell all of his shares.' At that point, I may have mentioned Waksal's daughters as well, I'm not sure."

Morvillo objected, saying that Faneuil shouldn't testify if he wasn't "sure." Given the opportunity, Faneuil made it worse for Stewart. "I'm confident saying with one-hundred-per-cent surety that I told her that Sam was trying to sell," he said. "I'll leave it at that."

Everyone thought that Morvillo's cross-examination of Faneuil would be the most important confrontation of the case, but, as it happened, the crucial turning point had nothing to do with him.

Through the early part of the trial, Peter Bacanovic's lawyers generally deferred to Morvillo, much as their client did to Stewart. Bacanovic's lead lawyer, Richard Strassberg, a former Assistant U.S. Attorney in Manhattan, who is now with the firm of Goodwin Procter, presented Bacanovic's opening statement, but he shared substantial responsibility for the defense with David Apfel, a Boston-based partner at the firm. Apfel, who is fifty-one, had a distinguished career as a federal prosecutor in Massachusetts, where in 1997 he won the John Marshall Award, the Justice Department's highest award for trial work. In the late nineties, he turned to private practice, and, at the lectern on February 4th, he proceeded to give life to the courtroom adage that the best prosecutors do not always make the best defense lawyers.

Apfel organized his notes, stared down Faneuil on the witness stand, and snarled at him, "Mr. Faneuil, let's get a few things straight right away."

Thus began a catastrophically ineffective cross-examination. The premise of Faneuil's testimony was that he knew why Stewart had sold her shares—because he had told her that the Waksals were selling—and that any other explanation was a "cover story." The defense team could have taken a softer route—one, in fact, anticipated during a practice cross-examination of Faneuil conducted at the U.S. Attorney's office. As that session was described to me, the lawyers pointed out that Faneuil was little more than a glorified secretary who had no way of knowing the real reason that Stewart sold her shares. Faneuil was not privy to many of Stewart and Bacanovic's conversations, and he was on vacation the week before the ImClone sale, when Stewart did make some tax-related sales of stock. Using this tack, Apfel could have dismissed Faneuil's importance.

Instead, Apfel went to war. He suggested that Faneuil had changed his story; he implied that Faneuil was out for revenge; he charged that Faneuil was the real mastermind of the coverup; he all but accused him of being a nutcase, a publicity hound, a moron, and a junkie. (Faneuil had admitted to occasionally smoking marijuana.) At one point, Apfel asked him, "In January of 2002, at the time that you were having a series of discussions with Mr. Bacanovic that you have described as intimidating, did you ever send him e-mails with any funny articles attached?"

After Faneuil said that it was possible, Apfel asked, "Do you recall sending him an article in January of 2003 about a man having sex with a goat?"

Seymour's objection to that question was sustained, and the jury's laughter came at Apfel's expense. Faneuil stuck, ever more persuasively, to his original story. Then Apfel, not content with dragging down his own client, started to pull down Martha Stewart as well.

In his direct testimony, Faneuil implied that there was nothing special about his relationship with Stewart—that it amounted to a few telephone conversations. Apfel introduced a series of Faneuil's e-mails to his friends suggesting that these were anything but bland encounters. On October 23, 2001, Faneuil recounted:

> I have never, ever been treated so rudely by a stranger on the telephone. She actually hung up on me! And she had the nerve—the NERVE—to mention the layoffs in her anger. She said, "Do you know who the hell is answering your phones? You call and you know what he sounds like? He sounds like this. . . ." And then she made the most ridiculous sound I've heard coming from an adult in quite some time, kind of like a lion roaring underwater. I laughed; I thought she was joking. And then she yelled. . . . "Merrill Lynch is laying off ten thousand employees because of people like that idiot!" And then she hung up.

Three days later: "Martha yelled at me again today, but I snapped in her face and she actually backed down! Baby put Ms. Martha in her place." Another time, Bacanovic had the temerity to put Stewart on hold, and that led to another tirade against Faneuil. "During that conversation," Apfel asked Faneuil, "she told you that she was going to leave Peter Bacanovic and leave Merrill Lynch unless that hold music was changed, is that right?" Correct, Faneuil said. Even Bacanovic had to laugh at the story about Stewart's "hold music" outburst. In a trial full of Stewart's enablers and apologists, Faneuil was the great exception.

Robert Morvillo had a lot of damage to undo. Deepening the split that Apfel had opened between the two defendants, Morvillo pointed out that it was Bacanovic, not Stewart, who had urged Faneuil to lie to investigators. And Morvillo did, at last, raise the issue of whether Faneuil was in any position to know the real reason that Stewart had sold her shares of ImClone. As for Stewart's somewhat intimidating personality, Morvillo tried to persuade the jury that it didn't matter that Stewart had yelled at an underling. After all, she always yelled at underlings—that was her style. Morvillo tried to make that point in cross-examining Waksal's secretary, Emily Perret, who had earlier said that Stewart was brusque when she called on December 27th. "Was there any difference between her tone on December 27th and the way she usually was with you?"

"No, most of the time it was the same," Perret replied.

"Most of the time she was hurried and harsh and direct when she spoke to you?"

"That's correct."

The positions of personal assistant and personal secretary may sound similar, but they represent distinct social archetypes. Assistants, like Faneuil, may aspire to be their bosses and see themselves as their social equals, while secretaries are more often denied the hope of advancement. The response of some secretaries to this plight is ever greater sublimation of self and dedication to the boss's welfare. The more Stewart's secretary, Ann E. (pronounced "Annie") Armstrong, tried to help her

"I can't stop conducting random security checks."

boss, the more she helped usher her to her fate.

Armstrong has been Stewart's secretary for six years. She has a nervous smile and a haunted look, and she mumbled through the first few minutes of her testimony. When she came to the events of December 27, 2001, she lost control of her emotions. When Stewart called on the way to Mexico, it marked the first time they had spoken since Christmas. "I thanked her for the plum pudding that she had sent home," Armstrong said, and then started to weep. She tried to recover her composure, saying, "Martha made plum puddings and sent them home with a lot of us for Christmas, so I thanked her for that." But then she started to cry again, and Judge Cedarbaum called a recess for the day.

As clearly as Faneuil loathed Martha Stewart, Armstrong loved her, which was why her testimony was so devastating. The central image she presented was vivid—the haughty Stewart sitting in her secretary's cubicle (something Armstrong said she had never done before) and fiddling with the phone log. Armstrong tried to minimize what Stewart had done, emphasizing that Stewart had told her to change the document back "instantly." On cross-examination, she told Morvillo that Stewart had never asked her to cover up or lie about the incident.

Still, the damage from Armstrong's testimony was profound. It foreclosed what would have been one of Stewart's best arguments in a case where she had not been charged with insider trading: Why would she lie if she hadn't done anything wrong in the first place?

Another disaster for the defense came in the person of Stewart's close friend Mariana Pasternak, a Westport real-estate broker. Stewart and Pasternak spoke daily, saw each other weekly, and had travelled together to the Galápagos, Egypt, Brazil, and Peru. In December of 2001, they went to Mexico and Panama. Pasternak's hair was darker than Stewart's, but they had the same expensive coiffure and similarly refined tastes. Regarding a conversation with Stewart on the balcony of their hotel suite in Los Cabos, Morvillo asked her, "You were in a chair?"

"I was in a *chaise*," Pasternak corrected.

The government called her simply to corroborate Faneuil's account of his conversation with Stewart on December 27th. Pasternak did that, but in her brief testimony she also gave a revealing glimpse into Stewart's emotional life.

On December 30th, the two women had returned to their suite after a guided hike near their resort. They were relaxing with soft drinks on their balcony when Pasternak, as she recalled it, said, "Here we are again, just the two of us on a holiday trip with no male companionship." They were both divorced, wealthy, and, in romantic terms, alone. Pasternak turned the conversation to Waksal, who had to be a complicated subject for Stewart. After all, Waksal and Stewart were about the same age, but he had dated her daughter. Stewart's reported comments about Waksal reflected the ambivalence such complications might produce.

Waksal, Stewart suggested, was falling apart. He had "disappeared again"—that is, she couldn't reach him. (She had tried calling him on the twenty-seventh after getting the tip from Faneuil.) He was "walking funny" at her Christmas party. Worse, Stewart went on, he and his daughters had sold or were trying to sell all their stock in ImClone. "His stock is going down, or went down, and I sold mine," Stewart added. This was the crucial part of her testimony, because Stewart had no way of knowing that Waksal and his daughters were selling except from the conversation with Faneuil.

Pasternak's appearance ended on a curious note. In her direct testimony, she said that, in another conversation in Mexico, Stewart had commented about Bacanovic's tip, "Isn't it nice to have brokers who tell you those things?" But, under Morvillo's cross-examination, she said, "I do not know if that statement was made by Martha or just was a thought in my mind"—a concession so dramatic that it brought a gasp from the spectators. But then, when the prosecution questioned her again, Pasternak said her "best belief" was that Stewart said it.

Pasternak noted in passing that Stewart was rather sad to have sold her shares in Waksal's company, because "it was a question of loyalty to her friend." Stewart said something similar to me at Turkey Hill, explaining that she liked to buy shares in the companies of C.E.O.s she admired, as a kind of tribute but also

28
35
5
Hamilton

"That's his urine sample."

as a way to learn from them. Her stock portfolio, which was made public during the trial, revealed that she fell for other emblematic figures of the nineteen-nineties. She did well with Wal-Mart and Dell, but lost with investments in Amazon, Lucent, Doubleclick, and JDS Uniphase.

One of the most frequently raised questions about the trial was why Stewart put on such a meagre defense. A high-powered defense team, it was asserted, should have come up with something in response to a month of government witnesses. As it turned out, however, when Morvillo finally had the chance to call witnesses he had almost no good options. Most important, he thought that it was out of the question for Stewart herself to testify. She had no good answers for the most basic questions. What explanation could she give for altering the phone log at Ann Armstrong's desk? How did Pasternak know that the Waksals were dumping their shares? And if Stewart told her, as she certainly did, why did she deny to investigators that she knew of the Waksal sales?

What's more, in a cross-examination of Stewart, the rest of her life would be open to ruthless scrutiny. Wasn't it true that the State of New York had charged her with lying about the location of her residence in order to avoid some taxes? In that case, didn't she testify under oath that she hadn't appeared on the "Today" show in 1991—and wasn't that testimony false? Was it true that the state concluded that the information Stewart supplied "could not always be relied upon"? (Stewart lost the tax case and ultimately paid the state more than two hundred thousand dollars.) Morvillo could imagine other cross-examination avenues: Ms. Stewart, let me direct your attention to May, 1997. Did you call your neighbor's landscaper in East Hampton a "fucking liar," then attempt to run him down in your Suburban truck? Did he scream that you were crushing him? Did you pay him a settlement for civil damages? (The landscaper, Matthew Munnich, filed a complaint with the police, which did not result in any charges against Stewart, but she did pay him an undisclosed amount to preëmpt a civil lawsuit.) How would the imperious Stewart hold up under this kind of questioning? Morvillo was not prepared to find out. Even more important, he knew that, under federal sentencing guidelines, Stewart would face a longer sentence if Judge Cedarbaum thought she had lied on the witness stand. Given the way the case was going, and the likelihood of conviction, Morvillo didn't want to take that risk, either.

There was no shortage of potential character witnesses willing to testify to Stewart's good works. But they would have opened up what was known in the defense camp as "Chris Byron issues." Christopher Byron and Jerry Oppenheimer had written scathing biographies of Stewart, and the prosecution could have sampled their most damning stories to challenge the evidence having to do with Stewart's character. Would it affect your opinion of Ms. Stewart's character, the prosecutor might ask, if you knew she acknowledged lying in public about her ex-husband's ability to father children? Stewart had admitted to that, but, under the rules of evidence, the prosecution wouldn't be required to prove the published stories of her misbehavior. Fair or not, the questions alone would do enough damage.

So Morvillo couldn't call Stewart, couldn't call character witnesses, and couldn't call anyone to verify Stewart's preëxisting agreement with Bacanovic to sell ImClone at sixty dollars—because, as was increasingly apparent, they had no such agreement. (In an effort to prove the sixty-dollar agreement, Bacanovic's lawyers called Heidi DeLuca, Stewart's bookkeeper; but in an artful cross-examination Schachter had shown that her conversation with Bacanovic probably concerned an earlier sale of ImClone shares by Stewart, not the one on December 27, 2001.) In the end, Morvillo called just a single witness, Steven Pearl, the associate at Wachtell, Lipton whom Savarese had brought along to the U.S. Attorney's office to take notes during Stewart's interview on February 4, 2002. The idea was to challenge the F.B.I. agent's account of the meeting; as with most office interviews, there was no tape recording or transcript. Oddly, though, Pearl had little experience in note-taking, and in his testimony couldn't remember much of what was said or decipher much of what he had written. Morvillo would have been better off calling no witnesses at all.

Schachter's dense, factual summation left Morvillo with only the hoariest of arguments for guilty white-collar defendants: that no one could have been so stupid as to leave such an obvious trail of evidence. He said, mockingly, that the government had said that Stewart and Bacanovic belonged to a "confederacy of dunces." But Karen Seymour, in her rebuttal summation, came up with the obvious rejoinder to Morvillo's desperate argument: "Smart people committing stupid crimes or doing stupid things, your common sense tells you that that's what white-collar criminals do every day."

Judge Cedarbaum praised the jury throughout the trial, and it did seem a remarkably attentive group. Not one juror missed a day, so none of the six alternates were called to deliberate, and the testimony was never delayed because of juror tardiness—rare in New York. The jurors returned the Judge's esteem by following her instructions with care.

Many jurors were interviewed after the verdict, and several took the opportunity to interpret its larger implications. One said that the case "sends a message to bigwigs in corporations that they have to abide by the law. No one is above the law." Actually, the deliberations seem to have been tethered closely to the facts of the case, rather than following any broader agenda. "We never really had any arguments—we had discussions," one of the jurors, Amos Mellinger, a market researcher from Riverdale, told me. The jurors quickly studied the key evidence, first asking to hear most of Faneuil's testimony and then reviewing Stewart's stock portfolio. Mellinger had once before served on a high-profile jury, in the case of one of the white men accused of murdering Yusef Hawkins in Bensonhurst in 1989. The Stewart jury, made up of eight women and four men, "got along beautifully," he said.

The jurors' first vote was on one of the false-statement counts against Stewart, and it was unanimous: guilty. Mellinger and other jurors said that Armstrong and Pasternak were especially effective for the prosecution. "As a loyal employee, Ann was just bent out of shape having to testify, and the same with Pasternak," Mellinger said. "They didn't want to be there, but they told the truth."

Most of the jurors' notes to the Judge concerned evidence against Bacanovic, so lawyers on both sides assumed that they hadn't even turned their attention to the case against Stewart. It came as something of a surprise when the jurors, after lunch on Friday, March 5th, sent a note announcing that they had a verdict. After a five-week trial, they hadn't deliberated for even two full days. "We thought the jury would be out longer," Morvillo told me in an interview after the trial.

Jurors often look haggard and exhausted when they deliver a verdict; the emotional toll of passing judgment is often considerable, especially after a long trial. But as these jurors filed into Room 110, just before three o'clock, they looked relaxed, and several had half smiles. None of them looked at the defendants—often a tipoff of conviction—but it was their equanimity that was so startling. The jury convicted Stewart of all four counts and Bacanovic of four out of five.

Nothing seemed to go right for Stewart. In the first hours following the verdict, she posted a statement on her Web site, marthatalks.com, saying, "I am obviously distressed by the jury's verdict but I continue to take comfort in knowing that I have done nothing wrong and that I have the enduring support of my family and friends." Within minutes, though, apparently at the insistence of her lawyers, the words "I have done nothing wrong" were removed. This revision was certainly influenced by Stewart's next problem: her sentencing.

Federal guidelines use a point system to help determine the length of a sentence. Stewart's crime has a base level of twelve, and the recommended sentencing range is ten to sixteen months. But the probation department, which makes the first evaluation, and Judge Cedarbaum, who will render the final decision, could adjust Stewart's score. If they found, for instance, that Stewart abused a position of trust, such as her status as a C.E.O., that could raise her score by another two points—indicating a prison sentence of fifteen to twenty-one months. The number could go down two points if Stewart shows "acceptance of responsibility." That reduction usually goes only to defendants who plead guilty, but Stewart's lawyers may argue for it, which is why they didn't want her saying, "I have done nothing wrong." Sentencing is set for June 17th. An investigation that began as a minor annoyance, a brief interview at the U.S. Attorney's office squeezed in between trips to Europe and the West Coast, will end for Martha Stewart with a judge deciding how long—not whether—she will go to prison.

In Karen Seymour's rebuttal summation, she implored the jurors, "Don't think about the S.E.C. Don't think about the F.B.I., though they certainly were victimized. It's really our entire nation, our country, that is victimized." Seymour was, to say the least, engaging in overstatement. Stewart didn't steal anything, or fleece any investors. On December 27, 2001, more than seven million shares of ImClone changed hands. Stewart did sell her nearly four thousand shares advantageously, but it's hard to imagine that her sale had any impact on the stock price. She also misled some federal agents, but not for very long. If anyone lost, it is the stockholders in Martha Stewart's company—as a result of the prosecution of its chief. In all, it is difficult to translate Stewart's lies into a crime against "our entire nation."

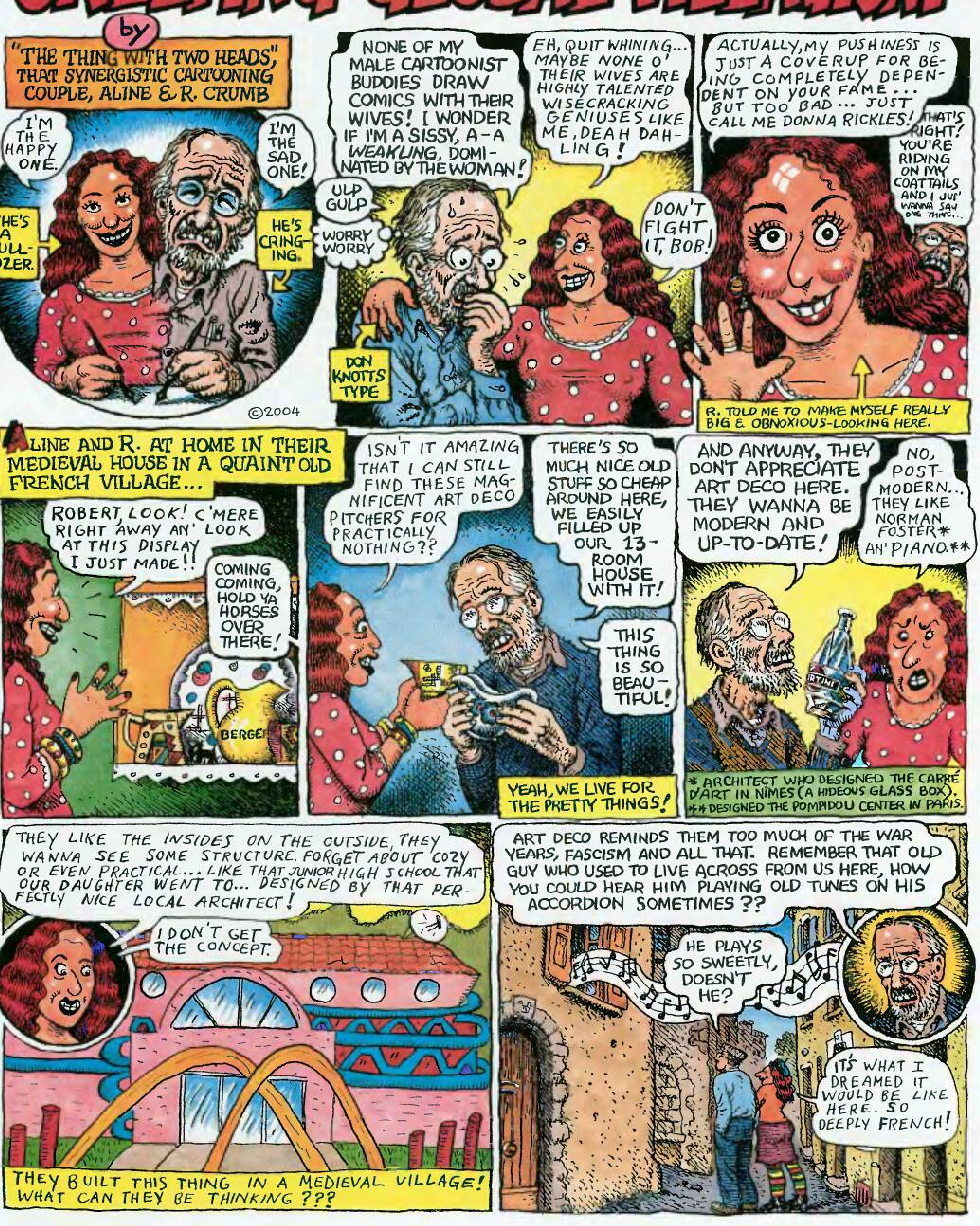
Many other attempts were made to find large significance in this trial, and the case brought together unlikely allies. On the "Today" show, the writer Naomi Wolf attributed Stewart's fall to "a social taboo against women being too powerful, too wealthy, too successful without being attached to a man." Some conservatives, like Ann Coulter, heard an echo of Bill Clinton in her indifference to truth-telling—a presumption that the rules didn't apply to her—and demanded punishment. Other conservatives saw the trial as big government run amok, with Stewart's shareholders as the real victims—they were, according to the editorialists at the *Wall Street Journal*, "the innocent bystanders paying the biggest price for the prosecutors' zeal to see Martha Stewart in an orange jumpsuit." The facts of Stewart's fall could fit almost any agenda.

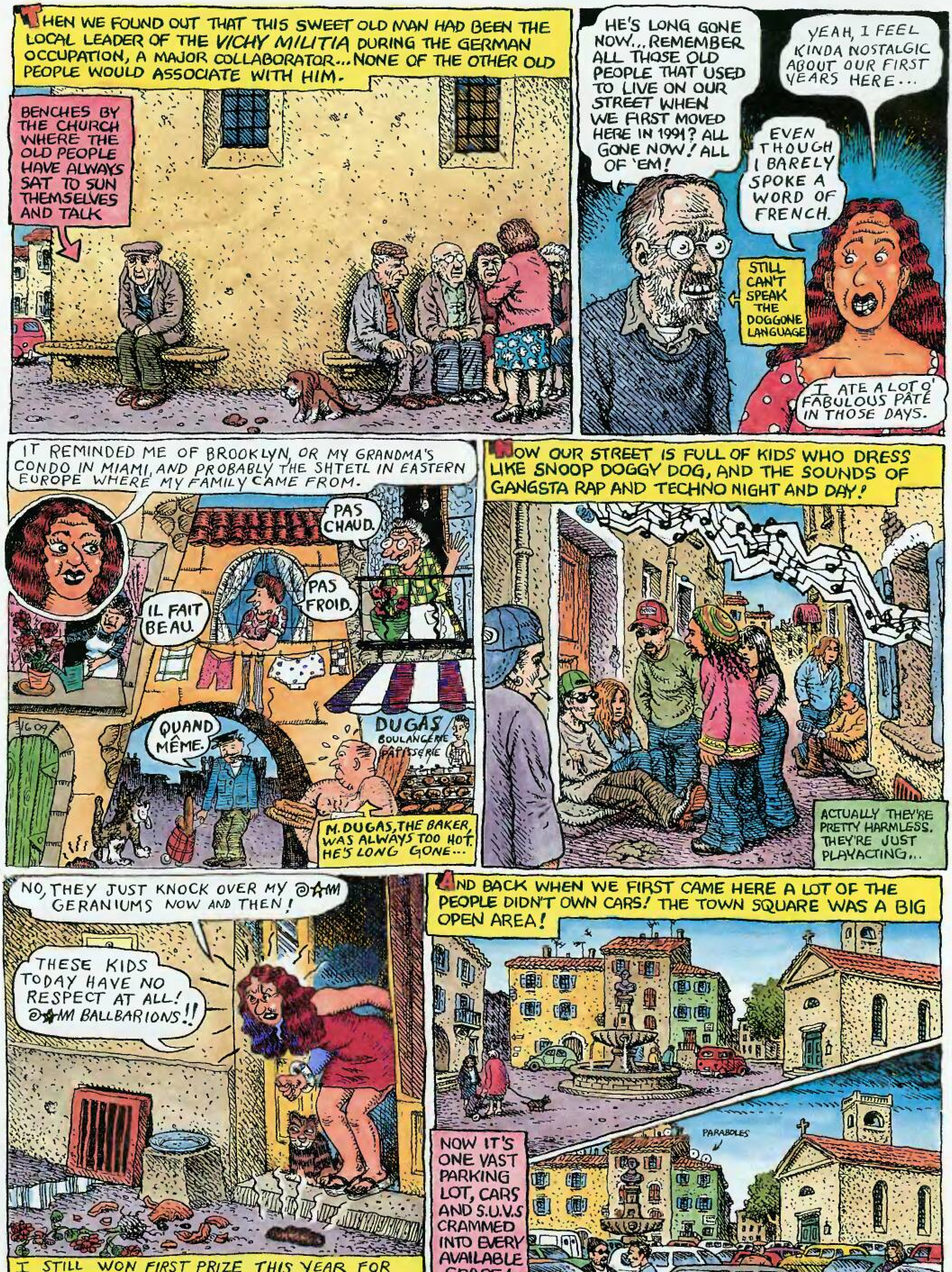
There was also a distinctly American story of self-creation—of a dramatic rise and sudden fall—which invested an essentially banal trial with the weight of meaning and the potential for a Schadenfreude festival. Martha Stewart came from a New Jersey suburb and created an American business success—persuading people to buy something they didn't know they needed. In her case, she refined the ordinary comforts of middle-class life: a better Thanksgiving dinner, a prettier Christmas wreath. Her projects often took hard work, but they were never too exotic. After all, the phrase most closely associated with her is "a good thing"—not a great one. It was a modest, homely aesthetic with an overlay of Stewart's odd glamour.

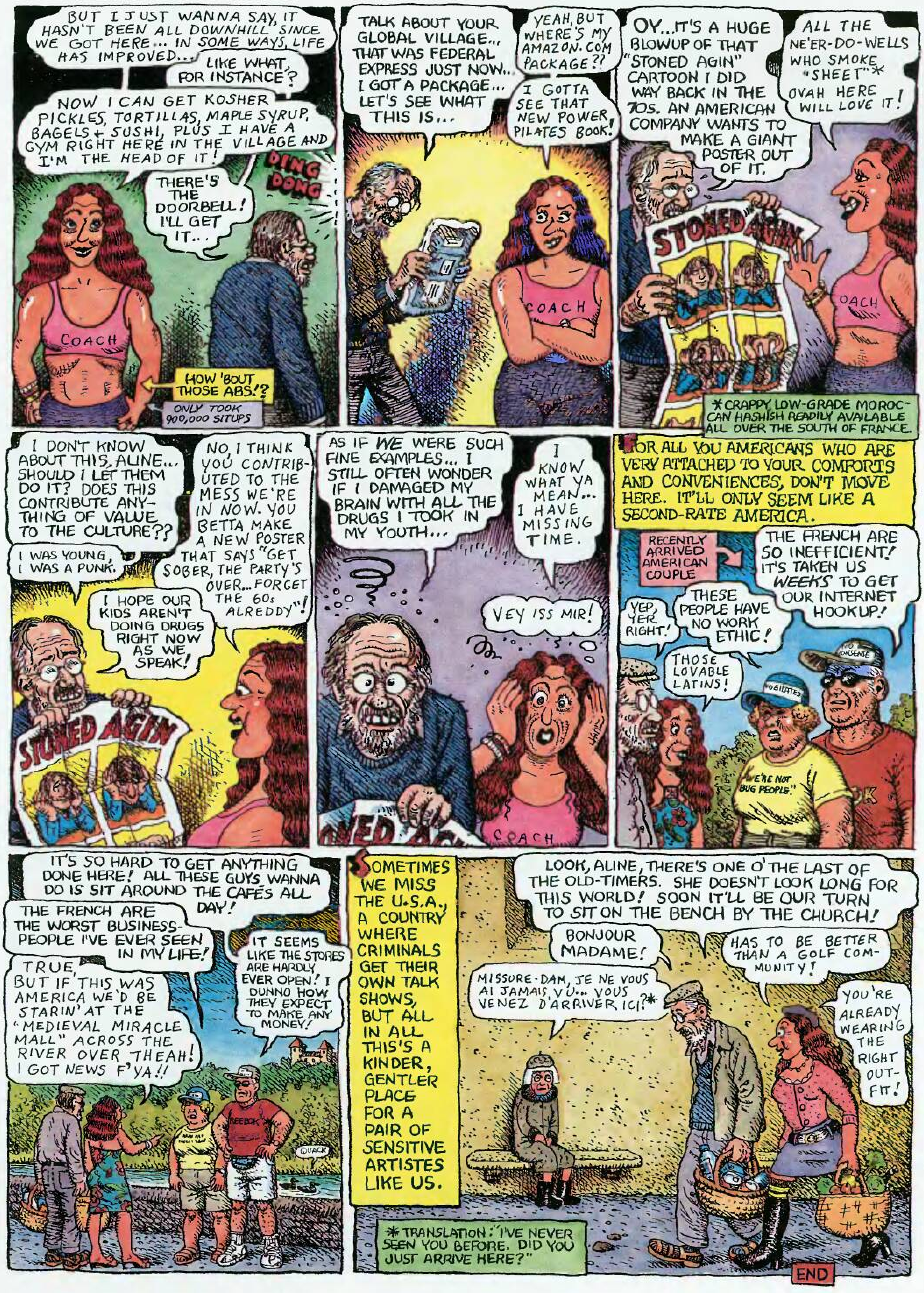
Stewart's phone logs, displayed so often during the trial, revealed an existence of enviable privilege and variety. "Sec. Albright is trying to set up a follow-up meeting next week." The president of Harvard wanted to talk. Could friends borrow a white Jaguar? Was there room for one more person to squeeze into Stewart's helicopter—the one taking her to the party on a yacht off the coast of Panama? "Dick Gephardt wants to speak to you about his upcoming trip to New York." What date was convenient for her to read David Letterman's Top Ten list? "Melanie Griffith (sounding exactly 12 years old) heard you were looking for someone to 'cook with on TV' and she'd like to recommend her sister, Tracy, who is 'forty, beautiful, a sushi chef in LA, and a HUGE Martha fan.'" Even the work didn't sound much like work: "Choose Cookie issue cover." It was another world. And then, overnight, it seemed, Stewart became a member of the Tabloid Hall of Fame, a place inhabited by Michael Jackson, David Gest, and Liza Minnelli. Already the same op-ed columnists and television panelists who had assigned various meanings to the affair were wondering if Stewart could return from prison and remake herself and her company. Or was the price of her felonies too high, and the damage to her image and story irreparable? ◆

AFTER THIRTEEN YEARS LIVING IN THE BEAUTIFUL SOUTH OF FRANCE, WE HAVE COME TO REALIZE THAT WE ARE WITNESSING, FIRST HAND, UP CLOSE, THE PROCESS WE CALL...

CREEPING GLOBAL VILLAGISM


by
"THE THING WITH TWO HEADS," THAT SYNERGISTIC CARTOONING COUPLE, ALINE & R. CRUMB
I'M THE HAPPY ONE.
I'M THE SAD ONE!
SHE'S A BULL-DOZER.
HE'S CRING-ING.
©2004
NONE OF MY MALE CARTOONIST BUDDIES DRAW COMICS WITH THEIR WIVES! I WONDER IF I'M A SISSY, A-A WEAKLING, DOMINATED BY THE WOMAN!
EH, QUIT WHINING... MAYBE NONE O' THEIR WIVES ARE HIGHLY TALENTED WISECRACKING GENIUSES LIKE ME, DEAH DAHLING!
ULP GULP
WORRY WORRY
DON'T FIGHT IT, BOB!
DON KNOTTS TYPE
ACTUALLY, MY PUSHINESS IS JUST A COVERUP FOR BEING COMPLETELY DEPENDENT ON YOUR FAME... BUT TOO BAD... JUST CALL ME DONNA RICKLES!
THAT'S RIGHT! YOU'RE RIDING ON MY COATTAILS AND I JUS' WANNA SAY ONE THING...
R. TOLD ME TO MAKE MYSELF REALLY BIG & OBNOXIOUS-LOOKING HERE.
ALINE AND R. AT HOME IN THEIR MEDIEVAL HOUSE IN A QUAINT OLD FRENCH VILLAGE...
ROBERT, LOOK! C'MERE RIGHT AWAY AN' LOOK AT THIS DISPLAY I JUST MADE!!
COMING COMING, HOLD YA HORSES OVER THERE!
BERGER
ISN'T IT AMAZING THAT I CAN STILL FIND THESE MAGNIFICENT ART DECO PITCHERS FOR PRACTICALLY NOTHING??
THERE'S SO MUCH NICE OLD STUFF SO CHEAP AROUND HERE, WE EASILY FILLED UP OUR 13-ROOM HOUSE WITH IT!
THIS THING IS SO BEAUTIFUL!
YEAH, WE LIVE FOR THE PRETTY THINGS!
AND ANYWAY, THEY DON'T APPRECIATE ART DECO HERE. THEY WANNA BE MODERN AND UP-TO-DATE!
NO, POST-MODERN... THEY LIKE NORMAN FOSTER* AN' PIANO.**
* ARCHITECT WHO DESIGNED THE CARRÉ D'ART IN NÎMES (A HIDEOUS GLASS BOX).
** DESIGNED THE POMPIDOU CENTER IN PARIS.
THEY LIKE THE INSIDES ON THE OUTSIDE, THEY WANNA SEE SOME STRUCTURE. FORGET ABOUT COZY OR EVEN PRACTICAL... LIKE THAT JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL THAT OUR DAUGHTER WENT TO... DESIGNED BY THAT PERFECTLY NICE LOCAL ARCHITECT!
I DON'T GET THE CONCEPT.
THEY BUILT THIS THING IN A MEDIEVAL VILLAGE! WHAT CAN THEY BE THINKING???
ART DECO REMINDS THEM TOO MUCH OF THE WAR YEARS, FASCISM AND ALL THAT. REMEMBER THAT OLD GUY WHO USED TO LIVE ACROSS FROM US HERE, HOW YOU COULD HEAR HIM PLAYING OLD TUNES ON HIS ACCORDION SOMETIMES??
HE PLAYS SO SWEETLY, DOESN'T HE?
IT'S WHAT I DREAMED IT WOULD BE LIKE HERE. SO DEEPLY FRENCH!


THEN WE FOUND OUT THAT THIS SWEET OLD MAN HAD BEEN THE LOCAL LEADER OF THE VICHY MILITIA DURING THE GERMAN OCCUPATION, A MAJOR COLLABORATOR... NONE OF THE OTHER OLD PEOPLE WOULD ASSOCIATE WITH HIM.
BENCHES BY THE CHURCH WHERE THE OLD PEOPLE HAVE ALWAYS SAT TO SUN THEMSELVES AND TALK
HE'S LONG GONE NOW... REMEMBER ALL THOSE OLD PEOPLE THAT USED TO LIVE ON OUR STREET WHEN WE FIRST MOVED HERE IN 1991? ALL GONE NOW! ALL OF 'EM!
YEAH, I FEEL KINDA NOSTALGIC ABOUT OUR FIRST YEARS HERE...
EVEN THOUGH I BARELY SPOKE A WORD OF FRENCH.
STILL CAN'T SPEAK THE DOGGONE LANGUAGE
I ATE A LOT O' FABULOUS PÂTÉ IN THOSE DAYS.
IT REMINDED ME OF BROOKLYN, OR MY GRANDMA'S CONDO IN MIAMI, AND PROBABLY THE SHTETL IN EASTERN EUROPE WHERE MY FAMILY CAME FROM.
PAS CHAUD.
PAS FROID.
IL FAIT BEAU.
QUAND MÊME.
1609
DUGAS BOULANGERIE PÂTISSERIE
M. DUGAS, THE BAKER, WAS ALWAYS TOO HOT. HE'S LONG GONE...
NOW OUR STREET IS FULL OF KIDS WHO DRESS LIKE SNOOP DOGGY DOG, AND THE SOUNDS OF GANGSTA RAP AND TECHNO NIGHT AND DAY!
ACTUALLY THEY'RE PRETTY HARMLESS. THEY'RE JUST PLAYACTING...
NO, THEY JUST KNOCK OVER MY @☆M GERANIUMS NOW AND THEN!
THESE KIDS TODAY HAVE NO RESPECT AT ALL! @☆M BALLBARIONS!!
I STILL WON FIRST PRIZE THIS YEAR FOR THE BEST FLOWER DISPLAY ON ANY BALCONY!
AND BACK WHEN WE FIRST CAME HERE A LOT OF THE PEOPLE DIDN'T OWN CARS! THE TOWN SQUARE WAS A BIG OPEN AREA!
PARABOLES
NOW IT'S ONE VAST PARKING LOT, CARS AND S.U.V.S CRAMMED INTO EVERY AVAILABLE SPACE!


BUT I JUST WANNA SAY, IT HASN'T BEEN ALL DOWNHILL SINCE WE GOT HERE... IN SOME WAYS, LIFE HAS IMPROVED...
LIKE WHAT, FOR INSTANCE?
NOW I CAN GET KOSHER PICKLES, TORTILLAS, MAPLE SYRUP, BAGELS + SUSHI, PLUS I HAVE A GYM RIGHT HERE IN THE VILLAGE AND I'M THE HEAD OF IT!
DING DONG
THERE'S THE DOORBELL! I'LL GET IT...
COACH
HOW 'BOUT THOSE ABS!?
ONLY TOOK 900,000 SITUPS
TALK ABOUT YOUR GLOBAL VILLAGE... THAT WAS FEDERAL EXPRESS JUST NOW... I GOT A PACKAGE... LET'S SEE WHAT THIS IS...
YEAH, BUT WHERE'S MY AMAZON.COM PACKAGE??
I GOTTA SEE THAT NEW POWER PILATES BOOK!
COACH
OY... IT'S A HUGE BLOWUP OF THAT "STONED AGIN" CARTOON I DID WAY BACK IN THE 70S. AN AMERICAN COMPANY WANTS TO MAKE A GIANT POSTER OUT OF IT.
ALL THE NE'ER-DO-WELLS WHO SMOKE "SHEET"* OVAH HERE WILL LOVE IT!
STONED AGIN
OACH
* CRAPPY, LOW-GRADE MOROCCAN HASHISH READILY AVAILABLE ALL OVER THE SOUTH OF FRANCE.
I DON'T KNOW ABOUT THIS, ALINE... SHOULD I LET THEM DO IT? DOES THIS CONTRIBUTE ANYTHING OF VALUE TO THE CULTURE??
NO, I THINK YOU CONTRIBUTED TO THE MESS WE'RE IN NOW. YOU BETTA MAKE A NEW POSTER THAT SAYS "GET SOBER, THE PARTY'S OVER... FORGET THE 60s ALREDDY"!
I WAS YOUNG, I WAS A PUNK.
I HOPE OUR KIDS AREN'T DOING DRUGS RIGHT NOW AS WE SPEAK!
STONED AGIN
AS IF WE WERE SUCH FINE EXAMPLES... I STILL OFTEN WONDER IF I DAMAGED MY BRAIN WITH ALL THE DRUGS I TOOK IN MY YOUTH...
I KNOW WHAT YA MEAN... I HAVE MISSING TIME.
VEY ISS MIR!
COACH
FOR ALL YOU AMERICANS WHO ARE VERY ATTACHED TO YOUR COMFORTS AND CONVENIENCES, DON'T MOVE HERE. IT'LL ONLY SEEM LIKE A SECOND-RATE AMERICA.
RECENTLY ARRIVED AMERICAN COUPLE
THE FRENCH ARE SO INEFFICIENT! IT'S TAKEN US WEEKS TO GET OUR INTERNET HOOKUP!
THESE PEOPLE HAVE NO WORK ETHIC!
YEP, YER RIGHT!
THOSE LOVABLE LATINS!
"WE'RE NOT BUG PEOPLE."
IT'S SO HARD TO GET ANYTHING DONE HERE! ALL THESE GUYS WANNA DO IS SIT AROUND THE CAFÉS ALL DAY!
THE FRENCH ARE THE WORST BUSINESS-PEOPLE I'VE EVER SEEN IN MY LIFE!
IT SEEMS LIKE THE STORES ARE HARDLY EVER OPEN! I DUNNO HOW THEY EXPECT TO MAKE ANY MONEY!
TRUE, BUT IF THIS WAS AMERICA WE'D BE STARIN' AT THE "MEDIEVAL MIRACLE MALL" ACROSS THE RIVER OVER THEAH! I GOT NEWS F'YA!!
REEBOK
QUACK
SOMETIMES WE MISS THE U.S.A., A COUNTRY WHERE CRIMINALS GET THEIR OWN TALK SHOWS, BUT ALL IN ALL THIS'S A KINDER, GENTLER PLACE FOR A PAIR OF SENSITIVE ARTISTES LIKE US.
LOOK, ALINE, THERE'S ONE O' THE LAST OF THE OLD-TIMERS. SHE DOESN'T LOOK LONG FOR THIS WORLD! SOON IT'LL BE OUR TURN TO SIT ON THE BENCH BY THE CHURCH!
BONJOUR MADAME!
MISSURE-DAM, JE NE VOUS AI JAMAIS VÚ... VOUS VENEZ D'ARRIVER ICI?*
HAS TO BE BETTER THAN A GOLF COMMUNITY!
YOU'RE ALREADY WEARING THE RIGHT OUTFIT!
* TRANSLATION: "I'VE NEVER SEEN YOU BEFORE. DID YOU JUST ARRIVE HERE?"
END

FICTION

PASSION

BY ALICE MUNRO

When Grace goes looking for the Traverses' summer house, in the Ottawa Valley, it has been many years since she was in that part of the country. And, of course, things have changed. Highway 7 now avoids towns that it used to go right through, and it goes straight in places where, as she remembers, there used to be curves. This part of the Canadian Shield has many small lakes, which most maps have no room to identify. Even when she locates Sabot Lake, or thinks she has, there seem to be too many roads leading into it from the county road, and then, when she chooses one, too many paved roads crossing it, all with names that she does not recall. In fact, there were no street names when she was here, more than forty years ago. There was no pavement, either—just one dirt road running toward the lake, then another running rather haphazardly along the lake's edge.

Now there is a village. Or perhaps it's a suburb, because she does not see a post office or even the most unpromising convenience store. The settlement lies four or five streets deep along the lake, with houses strung close together on small lots. Some of them are undoubtedly summer places—the windows already boarded up, as they always were for the winter. But many others show all the signs of year-round habitation—habitation, in many cases, by people who have filled the yards with plastic gym sets and outdoor grills and training bikes and motorcycles and picnic tables, where some of them sit now having lunch or beer on this warm September day. There are other people, not so visible—students, maybe, or old hippies living alone—who have put up flags or sheets of tinfoil for curtains. Small, mostly decent, cheap houses, some fixed to withstand the winter and some not.

Grace would have turned back if she hadn't caught sight of the octagonal house with the fretwork along the roof and doors in every other wall. The Woods house. She has always remembered it as having eight doors, but it seems there are only four. She was never inside, to see how, or if, the space is divided into rooms. Mr. and Mrs. Woods were old—as Grace is now—and did not seem to be visited by any children or friends. Their quaint, original house now has a forlorn, mistaken look. Neighbors with their ghetto blasters and their half-dismembered vehicles, their toys and washing, are pushed up against either side of it.

It is the same with the Travers house, when she finds it, a quarter of a mile farther on. The road goes past it now, instead of ending there, and the houses next door are only a few feet away from its deep, wraparound veranda.

It was the first house of its kind that Grace had ever seen—one story high, the roof continuing without a break out over that veranda, on all sides—a style that makes you think of hot summers. She has since seen many like it, in Australia.

It used to be possible to run from the veranda across the dusty end of the driveway, through a sandy, trampled patch of weeds and wild strawberries, and then jump—no, actually, wade—into the lake. Now Grace can hardly even see the lake, because a substantial house—one of the few regular suburban houses here, with a two-car garage—has been built across that very route.

What was Grace really looking for when she undertook this expedition? Perhaps the worst thing would have been to find exactly what she thought she was after—the sheltering roof, the screened windows, the lake in front, the stand of maple and cedar and balm-of-Gilead trees behind. Perfect preservation, the past intact, when nothing of the kind could be said of herself. To find something so diminished, still existing but made irrelevant—as the Travers house now seems to be, with its added dormer windows, its startling blue paint—might be less hurtful in the long run.

And what if it had been gone altogether? She might have made a fuss, if anybody had come along to listen to her; she might have bewailed the loss. But mightn't a feeling of relief have passed over her, too, of old confusions and obligations wiped away?

Mr. Travers had built the house—that is, he'd had it built—as a surprise wedding present for Mrs. Travers. When Grace first saw it, it was perhaps thirty years old. Mrs. Travers's children were widely spaced: Gretchen, twenty-eight or twenty-nine, already married and a mother herself; Maury, twenty-one, going into his last year of college; and then there was Neil, in his mid-thirties. But Neil was not a Travers. He was Neil Borrow. Mrs. Travers had been married before, to a man who had died. For a few years, she had earned her living, and supported her child, as a teacher of business English at a secretarial school. Mr. Travers, when he referred to this period in her life before he'd met her, spoke of it as a time of hardship almost like penal servitude, something that would barely be made up for by a whole lifetime of comfort, which he would happily provide.

Mrs. Travers herself didn't speak of it that way at all. She had lived with Neil in a big old house broken up into apartments, not far from the railway tracks in the town of Pembroke, and many of the stories she told at the dinner table were about events there, about her fellow-tenants, and the French-Canadian landlord, whose harsh French and tangled English she imitated. The stories could have had titles, like the stories by James Thurber that Grace had read in "The Anthology of American Humor," found unaccountably on the library shelf at the back of her grade-ten classroom. The Night Old Mrs. Cromarty Got Out on the Roof. How the Postman Courted Miss Flowers. The Dog Who Ate Sardines.

Mr. Travers never told stories and had little to say at dinner, but if he came upon you looking, for instance, at the fieldstone fireplace he might say, "Are you interested in rocks?" and tell you how he had searched and searched for that particular pink granite, because Mrs. Travers had once exclaimed over a rock like that, glimpsed in a road cut. Or he might show you the not really unusual features that he personally had added to the house—the corner cupboard shelves swinging outward in the kitchen, the storage space under the window seats. He was a tall, stooped man with a soft voice and thin hair slicked over his scalp. He wore bathing shoes when he went into the water and, though he did not look fat in his

ALICE ATTIE

clothes, a pancake fold of white flesh slopped over the top of his bathing trunks.

Grace was working that summer at the hotel at Bailey's Falls, just north of Sabot Lake. Early in the season, the Travers family had come to dinner there. She had not noticed them—it was a busy night, and they were not at one of her tables. She was setting up a table for a new party when she realized that someone was waiting to speak to her.

It was Maury. He said, "I was wondering if you would like to go out with me sometime."

Grace barely looked up from shooting out the silverware. She said, "Is this a dare?" Because his voice was high and nervous, and he stood there stiffly, as if forcing himself. And it was known that sometimes a party of young men from the cottages would dare one another to ask a waitress out. It wasn't entirely a joke—they really would show up, if accepted, though sometimes they only meant to park, without taking you to a movie or even for coffee. So it was considered rather shameful, rather hard up, of a girl to agree.

"What?" he said painfully, and then Grace did stop and look at him. It seemed to her that she saw the whole of him in that moment, the true Maury. Scared, fierce, innocent, determined.

"O.K.," she said quickly. She might have meant, O.K., calm down, I can see it's not a dare. Or, O.K., I'll go out with you. She herself hardly knew which. But he took it as agreement, and at once arranged—without lowering his voice, or noticing the looks that he was getting from the diners around them—to pick her up after work the following night.

He did take her to the movies. They saw "Father of the Bride." Grace hated it. She hated girls like Elizabeth Taylor's character—spoiled rich girls of whom nothing was ever asked but that they wheedle and demand. Maury said that it was just a comedy, but she told him that that was not the point. She could not quite make clear what her point was. Anybody would have assumed that it was because she worked as a waitress and was too poor to go to college, and because, if she wanted that kind of wedding, she would have to save up for years to pay for it herself. (Maury did think this, and was stricken with respect for her, almost with reverence.)

She could not explain or even quite understand that it wasn't jealousy she felt; it was rage. And not because she couldn't shop like that or dress like that but because that was what girls were supposed to be like. That was what men—people, everybody—thought they *should* be like: beautiful, treasured, spoiled, selfish, pea-brained. That was what a girl had to be, to be fallen in love with. Then she'd become a mother and be all mushily devoted to her babies. Not selfish anymore, but just as pea-brained. Forever.

Grace was fuming about this while sitting beside a boy who had fallen in love with her because he had believed—instantly—in the integrity and uniqueness of her mind and soul, had seen her poverty as a romantic gloss on that. (He would have known she was poor not just because of her job but because of her strong Ottawa Valley accent.)

He honored her feelings about the movie. Indeed, now that he had listened to her angry struggles to explain, he struggled to tell her something in turn. He said he saw now that it was not anything so simple, so *feminine*, as jealousy. He saw that. It was that she would not stand for frivolity, was not content to be like most girls. She was special.

Grace was wearing a dark-blue ballerina skirt, a white blouse, through whose eyelet frills the upper curve of her breasts was visible, and a wide rose-colored elasticized belt. There was a discrepancy, no doubt, between the way she presented herself and the way she wanted to be judged. But nothing about her was dainty or pert or polished, in the style of the time. A bit ragged around the edges, in fact. Giving herself Gypsy airs, with the very cheapest silver-painted bangles, and the long, wild-looking, curly dark hair that she had to put into a snood when she waited on tables.

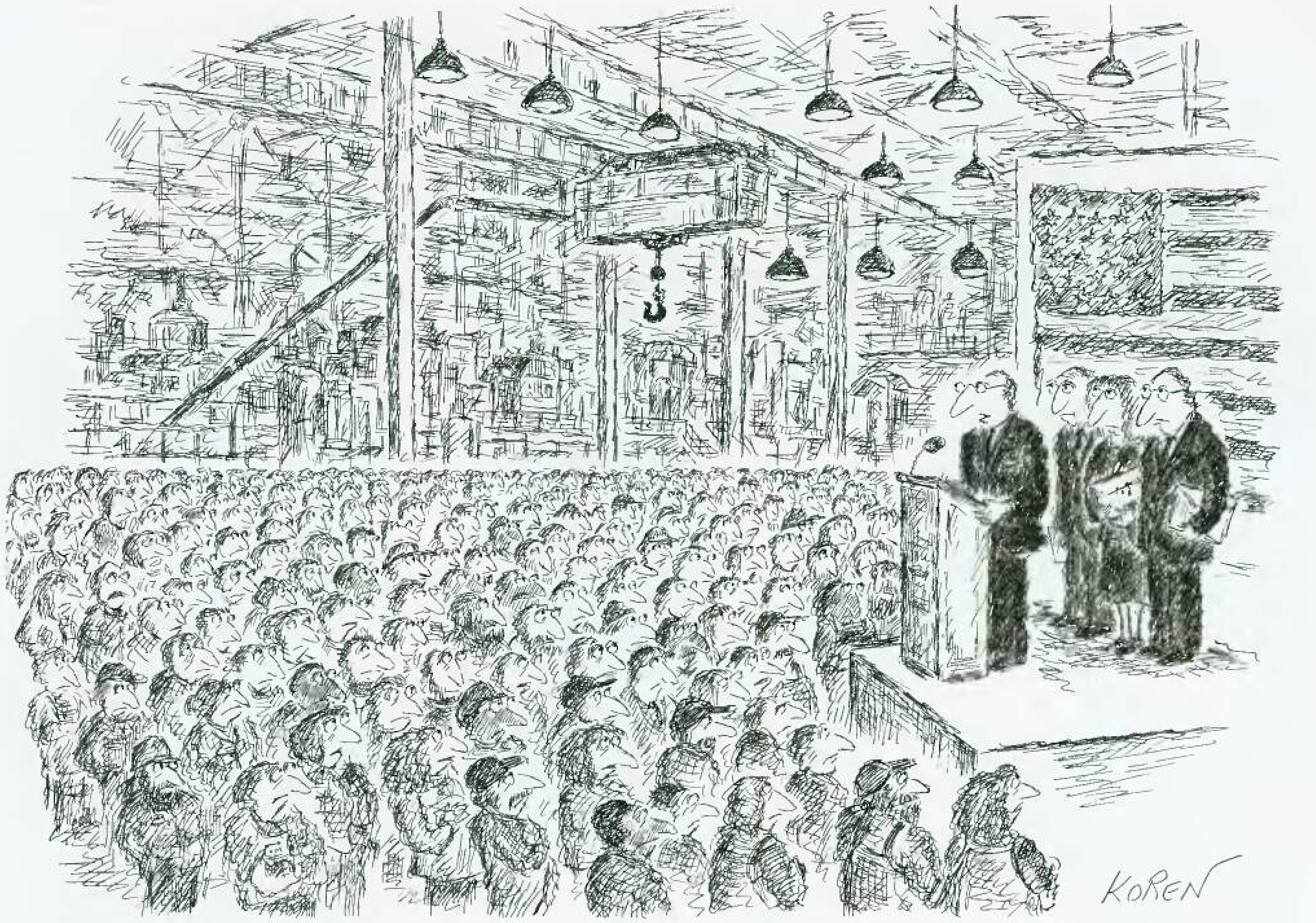
Special.

He told his mother about her, and his mother said, "You must bring this Grace of yours to dinner."

It was all new to her, all immediately delightful. In fact, she fell in love with Mrs. Travers, almost exactly as Maury had fallen in love with her, though it was not in her nature, of course, to be as openly dumbfounded, as worshipful, as he was.

Grace had been brought up by her aunt and uncle, really her great-aunt and great-uncle. Her mother had died when she was three years old, and her father had moved to Saskatchewan, where he now had another family. Her stand-in parents were kind, even proud of her. But they were not given to conversation. The uncle made his living caning chairs, and he had taught Grace how to cane so that she could help him and eventually take over the business when his eyesight failed. But then she had got the job at Bailey's Falls for the summer, and though it was hard for him—and for her aunt as well—to let her go, they believed that she needed a taste of life before she settled down.

She was twenty years old and had just finished high school. She should have finished a year earlier, but she had made an odd choice. In the very small town where she lived—it was not far from Mrs. Travers's Pembroke—there was nevertheless a high school that offered five grades, to prepare students for the government exams and what was then called senior matriculation. It was never necessary to study all the subjects offered, and at the end of her first year in grade thirteen—what should have been her final year—Grace took examinations in history and botany and zoology and English and Latin and French, receiving unnecessarily high marks. But there she was in September, back again, proposing to study physics and chemistry, trigonometry, geometry, and algebra, though these subjects were considered particularly hard for girls. She did creditably well in all three branches of mathematics and in the sciences, though her results were not as spectacular as they had been the year before. She thought, then, of teaching herself Greek and Spanish and Italian and German, so that she could try those exams the following year—those subjects were not taught by any teacher at her school—



"Our operations here close down today, and you are all emeritus!"

• •

but the principal took her aside and told her that this was getting her nowhere, since she was not going to be able to go to college, and, anyway, no college required such a full plate. Why was she doing it? Did she have any plans?

No, Grace said, she just wanted to learn everything you could learn for free. Before she started her career of caning.

It was the principal who knew the manager of the inn at Bailey's Falls and said that he would put in a word for her if she wanted to try for a summer waitressing job. He, too, mentioned getting "a taste of life."

So even the man in charge of learning in that place did not believe that learning had to do with life. He thought that what she had done was crazy, as everyone else did.

Except Mrs. Travers, who had been sent to business college, instead of a real college, in order to make herself useful, and who now wished like anything, she said, that she had crammed her mind first with what was useless.

By trading shifts with another girl, Grace managed to get Sundays off, from breakfast on. This meant that she always worked late on Saturdays. In effect, it meant that she had traded time with Maury for time with Maury's family. She and Maury could never see a movie now, never have a real date. Instead, he would pick her up when she got off work, around eleven at night, and they would go for a drive, stop for ice cream or a hamburger—Maury was scrupulous about not taking her into a bar, because she was not yet twenty-one—then end up parking somewhere.

Grace's memories of these parking sessions—which might last till one or two in the morning—proved to be much hazier than her memories of sitting at the Traverses' round dining table or, after everybody had finally got up and moved, with coffee or fresh drinks, on the tawny leather sofa or the cushioned wicker chairs at the other end of the room. (There was never any fuss about doing the dishes; a woman Mrs. Travers called "the able Mrs. Abel" would come in the morning.)

Maury always dragged cushions onto the rug and sat there. Gretchen, who never dressed for dinner in anything but jeans or Army pants, usually sat cross-legged in a wide chair. Both she and Maury were big and broad-shouldered, with something of their mother's good looks—her wavy caramel-colored hair, warm hazel eyes, easily sun-browned skin. Even, in Maury's case, her dimple. (The other waitresses called Maury "cute" and "hunky," and respected Grace somewhat more since she had got him.) Mrs. Travers, however, was barely five feet tall, and under her bright muumuus seemed not fat but sturdily plump, like a child who hasn't stretched up yet. And the shine, the intentness, of her eyes, the gaiety that was always ready to break out in them, had not been inherited. Nor had the rough red, almost a rash, on her cheeks, which was probably a result of going out in any weather without thinking about her complexion, and which, like her figure, like her muumuus, showed her independence.

There were sometimes guests, in addition to Grace, on these Sunday evenings. A couple, maybe a single person as well, usually close to Mr. and Mrs. Travers's age, and not unlike them. The women would be eager and witty, and the men quieter, slower, more tolerant. These people told amusing stories, in which the joke was often on themselves. (Grace has been an engaging talker for so long now that she sometimes gets sick of herself, and it's hard for her to remember how novel these dinner conversations once seemed to her. On the rare occasions when her aunt and uncle had had company, there had been only praise of and apology for the food, discussion of the weather, and a fervent wish for the meal to be finished as soon as possible.)

After dinner at the Travers house, if the evening was cool enough, Mr. Travers lit a fire, and they played what Mrs. Travers called "idiotic word games," for which, in fact, people had to be fairly clever to win. Here was where somebody who had been rather quiet at dinner might begin to shine. Mock arguments could be built up in defense of preposterous definitions. Gretchen's husband, Wat, did this, and so, after a bit, did Grace, to Mrs. Travers's and Maury's delight (with Maury calling out, to everyone's amusement but Grace's, "See? I told you. She's smart"). Mrs. Travers herself led the way in this making up of ridiculous words, insuring that the play did not become too serious or any player too anxious.

The only time there was a problem was one evening when Mavis, who was married to Mrs. Travers's son Neil, came to dinner. Mavis and Neil and their two children were staying nearby, at her parents' place down the lake. But that night she came by herself—Neil was a doctor, and he was busy in Ottawa that weekend. Mrs. Travers was disappointed, but she rallied, calling out in cheerful dismay, "But the children aren't in Ottawa, surely?"

"So this is how you settle out of court."

"Unfortunately not," Mavis said. "But they're thoroughly awful. They'd shriek all through dinner. The baby's got prickly heat, and God knows what's the matter with Mikey."

She was a slim, suntanned woman in a purple dress, with a matching wide purple band holding back her dark hair. Handsome, but with little pouches of boredom or disapproval hiding the corners of her mouth. She left most of her dinner untouched on her plate, explaining that she had an allergy to curry.

"Oh, Mavis. What a shame," Mrs. Travers said. "Is this new?"

"Oh, no. I've had it for ages, but I used to be polite about it. Then I got sick of throwing up half the night."

"If you'd only told me . . . What can we get you?"

"Don't worry about it. I'm fine. I don't have any appetite anyway, what with the heat and the joys of motherhood."

She lit a cigarette.

Afterward, in the game, she got into an argument with Wat over a definition he'd used, and when the dictionary proved it acceptable she said, "Oh, I'm sorry. I guess I'm just outclassed by you people." And when it came time for everybody to hand in their own word on a slip of paper for the next round she smiled and shook her head. "I don't have one."

"Oh, Mavis," Mrs. Travers said.

And Mr. Travers said, "Come on, Mavis. Any old word will do."

"But I don't have any old word. I'm sorry. I just feel stupid tonight. The rest of you just play around me."

Which they did, everybody pretending that nothing was wrong, while she smoked and continued to smile her determined, unhappy smile. In a little while she got up and said that she couldn't leave her children on their grandparents' hands any longer. She'd had a lovely and instructive visit, and now she had to go home.

"I must give you an Oxford dictionary next Christmas," she said to nobody in particular before she left, with a merry, bitter little laugh. The Traverses' dictionary, which Wat had used, was an American one.

When she was gone, none of them looked at one another. Mrs. Travers said, "Gretchen, do you have the strength to make us all a pot of coffee?" And Gretchen went off to the kitchen, muttering, "What fun. Jesus wept."

"Well. Her life is trying," Mrs. Travers said. "With the two little ones."

On Wednesdays, Grace got a break between clearing breakfast and setting up dinner, and when Mrs. Travers found out about this she started driving up to Bailey's Falls to bring her down to the lake for those free hours. Maury would be at work then—he was spending the summer with the road gang repairing Highway 7—and Wat would be in his office in Ottawa and Gretchen would be off with the children, swimming or rowing on the lake. Usually Mrs. Travers herself would announce that she had shopping to do or letters to write, and she would leave Grace alone in the big, cool, shaded living-dining room, with its permanently dented leather sofa and crowded bookshelves.

"Read anything that takes your fancy," Mrs. Travers said. "Or curl up and go to sleep, if that's what you'd like. It's a hard job—you must be tired. I'll make sure you're back on time."

Grace never slept. She read. She barely moved, and her bare legs below her shorts became sweaty and stuck to the leather. Quite often she saw nothing of Mrs. Travers until it was time for her to be driven back to work.

In the car, Mrs. Travers would not start any sort of conversation until enough time had passed for Grace's thoughts to have shaken loose from whatever book she had been in. Then she might mention having read it herself, and say what she had thought of it—but always in a way that was both thoughtful and lighthearted. For instance, she said, of "Anna Karenina," "I don't know how many times I've read it, but I know that first I identified with Kitty, and then it was Anna—oh, it was awful with Anna—and now, you know, the last time, I found myself sympathizing with Dolly. When she goes to the country, you know, with all those children, and she has to figure out how to do the washing, there's the problem about the washtubs—I suppose that's just how your sympathies change as you get older. Passion gets pushed behind the washtubs. Don't pay any attention to me, anyway. You don't, do you?"

"I don't know if I pay much attention to anybody." Grace was surprised at herself, wondered if she sounded conceited. "But I like listening to you talk."

Mrs. Travers laughed. "I like listening to myself, too."

Somehow, by the middle of the summer Maury had begun to talk about their being married. This would not happen for quite a while, he said—not until after he was qualified and working as an engineer—but he spoke of it as something that she, as well as he, must be taking for granted. "When we are married," he'd say, and, instead of questioning or contradicting him, Grace would listen curiously.

When they were married, they would have a place on Sabot Lake. Not too close to his parents, not too far away. It would be just a summer place, of course. The rest of the time they would live wherever his work might take them. It could be anywhere—Peru, Iraq, the Northwest Territories. Grace was delighted by the idea of such travels—rather more than she was by the idea of what he spoke of, with a severe pride, as "our own home." None of this seemed at all real to her, but then the idea of helping her uncle, of taking on the life of a chair-caner in the town and in the very house where she had grown up, had never seemed real, either.

Maury kept asking her what she had told her aunt and uncle about him, when she was going to take him home to meet them. In fact, she had said nothing in her brief weekly letters, except to mention that she was "going out with a boy who works around here for the summer." She might have given the impression that he worked at the hotel.

It wasn't as if she had never thought of getting married. That possibility had been in her mind, along with the life of caning chairs. In spite of the fact that nobody had ever courted her, she had felt sure that it *would* happen someday, and in exactly this way—with the man making up his mind immediately. He would see her and, having seen her, he would fall in love. In her imagination, he was handsome, like Maury. Passionate, like Maury. Pleasurable physical intimacies followed.

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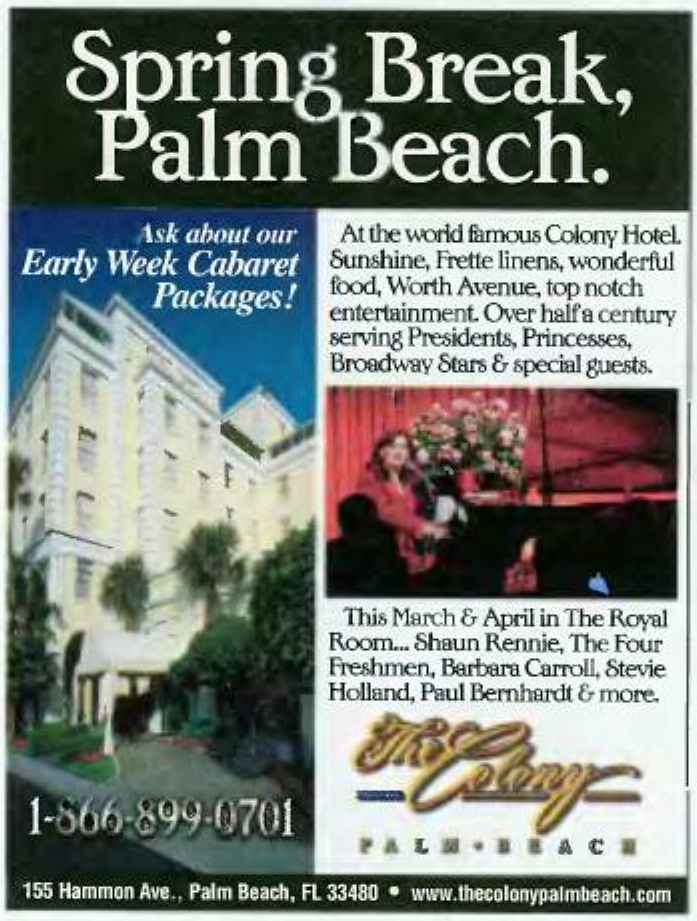

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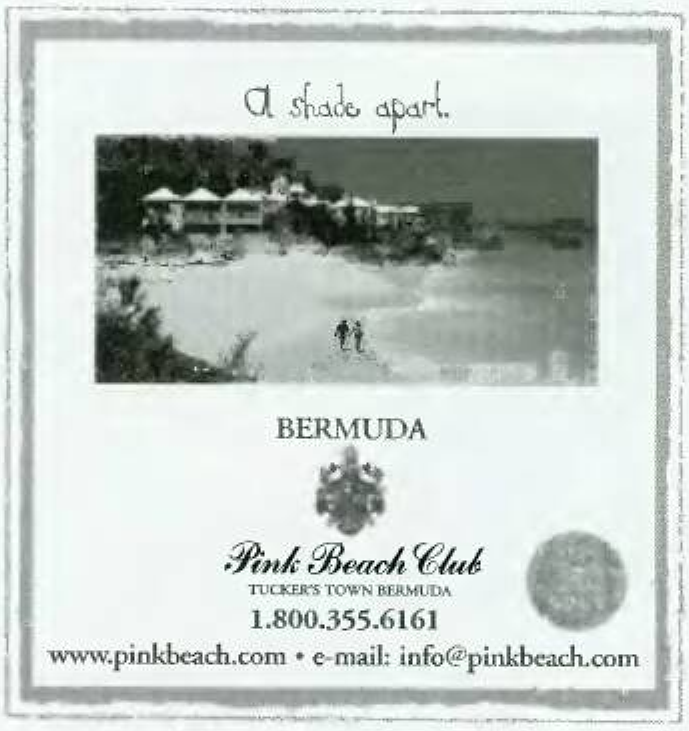

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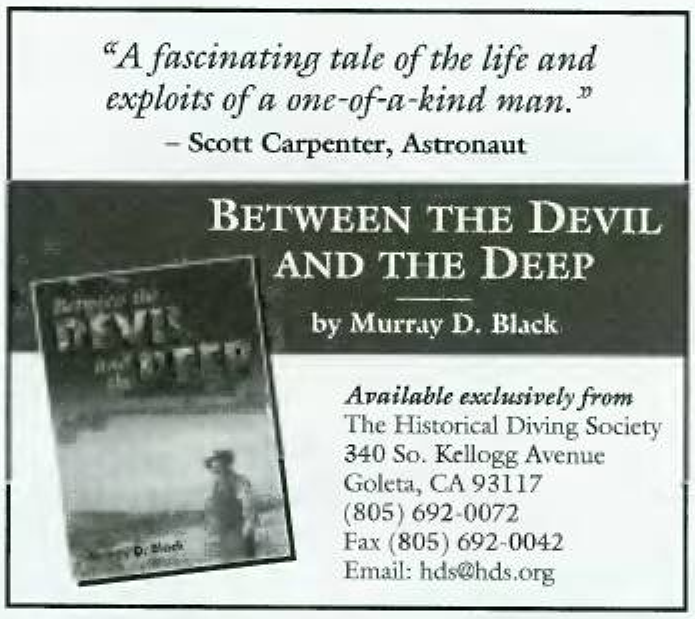

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happened. In Maury's car, or out on the grass under the stars, she was willing. And Maury was ready, but not willing. He felt that it was his responsibility to protect her. And the ease with which she offered herself threw him off balance. He sensed, perhaps, that it was cold—a deliberate offering that he could not understand and that did not fit in at all with his notions of her. She herself did not realize how cold she was—she believed that her show of eagerness would lead to the pleasures she knew about, in solitude and in her imagination, and she felt that it was up to Maury to take over. Which he would not do.

These sieges left them both disturbed and slightly angry or ashamed, so that they could not stop kissing, clinging, and using fond words to make it up to each other as they said good night. It was a relief to Grace to be alone, to get into bed in the hotel dormitory and blot the last couple of hours out of her mind. And she thought it must be a relief to Maury, too, to be driving down the highway by himself, rearranging his impressions of his Grace so that he could stay wholeheartedly in love with her.

Most of the waitresses left after Labor Day, to go back to school or college. But the hotel was going to stay open till October, for Thanksgiving, with a reduced staff—Grace among them. There was talk, this year, of opening again in early December for a winter season, or at least a Christmas season, but nobody on the kitchen or dining-room staff seemed to know if this would really happen. Grace wrote to her aunt and uncle as if the Christmas season were a certainty and they should not expect her back anytime soon.

Why did she do this? It was not as if she had other plans. Maury was in his final year at college. She had even promised to take him home at Christmas to meet her family. And he had said that Christmas would be a good time to make their engagement formal. He was saving up his summer wages to buy her a diamond ring.

She, too, had been saving her wages, so that she would be able to take the bus to Kingston, to visit him during his school term.

She spoke of this, promised it, so easily. But did she believe, or even wish, that it would happen?

"Maury is a sterling character," Mrs. Travers said. "Well, you can see that for yourself. He will be a dear, uncomplicated man, like his father. Not like his brother. Neil is very bright. I don't mean that Maury isn't—you certainly don't get to be an engineer without a brain or two in your head—but Neil is . . . He's deep." She laughed at herself. "*Deep unfathomable caves of ocean bear*— What am I talking about? For a long time, Neil and I didn't have anybody but each other. So I think he's special. I don't mean he can't be fun. But sometimes people who are the most fun can be melancholy, can't they? You wonder about them. But what's the use of worrying about your grown-up children? With Neil I worry a lot, with Maury only a tiny little bit. And Gretchen I don't worry about at all. Because women have always got something, haven't they, to keep them going?"

The house on the lake was never closed up till Thanksgiving. Gretchen and the children had to go back to Ottawa, of course, for school. And Maury had to go to Kingston. Mr. Travers could come out only on weekends. But Mrs. Travers had told Grace that she usually stayed on, sometimes with guests, sometimes by herself.

Then her plans changed. She went back to Ottawa with Mr. Travers in September. This happened unexpectedly—the Sunday dinner that week was cancelled.

Maury explained that his mother got into trouble, now and then, with her nerves. "She has to have a rest," he said. "She has to go into the hospital for a couple of weeks or so, and they get her stabilized. She always comes out fine."

Grace said that Mrs. Travers was the last person she would have expected to have such troubles. "What brings it on?"

"I don't think they know," Maury said. But after a moment he added, "Well. It could be her husband. I mean, her first husband. Neil's father. What happened with him, et cetera."

What had happened was that Neil's father had killed himself.

"He was unstable, I guess. But I don't

know if it even is that. It could be her age, and female problems and all that sort of thing. But it's O.K.—they can get her straightened out easy now, with drugs. They've got terrific drugs. Don't worry about it."

By Thanksgiving, as Maury had predicted, Mrs. Travers was out of the hospital and feeling well. Thanksgiving dinner would take place at the lake, as usual. And it was being held on Sunday, instead of Monday—that was also customary, to allow for the packing up and closing of the house. And it was fortunate for Grace, because Sunday was still her day off.

The whole family would be there, even Neil and Mavis and their children, who were staying at Mavis's parents' place. No guests—unless you counted Grace.

By the time Maury brought her down to the lake on Sunday morning, the turkey was already in the oven. The pies were on the kitchen counter—pumpkin, apple, wild blueberry. Gretchen was in charge of the kitchen, as coördinated a cook as she was an athlete. Mrs. Travers sat at the kitchen table, drinking coffee and working on a jigsaw puzzle with Gretchen's younger daughter, Dana.

"Ah, Grace," she said, jumping up for an embrace—the first time she had ever done this—and with a clumsy motion of her hand scattering the jigsaw pieces.

Dana wailed, "*Grand*-ma," and her older sister, Janey, who had been watching critically, scooped up the pieces.

"We can easy put them back together," she said. "Grandma didn't mean to."

"Where do you keep the cranberry sauce?" Gretchen asked.

"In the cupboard," Mrs. Travers said, still squeezing Grace's arms and ignoring the destroyed puzzle.

"*Where* in the cupboard?"

"Oh. Cranberry sauce," Mrs. Travers said. "Well, I make it. First I put the cranberries in a little water. Then I keep it on low heat—no, I think I soak them first—"

"Well, I haven't got time for all that," Gretchen said. "You mean you don't have any canned?"

"I guess not. I must not have, because I make it."

"I'll have to send somebody to get some."

"Dear, it's Thanksgiving," Mrs. Travers said gently. "Nowhere will be open."

"That place down the highway, it's always open." Gretchen raised her voice. "Where's Wat?"

"He's out in the rowboat," Mavis called from the back bedroom. She made it sound like a warning, because she was trying to get her baby to sleep. "He took Mikey out in the boat."

Mavis had driven over in her own car, with Mikey and the baby. Neil was coming later—he had some phone calls to make.

And Mr. Travers had gone golfing.

"It's just that I need somebody to go to the store," Gretchen said. She waited, but no offer came from the bedroom. She raised her eyebrows at Grace. "You can't drive, can you?"

Grace said no.

Mrs. Travers sat down, with a gracious sigh.

"Well," Gretchen said. "Maury can drive. Where's Maury?"

Maury was in the front bedroom looking for his swimming trunks, though everybody had told him that the water was too cold for swimming. He said that the store would not be open.

"It will be," Gretchen said. "They sell gas. And if it isn't there's that one just coming into Perth—you know, with the ice-cream cones."

Maury wanted Grace to come with him, but the two little girls, Janey and Dana, were begging her to come see the swing that their grandfather had put up under the Norway maple at the side of the house.

As Grace was going down the steps, she felt the strap of one of her sandals break. She took both shoes off and walked without difficulty on the sandy soil, across the flat-pressed plantain and the many curled leaves that had already fallen.

First she pushed the children in the swing, then they pushed her. It was when she jumped off, barefoot, that one leg crumpled and she let out a yelp of pain, not knowing what had happened.

It was her foot, not her leg. The pain had shot up from the sole of her left foot, which had been cut by the sharp edge of a clamshell.

"Dana brought those shells," Janey said. "She was going to make a house for her snail."

"He got away," Dana said.

Gretchen and Mrs. Travers and even Mavis had come running out of the house, thinking that the cry had come from one of the children.

"She's got a bloody foot," Dana said. "There's blood all over the ground."

Janey said, "She cut it on a shell. Dana left those shells here—she was going to build a house for Ivan. Ivan her snail."

A basin was brought out, with water to wash the cut and a towel, and everyone asked how much it hurt.

"Not too bad," Grace said, limping to the steps, with both girls competing to hold her up and generally getting in her way.

"Oh, that's nasty," Gretchen said. "But why weren't you wearing your shoes?"

"Broke her strap," Dana and Janey said together, as a wine-colored convertible swerved neatly into the parking space by the house.

"Now, that is what I call opportune," Mrs. Travers said. "Here's the very man we need. The doctor."

This was Neil—the first time that Grace had ever seen him. He was tall, thin, impatient.

"Your bag," Mrs. Travers cried gaily. "We've already got a case for you."

"Nice piece of junk you've got there," Gretchen said. "New?"

Neil said, "Piece of folly."

"Now the baby's awake," Mavis said, with a sigh of unspecific accusation. She went back into the house.

"Don't tell me you haven't got it with you," Mrs. Travers said. But Neil swung a doctor's bag out of the back seat, and she said, "Oh, yes, you have. That's good. You never know."

"You the patient?" Neil said to Dana. "What's the matter? Swallow a toad?"

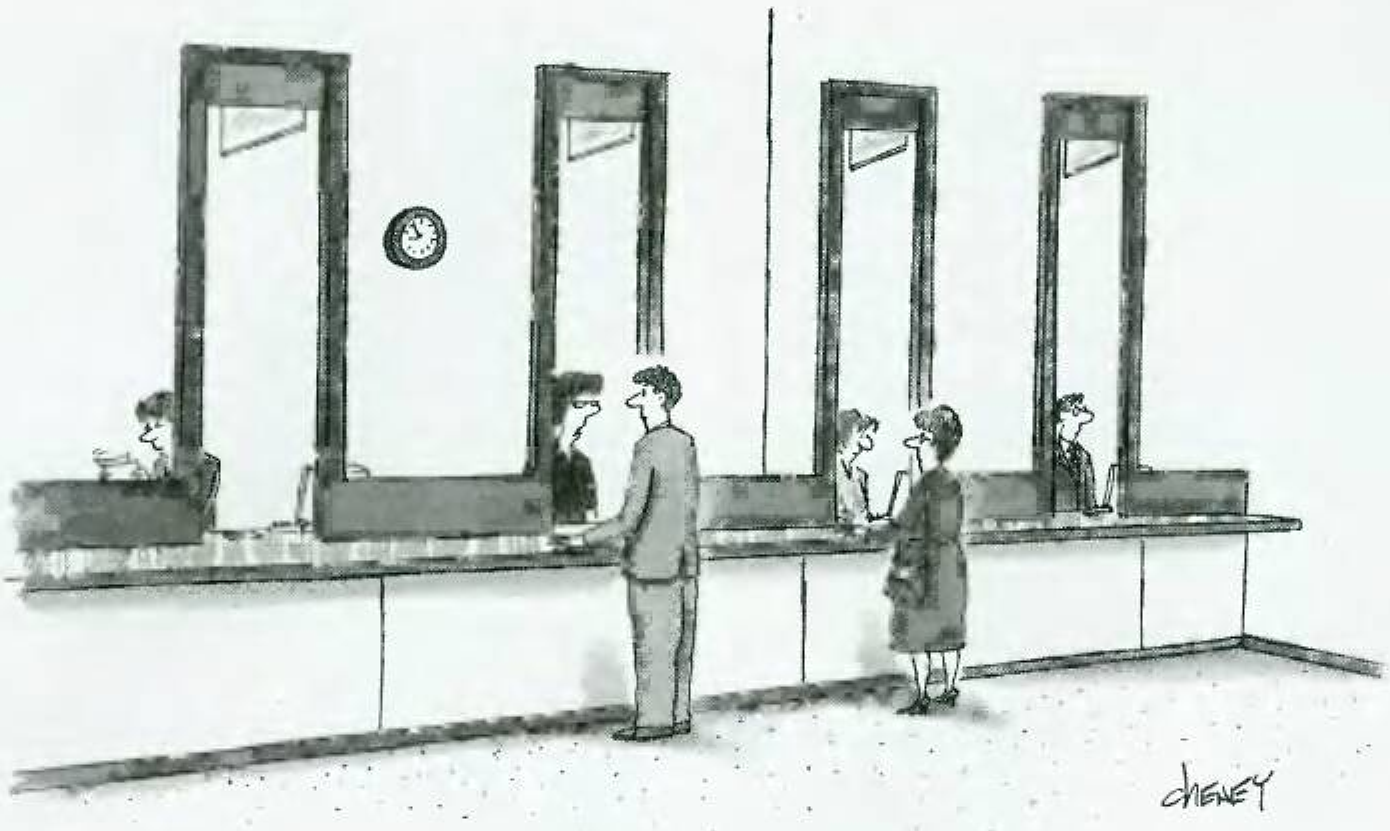
"It's her," Dana said with dignity. "It's *Grace*."

"I see. *She* swallowed the toad."

"She *cut her foot*."

"On a clamshell," Janey said.

Neil said, "Move over," to his nieces, and sat on the step below Grace. He carefully lifted the foot and said, "Give me that cloth or whatever," then blotted away the blood to get a look at the cut. Now that he was so close to her, Grace noticed a smell that she had learned to identify over the summer, working



"You're aware, of course, that there's a substantial penalty for early withdrawal on this account."

at the inn—the smell of liquor edged with mint.

"Hurts?" he asked.

Grace said, "Some."

He looked briefly, though searchingly, into her face. Perhaps wondering if she had caught the smell and what she had thought about it.

"I bet. See that flap? We have to get under there and make sure it's clean, then I'll put a stitch or two in it. I've got some stuff I can rub on it, so that won't hurt as much as you might think." He looked up at Gretchen. "Hey. Let's get the audience out of the way here."

He had not spoken a word, as yet, to his mother, who now said again what a good thing it was that he had come along just when he did.

"Boy Scout," he said. "Always prepared."

His hands didn't feel drunk, and his eyes didn't look it. Nor did he look like the jolly uncle he had impersonated when he talked to the children, or the purveyor of reassuring patter he had chosen to be with Grace. He had a high pale forehead, a crest of tight curly gray-black hair, bright gray but slightly sunken eyes, high cheekbones, and rather hollowed cheeks. If his face relaxed, he would look sombre and hungry.

When the cut had been dealt with, Neil said that he thought it would be a good idea to run Grace into town, to the hospital. "For an anti-tetanus shot."

"It doesn't feel too bad," Grace said.

Neil said, "That's not the point."

"I agree," Mrs. Travers said. "Tetanus—that's terrible."

"We shouldn't be long," he said. "Here. Grace? Grace, I'll get you to the car." He held her under one arm. She had strapped on the good sandal, and managed to get her toes into the other, so that she could drag it along. The bandage was very neat and tight.

"I'll just run in," he said, when she was sitting in the car. "Make my apologies."

Mrs. Travers came down from the veranda and put her hand on the car door.

"This is good," she said. "This is very good. Grace, you are a godsend. You'll try to keep him away from drinking today, won't you? You'll know how to do it."

Grace heard these words, but didn't give them much thought. She was too dismayed by the change in Mrs. Travers, by what looked like an increase in bulk, a stiffness in her movements, a random and rather frantic air of benevolence. And a faint crust showing at the corners of her mouth, like sugar.

The hospital was three miles away. There was a highway overpass above the railway tracks, and they took this at such speed that Grace had the impression, at its crest, that the car had lifted off the pavement and they were flying. There was hardly any traffic, so she wasn't frightened, and anyway there was nothing she could do.

Neil knew the nurse who was on duty in Emergency, and after he had filled out a form and let her take a passing look at Grace's foot ("Nice job," she said without interest) he was able to go ahead and give the tetanus shot himself. ("It won't hurt now, but it could later.") Just as he finished, the nurse came back into the cubicle and said, "There's a guy in the waiting room who wants to take her home."

She said to Grace, "He says he's your fiancé."

"Tell him she's not ready yet," Neil said. "No. Tell him we've already gone."

"I said you were in here."

"But when you came back," Neil said, "we were gone."

"He said he was your brother. Won't he see your car in the lot?"

"But I parked out back in the doctors' lot."

"*Pret*-ty *trick*-y," the nurse said, over her shoulder.

And Neil said to Grace, "You didn't want to go home yet, did you?"

"No," Grace said, as if she'd seen the word written in front of her, on the wall. As if she were having her eyes tested.

Once more she was helped to the car, sandal flopping from the toe strap, and settled on the creamy upholstery. They took a back street out of the lot, an unfamiliar way out of town.

She knew that they wouldn't see Maury. She did not think of him. Still less of Mavis.

Describing this passage, this change in her life, later on, Grace might say—she did say—that it was as if a gate had clanged shut behind her. But at the time there was no clang—acquiescence simply rippled through her, and the rights of those left behind were smoothly cancelled out.

Her memory of this day remained clear and detailed for a long time, though there was a variation in the parts of it she dwelled on.

And even in some of those details she must have been wrong.

First they drove west, on Highway 7. In Grace's recollection, there was not another car on the highway, and their speed approached the flight on the highway overpass. This cannot have been true—there must have been people on the road, people on their way home from church that Sunday morning, or on their way to spend Thanksgiving with their families. Neil must have slowed down when driving through villages, and around the many curves on the old highway. She was not used to driving in a convertible with the top down, wind in her eyes, taking charge of her hair. It gave her the illusion of constant perfect speed—not frantic but miraculous, serene.

And though Maury and Mavis and the rest of the family had been wiped from her mind, some scrap of Mrs. Travers did remain, hovering, delivering in a whisper and with a strange, shamed giggle, her last message.

You'll know how to do it.

Grace and Neil did not talk, of course. As she remembers it, you would have had to scream to be heard. And what she remembers is, to tell the truth, hardly distinguishable from her idea, her fantasies at that time, of what sex should be like. The fortuitous meeting, the muted but powerful signals, the nearly silent flight in which she herself figured more or less as a captive. An airy surrender, her flesh nothing now but a stream of desire.

They stopped, finally, in Kaladar, and went into the hotel—the old hotel that is still there. Taking her hand, kneading his fingers between hers, slowing his pace to match her uneven steps, Neil led her into the bar. She recognized it as a bar, though she had never been in one before. (Bailey's Falls Inn did not yet have a license, so drinking was done in people's rooms, or in a rather ramshackle night club across the road.) This bar was just as she would have expected—a big, dark, airless room, with the chairs and tables rearranged in a careless way after a hasty cleanup, the smell of Lysol not erasing the smell of beer, whiskey, cigars, pipes, men.

A man came in from another room and spoke to Neil. He said, "Hello there, Doc," and went behind the bar.

It occurred to Grace that it would be like this everywhere they went—people would know Neil.

"You know it's Sunday," the man said in a stern, almost shouting voice, as if he wanted to be heard out in the parking lot. "I can't sell you anything in here on a Sunday. And I can't sell anything to her, ever. She shouldn't even be in here. You understand that?"

"Oh, yes, sir. Yes, indeed, sir," Neil said. "I heartily agree, sir."

While both men were talking, the man behind the bar had taken a bottle of whiskey from a hidden shelf and poured some into a glass and shoved it across the counter to Neil.

"You thirsty?" he asked Grace. He was already opening a Coke. He gave it to her without a glass.

Neil put a bill on the counter, and the man shoved it away.

"I told you," he said. "Can't sell."

"What about the Coke?" Neil said.

"Can't sell."

The man put the bottle away. Neil drank what was in the glass very quickly. "You're a good man," he said. "Spirit of the law."

"Take the Coke along with you. Sooner she's out of here the happier I'll be."

"You bet," Neil said. "She's a good girl. My sister-in-law. Future sister-in-law. So I understand."

"Is that the truth?"

They didn't go back to Highway 7. Instead, they took the road north, which was not paved but was wide enough and decently graded. The drink seemed to have affected Neil's driving in the opposite way than it was supposed to. He had slowed down to the seemly, even cautious rate that this road required.

"You don't mind?" he said.

Grace said, "Mind what?"

"Being dragged into any old place."

"No."

"I need your company. How's your foot?"

"It's fine."

"It must hurt some."

"Not really. It's O.K."

He picked up the hand that was not holding the Coke bottle, pressed the palm of it to his mouth, gave it a lick, and let it drop.

"Did you think I was abducting you for fell purposes?"

"No," Grace lied, thinking how like his mother that word was. *Fell.*

"There was a time when you would have been right," he said, just as if she had answered yes. "But not today. I don't think so. You're safe as a church today."

The changed tone of his voice, which

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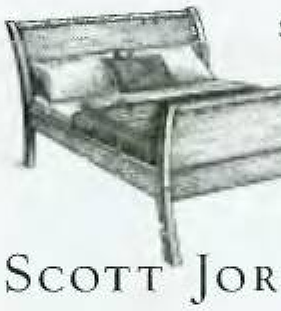
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had become intimate, frank, and quiet, and the memory of his lips pressed, his tongue flicked, across her skin, affected Grace to such an extent that she was hearing the words but not the sense of what he was telling her. She could feel a hundred flicks of his tongue, a dance of supplication, all over her skin. But she thought to say, "Churches aren't always safe."

"True. True."

"And I'm not your sister-in-law."

"Future. Didn't I say future?"

"I'm not that, either."

"Oh. Well. I guess I'm not surprised. No. Not surprised."

Then his voice changed again, became businesslike.

"I'm looking for a turnoff up here, to the right. There's a road I ought to recognize. Do you know this country at all?"

"Not around here, no."

"Don't know Flower Station? Ompah? Poland? Snow Road?"

She had not heard of them.

"There's somebody I want to see."

A turn was made, to the right, with some dubious mutterings on his part. There were no signs. This road was narrower and rougher, with a one-lane plank-floored bridge. The trees of the hardwood forest laced their branches overhead. The weather had been strangely warm this year, and the leaves were still green, except for the odd one here and there that flashed out like a banner. There was a feeling of sanctuary. For miles, Neil and Grace were quiet, and there was still no break in the trees, no end to the forest. But then Neil broke the peace.

He said, "Can you drive?" And when Grace said no he said, "I think you should learn."

He meant right then. He stopped the car, got out, and came around to her side, gesturing to her to move behind the wheel.

"No better place than this."

"What if something comes?"

"Nothing will. And we can manage if it does. That's why I picked a straight stretch."

He did not bother explaining anything about how cars ran—he simply showed her where to put her feet, and made her practice shifting the gears, then said, "Now go, and do what I tell you."

The first leap of the car terrified her. She ground the gears, and she thought he would put an end to the lesson immediately, but he just laughed. He said, "Whoa, easy. Easy. Keep going," and she did. He did not comment on her steering, except to say, "Keep going, keep going, keep on the road, don't let the engine die."

"When can I stop?" she said.

"Not till I tell you how."

He made her keep driving until they came out of the tunnel of trees, and then he instructed her about the brake. As soon as she had stopped, she opened the door so that they could trade sides, but he said, "No. This is just a breather. Soon you'll be getting to like it." And when they started again she began to see that he might be right. Her momentary surge of confidence almost took them into a ditch. Still, he laughed when he had to grab the wheel, and the lesson continued.

She drove for what seemed like miles, and even went—slowly—around several curves. Then he said that they had better switch back, because he could not get a feeling of direction unless he was driving.

He asked how she felt now, and though she was shaking all over she said, "O.K."

He rubbed her arm from shoulder to elbow and said, "What a liar." But did not touch her, beyond that, did not let any part of her feel his mouth again.

He must have got his feeling of direction back when they came to a crossroads some miles on, for he turned left, and the trees thinned out and they climbed a rough road up to a village, or at least a roadside collection of buildings. A church and a store, neither of them open to serve their original purposes but probably lived in, to judge by the vehicles around them and the sorry-looking curtains in the windows. There were a couple of houses in the same state, and, behind one of them, a barn that had fallen in on itself, with old dark hay bulging out between its cracked beams like swollen innards.

Neil exclaimed in celebration at the sight of this place, but did not stop there.

"What a relief," he said. "What—a—relief. Now I know. Thank you."

"Me?"

"For letting me teach you to drive. It calmed me down."

"Calmed you down?" Grace said. "Really?"

"True as I live." Neil was smiling, but he did not look at her. He was busy looking from side to side, across the fields that lay along the road after it had passed through the village. He was talking as if to himself. "This is it. Got to be it. Now we know."

And so on, till he turned onto a lane that didn't go straight but wound around through a field, avoiding rocks and patches of juniper. At the end of the lane was a house, in no better shape than the houses in the village.

"Now, this place," he said, "this place I am not going to take you into. I won't be five minutes."

He was longer than that.

She sat in the car, in the shade. The door to the house was open—just the screen door closed. The screen had mended patches in it, newer wire woven in with the old. Nobody came to look at her, not even a dog. And now that the car had stopped, the day filled up with an unnatural silence. Unnatural because on such a hot afternoon you would expect the buzzing and chirping of insects in the grass and in the juniper bushes. Even if you couldn't see them, their noise would seem to rise out of everything growing on the earth, as far as the horizon. But it was too late in the year, maybe too late even to hear geese honking as they flew south. At any rate, she didn't hear any.

It seemed that they were up on top of the world here. The field fell away on all sides; only the tips of the trees were visible, because they grew on lower ground.

Whom did Neil know, who lived in this house? A woman? It didn't seem possible that the sort of woman he would want could live in a place like this, but then there was no end to the strangeness that Grace could encounter today. No end to it.

Once, this had been a brick house, but someone had begun to take the brick walls down. Plain wooden walls had been bared underneath, and the bricks that had covered them were roughly piled in the yard, maybe waiting to be sold. The bricks left on the wall in front of her formed a diagonal line, a set of steps, and Grace, with nothing else to do, leaned back to count them. She did this both foolishly and seriously, the way you would pull petals off a flower, but not with any words so blatant as *He loves me, he loves me not.*

Lucky. Not. Lucky. Not. That was all she dared.

She found that it was hard to keep track of the bricks arranged in this zigzag fashion, especially since the line flattened out above the door.

Then she knew. What else could it be? A bootlegger's place. She thought of the bootlegger in the town where her aunt and uncle lived—a raddled, skinny old man, morose and suspicious. He sat on his front step with a shotgun on Halloween night. And he painted numbers on the sticks of firewood stacked by his door so he'd know if any were stolen. She thought of him—or this one—dozing in the heat, in his dirty but tidy room (she knew that it would be that way by the mended patches in the screen), getting up from his creaky cot or couch, covered with a stained quilt that some woman related to him, some woman now dead, had made long ago.

Not that she had ever been inside the bootlegger's house, but the partitions were thin, back home, between the threadbare ways of living that were respectable and those that were not. She knew how things were.

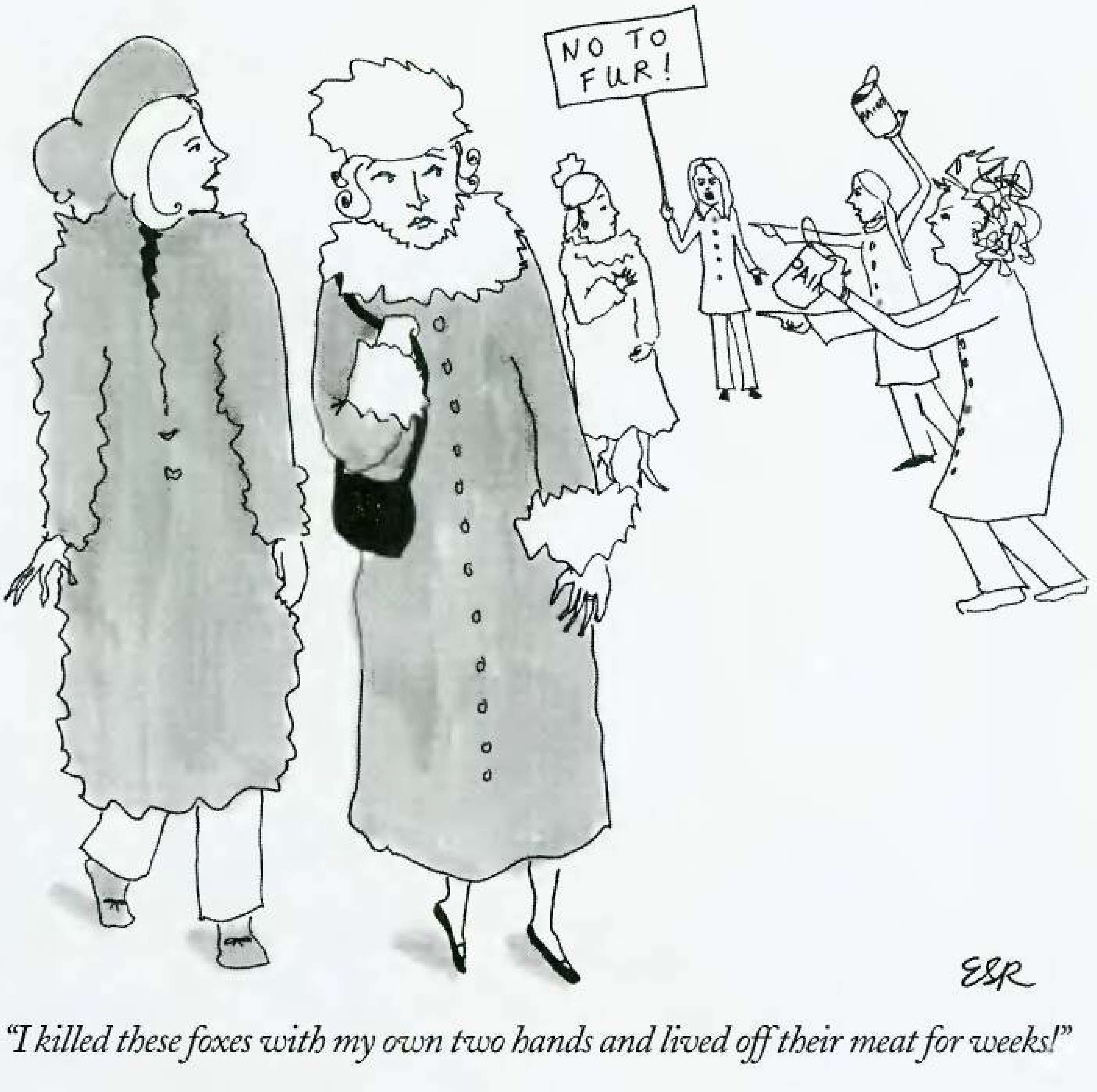
How strange that she'd thought of becoming one of them—a Travers. Marrying Maury. A kind of treachery, it would be. But not a treachery to be riding with Neil, because he wasn't fortunate—he knew some of the things that she did.

And then in the doorway it seemed that she could see her uncle, stooped and baffled, looking out at her, as if she had been away for years and years. As if she had promised to come home and then had forgotten about it, and in all this time he should have died but he hadn't.

She struggled to speak to him, but he was lost. She was waking up, moving. She was in the car with Neil, on the road again. She had been asleep with her mouth open and she was thirsty. He turned to her for a moment, and she noticed, even with the wind blowing around them, a fresh smell of whiskey.

"You awake? You were fast asleep when I came out of there," he said. "Sorry—I had to be sociable for a while. How's your bladder?"

That was a problem she had been



"I killed these foxes with my own two hands and lived off their meat for weeks!"

thinking about, in fact, while she was waiting. She had seen a toilet behind the house, but had felt shy about getting out and walking to it.

He said, "This looks like a possible place," and stopped the car. She got out and walked in among some blooming goldenrod and Queen Anne's lace and wild asters, to squat down. He stood in the flowers on the other side, with his back to her. When she got into the car, she saw the bottle, on the floor beside her feet. More than a third of its contents seemed already to be gone.

He saw her looking.

"Oh, don't worry," he said. "I just poured some in here." He held up a flask. "Easier when I'm driving."

On the floor there was also another Coca-Cola. He told her to look in the glove compartment for a bottle opener.

"It's cold!" she said in surprise.

"Icebox. They cut ice off the lakes in the winter and store it in sawdust. He keeps it under the house."

"I thought I saw my uncle in the doorway of that house," she said. "But I was dreaming."

"You could tell me about your uncle. Tell me about where you live. Your job. Anything. I just like to hear you talk."

There was a new strength in his voice, and a change in his face, but it wasn't the manic glow of drunkenness. It was as if he'd been sick—not terribly sick, just down, under the weather—and was now wanting to assure her that he was better. He capped the flask and laid it down and reached for her hand. He held it lightly, a comrade's clasp.

"He's quite old," Grace said. "He's really my great-uncle. He's a caner—that means he canes chairs. I can't explain that to you, but I could show you how, if we had a chair to cane—"

"I don't see one."

She laughed, and said, "It's boring, really."

"Tell me about what interests you, then. What interests you?"

She said, "You do."

"Oh. What about me interests you?" His hand slid away.

"What you're doing now," Grace said determinedly. "Why."

"You mean drinking? Why I'm drinking?" The cap came off the flask again. "Why don't you ask me?"

"Because I know what you'd say."

"What's that? What would I say?"

"You'd say, 'What else is there to do?' Or something like that."

"That's true," he said. "That's about what I'd say. Well, then you'd try to tell me why I was wrong."

"No," Grace said. "No. I wouldn't."

When she'd said that, she felt cold. She had thought that she was serious, but now she saw that she'd been trying to impress him, to show that she was as worldly as he was, and in the middle of that she had come on a rock-bottom truth, a lack of hope that was genuine, reasonable, everlasting. There was no comfort in what she saw, now that she could see it.

Neil said, "You wouldn't? No. You wouldn't. That's a relief. You are a relief, Grace."

In a while he said, "You know, I'm sleepy. Soon as we find a good spot I'm going to pull over and go to sleep. Just for a little while. Would you mind that?"

"No. I think you should."

"You'll watch over me?"

"Yes."

"Good."

The spot he found was in a little town called Fortune. There was a park on the outskirts, beside a river, and a gravelled space for cars. He settled the seat back, and at once fell asleep. Evening had come on as it did now, around suppertime, proving that this wasn't a summer day after all. A short while ago, people had been having a Thanksgiving picnic here—there was still some smoke rising from the outdoor fireplace, and the smell of hamburgers in the air. The smell did not make Grace hungry, exactly—it made her remember being hungry, in other circumstances.

Some dust had settled on her, with all the stopping and starting of her driving lesson. She got out and washed her hands and her face as well as she could, at an outdoor tap. Then, favoring her cut foot, she walked slowly to the edge of the river, saw how shallow it was, with reeds breaking the surface. A sign there warned that profanity, obscenity, or vulgar language was forbidden in this place and would be punished.

She tried the swings, which faced west. Pumping herself high, she looked into the clear sky—faint green, fading gold, a fierce pink rim at the horizon. Already the air was getting cold.

She had thought that it was touch. Mouths, tongues, skin, bodies, banging bone on bone. Inflammation. Passion. But that wasn't what she'd been working toward at all. She had seen deeper, deeper into him than she could ever have managed if they'd gone that way.

What she saw was final. As if she were at the edge of a flat dark body of water that stretched on and on. Cold, level water. Looking out at such dark, cold, level water, and knowing that it was all there was.

It wasn't the drinking that was responsible. Drinking, needing to drink—that was just some sort of distraction, like everything else, from the thing that was waiting, no matter what, all the time.

She went back to the car and tried to rouse him. He stirred but wouldn't waken. So she walked around again to keep warm, and to practice the easiest way with her foot—she understood now that she would be working again, serving breakfast in the morning.

She tried once more, talking to him urgently. He answered with various promises and mutters, and once more he fell asleep. By the time it was really dark she had given up. Now, with the cold of night settled in, some other facts became clear to her: that they could not remain here, that they were still in the world, after all, that she had to get back to Bailey's Falls.

With some difficulty, she got him over into the passenger seat. If that did not wake him, it was clear that nothing could. It took her a while to figure out how the headlights went on, and then she began to move the car, jerkily, slowly, back onto the road.

She had no idea of directions, and there was not a soul on the street to ask. She just kept driving, to the other side of the town, and there, most blessedly, was a sign pointing the way to Bailey's Falls, among other places. Only nine miles.

She drove along the two-lane highway, never at more than thirty miles an hour. There was little traffic. Once or twice a car passed her, honking, and the few she met honked also. In one case, it was probably because she was going so slowly, and, in the other, because she did not know how to dim the lights. Never mind. She couldn't stop to get her courage up again. She had to just keep going, as he had said. Keep going.

At first she did not recognize Bailey's Falls, coming upon it in this unfamiliar way. When she did, she became more frightened than she had been in all the nine miles. It was one thing to drive in unknown territory, another to turn in at the inn gates.

He was awake when she stopped in the parking lot. He didn't show any surprise at where they were, or at what she had done. In fact, he told her, the honking had woken him, miles back, but he had pretended to be still asleep, because the important thing was not to startle her. He hadn't been worried, though. He'd known that she would make it.

She asked if he was awake enough to drive now.

"Wide awake. Bright as a dollar."

He told her to slip her foot out of its sandal, and he pressed it here and there, before saying, "Nice. No heat. No swelling. Your arm hurt from the shot? Maybe it won't." He walked her to the door, and thanked her for her company. She was still amazed to be safely back. She hardly realized that it was time to say goodbye.

As a matter of fact, she does not know, to this day, if those words were spoken or if he only caught her, wound his arms around her, held her so tightly, with such continuous, changing pressure that it seemed as if more than two arms were needed, as if she were surrounded by him, his body strong and light, demanding and renouncing all at once, telling her that she was wrong to give up on him, everything was possible, but then again that she was not wrong, he meant to stamp himself on her and go.

Early in the morning, the manager knocked on the dormitory door, calling for Grace.

"Somebody on the phone," he said. "Don't bother getting up—they just wanted to know if you were here. I said I'd go and check. O.K. now."

It would be Maury, she thought. One of them, anyway. But probably Maury. Now she'd have to deal with Maury.

When she went down to serve breakfast—wearing running shoes, one loosely laced—she heard about the accident. A car had gone into a bridge abutment halfway down the road to Sabot Lake. It had been rammed right in—it was totally smashed and burned up. There were no other cars involved, and apparently no passengers. The driver would have to be identified by dental records. Or probably had been, by this time.

"One hell of a way," the manager said. "Better to go and cut your throat."

"It could've been an accident," said the cook, who had an optimistic nature. "Could've just fell asleep."

"Yeah. Sure."

Her arm hurt now, as if it had taken a wicked blow. She couldn't balance her tray, and had to carry it in front of her, using both hands instead.

She did not have to deal with Maury face to face. He wrote her a letter.

Just say he made you do it. Just say you didn't want to go.

She wrote back five words. *I did want to go.*

She was going to add, *I'm sorry*, but stopped herself.

Mr. Travers came to the inn to see her a few days later. He was polite and businesslike, firm, cool, not unkind. She saw him now in circumstances that let him come into his own. A man who could take charge, who could tidy things up. He said that it was very sad, they were all very sad, but alcoholism was a terrible thing. When Mrs. Travers was a little better, he was going to take her on a trip, a vacation, somewhere warm.

Then he said that he had to be going. He had many things to do. As he shook her hand to say goodbye, he put an envelope into it.

"We both hope you'll make good use of this," he said.

The check was for a thousand dollars. Immediately she thought of sending it back or tearing it up, and sometimes even now she thinks that that would have been a grand thing to do. But in the end, of course, she was not able to do it. In those days, it was enough money to insure her a start in life. ♦

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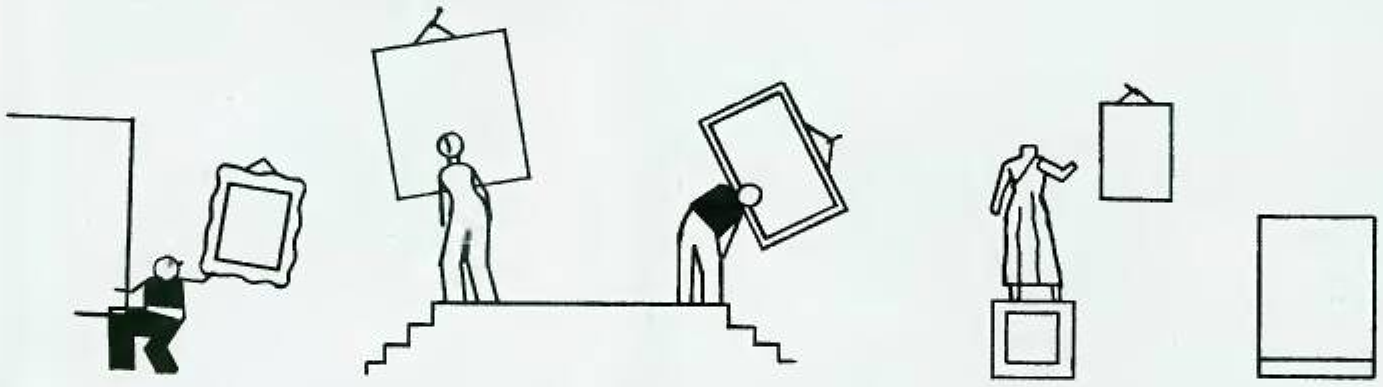

A CRITIC AT LARGE

TIMES REGAINED

How the old Times Square was made new.

BY ADAM GOPNIK

This year marks the hundredth anniversary of the decision to take an hourglass-shaped traffic funnel between Forty-second Street and Forty-seventh Street on Broadway, which had been called Longacre Square, and rename it after the New York *Times*, which had just built its office there. This was less an honor than a consolation prize. The other, then bigger and brighter newspaper, the New York *Herald*, had claimed the other, then brighter and better square, eight blocks south, which still bears its ghostly name. Nine years later, in 1913, the *Times* scurried off to a prim side street and a Gothic Revival bishop's palace, where it has been lifting its skirts and shyly peeking around the corner at its old home ever since.

No other part of New York has had such a melodramatic, mood-ring sensitivity to the changes in the city's history, with an image for every decade. There was the turn-of-the-century Times Square, with its roof gardens and showgirls; the raffish twenties Times Square of Ziegfeld and Youmans tunes; the thirties Times Square of "42nd Street," all chorus lines and moxie; the forties, V-J "On the Town" Times Square, full of sailors kissing girls; the wizened black-and-white fifties Times Square of "Sweet Smell of Success," steaming hot dogs, and grungy beats; and then the sixties and the seventies Times Square of "Midnight Cowboy" and "Taxi Driver," where everything fell apart and Hell wafted up through the manhole covers. No other place in town has been quite so high and quite so low. Within a single half decade, it had Harpo Marx in the Marx Brothers' valedictory movie, "Love Happy," leaping ecstatically from sign to sign and riding away on the flying Mobilgas Pegasus, and, down below, the unforgettable image of James Dean, hunched in his black overcoat, bearing the weight of a generation on his shoulders.

Now, of course, we have the new Times Square, as fresh as a neon daisy, with a giant Gap and a Niketown and an Applebee's and an ESPN Zone and television announcers visible through tinted windows, all family retailing and national brands. In some ways, the Square has never looked better, with the diagonal sloping lines of the Reuters Building, the curving Deco zipper, even the giant mock dinosaur in the Toys R Us. There are, of course, people who miss the old Times Square, its picturesque squalor and violence and misery and exploitation. Those who pointed at the old Times Square as an instance of everything that capitalism can do wrong now point to the new Times Square as an instance of everything that capitalism can do worse. Where once Times Square was hot, it is now cold, where once varied, now uniform, where once alive, now dead. Which just proves, as with the old maxim about belief, that people who refuse to be sentimental about the normal things don't end up being sentimental about nothing; they end up being sentimental about anything, shedding tears about muggings and the shards of crack vials glittering like diamonds in the gutter.

And yet, whatever has been gained, something really is missing in the new Times Square. The forces that created it, and the mixed emotions that most of us have in its presence, are the subject of James Traub's "The Devil's Playground" (Random House; $25.95), which is both an engaged civics lesson and a work of social history. The book begins with an ironic moment—Traub takes his eleven-year-old son to the new Forty-second Street to see the old "42nd Street"—and then spirals back into history, moving decade by decade over the past century.

Traub, a writer for the *Times*, hates city myth but loves city history: on every page you learn something about how the city really happened, and how it really happens now. He is particularly good at wrestling complicated history into a few tight pages. He gives the best account we have of the original sin of New York: the birth, in 1811, of the iron street grid almost before there were any streets. The decision to lay a crisscross of numbers over the city without any breaks for public squares, plazas, or parks—a deliberately brutal nod to the governing principle of commerce—is why we still, sadly, call any awkward and accidental space created by the diagonal of Broadway intersecting an avenue a "square."

Traub also has a gift for filtering social history through a previously invisible individual agent. As always, the vast forces of mass culture turn out to be the idiosyncratic choices of a few key, mostly hidden players. The character of the signs in Times Square, for instance, was mostly the invention of O. J. Gude, the Sign King of Times Square. Gude, a true aesthete with a significant art collection, was the first to sense that the peculiar shape of Times Square—a triangle with sign-friendly "flats" at the base and the apex—made it the perfect place for big electric national-brand signs, or "spectaculars," as they were called, even before the First World War. In 1917, when Gude put up a two-hundred-foot-long spectacular, on the west side of Broadway between Forty-third and Forty-fourth, featuring twelve gleaming "spearmen" who went through spasmodic calisthenics, it was as big an event in American pop culture, in its way, as the opening of "The Jazz Singer," ten years later. Gude also had the bright idea of joining the Municipal Art Society, the leading opponent of big signs, and later helped shape the zoning

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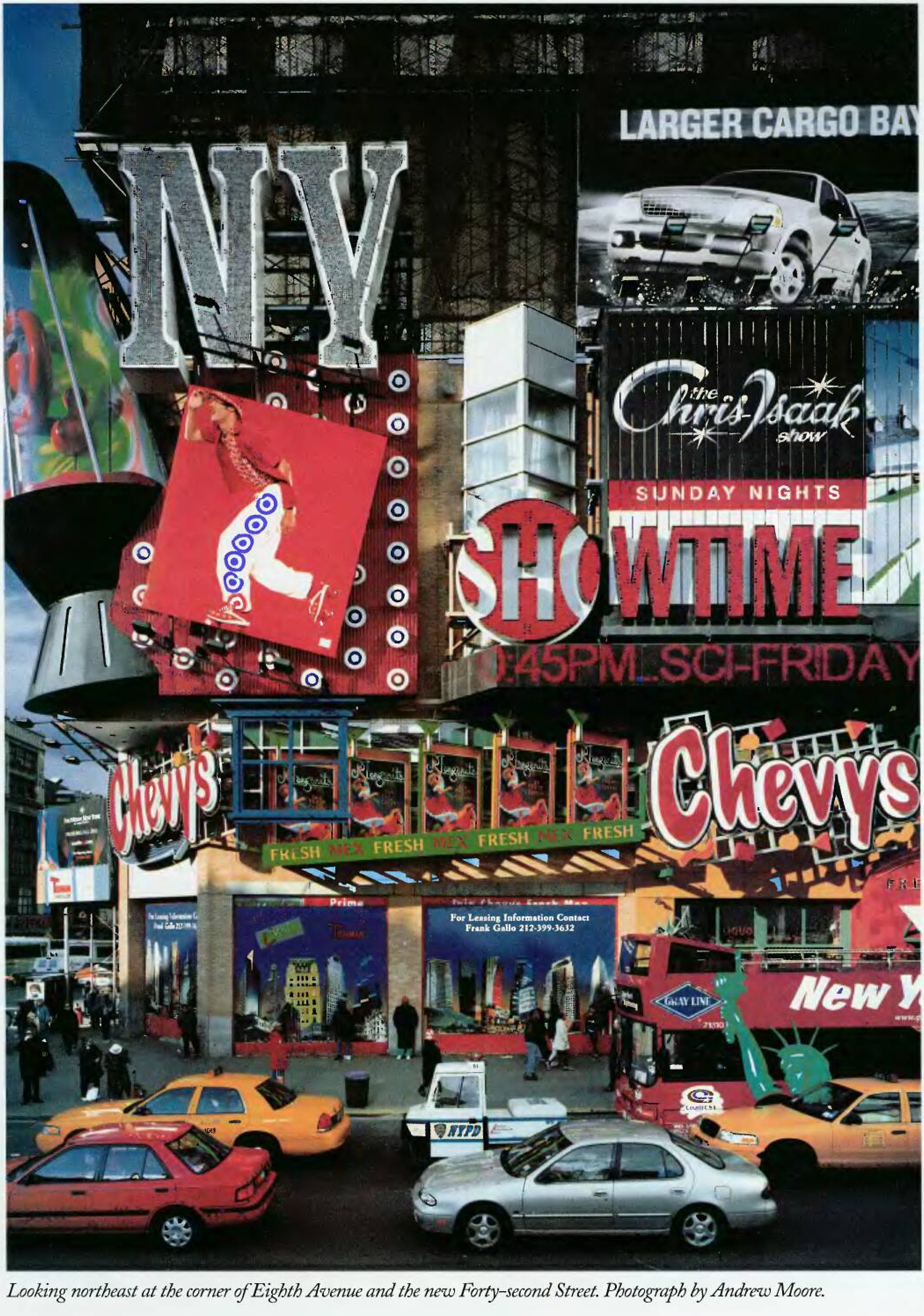
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Looking northeast at the corner of Eighth Avenue and the new Forty-second Street. Photograph by Andrew Moore.

ordinances that essentially eliminated big electric signs anywhere in midtown *except* in Times Square.

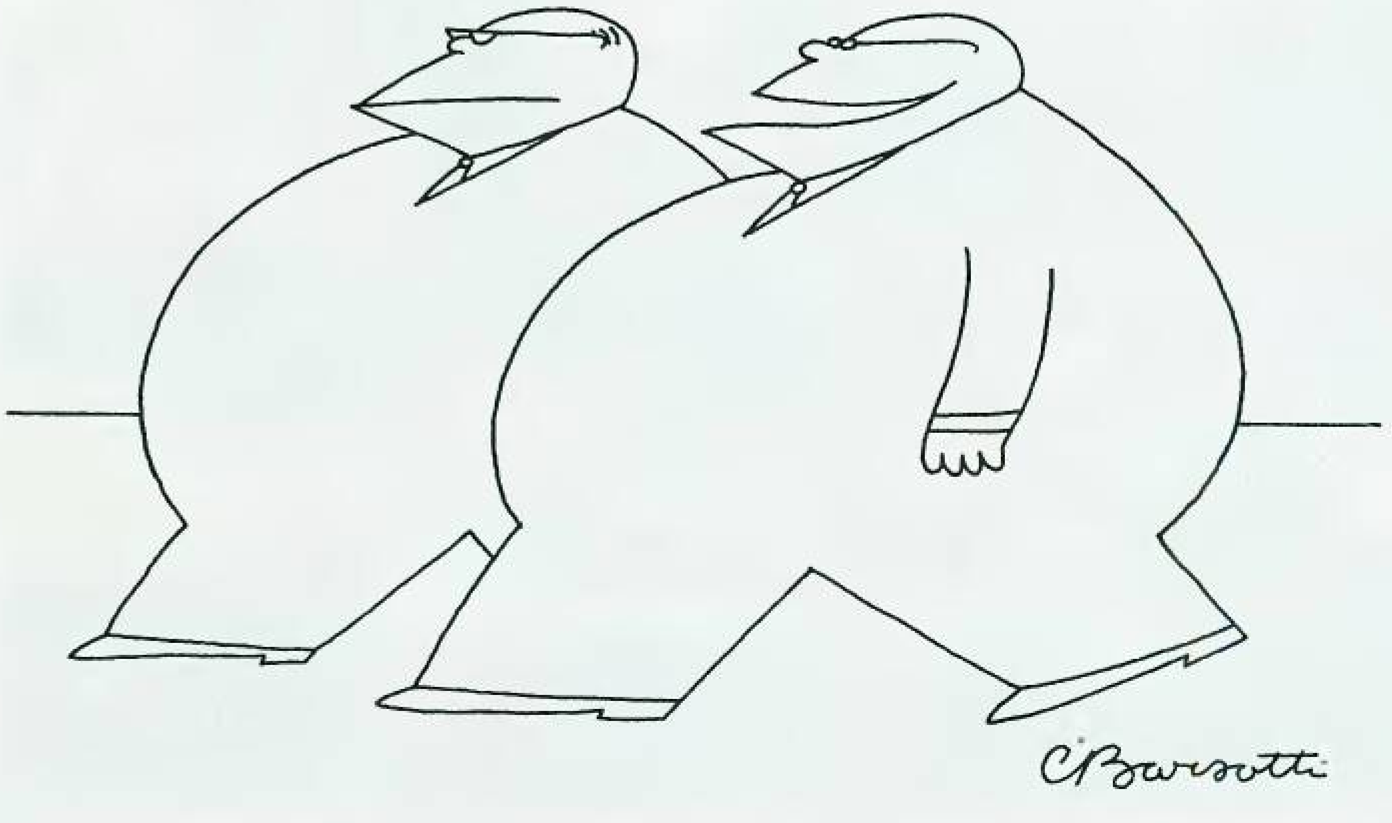
Times Square is famous for what used to be called its "denizens"—Damon Runyon, George S. Kaufman, Clifford Odets, A. J. Liebling—and Traub writes brief lives of a lot of them. But the history of the place isn't really a history of its illuminati; it's a history of its illuminations. Though social forces and neon signs flow out of individuals, they don't flow back into individuals so transparently. George S. Kaufman, to take one instance, was exclusively a creature of the theatre; if, like the galleries in SoHo in the nineteen-nineties, the Broadway theatre had in the thirties picked up and moved to Chelsea, Kaufman would have followed it blindly and would never have been seen on Forty-second Street again. Even Runyon has about as much to do with the history of Times Square as P. G. Wodehouse does with the history of Mayfair: his subject is language, not place, and in all of Runyon's stories it would be hard to find a single set-piece description of Times Square, a single bulb on a single sign. Individual artists help make cities, but cities don't make their artists in quite so neatly reciprocal a way. Dr. Johnson's "London" is a poem; "The London of Dr. Johnson" is a tour-bus ride.

Traub gives no false gloss to the decay of Times Square; it was really bad. The neighborhood declined to a point where, by the mid-seventies, the Times Square precincts placed first and second in New York in total felonies. (Harlem had a third as many.) These were crimes of violence, too: a rape or an armed robbery or a murder took place nearly every day and every night. Stevie Wonder's great 1973 song "Living for the City" has a spoken-word interlude in which the poor black kid from the South arrives on West Forty-second Street and in about five minutes is lured into the drug business. This was a song, but it was not a lie.

Traub's account of the area's transformation is lit from behind by another, still longer and larger one—Lynne B. Sagalyn's masterly "Times Square Roulette: Remaking the City Icon," just issued in paperback (M.I.T.; $29.95). Sagalyn teaches real estate at the University of Pennsylvania, and her book, the fruit of more than a decade of scholarly labor, is as mind-bendingly detailed an account of the relations of property and culture as one can find outside Galsworthy or Trollope. It's full of eye-opening material, if one can keep one's eyes open long enough to find it. Sagalyn's book is written, perhaps of necessity, in a prose so dense with city acronyms and cross-referential footnotes that it can defeat even the most earnest attention. Nonetheless, its material is the material of the city's existence. Reading it is like reading an advanced-biology textbook and then discovering that its sole subject is your own body.

Traub and Sagalyn agree in dispelling a myth and moving toward a history, and the myth irritates them both—Traub's usual tone of intelligent skepticism sometimes boils over here into exasperation. The myth they want to dispel is that the cleanup of Times Square in the nineties was an expression of Mayor Giuliani's campaign against crime and vice, and of his companion tendency to accept a sterilized environment if they could be removed, and that his key corporate partner in this was the mighty Disney, which led the remaking of West Forty-second Street as a theme park instead of an authentic urban street. As Traub and Sagalyn show, this is nearly the reverse of the truth. It was Mayor Koch who shaped the new Times Square, if anyone did, while the important private profit-makers and players were almost all purely local: the Old Oligarchs, the handful of rich, and mostly Jewish, real-estate families—the Rudins, Dursts, Roses, Resnicks, Fishers, Speyers, and Tishmans, as Sagalyn crisply enumerates them. Mayor Giuliani, basically, was there to cut the ribbon, and Disney to briefly lend its name.

The story follows, on a larger scale than usual, the familiar form of New York development, whose stages are as predictable as those of a professional wrestling match: first, the Sacrificial Plan; next, the Semi-Ridiculous Rhetorical Statement; then the Staged Intervention of the Professionals; and, at last, the Sorry Thing Itself. The Sacrificial Plan is the architectural plan or model put forward upon the announcement of the project, usually featuring some staggeringly obvious and controversial device—a jagged roof or a startling pediment—which even the architect knows will never be built, and whose purpose is not to attract investors so much as to get people used to the general idea that something is going to be built there. (Sometimes the Sacrificial Plan is known by all to be sacrificial, and sometimes, as in "The Lottery," known to everyone but the sacrifice.) The Semi-Ridiculous Rhetorical Statement usually accompanies, though it can precede, the Sacrificial Plan, and is intended to show that the plan is not as brutal and cynical as it looks but has been designed in accordance with the architectural mode of the moment. ("The three brass lambs that stand on the spires of Sheep's Meadow Tower reflect the historical context of the site . . ." was the way it was done a decade ago; now it's more likely to be "In its hybrid façade, half mirror, half wool, Sheep's Meadow Tower captures the contradictions and deconstructs the flow of . . .") The Staged Intervention marks



"It tickles me that my vote will cancel Paul Krugman's."

the moment when common sense and common purpose, in the form of the Old Oligarchs and their architects—who were going to be in charge in the first place—return to rescue the project from itself. The Sorry Thing Itself you've seen. (At Ground Zero, Daniel Libeskind supplied the sacrificial plan, and now he is pursuing all of the semi-ridiculous rhetoric, in the forlorn hope that, when the professionals stage their intervention, he will be the professional called on.)

The only difference in the Times Square project was that, because of its size, it all happened twice. (Actually, there were two dimensions to the remaking of Times Square—the West Forty-second Street projects, and the reclaiming of the Square itself—but each depended on the other, and, though administratively distinct, they were practically joined.) The first Sacrificial Plan appeared in the late seventies, and was called "The City at Forty-second Street." Presented by the developer Fred Papert, with the support of the Ford Foundation and with proposed backing from Paul Reichmann, of Olympia & York, it envisioned a climate-controlled indoor-mall Forty-second Street, with a five-hundred-thousand-square-foot "educational, entertainment, and exhibit center," and a 2.1-million-square-foot merchandise mart for the garment trade, all strung together with aerial walkways and, lovely period touch, equipped with a monorail. Mayor Koch wasn't happy about the plan; "We've got to make sure that they have seltzer"—that it's echt New York—"instead of orange juice," he said. But mostly he worried because someone else would be squeezing the oranges.

Still, the plan did what such plans are meant to do: establish the principle, civic-minded rather than commercial, that something had to be done here, and the larger principle that whatever was done should be done on a large scale—the old, outdoor theatre-and-arcade Forty-second Street could be turned into "a consumer-oriented exposition center with people moving across 42nd Street by means of pedestrian bridges," as one early draft of the rhetoric put it. As the initiative passed from the developers to the Koch administration, a further principle was established. The transformation could be made only by large-scale condemnation of what was already there, and the city and state together proposed a new way to link up private and public: the developers would get the right to build on condition that they paid directly for public improvements. The price of your tower on top was a cleaner subway station below.

Still more significant, and what should have been seen as a portent in the first Sacrificial Plan, was the felt need to pull away from the street completely. This was not simply snobbery but self-preservation; Forty-second Street wasn't dying but raving. The porno shops on West Forty-second Street weren't there because the middle class had fled. They were there because the middle class was there. The people who bought from the porn industry were the office workers who walked by the stores on the way to and from work, and the tourists who wanted to take back a little something not for the kids. The XXX video rooms and bookstores and grind-house theatres were going concerns, paying an average of thirty-two thousand dollars a year in rent; peep shows could gross five million a year. Though the retailers were obviously entangled with the Mafia, the buildings were owned by respectable real-estate families—for the most part, the same families who had owned the theatres since the thirties, the Brandts and the Shuberts. Times Square was Brechtville: a perfect demonstration of the principle that the market, left to itself, will produce an economy of crime as happily as an economy of virtue.

This—the crucial underlying reality in the Forty-second Street redevelopment—meant that the city, if it was to get the legal right to claim and condemn property in order to pass it over, had to be pointing toward some enormous, unquestioned commercial goal, larger or at least more concrete than the real goal, which was essentially ethical and "cultural." For once, the usual New York formula had to be turned right around: a question of virtue had to be disguised as a necessity of commerce. On Forty-second Street, a group of perfectly successful private businessmen in the movie-theatre business were being pushed aside in favor of a set of private businessmen in the tall-building business, and the legal argument for favoring the businessmen in the tall-building business was that they had promised that if you let them build a really tall building they would fix up the subway station.

This produced the Second Sacrificial Plan, of 1983: Philip Johnson and John Burgee's immense four towers straddling either side of Times Square on Forty-second, each with a slightly different pedimented top. The Semi-Ridiculous Rhetorical Statement invoked for this plan was that the pedimented tops "contextualized" the big buildings because they recalled the roofline of the old Astor Hotel, a victim of development twenty years before. They were by far the biggest and bulkiest buildings that had ever been proposed for midtown; Sagalyn gasps at the sheer zoning outrage of it. They had to be that big to establish their right to be at all. The Brandt family, which owned many of the theatres, sued and lost. "The Durst family interests put their name on five lawsuits," Sagalyn reports, "but the rumors of their financial backing of many more are legion." (The Dursts owned various individual lots along the street, which they intended to put together for their own giant building.) After ten years, they lost, too. Forty-seven suits were launched, and the plan withstood them all. The Johnson models, fortresses designed to withstand a siege of litigation, had triumphed. But nobody really wanted to build the buildings.

In the interim between the First Sacrificial Plan and the Second, however, something had changed in the ideology of architecture. A new orthodoxy had come into power, with an unapologetic emphasis on formal "delirium" and the chaotic surface of the city. In Rem Koolhaas's epoch-marking manifesto "Delirious New York" (1978), the buzz, confusion, danger, and weirdness of New York were no longer things to worry about. In fact, they were pretty much all we had to boast of. To an increasing bias in favor of small-scale streetscapes and "organic" growth was added a neon zip of pop glamour. The new ideology was Jane Jacobs dressed in latex and leather.

By what turned out to be a happy accident, this previously academic, pop-perverse set of ideas had influenced minds at the Municipal Art Society—the very group that had fought against the idea of signs and signage in Times Square at the turn of the century. In 1985, after the appearance of the Johnson plan, the Municipal Art Society, under the impeccable direction of the white-shoed Hugh Hardy, took on as its cause the preservation of the "bowl of light" in Times Square and "the glitz of its commercial billboards and electronic signs." After being digested in various acronymic gullets, this campaign produced not only new zoning text (sections ZR81-832 and ZR81-85, as Sagalyn duly notes) but, as an enforcement mechanism, an entirely new unit of measurement: the LUTS, or "Light Unit Times Square." (Each sign had to produce a minimum LUTS reading; the lighting designer Paul Marantz gave it its name.)

And so the Municipal Art Society became the major apostle of a continuing chaotic commercial environment in Times Square, while the big developers had to make the old Beaux-Arts case for classical order, lucidity, and space—for "trees and clean streets . . . museums and sidewalk cafés," in the plaintive words of the developer David Solomon. Eventually, in the early-nineties decline, Prudential, which had been holding on to the development on West Forty-second Street, was forced to sell its rights at a discount—to the Durst family, which had been leading the litigation against the plan all along but which, as everyone could have predicted, was there at the finale to develop and build, including 4 Times Square, the big building in which these words are being written.

None of this, however, could have created the new Times Square had it not been for other, unforeseeable changes. The first, and most important, was the still poorly explained decline in violent crime. (Traub tours the Eighth Avenue end of Forty-second with one of the district's privately financed security officers, who points out that there is still plenty of prostitution and drug-trafficking but very few muggings or assaults; even chain-snatching and petty theft are now rare.) This decline allowed for the emergence of the real hyperdrive of the new Square, the arrival of what every parent knows is the engine of American commerce: branded, television-based merchandise directed at "families" (that is, directed at getting children to torture their parents until they buy it). The critical demographic fact, as a few have pointed out, is the late onset of childbearing, delayed here until the habit of New York is set and the disposable income to spend on children is larger. When Damon Runyon was writing, the presence of Little Miss Marker in the Square was the material for a story. Now Little Miss Marker runs the place.

Of all the ironies of the Times Square redevelopment, the biggest is this: that the political right is, on the whole, happy with what has happened, and points to Times Square as an instance of how private enterprise can cure things that social engineering had previously destroyed, while the left points to Times Square as an instance of how market forces sterilize and drive out social forces of community and authenticity. But surely the ghosts of the old progressives in Union Square should be proudest of what has happened. It was, after all, the free market that produced the old Times Square: the porno stores were there because they made money, as part of a thriving market system. Times Square, and Forty-second Street, was saved by government decisions, made largely on civic grounds. Nothing would have caused more merriment on the conservative talk shows than the LUTS regulations—imagine some bureaucrat telling you how bright your sign should be—but it is those lights which light the desks of the guys at the offices of Clear Channel on Forty-second Street, and bring the crowds that make them safe. Civic-mindedness, once again, saved capitalism from itself.

And yet you don't have to have nostalgia for squalor and cruelty to feel that some vital chunk of New York experience has been replaced by something different, and less. Traub ends with the deconstructionist Mark Taylor, who trots out various depressions about the Society of Spectacle to explain the transformation, all of which are marvellously unilluminating. Times Square may be spectacular—that is what its signmakers have called their own signs for a century—but in the theoretical sense it's not a spectacle at all. It's not filled by media images that supplant the experience of real things. It's a tangible, physical, fully realized public square in which real people stare at things made by other people. The absence of spectacle, in that sense—the escape from the domination of isolated television viewing—is what still draws people on New Year's Eve, in the face of their own government's attempts to scare them away. (Dick Clark, of course, is a simulacrum, but he was born that way.)

Traub toys with the idea that the real problem lies in the replacement of an authentic "popular" culture, of arcades and Runyonesque song-pluggers, with a "mass" culture, of national brands and eager shoppers. But it's hard to see any principled way in which the twenty-foot-tall animatronic dinosaur at the new Toys R Us howls at the orders of mass culture, while O. J. Gude's dancing spearmen were purely Pop. The distinction between popular culture and mass culture is to our time what the distinction between true folk art and false folk art was to the age of Ruskin and Morris; we want passionately to define the difference because we know in our hearts that it doesn't exist. Even fairy tales turn out to be half manufactured by a commercial enterprise, half risen from the folkish ground. The idea that there is a good folkish culture that comes up from the streets and revivifies the arts and a bad mass culture imposed from above is an illusion, and anyone who has studied any piece of the history knows it.

All the same, there is something spooky about the contemporary Times Square. It wanders through you; you don't wander through it. One of the things that make for vitality in any city, and above all in New York, is the trinity of big buildings, bright lights, and weird stores. The big buildings and bright lights are there in the new Times Square, but the weird stores are not. By weird stores one means not simply small stores, mom-and-pop operations, but stores in which a peculiar and even obsessive entrepreneur caters to a peculiar and even an obsessive taste. (Art galleries and modestly ambitious restaurants are weird stores by definition. It's why they still feel very New York.) If the big buildings and the bright signs reflect the city's vitality and density, weird stores refract it; they imply that the city is so varied that someone can make a mundane living from one tiny obsessive thing. Poolrooms and boxing clubs were visible instances of weird stores in the old Times Square; another, slightly less visible, was the thriving world of the independent film business, negative cutters, and camera-rental firms.

There is hardly a single weird store left on Broadway from Forty-second Street to Forty-sixth Street—hardly a single place in which a peculiar passion seems to have committed itself to a peculiar product. You have now, one more irony, to bend east, toward respectable Fifth Avenue, toward the diamond merchants and the Brazilian restaurants and the kosher cafeterias that still fill the side streets, to re-create something that feels a little like the old Times Square. (Wonderful Forty-fifth Street! With the Judaica candlesticks and the Japanese-film rental and the two-story shops selling cheap clothes and stereos, lit up bright.) Social historians like to talk about the Tragedy of the Commons, meaning the way that everybody loses when everybody overgrazes the village green, though it is in no individual's interest to stop. In New York, we suffer from a Tragedy of the Uncommons: weird things make the city worth living in, but though each individual wants them, no one individual wants to pay to keep them going. Times Square, as so often in the past, is responding, in typically heightened form, to the general state of the city: the loss of retail variety troubles us everywhere, as a new trinity of monotony—Starbucks, Duane Reade, and the Washington Mutual Bank—appears to dominate every block. We just feel it more on Broadway.

Do we overdraw Times Square history, make it more epic than it ought to be? Piccadilly and Soho, in London, and Place de Clichy, in Paris, are similar places, have known similar kinds of decline and similar kinds of pickup—but without gathering quite the same emotion. We make Times Square do more work than it ought to. Other great cities have public spaces and pleasure spaces, clearly marked, and with less confusion between them. When Diana died, it was Kensington Palace, not Piccadilly, that got the flowers, and in Paris it is the Champs-Élysées, not Place de Clichy, that gets the military parade on the fourteenth of July. Which returns us, with a certain sense of awe, to the spell still cast by the original sin of the 1811 grid plan. We make our accidental pleasure plazas do the work of the public squares we don't have. This is asking a lot of a sign, or even a bunch of bright ones lighting up the night. ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

Links, *by Nuruddin Farah (Riverhead; $24.95).* This Somali novelist, who won the Neustadt International Prize for Literature in 1998, lives in exile in South Africa but, in his fiction, regularly returns to probe the "Dantean complexity" of his homeland. In his ninth novel, an exiled Somali dissident named Jeebleh goes back to Mogadishu after more than twenty years to search for his mother's grave and to settle old scores in the noxious hodgepodge of clan-based militias, warlords, and trigger-happy American soldiers. Jeebleh, now a university professor in New York with an American wife and two daughters, expects that his voyage will reinforce the great divide between his new life and the violent inhabitants of the "city of death." Instead, after the abduction of a friend's daughter, he discovers his own capacity for violence and his thirst for "justice, by any means possible."

One Day the Ice Will Reveal All Its Dead, *by Clare Dudman (Viking; $25.95).* In 1930, the German meteorologist Alfred Wegener disappeared on an expedition to Greenland; six months later, his body was found, perfectly preserved, beneath the ice. Dudman takes this as the starting point of her novel, a fictional autobiography in which Wegener embodies the scientist as man of action, launching hydrogen-balloon flights, spelunking down frozen crevasses, and racing across glaciers as the ice cracks. Between exploits, he investigates the origins of rain and the craters of the moon, and fends off attacks on his theory of continental drift—dismissed at the time as far-fetched but now widely accepted. As a narrator, Wegener is firmly rooted in his time, almost to a fault; occasionally, one wishes that the prose were less restrained and that the author had given her subject's life more of an arc. Still, Dudman artfully channels Wegener's voice—prim and fastidious, but filled with longing—so convincingly that her book reads like an artifact of Old World exploration.

All in Good Time, *by Jonathan Schwartz (Random House; $24.95).* New Yorkers of a certain age are familiar with the plummy and erudite voice of Jonathan Schwartz, radio's champion of the golden age of American song and Frank Sinatra's most passionate advocate. He is also the son of Arthur Schwartz, the composer of "By Myself," "Dancing in the Dark," and other pages in the songbook. The son's warm but intensely painful memoir of growing up lonely in rarefied company, of discovering an identity for himself and encountering idols like Sinatra, is engaging and original. Schwartz has published novels and, on the radio, he is an intimate storyteller; the narrative here is strangely unforgettable, like a haunting ballad heard in the middle of the night.

Peninsula of Lies, *by Edward Ball (Simon & Schuster; $24).* In 1968, an eccentric middle-aged English writer named Gordon Hall scandalized his adoptive home town of Charleston, South Carolina, by undergoing a sex change. Returning from surgery as a woman called Dawn, she married a black mechanic nearly three decades her junior, and set tongues further wagging by appearing with a baby daughter whom she claimed as her own. Ball's genteel detective story, attempting to get at the truth behind Dawn's self-invention, charts the course of an almost absurdly colorful life. Born illegitimately to a servant on the Sackville-West estate at Sissinghurst, Gordon moved to New York in 1952, where he was taken up by the actress Margaret Rutherford and the heiress Isabel Whitney. The latter left him a fortune, which, after he moved to Charleston, was frittered away on the opulent life of a Southern gentleman, then belle. Life took a sadder turn after marriage. Dawn's husband, mentally unstable, beat her and was institutionalized. Dawn herself died, almost destitute, in 2000.

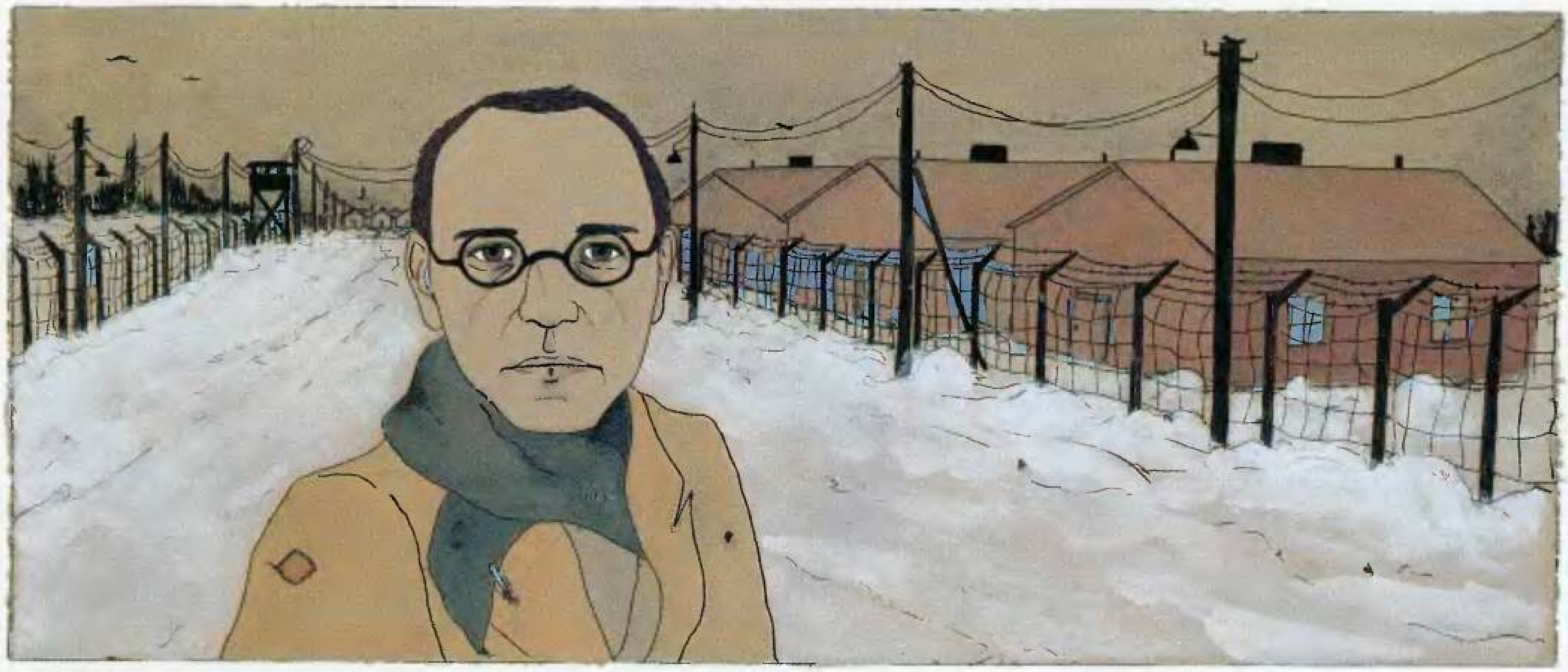
MUSICAL EVENTS

REVELATIONS

The story behind Messiaen's "Quartet for the End of Time."

BY ALEX ROSS

The most ethereally beautiful music of the twentieth century was first heard on a brutally cold January night in 1941, at the Stalag VIIIA prisoner-of-war camp, in Görlitz, Germany. The composer was Olivier Messiaen, the work "Quartet for the End of Time." Messiaen wrote most of it after being captured as a French soldier during the German invasion of 1940. The première took place in an unheated space in Barrack 27. A fellow-inmate drew up a program in Art Nouveau style, to which an official stamp was affixed: "Stalag VIIIA 49 *geprüft* [approved]." Sitting in the front row—and shivering along with the prisoners—were the German officers of the camp.



Messiaen wrote the Quartet after being captured as a French soldier during the German invasion of 1940.

LARA TOMLIN

The title does not exaggerate the ambitions of the piece. An inscription in the score supplies a catastrophic image from the Book of Revelation: "In homage to the Angel of the Apocalypse, who lifts his hand toward heaven, saying, 'There shall be time no longer.'" It is, however, the gentlest apocalypse imaginable. The "seven trumpets" and other signs of doom aren't roaring sound-masses, as in Berlioz's Requiem or Mahler's "Resurrection" Symphony, but fiercely elegant dances, whose rhythms swing along in intricate patterns without ever obeying a regular beat. In the midst of these Second Coming jam sessions are episodes of transfixing serenity—in particular, two "Louanges," or songs of praise. Each has a drawn-out string melody over pulsing piano chords; each builds toward a luminous climax and then vanishes into silence. The first is marked "infinitely slow"; the second, "tender, ecstatic." Beyond that, words fail.

Last week, the Met Chamber Ensemble, an all-star group from the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, played the Quartet at Carnegie's Weill Hall. I arrived with some mighty spiritual sounds ringing in my head; earlier that afternoon, at Lincoln Center, Philippe Herreweghe and assorted Franco-Belgian forces had presented Beethoven's "Missa Solemnis," and the same conductor had led Bach's "St. Matthew Passion" two nights before. Messiaen's quiet answer to the ultimate questions of fear and faith stayed with me the longest, not because he was a greater composer than Bach or Beethoven but because his reply came out of an all-too-modern landscape of legislated inhumanity. In the face of hate, this honestly Christian man did not ask, "Why, O Lord?" He said, "I love you."

The clarinettist Rebecca Rischin has written a captivating book entitled "For the End of Time: The Story of the Messiaen Quartet." Her research dispels several long-cherished myths about the 1941 première. As Messiaen told the story, he and three friends performed under the most trying circumstances—using dilapidated instruments, including a three-stringed cello—and won the hearts of five thousand hardened soldiers. In fact, the instruments, while inferior, were adequate to the task, and the crowd was more like three hundred. In Rischin's telling, the Quartet is less a triumph of individual genius and more a collective creation. Messiaen wrote every note, certainly, but the music would never have existed without the collaboration of the prisoners—and guards—of Stalag VIIIA.

Rischin lovingly brings to life the other musicians—Étienne Pasquier, cellist; Henri Akoka, clarinettist; and Jean Le Boulaire, violinist—who played with Messiaen, the pianist at the première. You can sense something of their personalities in the instrumental parts of the Quartet. Pasquier was a wry, gentle man who might have had a major solo career if he had desired one. Akoka, as vibrant and unpredictable as the Quartet's long clarinet solo, "Abyss of the Birds," was an Algerian-born Jew who survived the war through blind luck and mad courage. He tried several times to escape, and, in April, 1941, he succeeded: while being transferred from one camp to another by train, he jumped from the top of a fast-moving cattle car, with his clarinet under his arm. Le Boulaire, moody and withdrawn, later abandoned the violin for acting. He took the name Jean Lanier and appeared in New Wave films such as "The Soft Skin" and "Last Year at Marienbad." When Rischin interviewed him, she perceived him to be a bitter, unhappy man, but at the mention of Messiaen's Quartet his eyes brightened. "It's a jewel that's mine and that will never belong to anyone else," he said.

Then, there was the quasi-angelic figure of Karl-Albert Brüll, a music-loving guard at Stalag VIIIA. Excited by the presence of a significant composer, Brüll gave Messiaen pencils, erasers, and music paper, and had the composer stationed in an empty barrack so that he could work undisturbed. A guard stood at the door to turn away intruders. After the première, Brüll arranged for Messiaen's rapid return to France, conspiring in the forging of documents. A German patriot with anti-Nazi tendencies, he kept a sympathetic watch over Jewish prisoners, repeatedly advising them not to try to escape, because they would be safer in Stalag VIIIA than in Vichy France.

Several decades later, Brüll came to Paris and rang at Messiaen's door. For reasons that remain obscure, Messiaen declined to see him. Perhaps he didn't remember who Brüll was; perhaps he was unable to confront this apparition from the past. He eventually tried to correct his mistake, and sent a message to the man who had made his masterpiece possible. But it was too late: Brüll had died, after being run over by a car.

"There shall be time no longer." How did Messiaen understand this eerie phrase? First, it had for him a precise musical meaning. By 1941, this composer no longer wanted to hear time being beaten out by a drum—*one, two, three, four;* he had had enough of that in the war. Instead, he devised rhythms that expanded, contracted, stopped in their tracks, and rolled back in symmetrical patterns. Such music is heavenly to analyze but devilishly difficult to play. The Met Chamber Ensemble—Nick Eanet, violinist; Rafael Figueroa, cellist; Ricardo Morales, clarinettist; and, in a guest appearance, the veteran new-music pianist Christopher Oldfather—worked at the highest level. What they lacked was the total unanimity that makes a great performance of the Quartet seem like a mind-reading séance. (The group Tashi achieved this in an as yet unsurpassed recording, on the RCA label.) Still, the Met musicians were a joy to hear, not only in the Messiaen but also in pieces by Mozart, Debussy, Webern, and Berg, with James Levine joining in on piano.

For Messiaen, the end of time also meant an escape from history, a leap into an invisible paradise. Hence the hypnotically simple E-major chords in the two "Louanges." The postwar avant-garde composers who studied with Messiaen—Boulez, Stockhausen, Xenakis—wanted to eradicate all traces of the old world, but their teacher was not afraid to look back. In fact, Messiaen based the "Louanges" on two of his prewar compositions—"Oraison," from a piece titled "Fête des belles eaux," for six Ondes Martenot, one of the first electronic instruments; and "Diptyque," a 1930 piece for organ. The scholar Nigel Simeone tells us that "Fête" was written for the Paris Exposition of 1937, one of whose attractions was a "festival of sound, water, and light." Women in white flowing dresses played the Ondes in conjunction with spectacular fireworks and fountain displays. The opening phrase of the first "Louange" originally accompanied a colossal jet of water.

It is disconcerting to associate the Quartet with Moulin Rouge-style production values. But Messiaen always took joy in skating between the mundane and the sublime. He loved God in terms that were sensual, almost sexual. Human love and divine love were not opposites, as they are for so many close readers of the Bible, but stages in an unbroken progression. One undulating phrase in the final "Louange" is marked "avec amour." Eanet, the Met's brilliant young concertmaster, played with the lonely ardor of a forgotten Paganini working in an empty café. This is the music of one who expects paradise not only in a single awesome hereafter but also in the happenstance epiphanies of daily life. In the end, Messiaen's apocalypse has little to do with history and catastrophe; instead, it records the rebirth of an ordinary soul in the grip of extraordinary emotion. Which is why the Quartet is as overpowering now as it was on that frigid night in 1941. ♦

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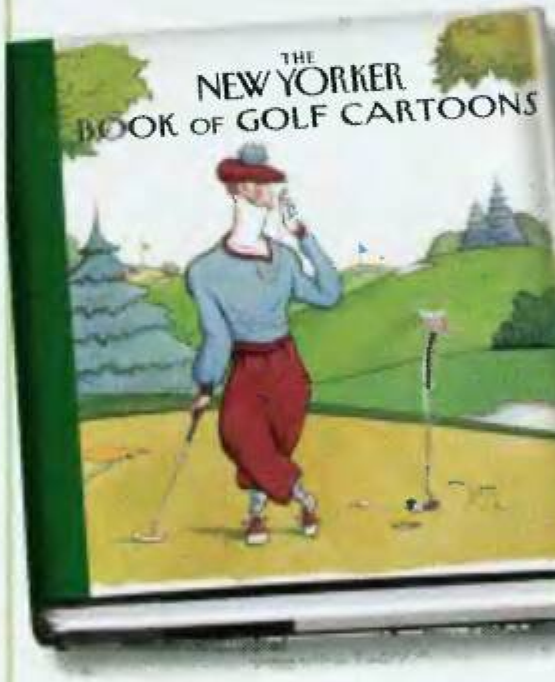

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DANCING

DRASTIC CLASSIC

Karole Armitage at the Joyce.

BY JOAN ACOCELLA

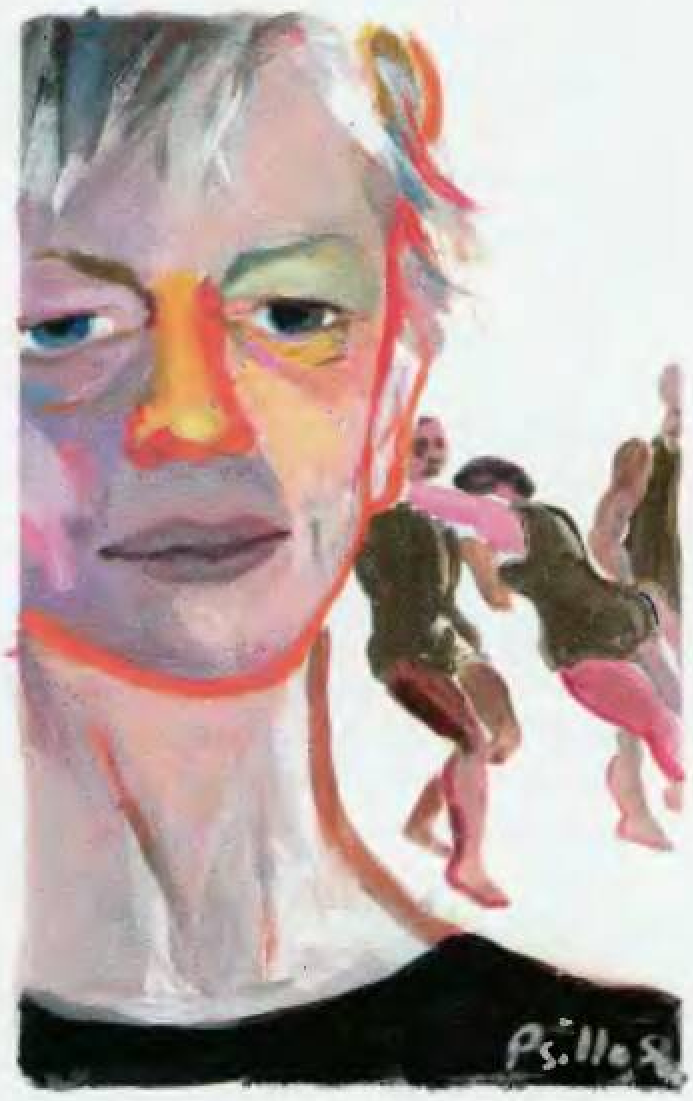
How nice, in these gray days on the ballet scene, to have Karole Armitage come back to New York, in a classical mood. In the nineteen-eighties, Armitage was a big presence in the downtown dance world. That's when dance caught up with postmodernism in the other arts, and the fact that it did so was due in part to her. She had useful boyfriends—the pomo stars Rhys Chatham and David Salle—and they provided her with music and sets. She also collaborated with Charles Atlas and Jeff Koons, and her work was in that vein: hard-edged, double-toned. I remember, one night in 1988, catching up with her in a piece called "Go-Go Ballerina," at a club in the East Village. She came out in a frightening unitard—black, with a hairy black fringe—and pitched herself on top of a heart-shaped, but black leather, chocolate box (by Koons) the size of an automobile. Out of the box came a man in a T-shirt imprinted with a skull and crossbones. She bit his chest. He hauled her around by her thighs. It wasn't much, but it stuck in your head.

Armitage's work was more than edge, however. It was also classical ballet, the technique in which she had been trained. In 1985, she presented a long pas de deux for herself and Joseph Lennon, an excellent dancer who also looked as though he might own a motorcycle. He wore a black leather skirt; she wore five-inch spike heels, with which, repeatedly, she grazed his head. One of them, you figured, was going to get killed before the night was out. But, instead, this cold transaction slowly became more intimate, questioning ("If I try this, will you help me?"), and the means was classical partnering: he catching her, she holding on to him, as her long, strong legs inscribed in the air their advanced mathematics. (The original title of the piece was "-p = dH/dq." Probably at the behest of a press agent, it was later renamed "The Watteau Duets.") This was a time when feminists were saying that classical ballet, by its very nature, demeaned women. The woman was held, she was lifted; ergo, she was a plaything. Armitage showed the opposite.

And she went further. Ballet is very crotchy. Apart from gymnastics, it is the only job in which a female is allowed to make public use of the structures between her legs as an element of design. This may be one reason that so many girls want to go into ballet: they can use their whole bodies, just like men, and nobody makes rude comments. Indeed, no one comments at all. The Sugar Plum Fairy may turn, in supported arabesque, and show her full lower anatomy to four thousand opera-house patrons, and nobody says a word. Armitage did say a word, or her work did. She took the pelvic action of the ballerina and pushed it further. Those legs were always open. She thereby extended ballet technique and got herself a reputation.

It wasn't always a good reputation. The glossy magazines loved Armitage—"the punk princess of the downtown scene," *Vanity Fair* called her—and a lot of thinking people admired her, but the daily critics tended to see her as a matter of fashion rather than of art. "A cultural con job," Clive Barnes, of the *Post*, called a piece that Armitage made for American Ballet Theatre in 1985. "Little talent, much pretension," the *Times*' Anna Kisselgoff said of another piece. Such reviews did not help her career, but a bigger problem was that the look of her work was so trendy, and that the trend—the eighties, Soho style—was passing. There were other discouragements, too. It is very hard to run a small pickup company such as she had in those years. She needed to be working for a big company, but by the late eighties most classical troupes in America were too stodgy to hire her. Her solution was to go to Europe, where there were a lot of well-funded opera-house companies eager to snag a New York punk princess. Occasionally, in the past fifteen years, she has brought her European creations back to New York. Some of them have been terrible—for example, "The Predators' Ball," a 1996 ballet about Michael Milken, with people in business suits yelling, "Buy! Sell!" and doing disco dances. And some of the work was beautiful: ballet pushed into new realms of tone and meaning.

"Time Is the Echo of an Axe Within a Wood," the dance that she showed in her season at the Joyce earlier this month, is in the latter category. The set, by Salle, is a knockout: a curtain of silver beads enclosing the three sides of the stage, making it look both numinous and bleak. Against this backdrop, as the piece opens, we see a dancer, Megumi Eda, in a gold leotard (costumes by Peter Speliopoulous), with her back to us and her rear end jutting out. Typical Armitage, you think: sex, glamour, in-your-face. But soon Eda's rear isn't just in your face. It's in your mind. Her legs are bare: we feel the body's innocence, nakedness. Yet the leotard is taut, metallic, gleaming. So these buttocks become a poignant image—two golden globes, moving in the darkness, telling us that flesh is armored, but still vulnerable. Again and again in the piece, Eda reappears in this position—the theme of the show, I think.



Armitage pushes ballet into new realms.

DEMETRIOS PSILLOS

In between, what we get is largely duets, with, as usual, much splay-legged action for the women. At one point, Theresa Ruth Howard crossed the entire diagonal of the stage in three huge grands jetés, with her partner running to keep up with her. It was like having a javelin thrown at you. Elsewhere, Cheryl Sladkin, in a duet with Brian Chung, seemed to ride him like a piece of gym equipment. Then she unfolded against his side in a massive extension of the leg—not the supposedly spectacular "six o'clock" but six-ten. Then she folded back into him, disappearing, almost, into his body's spaces. Like many of the couples in the piece, these two exited in separate directions once their agon was over. "I'm trying to convey the uncertainty and contradictions in the human condition," Armitage recently told the *Times*. Anyone could say that, and many have, but Armitage actually did it.

The eighties weren't altogether forgotten in "Time Is the Echo." In one ill-advised section near the end, Armitage brought on three club-dance voguers, who poked their arms out and stuck their legs behind their ears and broke the mood. At the same time, an Indian dancer appeared and did what looked like improvisation. But pretty soon these people went away, and the gladiators of love returned.

Armitage once entitled a piece "Drastic Classicism." That is an apt phrase to describe what George Balanchine practiced: the conjuring of extreme and secret states of the soul via ballet alone, with its steps serving as "open symbols," nonspecific but suggestive. Armitage has always had Balanchine on her mind. The company where she started out as a dancer, Geneva's Ballet du Grand Théâtre, had a Balanchine-heavy repertory, and a veteran Balanchine dancer, Patricia Neary, as its director. Armitage often speaks of Balanchine in interviews, and I think his "leotard" ballets were the primary inspiration for her choreography. For more than twenty years, since Balanchine's death, people have been waiting for someone to carry on his project and thus create the future of American ballet, of which he is, almost totally, the past. Armitage seems to be trying to do so. She should come home, and stay. ♦

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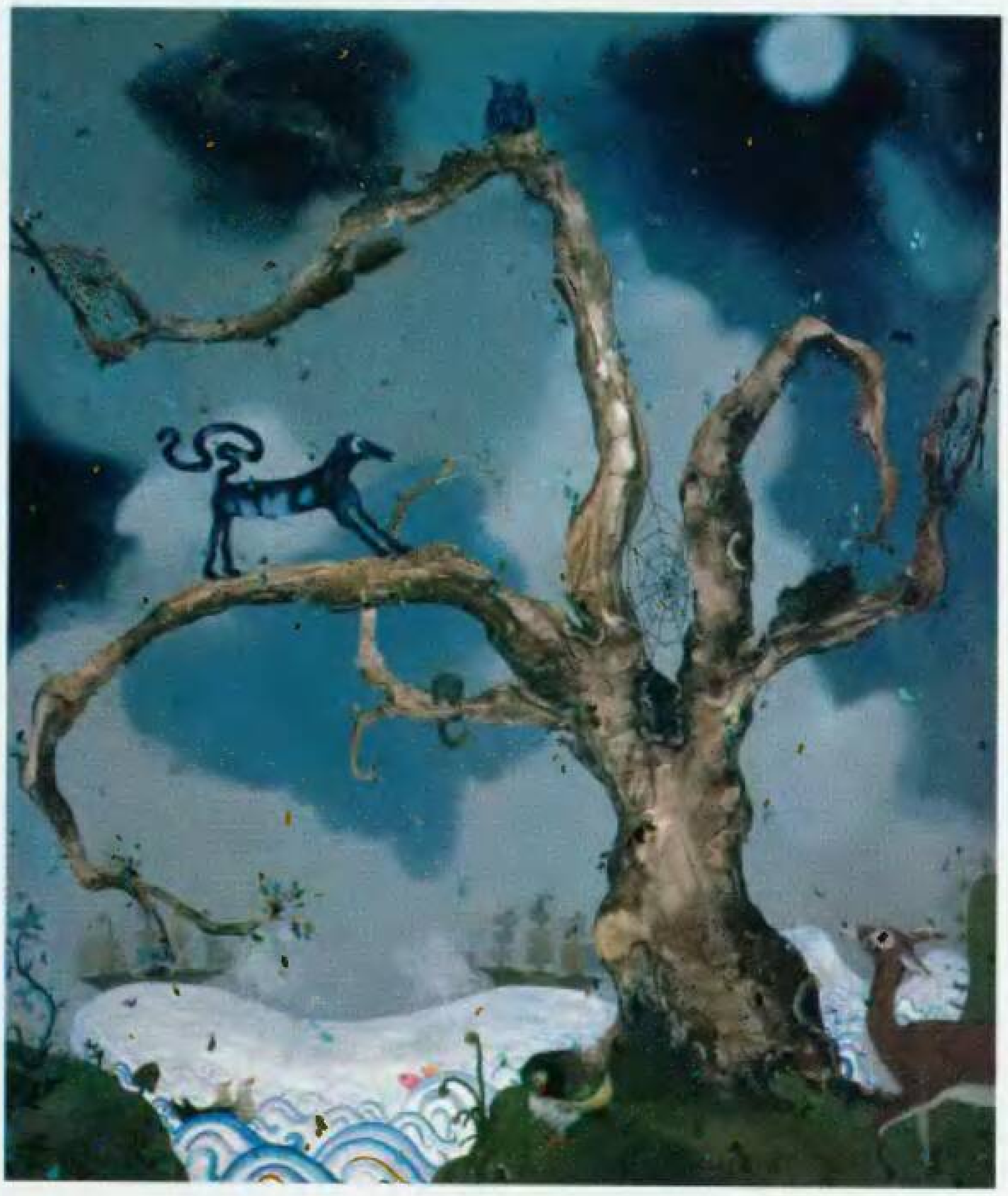
THE ART WORLD

WHAT'S NEW

The Whitney Biennial.

BY PETER SCHJELDAHL



Fantasy tableau: an untitled 2004 painting by the Los Angeles artist Laura Owens.

COURTESY GAVIN BROWN'S ENTERPRISE

The new Whitney Biennial is startlingly good. It is better—more serious, more pleasurable—than anyone, perhaps even the curators, Chrissie Iles, Shamim M. Momin, and Debra Singer, could have expected, given the general exhaustion and incoherence of the past decade and a half in art. Essays in the show's catalogue impose the usual theories and exhortations, but the artists largely elude them. All of a sudden, artists are again plainly smarter in their bones than art intellectuals are in their brains. The operative word is "plainly."

Painting and drawing are back. That's the big news of this Biennial. It's not that the handmade pictures in the show are so numerous, though they are, or so good, though many of them are very good indeed. It's that painting and drawing—the visual mediums in which the creative coöperation of hand, eye, and imagination attains peak efficiency—exercise a gravitational tug on practically everything in the show, including sculptures, installations, videos, photographs, films, and digital animations. Framing and the delineation of vision reign. Tactility counts. Aesthetics trump politics, without suggesting withdrawal from the world.

Though huge and dense, the show exhilarates. (Its superb arrangement, in smallish rooms that often juxtapose works by two or three artists with some particular affinity, helps avert viewer fatigue.) Festivalism—the mode of processional theatricality that has long marked institutional group shows of contemporary art—barely applies. You will want to revisit works in this Biennial. Here's my short list of highlights: paintings and drawings by David Hockney, Elizabeth Peyton, Laura Owens, Cecily Brown, Amy Sillman, James Siena, Lecia Dole-Recio, Raymond Pettibon, Robyn O'Neil, Robert Mangold, Chloe Piene, and Laylah Ali; video installations by Catherine Sullivan, Craigie Horsfield, Eve Sussman, and Slater Bradley; a photographic-conceptual work by Roni Horn; and exactly one mixed-media installation, by a group called assume vivid astro focus.

Hockney, the veteran showoff, is prepossessing again, in an instructive way. His glamorous portraits and large views of California, all in watercolor, hang in a room that is dominated, in spirit, by Elizabeth Peyton's small, fiercely adoring paintings and drawings of androgynous young people, including herself. It's as if Peyton had recalled Hockney to order, after his questionable forays into neo-cubism and clever theories of optics, reminding him that his innate gift for decorative charm is what we crave from him, unadulterated by great-artist longueurs. The art world must be in good shape when a fashion-sensitive fellow like Hockney confidently lets fly with what he does best. As for Peyton, the distilled allure of her little pictures makes them, for me, the moral center of the Biennial. Her romantic aestheticism charges her swift line and intense color with a sense of the sacred.

It's interesting to register the collapse of conviction in current installational work. Gone are the heydays of Robert Gober, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, David Hammons, Cady Noland, and other masters (none present in this Biennial) who exploded tropes of painting and sculpture into aggressively themed social space. The better installations here are nervously seductive, featuring lights, glitzy materials, and precious bric-a-brac. The neo-psychedelic disco provided by assume vivid astro focus takes crowd-pleasing to giddy heights with a tall, round-cornered room whose wallpaper and painted floor of overlaid Pop images reacts sensationally to shifting colored light, as a d.j. atop a spiral staircase manages catchy house music. The work is pure fun.

Most installations in the show palpably fall back on pictorial and sculptural conventions. I had an epiphany, in this regard, while looking at a large painting by Laura Owens, a Los Angeles artist with an avant-gardist background; it is a fantasy tableau of a tree (rendered in runny paint), cute animals, a cartoon seascape with ships, and dollops of thick paint that may represent falling leaves. It struck me as an installational piece pulled flat. Why go to the trouble of deploying things in real space when, with painting, you can make their essences comprehensible at a glance? As a bonus, if you're Owens, you can enhance the encounter with hauntingly sophisticated color.

Video installation is now a fully mature and independent art form that synthesizes aspects of narrative and documentary film, painting, sculpture, and decoration in real space and time. Craigie Horsfield enchants with a four-walled projection of a misty forest in the Canary Islands. Watching it, you have an experience that would be more transporting only if it included getting chilled and wet. (Also spiritually touristic is Roni Horn's distribution, throughout the museum, of sumptuous photographs of a beautiful boy, hieratic birds, and gloomy icebergs, all from Iceland.) Slater Bradley's close-ups of a youth choir in the cathedral of Notre-Dame stunningly capture states of gawkiness and anxiety in kids whose singing channels divinity. Catherine Sullivan, using actors trained in antic, Richard Foreman-ish stylizations, fills several screens with eerie evocations of war and tyranny in a twentieth-century Eastern Europe of the mind. Eve Sussman's twelve-minute-long high-definition video, "89 Seconds at Alcazar," takes on nothing less than Velázquez's "Las Meninas." With actors in full costume on a set that reproduces the room in the painting, Sussman imagines the activity—bristling with the tensions of the royal household, which seem to affect even the long-suffering pet dog—that might have preceded and followed the split-second arrangement of Velázquez's virtual photograph. As an aficionado of that enigmatic masterpiece, I have nits to pick with Sussman's speculations, but I salute a ravishing new wrinkle in art-historical criticism.

I can't decide if established, estimable painters and drafters like Brown, Sillman, Siena, and Pettibon have abruptly improved or if the new authority of their work mirrors the Zeitgeist. In the case of Brown's sexy Expressionism—nudes in bed, oppressed by darkling atmospheres that are pregnant with demonic intimations—both possibilities seem likely. Among the newcomers, Lecia Dole-Recio gives a sharp boost to the sagging fortunes of abstraction. Her large, unframed works on paper, entailing tiny cutout and collaged bits of painterly and geometric detail, are wonderfully decorative when glimpsed, and rivetingly thoughtful when perused. In a very different style, Dole-Recio evokes the lyrical rigor of a young Ellsworth Kelly. Robyn O'Neil's vast fantasy drawing of minuscule middle-aged men and animals in a mountainous snowscape is a graphite epic. You get lost in it. Chloe Piene is represented by a lugubrious, highly resistible video projection, in which a dirt-stained young woman writhes in masochistic rapture, but also by similarly themed, terrific drawings whose snarling line bears comparison with that of Egon Schiele.

Least engaging for me at the Whitney are works in key with some tendentious discourse or another, which, at present, commonly express nostalgia for nineteen-sixties-type counterculturalism. "Legality IS NOT Morality," trumpets a light-box sign by the protest-minded Sam Durant, to which I fancy a modish young smart-aleck of more recent vintage responding, "Well, duh." A new militant idealism may or may not be afoot and effective in society (if only by torpedoing another Democrat with votes for Ralph Nader), but it shows little promise of making an important difference in art. More compelling is the curators' peculiar selection of older artists, including the minimalist painter Robert Mangold, the pioneer conceptualist Mel Bochner, and the painterly filmmakers Stan Brakhage and Jack Goldstein, both of whom died last year. All four might be seen as cool, brainy types tempted by the dark joys of picture-making. Their presence suggests a sharply revised perspective on the recent past, as a tradition. Such backward adjustment of reputations always occurs when art moves forward. Am I sanguine? Yes, on the condition that art's attentive audience—you and I—assures our artists that their best instincts are noted and appreciated, and that more, and still better, is expected of them. ◆

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THE CURRENT CINEMA

DON'T LOOK BACK

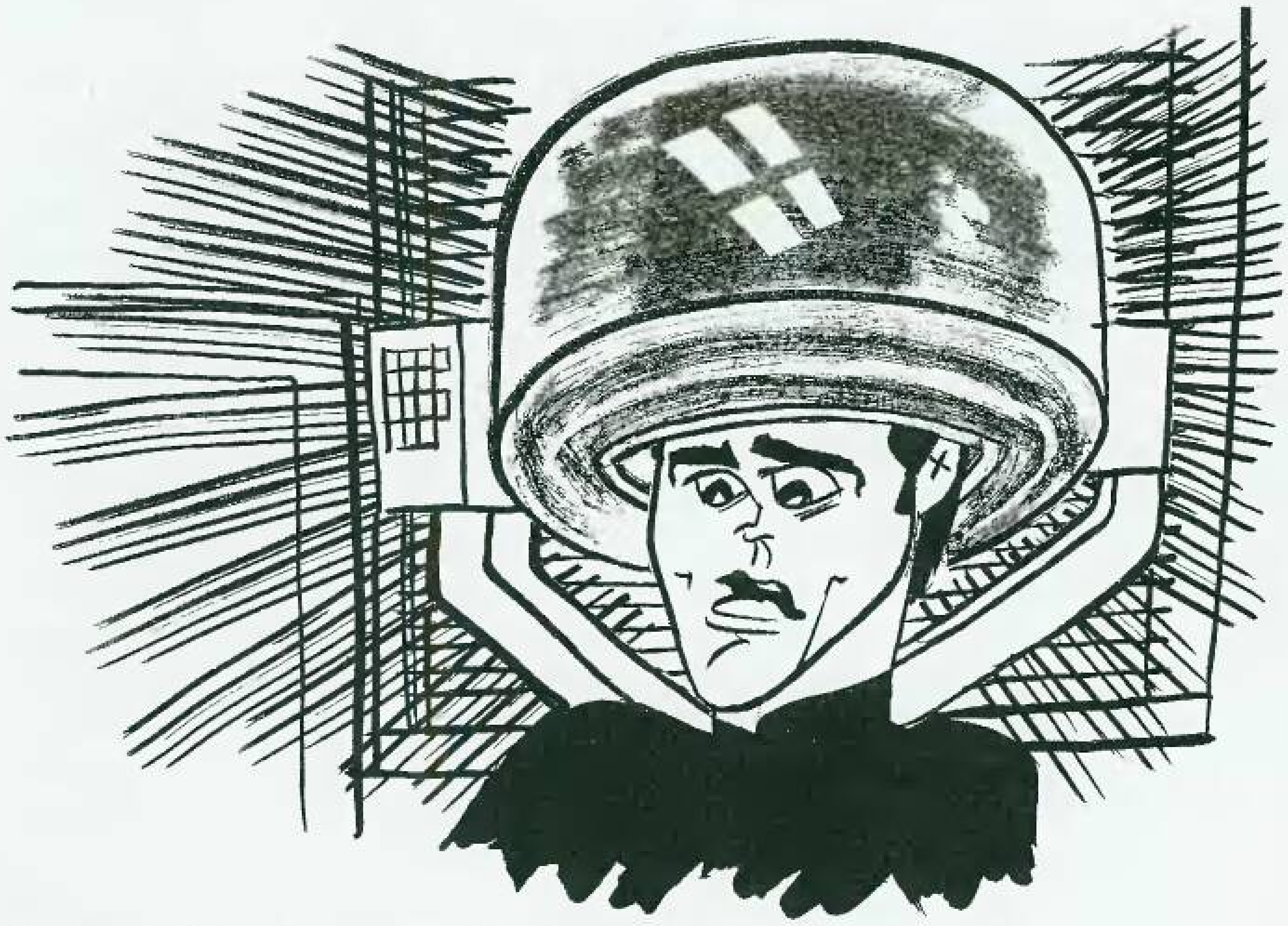
"Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind."

BY ANTHONY LANE

Do you feel clever, punk? Well, do you? Because that's the only way to get your head around the latest Charlie Kaufman flick. "Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind" is written by Kaufman, directed by Michel Gondry, and set in the kind of weather that makes you pray for five minutes of sunshine, never mind the eternal variety. On a biting Valentine's Day, Joel Barish (Jim Carrey) calls in sick and sneaks off to the beach—a glum arena for the battle of sand and snow, and as vacant as the moon until the arrival of a snuffling figure in flame red. This is Clementine Kruczynski (Kate Winslet), and she and Joel are strangers. Or, to be accurate, they have met before, on this same bleak strand, and spent the night together, and tumbled into love, and split in some distress. But today, unbeknownst to each other, they are starting from scratch.

The premise of "Eternal Sunshine" is that scratch is a pretty radical place to be. Kaufman, as he showed with "Being John Malkovich" and "Adaptation," is not so much a conjurer with a trick up his sleeve as a guy madly sewing extra sleeves onto his jacket, and this mischievous new movie cannot restrain itself from pouring forth conceits. The two big ideas are as follows. First, the story runs backward, yanking us from the lovers on the frozen shore, through the fall and rise of their affair, and so on, until their original meeting. Second, both Clementine and Joel call on Dr. Howard Mierzwiak (Tom Wilkinson), who runs a sleazy little operation called Lacuna. There, with help from his assistants, Stan (Mark Ruffalo) and Patrick (Elijah Wood), Dr. Mierzwiak will take your money and blow your mind. Specifically, he will put you to sleep, set up a brain scan, and blow away portions of your mind, like cobwebs or particles of dirt, leaving you with a nice clean space where a memory used to be. Thus, one mournful lady sits in the waiting room with a dog's bowl and bone, unable to bear the loss of her late Buster. She will presumably hand over his effects and then, after a blast from the Lacuna zapper, forget that the poor pooch ever existed. And so it is with Joel and Clementine: each deletes all traces of the other.

This is, of course, unrefined sci-fi, but one of the virtues of "Eternal Sunshine" is that, thanks to some careful roughening from Michel Gondry, it maintains the beautiful illusion of looking like shit. How tiring it was, as "The Matrix" plodded along its interminable paths, to watch the digital effects unfurl against a backdrop—of gesture, dress, and architectural design—that already gleamed with meticulous artifice. You felt at once dazzled and unsurprised, whereas much of "Eternal Sunshine" resembles one of those independent movies which are shot with a borrowed camera for ten thousand dollars. Clementine works in a Barnes & Noble, and, when Joel pays a visit there, we expect nothing more than a snatch of conversation under the glare of the store lights; instead, the signs marking the sections suddenly go blank—there goes Fiction, there goes History—and the titles themselves start to vanish from the spines of the books, and before we know it the lovers are left standing next to shelves of nothingness, with Clementine leafing through pages of pure white. What is happening is that Dr. Mierzwiak's machine is scrubbing this particular episode—tiny, but steeped in feeling—from Joel's recollection. (The machine scrolls backward through the patient's history, piece by piece, and the entire scrub takes a night to complete.) In a poem, you can hanker after your beloved in isolation, itemizing her perfections and flaws, but onscreen she is surrounded by the physical flotsam of your shared existence, and that, too, must be wiped away, as if you were a teacher erasing a blackboard, turning complex equations into dust.



Playing tricks on the memory: Jim Carrey in Charlie Kaufman's new movie.

TOM BACHTELL

That is just one instance of the film's unlovely elegance. It deepens to an amazing finale, in which Joel and Clementine fight to hang on to each other—to the knowledge that they were once intertwined—while the beach house where they met collapses around them. If you ever wondered what the sands of time look like, there's your answer. The lyrical plausibility of such scenes is so winning that one barely notices the more prosaic rifts opening up in the picture's credibility. The idea that Clementine might grow weary of her man and seek a swift oblivion with the aid of Lacuna is fair enough; but would Joel, when he discovers her treachery, really follow suit? And is it only those well versed in the neural sciences who will find something overcooked in the notion that Joel and Clementine might change their minds in mid-wipe and beg, with wounded cries, to be left with a handful of details by which to remember their love? Aren't they supposed to be asleep during all this?

If Gondry and Kaufman are straining here, it's not hard to fathom their reasons. After all, they are making a romantic movie. In creating a pair of lovers who forget each other and then click all over again, they suggest that every one of us harbors an inextinguishable need, and that we helplessly swing back toward our soul mate, as if he or she were a living magnetic north. There aren't many performers who can deliver the fullness of heart that such a plot demands, but Winslet is one of them, allowing herself to be driven by needs and whims, as signalled by the changing hues of her hair. Her Clementine plays life with the volume up, and she scowls at meek moderation:

> JOEL: I had a really nice time last night.
> CLEMENTINE: *Nice?*
> JOEL: I had the best fucking time of my entire fucking life.
> CLEMENTINE: Thaaaaat's better.

It is a treat to see Jim Carrey, the jester of any court he pleases, cower beneath this blast of womanhood. Whether he survives and prospers in the picture is open to question. He can certainly shift from his usual rubbery persona to the grunge of "Eternal Sunshine," and Gondry helps him out, on more than one occasion, by filming him from a highly unflattering point somewhere behind his right shoulder, so that the side of his face seems stubbled, unfunny, and riven with fatigue. The more nagging problem is that, as a comic, Carrey has been so ceaselessly (and profitably) self-involved that to ask him to swivel outward and focus his yearning on another being—in short, to pretend to love—is not so much to cast him against type as to argue the case for genetic modification. His agent would howl with derision, but I would have had Carrey switch roles with Mark Ruffalo and take the part of Stan, the twitchy, cynical computer ace who runs the Lacuna program, while the intense Ruffalo could have doffed his thick-rimmed spectacles and gazed with untrammelled longing at the girl with the blue hair.

Instead, Ruffalo is part of a subplot that seems molded to strip the central love of its allure. Stan's sidekick, Patrick, takes advantage of Clementine's involvement in Lacuna to wrangle her, by fair means or foul, into becoming his girlfriend. (He steals a necklace that Joel had already picked out for her, then offers it himself, knowing that it will find favor.) Even Dr. Mierzwiak, we learn, has played God with his own invention, to the detriment of his receptionist, Mary Svevo (Kirsten Dunst). If I were Mr. or Mrs. Dunst, I would be *slightly* worried that my radiant daughter is able to feign the effects of inhaling the effusions of marijuana with quite such convincing ease. But then her trademark gaze is forever faraway, and when the movie, almost as an afterthought, asks her to wreak revenge, it seems too strong for so mild a character. Indeed, as in "Adaptation," this Kaufman script grows so manic in pursuit of its own tail that it continues to lash when it should be wrapping itself up in a neat knot; Gondry and Kaufman could have ended the story where it began, but they cannot deny themselves the shudder of a final twist.

That, however, may be the draw of this singular enterprise. Who can resist the spectacle of large-brained writers and directors struggling to pay homage to the heart, an altogether less controllable organ? (One half suspects that Kaufman set himself a deliberate challenge, risking a tale of devotion in order to dispel previous charges that he was a smart-ass and nothing more.) Any other organs, by the way, are strictly out of bounds. I happen to think that "Eternal Sunshine" could have used a lengthy sex scene; just imagine the erotic horror of one body being hauled like Eurydice, lip and bosom, limb by limb, from the desperate embrace of another. Winslet, one knows, would have gone for it, although her co-star might have grown pale at the thought. In truth, when one looks back on "Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind," one realizes how little of the movie has been devoted to the business of loving, let alone of making love. We get a double helping of first dates, and a bunch of barking arguments, but this is a romance assailed by time, and the promise of uncluttered bliss that is proffered by the title is held witheringly at bay. That title comes from "Eloisa to Abelard," by Alexander Pope (or, as a dozy-eyed Dunst calls him, Pope Alexander), who was less abashed by sex in 1717 than we are in 2004, and plainly an early master of special effects:

> I hear thee, view thee, gaze o'er all thy charms,
> And round thy phantom glue my clasping arms. . . .
> I call aloud; it hears not what I say;
> I stretch my empty arms; it glides away. ◆

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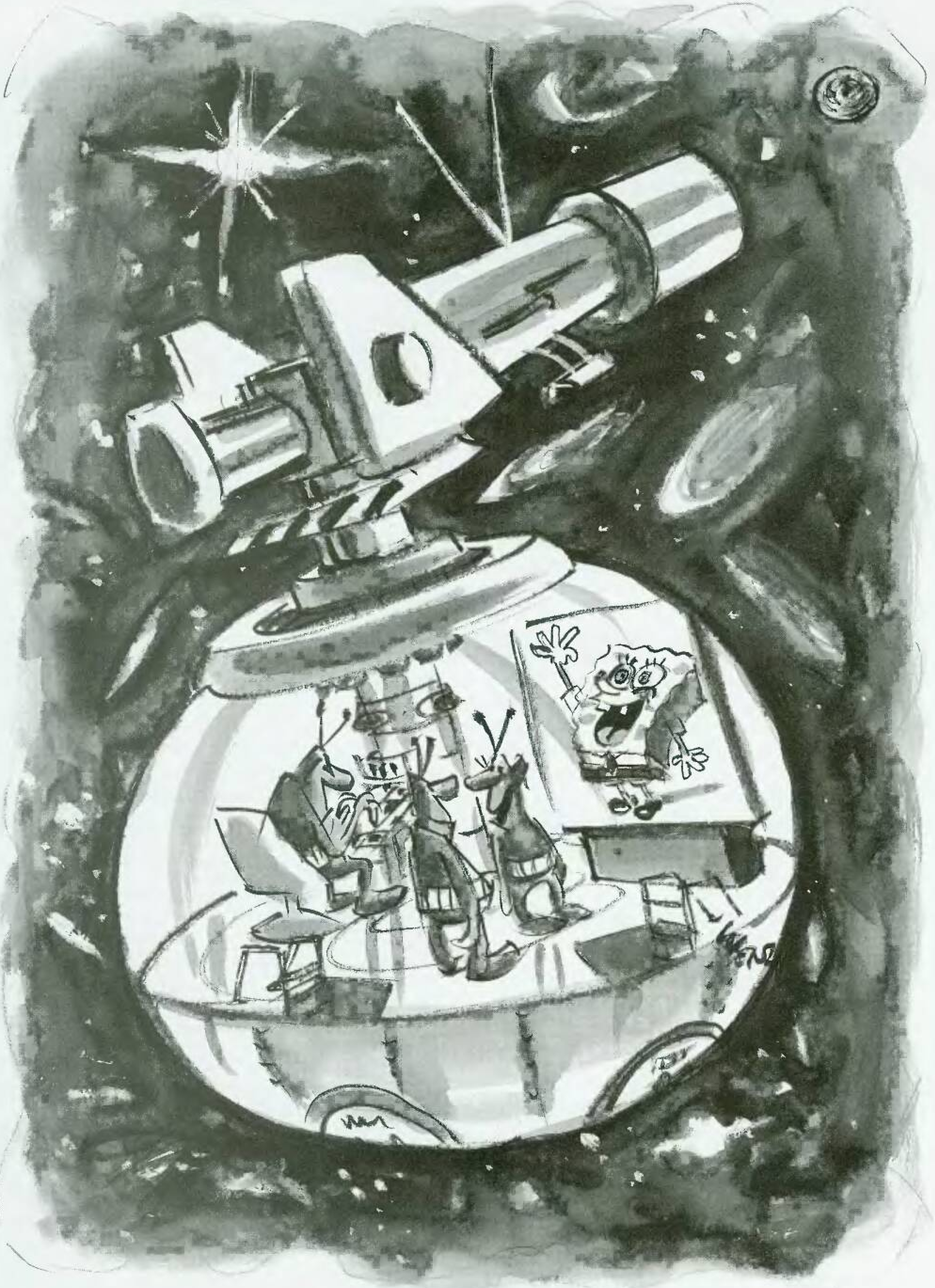

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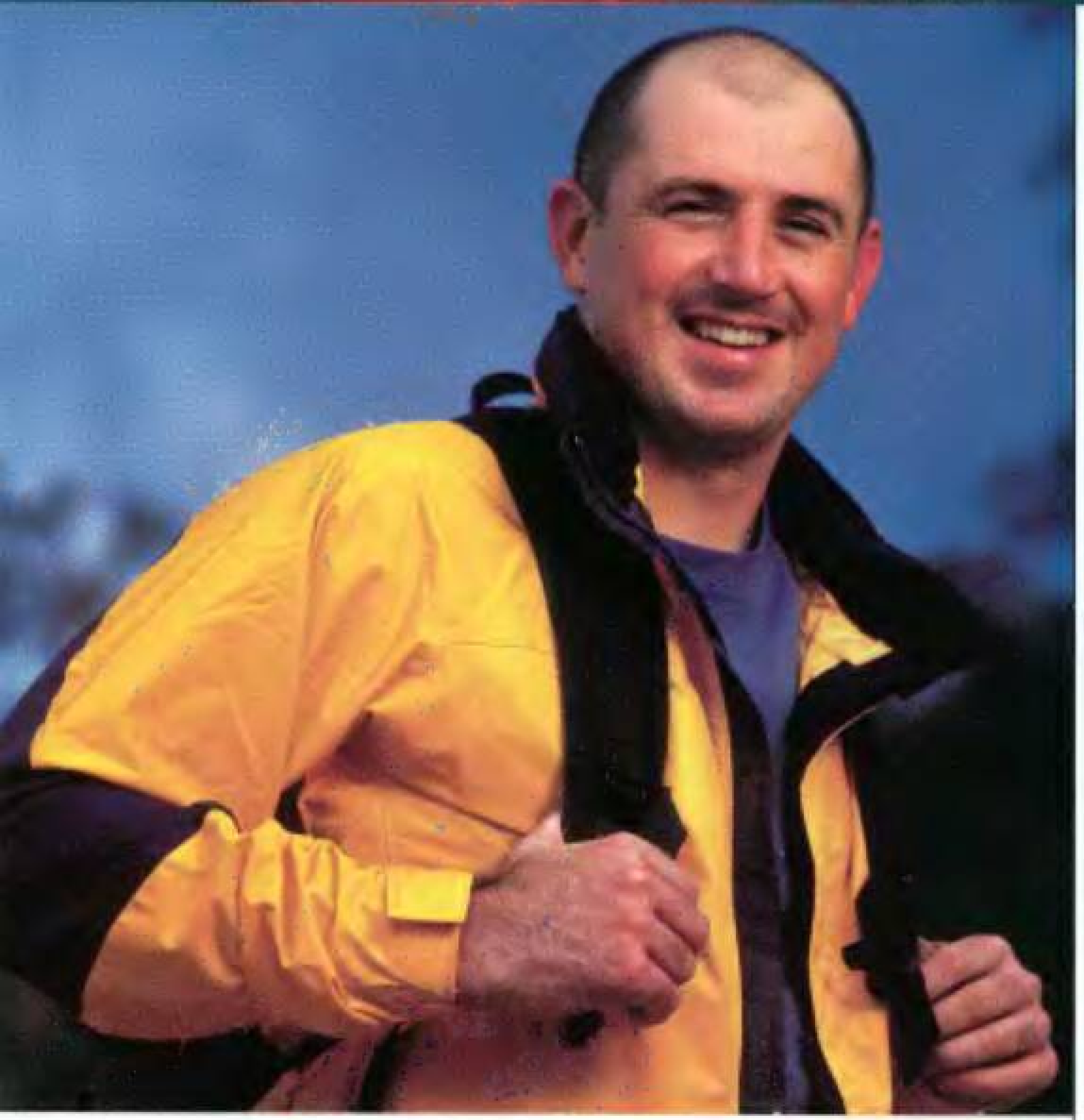

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