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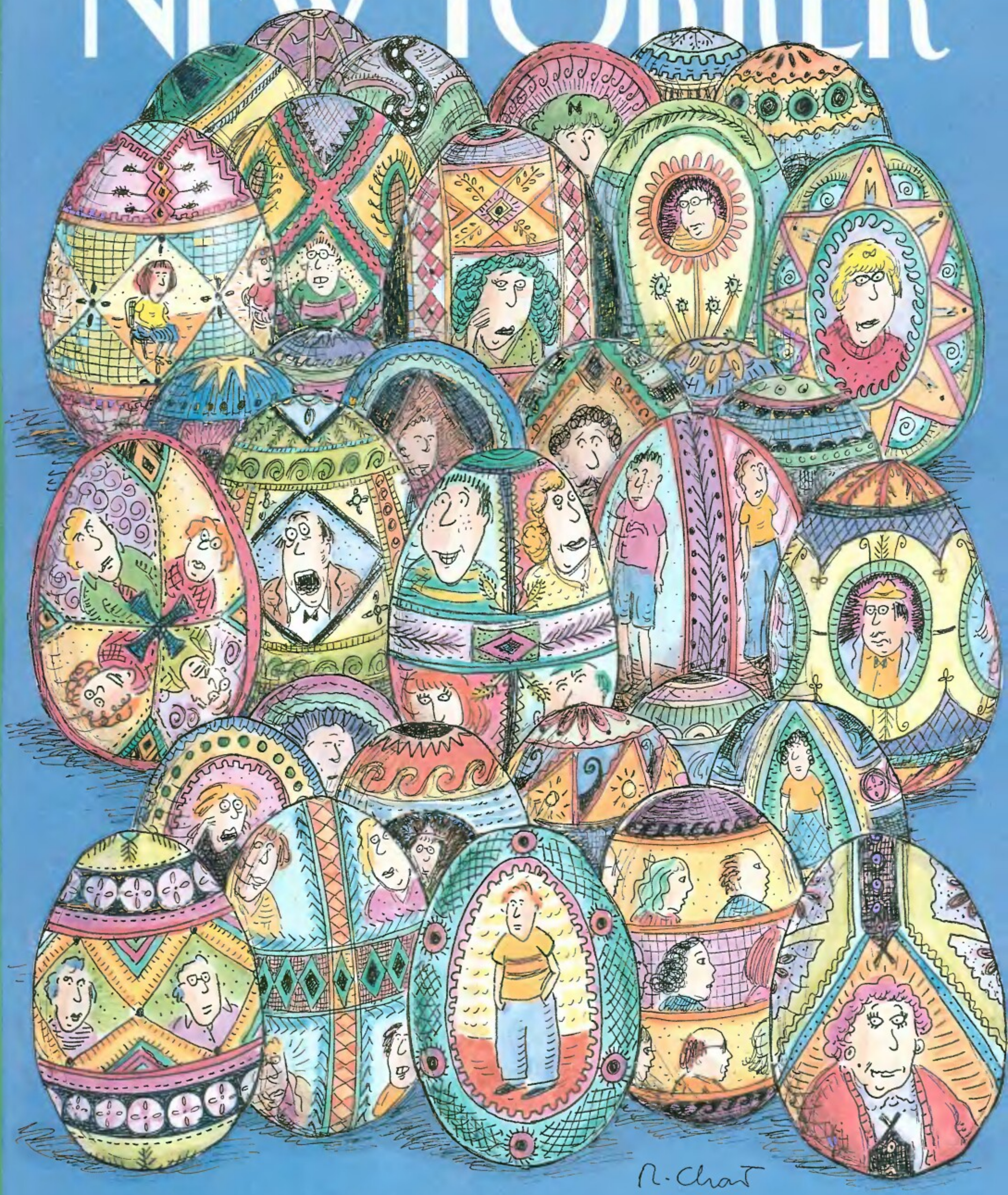
APRIL 12, 2004



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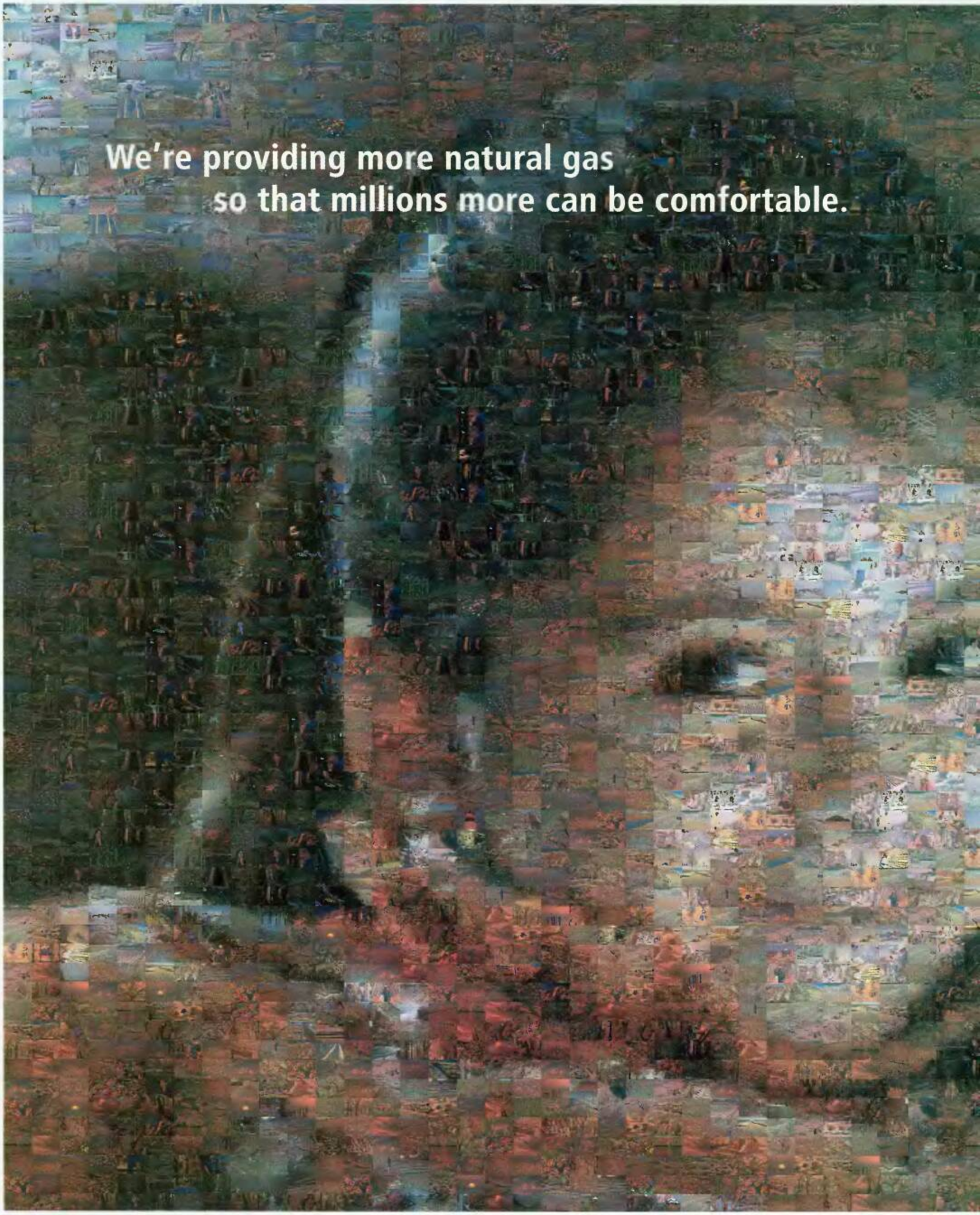

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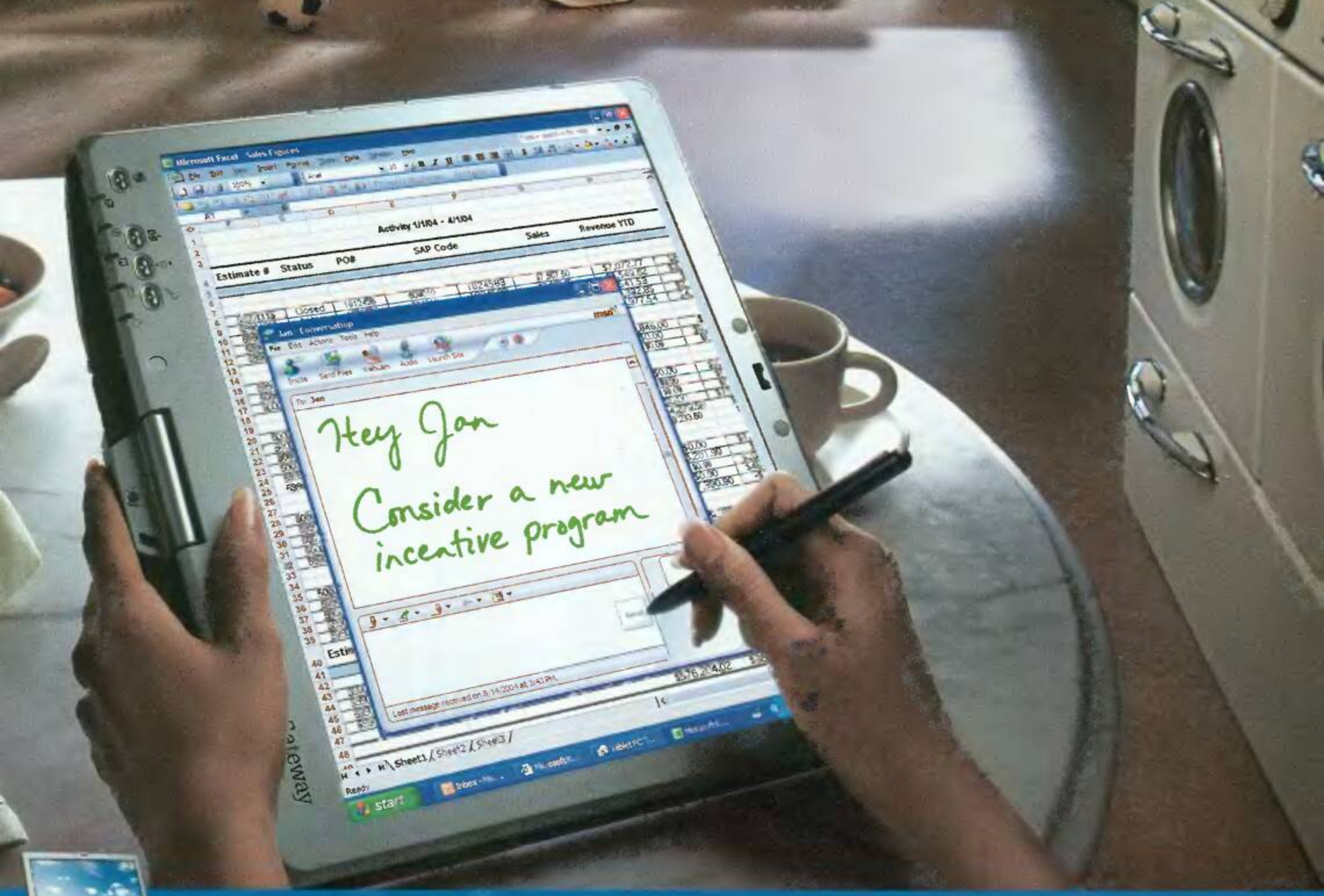

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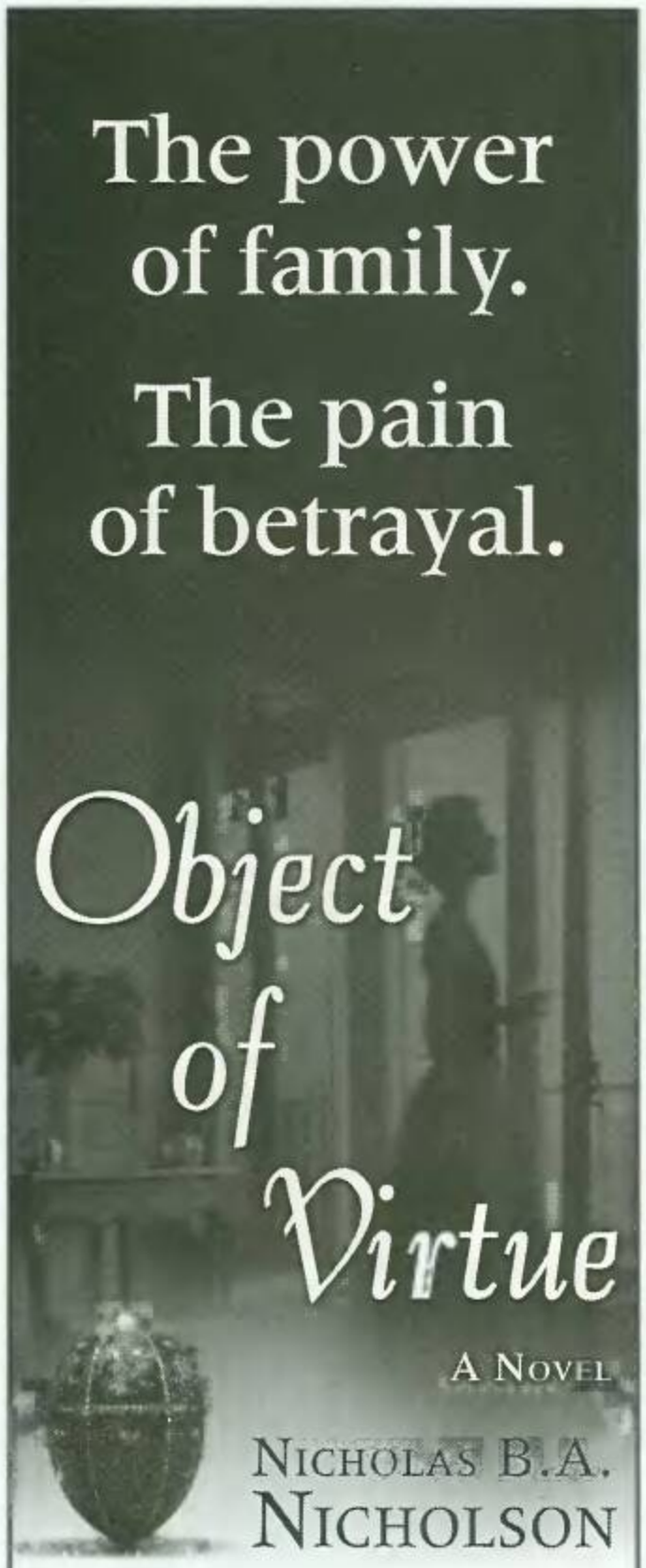

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CONTRIBUTORS

Seymour M. Hersh ("The Other War," p. 40) wrote his first article for the magazine, on the Vietnam War, in 1971. He became a regular contributor in 1993.

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Philip Gourevitch ("Fight on the Right," p. 34) is covering the Presidential campaign. He is the author of "We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed with Our Families: Stories from Rwanda."

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Roz Chast (Cover; Cartoon, p. 70) is a cartoonist and a regular contributor. Her new book, "The Party, After You Left: Collected Cartoons 1995-2003," has just been published.

Cynthia Zarin ("The Storyteller," p. 60) is a staff writer. Her piece, "An Enlarged Heart," ran last summer.

Vijay Seshadri (Poem, p. 42) will publish his second collection of poems, "The Long Meadow," next month.

Ann Beattie (Fiction, p. 68) is the author of seven short-story collections and seven novels, including "The Doctor's House."

Nicholas Lemann (Books, p. 82) is the dean of the Graduate School of Journalism at Columbia University, and writes the Wayward Press column for the magazine.

David Denby (The Current Cinema, p. 89) is the author of "Great Books" and, most recently, "American Sucker."

Barry Blitt (The Back Page, p. 92) is working on illustrations for several projects, including a children's book. ♦

"Nation-wise, we're in a pickle."

THE MAIL

GONE FOR *SOLDIERS*

Dan Baum's arresting portrait of Sergeant Michael Cain, of Berlin, Wisconsin, whose leg was amputated after his truck hit a roadside bomb in Tikrit, raises a disquieting question: How many one-legged guys with shattered ambitions will the nation tolerate as the cost of doing business in Iraq ("The Casualty," March 8th)? We will likely see many more such cases, given that Iraq is still dangerously close to civil war. But it also raises questions about how we fill our military ranks. There is irony in the fact that we are trying to bring democracy to Iraq with a military composed, in large measure, of "volunteers" who are there because they see it as the best, or only, way to better their lot in life. It may be time to revisit the notion that obligatory universal service, in the form of a draft, is the price we all pay for our freedom.

Richard Harsham
Cincinnati, Ohio

MOM *VS.* MOM

The missing ingredients in the motherhood-vs.-work polemics that Elizabeth Kolbert reviews are fathers and economics (Books, March 8th). This has never been just a women's problem but a family problem. When my mother stayed home, my father earned enough to support three children, a mortgage, and two cars—which is what a middle-class salary was supposed to cover. Now our expectation that women can choose work has combined with economic trends to create a situation in which parents *must* have two incomes. And this doesn't even address the issue of single mothers of children whose fathers don't feel bound to fulfill their obligations. Women have broadened the workforce, and an exorbitant rise in the cost of living is our punishment.

CathyAnn Coley McIntyre
Boxborough, Mass.

Kolbert is right: having sidelined my career to be home with my kids, I do feel that I deserve mainstream validation. My decision to stay home was not simply a life-style choice, like deciding that I prefer skiing to golf. It was driven by a concern that my children would not turn out well if I put them in full-time commercial care. Having relinquished considerable income, retirement savings, professional prestige, and social standing to become "just a stay-at-home mom" for what I view as important reasons, I admit to being irked by people who do not value what I do. My ego will survive; I get enough rewards from raising my kids. But until there are profound changes in our attitude toward the value of child-rearing and in the structure of our workplaces, some of us will have to choose between thriving economically and raising healthy, happy, well-functioning children.

Sharon Conaway Rutberg
Seattle, Wash.

A EUROPEAN MARRIAGE

Perhaps the most puzzling aspect of the gay-marriage controversy discussed in Hendrik Hertzberg's Comment is that it is taking place without reference to the rest of the world (March 15th). But data on the effects of gay marriage are readily available from countries such as Belgium and the Netherlands, which have already legalized it. In the Netherlands, it has become so much a part of the norm that leading newspapers barely mention it—nor do they report any social or moral collapse as a result. On the other hand, there is a great deal of discussion in the Dutch media about how to avoid importing *Amerikaanse toestanden*—American conditions. What is meant by this is not moral decay but the income gap in the U.S. between rich and poor.

Robert S. Kirsner
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Los Angeles, Calif.

•

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THIS WEEK

ICELAND'S OWN

The artist Erró may not be well known in the United States (he's just having his first major show here), but he is beloved in his native Iceland, where he was born seventy-two years ago. His large, surreal canvases teem with political and cultural references—everything from astronauts to Wonder Woman and Mao Tse-tung—and his films and performances reflect his dedication to traversing the globe: he lives and works in Paris, Spain, and Thailand. His show at N.Y.U.'s Grey Art Gallery is co-organized by the Reykjavik Art Museum and includes paintings, collages, and props from experimental films. (Opens April 13; see Art.)

AN EARLY FALL

The Fall, the British rock group led by the singer and guitarist Mark E. Smith, has been turning out angular, edgy records leavened by Smith's eccentric sense of humor for more than twenty-five years. The lineup has passed through innumerable incarnations—Smith changes bandmates the way other people change clothes—but the current version of the Fall has recently released "The Real New Fall LP (Formerly 'Country on the Click')," an album that demonstrates that Smith's manic energy and his way with a memorable hook are undiminished. (Knitting Factory, April 8-9; see Night Life.)

EAT THE MUSIC

The New York Festival of Song has long been a movable feast, roving around the city's best concert halls and offering programs that reflect the omnivorous tastes of its founders, the pianists Michael Barrett and Steven Blier. Paul Bowles's "Picnic Cantata" is the highlight of their latest venture, "Men, Women, and Food," which also features gastronomically themed music by Barber ("Now Have I Fed and Eaten Up the Rose"), Bolcom, Rodgers, and others, with a dash of Joni Mitchell ("A Case of You") tossed in for seasoning. (Merkin Concert Hall, April 8; see Classical.)

Mark E. Smith brings the Fall to town for two shows at the Knitting Factory.

The Icelandic artist Erró in his first major U.S. show, at Grey Art Gallery.

JOSÉ LUIS MERINO

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9:03 AM	7:00 AM
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12:03 PM	9:00 AM
3:03 PM	10:00 AM
4:00 PM	11:00 AM
5:00 PM	12:00 PM M
6:00 PM	1:00 PM
7:00 PM	2:00 PM M
	3:00 PM
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	4:00 PM
	4:30 PM M
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THE THEATRE
OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

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

ASSASSINS
The Roundabout Theatre Company presents the first Broadway production of Stephen Sondheim and John Weidman's musical about nine men and women who killed or tried to kill American Presidents. With Neil Patrick Harris as Lee Harvey Oswald, Michael Cerveris as John Wilkes Booth, and Mary Catherine Garrison as Lynette (Squeaky) Fromme. Directed by Joe Mantello. In previews. (Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 212-239-6200.)

BETWEEN US
A kind of contemporary "Big Chill," written by Joe Hortua and directed by Christopher Ashley. With David Harbour, Daphne Rubin-Vega, Kate Jennings Grant, and Bradley White. A Manhattan Theatre Company production. In previews. (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212.)

BIRO
The story of a refugee from Uganda who ends up in a Texas jail cell. Written and performed by Ntare Guma Mbaho Mwine. Directed by Peter DuBois. In previews. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-239-6200.)

BOMBAY DREAMS
A. R. Rahman's lavish musical about an Indian slumdweller who wants to become a Bollywood star, which has been a hit in London for two years, comes to New York. Based on an idea by Andrew Lloyd Webber and Shekhar Kapur, with a book by Thomas Meehan ("Hairspray") and Meera Syal and music by Rahman. In previews. (Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 212-239-6200.)

CAROLINE, OR CHANGE
The new musical by Tony Kushner and Jeanine Tesori comes to Broadway after a successful run at the Public. Directed by George C. Wolfe. Previews begin April 12. (O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200.)

FINIAN'S RAINBOW
Melissa Errico and Malcolm Gets star in a concert adaptation of the musical by Yip Harburg, Fred Saidy, and Burton Lane. Directed by Charlotte Moore. In previews. (Irish Rep, 132 W. 22nd St. 212-727-2737.)

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. In previews. Opens April 11 at 2. (Laura Pels, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300.)

JUMPERS
Simon Russell Beale and Essie Davis lead the cast in a revival of Tom Stoppard's comic, philosophical murder mystery, from 1972. Directed by David Leveaux. In previews. (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 212-307-7171.)

MATCH
In a new play by Stephen Belber ("Tape"), starring Frank Langella, Ray Liotta, and Jane Adams, a husband and wife interview a once famous dancer about his past. Directed by Nicholas Martin. Two previews on April 7. Opens April 8 at 6:45. (Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

MR. FOX: A RUMINATION
The final offering of the Signature Theatre Company's Bill Irwin season is a reflection on the life of the celebrated clown George L. Fox (1825-77). Directed by James Houghton. In previews. Opens April 13 at 7. (Peter Norton Space, 555 W. 42nd St. 212-244-7529.)

MRS. FARNSWORTH
Electoral politics are the focus of a new comedy by A. R. Gurney that stars Sigourney Weaver, John Lithgow, and Danny Burstein. Directed by Jim Simpson. Opens April 7 at 7. (Flea, 41 White St. 212-352-3101.)

Kurt Wagner and his band Lambchop play the Bowery Ballroom April 8–9.

A RAISIN IN THE SUN
Sean (P. Diddy) Combs, Audra McDonald, and Phylicia Rashad star in a revival of Lorraine Hansberry's play about three generations of a family who live under the same roof on the South Side of Chicago. Directed by Kenny Leon. In previews. (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

ROAR
In a new play by Betty Shamieh ("Chocolate in Heat"), set in Detroit after the first Gulf War, a Palestinian-American family takes in a relative who has come from Kuwait. Directed by Marion McClinton. Opens April 7 at 7. (Clurman, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.)

SIXTEEN WOUNDED
A new play by Eliam Kraiem about a friendship between a Jewish baker and a young Palestinian man, with Judd Hirsch, Martha Plimpton, Omar Metwally, and Jan Maxwell. Directed by Garry Hynes. In previews. (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200.)

OPENED RECENTLY

BRIDGE & TUNNEL
Sarah Jones, a sort of multicultural mynah bird, lays our mongrel nation before us with gorgeous, pitch-perfect impersonations. (Reviewed in our issue of 3/8/04.) (45 Bleecker Street Theatre, at 45 Bleecker St. 212-307-4100.)

BUG
In this dark new comedy by Tracy Letts, Agnes (Shannon Cochran), hiding out from her violent ex-con ex-husband in an Oklahoma City hotel room, falls for a handsome drifter (Michael Shannon) with a conspiracy theory: he believes the authorities have planted bugs under his skin. With sterling performances by Cochran and Shannon (both of whom look terrific naked, which they are at length) and by Michael Cullen, as the frightening ex-husband. The director, Dexter Bullard, keeps up the suspense all the way through. (Barrow Street Theatre, 27 Barrow St., at Seventh Ave. 212-239-6200.)

EARS ON A BEATLE
Dan Lauria and Bill Dawes portray two undercover F.B.I. agents who conduct surveillance on John Lennon in the nineteen-seventies. Written and directed by Mark St. Germain ("Camping with Henry and Tom"). (DR2, at 103 E. 15th St. 212-239-6200.)

FROM DOOR TO DOOR
A comedy about smothering mothers and single parenthood by James Sherman ("Beau Jest"). Directed by Joe Brancato. (Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 212-239-6200.)

FROZEN
In Bryony Lavery's extremely well-crafted play, Swoosie Kurtz plays Nancy, a mother who walks about in a stunned silence brought on by the kidnapping and murder of her little girl by a pedophile named Ralph (the brilliant Brían F. O'Byrne). The abduction occurred twenty years before, but Nancy is defined by mourning—frozen by grief. Set in present-day England, the play is essentially a series of monologues describing the locked-in lives of Nancy, Ralph, and a criminologist named Agnetha (Laila Robins), who has come from the United States to deliver lectures on the characteristics of the criminal mind. Robins has a deadpan focus and a passion for acting, but she's no showoff. Kurtz can say nothing and speak volumes by shifting slightly in her seat. O'Byrne, on the other hand, is all physicality, alternately timid and intimidating. Directed by Doug Hughes. (3/29/04) (MCC at East Thirteenth Street Theatre, 136 E. 13th St. 212-279-4200.)

HANNAH & MARTIN
Kate Fodor's play about the relationship between Hannah Arendt and Martin Heidegger, Arendt's onetime philosophy professor and lover, stars David Strathairn and Melissa Friedman. Directed by Ron Russell. A production of the Epic Theatre Center. (Manhattan Ensemble Theatre, 55 Mercer St. 212-279-4200.)

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. (Theatre at 45th Street, 354 W. 45th St. 212-868-4444.)

THE LIFE OF SPIDERS
In a new production by the Holderness Theatre Company, people dressed as spiders dangle from sheer curtains. The Cirque du Soleil-style acrobatics accompany a traditional but kooky drama about a doomed love affair between a Parisian countess (Kathryn Foster) and a young man from the provinces (Tuomas Hil) who hopes to get rich from a miracle fabric he makes from spider's silk. Foster is steely and luscious as the man-eater, but the play attempts too much and gets tangled in its own web. Directed by Rebecca Holderness. (Culture Project, 45 Bleecker St. 212-352-3101.)

THE MOONLIGHT ROOM
Tristine Skyler's critically lauded play, about two teen-agers at a hospital who are waiting for news

R. GREGORY CHRISTIE

about a friend who has overdosed, has reopened on Theatre Row. Directed by Jeff Cohen. (Beckett, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.)

MY KITCHEN WARS
A one-woman show in which the preparation of a lobster salad and a Grand Marnier soufflé accompany Betty Fussell's memories of her transformation from passive wife to enlightened writer during her marriage to the Princeton historian Paul Fussell. Performed by the likable Dorothy Lyman, who adapted the play from Ms. Fussell's memoir and is accompanied onstage by the torch singer Melissa Sweeney. Directed by Elinor Renfield. (78th Street Theatre Lab, 236 W. 78th St. 212-868-4444.)

OPEN HEART
Robby Benson ("Ice Castles") wrote and stars in this musical about a young television executive who pays more attention to his sitcom family than to his actual family until a heart attack changes his priorities. With Benson (who has experienced two heart attacks), his real-life wife Karla DeVito, and the marvelous Stan Brown. Directed by Matt Williams. (Cherry Lane, 38 Commerce St. 212-239-6200.)

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

SARAH, SARAH
Manhattan Theatre Club presents a new play by Daniel Goldfarb, set in Canada in 1961 and in China in 2001, about an immigrant woman who opposes her son's marriage. J. Smith-Cameron plays the matriarch in the first act and her granddaughter in the second. Directed by Mark Nelson. (Reviewed in this issue.) (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212.)

SLY FOX
Arthur Penn directs a revival of Larry Gelbart's comedy, an update of Ben Jonson's "Volpone." With Richard Dreyfuss, Eric Stoltz, and Elizabeth Berkley. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200.)

TWENTIETH CENTURY
The Roundabout Theatre's superbly cast revival of Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur's screwball comedy from 1934 stars Alec Baldwin as the worn-out impresario Oscar Jaffe and Anne Heche as his former lover and protégée, Lily Garland, who has become an Academy Award-winning star. From adjacent railway couchettes, the two hilariously act out society's battle between collapse and abundance. Like their characters, Baldwin and Heche have lived out their caprices in public; in addition to their wit and alertness, they bring to the stage their own legends, which lend a particular vividness to their characterizations and make for a rich theatrical chemistry. Slickly directed by Walter Bobbie, with a clever Art Deco set by Jon Lee Beatty, on which Pullman cars slide along the proscenium, creating the illusion of movement. (4/5/04) (American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-719-1300.)

WAVE
In a comic drama by Sung Rno, presented by the Ma-Yi Theatre Company, members of a Korean-American family struggle to hold onto their heritage against the current of American culture. Michi Barall, as the mother, anchors the production with her ironic intelligence—she slices Converse sneakers into a kimchi stew to protest her family's taste for modern fare. Meanwhile, the father (Ron Domingo), obsessed with American beauty standards, becomes infatuated with a digital, Asian version of Marilyn Monroe. Directed by Will Pomerantz. (Ohio Theatre, 66 Wooster St. 212-352-3101.)

WELL
Lisa Kron's cunningly written and compelling play is a Pirandello-like examination of chronic illness. She describes it as "a solo show with some other people in it." One of these people is her sick, obese, complaining but beloved mother Ann (the superb Jayne Houdyshell), whom she both berates and allows to hijack the play. Perhaps because Kron feels guilty for cannibalizing her past, she allows her characters to get the best of her. They protest her scenes, join forces with her mother, and sometimes even attack her. Their disagreements with Kron's authorial voice lend a sense of both modesty and accuracy to her personal history. Directed by Leigh Silverman. (4/12/04) (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-239-6200.)

YEARDLEY SMITH: MORE
Smith, the actress who provides the voice of Lisa on "The Simpsons," is ruefully winsome in her confessional one-woman show about the ups and (mostly) downs of her acting career and her lifelong struggle with bulimia and depression. Directed by Judith Ivey. (Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 212-307-7171. Closes April 18.)

ALSO PLAYING

AIDA
Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 212-307-4747.

AVENUE Q
Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.

BIG BILL
Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200.

THE BOY FROM OZ
Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.

CHICAGO
Ambassador, 215 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200.

CIRQUE JACQUELINE
Triad, 158 W. 72nd St. 212-352-3101. (Closes April 21.)

EMBEDDED
Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-239-6200.

FIDDLER ON THE ROOF
Minskoff, 200 W. 45th St. 212-307-4100.

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Ford Center, 213 W. 42nd St. 212-307-4100.

GYPSY
Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.

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HAIRSPRAY
Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 212-307-4100.
KING LEAR
Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200. (Through April 18.)
THE LION KING
New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 212-307-4100.
MAMMA MIA!
Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 212-563-5544.
MOVIN' OUT
Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 212-307-4100.

Cheney Thompson's paintings and a specially constructed bunker, at Kreps through April 10.

THE PRODUCERS
St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.
SILENT LAUGHTER
Lamb's, 130 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.
THE STENDHAL SYNDROME
59E59 Theatre, 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.
THE TRICKY PART
McGinn/Cazale, 2162 Broadway, at 76th St. 212-239-6200.
WICKED
Gershwin, 222 W. 51st St. 212-307-4100.
WONDERFUL TOWN
Al Hirschfeld, 302 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.

DANCE

COMPAGNIE MAGUY MARIN
The French company presents the evening-length work "One Can't Eat Applause," which is intended as an indictment of postindustrial commercialization but is pretty to look at, if repetitive, and might more aptly be titled "Showdown at Sherwin-Williams." Nine dancers push through a curtain of colored plastic strips, shoulder-butting one another and occasionally stopping in freeze-frames. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. April 6-10 at 8 and April 11 at 2 and 7:30.)

"DECAY OF THE ANGEL"
Maureen Fleming, perhaps the foremost American practitioner of Butoh, specializes in metamorphoses, transforming her body with agonizing slowness. In an ecstatic new work at La Mama Annex, she draws on the ancient Japanese tale of a fisherman who finds a piece of an angel's wing caught on a branch and refuses to return it until the angel shows him a celestial dance. Using film and images by Lois Greenfield, photographs of the ikebana flower arrangements of Gaho Taniguchi, and a score by Philip Glass, Fleming creates the angel's dance. (66 E. 4th St. 212-475-7710. April 8-10 at 7:30 and April 11 at 2:30 and 7:30.)

HUMAN FUTURE DANCE CORPS
In "Coming Out of the Night with Names," Peter Jacobs, DD Dorvillier, Oren Bar-noy, and Heather Kravas explore every corner of P.S. 122—from the stage to the hallways and bathrooms—in their search for a mysterious missing man. With a video by Molly Davies and live guitar and electronic music by Kenta and Michelle Nagai. (150 First Ave., at 9th St. 212-477-5288. April 8-10 at 7:30 and April 11 at 5.)
"MILAGRO"
This high-minded, high-speed piece by the longtime collaborators Patricia Hoffbauer and George Emilio Sanchez makes use of language, dance, and theatre. The performers travel between imaginary places, attempting to break down boundaries of time and space while searching for meeting points. The vaudevillian antics are only slightly amusing. Part of Dance Theatre Workshop's "Carnival" festival. (219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. April 7-10 at 7.)
SAEKO ICHINOHE DANCE COMPANY
In the late sixties, Ichinohe moved from Japan to New York, where she studied dance at Juilliard with Antony Tudor and soon founded her own company. To commemorate the hundred-and-fiftieth anniversary of Commodore Matthew Perry's visit to Japan—an event that inspired Puccini's "Madama Butterfly" and Sondheim's "Pacific Overtures"—she presents two dances that evoke Japan before and after Perry. "Utamaro," a new work, is based on the woodblock prints of the artist Kitagawa Utamaro, who romanticized the "floating world" of the Edo period, with its geishas and samisens. A section of the piece, "Michiyuki" ("Lover's Journey"), is dedicated to Tudor. The evening's second work is a revival of Ichinohe's "Stars & Stripes and Cherry Blossoms," from 1984, set to an original score by Nicholas Scarim. (Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College, Park Ave. at 68th St. 212-772-4448. April 13 at 8.)
"CROSSING BOUNDARIES"
Dixon Place in Exile presents the newest installment of its multimedia dance series, curated by Marcia Monroe. Choreographers include Wendell Beavers, Renee Gerardo, Jennifer Nugent, and Smruti Patel. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 212-219-0736. April 12 at 8.)

NIGHT LIFE
CONCERTS

BEYONCÉ / ALICIA KEYS / MISSY ELLIOTT
This impressive triple bill should deliver flagrant octave-scaling, hip-hop beats, and, of course, plenty of bootyliciousness. (Nassau Coliseum. 212-307-7171. April 10 at 7. Madison Square Garden. 212-307-7171. April 12 at 7.)
THE SIDNEY BECHET SOCIETY
The society presents a jam session with Jacques Sany, Randy Sandke, and Wycliffe Gordon, among others. (Theatre at Greenwich Village Center, 219 Sullivan St. For more information, call 516-627-4468. April 12 at 7 and 9.)
SLIPKNOT
The members of this ensemble from Iowa wear masks and jumpsuits and make bruising heavy-metal music with hip-hop flourishes. Their penchant for the macabre and their shock-rock theatrics (they've been known to assault one another during performances) have earned them a sizable, fiercely loyal, and slightly disconcerting following. (Roseland, 239 W. 52nd St. 212-307-7171. April 12 at 7.)
AIR
At the close of the twentieth century, the French electronic duo's début album, "Moon Safari," was the preferred sonic wallpaper in stylish coffee bars and posh spas. They had less luck with their second release, "10,000 Hz Legend," which many argued was marred by an experimental streak. The pair have found a happy medium between multi-instrumental adventurousness and engaging trip-hop on their third record, "Talkie Walkie." New York City's own **Mosquitos,** who play sunny, summery pop, open the show. (Hammerstein Ballroom, Manhattan Center, 311 W. 34th St. 212-307-7171. April 13 at 8.)

CLUBS

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

BARBÈS
376 9th St., Park Slope, Brooklyn (718-965-9177)—April 10: The ethnomusicologist, composer, and banjo player David Gould leads the **Bootleg Remedy** through a repertoire of bluegrass, Dixieland, and Western swing. Good times are assured.
B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (212-997-4144)—April 7: The **Funky Meters,** from New Orleans. April 8: Orange County's **Sugar Ray** ditched their grunge-rock sound after their lilting pop single "Fly" became a hit in 1997, and their subsequent albums built on that winning formula. It didn't hurt that Mark McGrath, the lead singer, is effortlessly charming. April 9: The **Flatlanders** are three roots-rock legends from West Texas—Joe Ely, Jimmie Dale Gilmore, and Butch Hancock—who first performed together in the early seventies. They reunited a few years ago and have released a pair of albums that make good on the promise of their youth. April 13: **Olu Dara,** a Mississippi-born avant-garde jazz cornettist who's also proven

MICHAEL WELDON

adept at the blues guitar, stops by with his band. The opening act is **Vusi Mahlasela,** a South African singer whose soaring vocals and dramatic range earned him the nickname "the Voice" at home.

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—April 8-9: **Lambchop,** led by the singer, songwriter, and guitarist Kurt Wagner, is big; membership has been as high as twenty. Lambchop is also prolific; they recently released two new records, "Aw C'mon" and "No You C'mon," full of string-drenched countrypolitan arrangements and Curtis Mayfield-inflected soul. With the formerly neo-country **Pernice Brothers,** who now produce gracefully melancholic pop. April 10: Denver's **Sixteen Horsepower** combines the troubled melodrama of vintage Nick Cave with a dark country-rock sensibility. Their atmospheric music transports the listener to a chilly, lonely place.

IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (212-777-6800)—April 6-8: The onetime teen-age wonder and former Radish front man **Ben Kweller** and his band. He has a new record of heartfelt, ambitious pop, "On My Way," on sale this week. Kweller shares the bill with **Death Cab for Cutie,** an ethereal pop band from Bellingham, Washington. April 9: The instrumental electronica-funk and self-proclaimed "space porn" band **Particle.** When they played Irving Plaza last Halloween, they transformed the place into a homage to Studio 54, complete with the famed moon with a spoon. This time around they're touring with **Buckethead,** an intense funk-metal guitarist whose playing transcends his costume—a Kentucky Fried Chicken container worn over his head.

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—April 8: The Atlanta-based soul singer **Van Hunt.** Fridays in April, starting April 9: The Brazilian singer **Luciana Souza** explores the music of South America in English, Spanish, and Portuguese. Her latest album sets the poems of Pablo Neruda to music. April 13: **Tom Russell.** How many country-folk singers are also bullfighting aficionados? Russell is, which sets him apart from the rest of the acoustic-guitar-toting crowd. His latest album, "Indians Cowboys Horses Dogs," is his nineteenth, and he's also written songs for other performers, including Nanci Griffith, Dave Alvin, Joe Ely, Iris DeMent, and K. D. Lang.

KNITTING FACTORY
74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (212-219-3055)—April 6: The Jamaican dancehall innovator **Eek-a-Mouse.** April 8-9: The **Fall** (see This Week). April 12: The **Unicorns** are an exuberant, lo-fi pop band from Canada.

LIVING ROOM
154 Ludlow St. (212-533-7235)—April 8: The former Madder Rose vocalist **Mary Lorson.** At midnight the band **Gloria Deluxe** conjures up Patsy Cline. April 10: The Hawaiian swing of the **Moonlighters.** Mondays: The guitarist **Jim Campilongo** and friends.

MERCURY LOUNGE
217 E. Houston St. (212-260-4700)—April 8-9: The local group **TV on the Radio,** which is riding a cresting wave of media attention for its stately gospel-like rock.

NORTHSIX
66 N. 6th St., Williamsburg, Brooklyn (718-599-5103)—April 9: Seattle's indie-rock community has rallied round the songwriter John Roderick, whose band the **Long Winters** plays power pop with the help of members of the Posies and Death Cab for Cutie. April 10: **Mike Doughty,** the former lead singer of the local maverick avant-garde pop band Soul Coughing.

S.O.B.'S
204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (212-243-4940)—April 7-8: The English neo-soul duo **Floetry.**

SPIRIT
530 W. 27th St. (212-268-9477)—April 8: The **Psychedelic Furs** defined their place in the British New Wave of the early eighties with a stylish mix of Velvet Underground cool and Sex Pistol snarl. They're back on tour, teaming up with the equally antiquated **Alarm,** Welsh firebrands with high hair and bleeding hearts.

TONIC
107 Norfolk St. (212-358-7503)—April 9: **Angel Dean** and **Sue Garner,** two singers who did time in an eighties New York alt-country outfit called the Last Roundup, have reunited for an eerie and engaging new record, "Pot Liquor."

TRIBECA ROCK CLUB
16 Warren St. (212-766-1070)—April 9: The Canadian singer-songwriter **Sarah Harmer,** who ruminates on love, loss, and other aspects of life with simple grace. She's just released a new album, "All of Our Names."

JAZZ AND *STANDARDS*

ALGONQUIN HOTEL
59 W. 44th St. (212-840-6800)—Through May 15: The elegant vocalist **Karen Akers** may personify New York cabaret, but she shuns chestnuts in favor of imaginatively programmed evenings. Sundays: **Barbara Carroll's** authentic bebop piano, subtle vocalizing, and encyclopedic knowledge of standards make for a civilized night out.

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—Through April 11: The trumpeter Jesús Alemañy and his horn-laden ensemble **¡Cubanismo!** serve up the Cuban music experience in all its propulsive glory.

CARLYLE HOTEL
Madison Ave. at 76th St. (212-744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wrap-around murals, and, through May 1, **Maria Friedman,** a British theatre star who brings two piano accompanists and a wealth of West End experience (she will co-star in Andrew Lloyd Webber's upcoming "The Woman in White").

FEINSTEIN'S AT THE REGENCY
540 Park Ave., at 61st St. (212-339-4095)—Through April 24: The Broadway veteran **Patti Lupone.**

IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—Through April 8: The octogenarian avant-garde saxophonist **Sam Rivers** and the young pianist **Jason Moran,** kindred spirits, are joined by the veteran bassist **Reggie Workman.** April 9-11: Sun Ra himself is gone, but the **Sun Ra Arkestra,** now under the direction of the saxophonist Marshall Allen, keeps big-band eccentricity alive for a new generation of listeners. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.**

Alexis Rockman's "Manifest Destiny," an eight-by-twenty-four-foot mural that imagines a future Brooklyn waterfront swamped b

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—April 9-11: The **Russell Malone** quartet. Having paid his dues with the likes of Harry Connick, Jr., and Diana Krall, the graceful guitar stylist Malone is stepping out on his own.

SWEET RHYTHM
88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (212-255-3626)—April 9-10: **David Hazeltine,** an assured neo-bop pianist who's done first-rate work in trio settings (this year's album "Close to You" comes to mind), goes the quartet route here with the addition of **Jim Rotundi** on trumpet.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—Through April 18: The pianist **Bill Charlap** is confident and lyrical on the new CD with his trio, "Somewhere: The Songs of Leonard Bernstein." The bassist **Peter Washington** and the drummer **Kenny Washington** provide magic-carpet support. 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 into 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. Etchings, silk screens, 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. ♦ W. B. Yeats called it the "artifice of eternity"—the icons, metalwork, carvings, and textiles of Byzantine culture. Christian and Islamic traditions were melded into an aesthetic of illumination, gilding, fresco, and mosaic that influenced the masters of the Italian and Northern Renaissance. Crowded with sombre Madonnas and lean Christs in red robes, **"Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261-1557)"** includes treasures like the "Man of Sorrows" reliquary, filled with bits of saints tied in silk bags. The Byzantine influence on Europe is illustrated with masterpieces by van Eyck and van der Weyden. Through July 4. (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 gargantuan retrospective of the late, underknown German-Swiss artist Dieter Roth, holds sway at MOMA and in a smaller show at its affiliate, P.S. 1. Imagine Robert Rauschenberg, Yves Klein, and Joseph Beuys rolled into one and thrown against a wall. Roth emerged after the Second World War as a gifted draftsman à la Paul Klee, proceeded through phases of inventive geometric and kinetic work, and then, influenced by Jean Tinguely and Fluxus, became an installational wild man, using innumerable mediums (frequently, cast chocolate) to colonize the world with a kind of participatory narcissism. Did Roth liberate his considerable talent, or did he trash it? 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 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)—A startlingly good Biennial banishes the gloom that has long beset the Whitney's programs on contemporary art. Painting and drawing reign. Handmade pictures exercise a gravitational tug on practically everything in the show, including sculptures, installations, videos, photographs, films, and digital animation. Paintings by younger artists like Elizabeth Peyton, Laura Owens, and Lecia Dole-Recio exchange energy with those by veterans like David Hockney, Mel Bochner, and Robert Mangold. Video installation emerges as a fully mature art form in strong works by Catherine Sullivan, Craigie Horsfield, Eve Sussman, and Slater Bradley. Installational hybrids of painting and sculpture—dominant in the last decade—show signs of exhaustion; an exception is a delightful neo-psychedelic disco by a group called assume vivid astro focus. Through May 30. (Open Wednesdays through Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART
Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—Alexis Rockman's "Manifest Destiny" is unveiled at the public opening of the museum's expansion and renovation on April 17. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

JAPAN SOCIETY
333 E. 47th St. (212-752-3015)—The Edo and Meiji periods covered in **"An Enduring Vision: Seventeenth to Twentieth Century Japanese Painting from the Gitter-Yelen Collection"** are, not coincidentally, also those in which the haiku developed and matured. The paintings on show, from finely detailed gilt-and-lacquer folding screens to swift calligraphic brushwork on rice paper, are as

ostentatiously spare as any three-line poem, and as clever in their formal variations. A discreet sense of humor is occasionally evident, as in a group of black crows examining a bright-orange egg, or Hotei Gosei's women picking tea leaves, their mouths frozen in laughter. Through June 20. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, 11 to 6, and weekends, 11 to 5.)

NEUE GALERIE
1048 Fifth Ave., at 86th St. (212-628-6200)—"Arcadia and Metropolis: Masterworks of German Expressionism from the Nationalgalerie Berlin" traces the shift in early-twentieth-century German art from pastoral dreaminess to hard-edged urban imagery. Paula Modersohn-Becker's voluptuous "Kneeling Mother with Child" and Emil Nolde's primitivist "Papuan Boys" represent the earlier phase; Ernst Ludwig Kirchner's "Potsdamer Platz," populated with his signature angular figures, the later. The biggest surprise is a New York visit by a celebrity of sorts: Hannah Höch's famous collage "Cut with the Kitchen Knife," which is filled with black-and-white mass-media images of famous Weimar figures and nonsensically arranged letters. It was the sensation of Berlin Dada in 1920. Through June 7. (Open Fridays, 11 to 9, and Saturdays through Mondays, 11 to 6.)

nvironmental degradation, will be unveiled on April 17 at the Brooklyn Museum of Art.

GALLERIES–UPTOWN

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

GEORGE AULT
This upstate artist has the look of Hopper and a knack for the ominous pastoral—his drawing and lithograph for "Came's House" (1934) might be a picture of small-town peace and quiet but for a dying tree in the foreground, pruned back to the trunk and a few awkward limbs. The same mordant eye for detail addresses the difficulties of painting the human figure in a cold climate with "Nude and Torso" (1945). The subject faces away, her feet coyly clad in blue ankle socks, while a small classical torso of a woman rests on the floor nearby. Through April 24. (Zabriskie, 41 E. 57th St. 212-752-1223.)

Short List

GLENN BROWN
Gagosian, 980 Madison Ave., at 76th St. 212-744-2313. Through April 10.
DAVID HOCKNEY
Richard Gray, 1018 Madison Ave., at 78th St. 212-472-8787. Through April 23.
WILLIAM KENTRIDGE
Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. 212-977-7160. Through April 10.

GALLERIES–CHELSEA

YAYOI KUSAMA / PATRICIA PICCININI
Kusama has been making optically and erotically charged paintings and sculptures since the early nineteen-sixties, although the new works here—paintings with webs of opalescent color—lean more to the beautifully ordered than the sensually weird. They harmonize nicely with Piccinini's "Car Nuggets," abstract sculptures in cast fibreglass and automotive paint. Still, the whole ensemble has a polite, corporate-lobby feel; the good ideas have been so refined that they have little power left. Through April 24. (Miller, 524 W. 26th St. 212-366-4774.)
DINH Q. LÊ
Lê's photo-collages are made by weaving together sliced stills from Hollywood war movies and found images from the Vietnam era. The result is lushly tessellated, vibrantly colored pictures so packed with information that they're difficult to read. The didactics are fairly obvious; one is reminded that it's called "the American War" in Vietnam. But the images are seductive, and the eye is lost in a gorgeous flurry of visual overload. Through April 17. (P.P.O.W., 555 W. 25th St. 212-647-1044.)
MELIK OHANIAN
A sophisticated New York début by a French artist with an affinity for eclectic symbols. "Welcome to Hanksville" is a video triptych shot last summer when members of the Mars Society descended on a small Utah town to witness the Red Planet's

New York Times bestseller

The untold story of the CIA's war on bin Laden's al Qaeda

"[**Ghost Wars**] is a well-written, authoritative, high-altitude drama with a case of few heroes, many villains, bags of cash and a tragic ending—one that may not have been inevitable."

—*The Washington Post*

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closest orbit to Earth in sixty thousand years. "The Gear" is a reflective, minimalist stainless-steel sculpture that rotates slowly and is accompanied by a mournful composition of police-siren samples. Footage of an N.Y.P.D. patrol car circling the block with lights flashing during the show's opening will be added to the mix later. Through April 17. (Lambert, 564 W. 25th St. 212-242-3611.)

CHENEY THOMPSON

The gallery walls are covered by dozens of trompe-l'oeil-style paintings—renditions of two-by-fours, rusting corrugated steel, bricks, and particle board. The constructions look like something made from an Ikea kit packaged with the wrong instructions. But themes emerge: the line of one piece of lumber stretches across four or five canvases, a construction has a twin on a neighboring canvas. Large, stuttering, undulating patterns are ranged around vanishing points on each wall. The paintings lack a single center, as does the gallery—a bunker blocks access to the middle of the room. Through April 10. (Kreps, 516A W. 20th St. 212-741-8849.)

ANDY WARHOL

In the early nineteen-eighties, Warhol was commissioned to create a suite of prints celebrating Japan's royal flower, the *kiku,* or chrysanthemum. The forty-four collages on display here are studies for the final works, and they have a scruffy, layered quality that makes them worth looking at. Panels of art board in swoony hues are inked over with swaths of contrasting color, and big, splashy, blown blooms look like Mao or Marilyn gone botanical. Through April 17. (Kasmin, 293 Tenth Ave. 212-563-4474.)

Short List

BARBARA KRUGER

Boone, 541 W. 24th St. 212-752-2929. Through April 24.

XIAOZE XIE

Cowles, 537 W. 24th St. 212-741-8999. Through April 10.

GALLERIES–DOWNTOWN

MICHAEL BEVILACQUA

Bevilacqua has forsaken high fashion for the garage in his new work, which is free of the Gucci and Louis Vuitton logos that overlaid his previous paintings. The full-sized race-car body at the center of the show comes loaded with mismatched auto branding (Lexus, Dodge, Goodyear), as well as skate and band stickers. The surrounding works on linen, including a painting of the Ramones silhouetted against a pink sky, are stronger. Through April 17. (Deitch Projects, 76 Grand St. 212-343-7300.)

CHRISTIAN JANKOWSKI

Jankowski's meta-artistic video works may make him the Charlie Kaufman of the art world. In the dramatic monologue "Rosa," characters break scene to expound on beauty or the art/commerce nexus. In "What Remains," moviegoers exiting a theatre are asked for an impression of what they've just seen; most are still suspended between the imaginary world of the film and real life. Through May 2. (Maccarone, 45 Canal St. 212-431-4977.)

Short List

ERRÓ

Grey Art Gallery, 100 Washington Sq. E. 212-998-6780. Opens April 13.

LAURA OWENS

Gavin Brown, 620 Greenwich St. 212-627-5258. Through April 10.

PHOTOGRAPHY

EIKOH HOSOE

Erotic tableaux by a Japanese master photographer whose long career has been defined by an interest in sex and theatricality. For this new work, which is, uncharacteristically, in color, Hosoe projected slides of lusty seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Japanese woodblock prints onto the (mostly naked) bodies of Butoh dancers. He then photographed the scenes, with lush and sensual results. The dancers are bathed in images of flowered kimonos, great plumes of pubic hair, and dramatic pudendal mounds. You have to study some of the pictures for a while to figure out exactly what is going on, but cunnilingus and female masturbation are recurring themes. The prints are mounted on aluminum and framed against black suède. Through April 24. (Greenberg, 41 E. 57th St. 212-334-0010.)

ZWELETHU MTHETHWA

Magnificent color portraits of South African sugarcane cutters, taken in the fields where they work. The first room in the gallery holds a series of nine prints, six feet by eight feet, and there are smaller pieces in two other rooms. Each picture is of a single figure, often posed at the center of the frame, with stalks of cane lying in rows in the foreground, against a background of erect plants. Nature isn't messy here. It's geometrically formal. In one image, a man stands against what appears to be an impassably dense, green forest of cane. In other pictures, the workers are isolated in an austere, flat landscape. They are all dressed in layers of clothing: ragged skirts, multiple knit caps, two or three

TABLES FOR TWO

WESTVILLE

210 W. 10th St. (212-741-7971)—Like the kind of Hampton that no longer exists, Westville is mellow, a little arty, and you and all your friends can afford to be there. Jay Strauss, an erstwhile photographer who owns the restaurant with a friend from N.Y.U. (they graduated in the eighties), grew up in Oyster Bay. He can reliably be found shimmying through the restaurant's narrow passages in a well-worn black T-shirt and jeans, pouring water from a plastic pitcher or opening more wine. (He works in the shoebox kitchen four days a week.) The restaurant seats eighteen—here an actress memorizing lines, there a young novelist. One night, a couple sat down to dine and knew the party of four to their right and the party of three to their left, and soon dishes were being passed among the tables—try the bok choy, these string-beans are amazing—until the whole thing felt like an après-softball potlatch. ("After the Gold Rush" was on the sound system.) Tiny imperfections in the food, you forgive. So what if the fennel is a little waterlogged? Just feel lucky you got a seat.

Burgers and dogs have pride of place on the menu, and the Fearless Frank, from the Niman Ranch, is really something: fit to burst and salty as a dog should be. The waitress recommends it with the chili (mild and almost too fresh—the beans are al dente). The fries are skinny and pale, just like at Mickey D.'s. Chicken tenders, a king-size appetizer, are beyond crunchy, with perfectly cooked middles, and served with chunky blue-cheese dressing or hot sauce. More sophisticated dishes, like trout, with a heavy smattering of finely minced rosemary between the filets, are simple and au naturel: the trout comes with a lemon wedge, a bed of mixed greens, and the head.

In the summer, Strauss gets produce from the greenmarket at Hudson and Twelfth Streets, but even in the in-between months he serves up "Market Sides"—vegetable dishes such as roasted beets and sweet walnuts, snow peas and carrots, and sautéed broccoli rabe. The L'il Devin (an oatmeal-and-cranberry sandwich cookie with a cream-cheese filling) and heavenly carrot cake are homemade by Ivy Tack, the only one on the premises who's been to cooking school. (Open daily for lunch and dinner and for brunch on weekends. Entrées $7-$14.)

—*Dana Goodyear*

soiled cotton shirts tied at the tails, baggy pants, big rubber boots. The effect is remarkably . . . well, chic. The men have a highly evolved sense of fashion, as well as sophisticated ideas about the presentation of self. Through April 17. (Shainman, 513 W. 20th St. 212-645-1701.)

PATTI SMITH

A series of small gelatin silver prints made from Polaroid images of subjects that have talismanic significance for Smith: a china cup that belonged to her father, her friend Robert Mapplethorpe's slippers, a life mask of William Blake, Hermann Hesse's typewriter, William Burroughs's bandanna. Several of the photographs were taken in Sussex, at and near Virginia Woolf's house, including views of the writer's bed and the River Ouse, where she drowned herself. The pictures are quiet and thoughtful, with a religious streak (the shape of a granite cross owned by Mapplethorpe is echoed in the embroidery and folds of Woolf's coverlet). Through April 24. (Robert Miller, 524 W. 26th St. 212-366-4774.)

ALEC SOTH

Soth lugged an eight-by-ten view camera the length of the Mississippi River, from his home in Minnesota to the southernmost part of Louisiana accessible by car, making landscapes, portraits, still-lifes, and photographs of abandoned rooms. Each image has a distinctive, often muted palette. The green of the river's edge in one picture is broken only by white morning glories and an abandoned metal bed frame. The dreary brownish gray of the earth around the house in Dyess, Arkansas, that Johnny Cash grew up in is complemented by an ominous gray sky. Building on the school of photography practiced by Robert Frank, Garry Winogrand, William Eggleston, and Joel Sternfeld, Soth has found a brooding sexuality, an eccentric beauty, and an overwhelming sadness in the people and places along the river. A buff construction worker from Minneapolis sits in his kitchen in his jockey shorts; a mattress floats in the stagnant water at the river's edge in Arkansas; children hang out in an overgrown cemetery in New Orleans. The images are large, as big as fifty inches by forty inches, and elegantly composed. Through April 24. (Milo, 552 W. 24th St. 212-414-0370.)

Short List

LOTTE JACOBI
Jewish Museum, 1109 Fifth Ave. 212-423-3200. Through April 11.

ANDREA MODICA
Houk, 745 Fifth Ave. 212-750-7070. Through April 17.

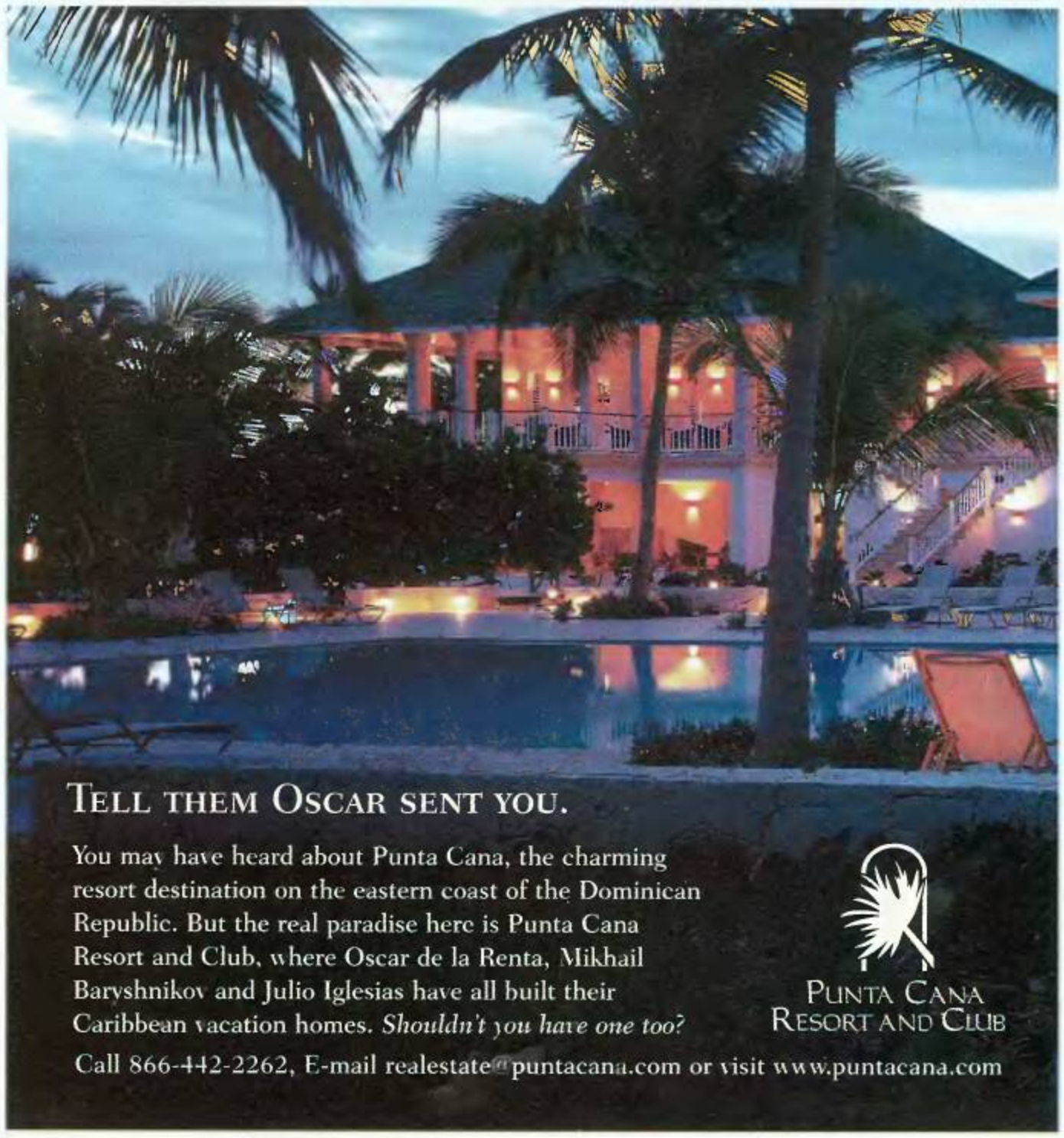
CATHERINE OPIE
Gorney Bravin + Lee, 534 W. 26th St. 212-352-8375. Through April 10.

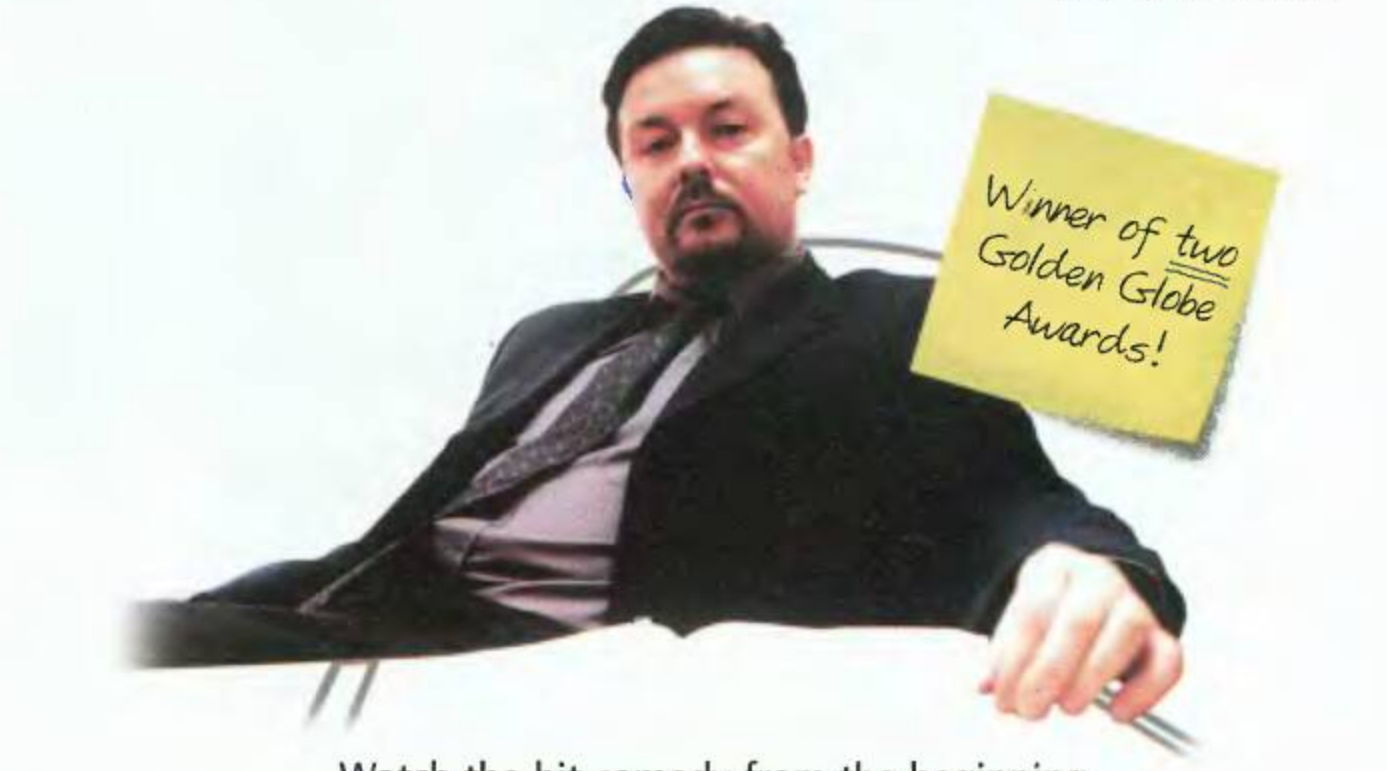
MASSIMO VITALE
Benrubi, 52 E. 76th St. 212-517-3766. Through April 10.

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

SOTHEBY'S

April 7 at 10:15 A.M.: Just as there is nothing proletarian about English public schools, there is nothing rustic about the English country house, at least as it is represented in this sale of furnishings. Some lots are purely decorative, like an intricate sixteenth-century needlework portrait of Elizabeth I wearing a plumed hat and standing in front of a formal garden; more practical, especially for those with secret lives, is a nineteenth-century giltwood library cabinet with a concealed door, reputed to have belonged to the Earls of Dartmouth. ♦ April 13 at 10:15 A.M. and 2: Maurice Neville spent more than twenty years amassing letters, manuscripts, and inscribed books by leading modern authors. This two-part auction of his collection includes a remarkable first edition of Kerouac's "The Town and the City," tough-talking correspondence by Hemingway (along with first editions of "The Sun Also Rises," "In Our Time," and "The





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Torrents of Spring"), and a brief inscription by F. Scott Fitzgerald, who captures on paper a moment of profound self-doubt. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.)

CHRISTIE'S

April 8 at 10 A.M. and 2: Halsted Billings Vander Poel—who was born on a Louis XIV-style estate in Fort Tryon Park which is now the site of the Cloisters—was a man of many interests; in addition to serving in the Second World War and in the Eisenhower and Truman Administrations, he was active in the restoration of churches and antiquities in Italy. This sale of English furniture features many pieces from Vander Poel's collection, including a selection of George II mahogany chairs and a seventeenth-century strongbox, brass bound and filled with secret compartments, set on a custom-made stand decorated with putti. Another highlight, from a different collection, is an eighteenth-century German blue-black-and-gilt mirror decorated with Japanese themes. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC

OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA

Karita Mattila—giving the performance of her life—sings the title role in Jürgen Flimm's stunning new production of **"Salome."** Victoria Livengood, Siegfried Jerusalem, Bryn Terfel, and Matthew Polenzani are her excellent colleagues; Valery Gergiev conducts. Sue Patchell replaces Mattila on April 7. (April 7 and April 10 at 8. These are the final performances.) ♦ The redoubtable Julius Rudel conducts a revival of **"Madama Butterfly,"** featuring Liping Zhang and Eduardo Villa. (April 8 at 8.) ♦ With Richard Leech replacing Villa. (April 13 at 7:30.) ♦ **"Rigoletto,"** with Ruth Ann Swenson, Irina Mishura, Ramón Vargas, and Franz Grundheber; Marco Armiliato. (April 9 at 8. This is the final performance.) ♦ When Elijah Moshinsky's production of **"Nabucco,"** Verdi's early, rough-hewn jewel of an opera, made its triumphant première, in 2001, Maria Guleghina took on the punishing role of Abigaille. More recently the young American soprano Andrea Gruber has proved her mettle in the part, which requires both rippling fiorituras and real dramatic weight. Gruber is again leading the cast, which also features Marina Domashenko, Gwyn Hughes Jones, Leo Nucci, and Samuel Ramey, a veteran of the original run; Carlo Rizzi. (April 10 at 1:30.) ♦ The revival of Otto Schenk's production of Wagner's "Der Ring des Nibelungen" continues with **"Die Walküre,"** featuring Jane Eaglen, Deborah Voigt, Yvonne Naef, Plácido Domingo, James Morris, and Matti Salminen; James Levine. (April 12 at 6:30.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000.)

NEW YORK CITY OPERA

A new production of Marvin David Levy's **"Mourning Becomes Electra,"** with Lauren Flanigan, Emily Pulley, Jason Howard, Stephen West, and Kurt Ollmann; George Manahan conducts. (April 7 and April 13 at 7:30. These are the final performances.) ♦ Mark Lamos's production of **"Tosca,"** set in Fascist Italy in the nineteen-thirties, returns with a cast headed by Michele Capalbo, Carlo Ventre, and Grant Youngblood; Joseph Rescigno. (April 8 at 7:30 and April 10 at 1:30.) ♦ Handel's **"Xerxes,"** with Sarah Connolly (in the title role), Amy Burton, Lisa Saffer, and David Walker; Gary Thor Wedow. (April 9 at 8.) ♦ **"Le Nozze di Figaro,"** with Georgia Jarman, Angela Fout, Jennifer Rivera, Kelly Anderson, and Marcus DeLoach; Steven Mosteller. (April 10 at 8.) ♦ For the first time, City Opera presents **"Ermione,"** Rossini's almost forgotten "tragic action" based on Racine's "Andromache." (It's not the New York première, however: Peter Tiboris's plucky MidAmerica Productions beat them to the punch last year.) Rossini, who carefully preserved the score, knew that its day would come: the title role, that of a ferocious Spartan princess trying to hang on to her man in the aftermath of the Trojan War, is full of opportunities for the soprano Alexandrina Pendatchanska. Ursula Ferri, Gregory Kunde, and Barry Banks are also featured; Manahan. (April 11 at 1:30.) (New York State Theatre. 212-870-5570.)

AMATO OPERA

The East Village's feisty chamber-opera company returns with **"The Marriage of Figaro,"** directed and conducted by the group's co-founder, Anthony Amato. (319 Bowery, at 2nd St. 212-228-8200. April 9-10 at 7:30. Through April 25.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

THE MANNES ORCHESTRA

JoAnn Falletta, the respected music director of the Buffalo Philharmonic, leads the group in music by Bernstein, Tchaikovsky (the First Piano Concerto, with the student soloist Ying Feng), and Rimsky-Korsakov. (Alice Tully Hall. April 7 at 8. For free tickets, which are required, call 212-875-5050.)

EOS ORCHESTRA: "CONCUSSION (PERCUSSION)"

First performances are no big deal for Evelyn Glennie, the world's only major solo percussionist, who has commissioned more than a hundred new works to play on her collection of some fifteen hundred instruments. On the conductor Jonathan Sheffer's latest concert, she performs the New York première of Ned Rorem's "Mallet Concerto," an essay in melody, along with the world première of "Loud Love Songs" by the downtowner David Lang, which should be a far more boisterous affair. The program begins with the pastoral serenity of Schubert's Symphony No. 5 and closes with "Three Derangements," from the zany world of Spike Jones. (Ethical Culture Society Concert Hall, 2 W. 64th St. 212-691-6415. April 8-9 at 8.)

NATIONAL CHORALE AND ORCHESTRA

Martin Josman's professional-grade chorus offers Mozart's Requiem, along with performances of the "Ave verum corpus" and the rarely performed "Vesperae Solennes de Dominica" (K. 321). (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-721-6500. April 9 at 8.)

POMERIUM

Alexander Blachly's renowned early-music choir offers an Eastertide program featuring motets by Lassus, Monteverdi, and Byrd. (The Cloisters, Fort Tryon Park. 212-650-2290. April 10 at 1 and 3.)

BACH VESPERS

Since 1968, Holy Trinity Lutheran Church has been presenting Sunday-evening performances (on period instruments) of the Bach Cantatas. The Bach Choir and Players' latest concert features Cantata No. 31, "Der Himmel lacht!," along with smaller works by Lassus and Luther himself; Richard Erickson conducts. (W. 65th St. at Central Park W. 212-877-6815. April 11 at 5. A donation is suggested.)

RECITALS

DEBORAH VOIGT

Covent Garden may have spurned her, but the beloved American diva will surely get a rapturous reception at Carnegie Hall, where she'll be accompanied by Brian Zeger in a program of songs by Ives, Schubert, Strauss, Sondheim, and Tchaikovsky. (212-247-7800. April 7 at 8.)

LUCY SHELTON

The intrepid American soprano, deftly mixing old and newer fare, offers a recital of works by Handel, Berio (including "Sequenza III"), Donizetti, and Scelsi at Columbia University's Italian Academy; Karl Paulnack is at the piano. (Casa Italiana, 1161 Amsterdam Ave. 212-854-1623. April 7 at 8.)

NADJA SALERNO-SONNENBERG AND ANNE-MARIE MCDERMOTT

The violinist and the pianist, making live recordings of works by Schubert, Poulenc, and Beethoven (the Sonata in C Minor, Op. 30, No. 2), invite an audience to attend. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 212-501-3330. April 8 and April 10 at 8.)

BARGEMUSIC

April 8 at 7:30: Star quality comes to Bargemusic in the form of Yefim Bronfman, who joins a group of strings led by the violinist Mark Peskanov in a con-

cert of music by Beethoven (the "Spring" Sonata), Françaix, and Schumann (the Piano Quintet). The program is repeated as a family concert on April 10 at 2. ♦ April 9 at 7:30 and April 11 at 4: The pianist Paul Ostrovsky joins Peskanov and friends for a program of Mozart and Schubert (the "Trout" Quintet). (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083.)

JOSHUA BELL

Simon Mulligan accompanies the appealing violinist in a program that includes works by Schubert, Grieg (the Sonata No. 3 in C Minor), Ravel, Tchaikovsky, and Sarasate. (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. April 8 at 8.)

NEW YORK FESTIVAL OF SONG: "MEN, WOMEN, AND FOOD"

Paul Bowles's "Picnic Cantata" is the highlight of the festival's latest concert, which features the soprano Karen Holvik and the baritone Kurt Ollmann; Steven Blier and Michael Barrett are at the piano. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 212-501-3330. April 8 at 8. See This Week.)

"NEW SOUND NEW YORK: FEEDBACK"

The monthlong festival, organized by the Kitchen and Cooper Union's Chanin School of Architecture, continues with an evening of "sonic environments" created by three experimentalist veterans (Alvin Lucier, David Behrman, and Nic Collins) and their young followers. (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 212-255-5793. April 8 at 8. For a full schedule of events, see www.timeoutny.com/nsny.)

MILLER THEATRE

April 8 at 8: Kristjan Järvi's Absolute ensemble (with the trombonist David Taylor) offers an evening of works by the young Swiss composer-saxophonist Daniel Schnyder. ♦ April 9 at 3: Christopher Taylor, a pianist whose intellect is as formidable as his stamina, plays virtuoso études by Bolcom, Bermel, Ligeti, and Berle. (Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 212-854-7799.)

FRIENDS & ENEMIES OF NEW MUSIC

The persistent little series moves to Brooklyn for an evening of excerpts from music-theatre works by Tom Cipullo ("The Land of Nod," set to texts by Jane Bowles and Alice Gray), Robert Wilson, Susie Ibarra, and others; the performers include the soprano Tara Venditti. (South Oxford Performing Space, 138 S. Oxford St. 212-749-1324. April 9 at 8.)

BORROMEO STRING QUARTET

The stylish young foursome offers works by Brahms (the Quartet in B-Flat Major) and Martinů. (Tenri Cultural Institute, 43 W. 13th St. 212-645-2800. April 9 at 8.)

MENAHEM PRESSLER AND THE ST. LAWRENCE STRING QUARTET

Two generations separate this pianist from his young friends, but they are united in the elegance and insight they bring to the Romantic tradition. Their all-Dvořák program includes the Quartet in C Major, Op. 61, and the Piano Quintet in A Major. (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. 212-570-3949. April 10 at 8.)

"PERSPECTIVES": EMANUEL AX

Debussy is the theme for the pianist's three-concert series at Zankel Hall, performed in collaboration with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. It begins with a program that includes the composer's Sonata for Flute, Viola, and Harp (along with several songs), Ravel's "Chansons Madécasses," and a new work by Kaija Saariaho; the mezzo-soprano Susan Graham is the special guest. (212-247-7800. April 12 at 8.)

BRYN TERFEL AND MALCOLM MARTINEAU

The commanding bass-baritone and his attentive pianist offer a program of Schumann, Schubert (excerpts from "Schwanengesang"), Tosti, and a bevy of British folksongs. (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. April 12 at 7:30.)

"KEEPING TIME: CONDUCTORS ON FILM"

Great conductors are the focus of Lincoln Center's annual festival of classical-music films, which begins with a double feature consisting of "Ambassadors of Music," a collection of Berlin Philharmonic clips assembled in 1954, and "Kleiber: Father and Son," in which a five-minute excerpt of Erich Kleiber conducting the Beethoven Ninth precedes a full traversal of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony and Brahms's Fourth, both led by his eccentric son, Carlos. (Walter Reade Theatre. 212-721-6500. April 13 at 7 and 8:45.)

JUILLIARD STRING QUARTET

The eminent group performs music by Mozart (the Quartet in D Major, K. 575), Dvořák, and Richard Wernick (a première, with the hornist William Purvis). (Alice Tully Hall. April 13 at 8. For free tickets, which are required, call 212-769-7406.)

READINGS

April 7 at 6:30: "Selected Shorts" continues with the author Edwidge Danticat and the actors Lonette McKee and Michael Genét reading work by Courtney Angela Brkic, Touré, and Danticat herself. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-5400.) ♦ April 8 at 8:15: Carl Dennis and Marie Ponsot read from their poetry. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500.) ♦ April 12 at 7: Philip Levine joins poetry students from Goldwater Hospital for an evening of verse. The benefit is hosted by the poet Sharon Olds. (Lipton Hall, New York University, 108 W. 3rd St. 212-998-8816.)

TALKS

April 8 at 5:30: Richard Fortey, winner of the Lewis Thomas Prize for Writing About Science, presents a talk titled "The Earth: An Intimate History." (Caspary Auditorium, Rockefeller University, 1230 York Ave., at 66th St. For reservations, which are required, call 212-327-7625.) ♦ April 7 at 7:30: Phillip Lopate discusses his new book, "Waterfront: A Journey Around Manhattan." (Barnes & Noble, Broadway at 82nd St. No tickets necessary.)

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MOVIES
OPENING

THE ALAMO
The story of Davy Crockett (Billy Bob Thornton), Jim Bowie (Jason Patric), and the other outnumbered men who defended their Texas fort against the troops of General Santa Ana (Emilio Echevarría) in an 1836 standoff. With Dennis Quaid as General Sam Houston. Directed by John Lee Hancock. Opening April 9.

THE BLONDS
Albertina Carri directed this film that uses documentary and dramatic episodes to investigate why her parents were kidnapped and murdered during Argentina's dirty war. In Spanish. Opening April 7. (Film Forum.)

ELLA ENCHANTED
An adaptation of the children's novel about a teenage girl (Anne Hathaway) who labors under a magical birthright that requires her to obey everyone, including her loathsome stepmother. With Hugh Dancy, Cary Elwes, and Minnie Driver. Directed by Tommy O'Haver. Opening April 9.

THE GIRL NEXT DOOR
A high-school student (Emile Hirsch) discovers that his neighbor (Elisha Cuthbert) is an adult-film star, in a comedy directed by Luke Greenfield. Opening April 9.

I'M NOT SCARED
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening April 9. (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

JOHNSON FAMILY VACATION
Cedric the Entertainer plays a put-upon father driving his family cross-country for a reunion, in a comedy directed by Christopher Erskin. The cast includes Steve Harvey, Bow Wow, and Shannon Elizabeth. Opening April 9.

TWENTYNINE PALMS
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening April 9. (Cinema Village.)

THE WHOLE TEN YARDS
Bruce Willis reprises his role as Jimmy the Tulip, a mobster in suburbia, in a sequel to the 2000 comedy. With Matthew Perry, Natasha Henstridge, and Amanda Peet. Directed by Howard Deutch. Opening April 9.

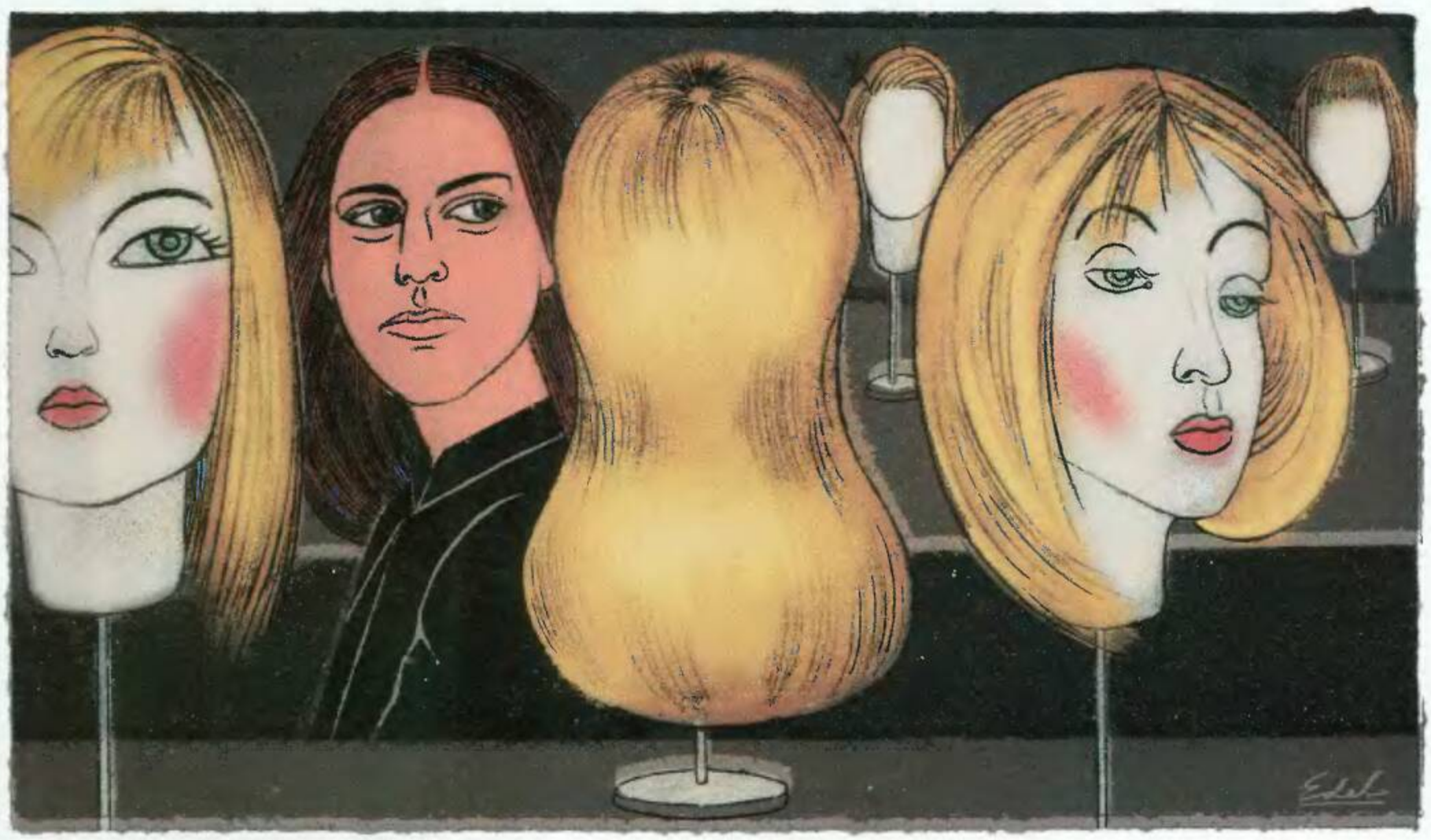
FILM NOTES

AMANDLA!: A REVOLUTION IN FOUR-PART HARMONY
The documentary-maker Lee Hirsch may overstuff this depiction of the role of music in sustaining black South Africans through the long night of apartheid, but the film's potent fusion of song, dance, and incident silences niggling complaints. Hirsch succeeds in melding a half-century of South African history with a tumultuously moving demonstration of how an oppressed people imbued anthems, cheers, and protest poems with rhythm and melody—and expressed all the fiery, tender, and doleful moods of life during wartime. The artists and witnesses include Miriam Makeba and Hugh Masakela. Originally released in 2002. In English and Zulu.—*Michael Sragow* (Thalia Theatre; April 10.)

BON VOYAGE
An entertaining and frivolous farce mounted on a pedestal of period realism. In Bordeaux in 1940, the remnants of the French government and the Parisian haut monde mill about in the lobby of the deluxe Hotel Splendide. From the start, the movie is a frenzied fashion show of elegant black Citroëns, rakishly conservative double-breasted suits, and plush silk coverlets. The starlet Viviane (Isabelle Adjani) is the hub of the wheel, a femme fatale whose eyelashes brush the vanity of three men haplessly in love with her: the sappy hero, Frédéric (Grégori Derangère), a carefree young writer who has been Viviane's backstairs lover for years; the suave government minister Beaufort (Gérard Depardieu), who can hardly wait to collaborate with the Germans; and Winckler (Peter Coyote), an English journalist who is also a German spy. The movie reminds one of "Casablanca" and other glamorous Hollywood wartime melodramas in which political intrigue flows through love affairs and black-market deals, and everyone rushing about is connected to everyone else. The expert cast knows how to play farce—exaggerate everything, but not too much.—*David Denby* (Reviewed in our issue of 3/29/04.) (Paris and Sunshine Cinema.)

CECIL B. DE MILLE: AN AMERICAN EPIC
No one does filmmaker documentaries with a keener balance of elegy and analysis than Kevin Brownlow. His swift two hours on De Mille, the master of silent melodrama who became Hollywood's king of sex-and-piety spectacles, captures the pioneer spirit of early American movies. It shows how the director, even after he devolved into a formulaic showman, retained some aspects of this spirit, especially in his final film and magnum—make that jeroboam—opus, "The Ten Commandments." Among the stash of revelations: De Mille, who had to modify his final print of "The King of Kings" to lay blame for the Crucifixion on one character instead of on the Jewish people, was the son of a Jewish mother who'd converted to Christianity; perhaps even more remarkably, between studio stints, the future anti-Communist went looking for work in the Soviet Union and declared Communism a fascinating experiment. The brisk and beautifully preserved clips overflow with De Mille's histrionic vitality, and the selection of new and archival interviews is astute. In particular, Steven Spielberg (De Mille's sometime heir) holds forth eloquently on this epic-maker's strength and limitations.—*M.S.* (Moving Image; April 10.)

THE CHEAT
He may play the villain, but Sessue Hayakawa displays such deep virile command as the wealthy Asian who lends a giddy socialite, Fannie Ward, ten thousand dollars to replace squandered charity funds that he connects with the audience in am-



Albertina Carri's autobiographical documentary about her parents' disappearance, "The Blonds," opens April 7 at Film Forum.

biguous ways. He's more transfixing than appalling in the copper-tinted scene when he brands Ward for breaking her end of the deal and not making love to him. Cecil B. De Mille knew what he was doing when he cast the leads: their oscillating current turned a tale of two different crimes and punishments into a high-society apache dance and a 1915 box-office hit.—*M.S.* (Moving Image; April 10.)

DAWN OF THE DEAD

Some may have forgotten, and others may never have experienced, the hilarious shocks that George Romero, Sam Raimi, and their fellow horror-meisters offered audiences a decade or two ago. The audacity of films like "Evil Dead 2" and the original "Dawn of the Dead" surprised moviegoers with surreal images of graphic, unnatural violence. In this remake of Romero's zombiefest, the director Zack Snyder brings back the cringe-inducing gore of yore as his flesh-eating zombies attack a Wisconsin mall in search of fresh meat (Sarah Polley and Ving Rhames among a cast of tasty others). The story hacks away most of the original film's satirical subtext of a consumer society gone wild, but it has retained much of the suspenseful action sequences and the fabulously disgusting makeup effects. The movie may be as mindless as a swarm of the undead, but it's fun in its splatter-filled way.—*Bruce Diones* (Battery Park 11, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

DOGVILLE

Pedantic, obtuse, and unwatchable, this three-hour exercise in inept avant-gardism, written and directed by Lars Von Trier, is set in a town without walls, streets, or air—a conceptual Depression-era nowheresville in the American Rockies in which obvious allegories of conformity and viciousness are acted out by a cast reciting an inhuman language into the dead silence. We might be present at a nightmarish school play. With Nicole Kidman as the poor waif who eventually takes her revenge, Paul Bettany as a weak-willed artist, and a variety of other excellent actors submitting to Von Trier's solemnly stupid rituals of betrayal. The pompous narrator is John Hurt, who sounds like Henry Fielding wishing he had a tankard in his hand.—*D.D.* (3/29/04) (Angelika Film Center, Beekman, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and 19th Street East 6.)

ETERNAL SUNSHINE OF THE SPOTLESS MIND

Yes, it's another attempt by the screenwriter Charlie Kaufman to replace the antique notion of cinema as persuasive entertainment with that of cinema as some strange, whirring device for the disorientation of the human brain. Jim Carrey plays Joel and Kate Winslet plays Clementine, who fall in love and out of love and back in love again. Fair enough, but Kaufman and the director, Michel Gondry, run the whole story in rewind, as if to prove the Shakespearean theorem that journeys end in lovers' meeting. Just to complicate the issue, Tom Wilkinson plays a dodgy doctor who can, for a fee, wipe the memory of a chosen individual, adored or otherwise, from your mind—a treatment of which both Joel and Clementine avail themselves. The conceit writhes with implausibility, yet it also gives off flashes of high-tech, low-down beauty, as scenes of tenderness begin to go grievously blank before the sweethearts' eyes. Carrey's latest effort to elude, or at least refine, his looney persona is more sincere than convincing, and it is left to Winslet, at once fierce and footloose, to carry the show. On the eighth viewing, say, the damn thing might even make sense. With Mark Ruffalo, Elijah Wood, and a blissed-out Kirsten Dunst—what is she on?—*Anthony Lane* (3/22/04) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Battery Park 11, Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, 72nd Street East, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

INTERMISSION

A sharp and scruffy movie, shot on the cheap in Dublin. The cheapness spreads into world of the plot, as if the characters were fighting to persuade themselves that anything—their loves, their jobs, their reputations—is worth more than the price of a drink. Colin Farrell, buzzing with the chance to speak in his native accent again, plays a mean piece of work named Lehiff, whose plan is to take a girl

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High Noon (1952)
APRIL 10

Annie Hall (1977)
APRIL 17

Dr. Strangelove (1964)
APRIL 24

Singin' in the Rain (1952)
MAY 1

Random Harvest (1942)
MAY 8

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hostage and thereby put the squeeze on her new man, the manager of a bank. Needless to say, everything goes gangrenously wrong, and we soon realize that the screenwriter, Mark O'Rowe, and the director, John Crowley, are openly courting the dark and farcical pleasures of coincidence. The dialogue is a good clean blast of filth, and the cast has the joshing coherence of a sports team, with Cillian Murphy as a store worker, Kelly Macdonald as his ex, Colm Meaney as a jaded cop with a sweet tooth for Celtic mysticism, and, most touching of all, Deirdre O'Kane as a discarded wife making up for lost, libidinous time.—*A.L.* (4/5/04) (First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, and Village Theatre VII.)

THE LADYKILLERS

An elderly lady (Irma P. Hall) lives with her memories, her cat, and her scandalized view of youth. Into her life comes a courteous (and presumably bogus) professor (Tom Hanks), who needs a room to rent and a cellar in which to make sweet music. That, at any rate, is his excuse, his true intent being to tunnel through from below to the vault of a nearby casino. The plot will be familiar to anybody versed in Ealing comedy (the original movie, directed by Alexander Mackendrick, and graced with the same title, came out in 1955), but the existence of this new version is harder to explain. It was made by the Coen brothers, whose own taste for slight provincial surrealism veers close to that of Mackendrick, but, far from refining his work, they have devised one of their coarsest pictures to date. Its grasp of time and place is, by their standard, weirdly unstable, and the supporting players, among them Marlon Wayans, J. K. Simmons, and Ryan Hurst, cannot hope to match the fooling of Peter Sellers, Cecil Parker, and Herbert Lom in the earlier film. Hanks gives his all, but the movie deflates around him; there is even what one hesitates to call a running gag, based on irritable bowels. Is that what the creators of "Fargo" now consider funny?—*A.L.* (4/5/04) (Battery Park 11, Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Metro Twin, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Village East Cinemas.)

MOUCHETTE

Robert Bresson has made several films of such sobriety that, while some people find them awesomely beautiful, other people find sitting through them like taking a whipping and watching every stroke coming. "Mouchette," from a Bernanos novel, is about a lonely, mistreated fourteen-year-old girl who commits suicide. Originally released in 1966. In French.—*Pauline Kael* (Anthology Film Archives; April 8.)

SCOOBY-DOO 2: MONSTERS UNLEASHED

More good actors trapped in dogville. Sarah Michelle Gellar and Matthew Lillard, among others, reprise their Scooby-gang roles in this sequel adaptation of the ever-running cartoon hit. As the members of Mystery Inc., they investigate the ransacking of a museum devoted to their past successes. The amateur sleuths of Coolsville and their computer-generated dog have to fight the ghouls, many from the original series, that have come back to haunt them. It's the film's one clever idea. The Pop Rocks look of the movie, bright rainbow-seventies color, is headache-inducing, and the script is just a sugar-fuelled jumble of special effects. Lots of clues, lots of running, and not a lot of fun.—*B.D.* (Battery Park 11, East 86th Street Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, 19th Street East 6, 64th and 2nd, 34th Street Theatre, and Village East Cinemas.)

SHAOLIN SOCCER

A Hong Kong sports story about two feuding soccer coaches and their F/X-driven teams. The film, centering on the unique talents of a group of kung-fu students from Shaolin temple and their big game against the players from "The Evil Team," is a playfully absurd piece of hokum. The director-star, Stephen Chow, introduces his characters through visually witty setups, such as having them break into dance routines or perform high-flying stunts. As the big game approaches, the soccer action is like live anime—balls fly through the air and land on the field like meteors, and players spin in the air like tornadoes. The movie has been edited with a cleaver and not all the gags work, but its primitive moviemaking hucksterism is hard to resist. In Cantonese.—*B.D.* (42nd Street E Walk and Sunshine Cinema.)

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* (Battery Park 11, Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema 3rd Avenue, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

At Moving Image, a Cecil B. De Mille retrospective.

THE THIRD MAN

The most famous collaboration of the director Carol Reed and the screenwriter Graham Greene has the structure of a good suspense thriller and an atmosphere of baroque, macabre decadence. The simple American, Joseph Cotten, arrives in postwar Vienna to meet an old friend, only to be told that the friend has been killed in an accident. In trying to discover the facts, Cotten learns so much about his friend that when he finally finds him alive, he wants him dead. Orson Welles's portrait of the friend, Harry Lime, is a study of corruption—he's evil, witty, unreachable. It's balanced against Trevor Howard's quietly elegant underplaying of the Army officer who teaches the simple American some of the uglier facts of life. There is an ambiguity about our relation to the Cotten character: he is alone against the forces of the city and, in a final devastating stroke, he is even robbed of the illusion that the girl (Alida Valli) is interested in him, yet his illusions are so commonplace that his disillusion does not strike us deeply. Greene has made him a shallow, ineffectual, well-meaning American. The zither music is by Anton Karas. Originally released in 1950.—*P.K.* (Film Forum; April 9-13.)

ALSO PLAYING

THE BATTLE OF ALGIERS
BAM Rose Cinemas and Film Forum.

HELLBOY
Astor Plaza, Battery Park 11, Chelsea West, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.

THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST (3/1/04)
Battery Park 11, East 86th Street Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, 64th and 2nd, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.

SPRING, SUMMER, FALL, WINTER . . . AND SPRING
Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.

TOUCHING THE VOID (1/19/04)
64th and 2nd, Sunshine Cinema, and Sutton 1 and 2.

WALKING TALL
Battery Park 11, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

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

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
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.

MICHAEL KUPPERMAN

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).
Pioneer Theatre, 155 E. 3rd St. (212-254-3300).
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)—Spring-break screenings. April 5-9 and April 12-13 at 2: "Disney's Teacher's Pet" (2004, Timothy Bjorklund). ♦ World-cinema Fridays. April 9 at 7:30: "I'm Looking for You" (2002, Ricardo Coral Dorado; in Spanish). ♦ Through April 25: A Cecil B. De Mille retrospective. The silent films will have live piano accompaniment. April 10 at 1: "The Cheat" (†) and "The Golden Chance" (1915; silent). ♦ April 10 at 4: "Cecil B. De Mille: An American Epic" (†), introduced by the co-director Kevin Brownlow. ♦ April 11 at 2: "The Godless Girl" (1928; silent). ♦ April 11 at 4:30: "Cleopatra" (1934). ♦ Repertory nights. April 10-11 at 6:30: "Arabian Nights" (1974, Pier Paolo Pasolini; in Italian).

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES

32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5110)—A Robert Bresson retrospective. All films are in French and without subtitles; printed synopses in English will be provided. April 8 at 7: "Pickpocket" (1959). ♦ April 8 at 9: "Mouchette" (†). ♦ April 9 at 7: "Au Hazard Balthazar" (1966). ♦ April 9 at 9: "Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne" (1944). ♦ April 11 at 7: "Une Femme Douce" (1969). ♦ Jean Cocteau's Orphic trilogy. April 10 at 7: "Le Sang d'un Poète" (1930; in French), "Orphée" (1950; in French, without subtitles), and "La Testament d'Orphée" (1960; in French, without subtitles). ♦ Essential cinema. April 9 at 8: "Quick Billy" (1970, Bruce Baillie). ♦ April 10 at 6: Early works by Robert Breer (1952-73). ♦ April 10 at 8: "Entr'acte" (1924, Rene Clair; silent), "Un Chien Andalou" (1928, Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dali; silent), and "Land Without Bread" (1932, Buñuel; in French). ♦ April 11 at 6: "A Movie" (1958) and two other Bruce Conner collage films. ♦ April 11 at 8: "Nothing But the Hours" (1928, Alberto Cavalcanti). ♦ April 11 at 9: "L'Âge d'Or" (1930, Buñuel and Dali; in French, without subtitles).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS

30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-777-3456)—British horror films. April 7 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "The Gorgon" (1964, Terence Fisher). ♦ Through April 11: A Raymond Depardon retrospective. All films are in French. April 8 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Les Années Déclic" (1983) and "Contacts" (1990, William Klein). ♦ April 9 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Profils Paysans: L'Approche" (2001). ♦ April 10 at 2 and 6:50: "Caught in the Act" (1994). ♦ April 10 at 4:30 and 9:10: "Emergencies" (1987). ♦ April 11 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "San Clemente" (1980). ♦ Repertory favorites. April 12 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Daisies" (1967, Vera Chytilová; in Czech). ♦ A night with Bill Murray. Four of the actor's films will be shown simultaneously in separate theatres, followed by an interview with Murray moderated by the film critic Elvis Mitchell. April 13 at 7: "Ghostbusters" (1984, Ivan Reitman). ♦ April 13 at 7:15: "Lost in Translation" (2003, Sofia Coppola). ♦ April 13 at 7:30: "Quick Change" (1980, Murray and Howard Franklin). ♦ April 13 at 7:40: "Nothing Lasts Forever" (1984, Tom Schiller).

FILM FORUM

W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—Through April 15: An Orson Welles retrospective. April 7 at 1:55, 5:30, and 9:05: "Oedipus the King" (1967, Philip Saville). ♦ April 7 at 3:45 and 7:20: "Orson Welles: The One-Man Band" (1995, Vassili Silovic). ♦ April 9-13 at 1:30, 3:30, 5:30, 7:30, and 9:30: "The Third Man" (†). ♦ Through April 8: Columbia 3-D Thursdays. April 8 at 1:20, 3:20, 5:20, 7:20, and 9:20: "Miss Sadie Thompson" (1953, Curtis Bernhardt).

FLORENCE GOULD HALL

55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—Through May 11: "The Undeclared War: The Algerian War on Film." April 13 at 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, and 9: "Drowning by Bullets" (1992, Philip Brooks and Alan Hayling; in English and French) and "Gillo Pontecorvo: The Dictatorship of Truth" (1992, Oliver Curtis; in English and Italian).

GRAMERCY THEATRE

127 E. 23rd St. (212-777-4900)—The films of Sofia Coppola. April 7 at 6: "Lost in Translation" (2003). ♦ April 7 at 8:15: "Lick the Star" (1998) and "The Virgin Suicides" (1999). ♦ The theatre will close on April 8.

SUNSHINE CINEMA

139-143 E. Houston St. (212-358-0573)—Midnight movies. April 9-10: "Ed Wood" (1994, Tim Burton).

THALIA THEATRE

Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. (212-864-5400)—Music films and documentaries. April 10 at 1: "Amandla!: A Revolution in Four-Part Harmony" (†). ♦ April 10 at 3: "You, Africa!" (1994, Ndiouga Moctar Ba; in French and Wolof). ♦ April 10 at 4:15: "Cajun Country" (1983, Alan Lomax) and "Appalachian Journey" (1983, Lomax). ♦ April 10 at 7: "The Flute Player" (2003, Jocelyn Glatzer). ♦ April 10 at 9:30: "Chunhyang" (2000, Im Kwon Taek; in Korean). ♦ Special presentation. April 11 at 11 A.M., 2, 3:30, 5, 6:30, and 8: "Yossi & Jagger" (2002, Eytan Fox; in Hebrew).

WALTER READE THEATRE

Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—Through April 15: The New York African Film Festival. April 7 at 12:45: "Saworoide" (1999, Tunde Kelani; in Yoruba and English). ♦ April 7 at 3:15: "Agogo Eewo" (2002, Kelani; in Yoruba). ♦ April 7 at 6 and April 10 at 5: "Campus Queen Centerpiece" (2003, Kelani; in Yoruba). ♦ April 7 at 8:45 and April 13 at 5: "Ouaga Hip Hop" (2004, Benny Malapa; in French, Wolof, Mooré, Jula, and Bambara). ♦ April 8 at 1: "Thunderbolt" (2001, Kelani; in English, Igbo, and Yoruba). ♦ April 8 at 3:30: Three Nigerian films (1998-2004). ♦ April 9 at 12:30: "Love Brewed in an African Pot" (1980, Kwaw Ansah). ♦ April 9 at 3 and April 10 at 7:30: "Traces, Women's Imprints" (2003, Katy L. Ndiaye; in Kasem and French). ♦ April 9 at 5:30: "Mapantsula" (1998, Oliver Schmitz; in Afrikaans, English, Sotho, and Zulu). ♦ April 9 at 7:45 and April 13 at 12:30: "Valley of the Innocent" (2003, Branwen Okpako; in German). ♦ April 9 at 9:45: "Emotional Crack" (2003, Lancelot Oduwa-Imasuen). ♦ April 10 at 10: "Me & My White Pal" (2003, Pierre Yameogo; in French and Mooré). ♦ April 11 at 12:45 and April 12 at 9:15: "Tasuma" (2003, Daniel Sanou Kollo; in Dioula and French). ♦ April 11 at 2:40: "Qula Kwedini: A Rite of Passage" (2003, Mandilakhe Mjekula and Jahmil XT Qubeka; in English and Xhosa). ♦ April 11 at 4:15 and April 13 at 2:45: "One Blow—The Genesis" (1997, Tade Ogidan; in Yoruba). ♦ April 11 at 7: "Dirt for Dinner" (2000, Okpako; in German). ♦ April 11 at 9:30: "Woubi Chéri" (1998, Philip Brooks and Laurent Bocahut; in French). ♦ April 12 at 12:30: "A Normal Daughter: The Life and Times of Kewpie of District Six" (1998, Jack Lewis). ♦ April 12 at 2:30: "Kounandi" (2003, Apolline Traore; in Dioula). ♦ April 12 at 5: "A Lion's Trail" (2002, François Verster). ♦ April 12 at 6:45: "In Darkest Hollywood" (1992, Peter Davis and Daniel Riesenfield). ♦ Starting April 13: "Keeping Time: Conductors on Film." (See Classical.)

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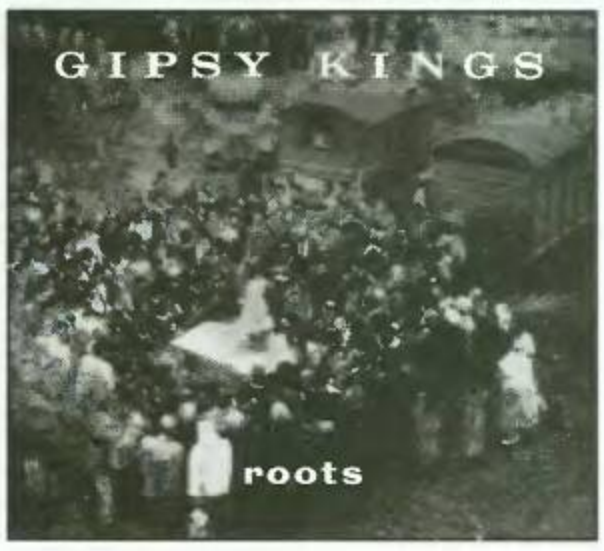

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THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT

RELUCTANT WITNESSES

After an unusually conspicuous episode of sullenness and stonewalling, the Bush Administration has yielded—a little—to the importunings of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, the ten-member bipartisan panel familiarly known as the 9/11 commission. Last Tuesday afternoon, President Bush appeared at the lectern of the White House press briefing room, quickly read a four-minute statement, and left as reporters called out questions to his retreating back. The statement was an announcement that Bush's national-security adviser, Condoleezza Rice, "will provide public testimony." It added, as if in passing, that Bush and Vice-President Dick Cheney "will jointly meet with all members of the commission in a private session."

Bush didn't like the idea of a 9/11 commission to begin with. He fought its creation for a year, until congressional pressure and the indignation of families of the murdered forced him to make a deal. Ever since the commission was established, in November of 2002, the keynote of his relations with it has been grudgingness. He tried to make Henry Kissinger, of all people, its chairman—a Cheney suggestion, which soon foundered on Kissinger's refusal to disclose the names of the clients of his consulting firm. (Kissinger's successor, Thomas Kean, a former Republican governor of New Jersey, has a reputation for moderation and transparency.) It took another year, until November of 2003, for the White House to allow four members of the commission to have a look at the relevant copies of the President's Daily Brief, the intelligence summary that goes to the President and a few other high officials each morning. The commission has at times been forced to beg for funds, thanks to what has appeared to be deliberate Administration foot-dragging. (The commission is budgeted to spend fifteen million dollars, some fifty-five million less than Kenneth Starr & Co. spent on the pursuit of Bill Clinton.) These and other delays, most of them caused by the White House, were such that the commission issued urgent warnings that its task could not be completed without an extension of its deadline, originally May 27th of this year. It recently managed to pry an extra two months out of Bush's allies in the House of Representatives, but only after John McCain and Joseph Lieberman threatened to hold up a highway bill in the Senate.

Condoleezza Rice

The Administration's latest concessions are a direct result of the emergence from relative obscurity of Richard A. Clarke, the veteran federal bureaucrat who, in nearly thirty years of extraordinary service in the Defense and State Departments and on the professional staff of the National Security Council, probably learned more, thought more, and did more about terrorism and counter-terrorism than any other public official. In his testimony—before the 9/11 commission, in his book "Against All Enemies," and in hours of television interviews—Clarke has presented a detailed and extremely persuasive narrative of events that differs dramatically from the version preferred by the Administration and its toadies in Congress and the media. The Condoleezza Rice flip-flop represents an admission that the question of whether Bush has effectively protected the United States against terrorism—both before September 11, 2001, and after—is, abruptly, open. "The nation needed thoughtful leadership to deal with the underlying

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

"Gays and lesbians aren't a threat to the sanctity of my marriage. It's all the straight women who sleep with my husband."

• •

problems September 11 reflected," Clarke writes in his book. "Instead, America got unthinking reactions, hamhanded responses, and a rejection of analysis in favor of received wisdom. It has left us less secure."

The White House's retreat got big headlines, but it was less far-reaching than it may appear. The commission is having to pay dearly for what, in his statement, the President called without irony "this level of coöperation." The fine print was in a letter from Alberto R. Gonzales, the White House counsel, to Kean and his Democratic deputy, Lee Hamilton, a former chairman of the House Intelligence Committee:

> The necessary conditions are as follows. First, the Commission must agree in writing that Dr. Rice's testimony before the Commission does not set any precedent for future Commission requests, or requests in any other context, for testimony by a National Security Advisor or any other White House official.
>
> Second, the Commission must agree in writing that it will not request additional public testimony from any White House official, including Dr. Rice.

Sounds a little repetitive, no? Gonzales, it would seem, wanted to leave nothing to chance in making the White House's point, which was this: We'll give you Rice for a couple of hours, but that's it. No more questions in public for anybody in the White House, for any reason, in any context, no matter how many contradictions and unanswered questions are left. The end. Now go away.

More small print from the counsel's office:

> I would also like to take this occasion to offer an accommodation on another issue on which we have not yet reached an agreement—Commission access to the President and Vice President. I am authorized to advise you that the President and Vice President have agreed to one joint private session with all 10 Commissioners, with one Commission staff member present to take notes of the session.

A few weeks ago, the White House was still holding out for a pair of one-hour sessions, each of which would have only three participants: Kean, Hamilton, and either Bush or Cheney. Then it backed away from its insistence on sixty minutes and not a minute more. And now it says it's O.K. for the commission to bring its commissioners. But when they get there they will find a team: Bush and Cheney, Cheney and Bush—like Robin and Batman. Is it too uncharitable to suggest that the White House prefers a double act because it doesn't trust the President to handle the questioning alone and, perhaps more important, doesn't want to risk too many glaring contradictions between Bush's memories and Cheney's?

And what about that "one Commission staff member"? In Cicero's Rome, having a scribe take notes was the latest thing in audio technology, and so it remained right through the days when the young Charles Dickens earned his living in the press gallery of the House of Commons. Now, though, there are more reliable ways of keeping track of what people say in important meetings. Yet there will be no official electronic recording of Bush-and-Cheney's testimony (as there was none of Rice's four-hour private session with the commission on February 7th), and there will be no transcript. Dickens knew how to take shorthand, but that is not among the talents found on the commission's staff. In its details and nuances, if not in its broad outlines, the record of what the President and the Vice-President say will necessarily be incomplete. This is the White House's choice, not the commission's. Trust, but don't verify.

—Hendrik Hertzberg

THE RADIO DIAL
DUMBASSIFICATION

An hour or so after Air America began broadcasting last week, Chuck D, the front man for the rap group Public Enemy, arrived at its studios, on Park Avenue South. He was wearing a black nylon tracksuit, a black T-shirt, a black headband, and black suède sneakers, and he carried a black bag. He was running late, but he pointed out that, since he generally prefers to work from 2 to 5 A.M., the hour—1 P.M.—was actually quite early. In the studios, he ran into Michael Moore, the filmmaker, who had on a red baseball cap.

"You excited?" Moore asked.

Chuck D shrugged. "As excited as I can get," he said.

Depending on how you look at it, Air America is either a loftily conceived de-

fense of liberal discourse or a signal of its final collapse. The network—or, really, network-let—is currently leasing time on AM stations in six cities, including New York and Los Angeles, and is being marketed, quite explicitly, as a left-wing ripoff of Rush Limbaugh. ("All the caffeine and none of the Oxycontin," one of its ads declares.) Its launch, last Wednesday, was presented as a major media event, mostly owing to the participation of Al Franken, whose three-hour daily program, in homage to Fox's Bill O'Reilly, is called "The O'Franken Factor."

But if the goal of Air America is truly to match conservative radio's hostility and bluster, Chuck D's show, called "Unfiltered," may come closer to the mark. "The right-wing cats got balls," Chuck D said, shortly after arriving and settling into one of the studios' few available chairs, which was sitting in an empty hallway. "Bill O'Reilly is going to say what he believes. And often people to the left, they don't really speak on what they believe. If the wind blows left, they go left; if the wind blows right, they go right." Chuck D rejects the label "liberal," preferring that he be called "radical," but, he said, "when I come on the radio I might be looked upon as being conservative, because there's really a lot of bullshit that needs to be called out."

Public Enemy was formed in 1982, and released its first album, "Yo! Bum Rush the Show," five years later. If it is no longer the most popular rap group recording, it is almost certainly the most venerable, and Chuck D, né Carlton Douglas Ridenhour, is widely regarded as one of the most influential figures in the history of hip-hop. Every year, he makes a college-lecture tour, speaking out against what he likes to call the "dumbassification" of American culture. Politics have always featured prominently in his work, in songs like "Fear of a Black Planet," "Party for Your Right to Fight," and "Son of a Bush," whose lyrics are, in part:

> Have you forgotten
> I been thru the first term of rotten
> The father, the son
> And the Holy Bush-it We all in
> Dont look at me
> I aint callin for no assassination
> Im just sayin
> Sayin who voted for this asshole of the nation?

"The guy that's in there now has to go," he said the other day, speaking of the Oval Office's current occupant. "But the guy that says he's going to be in there and be better, I'm, like, 'And? We don't want you to come and just fuck shit up, either.'"

As Chuck D ruminated out in the hallway, people kept coming up to him and asking how he was doing. Some were wearing red-white-and-blue buttons with little slogans. "Department of Homeland Hilarity," one read. "I think talk radio from a liberal standpoint means that you can actually touch more souls and be more sensitive to a wider demographic, instead of saying, 'We're going to turn America into a bonfire pep rally, and if anybody doesn't like that we're going to bomb them, too,'" Chuck D said. "I mean, what the fuck is that about? That's some 1944, 'Sands of Iwo Jima,' John Wayne, I'm-mad-at-everybody-else-because-some-black-guy-took-my-girlfriend-type shit."

Chuck D

"Unfiltered" will be broadcast from 9 A.M. to noon every weekday. (Chuck D joked that he was planning to leave the early hours of the show to his co-hosts, Lizz Winstead and Rachel Maddow.) Because of scheduling quirks, the program was not on the air the first day, but to promote it Chuck D had agreed to put in an appearance on "The O'Franken Factor." Early in the interview, Franken asked for Chuck D's reaction to a pet project of his—getting popular musicians to travel across the country, registering voters, which Franken called the Love Train. It was hard to tell what Chuck D thought of the idea.

"Voting is as essential as washing your tail in the morning," he said, finally.

—Elizabeth Kolbert

ON THE HORN

976-GONE

There are many ways of checking the weather. The original one—step outside, feel the air, note the wind—has fallen out of favor, though if you know what you're doing you can still make it work. People tend to prefer secondary sources these days—newspaper, radio, television, ticker, beeper, Internet, elevator screen—and you can't go very far without stumbling over a five-day forecast or an update on the current conditions. This glut may explain why no uproar or protest greeted the demise, the other day, of good old 976-1212, which for decades has been the number to call for the weather.

It was but one of hundreds of pay-per-call services, some more wholesome than others, that were yanked on March 24th by Verizon, the city's ruling phone company. Other casualties included 976-1616 ("At the tone, the time will be two-forty-two and thirty-six seconds") and numbers that could access fly-by-night stock advice and up-to-the-minute results of marching-band competitions. There was no announcement, no explanation.

Verizon's motto is (in the voice of James Earl Jones) "Make progress every day," so this, apparently, was that particular day's leap forward, though it hardly felt like one. In 1939, New York Telephone established the first weather update that could be reached by multiple callers. The number was WE6-1212—WEather 6. In time, 976 replaced 936 as the prefix for this and other such local services around the country. Soon 976 was joined by 970, 550, 900, 880, and 540, each with a particular pricing arrangement and technical capacity. They flourished in the eighties, before the Internet came along. The companies that operated these "channels" were known as Information Providers, or I.P.s. The information they provided pertained to astrology, pro wrestling, soap operas, and porn. This, lest we forget, was the era of 976-PEEE, "the extra 'e' for extra pee."

Last week, callers to 976-1212 were greeted with a contrapuntal tune consisting, simultaneously, of a ringing sig-

nal and a busy signal, what Charles Ives might have come up with if he'd been asked to render in song the nor'easter that was soaking the city and stalling the onset of spring. Eventually, the ringing ceased and a recording kicked in, but the busy signal made it impossible to hear what the recording had to say, other than the usual, "We're sorry."

A call to Verizon didn't reveal much, either. The company spokesman seemed to be preoccupied with a recent catastrophe involving a technician who had mistakenly routed two hours of 911 calls to a bank in Brooklyn. The spokesman confirmed that Verizon was getting out of the 976 game (as well as the 970, 550, 900, 880, and 540 games), but he would not discuss what the game was or who the players were. "We do not reveal customer information," he said. (He did say that Verizon no longer wanted to do the I.P.s' billing and collecting, or to have its good name sullied by the few whose methods were unsound.) And so commenced a journey down a telecom rabbit hole, where one encountered complicated regulatory rulings, equipment and billing disputes, and puzzling invocations of RICO statutes and Y2K worries.

But then, hiding in some fine print, a customer: Larry Weiss, who might well be the Information Provider king. Weiss, a fifty-one-year-old Long Islander, first achieved tristate-area renown as the man behind the old Crazy Eddie advertising campaign—"His prices are in-*saaane!*" ("We aim at the guy who's out partying, who comes home at one or two in the morning and turns on the TV," he explained, in 1979.) In the early eighties, Weiss built the first interactive telephone dating service, Club 1 (540-0001)—information, of a kind—and over time came to own or supply equipment and advice to dozens of pay services, whose offerings ranged from lottery results to dirty talk. (Weiss was especially fond of the one featuring a Wall Street analyst with cancer, who dispensed stock tips from his deathbed, for eighty-five bucks a call. "It was a win-win, across the board," Weiss recalled.) For the past six years, Weiss has been the man behind the weather (1212) and the time (1616), among other things.

Last week, he was in his office in Bethpage, scrambling to find a way to get his numbers up and running again; he hoped to persuade other carriers to pick them up and save his business. He had been on the phone all day. "If you want information *right now*, you pick up the phone," he said. "Here's a great example: you probably have a telephone book next to you on your desk, but if you're looking for a number you just dial 411, right?"

He promised that it wouldn't be long before he could resume providing information, and getting it, too. Until then, he would have to guess at things. "I'm in a room with no windows," he said. "I think it's raining, no?"

—*Nick Paumgarten*

PEPE LE PEW DEPT.

BRUSH-OFF

A year ago, when the French President, Jacques Chirac, declared that France would veto a United Nations resolution in favor of war against Iraq, "whatever the circumstances," he probably did not consider the potential collateral damage it might do to French bachelors overseas.

But this circumstance was of grave concern to many Manhattan-based French businessmen. And so, on March 18, 2003—the day before the United States started bombing Iraq—Pierre Battu, a textile importer with the compact proportions and purposeful intensity of a Jack Russell terrier, decided to act in self-defense. He threw a cocktail party for French expatriates and the Americans who liked them. Fifty people turned up, mostly men; the evening was such a success that he held another the next month. Battu named the party "French Tuesdays," and at the second one a lanky young banker named Georges Benoliel, fresh out of business school in Paris, showed up with a dozen young women. After a brief discussion of their mutual aims (more women), Battu invited Benoliel into the French Tuesdays junta, which included Battu and his partner in the textile business, Gilles Amsallem, who runs around snapping photographs.

Battu put up a Web site so that he could post the party photos and explain his raison d'être. It reads, "You have a particular taste for red wine, cheese, smokers, you like bubbles, play pétanque, enjoy taking a few days off in Paris or Saint-Tropez, qualify yourself as a Francophile / Francophone, speak French or just enjoy to socialize the French way. . . . You have already qualified to join our happy, trendy, hip 'French Tuesdays' parties."

By this winter, the party had evolved from a small monthly cocktail hour to a biweekly all-night extravaganza that moves among various large night clubs. When the group celebrated its first anniversary last month, at a place called Marquee, a party given by *Playboy* for its April cover model, Rachel Hunter, was bumped to an upstairs lounge in order to make room for the Frenchmen. Lucas Labat, a party regular, spent most of the evening surrounded by American women. He had theories. "American girls are very liberated, but the American men are uptight," he said. "They want to be perfect, they get the chest wax, they wear nice clothes. We French, we think the Americans are too gentlemen, they are afraid of the girls. So we make sure the girls don't get ignored."

Rachel Hunter, with Frenchman.

Battu elaborated. "We French have the image of being arrogant and loving women and wine and cheese and all that," he said. "And, you know, it's true, we are that way!"

Benoliel poured out jeroboam after jeroboam of champagne. "When American girls go to a party, they're hoping to

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meet a man," he said. "But the men keep to themselves and drink beer, and ignore the women. It is a terrible waste."

Although the party was going strong, something was troubling Battu and his friends. Up in the lounge, Hunter and some model friends languished, their charms squandered on American men who, presumably, were drinking beer and ignoring them. *Playboy* guests wore special plastic bracelets that gave them access to the party. "Those girls were separated from us," Battu said. "For us, the *Playboy* Playmate—it's an American icon! We couldn't believe it when we heard *Playboy* would share this party with us. We thought we would meet our dream in reality! But no. They would not let us in, because of our heavy French accent."

"I could not go there. I had no bracelet," Benoliel said sadly. "The man at the rope wouldn't let us pass." He paused. "Except for Charles-Henry. Yes, Charles-Henry. He slipped in. Many times."

Charles-Henry Kurzen, a twenty-five-year-old banker from Paris, happened to know a close personal friend of Hunter's, and he was able to get past security. "I was determined to go upstairs, because Rachel Hunter was there," Kurzen said. "She is a woman born in 1969—she is thirty-four!—but she is a beautiful, mature woman; a woman of character, a woman of history, a woman who has lived!" Kurzen tried to persuade Hunter to join his countrymen downstairs, but she declined. "Maybe because her party was a business gathering and she could not leave," he speculated. "Maybe because she found me too young; maybe because she did not like the idea of a French party." He thought a little longer. "Or maybe it was a question of chic. I do not know."

—Liesl Schillinger

NAME GAME
READY, ATTACK!

In this time of war, it should perhaps come as little surprise that our emerging volumes of present-day history—particularly those insider accounts of the Bush White House—have titles suggestive of supermarket thrillers. "Against All Enemies," the recent tell-all by the former counter-terrorism chief Richard Clarke, shares its name with three recently published pulp novels—one about a group of McVeigh-style Idaho militiamen; one about Sudanese terrorists in possession of the Ebola virus; and a third about unilateral war with a rogue South American regime. "Plan of Attack," Bob Woodward's highly anticipated account of the current Iraq conflict, hits bookstores later this month—beating to the shelves by just three weeks another "Plan of Attack," by Dale Brown.

Woodward is the author (or co-author) of a dozen nonfiction best-sellers, including "All the President's Men," "The Final Days," and "The Commanders," about the first Iraq war. Brown, a former Air Force captain, is the author of such books as "Chains of Command," "Fatal Terrain," and "Warrior Class." He may, in fact, be the more accomplished writer: his last fifteen books—so-called techno-thriller-adventure novels—have been best-sellers.

Neither man was aware of the overlap until very recently. "I heard just last week," Brown said the other day, from his home in Nevada. "My editor contacted me by e-mail and said he didn't think it was a problem, but he just wanted to let me know."

"Titles are not copyrighted," Woodward said. "In 1979 I did a book, 'The Brethren,' about the Supreme Court. And John Grisham came along and wrote a novel with the same name."

These two books actually have more than a title in common. Although Brown writes fiction, he said, "I want readers to open up a book and start reading about a conflict that they could have read about just a few minutes earlier in the newspaper." So his "Plan," like Woodward's, deals with a military engagement in the Muslim world (a Taliban warlord has taken control of oil-rich Turkmenistan . . .), and he similarly relies on well-placed sources to keep his accounts fresh. Often, this results in phone calls from officials: "How did you find out about that?" (Brown's style is heavy on weapon-speak: "Kelly's F-16 had two 370-gallon drop tanks on board, along with four AIM-120 AMRAAM radar-guided missiles, two AIM-9L 'Sidewinder' heat-seeking missiles, and ammunition for the twenty-millimeter cannon.")

Woodward's "Plan" is under strict embargo from the publisher, so there is no telling, yet, the exact nature of his assessment. His previous installment, "Bush at War," was largely favorable to the Administration, but it was reported last week that Republicans may not be so pleased this time around. Brown, for his part, was happy to offer his own analysis of the Pentagon's attack plan.

"I watched quite a bit of the second Persian Gulf War, and tried to get a lot of commentary on it," Brown said. (His Deep Throats include "some retired guys, some currently in active duty, from all ranks and all kinds of positions.") "I would have liked to see all that 'shock and awe' really happen. I would have liked to see a lot more quicker, high-response stuff—more deadly stuff." Brown felt that General Tommy Franks did the best he could, given his objectives and a military that's stuck in an outdated, artillery-based mind-set—one that hasn't yet embraced, say, the use of QAL-52 Dragon airborne-laser aircraft.

Brown has "Bush at War" on audiotape, and he says that he plans to read his rival's "Plan of Attack" as soon as it comes out. "I'd love to do a book signing side by side," he said. "I don't think readers will get confused." He noted that he is already commonly mistaken for another best-selling author. "People ask me if I'm related to Dan Brown, of 'The Da Vinci Code.' They say we look alike, and I doubt that."

There is, as it happens, a third "Plan of Attack." It was published in 1990 by Robert Tunis, a commercial-real-estate executive in New York. (The book's subtitle is "A Powerful, Principled Strategy for Office Space Negotiation.") Tunis just learned about Woodward's book, too. And it turns out that he is at work on a second edition of his own "Plan."

"I'm sure we're going to be in touch," Tunis said last week, referring to Woodward. "After all, I am the progenitor." (He was unaware of Dale Brown's upcoming contribution. "You mean *Dan* Brown?" he said.) While Tunis's area of expertise would seem not to lend itself to foreign-affairs commentary, he said, "I think if you spoke to a number of people in the commercial-real-estate industry they would tell you it's a war out there." His advice for the situation in Iraq, then? "They need infrastructure, rebuilding."

—Ben McGrath

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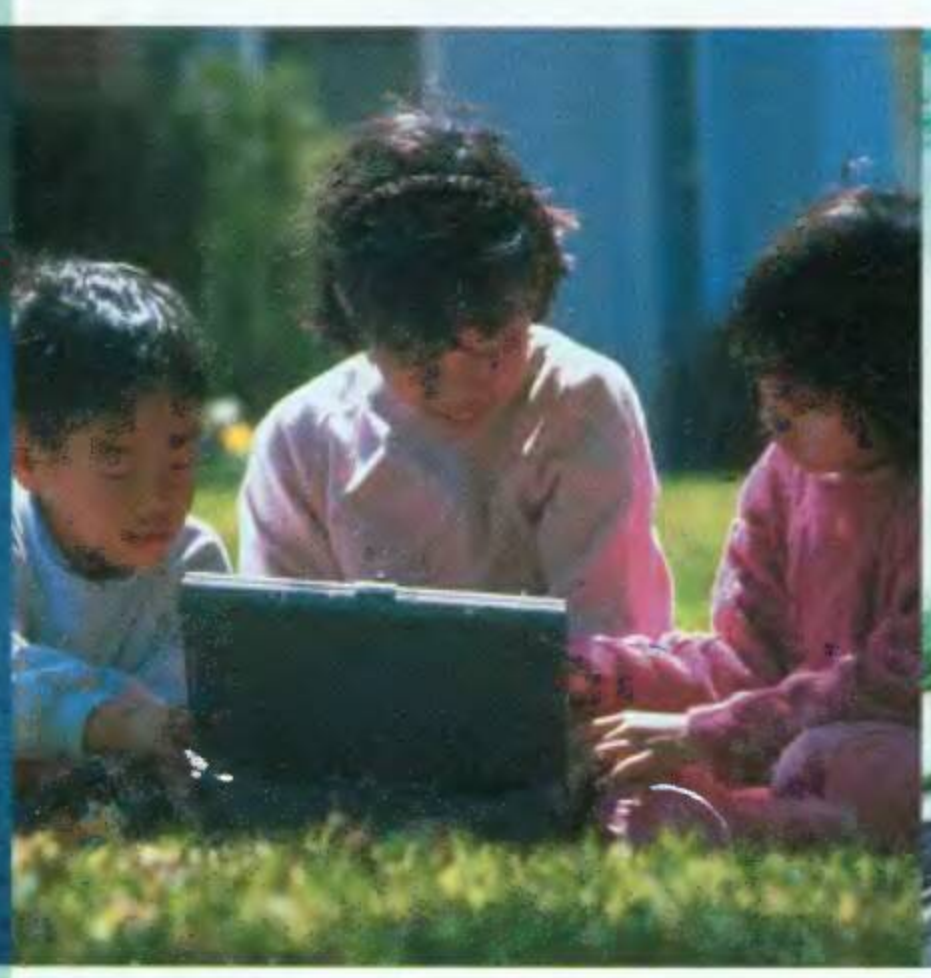

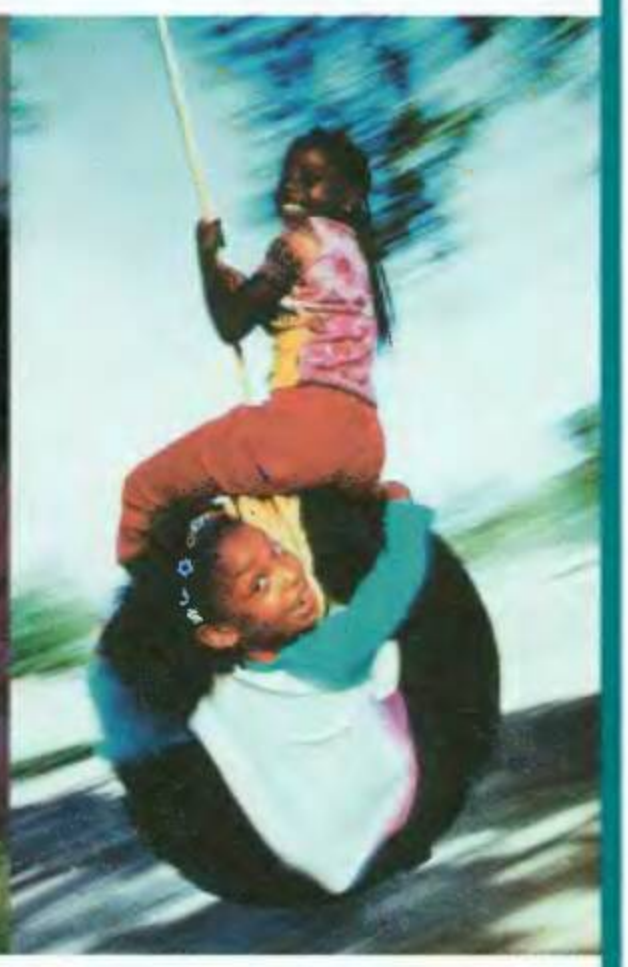

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CAMPAIGN JOURNAL

FIGHT ON THE RIGHT

In Pennsylvania's Republican primary, conservatives test the Party line.

BY PHILIP GOUREVITCH

Most days begin for Arlen Specter, the senior senator from Pennsylvania, with a game of squash around dawn, and they taper off in the evening after a couple of Martinis. "Martinis I find to be very relaxing," Specter told me recently, on an early morning of weak, gray light, with sleet blowing across the parking lot where we stood—in front of a medical office that abutted a mall alongside an interstate on the outskirts of Reading. Specter had just spent an hour urging a group of about a dozen doctors to vote for him in the state's Republican primary, on April 27th. Now he stood clutching a cell phone in one hand, holding his coat shut with the other, waiting for his Town Car to glide over and take him to a TV studio for an interview with a Christian broadcaster in Lancaster County. "I've been drinking Martinis since law school," he said, in the nasal drawl that serves as a constant, folksy reminder that, although he is a Philadelphia lawyer, he spent his boyhood in Bob Dole's home town, Russell, Kansas. "Martinis take a lot of the pressure off," he said. "Y'know, medicinally, there've been some recent studies that show they're good for you." Specter, who is seventy-four, has been a senator since he was fifty, and he's in the business of telling people what they'll be glad to hear. Gin as health food? Why not? The harder sell for him these days is himself.

Specter holds a prized seat on the Senate Appropriations Committee, and if reëlected he is in line to ascend to the chairmanship of the Judiciary Committee—the sort of political real estate that should make winning renomination in a primary a cinch. But Pennsylvania's Republican primary is "closed" (only registered Party members can vote), so the contest will be decided by an especially narrow slice of the general electorate: those who care most passionately about core Republican issues. For Specter, that means having to write off as much as a third of the primary vote in advance, on account of his steadfast pro-choice stand on abortion rights. Specter is an old-style centrist, one of the last of an aging and embattled breed of Republican moderates in a party that has moved steadily to the right in recent years. To some Republicans, like Paul Weyrich, a founder of the Heritage Foundation, who is regarded as one of the godfathers of the modern conservative movement, the thought of the Judiciary Committee chairmanship going to Specter—a man who helped block Robert Bork's nomination to the Supreme Court—is a horror to be vigorously resisted. (In 1992, after Specter smoothed Clarence Thomas's path to the Court, Weyrich campaigned *for* Specter by telling voters, "Arlen Specter is an S.O.B., but he's our S.O.B.") So, while the White House and Senate leaders have endorsed Specter, his challenger, a third-term congressman from the Lehigh Valley named Patrick Toomey, comes armed with the blessings and the cash of Republican grassroots activists and heavyweights—including Bork, Weyrich, Edwin Meese, and Steve Forbes—who don't mind bucking the Bush machine in the hope of hardening the Party line.

Pat Toomey is a conservative Republican of rigorous doctrinal purity: anti-abortion, anti-taxes, anti-spending (except for defense); a fiscal hawk, appalled by big deficits, a crusader for school choice, tort reform, Social Security privatization, and a smaller federal government. Before going to Washington, he was an owner of bars and restaurants in Allentown and, before that, an investment banker in New York, Tokyo, and Hong Kong. He is forty-two, a Catholic, the son of working-class Democrats and also a Harvard man, blond, meticulously groomed, with unnervingly white teeth

The senator from Pennsylvania, Arlen Specter, and the challenger, Patrick Toomey.

RICHARD THOMPSON

and scrubbed pink skin. He has a tightly wound but forthright manner. "I was always very interested in public policy—a pretty wonkish guy, reading Social Security-reform proposals and things like that in my spare time," he said when I spent some time campaigning with him in central Pennsylvania. If Toomey has a sense of humor, he is careful not to flaunt it.

Toomey's voting record in Congress has won him nearly perfect scores on the ideological litmus tests of the American Conservative Union, the National Taxpayers Union, and Citizens Against Government Waste. The latter organization issues an annual "Pig Book," listing Congress's profligate pork-barrel spenders, whose sins have multiplied madly in recent years, in large part because President Bush has never used his veto power. Arlen Specter was named "porker of the year" for 2003 in honor of his habit of signing off on appropriations bills packed with seemingly gratuitous, and often comical-sounding, federal handouts.

"The ridiculousness of these projects!" Toomey exclaimed, at a press conference at the state capitol, in Harrisburg. "Fifty million dollars that we're spending to build an indoor tropical rain forest in Iowa. Four million dollars we're spending to study fruit flies in France. Two million dollars we're spending to teach kids to play golf in Florida. All programs that Arlen Specter has voted for and all absolutely unjustifiable." Snarlin' Arlen, as he is known, on account of his hard demeanor, makes no apologies. "It's not extra money. It's making sure that Pennsylvania gets a fair share," he said. "It's totally justifiable, but people don't understand it. It's not an add-on. And I didn't vote for that *tsetse* fly. Ahhhh—ridiculous!"

At each campaign stop, Specter touts his seniority and his perch on the Appropriations Committee as he enumerates the grants and set-asides he has earmarked for local projects—a road repaired, a hospital research program endowed, an industrial-waste site redeveloped. "My opponent calls it pork," he says. "I call it bringing home the bacon." Specter dismisses Toomey as "not far right—far out," and, he told me, "I'm a better Republican than he is. Who more accurately expresses the view of the Republican Party? President Bush, who endorsed me? Vice-President Cheney, who came in and campaigned for me? Senator Rick Santorum, our own Pennsylvania conservative, who's behind me?" Toomey counters with the observation that the White House always endorses incumbents from the President's party. "So he's saying that Santorum's a hypocrite, that Bush is a hypocrite?" Specter snapped. "Listen, the guy will say anything."

Pat Toomey's energies in Congress have been devoted almost entirely to trying to impose fiscal discipline on the federal budget. Last November, he was prominent among several dozen conservative Republican congressmen who opposed Bush's huge Medicare-reform-and-prescription-drug bill. The four-hundred-billion-dollar price tag struck Toomey as too high, besides which he didn't trust the figures. He was proved to be prescient when the White House was accused of suppressing the real estimate, which was well over five hundred billion dollars. "We Republicans deserve plenty of blame for the level of government spending, which I think is excessive, and the five-hundred-billion-dollar deficit I think is extremely excessive," Toomey said, adding, "Am I issuing a challenge to Republicans? Yeah. I've been doing that since I got to Congress."

"The White House is concerned," Weyrich told me. "They think that if Toomey wins he can't be elected in the general election. I don't agree with that." Weyrich is confident that if Toomey beats Specter "he'll be larger than life," and in great shape to fend off the Democratic candidate, Joseph Hoeffel, a congressman from Philadelphia who is also a comparative unknown. That opinion is shared and frequently amplified in the conservative press, particularly in William Buckley's *National Review*, which last year labelled Arlen Specter "the worst Republican senator," citing his pro-choice politics, his rejection of Bork, his refusal to vote to impeach President Clinton, and his resistance to several nominees for federal judgeships.

In the absence of a Republican Presidential primary contest, the Toomey-Specter race, by exposing rifts in the Republican ranks, has, for better or for worse, taken on national dimensions as a struggle to define the Party's brand of

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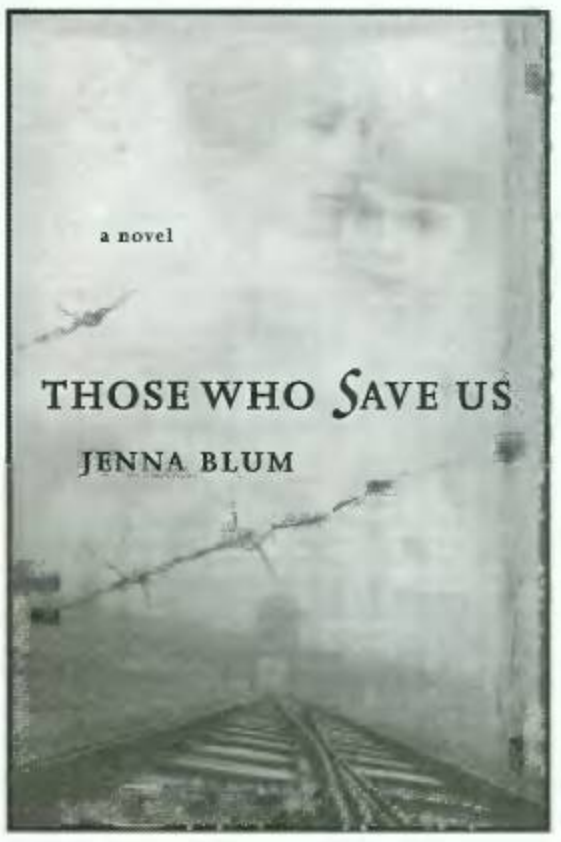

An old family photograph provides the only clue to Trudy Schlemmer's past. Driven by the guilt of her heritage, she unearths the heartbreaking truth of her mother's life. This is a poignant exploration of what we endure to survive and the legacy of shame.

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conservatism. Last month, *National Review* ran a photograph of Toomey on its cover, declaring him "the right choice" in "a battle for the GOP's future." Ramesh Ponnuru, a senior editor at the magazine, wrote that the Toomey-Specter primary was arguably "the second most important election" of 2004, and an opportunity for "conservatives who generally support President Bush but are concerned about the Republican party's drift under his stewardship" to send the White House a message. "Criticism of Bush is often deserved, and often useful," Ponnuru said, adding, "If you are a conservative upset about the Republican establishment's big spending and accommodationism—especially if you're upset enough to be thinking about boycotting Bush's re-election—there is no excuse not to be supporting Toomey."

Pennsylvania will be a key state in the general election in November. Bush lost Pennsylvania to Gore by 4.2 per cent in 2000, even though the state's two senators were Republican—as was the governor at the time, Tom Ridge (now the Secretary for Homeland Security), who has since been replaced by a Democrat, Ed Rendell. Bush has visited the state twenty-four times since his inauguration, an average of once every seven weeks. Specter likes to ride along on Air Force One and in the Presidential limo, and when he's on the stump he tells stories that begin, "Y'know, I was with the President the other day, and . . ." The same week last year that Toomey announced his candidacy, the White House sent Bush's chief of staff, Andrew Card, into Toomey's home district to hold a fund-raiser for Specter. In Pittsburgh, Bush made a point of saying that he looked forward to having Specter as Judiciary Committee chairman. Still, polls show that as Toomey has become better known he has steadily trimmed the incumbent's lead, and Specter aides now describe the campaign as "tight."

"Republican audiences are not happy that the Administration thought they could—at least on spending—play Democrat-lite," Steve Forbes, the publisher and former Presidential candidate, said. He mentioned Toomey's resistance to the Medicare bill, a "no" vote that has taken on folkloric dimensions among conservatives. On the night of the vote, as the House Republican leadership begged—and, in at least one case, now under investigation, allegedly attempted to bribe—dissenting or undecided members for support, Toomey led a band of about twenty opponents of the bill out to the Hunan Dynasty restaurant on Capitol Hill. "I knew I wasn't going to bend," he told me, "and I was confident of most everybody else." Still, Toomey thought it best for the group to stick together, and he kept them discussing cost containment and means testing and other measures of fiscal responsibility until the vote was finally called, around three in the morning. On the first tally, the "no" ballots prevailed, so the Speaker, Dennis Hastert, kept the vote open for another three hours while a few fence-sitters were converted to the President's side. Conservatives were outraged by this unorthodox maneuvering, but Toomey shrugs it off. "That's the political process," he said. Despite his disagreements with the White House on a number of key bills, and no matter what some of his backers may think, Toomey insists that he is not running against Bush, and he hopes soon to be running with him.

"By fighting these seemingly lonely fights, Toomey is winning the heart of the Party, and certainly the rank and file has responded," Steve Forbes said, adding, "If Pat wins, I think it's going to send a very strong message to the rest of the Party that there's a different way to do things." Paul Weyrich agreed. "It would be big," he said. "It would be *very* big."

In the basement of a public library in Camp Hill, Pennsylvania, across the Susquehanna River from Harrisburg, Pat Toomey was talking with a group of parents involved in home-schooling their children when a man in the audience said, "I would characterize your opponent as a militant left-wing extremist rather than a moderate. How do you think he's been painted as a moderate all these years?"

Toomey, who never slips, as many of his conservative friends and backers do, into the incendiary rhetoric of right-wing talk radio, responded with a compressed version of his stump speech. "Arlen Specter is a liberal," he said. "Across the board, he's much more likely to come down on the side of Ted Kennedy than he is on the side of conservatives. The reason I'm running is that there's a real opportunity now for the center right of the Republican Party—commonsense conservatives—to finally govern. We've waited seventy years to have complete control of the elected government in Washington. And we've got that today. We've got a Republican majority in the House, we've got a Republican in the White House, and we've got a Republican majority in the Senate. But, unfortunately, in the Senate it's really a nominal majority. It's not a functioning majority, and it's certainly not a conservative majority. And the reason is that a handful of liberal Republicans who never bought into the Republican conservative ideas in the first place are continuing to side with the Democrats and prevent us from accomplishing so many wonderful things we could be doing."

Toomey presents himself as a national figure engaged in a struggle for the conservative Republican cause, and his message to conservative voters is quite simple: it's our time now. "You could make the case that, when Bill Clinton was President, Arlen Specter's liberalism didn't matter that much because you couldn't get good legislation signed into law," he said. "You could make the case that when Tom Daschle was running the United States Senate we couldn't get much passed, regardless of Arlen Specter's liberalism. But you can't make that case anymore. Today, we have complete control. And the question that I'm posing to Republican primary voters all across Pennsylvania is a simple one: Are we going to seize this opportunity to govern with a commonsense conservative agenda, or are we going to let it slip away by reëlecting a liberal who will fight our agenda? That's what's at stake here."

Since the Hoover Administration, Republicans—conservative Republicans in particular—have had a minority status in the American political consensus. To be sure, during much of that period conservatives also found a home in the Democratic Party, notably in the South, but, while conservatism has never been

as much of an outsiders' creed as conservatives like to claim, it has been the country's ruling ideology only fitfully, and for the last quarter century Republican history has played out largely as a struggle between the Party's Reaganite right wing and more moderate figures, like the first President Bush, a multilateralist internationally and a centrist domestically. To the Reagan revolutionaries, who count Toomey as one of their own, Bush the father was an apostate: when he broke his vow not to raise taxes, many Republicans felt betrayed. He lost his base and then the White House.

The rejection of the elder Bush by the Republican right was a measure of the mounting influence of a young activist named Grover Norquist, the president of an advocacy group called Americans for Tax Reform, who had begun extracting anti-tax pledges from lawmakers in the late eighties. Norquist's tax pledge became one of the defining Republican credentials of the nineties, and Norquist emerged as one of the Party's preëminent power brokers. "I got ninety-five per cent of House Republicans and eighty per cent of the senators to sign the pledge never to raise taxes," Norquist told me recently. "Ninety per cent of Republicans in the House and the Senate will vote for every tax cut that's put on the table. So the guys who aren't with you are oddballs like McCain, who has a psychotic hatred of Bush—I mean if Bush was for raising taxes he'd be for cutting them." Norquist helped Newt Gingrich engineer the Republican takeover of Congress in the 1994 election, and to this day he holds a weekly breakfast salon at his Washington office, where conservatives in and out of government line up to win approval for their agendas.

Norquist always cultivated an image as a rebel, but from his days as a College Republican he was a pal of Karl Rove, and when Rove began preparing the younger George Bush to run for President, Norquist was summoned to Austin to strategize and to offer his stamp of ideological approval. These days, he is usually seen as a consigliere to the Bush White House—Karl Rove's Karl Rove—a position that some say has softened his edge. ("It restricts your movement to be a revolutionary when the politburo is giving you your dictates," a Republican Senate staffer quipped.) But Norquist did not hesitate to tell me that it would be a mistake for the President to become too focussed on foreign policy during the campaign. "Americans don't care about the rest of the world," he explained. "If they mess with us, go blow them up, and don't bother me, y'know—don't sit and talk about it all day. You went out and blew up the nice Taliban. Good. O.K. Next. What are you doing for me?"

Norquist is a pudgy, owlish man with a light, fluffy beard and round glasses. He fidgets incessantly while talking, rifling through papers on his desk, wiping his glasses, applying hand cream from a tiny hotel sample bottle. At one point in our conversation, he removed both his shoes, placed them on the desk, and set about replacing the laces. The walls of his office are decked with National Rifle Association flyers and a poster of Janis Joplin. As a young man, in the late years of the Cold War, he displayed a taste for blowing up foreign enemies himself, primarily in Angola, where he became an acolyte of Jonas Savimbi, the anti-Communist puppet of Washington and apartheid Johannesburg. There, among the guerrillas, Norquist had himself photographed holding a submachine gun, and he picked up a pair of combat fatigues that he later liked to wear to Washington meetings. For a time, he carried a briefcase with an "I'd rather be killing Commies" bumper sticker. Now that he finds himself a pillar of the Washington establishment, he allows that having power can be duller than wanting it. About this year's election, for instance, he said, "The left is more excited because they have more at stake."

Beneath the bombast, Norquist's brand of conservatism, like Pat Toomey's, is largely about bookkeeping. He likes Bush's tax cuts, wants more of them, and was disappointed recently when Congress, in alarm at the growth of the federal deficit, postponed making those cuts permanent. Norquist blames "inexcusable explosions of spending" for the deficit, not the decline in tax revenues. Non-defense spending increased twenty-five per cent under Bush, and that figure doesn't include the new Medicare plan. "The President and Republican Congress have been rock solid on almost everything—except federal spending," Norquist wrote in last month's *American Spectator*. "How could that be? If the professed goal of the Republican Party is to limit the size and scope of government so as to maximize individual liberty, how can it fail to limit federal spending? Something is wrong when everything on the agenda gets attention—except the one big thing." Norquist has said that his ideal is a government cut "down to the size where we can drown it in the bathtub," and he told me, "One of the steps for getting there is a permanent Republican government, in the sense of fifty-five Republican senators and a thirty-vote margin in the House and a Republican President for twenty years in a row. That's when you can do to the left what the left did to us in the thirties and the forties."

I said this sounded like a one-party

state. He preferred to call it a dismantling of "the non-democratic institutions that have been put into place by sixty years of Democratic hegemony": trial lawyers, organized labor, and what he called the public-school monopoly—the same targets that Pat Toomey lists. "When that happens, the Democratic Party will have ceased to be the economic statist party," he said. "They can be the weird-sex party, they can be the tree-hugger party, they can be the secularists-against-the-religious-zealots party. There are a lot of different things they can be. There will be two parties. Just dissolve the anti-democratic institutions, and you can have a fair fight."

Grover Norquist supports Pat Toomey in the Pennsylvania primary. "The Pennsylvania thing is an interesting microcosm," he said. But he wondered what would happen if Toomey lost. "Would that convince people that the Specters are more important or powerful than they are?"

Stephen Moore, a supply-side conservative who's been raising a lot of money for Toomey, prefers to ask, What if Toomey wins? "The message is that somebody's watching over the shoulder of the moderate Republicans, and if they keep voting for bigger government programs and higher taxes they're going to be defeated," Moore said. "It will have a very disciplining effect."

Moore runs the Club for Growth, an organization in Washington that bundles contributions from a network of conservatives, including some big donors from Wall Street, to bankroll primary challenges against moderate Republicans. (Most recently, the Club has supported the successful campaigns of Katherine Harris, in Florida, and John Sununu, in New Hampshire.) When I stopped by Moore's office, he sat behind a cluttered desk in a swivel chair that stood in a sprawling puddle of envelopes, each one carrying a check, nearly all of them to be funnelled to Toomey. "We've raised almost a million dollars in hard money for Toomey, and we'll probably put another million into voter-education campaigns in Pennsylvania," he said. "It's a huge investment for us. It's probably three times more than we've ever spent in any other race." Moore was feeling "buoyant" about some new poll results that showed Toomey gaining on Specter. He credited a television spot the Club for Growth was running, which painted Specter as John Kerry's ideological twin, voting the same way as the Massachusetts liberal seventy per cent of the time.

"I've said from the start this really is a race for the heart and soul of the Party," Moore said. "If Toomey wins the race, it will have reverberating effects around the country. One of the problems we've had in the conservative movement is that there's a very thin talent pool among the Republicans in the Senate. Conservatives don't have anyone to go to who will champion their cause the way the liberals have Hillary Clinton and Ted Kennedy. So it's a big race. The Olympia Snowes of the world and the Lincoln Chafees and the George Voinoviches would behave themselves much better if one of their colleagues got knocked off."

Moore makes no secret of his hostility to the Bush White House, and he recognizes that the President's high level of support among Republican primary voters could be a problem for Toomey. "We'd like Bush to just stay out of it, obviously, as much as possible," he said. "One of the points we've made to him is, look, it is not in your political self-interest to take a high-stakes position for Specter given that you're already seeing a little bit of a collapse in your conservative support. This would only reinforce the idea that you're not a real conservative." After all, Moore said, "I think if you're a Republican in 2004 you've got to stand for a few things. You've got to be for school choice, and you've got to be for cutting taxes, and you've got to be for smaller government. Otherwise, what are Republicans good for? That's why we keep saying Specter's a RINO—a Republican in name only—and let's replace him with a real Republican."

Arlen Specter regards Moore as a blowhard and a bully. The one thing he does agree with Moore about is that the race with Toomey has broad ramifications for American political life. "I would say it's an election to see if there's going to be any place in the Republican Party for the big tent," Specter said as we drove through Lancaster County in a freak March snowstorm. "If a guy in my position can't win in a moderate state like Pennsylvania, albeit in a closed primary, I think it bodes very ill for the big tent and balance in the Party. When I came to the Senate, we had a lot of members of the Wednesday Club"—a weekly gathering of Republican moderates. "You had Lowell Weicker, you had Bob Stafford, you had Bob Packwood, you had Mark Hatfield, you had Lincoln Chafee, you had John Danforth, you had Jim Jeffords, you had John Heinz. Now there are only a few of us. And it's important. When Joe Biden needs a co-

"What's the matter? Not puffy enough for you?"

sponsor, he comes to Arlen Specter. That kind of balance is really important for the country. It's more than the soul of the Republican Party; it's to have some balance within the Party and within the two-party system."

Paul Weyrich thinks it's the other way around: that the Party is wounded by moderates. "I don't see that they contribute that much," he told me. For example, he said, "One of Bush's main objectives right now is to drive home this idea that Kerry has been weak on defense, that he's never voted for a weapons system. And here comes John McCain and says, 'No, he's not weak on defense—you know, we have different voting records, and he'll have to explain that, but I do not consider him weak on defense.' Well, that is like knocking the props out from under Bush. Is it helpful to have a liberal Republican like that hanging around? I don't think so."

Grover Norquist is no fan of McCain, either, and he has made clear with his endorsement that he prefers Toomey to Specter, but he questioned the wisdom of the Club for Growth's strategy in Pennsylvania. After all, he said, "What do these so-called moderates have in common? They're seventy years old. They're not running again. They're gonna be dead soon. So, while they're annoying, within the Republican Party our problems are dying." In the meantime, he worried: "Does the right make a mistake in demonizing Specter? He's not *that* erratic or far left. And if we can't win 'the biggest race in the country' or beat 'the worst senator,' what does that say? Why not go after the Democrats instead? Why not use the same resources to go after Tom Daschle?"

Joe Hoeffel, the Democratic challenger for Pennsylvania's Senate seat, has been watching the Toomey-Specter showdown closely, and he is no longer convinced that Specter really qualifies as a moderate. "He's been meek, a supporter of the Bush program, which has alarmed a lot of moderates, with the budget deficits growing and the deceptions in Iraq and all the rest," Hoeffel said. He pointed out, as Toomey also does, that Specter swung to the right in preparation for the primary challenge. But he didn't think that in the general election Pennsylvania voters were going to be interested in the sort of ideological debates that are dividing the Republicans now. "We've lost a hundred and fifty thousand manufacturing jobs in the state," he said. "People are worried about the economic and pocketbook issues, and I don't think they are going to be distracted by what the right wing wants to talk about."

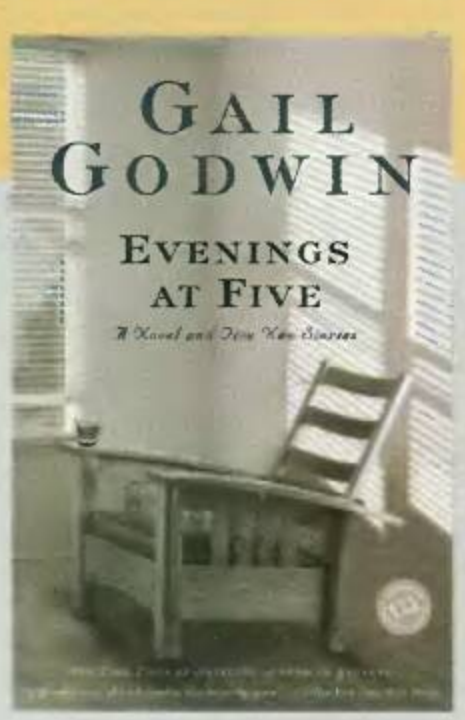
It was a curious experience to talk to a Democrat after my days among the Republicans. The Republicans had seemed so self-sufficient, hardly even mentioning that other party. Four years ago, American voters were complaining that there was no real choice between the Presidential candidates—the "pragmatic liberal" and the "compassionate conservative." A Pew Research Center poll in June of 2000 found that only fifty-one per cent of American voters realized that the Republican and the Democrat had different ideas of the world. Even among the well-informed, there was a strong sentiment that Al Gore and George Bush weren't merely uninspiring but essentially interchangeable. This delusion that it hardly mattered whom one voted for did not survive Election Day, 2000, in Florida, and, in the eruption of partisanship that ensued, it was often suggested that the bruising closeness of the vote would require the incoming President to reach out across party lines to govern as a healer from the political center. But when the Supreme Court gave Bush the White House he proceeded as if he had the mandate of an electoral landslide. Drawing heavily from the right wing of his party, he assembled an Administration whose defining attitude was, from the get-go, you're with us or you're against us.

This should not have been a surprise. Bush, whose conservative credentials are now being questioned because of the deficit, never pretended to be moderate. As Newt Gingrich said to me in Washington recently, "If you go back and look at what his campaign pledges were, it was stronger defense, massive tax cuts, much more American nationalism in his foreign policy, much less multinational kowtowing to the Europeans, a clearly socially conservative, pro-life position—he even talked about having an office of faith-based solutions in the White House—and he was for personal Social Security accounts. In the 2000 campaign, it seemed to me, if you were reading his speeches, he was running at least as conservative as Reagan ever did, and maybe more conservative." In fact, Gingrich said, "he's probably to the right of Reagan, most days." And he added, "Reagan was pretty cheerful about saying that he didn't worry nearly as much about deficits as he worried about cutting taxes and strengthening the military." The Reaganite notion is that big deficits eventually take care of themselves by intimidating Congress into cutting spending.

"There's irritation on the right, yeah," Gingrich said. "But that's the nature of being a majority. Just as in the great age of the Democratic Party you had Mississippi segregationists and Chicago blacks both supporting Franklin Delano Roosevelt, both proud to be Democrats, largely because they weren't Republicans." Grover Norquist, whom Gingrich has described as the new standard-bearer of the conservative cause, took an even broader view of what it means for Republicans to have a majority: "If we lose Bush, we still have the House, we have the Senate. Kerry can't steal our guns, raise our taxes, spend any money we don't want to."

It's true, as the Republican idea men say, that a great deal is at stake for the Party in Pennsylvania, but the stakes may be far more prosaic than their high-flown rhetoric suggests. After all, the Republicans' ability to hold the Senate in November is far from certain. If Pat Toomey were to beat Arlen Specter, he would be a long shot for a statewide victory, and a Senate seat that has been securely Republican would suddenly be up for grabs. For ideologically uncompromising voters who want to send the White House a warning of their disaffection, Toomey presents an attractive messenger. But they risk losing their majority in the name of toughening it. While Toomey invokes the century-old dream of conservative political dominion, perhaps it is Specter, the known quantity, posing in campaign literature arm in arm with Dick Cheney, who is, in the literal sense of the word, the conservative choice. ♦

"[A] tender story of a relationship that defies the grave."
—*The New York Times Book Review*



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ANNALS OF NATIONAL SECURITY

THE OTHER WAR

Why Bush's Afghanistan problem won't go away.

BY SEYMOUR M. HERSH

In December, 2002, a year after the Taliban had been driven from power in Afghanistan, Donald Rumsfeld gave an upbeat assessment of the country's future to CNN's Larry King. "They have elected a government. . . . The Taliban are gone. The Al Qaeda are gone. The country is not a perfectly stable place, and it needs a great deal of reconstruction funds," Rumsfeld said. "There are people who are throwing hand grenades and shooting off rockets and trying to kill people, but there are people who are trying to kill people in New York or San Francisco. So it's not going to be a perfectly tidy place." Nonetheless, he said, "I'm hopeful, I'm encouraged." And he added, "I wish them well."

A year and a half later, the Taliban are still a force in many parts of Afghanistan, and the country continues to provide safe haven for members of Al Qaeda. American troops, more than ten thousand of whom remain, are heavily deployed in the mountainous areas near Pakistan, still hunting for Osama bin Laden and Mullah Omar, the Taliban leader. Hamid Karzai, the U.S.-backed President, exercises little political control outside Kabul and is struggling to undercut the authority of local warlords, who effectively control the provinces. Heroin production is soaring, and, outside of Kabul and a few other cities, people are terrorized by violence and crime. A new report by the United Nations Development Program, made public on the eve of last week's international conference, in Berlin, on aid to Afghanistan, stated that the nation is in danger of once again becoming a "terrorist breeding ground" unless there is a significant increase in development aid.

The turmoil in Afghanistan has become a political issue for the Bush Administration, whose general conduct of the war on terrorism is being publicly challenged by Richard A. Clarke, the former National Security Council terrorism adviser, in a memoir, "Against All Enemies," and in contentious hearings before the September 11th Commission. The Bush Administration has consistently invoked Afghanistan as a success story—an example of the President's determination. However, it is making this claim in the face of renewed warnings, from international organizations, from allies, and from within its own military—notably a Pentagon-commissioned report that was left in bureaucratic limbo when its conclusions proved negative—that the situation there is deteriorating rapidly.

In his book, Clarke depicts the victory in Afghanistan as far less decisive than the Administration has portrayed it, and he sharply criticizes the Pentagon's tactics, especially the decision to rely on airpower, and not U.S. troops on the ground, in the early weeks. The war began on October 7, 2001, but, he wrote, not until seven weeks later did the United States "insert a ground force unit (Marines) to take and hold a former al Qaeda and Taliban facility. . . . The late-November operation did not include any effort by U.S. forces to seal the border with Pakistan, snatch the al Qaeda leadership, or cut off the al Qaeda escape."

Clarke told me in an interview last week that the Administration viewed Afghanistan as a military and political backwater—a detour along the road to Iraq, the war that mattered most to the President. Clarke and some of his colleagues, he said, had repeatedly warned the national-security leadership that, as he put it, "you can't win the war in Afghanistan with such a small effort." Clarke continued, "There were more cops in New York City than soldiers on the ground in Afghanistan. We had to have a security presence coupled with a development program in every region and stay there for several months."

In retrospect, Clarke said, he believes that the President and his men did not respond for three reasons: "One, they did not want to get involved in Afghanistan like Russia did. Two, they were saving forces for the war in Iraq. And, three, Rumsfeld wanted to have a laboratory

"The real action is at the village level, but we're not there," a military consultant said.

to prove his theory about the ability of small numbers of ground troops, coupled with airpower, to win decisive battles." As of today, Clarke said, "the U.S. has succeeded in stabilizing only two or three cities. The President of Afghanistan is just the mayor of Kabul."

Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Joseph Collins, a Pentagon expert on Afghanistan, acknowledged that it was only in the past several months that "significant money began to flow" into Afghanistan for reconstruction and security. "We found in the security area we were doing the right thing, but not fast enough," he told me. The resurgence of the Taliban and Al Qaeda, Collins said, did not begin until early last year. "They began to realize at the end of 2003 that the key is not to fight our soldiers but U.N. officials and aid workers." In the long run, Collins added, "these tactics are self-defeating—in Afghanistan and in Iraq."

Clarke's view of what went wrong was buttressed by an internal military analysis of the Afghanistan war that was completed last winter. In late 2002, the Defense Department's office of Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict (SOLIC) asked retired Army Colonel Hy Rothstein, a leading military expert in unconventional warfare, to examine the planning and execution of the war in Afghanistan, with an understanding that he would focus on Special Forces. As part of his research, Rothstein travelled to Afghanistan and interviewed many senior military officers, in both Special Forces and regular units. He also talked to dozens of junior Special Forces officers and enlisted men who fought there. His report was a devastating critique of the Administration's strategy. He wrote that the bombing campaign was not the best way to hunt down Osama bin Laden and the rest of the Al Qaeda leadership, and that there was a failure to translate early tactical successes into strategic victory. In fact, he wrote, the victory in Afghanistan was not, in the long run, a victory at all.

Last month, I visited Rothstein in his office at the Naval Postgraduate School, in Monterey, California, where he is a senior lecturer in defense analysis. A fit, broad-shouldered man in his early fifties, he served more than twenty years in the Army Special Forces, including three years as the director of plans and exercises for the Joint Special Operations Command, at Fort Bragg, before retiring, in 1999. His associates depicted him as anything but a dissident. "He puts boots on the ground," Robert Andrews, a former head of SOLIC, told me, referring to Rothstein's missions in Central America, for which he earned a decoration for valor, and in the former Yugoslavia. Rothstein agreed to speak to me, with some reluctance, only after I had obtained his report independently, and he would not go into details about his research. "They asked me to do this," he said of the Pentagon, "and my purpose was to make some things better. All I want people to do is to look at the paper and not at me. I'll tell you the good and the bad."

The report describes a wide gap between how Donald Rumsfeld represented the war and what was actually taking place. Rumsfeld had told reporters at the start of the Afghanistan bombing campaign, Rothstein wrote, that "you don't fight terrorists with conventional capabilities. You do it with unconventional capabilities." In December, the Taliban and Al Qaeda retreated into the countryside as the armies of the Northern Alliance, supported by American airpower and Special Forces troops, moved into the capital. There were many press accounts of America's new way of waging war, including well-publicized reports of American Special Forces on horseback and of new technologies, like the Predator drones. Nonetheless, Rothstein wrote, the United States continued to emphasize bombing and conventional warfare while "the war became increasingly unconventional," with Taliban and Al Qaeda fighters "operating in small cells, emerging only to lay land mines and launch nighttime rocket attacks before disappearing once again." Rothstein added:

> What was needed after December 2001 was a greater emphasis on U.S. special operations troops, supported by light infantry, conducting counterinsurgency operations. Aerial bombardment should have become a rare thing. . . . The failure to adjust U.S. operations in line with the post-Taliban change in theater conditions cost the United States some of the fruits of victory and imposed additional, avoidable humanitarian and stability costs on Afghanistan. . . . Indeed, the war's inadvertent effects may be more significant than we think.

By the end of 2001, the Afghan war had essentially become a counterinsurgency. At this point, it was important to turn to a specific kind of unconventional warfare: "The Special Forces were created to deal with precisely this kind of enemy,"

GUY BILLOUT

Rothstein wrote. "Unorthodox thinking, drawing on a thorough understanding of war, demography, human nature, culture and technology are part of this mental approach. . . . Unconventional warfare prescribes that Special Forces soldiers must be diplomats, doctors, spies, cultural anthropologists, and good friends—all before their primary work comes into play."

Instead, Rothstein said, "the command arrangement evolved into a large and complex structure that could not (or would not) respond to the new unconventional setting." The result has been "a campaign in Afghanistan that effectively destroyed the Taliban but has been significantly less successful at being able to achieve the primary policy goal of ensuring that al Qaeda could no longer operate in Afghanistan."

Rothstein wrote that Rumsfeld routinely responded to criticism about civilian casualties by stating that "some amount" of collateral damage "is inevitable in war." It is estimated that more than a thousand Afghan civilians were killed by bombing and other means in the early stages of the war. Rothstein suggested that these numbers could have been lower, and that further incidents might have been avoided if Special Forces had been allowed to wage a truly unconventional war that reduced the reliance on massive firepower.

The Administration's decision to treat the Taliban as though all its members identified with, and would fight for, Al Qaeda was also a crucial early mistake. "There were deep divisions within the Taliban that could have been exploited through a political-military effort which is the essence of unconventional warfare," Rothstein said. "A few months of intensive diplomatic, intelligence and military preparations between Special Forces and anti-Taliban forces would have made a significant difference."

Instead, Rothstein wrote, the American military campaign left a power vacuum. The conditions under which the post-Taliban government came to power gave "warlordism, banditry and opium production a new lease on life." He concluded, "Defeating an enemy on the battlefield and winning a war are rarely synonymous. Winning a war calls for more than defeating one's enemy in battle." He recalled that, in 1975, when Harry G. Summers, an Army colonel who later wrote a history of the Vietnam War, told a North Vietnamese colonel, "You never defeated us on the battlefield," the colonel replied, "That may be so, but it is also irrelevant."

Rothstein delivered his report in January. It was returned to him, with the message that he had to cut it drastically and soften his conclusions. He has heard nothing further. "It's a threatening paper," one military consultant told me. The Pentagon, asked for comment, confirmed that Rothstein was told "we did not support all of his conclusions," and said that he would soon be sent notes. In addition, Joseph Collins told me, "There may be a kernel of truth in there, but our experts found the study rambling and not terribly informative." In interviews, however, a number of past and present Bush Administration officials have endorsed Rothstein's key assertions. "It wasn't like he made it up," a former senior intelligence officer said. "The reason they're petrified is that it's true, and they didn't want to see it in writing."

The high point of the American involvement in Afghanistan came in December of 2001, at a conference of various Afghan factions held in Bonn, when the Administration's candidate, Hamid Karzai, was named chairman of the interim government. (His appointment as President was confirmed six months later at a carefully orchestrated Afghan tribal council, known as a Loya Jirga.) It was a significant achievement, but there were major flaws in the broader accord. There was no agreement on establishing an international police force, no procedures for collecting taxes, no strategy for disarming either the many militias or individual Afghans, and no resolution with the Taliban.

Then came Iraq. In interviews with academics, aid workers, and non-governmental-organization officials, I was repeatedly told that, within a few months of the Bonn conference, as the United States began its buildup in the Gulf, security and political conditions throughout Afghanistan eroded. In the early summer of 2002, a military consultant, reflecting the views of several American Special Forces commanders in the field, provided the Pentagon with a briefing warning that the Taliban and Al Qaeda were adapting quickly to American tactics. "His decision loop has tightened, ours has widened," the briefing said, referring to the Taliban. "He can see us, but increasingly we no longer see him." Only a very few high-level generals listened, and the briefing, like Rothstein's re-

APHASIA

His signs flick off.
His names of birds
and his beautiful words—
eleemosynary, fir, cinerarium, reckless—
skip like pearls from a snapped necklace
scattering over linoleum.

His thinking won't
venture out of his mouth.
His grammar heads south.
Pathetic his subjunctives; just as pathetic
his mangling the emphatic enclitic
he once was the master of.

Still, all in all, he has
his inner weather of pure meaning,
though the wind is keening
through his Alps and his clouds hang low
and the forecast is "Rain mixed with snow,
heavy at times."

—Vijay Seshadri

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port, changed nothing. By then, some of the most highly skilled Americans were being diverted from Afghanistan. Richard Clarke noted in his memoir, "The U.S. Special Forces who were trained to speak Arabic, the language of al Qaeda, had been pulled out of Afghanistan and sent to Iraq." Some C.I.A. paramilitary teams were also transferred to Iraq.

Meanwhile, the United States continued to pay off and work closely with local warlords, many of whom were involved in heroin and opium trafficking. Their loyalty was not for sale but for rent. Warlords like Hazrat Ali in eastern Afghanistan, near the Pakistan border, and Mohammed Fahim had been essential to America's initial military success, and, at first, they had promised to accept Karzai. Hazrat Ali would be one of several commanders later accused of double-crossing American troops in an early, unsuccessful sweep for Al Qaeda, in 2002. Fahim, now the defense minister, is deeply involved in a number of illicit enterprises.

The Bush Administration, facing a major war in Iraq, seemed eager to put the war in Afghanistan behind it. In January of 2003, Paul Wolfowitz, the Deputy Secretary of Defense, made a fifteen-hour visit to Kabul and announced, "We're clearly moving into a different phase, where our priority in Afghanistan is increasingly going to be stability and reconstruction. There's no way to go too fast. Faster is better." There was talk of improving security and rebuilding the Afghan National Army in time for Presidential and parliamentary elections, but little effort to provide the military and economic resources. "I don't think the Administration understood about winning hearts and minds," a former Administration official told me.

The results of the postwar neglect are stark. A leading scholar on Afghanistan, Barnett R. Rubin, wrote, in this month's *Current History*, that Afghanistan today "does not have functioning state institutions. It has no genuine army or effective police. Its ramshackle provincial administration is barely in contact with, let alone obedient to, the central government. Most of the country's meager tax revenue has been illegally taken over by local officials who are little more than warlords with official titles." The goal of American policy in Afghanistan "was not to set up a better regime for the Afghan people," Rubin wrote. "The goal instead was to get rid of the terrorist threat against America." The United States enlisted the warlords in its war against terrorism, and "the result was an Afghan government created at Bonn that rested on a power base of warlords."

One military consultant with extensive experience in Afghanistan told me last year, "The real action is at the village level, but we're not there. And we need to be there 24/7. Now we are effectively operating above the conflict. It's the same old story as in Vietnam. We can't hit what we can't see." He added, "From January, 2002, on, we were in the process of snatching defeat from the jaws of victory."

Last summer, a coalition of seventy-nine human-rights and relief organizations wrote an open letter to the international community calling for better security in Afghanistan and warning that the Presidential elections there, now scheduled for September, were imperilled. The letter noted, "For the majority of the Afghan people, security is precarious and controlled by regional warlords, drug traffickers or groups with terrorist associations. The situation is getting worse, and there is no comprehensive plan in place to halt the spiral of violence." Statistics compiled by CARE International showed that eleven aid workers were murdered in four incidents during a three-week period ending early last month, and the rate of physical assaults on aid workers in Afghanistan more than doubled in January and February compared with the same period in the previous year. Such attacks, a CARE policy statement suggested, inevitably led to cutbacks in Afghan humanitarian and reconstruction programs. In early 2003, for example, according to the Chicago *Tribune*, there were twenty-six humanitarian agencies at work in Kandahar, the main Afghan city in the south. By early this year, there were fewer than five.

Even one of the most publicized achievements of the post-Taliban government, the improvements in the lives of women, has been called into question. Judy Benjamin, who served as the gender adviser to the U.S. Agency for International Development mission in Kabul in 2002 and 2003, told me, "The legal opportunities have improved, but the day-to-day life for women, even in Kabul, isn't any better. Girls are now legally permitted to go to school and work, but when it comes to the actual family practice, people are afraid to let them go out without burkas." Conditions outside Kabul are far worse, she said. "Families do not allow females to travel—to go to jobs or to school. You cannot go on many roads without being held up by bandits. People are saying they were safer under the Taliban system, which is why the Taliban are getting more support—the lack of safety."

Nancy Lindborg, the executive vice-president of Mercy Corps, one of the major N.G.O.s at work in Afghanistan, had a similar view. Outside of Kabul, she said, "everywhere I go, from Kunduz to Kandahar, I see no change for most women, and security for everybody has fallen apart since November of 2002." The Pentagon's announcements of increased commitments to security and reconstruction were increasingly seen "as a big charade," Lindborg said. "The United States has left Afghanistan to fester for two years."

The humanitarian community is not alone in its concern. In February, Vice-Admiral Lowell E. Jacoby, the head of the Defense Intelligence Agency, acknowledged during a Senate Intelligence Committee hearing that the growing Taliban insurgency was targeting humanitarian and reconstruction organizations. Over all, he said, Taliban attacks had "reached their highest levels since the collapse of the Taliban government."

Heroin is among the most immediate—and the most intractable—social, economic, and political problems. "The problem is too huge for us to be able to face alone," Hamid Karzai declared last week in Berlin, as he appealed for more aid. "Drugs in Afghanistan are threatening the very existence of the Afghan state." Drug dealing and associated criminal activity produced about $2.3 billion in revenue last year, according to an annual survey by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, a sum that was equivalent to half of Afghanistan's legitimate gross domestic product. "Terrorists take a

cut as well," the U.N. report noted, adding that "the longer this happens, the greater the threat to security within the country."

The U.N. report, published last fall, found that opium production, which, following a ban imposed by the Taliban, had fallen to a hundred and eighty-five metric tons in 2001, soared last year to three thousand six hundred tons—a twentyfold increase. The report declared the nation to be "at a crossroads: either (i) energetic interdiction measures are taken now . . . or (ii) the drug cancer in Afghanistan will keep spreading and metastasise into corruption, violence and terrorism—within and beyond the country's borders." Afghanistan was once again, the U.N. said, producing three-quarters of the world's illicit opium, with no evidence of a cutback in sight, even though there has been a steady stream of reports from Washington about drug interdictions. The report said that poppy cultivation had continued to spread, and was now reported in twenty-eight of the nation's thirty-two provinces.

Most alarmingly, according to a U.N. survey, nearly seventy per cent of farmers intend to increase their poppy crops in 2004, most of them by more than half. Only a small percentage of farmers were planning any reduction, despite years of international pressure. Many of the areas that the U.N. report identified as likely to see increased production are in regions where the United States has a major military presence.

Despite such statistics, the American military has, for the most part, looked the other way, essentially because of the belief that the warlords can deliver the Taliban and Al Qaeda. One senior N.G.O. official told me, "Everybody knows that the U.S. military has the drug lords on the payroll. We've put them back in power. It's gone so terribly wrong." (The Pentagon's Joseph Collins told me, "Counter-narcotics in Afghanistan has been a failure." Collins said that this year's crop was estimated to be the second largest on record. He added, however, that the Afghan government is planning to "redouble" its efforts on narcotics control, and that the Pentagon is "now putting more money into it for the first time"—seventy-three million dollars.)

The easy availability of heroin also represents a threat to the well-being of American troops. Since the fall of 2002, a number of active-duty and retired military and C.I.A. officials have told me about increasing reports of heroin use by American military personnel in Afghanistan, many of whom have been there for months, with few distractions. A former high-level intelligence officer told me that the problem wasn't the Special Forces or Army combat units who were active in the field but "the logistical guys"—the truck drivers and the food and maintenance workers who are stationed at the military's large base at Bagram, near Kabul. However, I was also told that there were concerns about heroin use within the Marines. The G.I.s assigned to Bagram are nominally confined to the base, for security reasons, but the drugs, the former intelligence officer said, were relayed to the users by local Afghans hired to handle menial duties. The Pentagon's senior leadership has a "head-in-the-sand attitude," he said. "There's no desire to expose it and get enforcement involved. This is hard shit," he added, speaking of heroin. The Pentagon, asked for comment, denied that there was concern about drug use at Bagram, but went on to acknowledge that "disciplinary proceedings were initiated against some U.S. military personnel in Afghanistan for suspected drug use." Asked separately about the allegations against marines, the Pentagon said that some marines had been removed from Afghanistan to face disciplinary proceedings, but blamed alcohol and marijuana rather than heroin.

The drug lords traditionally processed only hashish inside the Afghan borders, and shipped poppies to heroin-production plants in northern Pakistan and elsewhere. A senior U.N. narcotics official told me that in the past two years "most of the heroin has been processed in Afghanistan, as part of a plan to keep profits in-country." Only a fraction of what is produced in Afghanistan is used there, the officer said. Nonetheless, a U.S. government-relief official told me, the "biggest worry" is that the growth in local production will increase the risk of addiction among G.I.s. A former C.I.A. officer who served in Afghanistan also said that the agency's narcotics officials have been independently investigating military drug use.

Afghanistan is regaining the Bush Administration's attention, in part because the worsening situation in Iraq has increased the need for a foreign-policy success. State Department and intelli-

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gence officials who have worked in Kabul said that it is widely understood that Afghanistan's Presidential and parliamentary elections, which had already been rescheduled, must be held before the American Presidential elections, on November 2nd. The upside to the political timetable has been a new commitment of American reconstruction funds—more than two billion dollars, a fourfold increase over the previous year—for schools, clinics, and road construction in Afghanistan. Richard Clarke wrote in his memoir that initially the aid funds were "inadequate and slowly delivered," and far below the thirteen hundred and ninety dollars per capita that was spent in the first years of the rebuilding effort in Bosnia and the nearly twenty billion dollars now earmarked for Iraq. At one point in 2002, American aid funds for Afghanistan came to only fifty-two dollars per person. "Why are we getting aid money now?" the U.S. government-relief official said to me, with a laugh. "We've been asking for two years and no one in their right mind thought about getting all this."

In insisting on holding elections by the fall, the Administration is overriding the advice of many of its allies and continuing to bank heavily on Hamid Karzai. (As of this spring, an estimated ten per cent of eligible voters were registered.) Last week, the international conference in Berlin bolstered Karzai's regime, and his election prospects, by promising to provide more than four billion dollars in aid and low-cost loans in the next year—although that figure includes more than a billion dollars previously pledged. Half of the contributions came from the Bush Administration. Secretary of State Colin Powell praised Karzai for having turned Afghanistan from "a failed state, ruled by extremists and terrorists, to a free country with a growing economy and emerging democracy."

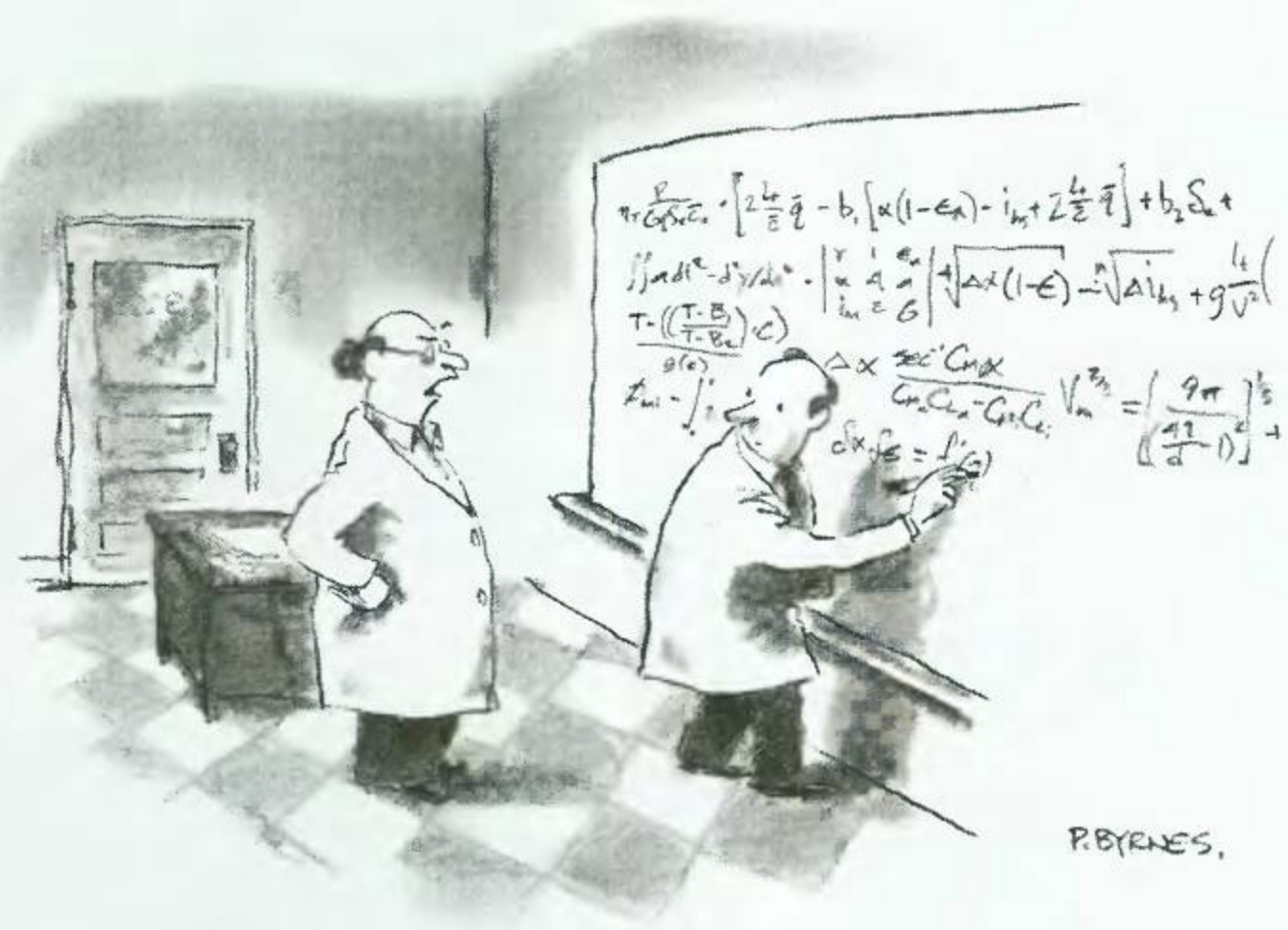
Nonetheless, in interviews for this article, Hamid Karzai was consistently depicted by others as unsure of himself and totally dependent on the United States for security and finances. One of Karzai's many antagonists is his own defense minister, Mohammed Fahim. Last year, the Bush Administration was privately given a memorandum by an Afghan official and American ally, warning that Fahim was working to undermine Karzai and would use his control over money from illegal businesses and customs revenue to do so. Fahim was also said to have recruited at least eighty thousand men into new militias.

The United States' continuing toleration of warlords such as Fahim and General Abdul Rashid Dostum—an alleged war criminal and gunrunner who, after being offered millions of dollars by Washington, helped defeat the Taliban in the fall of 2001—mystifies many who have long experience in Afghanistan. "Fahim and Dostum are part of the problem, and not the solution," said Milt Bearden, who ran the C.I.A.'s Afghan operations during the war with the Soviet Union. "These people have the clever gene and they can get us to do their fighting for them. They just lead us down the path," Bearden said. "How wonderful for them to have us knock off their opposition with American airplanes and Special Forces."

The wild card in the election planning may be the Taliban. The former Taliban foreign minister, Wakil Ahmed Muttawakil, who spent months in American custody, has repeatedly offered to open a channel to the Taliban leadership for extended talks. "But the Administration only wants to get help in finding Osama bin Laden," a Democratic Senate aide said. "Its only concern is tactical information." Meanwhile, the Taliban's influence has grown throughout the south and east of Afghanistan, in defiance of—or, perhaps, because of—continued American air and ground assaults, which inevitably result in civilian casualties.

In an effort to strengthen Karzai, the American military command has tried to reduce its own reliance on some regional warlords. The most recent target was Ismail Khan, the popular independent governor of Herat, a large province in western Afghanistan, adjacent to Iran. Khan, a bitter enemy of the Taliban, supported the initial American invasion of Afghanistan after September 11th. He has since defied the central government and refuses to hand over to Kabul most of the tax and customs revenue. (Herat is an ancient trade center.) Kahn personifies how difficult it is for the U.S. to separate its enemies from its allies in Afghanistan. "If Mohammed Fahim is a government minister and Ismail Khan is a warlord," one American official told me, "you're abusing the language." The official's point was that Khan has provided better security and more stability for the local population than is found in other Afghan provinces, and international observers believe that he would probably win a provincial election. But he treats Herat as a private fiefdom, and has alarmed many in the Bush Administration with his vocal support of Iran; last fall, he was quoted as calling it "the best model of an Islamic country in the world."

One regional expert told me that Karzai—who was always apprehensive about Ismail Khan—raised the question of how to remove him last spring, during a brief visit by Donald Rumsfeld



"Duh."

POSTMARK New Mexico

The Artful Spell of the High Desert

Despite its bold landscapes, New Mexico is a land of subtleties and graciousness. The soul and the stories that are New Mexico reside not only in its pristine wilderness, but in its historic sites, majestic monuments, and museums. The West comes alive in the drama of the open plains and the fragrance of a piñon fire, but it's revealed in the magic of unrivaled theatre, opera, and dance.

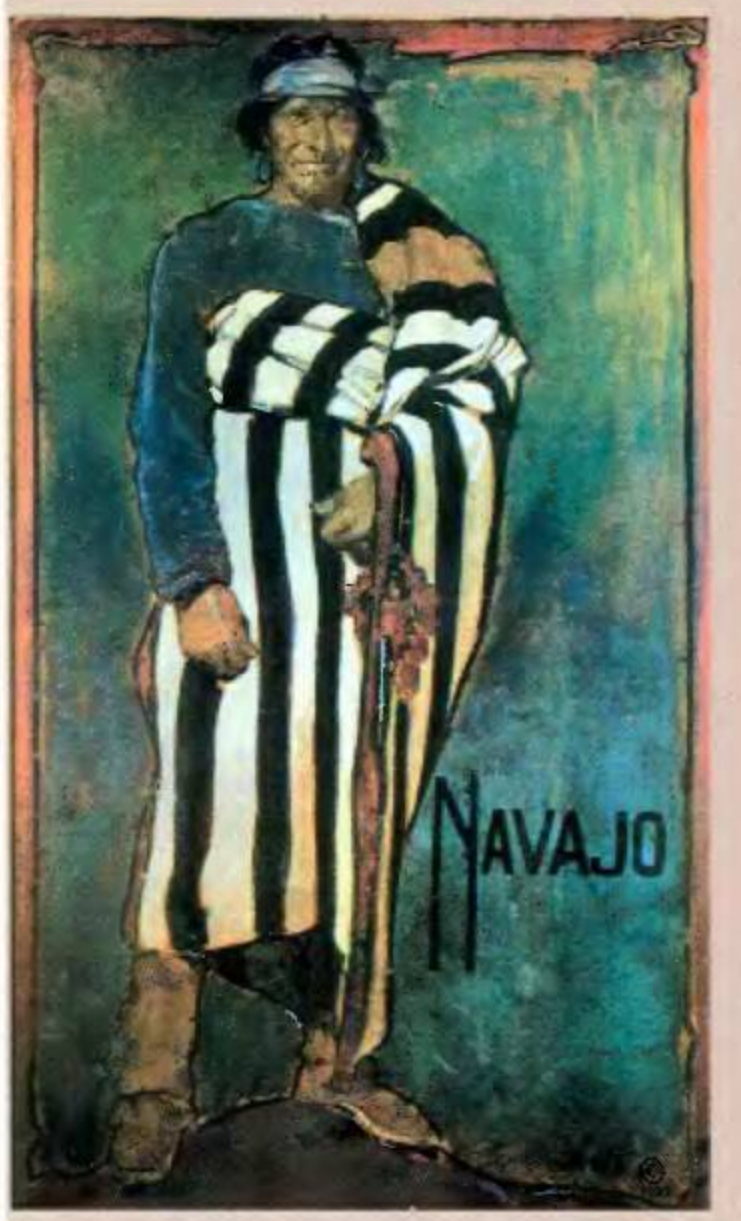
Pervasive in the state's largest city, Albuquerque, but even more so in the far reaches of this Land of Enchantment, there's a down-to-earth, small-town spirit influenced by creative expression. Nowhere is the creative expression more visible than in Santa Fe—the state's nearly four-hundred-year-old capital city—offered through the works of traditional, minimalist, and abstract artists and in the distinctive musical variations of opera, jazz, world music, rock and chamber music, ballet, and flamenco.

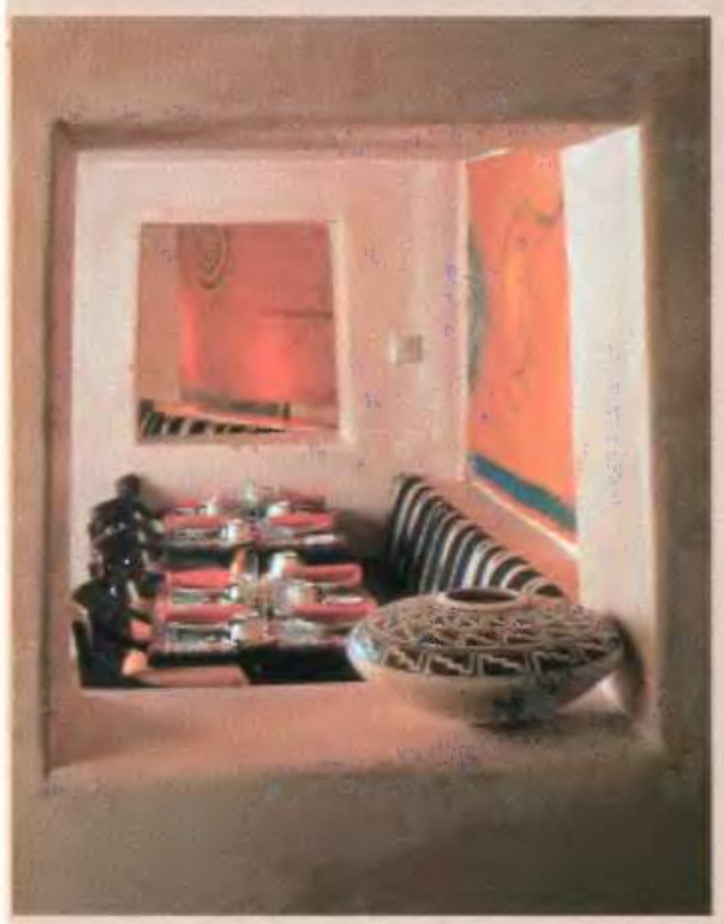
An hour's drive north is Taos, nearly seven thousand feet up the southern trail of the Rockies. It doesn't take much more than ten minutes to drive outside of town before things start to get downright rural; the rustic charm of what remains of the Wild West is the very reason to visit. Home of centuries-old Taos Pueblo, Taos is steeped in a culture that echoes the surrounding terrain and its people.

Santa Fe's history was shaped by its dynamic mix of Native American, Hispanic, and European influences. The multitude of art forms in their present incarnations present an intriguing fusion of old traditions with leading-edge expression. The third largest art market in the country behind New York and Los Angeles, Santa Fe is home to some 250 art galleries, more per capita than any other place in the country.

The **Museum of Fine Arts**, offering works by both early and contemporary artists, is housed in a masterpiece of Pueblo-Revival architecture. The **Museum of International Folk Art** is home to the world's largest collection of folk art, drawn from more than a hundred nations. The **Museum of Indian Arts & Culture** tells the stories of the Native American Southwest, while the **National Hispanic Cultural Center** showcases historic and contemporary Hispanic arts, humanities, and achievements.

Santa Fe was once the seat of power for the Spanish Empire north of the Rio Grande. Even





SEIZE THE MUSE Part of a vast collection of original art housed in Santa Fe's La Fonda and exhibited throughout the hotel's public areas are the paintings of Gerald Cassidy. "Navajo" *(top)* is one of a series of ten of the artist's works that immortalizes outstanding figures of the great Southwest. *(Below)* One of Santa Fe's most acclaimed dining rooms in the Inn of the Anasazi.

IMAGES COURTESY OF LA FONDA AND INN OF THE ANASAZI

so, the Indian, Hispanic, and Anglo cultures intersected only where necessary, remaining distinct and creating a city too diverse and resilient to ever become a melting pot.

Georgia O'Keeffe, one of the most important artists of the twentieth century, arrived in Santa Fe in 1929, ushering in a new era of art. O'Keeffe was devoted to creating imagery that expressed what she called "the wideness and wonder of the world as I live in it." The **Georgia O'Keeffe Museum**, dedicated to her art and to the study of American Modernism, has become New Mexico's most popular art museum since opening its doors two blocks off Santa Fe Plaza seven years ago.

Complimenting the museum's permanent collection of more than 130 O'Keeffe paintings, drawings, and sculpture—the largest single collection of her work in the world—are special exhibitions that are either devoted entirely to O'Keeffe or that combine examples of her art with those of American Modernist contemporaries such as Arthur Dove, Helen Frankenthaler, Marsden Hartley, John Marin, Frank Stella, and others.

Two such special exhibitions, "Moments in Time," an exhibition celebrating the publication of Maria Chabot/Georgia O'Keeffe correspondence 1941–1949, will be presented through June 1st; and "Georgia O'Keeffe and New Mexico: A Sense of Place" follows from June 11th–September 12th, and will explore the significance of her fifty landscape paintings and drawings and the locations that inspired them.

Santa Fe residents have been blessed by the city's rich musical tradition, exemplified in the many professional groups that perform here on a regular basis. During its first season in 1973, **Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival** staged six Sunday concerts and its musicians toured New Mexico's communities. Pablo Casals was the festival's honorary president and O'Keeffe's art was featured on both posters and programs. Thirty-two years later, the festival is offering more than forty-five concerts—including youth concerts—that are performed by more than eighty musicians. It's also featuring twenty pre-concert lectures, open rehearsals, and master classes. This year, jazz artist Chick Corea, Emanuel Ax, the Orion String Quartet, and the Thelonious Monk Institute Jazz Ensemble with Terence Blanchard are set to appear at the Lensic Performing Arts Center. A World Music Afro-Cuban program is also scheduled.

Santa Fe is also home to the world-renowned **Santa Fe Opera**—its venue a spectacular open-air amphitheatre offering views of the surrounding Sangre de Cristo and Jemez mountains, the sunsets and the stars. The striking, state-of-the-art structure, with a roof that can be seen from the highway below, has won several important design awards. The roof design was inspired by the "shape of the sound" that would rise beneath it, and its curves follow the acoustic reflections of sound from the stage to the audience.

The season runs from early July through August and this summer's roster will include four new productions featuring works by Handel, Bellini, Verdi, and Mozart. The city's eclectic cross section of operagoers insures that tuxedos and white linen will join with picnic baskets and folding chairs on grounds that include gardens and a scenic pool.

Historic settings endowed with superb acoustics are as much a part of **The Santa Fe Desert Chorale** experience as is its repertoire. Such landmarks as Loretto Chapel, the Cristo Rey Church, and the Lensic are among the chamber chorus's venues this summer. Beginning on July 13th, the chorale, which celebrates its twenty-second year, will offer five programs as well as début "An Evening of Romance: Monteverdi to Gershwin," an homage to great composers.

Other popular musical groups include **Santa Fe Pro Musica**, performing chamber works in ensembles of various

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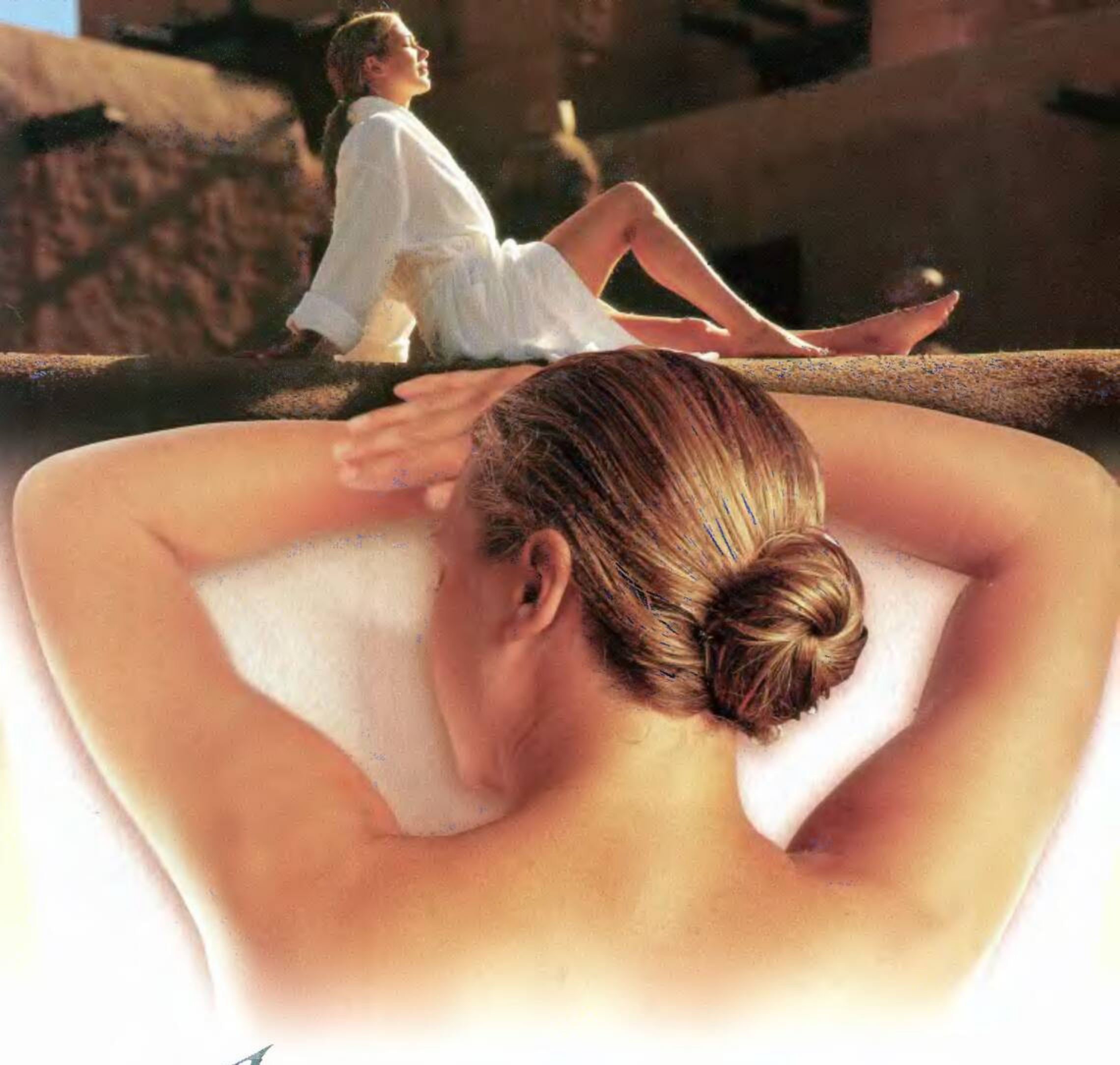

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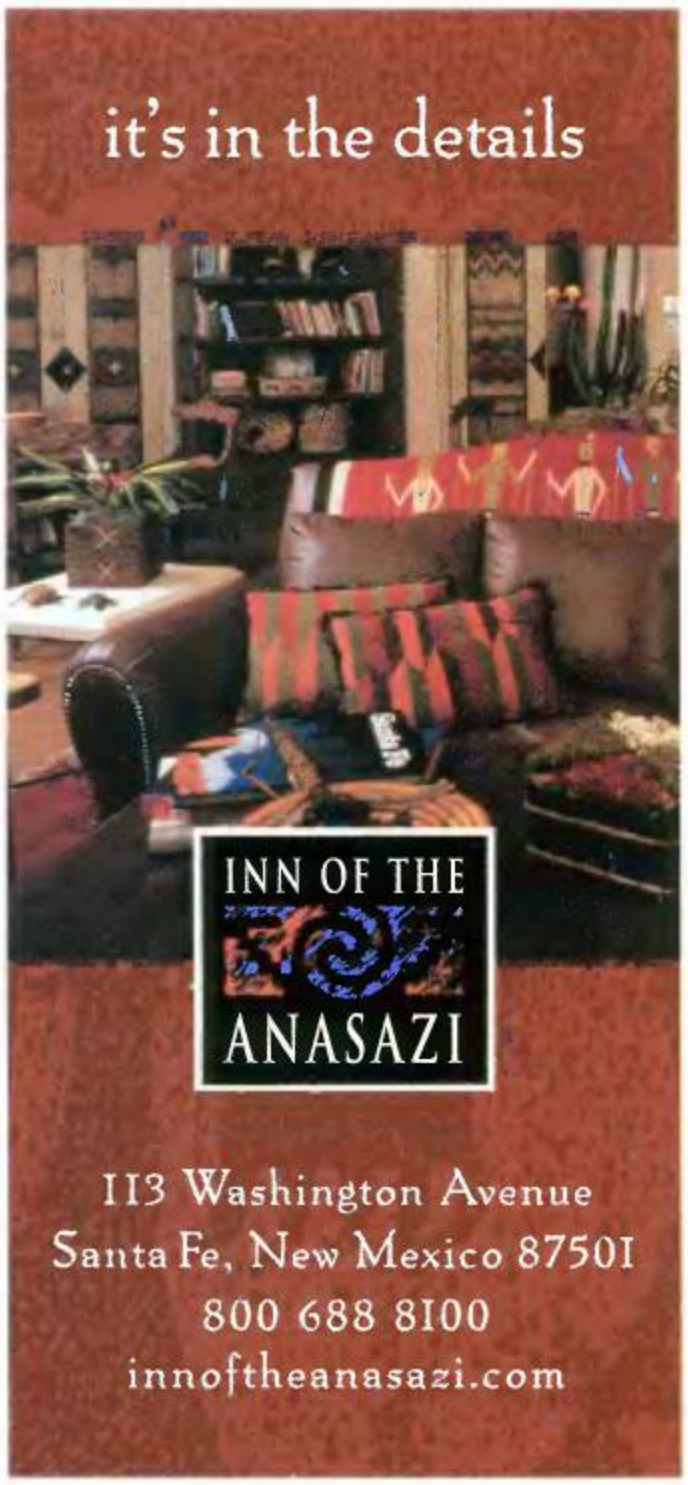

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sizes from October through April; the **Santa Fe Symphony and Chorus**; and the **Santa Fe Concert Band**, the oldest musical group in the Southwest.

For centuries, itinerant wanderers passed through the Santa Fe area and stopped to lay down roots. The mysterious Anasazi ("Ancient Ones") built majestic cliff dwellings here, only to abandon them in 1300. Later the Navajo, Hopi, and other tribes settled in the region, followed by the Spanish conquistadors. During the Wild West era, the Santa Fe Trail brought wagon trains and cowboys.

The Inn of the Anasazi is a hotel that evokes the region's Native American culture while giving a nod to its later Hispanic and Anglo influences. Curbside attendants escort guests past massive rough-hewn doors into a lobby filled with cacti in terra-cotta pots, locally made rugs and baskets, sumptuous leather furnishings, and an ever-burning kiva (adobe fireplace). While architects designed the inn to have the look and feel of an Anasazi ruin, guests won't be roughing it like their predecessors: Expect concierge service and in-room massages, among other amenities. Guest rooms have their own kivas, and luxurious four-poster beds outfitted with Frette linens provide havens of comfort under ceilings constructed with authentic vigas (log rafters) and *latillas* (wooden beams).

Once a Harvey House (a former chain of fine hotels immortalized by Judy Garland in the MGM musical "Harvey Girls"), the historic **La Fonda** hotel, situated at the heart of Santa Fe, is where trappers, cowboys, politicians, railway passengers, and an occasional movie star have gathered for the last eighty-odd years. The lobby is a destination in its own right: Walls are covered with memorabilia and folk art from the nineteen-twenties to present day depicting Native American dancers, conquistadors, and wagon trains. Compliments of La Fonda's own on-staff artist, hand-painted birds in flight grace its corridors and guest room interiors are decorated with ornately painted furnishings. Guests who stay in one of the fourteen private La Terraza rooms and suites enjoy exclusive access to its workout facility and a pool house, outdoor hot tub, and rooftop terrace. With a sweeping vista, the terrace affords one of the best places to view the celebrated rose window of neighboring St. Francis Cathedral.

Woodstock West

Located on a rolling mesa at the base of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, Taos and its surrounding valley have a history dating back thirteen millenia to the ancestors of the Pueblo Indians. The village of Taos is about four hundred years old, and the diverse populations that

(continued)

TOP: ORION STRING QUARTET IMAGE/SANTA FE CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL
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www.wiminfest.org

May 28–30
Silver City Blues Festival
www.mrac.cc/bluesfestival.html

May 29–31
Southern New Mexico Wine Festival
Las Cruces
www.nmwine.net/festivals.htm

Through June 1
"Moments in Time" Photography Exhibit
Georgia O'Keeffe Museum
Santa Fe
www.okeeffemuseum.org

June 19
Albuquerque Folk Festival
www.abqfolkfest.org

July 1–4
2004 UFO Festival
Roswell
www.roswellufo.us

July 9–11
Taos Pueblo Pow-Wow
www.taospueblopowwow.com

July 19–August 21
Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival
www.sfcmf.org

July 24–25
Spanish Market
Santa Fe
www.spanishmarket.org

August 4–8
Inter-Tribal Indian Ceremonial
Gallup
www.gallupnm.org/ceremonial

August 21–22
Sante Fe Indian Market
www.swaia.org/market.php

September 2–19
New Mexico State Fair
Albuquerque
www.exponm.com

September 4–5
Hatch Chile Festival
www.hatchchilefest.com

September 15–19
Golden Aspen Motorcycle Rally
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www.motorcyclerally.com

September 17–18
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POSTMARK New Mexico

have lived in it are all represented in the six major museums of Taos.

To repeat a well known bit of Taos lore, a century ago two East Coast neophyte artists, Ernest Blumenschein and Bert Phillips, who were on a painting excursion bound for Mexico, were sidelined when the wheel of their wagon broke about thirty miles outside of Taos. The ensuing delay gave the duo time to develop a passion for the region's natural light, its landscapes, as well as its diverse cultures that ultimately led them to end their trip and settle in Taos. Later, Blumenschein and Phillips were instrumental in establishing the famous Taos Society of Artists. And it wasn't long before artists like Ansel Adams, John Marin, and D.H. Lawrence became Taoseños as well. An eccentric collection of artists, writers, and painters continue to gravitate here, and their works are responsible for documenting and promoting much of the magic for which the region has become renowned. The adobe **Blumenschein Home and Museum** on Ledoux Street near the center of town is carefully maintained just as it was when the artist and his family of painters were alive.

COURTESY OF GEORGIA O'KEEFFE MUSEUM

Displaying the art and Old World furniture collected by Russian artist Nicolai Fechin along with the doors, windows, and corbels that he handcrafted, The **Taos Art Museum at Fechin House**, built in the late-twenties, is one of the most unique of Taos's museums. Works from the Taos Society of Artists, and many other prominent pieces are on display in this Pueblo Revival structure, eloquently articulating the last hundred years of art in Taos.

The second oldest art museum in the state, the **Harwood Museum of Art**, spans the spectrum of arts in Taos, from The Hispanic Traditions Gallery to the contemporary works of the Taos Moderns. Noted Southwestern Arts patron Mabel Dodge Luhan contributed a formidable assortment of nineteenth-century *retablos* (religious icons painted

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Earth Day 2004, Kit Carson Park
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21st Taos Spring Arts Celebration
Visual, film, theater, musical, literary and culinary arts.
May 7 - 9
Arts and Crafts Fair
Mother's Day Music Festival
May 7 - 16
Taos Film Festival of the Arts
May 14 - August
Jack Smith / Wayne Thiebaud, Harwood Museum of Art
May 22
Folk Life Festival, Millicent Rogers Museum
May 28 - 31
Motorcycle Run, Red River
Memorial Day, Vietnam Veterans National Memorial
June 1
All area mountain bike trails open
June 13
Feast Day, Taos Pueblo
June 25 - 27
Taos Solar Music Festival
Rodeo de Taos

on wood) to the museum. A substantial collection of books—both those author D.H. Lawrence penned as well as those written about him—are also on hand.

With a mission to preserve the Native American art as well as Hispanic religious and domestic art that she feared was vanishing in the mid-twentieth century, Standard Oil heiress Millicent Rogers collected Zuni and Hopi pottery, paintings, photography, graphics, and arts and crafts that today is housed in the **Millicent Rogers Museum**. Also included in the collection are works from the many cultures of northern New Mexico.

On the Rio Pueblo's banks, two miles south of Taos Plaza, a collection of Hispanic art can be found at **La Hacienda de los Martinez**, one of the few late Spanish Colonial great houses that remains intact in the Southwest. Twenty-one rooms surround two *placitas* (courtyards) in this thick adobe-walled compound that once provided protection from Native American raids. Among them, a tack room and a weaving room afford visitors an authentic glimpse of the region's frontier life in the eighteen-hundreds. This summer, ¡Mas Mezcla!, a five-weekend celebration of the hacienda's bicentennial, will include a community replastering of the museum's exterior, a fandango, and an invitational art exhibition to commemorate the occasion.

A short walk east of Taos Plaza, the **Kit Carson Home and Museum** preserves a portion of Kit Carson's original residence. A wedding gift from the frontiersman to his bride, Carson occupied the structure from 1843–1868. Saddles, firearms, tools and Kit's own childhood cradle tell his life story and show how it lent color to the history of Taos.

A vibrant tapestry of differing cultures ranging from Native American and Spanish to Wild West cowboy, artists have long found New Mexico an inspiring place for artistic expression. The state's ongoing commitment to cultural integrity has helped to define New Mexico's profile—an enchanted land that equates its peoples' arts and culture with its own identity.

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Georgia O'Keeffe Museum

ALFRED STIEGLITZ, *GEORGIA O KEEFFE*, 1933. GELATIN SILVER PRINT. ©THE GEORGIA O'KEEFFE MUSEUM

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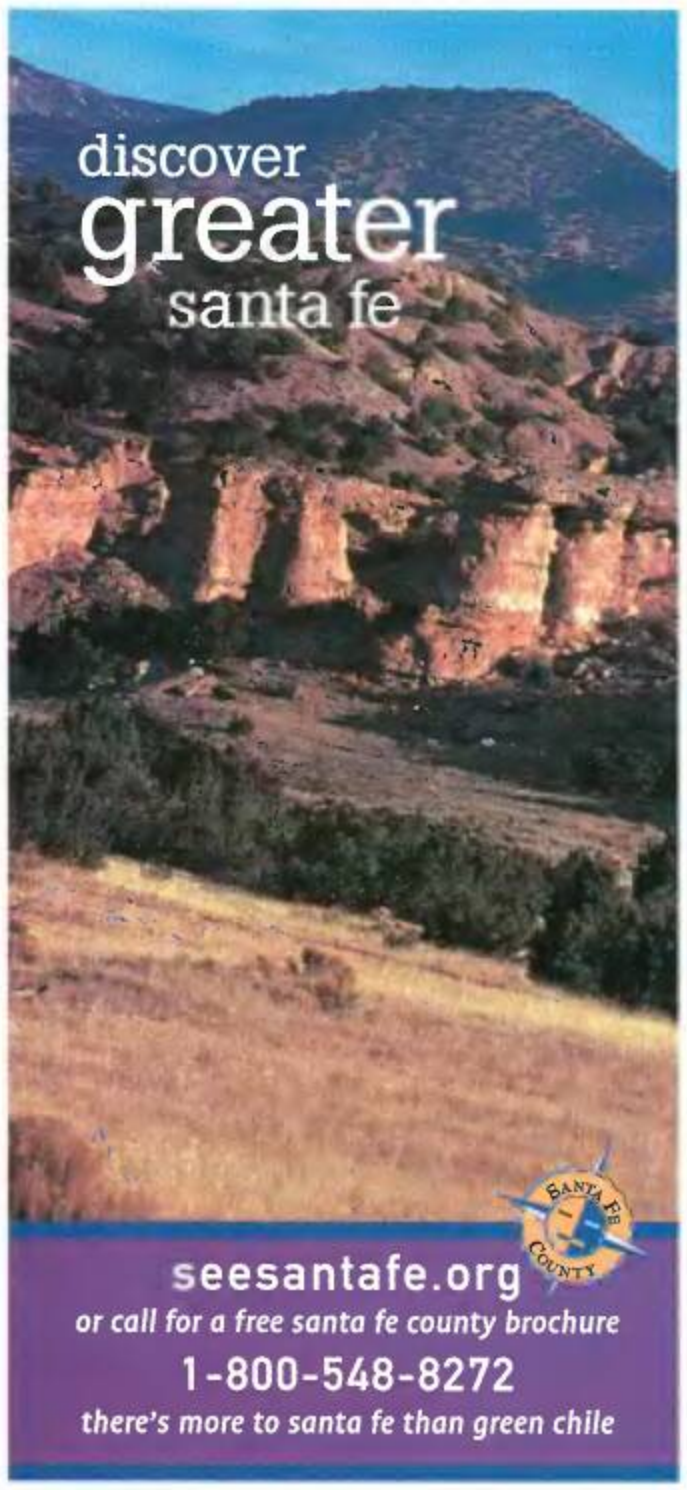

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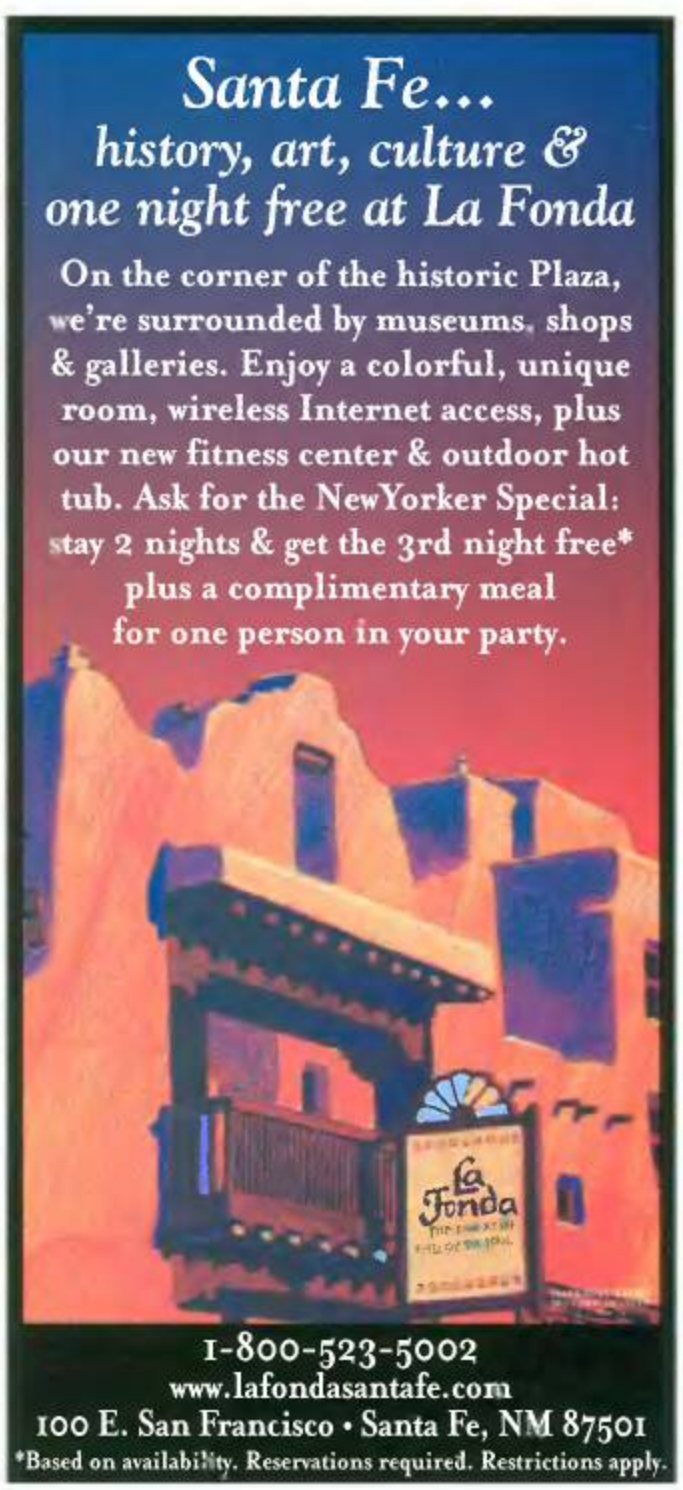

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to Kabul. "He asked Rumsfeld for his support," the expert recalled. "Rumsfeld wished him good luck but said the United States could not get involved. So Karzai got cold feet." The issue was revisited again in February, a former C.I.A. consultant told me, by the American military command at Bagram. Sometime that month, the American command put out a request to its intelligence components for a new operational plan for Khan. The former C.I.A. consultant learned from within the intelligence community that there was agreement that Khan had to be neutralized. Asked what that meant, he said that he was told "Khan had to be eliminated—we've got to end his influence." (The Pentagon denied that there was such a plan.)

On March 21st, an armed conflict erupted in Herat between Khan's forces and those loyal to the central government. Accounts of what happened vary widely; it was not immediately clear who started what. According to an account by U.N. workers in Afghanistan, filed to headquarters in New York, tensions had been mounting between Khan and one of his bitter rivals, General Abdul Zaher Naibzadah, over control of the Afghan military's Herat garrison. Khan's son heard reports that there had been an assassination attempt on his father, and drove to the General's house, where Naibzadah's bodyguards gunned him down, along with others. According to the U.N. dispatch, Ismail Khan took violent revenge on his attackers, burning down the local headquarters of the Afghan militia and killing scores. Some press accounts put the death toll of the subsequent daylong battle at a hundred or more; other accounts, emanating from Kabul, said that fewer than two dozen were killed. The U.N. account included reports that a personal phone call from Karzai to Khan was necessary to defuse the situation. In the next days, a division of the Afghan National Army, sent by the central government, moved into Herat to restore order.

There is no evidence that the American commanders were involved in any attempt on Khan's life, the former C.I.A. consultant told me. But, according to some officials, Americans were attached to Afghan military units that were present in Herat. "We clearly had embedded American trainers and advisers with the Afghan troops," the consultant said. "They knew what was going on." The result, the U.N. reported, was that Khan "may become even more intractable in his dealing with the central government." The American-endorsed plan to challenge Khan's leadership and strengthen Karzai's national standing inside Afghanistan, it seemed, had served to make Khan a more determined enemy.

The U.S. government-relief official told me of spending weeks last year travelling through Afghanistan—including the south and the east, areas with few ties to the central government in Kabul. "They'd say, 'We don't like the Taliban, but they did bring us security you haven't been able to give us,' " the official said. "They perceived that we were allied with the bad guys—the warlords—because of our war on terrorism." The official recalled being asked constantly about the American war in Iraq. "They were concerned about Iraq, and wanted to know, 'Are you going to stay?' They remembered how we left"—after the American-sponsored defeat of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. "They'd say, 'You guys are going to leave us, like you did in 1992. If we had confidence in the staying power of America, we'd deal with you.' " The official concluded, "Iraq, in their mind, meant that America had bigger priorities."

One U.N. worker who is helping to prepare for elections in Afghanistan told me that American aid funds now headed into Afghanistan, whatever the Administration's motives, are essential for the country's future. "We've got a golden window of opportunity that will close on November 2nd." It's a cynical process, he added. "A key factor in holding the election will be the non-interference of the various drug-dealing warlords around the nation, and stemming the drug trade will not be a priority." The message he's getting from the warlords, the U.N. worker said, was that if the U.S. attempted a "hard and heavy" poppy-eradication program, the warlords would disrupt the elections.

The U.N. worker said that President Karzai was perceived as "a weak leader with very little street credibility." He told me that, again and again, when he met with village elders, as part of his work, "the old people say, 'Hamid is a good man. He doesn't kill people. He doesn't steal things. He doesn't sell drugs. How could you possibly think he could be a leader of Afghanistan?' " ♦

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A REPORTER AT LARGE

WRITTEN IN STONE

The James ossuary was heralded as a major archeological find—a physical link to Jesus. Is it real?

BY DAVID SAMUELS

Oded Golan, a dark-haired antiquities collector with gentle brown eyes, is a controversial figure in the world of Biblical archeology. To his promoters and admirers, including Hershel Shanks, the editor of the widely read *Biblical Archaeology Review*, Golan may be responsible for some of the most spectacular finds in archeological history. Others, including Amir Ganor, the head of the theft unit of the Israel Antiquities Authority, believe that these remarkable artifacts are fakes. Golan, they say, is a central figure in a larger scheme in recent decades to infiltrate fake antiquities, connected directly to the Bible, into some of the leading collections in the world, making millions of dollars and disrupting the delicate chain of transmission that links Western civilization to its sacred founding texts.

Golan's apartment, which is on the third floor of a modest residential building in Tel Aviv, is a loftlike space, with a dark-gray futon on the floor, a white baby-grand piano, and large glass display cabinets. When I visited him last September, Golan, who is fifty-two, spoke like a man who had just been awakened from a dream.

"I can look at my family, and the whole recent history of Israel is reflected in their lives," Golan said, sitting behind a modern wooden desk. His grandfather Ben-Zion Berkovitch, he said, was a socialist rabbi and a successful attorney. His grandmother was a dogmatic atheist. Golan has been, by turns, a student of industrial engineering at the Technion (Israel's equivalent of M.I.T.), an Army officer, a tour operator in Egypt, a dabbler in high-tech ventures, and an investor in Tel Aviv real estate. When I asked to see his collection of antiquities, he pressed a button near his desk, and a curtain rose to reveal a well-lit vitrine containing pottery animals, vases, and altar stands.

"Here you can see, let's say, twenty animals, vessels in the shape of animals, most of them from the eighth and seventh centuries B.C.," Golan said proudly, pointing to a row of clay vessels. "That's a pig over there. A lion. It's a very, very rare one." It is his practice, he said, to repair the items in his collection so that the repair will be easily visible to a trained eye. "I can tell you immediately that this leg is a new one," he went on, pointing to a clay ox. "This has one horn that is a new one. Do you see? The left one is ancient, the right one is a new one. I can see it immediately. But you wouldn't recognize it."

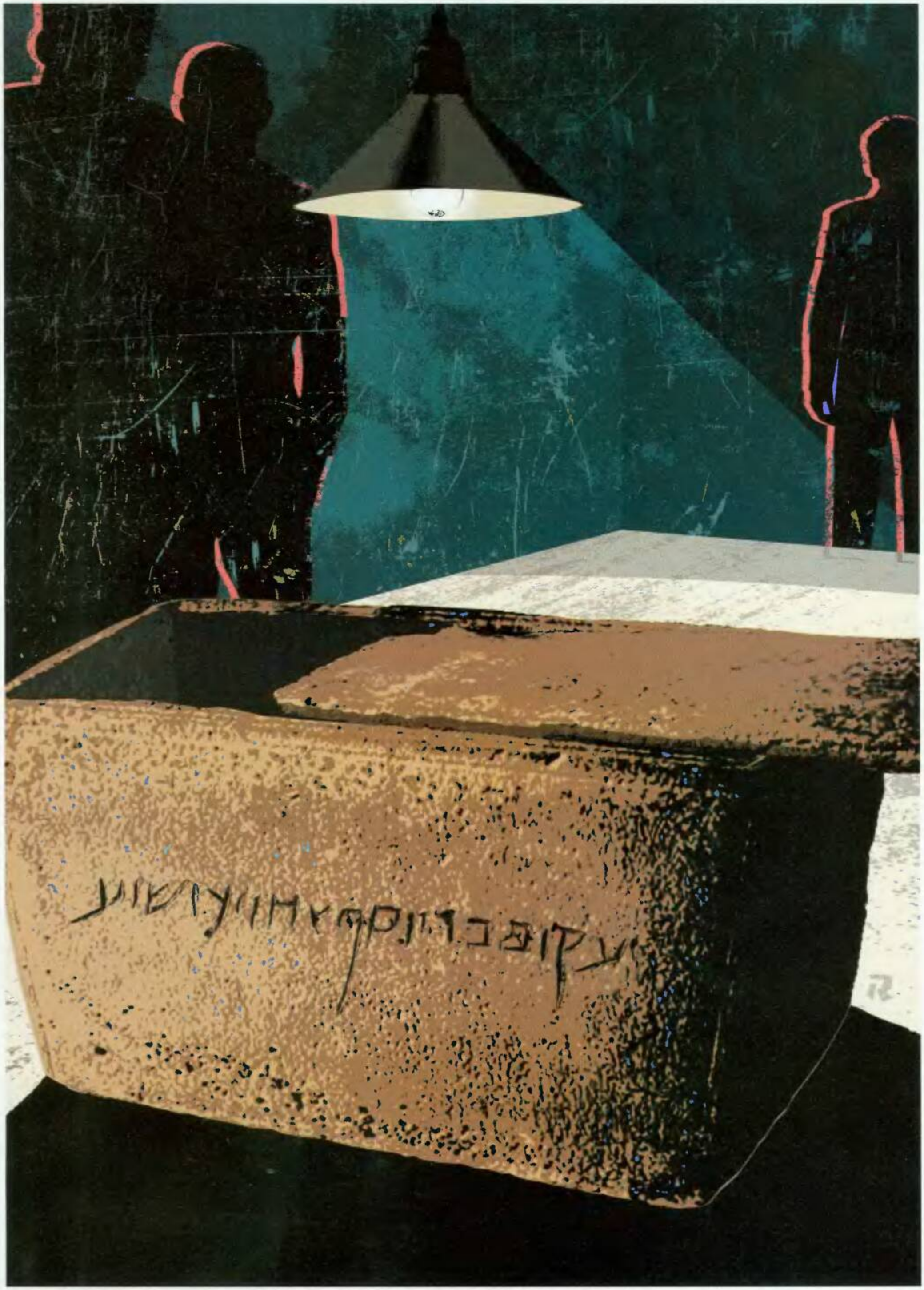
The most famous item from Golan's collection is the ossuary, or stone burial box, of James, son of Joseph, a Jew who died in the first century in Jerusalem. The James ossuary, as it became known, was unveiled at a press conference in the fall of 2002, and was shown on CNN and in newspapers and magazines around the world; it was acclaimed by some scholars as the most important archeological find of the last two millennia. On its side was a short inscription in Aramaic—*Ya'akov bar Yosef akhui d'Yeshua'*—which was widely translated as "James son of Joseph brother of Jesus." It was quickly put forth that the person whose bones had been stored in the ossuary was the man referred to in Galatians 1:19 as "James the Lord's brother," whom Christian believers call James the Just. Like other significant items from Golan's collection, the ossuary is now locked in a closet in Jerusalem, in the headquarters of the Israel Antiquities Authority, the government agency responsible for protecting the nation's antiquities as well as for policing the trade. The James ossuary was recovered during a police raid on Golan's apartment last July; since October, 2002, Golan has been under investigation by the Antiquities Authority, which believes that he is at the center of a forgery ring that may have done more damage to Biblical history and archeology than anyone since the master forger Moses Wilhelm Shapira, who produced thousands of fake Biblical objects in Jerusalem more than a century ago.

Golan claims that he bought the James ossuary in the nineteen-seventies. He has not been charged with any crime, and says that the authorities have done "damage for many generations to come." He maintains that, without the involvement of dealers and collectors like him, many objects of great historical importance like the James ossuary would be lost forever, adding that he believes the investigation was "driven by the personal ambitions of several Antiquities Authority officials." Proclaiming his innocence—he maintains that he is merely a collector, and has sold only a handful of artifacts over the past thirty years—Golan then related a story about his first major discovery, which he made as a child, during a trip with his parents to Tel Hazor, an archeological site near the Sea of Galilee.

"Hazor was the biggest city in Israel during the mid-second millennium B.C.," Golan said. "I found a small clay fragment, which I could immediately identify as written in cuneiform." When he arrived home in Tel Aviv, Golan said, he telephoned the archeologist Yigael Yadin, and told him about the fragment. "He came to my parents' apartment," Golan said, "and he found that the fragment was part of a dictionary written in two languages, both in cuneiform. One is Akkadian, the other is Sumerian—from the seventeenth century B.C., if I'm not wrong. It's interesting how a dictionary was developed, because it was very functional. It was purely a commercial dictionary for traders, and the words are actually like 'good price,' 'bad price,' 'high price,' 'low price,' things like that.

"But the more fascinating story behind it," he went on, "is that Yadin brought several aerial photographs of

JOHN RITTER



The ossuary's owner said that it had been in his collection for decades but that he had not grasped its significance.

"We had to remove him from public view."

• •

the mound, and he asked me, 'Oded, tell me where did you find it? Because this dictionary probably belonged to the palace at Hazor, which I am looking for.' He even mentioned Yavin, the king of Hazor, who is mentioned in the Bible."

Unable to remember where, exactly, he had found the shard, the boy turned to his fertile imagination to aid the archeologist. "I said to myself, 'If I was the king of Hazor, where would I put my own palace?' " Golan recalled. "So I told Yadin that I thought it was probably very close to the place where I found it, and I pointed to a specific place."

A curious look passed over Golan's face as he recollected the scene. "You know, several years ago I went to Hazor, and I found that the Hebrew University had been working there for years, at the place where I pointed with my finger," Golan said. "And I spoke to some people, and they said that Yadin, in his so-called will, his scholarly testament, had mentioned that he believed that the palace of Hazor should be at that place.

"And the most incredible part of the story is that the palace *is* there," Golan said. He fixed me with a wide-eyed stare. "They found the biggest palace in the world at exactly the spot where I pointed, where I would have put my own palace as a boy, if I were the king of Hazor."

A BOX OF BONES

The existence of the James ossuary—a limestone box, about twenty inches long, twelve inches high, ten inches wide, and trapezoidal in shape—was publicly revealed in Washington, D.C., on October 21, 2002. The host of the press conference was Hershel Shanks, whose *Biblical Archaeology Review* is an influential popular magazine about the archeology of the Biblical period. A Harvard Law School graduate and former Justice Department lawyer who became interested in archeology by studying the Bible, Shanks presented the ossuary as a world exclusive: "EVIDENCE OF JESUS WRITTEN IN STONE" read the cover of the magazine's November / December, 2002, issue. "Ossuary of 'James, Brother of Jesus' Found in Jerusalem." The magazine said that the ossuary came from an unnamed collector; an Israeli journalist soon identified Golan as the ossuary's source.

Shanks, whose outsized emotions and truculent bearing are reminiscent of a Saul Bellow character, is often described by the scholars whose work he publishes and reports on as both a blessing to and a curse on their profession. As the first to publish embargoed sections of the Dead Sea Scrolls, in 1991, Shanks helped bring about the end of the four-decades-long monopoly that had restricted access to large portions of the Scrolls to a close-knit group of scholars. In a long conversation last fall, Shanks described his editorial approach this way: "Articulate, well-written, forceful, evenhanded, willing to call a spade a spade, or some might say willing to call a spade a dirty old shovel." He went on, "I have absolutely no training, so everything I've learned I've learned on a one-on-one basis from the greatest scholars in the world."

Shanks says that he learned about the James ossuary in 2002 from André Lemaire, a professor of paleography and epigraphy at the Sorbonne and a contributor to the magazine. Lemaire, who can seem distant even to people who have known him for years, is an expert in the study of ancient scripts. Like other scholars in his field, Lemaire frequently publishes articles about objects that come to him from dealers and collectors. "I am not interested in the problem of money. I am not interested in the problem of the market," he said, when I asked him about the nature of his relationships with the antiquities dealers who largely control the market in valuable finds from the Biblical era. As a paleographer, he said, he is interested only in "the scientific point of view."

Lemaire told me that he first met Oded Golan in the spring of 2002, at a dinner party in Israel. "Oded mentioned he had something to show me," Lemaire recalled; it turned out to be a large color photograph of a long inscription on an ossuary from his collection. On Lemaire's prompting, Golan gave him photographs of other objects in his collection, including the James ossuary. "At once, I told Oded we must be very

careful," Lemaire recalled, warning him not to jump to any conclusions. "He wanted to know a little bit more." Lemaire, who had once studied for the Roman Catholic priesthood, told Golan that James appears in the New Testament as the "brother of Jesus." According to different Christian traditions, James is variously held to be the half brother, a stepbrother, a cousin, or an esteemed follower of Jesus.

Lemaire was also aware of another ossuary linked to a famous figure from the Gospels. In November, 1990, a municipal dump truck operating in an ancient Jewish cemetery in the Old City of Jerusalem crashed through the roof of a tomb that was later found to contain what is believed to be the ossuary of Joseph Caiaphas, the Jewish High Priest. According to the Gospels, it was Caiaphas who handed Jesus of Nazareth over to the Roman Procurator Pontius Pilate to be crucified. The ossuary of James, the brother of Jesus, would bring Christian believers of the early twenty-first century one step closer to the physical body of Christ.

Based on an examination of the inscription, Lemaire pronounced the James ossuary to be authentic; he immediately arranged to meet with Shanks in Jerusalem to propose an article about his find. Lemaire wanted to write about the ossuary for *Biblical Archaeology Review* rather than for a scholarly journal like the *Revue Biblique*, he told me, because Golan had asked him to publish the story in English. Later, Shanks showed photographs of the inscription to the epigrapher Kyle McCarter, of Johns Hopkins University, as well as to Joseph Fitzmyer, a Jesuit scholar who taught at Catholic University, in Washington, D.C., and who became part of the team that authenticated the ossuary for the *Biblical Archaeology Review*. Shanks enlisted the services of two Israeli scientists, Shimon Ilani and Amnon Rosenfeld, to examine the stone. Both men worked for the National Infrastructure Ministry's Geological Survey of Israel, and had previously authenticated artifacts from the illegal antiquities market. They did not, they wrote, find "any evidence that might detract" from the authenticity of the inscription.

Aware of the potential import of Lemaire's find, Shanks also engaged the services of an Emmy-winning filmmaker from Toronto named Simcha Jacobovici, a *hozer bitshuva*, or born-again Jew. The filmmaker flew to Tel Aviv to meet Oded Golan on September 25, 2002, and to record the unveiling of the James ossuary at Golan's apartment.

"It was like a James Bond thing," Jacobovici told me, recalling the secrecy surrounding the location of the ossuary. "I didn't know where I was going until I was in the van, and then I was given a phone number of the owner and he led us through the streets. I was expecting some kind of villa with artifacts all over, like in the movies." Golan played the piano and, while Jacobovici was filming, talked about his collection. The ossuary was on a little table on wheels in the middle of the room. "I looked in the box, there were still some bone fragments," Jacobovici said. "I thought, Oh, my gosh, if this is real, then Jesus' DNA is there!"

What happened next was even more entrancing: "I was alone with Oded Golan, and he was at the baby grand, playing, in another world. I've got in my hands two beta cassettes, I'm watching this guy playing Bach to the bone box of the brother of Jesus of Nazareth. I said, 'Thank you very much,' and, with the music wafting, I went back to normal intifada-land and I walked on the beach in Tel Aviv. It was just unbelievable."

With the tests on the ossuary completed and Jacobovici's footage in the can, Shanks turned his attention to staging an event that would focus world attention on the artifact from Golan's collection. He knew that in mid-November more than eight thousand Bible scholars, archeologists, and amateur enthusiasts would descend on Toronto for the annual meetings of the Society of Biblical Literature, the American Academy of Religion, and Shanks's own Biblical Archaeology Society. Shanks called Ed Keall, a curator at the Royal Ontario Museum, in Toronto. As Shanks talked, the curator doodled on a lined sheet of scratch-pad paper, which still hangs above his desk.

"You see, the first thing I wrote in large letters: 'James, son of Joseph, brother of Jesus,' " Keall said, retracing his introduction to Hershel Shanks. "I really thought it was a crank call, because I get a number of these things—pyramidology, Mt. Ararat, that sort of thing."

When Shanks mentioned André Lemaire, Keall realized that his caller was a serious person and that the find might be genuine. For what Keall describes as a "cash-strapped Canadian institution," a chance to exhibit the most important archeological find in the history of the Christian world was an opportunity not to be missed. Immediately after getting off the phone with Shanks, Keall sent an e-mail to the director of the museum, William Thorsell, informing him of the ossuary: "DATE 10/10/02 4:16:08 PM, Subject: Jesus Christ." The next day, Keall wrote Shanks to inform him that Thorsell had responded positively. Two weeks later, the museum signed a deal with Shanks to display the ossuary for six weeks, and agreed on an initial payment of twenty-five thousand dollars. The ossuary, shipped in a cardboard box protected by several layers of bubble wrap, arrived at the museum in pieces. The conservation staff had to work around the clock to repair the damage.

When Oded Golan arrived in Toronto, he told reporters that the ossuary had been sitting in his collection for decades; he said that his poor understanding of Aramaic had made it impossible for him to grasp the potential significance of the find. Hershel Shanks also spoke. "In my opinion," he told the gathered reporters, "this is the ossuary of James, the brother of Jesus of Nazareth." At a private viewing of the ossuary arranged by Shanks, Fitzmyer seconded the opinions of Lemaire and Shanks that the inscription was authentic. (Fitzmyer, however, questioned the likelihood that the James on the ossuary inscription was necessarily the brother of Jesus of Nazareth.) Frank Moore Cross, Jr., an epigrapher from Harvard, added, "It's done beautifully. If it's forged, it's by a genius."

The battle between scholars who seek historical truth in Biblical narratives (commonly referred to as maximalists) and those who see the Bible as an encyclopedia of Hebrew fables and national myths (minimalists) has marked the critical study of Biblical texts in the West since the six-

THE MODERNIST IMPULSE

On My Birthday

Has it ever been absent, this desire
for every moment to stand in relief,
the unending row of them set
like solitaires into what passes,
burnished to unbearable depths?

The park here is going green and all at once
its expanse is a moment of its own great making,
a flare in the midst of so much shattered.
The trees are certain their time has come.

I have never once been able to say yes,
now, this is the instant in which
I should begin to live again,
in which this love is the only love
worth having, the richest of all possible shining arts

teenth century. Both camps were well represented in Toronto for the unveiling of the James ossuary. Many modern archeologists do not rely on the specialized abilities of epigraphers to date ancient artifacts, preferring the methods of the material sciences. Even antiquities dealers, who often to use epigraphers to authenticate objects for the market, tend to view epigraphy as more of an art than a science. Gideon Sasson, one of the most respected antiquities dealers in Jerusalem, told me last fall, "How come different astrologers have different opinions about the future of the same person? How can something be a science when the results you get can differ so completely, depending on whom you ask, or on what day you happen to ask them?"

No one doubted that the ossuary itself dated from the time of Jesus of Nazareth; James and Joseph were fairly common names then. But some scholars in Toronto did question whether the inscription had been written by a single hand in the first century A.D. At a Saturday-afternoon panel sponsored by the museum, the epigrapher Kyle McCarter observed that the first half of the inscription ("James son of Joseph") was in a formal script that appeared similar to that found on one of the Dead Sea Scrolls. The inscription's second half ("brother of Jesus") was written in cruder, cursive letters. McCarter concluded that the second part of the inscription was written by a different hand. A month earlier, Robert Eisenman, the author of a 1997 book called "James the Brother of Jesus," had dismissed the discovery of the ossuary as "too pat." The scholars in attendance were aware that bad blood existed between Shanks and Eisenman, whose own efforts to break the scholarly monopoly on the Dead Sea Scrolls had been eclipsed by Shanks.

The following day, the Society of Biblical Literature convened a panel discussion entitled "No Ordinary Box of Bones," featuring five scholars and writers, including Lemaire, Shanks, and Eric Meyers, a professor of Judaic studies and archeology at Duke University and a past president of the American Schools of Oriental Research. Meyers opened by saying that he was concerned that the James ossuary had been acquired on the black market and that its owner, Oded Golan, was under criminal investigation for illicit trade in antiquities; the American Schools of Oriental Research policy forbids the publication of scholarly articles about objects from the black market. (Golan has claimed that he bought the ossuary more than thirty years ago, from a dealer in the Old City of Jerusalem; if so, that would place the purchase before a 1978 law forbidding trade in antiquities not licensed by the Israeli government.) Meyers also referred to an analysis of the inscription by an independent scholar named Rochelle Altman, who published her work on a Biblical-studies Web site, the Bible and Interpretation (bibleinterp.com). Focussing on what she called "writing systems" (including script, direction of letters, format, size, punctuation, and content) rather than on individual letters and phrases, Altman had concluded that the inscription on the James ossuary was a forgery.

Hershel Shanks rose to respond. Like Meyers, he regretted the absence of a more complete archeological context in which the James ossuary could be studied. However, the choice confronting the scholars present, he insisted, was either to learn from the ossuary or to ignore it. Why had the American Schools of Oriental Research ignored the ossuary, Shanks asked, his voice rising. Because of the "bad man" who had acquired it? Indeed, Shanks claimed, it was the schools' policy of refusing to engage with the antiquities market that encouraged the looting of archeological sites. Whether the inscription on the ossuary was composed by one hand or two hands, Shanks argued, should be up to reputable academics to decide.

"Who is this Rochelle Altman, anyway?" Shanks asked. "Has anyone ever heard of her?" Then, lowering his voice, he added, "All questions are legitimate. What is not legitimate is to vilify and castigate those who attempt to learn."

Many scholars in attendance were impressed by the seeming agreement between Lemaire and Fitzmyer. But others agreed with Meyers's stand against the antiquities market, and felt that Altman had been treated shabbily. Hershel Shanks wanted to ship the James ossuary to a convention of Christian broadcasters in Nashville, but the Israel Antiquities Authority refused to extend an export permit for the artifact. The James ossuary would return to Israel.

THE JEHOASH TABLET

In the summer of 2001, more than a year before the James ossuary was made public, another important artifact with links to the Bible began making the rounds of prominent Israeli scholars and curators. The Jehoash tablet, as it was later called by the Israeli press, was a

to hold forth: Here,
I was here and I knew it.

In this neighborhood the slate
sidewalk piles up on itself all winter,
as it has for hundreds of winters,
cracked by the cold and heaving
into crazed shelter for the dirt below.

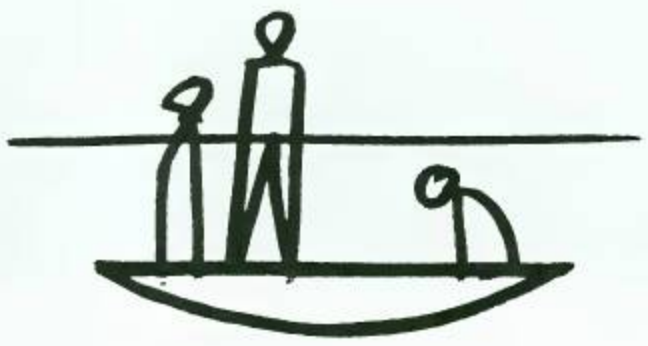
I roll back the stone from my life.
Oh my near-miss, return to me
now when I need you most. Come
and tell me that ages pass, that effort
is rewarded at the very least after we die.
I loved you as well as this sweet green park
coming into focus across the street,
all in delicate arrogance.

—Melanie Rehak

monumental inscription, in ancient Hebrew, on dark-gray sandstone—the first inscription ever found bearing the name of a king from the First Temple period, which historians date back to the tenth century B.C. The tablet refers to the son of "[A]haziah, k[ing . . .] [J]udah," who is known to Bible readers as King Jehoash, and who ruled between 836-798 B.C. Jehoash was familiar to contemporary Biblical archeologists, most recently in connection with an inscription, discovered in 1993, that made the first mention of the House of David outside the Bible. The inscription on the Jehoash tablet closely paralleled a passage in the Second Book of Kings, in which Jehoash directed repairs to the temple built by King Solomon.

The Jehoash tablet was offered for viewing to representatives of the Israel Museum, in Jerusalem, on behalf of an anonymous client by an attorney named Yitzchak Herzog. A former Cabinet secretary to Ehud Barak, the Israeli Prime Minister, Herzog had accompanied Barak in the summer of 2000 to Camp David, where the Israeli leader's peace offer was rejected by the Palestinian leader Yassir Arafat. Herzog knew that a stone from Solomon's Temple would be a politically explosive artifact—tangible proof that, contrary to claims made by Arafat and other Palestinian spokesmen, the Jewish Temple had indeed once stood in Jerusalem, on the site of the Temple Mount. That site is occupied by the Al Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock—holy places for Muslims—and is bordered by the Western Wall, the holiest site in Judaism. According to Abdullah Kanaan, the secretary-general of Jordan's Royal Committee for Jerusalem Affairs, "Jewish gangs and extremist factions" were using the newly discovered Jehoash tablet to "support their bid to destroy the Al-Aqsa Mosque." The Geological Survey of Israel described the find as "an archaeological sensation that could have global repercussions and that effectively vindicates Jewish claims to the Temple Mount." With such historical claims at stake, the price for the Jehoash tablet was reportedly set at four million dollars.

The epigrapher Joseph Naveh, of Jerusalem's Hebrew University, first saw the tablet in mid-2001. In a Jerusalem hotel room, he met a man who called himself Izak Tzur, and who was accompanied by a young Arab. Removing the stone from his briefcase, where it was packed in bubble wrap, Tzur speculated that the tablet had come from



the area around the Temple Mount. If Naveh talked about the tablet, or mentioned it to anyone, he was told, the Arab who had found the tablet would be placed in great danger—for undermining Palestinian claims to the Old City of Jerusalem.

Tzur also took the Jehoash tablet to the Geological Survey of Israel, where it was tested by Ilani and Rosenfeld. They reported that the tablet was an authentic ninth-century B.C. artifact. Microscopic globules of gold burned into the stone, they concluded, could mean that it was once situated with gold objects in a building that had burned down—most likely Solomon's Temple, destroyed by Babylonian invaders in 586 B.C.

The chief of the Israel Antiquities Authority's theft-investigation unit, Amir Ganor, first heard of the Jehoash tablet in the spring of 2002—nearly a year before its public announcement. Ganor had received a tip from a source in the West Bank village of Beit Ula. According to Ganor's informant, a buyer from Tel Aviv had gone to Beit Ula and purchased a significant number of late-Bronze Age metal objects that had been discovered in a cave. (Buying artifacts from unlicensed dealers in the Palestinian Territories is prohibited by the 1978 antiquities law, but it is, nevertheless, a common practice.) The description that the informant gave of the buyer led Ganor to a Jerusalem antiquities dealer, who in turn led Ganor to Oded Golan.

Ganor, who is thirty-five, commands approximately a dozen other archeological officials. He is an ebullient man who is currently completing his master's in archeology and carries a holstered gun on his belt, next to his cell phone. The Oded Golan investigation is the first major archeological forgery case that Ganor and the Antiquities Authority have handled. He paid his first call on Golan in September, 2002. "We went up to his apartment, and he presents his collection, and in the middle of the meeting I saw the objects from the cave. There was a bronze sword. Two very nice items," Ganor told me, with a soft laugh. "So I asked him directly, 'Oded, those are the things that you bought from Beit Ula?' "

Golan did not deny buying antiquities

MAGNUM

KICK START *The first week of spring brought out a group of three- and four-year-olds (and their parents) to play soccer in Central*

Park. Photograph by Gilles Peress.

from Beit Ula, and Ganor did not ask him about the Jehoash tablet. Ganor's investigation soon centered on Izak Tzur, who, it turned out, was a private detective with former links to Israeli intelligence. From the detective, Ganor learned that the source of the Jehoash tablet was Oded Golan. In February of 2003, the antiquities police staged a late-night raid on Golan's home; they didn't find the tablet. After investigators conducted a second raid, in March, Golan turned the tablet over to the police. Golan continues to claim that he was never the owner of the tablet, and was simply assisting a Palestinian dealer, for a fee, in its sale.

Unlike the James ossuary, which the Israeli press had largely treated as a curiosity, the discovery of the tablet caused a sensation, because of its alleged connection to Solomon's Temple. That March, the police transported the Jehoash tablet to the Israel Antiquities Authority for inspection. On the journey, the tablet cracked in half.

Yosef Naveh, the epigrapher who had first seen the tablet in a Jerusalem hotel room, immediately pronounced the inscription to be a forgery. To him, the script appeared to come from different historical periods. The Jehoash tablet also aroused the suspicions of Nadav Ne'eman, a historian of the Biblical period at Tel Aviv University. In a speculative article that he had written for a Dutch journal, Ne'eman theorized that lost tablets from the First Temple might have been the source for the Books of Kings. The similarities between the text of the Jehoash inscription and Ne'eman's theoretical missing tablets were so striking that it seemed likely that the forger had read the article. Other scholars were also quick to point out a number of anomalies in the text of the Hebrew inscription, one of which was the anachronistic use of the phrase *bedeq habayit*. In the time of King Jehoash, "to do *bedeq habayit*," which means "home repairs" in modern Hebrew, would have meant "to crack the walls of the temple"—something that would have made little sense on an inscription commemorating Jehoash's repairs to the building.

The Web-based scholar Rochelle Altman, whose book about writing systems is forthcoming, was also skeptical. There were obvious flaws in the inscription, she wrote, including the use of seventh-century B.C. Aramaic and Phoenician letters in what was supposedly a Hebrew artifact from the ninth century B.C., and the use of both cursive and monumental fonts in a single word. Scripts, Altman explained, are tightly bound to a culture's identity; they were the ancient world's equivalent of national flags. The use of these foreign scripts "on an inscription purporting to be written by a king of Israel is prima facie evidence of forgery."

Altman then referred to her earlier argument that the inscription on the James ossuary had been written by two different hands. In a subsequent article, she cited the "Catalogue of Jewish Ossuaries in the Collection of the State of Israel," a reference work compiled by L. Y. Rahmani which contains photographs of eight hundred and ninety-seven Jewish ossuaries, two hundred and thirty-three of which bear inscriptions. Only one ossuary in the collection, No. 570, mentioned a brother in Hebrew or in Aramaic—"Shimi, son of Asiyah, brother of Neharin."

In Altman's view, the clue to the mystery of the James ossuary had been hiding in plain sight all along. She focussed on the phrase that scholars and journalists had been translating as "the brother of Jesus." In fact, Altman pointed out, what was written on the James ossuary was "his brother of Jesus"—a double possessive. But the inscription on the Rahmani ossuary did not contain the letter "dalet," meaning "of." Rather, Altman wrote, the extra letter was a misprint in the Rahmani catalogue. "The forger demonstrated that he did not read the inscription itself but read only the proposed reading as transliterated into Modern Hebrew square script," she informed her readers on the Web.

Apart from doubts about the inscriptions, the Jehoash tablet and the James ossuary had something else in common: both had been publicly linked to Oded Golan.

THE CURSE OF ARCHEOLOGY

Yuval Goren, a forty-seven-year-old archeologist at Tel Aviv University who specializes in the geological study of archeological sites, was working in his office when he heard the first re-

ports that the Jehoash tablet had been certified as genuine by the Geological Survey of Israel. Goren was outraged to learn that the government scientists Ilani and Rosenfeld might be using their positions to certify objects from the illegal antiquities market, and wrote a letter of protest to the survey. He knew that an imitation of patina—the surface area that is visibly altered by the elements, providing a record of the stone's interaction with its environment over time—could easily be faked in a lab. To demonstrate his point, one afternoon he inscribed a stone he had in his lab with the name "David," covered it with a modern patina, and then posted the results on the Web. He was soon approached by the Israel Antiquities Authority.

Goren's "David stone" currently rests on a high shelf in his office, next to various archeological texts. On Goren's desk when I visited him last fall were dozens of items from the collection of Shlomo Moussaieff, an elderly jeweller who operates a shop at the London Hilton and has amassed one of the most spectacular collections of Jewish antiquities in the world. Moussaieff had loaned these items to Goren for analysis in connection with the antiquities investigation. Two significant works in the Moussaieff collection are ostraca, or inscribed pottery shards, which were sold to Moussaieff by a dealer on behalf of Oded Golan.

The sale of the two ostraca, whose inscriptions refer to Solomon's Temple, was completed in the mid-nineties, after two years of testing in laboratories around the world dated the inscriptions to the seventh century B.C., making them among the oldest extant references to the Temple. However, Goren has concluded that the inscriptions are forgeries. When one views the ostraca through a microscope, he says, it is easy to see globs of paraffin that were used to protect the inscriptions while a fake patina was applied. In order to create a convincing forgery, "You need to read about the style of script in the ninth century B.C.E., you need to be acquainted with all the linguistic aspects of it, you need to know some geology and read some scientific reports," he explained. "You have to be an expert in many unrelated fields. This is a big thing to do. Unless you are a true genius, you can't be professional in so many unrelated fields."

Goren was put in touch with Avner Ayalon, a shy, shambling, red-haired biochemist in his mid-fifties, who has spent the last ten years studying the mineral composition of the rocks in and around Jerusalem for the Geological Survey of Israel. By testing the oxygen isotopic composition of calcium carbonate extracted from samples taken from the patina on the James ossuary, Ayalon was able to date the inscription in a scientific way that a forger could not have anticipated, since the test had never before been used to evaluate the authenticity of the patina on an inscription.

"What I learned from my study is that the patina that covered the inscription is a fake," Ayalon told me last fall. "It was not formed under natural conditions that prevailed in the Judean mountains during the last three thousand years." Taking samples of the patina from several places on the ossuary, Ayalon found that the oxygen isotopic ratios matched the values he had compiled in his study of Jerusalem rocks. Samples from inside the inscription did not. Where the patina on the rest of the ossuary appeared to be part of the stone, Ayalon noted, the fake patina could easily be removed; the isotopic ratios in the patina were wildly off. Chipping patina from elsewhere on the ossuary, Ayalon and Goren concluded, the forger had taken tap water, heated it to at least fifty degrees centigrade, and ground up the real patina in the water until it dissolved, then brushed the mixture onto the entire inscription in order to create the illusion of patina from Biblical times.

Hershel Shanks and others have argued that the ossuary may have been repeatedly cleaned since it was found, which accounts for the discrepancy. Goren responds that in that case the cleaning should have affected more than just the area inside the inscription. Goren and Ayalon performed similar tests on the patina of the Jehoash tablet. Both inscriptions, they concluded, had been coated with a false patina; the patina on the ossuary was made of chalk powder, and that on the Jehoash inscription was a mixture of clay or red soil, chalk powder, carbon, and metal granules. Last summer, a committee of archeological experts—its members included linguists, historians, paleographers, conservators, and geologists, as well as Goren and Ayalon—examined the Jehoash tablet and the James ossuary on behalf of the Israel Antiquities Authority. Their conclusion was that the inscriptions were fakes. The same view has now been embraced by the Harvard epigrapher Frank Cross. There are still some experts who are unconvinced, including Lemaire, Fitzmyer, and Ada Yardeni, an epigrapher who created the first drawing of the ossuary inscription, for the *Biblical Archaeology Review*.

The ostraca from the Moussaieff collection are of particular interest to Amihai Mazar, a professor at the Hebrew University. He saw the ostraca for the first time during a visit to Moussaieff's home in London. "I told Moussaieff these are new, they were written new, they are so fresh," Mazar recalled. "I entered this apartment, I saw rooms and rooms loaded with antiquities, in disorder, carloads, and I looked at it and was amazed. I don't know. Part of it was probably fake, some of it is not fake, I don't know what is fake and what is not. For me, I was shocked. My wife, who was with me, was shocked as well. When you think of what kind of damage was caused in order to achieve those antiquities, you shudder."

According to the Israel Antiquities Authority, Robert Deutsch was the dealer who organized the sale of the ostraca to Moussaieff for Oded Golan. Deutsch has written or co-written nine books, including two with André Lemaire, and has been a major source of artifacts for the Moussaieff collection. Taken together, the objects that Deutsch has supplied suggest an eager child's autograph book of famous figures from the Bible. The collection includes many seals and seal impressions, or bullae, of Judahite kings. One seal impression of King Ahaz of Judea bears a fingerprint at the edge—as if reaching across the millennia through the indelible clay. "We believe it is the King's, and that it was made unintentionally, as he imprinted the seal with his signet ring," Deutsch wrote in his book "Messages from the Past."

The controversy surrounding Oded Golan's possessions, Deutsch told me recently, is part of a concerted campaign by the Israel Antiquities Authority to drive dealers and collectors underground, even though their activities are legal, even admirable. Having known Golan for "five, six, maybe seven years," Deutsch went on, he had no reason to suspect the collector of forgery. "Everybody knew him, because he was buying in every shop," he said. "Nobody ever thought about him as a criminal or a faker."

Since the announcement of the purported James ossuary, in October of 2002, other artifacts have come under suspicion—including some of the most famous Biblical relics in Israel. The most widely publicized object ever found relating to the First Temple is a thumb-size ivory pomegranate, with a long neck and six elongated petals. The body is solid, with a small, deep hole in the base, which scholars have suggested was meant for the staff of a priest in the Temple. Around the shoulder of the pomegranate, which is now part of the permanent collection of the Israel Museum, is an incised ancient Hebrew inscription, part of which is missing. The inscription is believed to read, "Belonging to the Temp[le of Yahwe]h, holy to the priests." In late March, the Israeli press reported that this artifact, too, is suspected of being a fake.

As a symbol of the historical Jewish connection to the Temple Mount, the pomegranate is a prized exhibit in the Israel Museum's collection, and the museum defends its authenticity, saying that evidence has yet to be provided to show otherwise. The pomegranate was purchased on behalf of the museum in 1988 for more than six hundred thousand dollars, by an anonymous donor from an anonymous collector who was represented by intermediaries for Raffi Brown, an antiquities dealer in Jerusalem and a onetime colleague of Oded Golan and Robert Deutsch.

In February, when I spoke with Brown about the pomegranate, he said, "It came from a French collector, bless his soul, who left it with his brother." Brown, who was travelling in the United States when I spoke to him, added, "I saw it first fifteen years earlier, in the seventies. His brother sold it. I showed it to André Lemaire on his instructions. The brother sent him to me."

The publication of the inscription on the pomegranate from Solomon's Temple, in 1984, established André Lemaire's wider reputation—and led to his regular publication in *Biblical Archaeology Review*.

I asked Brown if, fifteen years ago, he might have sold fakes to the Israel Museum or to private collectors. "I wouldn't be surprised," he said without hesitation. "Probably I made a mistake. I'm not a saint, I'm not the expert in the world. I bought myself a few pieces that I found out are fakes."

The Antiquities Authority says that it does not suspect Golan of being involved in the sale of the pomegranate.

At the root of the controversies that plague the field of Biblical archeology, some scholars believe, is the relationship between scholarship and valuable objects that come from the antiquities market. "The problem is that we know that some things that appear on the market are genuine," Amihai Mazar, of the Hebrew University, explained. "The classic example is the Dead Sea Scrolls. They were brought by Bedouin who found them in the caves, and they were sold by those Bedouin on the market. There are definitely antiquities arriving on the market that are genuine. But we can never be sure."

The weakest link in the scholarly chain, Mazar said, is the professional structure that rewards epigraphers and art historians for publicizing important inscriptions of dubious provenance. "They have the greatest temptation. Of course, the dealer and the collector want to have authentication, and the best authentication is a scientific publication"—by people like Yosef Naveh or André Lemaire. "They legitimatize the finds," Mazar said.

The influence of the alliance of dealers, scholars, money, and academic glory which Mazar decries is powerfully resistant to change. Uzi Dahari, Amir Ganor's predecessor as chief of the Israel Antiquities Authority's theft unit, is now deputy director of the authority. At the turn of the last century, Dahari's grandfather walked across the deserts of Yemen to Palestine at the age of six, along with his older brother, drawn by the romantic idea of a reborn Jewish nation. A man who bears the scars of battles in the Sinai and Lebanon, Dahari is a fanatic about one subject—the corrupting influence of money on archeology.

"I lived in the Judean desert for a while," he explained one afternoon, as

"I once kissed a cat. It was totally weird."

we walked down Emek Refa'im, a smart shopping street in West Jerusalem. "There's a unique species of fox, the cliff fox, it has very small legs. I used to show a picture of that fox. There's no money in that discovery. In a cave in the Judean desert, there is a plant called the *grisit*. A European plant. It's unique. It grows only in this one cave in the desert, and in the Alps above four thousand feet. There's no money in it, either. Then there were the Dead Sea Scrolls," he added. "That's the curse of archeology—there's money in it."

THE RAID

What interests Oded Golan most about archeology, he says, is the unpredictable human element, the petty squabbles among dealers, and the give-and-take that enlivened his visits to Arab villages in the West Bank before the intifada broke out. He is amused by the faces of the two-thousand-year-old pottery animals that line the walls of his apartment. Listening to a recording of a four-hour-long conversation I had one night with Golan on these and other subjects, I was struck by the high notes of laughter captured on the digital tape.

"Are you the source of all the bullae that have been appearing so suddenly on the market?" I asked. "Do you have a magic factory somewhere?"

"Everything," Golan said, amused. "Yes, every year, hundreds. So that's the situation." He paused. "The bullae, it's a very interesting story, but I don't think it is for this article. I'll tell you there are fakes in Israel," he added. "In the last two years, there were some bullae that look better than they used to."

"How about stamp seals?" I asked.

"The stamp seals I can tell you that I'm quite sure that there are fakes," he said. "In the Haifa museum, I saw some that are fake. Why? I don't know. This is my feeling."

"You must have seen many fakes," I suggested.

"The number of fakes is not so big. Good fakes," Golan added quickly.

I asked Golan how one identifies a fake.

"I'll tell you," he said. "First of all, there is a style. If the style is wrong, this is a red light. This is before everything. If you see an ancient jar in the shape of a TV, you know this is impossible. . . . Of course, it's much easier to fake patina in a small item than in a big one. The field in which you have to create patina—if you can—is very small. It's millimetres. You have complete control over it. You can work under—I don't know what—a microscope or something, which you cannot do with any other item." He explained, "Normally, there is either a picture or a very simple inscription that you can just copy from another place. It's not language. Just the name of a person—Moses, let's say. You just take another stamp seal from the same period and you copy the three letters. And if somebody's experienced for years to work on it—in, say, Lebanon—he might do it, you know. It's not so complicated. That's the reason why there were several fakes."

When I asked Golan if he had ever sold seals or bullae to Shlomo Moussaieff, he replied that the collector had bought "not directly from me. They came from a person, a big group of bullae, fourteen or sixteen, some of them having important names, like King Hezekiah and some servants. They came from Beit Ula." Golan added, "Look, this is Moussaieff. This is a very, very unusual person."

Golan denied that the James ossuary is a fake: "First of all, it's impossible, in my opinion. Second, I think if somebody had faked it, he would have mentioned in some way a relation to Jesus of Nazareth—an extra word, let's say." Golan went on, "The difference between Rembrandt and a picture that might be Rembrandt—there is no relation between the prices of both of them."

"There was a big Rembrandt misattribution that hung in the Met throughout my childhood," I said. "Everyone admired it very much."

"Same picture," Golan said. "So there is no reason for someone to do all the work without signing Rembrandt."

But if all of these objects—the James ossuary, the Jehoash tablet, the ancient pottery shards—were forgeries, who furnished them? When I returned to Jerusalem last fall, Amir Ganor told me about the raid that he and his detectives had conducted on Oded Golan's apartment in Tel Aviv the previous March.

The Antiquities Authority searched both the apartment and a storage space on Golan's roof. "We arrived in the middle of the night, with a search warrant," Ganor recalled. "And I went through the boxes, and one of my guys came to me with some dental equipment, with all

"This next one is a hard-rockin', kick-ass, take-no-prisoners tune we wrote about turning sixty."

the drills, and said, 'What is this?' One of my friends told me, 'These are dental tools.' I said, 'O.K.' Another two boxes, I open, I see material from archeology sites all over Israel. Dirt. Earth. And I didn't understand it yet. But my instinct told me to take it."

"Maybe he was just a person who liked collecting rocks and dirt from archeological sites?" I suggested.

"Yes, and also very good equipment," Ganor replied. "And, also, we have some very good fakes. We have a hundred and fifty bullae. And all the heroes of the Bible, including Isaiah the Prophet."

"He had his own seal?" I asked.

Ganor shrugged, and opened a clear plastic bag filled with round stones.

"You take the tools from here, and in ten minutes you can produce a seal," he explained.

Golan maintains that whatever tools were found in his home are simply those commonly found among antiquities conservators and collectors.

Not long ago, Israeli television aired a documentary on Oded Golan, in which Ganor demonstrated how small items like forged seals may have been hidden in cigarette packs and smuggled into Israel from Egypt. On the program, viewers heard a tape recording in which an Egyptian artist purportedly discussed a method for creating bullae with Golan. During my visit to the Israel Antiquities Authority's well-guarded headquarters, in East Jerusalem, Ganor showed me a series of what he called *skitzot*—blueprints—for making bullae, which he said had belonged to Golan. "We have from the laboratory some ten boxes, filled with many other interesting items," Ganor told me. "I will say that the common element to all the pieces is the First Temple and the Second Temple in Jerusalem."

Golan kept the James ossuary on top of a toilet tank in an unused bathroom in the storage area. He claims he placed it there for safekeeping after his name and address had been leaked to the press. Still, it was an unlikely resting place for the most valuable archeological relic in the world.

So far, no one has been indicted in what may be the biggest case of archeological fraud in a century or more, and only Oded Golan has been publicly accused. The Israeli legal process works slowly, according to rules that are not the same as those governing police and prosecutors in the United States. While indictments often mark the true beginning of the legal discovery process in America, allowing prosecutors to question witnesses under oath, indictments in the Israeli process tend to come at the end of police investigations that can drag on for months, or even years. The Israeli authorities have been cited by the courts for overzealousness in this investigation.

"I am accused of completely ungrounded allegations and have faced the deliberate destruction of my reputation and the reputation of my collection," Golan wrote in a recent e-mail. "I acknowledge that, like many other collectors and museums all over the world, it is not inconceivable that, among the thousands of items I have purchased in over four decades, I may have unknowingly bought phony items. There are many imitations, scarabs, seals, and other elements for sale in the Old City of Jerusalem, which are in most cases easily identified as fakes. However, it is noteworthy that during some point in the nineteen-seventies and nineteen-eighties, the Old City was flooded with high-class imitation bullae and seals, at least some of which originated in Jordan and Lebanon. Other than that, I do not recall any knowledge of any forged inscription (on ossuaries or other items)."

Ganor says that the Israelis will most likely hand down indictments within a month or two, but such assurances have been made before—as recently as last August. And the Israeli police, like authorities elsewhere, are not above using the press and television to pressure their quarry. Ariel Sharon, the Israeli Prime Minister, has been suffering under the duress of a two-year-long police investigation that has yet to result in a formal indictment.

Ganor told me that Golan "needed a lot of money in 2002," noting that he had taken a bank loan of four million dollars to develop some land in Tel Aviv—"shopping and offices and apartments. Ten, twelve stories. Something big." Golan maintains that he had no particular financial worries and that the real-estate deal concerns land that has been in his family's possession for decades. Even so, Ganor holds fast to his theory, saying, "In the pressure to get money quickly, he made a mistake. He put out the ossuary and the stone at the same time."

In doing so, the Israel Antiquities Authority contends that the forger set in motion the potential exposure of a forgery ring that could be connected with every known Hebrew inscription referring to Solomon's Temple. Between a hundred and two hundred antiquities relating to the First and Second Temple periods, as well as a complementary series of Egyptian finds, are currently suspected by the Antiquities Authority to be forgeries.

"We need to clean up archeology," Ganor said, referring to the market for artifacts of dubious provenance. "Now I understand that teachers in universities were involved in these things. That the people in the museums in Israel were involved in these things, the people of the geological survey were involved, the antiquities dealers were involved, the collectors were involved. In Israel, we have a saying: One time was a mistake, two times it's a bad habit, and three times it's a way of life. This is a way of life that needs to change."

Late one night not long ago, I received a phone call from someone I met while reporting this story, who told me about a remarkable find, currently in the collection of a well-known museum—"It's from a legal excavation," my source said. His voice filled with awe as he swore me to secrecy before telling me of his treasure: a detailed engraving of the Ark of the Covenant, the box that once held the Tablets of the Law, which the Israelites carried around the desert for forty years. The dimensions of the sanctuary, he revealed, correspond exactly to those given in the Book of Exodus.

"Isn't that a bit suspicious?" I asked.

"It means it could only have been done by an eyewitness," he explained. "It's the most valuable artifact in the history of the Torah and the Jewish people. It's a direct link to Moses and to the giving of the Torah on Sinai." He waited for me to absorb the news. "I didn't believe it, either," he said. "Until I saw it with my own eyes." ♦

PROFILES

THE *STORYTELLER*

Fact, fiction, and the books of Madeleine L'Engle.

BY CYNTHIA ZARIN

My copy was blue. The book was a small Scholastic paperback, and on the cover was a trio of pale-green concentric circles. They looked like radio waves, or the kind of design you could get by fiddling around with a Spirograph set. In one of the circles was the silhouette of a girl, and, in another, a matching image of a little boy.

The book was "A Wrinkle in Time," by Madeleine L'Engle. Published in 1962, it is—depending on how you look at it—science fiction, a warm tale of family life, a response to the Cold War, a book about a search for a father, a feminist tract, a religious fable, a coming-of-age novel, a work of Satanism, or a prescient meditation on the future of the United States after the Kennedy assassination. When I first read it, in 1967, at the age of eight, I was innocent of any of this, and I had no idea that the story was also about the author. The girl in the circle was her childhood self, lost and lonely in space. But for L'Engle, even more than for Meg Murry, who with her brother Charles Wallace is travelling, according to my edition's back-flap copy, "through a *wrinkle in time*, to the deadly unknown terrors beyond the tesseract!," it had been even more perilous, because she had no grave, precocious little boy to accompany her. I knew even less that those closest to Madeleine L'Engle considered her science fiction to be the least fantastical of her more than fifty books, which, in addition to her novels, include poetry, meditations, and memoirs.

I once asked L'Engle to define "science fiction." She replied, "Isn't everything?" On another occasion, in the vast, sunny apartment in a building on West End Avenue where she has lived since 1960, and where she and her late husband, the actor Hugh Franklin, brought up their three children, she offered an example. "I was standing right there, carrying a plate of cold cuts," she said, pointing at a swinging door between the dining room and the pantry. "And I swooped into the pantry, *bang*, and got a black eye. It was exactly as if someone pushed me." At eighty-five, L'Engle is a formidable figure. She is five feet nine in her stocking feet, and uses a wheelchair owing to a broken hip. She has a birdlike head, a sharp nose, and an air of helpless innocence that is almost entirely put on. She wore a loose-fitting dress in one of her favorite colors, peacock blue. "Most likely," she continued firmly, "it was a poltergeist. There must have been a teen-age girl in the house. All that energy! They create the best atmosphere for them, you know. We don't know how to catch and harness it." She nodded. "Too true of most things."

"A Wrinkle in Time" is about Meg Murry and her little brother Charles Wallace, and their search for their father, who has disappeared. Meg and Charles Wallace live in a big, drafty New England house on a wooded hill. Meg, at about twelve, is untidy, unattractive, temperamental, and surly at school. She fights with the school bully, who makes rude remarks about Charles Wallace, who, according to the village gossips, "is not quite bright." She bridles at whispers that her father may not come back, even though she knows he will: her mother, a brilliant, beautiful scientist, has told her so. And she knows there's nothing wrong with Charles Wallace. He is a small, blond, preternaturally intelligent four-year-old, who was silent until he began to speak in complete, complicated sentences. He also has second sight.

The book opens on a stormy night. "I knew you'd be down," Charles Wallace says to Meg as midnight nears. There is a strange sound at the kitchen door, and, when Mrs. Murry opens it, in tumbles a very old, cheerful woman who accepts a sandwich, and leaves just as suddenly, in a heave of drenched outer garments, saying in a by-the-by sort of way, "There *is* such a thing as a tesseract."

Mrs. Murry blanches. Before Mr. Murry disappeared, the two of them had been playing around with a way to square the fourth dimension. Or, as Charles Wallace explains to Meg:

> Well, the fifth dimension's a tesseract. You add that to the other four dimensions and you can travel through space without having to go the long way around. In other words, to put it into Euclid, or old-fashioned plane geometry, a straight line is *not* the shortest distance between two points.

The next day, Meg and Charles Wallace hike into the woods in search of the woman, and run into an older, popular boy from school named Calvin O'Keefe, who has no idea why he has come to their wood, except that, as he puts it, "When I get this feeling, this compulsion, I always do what it tells me." (Calvin is psychic, too. In L'Engle's "The Arm of the Starfish," Meg and Calvin surface again, grown up—Calvin's a biologist, studying regeneration theory; he and Meg are married, and they have a daughter called Polyhymnia.)

The three children are taken in hand by the visitor, Mrs. Whatsit, and her two weird sisters, Mrs. Who and Mrs. Which, who turn out not to be kind old ladies but, rather, the corporeal emanation of stars who gave up their lives fighting the Dark Thing, which threatens to overcome the universe. Mrs. Whatsit is sensible; Mrs. Who is given to quoting—Cervantes, Goethe, Seneca, Shakespeare, and Jesus; Mrs. Which stammers. They have come to help the children find their father, who, after working in New Mexico and "at Cape Canaveral," is lost in space. Off they go, leapfrogging from one galaxy to another until they land on Camazotz, where life is so regulated that children bounce their balls in unison.

Their father is here. They must descend into the town to find him. Mrs. Who, Mrs. Which, and Mrs. Whatsit, Glindas in a murky Oz, depart. In the

TULLIO PERICOLI

Asked to define "science fiction," L'Engle, the author of the children's classic "A Wrinkle in Time," replied, "Isn't everything?"

"With this suit, I hereby establish dominion over my male identity."

end, Meg discovers that it is only by using her faults—her stubbornness, her willfulness, her unruly heart—that she can rescue her father, and ultimately Charles Wallace, from the planet where the Dark Thing has won.

Catherine Hand, who is an executive producer of a made-for-television version of "A Wrinkle in Time," which is scheduled to air next month on ABC, fell in love with the book when she was ten. She says, "The engine that drives it is Meg's inner life, and it's astonishing, because here is a girl who at that moment is stronger than her father. For some of us, it planted the seeds of the women's movement. I have had wonderful conversations with Madeleine, as a friend, who is, of course, Meg."

Robert Giroux, of Farrar, Straus & Giroux, which first published "A Wrinkle in Time," says, "Madeleine L'Engle? She's an unusual woman, brilliant intellectually. A really superior person. She's what you used to call a bluestocking. I've worked with T. S. Eliot, and W. H. Auden, and so on, but my young relatives all say, 'Oh, Madeleine L'Engle!' "

The hardcover edition of "A Wrinkle in Time" is now in its sixty-seventh printing, and continues to sell about fifteen thousand copies annually. (L'Engle says that she had a clause in her contract that Farrar, Straus had the rights to "A Wrinkle in Time" in perpetuity in the universe, but not on Andromeda.) More than six million copies of the paperback are currently in circulation.

More than most writers, L'Engle has engaged with her readers. Until about five years ago, she was a tireless lecturer and teacher, annually accepting dozens of invitations to speak, on writing, family life, and faith—L'Engle has been a devout Anglican for most of her adult life—and she has often received more than a hundred letters from readers in a week. (Her grandchildren, Léna Roy and Charlotte and Edward Jones, now handle most of her correspondence.) One evening at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, where L'Engle has been the librarian for forty years, an Evensong service was held to celebrate her contribution to literature for children. Scores of strangers waited to greet her—mainly middle-aged women, some with children in tow, but men, too. What they said was "Thank you. You changed my life."

Of course, people say that all the time about beloved writers. As for me, I kept that copy of "A Wrinkle in Time." One way or another, I read it every year. More recently, I've read it aloud to my children. "A Wrinkle in Time," and a number of L'Engle's other books, became inextricably part of who I was. They influenced how I thought about religion and politics, about physics and mystery, and how I imagined what family life could be.

It wasn't just me. When I was in college, I remember a friend saying to me, "There are really two kinds of girls. Those who read Madeleine L'Engle when they were small, and those who didn't."

"What did you read as a child?" I asked L'Engle one afternoon. I had brought along my daughter, Rose, to see her, and they were playing Scrabble. "I was a voracious reader," she said, counting out tiles. "My grandfather used to send me a magazine called *Chatterbox*, from England, which I loved. And I read 'Emily of New Moon,' by L. M. Montgomery. She had a dying father, and so did I. She wrote, and so did I. I read that book over and over." L'Engle also read George MacDonald, the Christian fantasist. As a writer, she shares with MacDonald, as well as with C. S. Lewis, another favorite, the sense that there is a parallel universe, and an active belief in the presence of good and evil. She refuses to distinguish between children's and adult literature, and she has consistently resisted being labelled a "children's-book writer." When people ask her how to write for children, her answer is always the same: "Write your story."

She looked down at the board. So far, the tiles spelled out "BORN," "TREE," "NAG," and "WRATH." "Look at that," she said, an owlish grin spreading across her face. "It's the Garden of Eden!" Then she looked at Rose sharply. "You like to write stories, don't you? When I was a little girl, I was in a play. I chose to be one of the girls playing timbrels on the way to the guillotine."

Madeleine L'Engle Camp was born in 1918 in New York City, the only child of Madeleine Hall Barnett, of Jacksonville, Florida, and Charles Wadsworth Camp, a Princeton man and First World War veteran, whose family had a big country place in New Jersey, called Crosswicks. In Jacksonville society, the Barnett family was legendary: Madeleine's grandfather, Bion Barnett, the chairman of the board of Jacksonville's Barnett Bank, had run off with a woman to the South of France, leaving behind a note on the mantel. Her grandmother, Caroline Hallows L'Engle, never recovered from the blow.

"The Barnett scandal was just incredible for Jacksonville," Francis Mason says. Mason, who is now in his eighties, is Madeleine's cousin on her father's side. He is the editor of *Ballet Review* and the chairman of the board of the Martha Graham Center of Contemporary Dance. He recalls, "England had the Windsors, we had the Barnetts. In Jacksonville, we called Bion Barnett 'King Tut.' "

Madeleine's parents were the kind of couple whose devotion to each other can stymie children. They rose late, read aloud to each other, and went out most nights. In their apartment on the East Side, Madeleine ate her meals on a tray in her room. Her mother played the piano; her father, after a stint as a foreign correspondent, wrote potboilers. At school, she was terrible at sports and, she says, thought to be stupid (though at least one of her school reports belies this); like Meg Murry, she felt gangly, needy, bullied, and dismayed. She hated the school so much that to this day she won't say which one it was. Her granddaughter Charlotte Jones recalls that when she herself was in private school in New York, half a century later, she was terrified of playing competitive sports: any girls' school could be that school, still full of tormentors.

One morning in Switzerland, at the end of a summer spent abroad, when Madeleine was twelve years old, her parents drove through the gates of Chatelard, a boarding school for girls, introduced her to the headmistress, and left her there. She was completely unprepared. "I shook hands with the matron, and they vanished," L'Engle said. She was sitting in her high-back wing chair in the West End Avenue apartment. "My parents had diametrically opposed views on how to raise me. In New York, even once they knew the school wasn't the right place for me my father kept me there, to teach my mother a lesson, because it had been her idea."

In addition to her novels, L'Engle is the author of several books of memoirs, including "The Crosswicks Journal," which was published in several volumes and is about her life in Connecticut, and includes the book "Two-Part Invention," which tells the story of her marriage to Hugh Franklin. In these accounts, young Madeleine is sent to boarding school because her father was gassed in the war. He needs to travel endlessly in search of air clear enough for him to breathe. She knows that she is loved, though: she stays with her parents during school holidays. One day, however, she told me that she almost never saw her parents during school vacations. She spent the holidays in Provence, with her grandfather. During the long afternoons, she read his collection of *Punch*.

When Madeleine was about fifteen, her parents returned from Europe—the search for clear air apparently abandoned—and went to live in Jacksonville. After the move, she was released from Chatelard and sent to Ashley Hall, in Charleston. Of her peregrinations, her Jacksonville relatives said, "Where have they shipped that girl off to now?" Madeleine, in turn, found Florida stultifying and surreal: one afternoon, she watched an alligator pick its way up the porch steps. But, to her surprise, she adored Ashley Hall. "We did Shakespeare, and the Chester Cycle. We had a Miss McBee, who was mad about the theatre. The teachers thought I was bright, and I was elected class president. It was extraordinary." During her last year, her father caught pneumonia, and, according to L'Engle, his weakened lungs gave out. Francis Mason was fifteen years old, and the funeral was at his family's house in Jacksonville.

Mason, who later became a close friend of George Balanchine, is accustomed to larger-than-life personalities. He told me, "I knew the saga. Uncle Charles was very exotic. He used to smoke Rameses cigarettes. And he used to drink a lot. He was a great Princetonian, and he went up to a game and caught a cold and died. My mother was brokenhearted."

But weren't Charles's lungs already damaged? I asked Mason. "No, Uncle Charles was not ailing in his life. He was a big, handsome man in a white linen suit smoking cigarettes on the porch and drinking whiskey. He was a favorite of my mother's, and she was a talker, and she never mentioned anything about him being gassed in the war."

L'Engle went on to Smith College. The novelist Mary Ellen Chase, with whom she studied, divided English literature into three parts: Major, Minor, and Mediocre. As L'Engle recalled, "We were all quite vocal about not wanting to be mediocre!" She had already decided that she was going to be a famous writer. "It didn't occur to me that there was an alternative career," she said. "I loved writing dramatic monologues; in class, I did Cerberus, spontaneously."

On odd weekends she took the train down to Germantown, Pennsylvania, where cousins on her father's side held a perpetual open house. There were three sisters. L'Engle was closest to Starr, who reviewed books and gave her new ones to read; a fourth sister, Margaret Lawrence, an actress, had been shot dead by her lover. When L'Engle graduated, she went back to New York.

"I escaped Jacksonville," L'Engle said with a flourish. "I lived first at 43 West Ninth Street. Then I moved to West Twelfth, and then I made a big move, to 32 West Tenth. Leonard Bernstein lived upstairs, with two little babies, and we thought of switching so they wouldn't have to carry the carriage up the steps. We could eat at the Golden Eagle on Tenth Avenue—it was one dollar for spaghetti with wine, a dollar twenty-five without. It was 1941, and I got a job through the American Theatre Wing selling war bonds during intermissions on Broadway. I took acting lessons from Morris Carnovsky—a quarter per lesson."

In the winter of 1942, L'Engle auditioned for the actors Eva Le Gallienne, who had founded the Civic Repertory Theatre, and Joseph Schildkraut with a monologue put together from the letters of Katherine Mansfield. Tall and gawky, she was cast in a small part in "Uncle Harry," and then, in the summer of 1943, as a walk-on in "The Cherry Orchard." The show went on tour, and she roomed with the young Anne Jackson.

"Madeleine was a grown-up kid," Jackson told me. "She was fearless and grand, but then she would confide in one, like a little girl. She amused and delighted and awed me. After her bath, she would walk naked around the room

with only her beads on. And once when I was ill she tried to make me feel better by spraying perfume all over the room, which made me feel worse!" Jackson laughed. "She was zany. But I always got the sense that she'd been trained to be a lady, which meant she was not so at ease with her emotions. There was something ethereal about her. She had a terrible time having babies, for instance, but she's wonderfully domestic: she's a terrific cook. And she's terrifically loyal. After she broke her hip, she came to see me in a play in a wheelchair. It was as if she was playing a part—a person in a wheelchair."

Hugh Franklin, a handsome young actor from Tulsa, had been cast in the role of Petya Trofimov, the student. Madeleine was besotted; it seemed he was, too. Then he vanished. She was heartbroken. He surfaced, briefly, the following summer, and then turned up again in the winter and proposed to her. They were married in 1946. In "Two-Part Invention," which came out after Franklin died, of cancer, in 1986, L'Engle wrote, "There in the chapel of the church, Hugh and I made promises, promises which for forty years we have, by some grace, been able to keep." The memoir testifies to the idea that two vibrant, curious people can, over the decades, maintain a marriage that is imaginative, deeply sustaining, and alive.

Of the three children of that marriage, two survive: Josephine Jones is a psychotherapist, and Maria Rooney is a photographer; Bion Franklin died at age forty-seven, in 1999, of the effects of long-term alcoholism. L'Engle's children and grandchildren—who love her deeply, but with a kind of desperate frustration spliced with resentment—revile "Two-Part Invention." Indeed, L'Engle's family habitually refer to all her memoirs as "pure fiction," and, conversely, consider her novels to be the most autobiographical—though to them equally invasive—of her books. (Naturally, L'Engle's children are not the only writer's children who feel that by using them as copy their mother or father has mortgaged their privacy.) When Josephine Jones read "Two-Part Invention," she thought, 'Who the hell is she talking about? Alan Jones, the dean of Grace Cathedral in San Francisco, who was married to Josephine for many years, told me, "The matriarch of the family is the guardian of the family narrative, and if that person is a writer . . . One of the things Madeleine used to say to me is 'It's true, it's in my journals,' which was a hilarious statement. Some of her books were good bullshit, if you don't know the family. Spaghetti on the stove, Bach on the phonograph, that's all true. But there was this tremendous fissure."

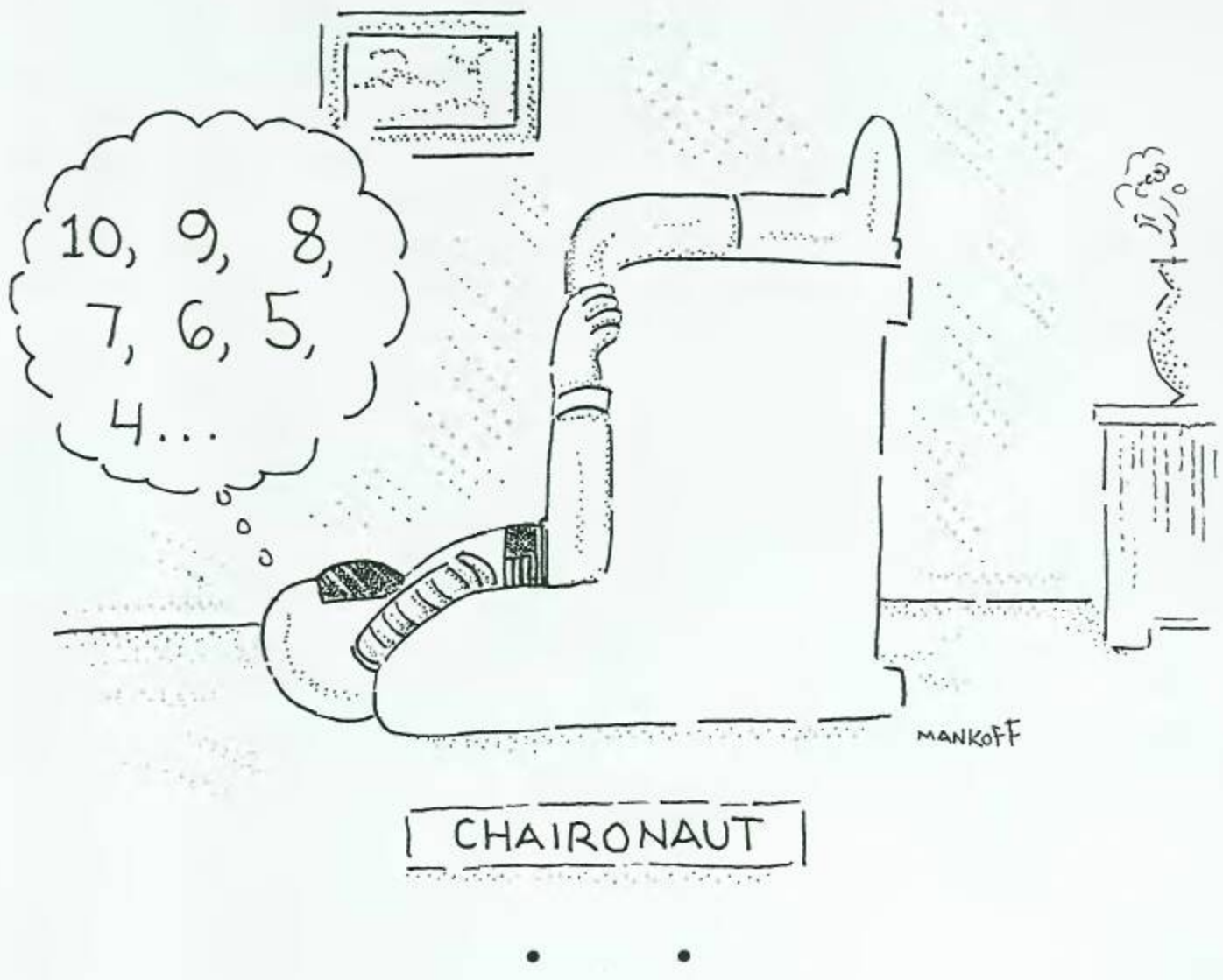
Maria Rooney calls "Two-Part Invention" "a lovely fairy tale." She says, "Madeleine knows she's had an enormous influence. I think it snowballs. It would be hard for her to say, 'I made mistakes. Like other mortals.' "

There is a line by the poet Elinor Wylie that L'Engle particularly likes: "Now let no charitable hope / Confuse my mind with images." It has, she says, some indestructible naïve power. One afternoon, in her living room, while we were talking about the past, she fell momentarily silent. In the pause, I read the spines of the books on the bookcase shelf directly behind her head: "Tituba of Salem Village," by Ann Petry; "Bruno's Dream," by Iris Murdoch; "Hildegarde, The Last Year"; Susan Sontag's "Death Kit"; and a row of six books by Rumer Godden.

At last she said, "When I was first in the cathedral library, I had my dog Oliver with me. There was a woman who used to come in he didn't like. One day, she showed up on the close with a knife. He knew she had that knife, and he wouldn't let her in the door." She narrowed her eyes. "This is the first time I haven't had a dog." She thought for a minute, and then said, "I am very impressed with the mind's ability to make a complete shift, to keep a corner free. I like the fact that the universe is alive, that it is moving and growing. Hearing yourself think—that's really what it is for a writer."

"It was the unsubstantiated rumors that attracted me to you in the first place."

The summer after Hugh and Madeleine were married, they bought a dilapidated farmhouse in Goshen, in northwest Connecticut. Josephine, born in 1947, was three years old when they moved permanently to the house, which they called Crosswicks. Bion was born just over a year later. Money was short. Hugh put his acting career aside, and the Franklins took over the derelict local general store, and made a go of it. In 1956, they adopted a little girl, Maria; her parents, close friends of theirs, had both died suddenly. L'Engle wrote early in the morning and late at night, and the white farmhouse became the proto-setting for the books that made her reputation: "A Wrinkle in Time" and the stories about the Austin family, the first of which, "Meet the Austins," was published in 1960, two years before "Wrinkle." L'Engle said, "It was during that decade when we were poised for nuclear war. We thought Goshen would be a



better, safer place for the children to grow up. Then we realized there was no safe place—we had a feeling of imminent disaster—but we tried anyway, for the children, to create that safe place. I was conscious of creating it in life, and the books were echoing what that life was like."

"Meet the Austins" is about a family like the Franklins and the Murrys, who live in a white farmhouse on a hill in Connecticut. There are four children: John; Vicky, who wants to be a writer; Suzy; and Rob, a small blond boy whose powers of empathy, if not quite up to Charles Wallace's, are nevertheless remarkable. Mrs. Austin—who is also named Vicky—is fair-minded, concerned, in love with her husband, and a good cook. The children's father, Wally (certain names run in L'Engle's family), is an overworked, beloved country doctor.

Into this happy world springs disaster. A little girl the Austins know, Maggy Hamilton, is orphaned, and comes to live with them. Alas, poor Maggy, whose only relation is a distant, rich grandfather, is spoiled, deceitful, and destructive. She tells lies and tears Rob's beloved stuffed animal, Elephant's Child. Darkness is unleashed: the children argue, Dr. Austin snaps at his wife, Vicky breaks her arm. Mirabile dictu, by the second Austin book Maggy is made to disappear through a second, convenient adoption.

"Meet the Austins" has been continuously in print since its publication. Maria Rooney told me, "I hated the Austin books. Everyone who reads them says, 'How could she have done that?'"

Rooney, who recalls her childhood relationship with her mother as difficult, is now married to an architect, and has two teen-age boys of her own. In recent years she has collaborated with L'Engle on a series of photography books about mothers and their children. She shook her head, and said, "No, I'm not filled with bitterness now. She's such a storyteller that she gets confused about what really happened."

On Maundy Thursday, a priest, performing an ancient Easter rite, came to L'Engle's apartment to wash her feet. "All Angels comes to me," she explained, naming a nearby Episcopal church. "I was thinking just now of Daniel: 'Thou art weighed in the balances and art found wanting.' Martin Buber writes about what goes on in the heart, and we're not good at admitting what goes on in the heart. It's not always pretty." Once, when I'd asked L'Engle about the gestation of Maggy Hamilton, she said, "Maggy has always been Maggy, not Maria. People have always tried to identify her with Maria, but it's not true. We didn't have a large family, and that was perhaps just as well; my characters are more alive to me than the people they are based on."

Now, she looked at me sternly over her teacup. "However, I don't like this current spate of children exposing their parents. I don't think certain things need to be discussed. Why should I care about anyone's bedding down? You know more about Tolstoy from walking through his books." She took a sip, and then said, "Well, Maria. The universe proved itself unreliable when her parents died, so she imagined she could do whatever she wanted in an unreliable universe. I read 'The Bad Seed,' and I got it out of the house because I was afraid she might read it." Later, she told me, "I think I put in a disclaimer somewhere where I say that, of course, real people are more complicated than they are in books. Didn't I do that?"

In 1960, "Meet the Austins" had come out to favorable reviews but small young-adult market sales, and "A Wrinkle in Time," despite the best efforts of L'Engle's agent, Theron Raines, could not find a publisher. The manuscript was rejected repeatedly. To Raines, the problem with the book was the religious element. (It may have been that the potential for identifying Charles Wallace as a type of Christ child made people uncomfortable.) But Raines loved it. "Here was a genuine storytelling voice, and I thought it was wonderful," he told me. "I remember one publisher saying to me that he thought he might be turning down 'Alice in Wonderland.'" But Raines pressed on, and sent the manuscript to Farrar, Straus & Giroux. "The reason John Farrar bought it is he was a very religious man and went to church; he once told me that in the early days it paid for the rent on the offices."

In 1963, after a flux of laudatory reviews (*Saturday Review* announced, "It has the general appearance of being science fiction but it is not. . . . There is mystery, mysticism, a feeling of indefinable brooding horror . . . original, different, exciting"), "A Wrinkle in Time" won the Newbery Medal, the highest honor for a work of fiction for children. This was despite the fact that some Christian fundamentalists initially tried to ban it. According to L'Engle, "They said it wasn't a Christian book. I said, 'Quite right.' I wasn't trying to write a Christian book. But, of course, it is. So is

'Robin Hood.' The Mrs. Ws witches? They're guardian angels!"

At Farrar, Straus, Sandra Jordan became, for a time, L'Engle's editor. Like Anne Jackson, she found her a winning mixture of grand dame and vulnerability. "We told each other dirty jokes," Jordan recalled, laughing. "There was one about the Holy Grail—that was part of our bonding." L'Engle was working on a sequel to "A Wrinkle in Time," the book that became "A Swiftly Tilting Planet" (there are four books in the Time series). Jordan said, "She would call and say, 'Would Charles Wallace do this?' And we would go paragraph by paragraph, and line by line."

For L'Engle, the alchemy worked. Jordan continued, "I remember with 'Ring of Endless Light' "—the fourth book in the Austin series—"I felt Vicky, who even more than Meg Murry is Madeleine's alter ego, was being insufferable. She was always right and everyone else was wrong. It was fatiguing. And Madeleine and I had a big talk about the vanity of being good, the pitfalls, which led to the scene with Grandfather, when he tells Vicky that other men's burdens are not your burdens. Madeleine had turned it around and spun straw into gold."

In the winter of 1960, the Franklins had moved back to the city, to the building on West End Avenue. Before the move, the family went on a cross-country trip, which Madeleine fictionalized in her second book about the Austins, "The Moon by Night." Hugh had begun to work in the theatre again, and in television; in 1970, he was cast as Dr. Charles Tyler in a new soap opera called "All My Children," a role that he played for fourteen years. Here, too, fiction and reality blurred. Wally Austin-cum-Hugh Franklin is a doctor; now, Hugh was playing a doctor on a hugely popular show.

Robert Lescher, who succeeded Theron Raines as L'Engle's agent, said, "One of the interesting things is that they both had different constituencies. They would go somewhere, and only one of them would be recognized. I think they were mutually supportive to an unusual degree. But Hugh was not, I'd say, as abrasive a personality."

Despite outward appearances, and what L'Engle was recounting in her journals, by the seventies the marriage was troubled. Friends noticed that Hugh was drinking heavily, and he was embroiled in at least two affairs, one of which, according to Josephine Jones, lasted until his death. When I asked L'Engle about her marriage, she said, "Hugh was lucky for an actor—he was tall, good-looking, and he didn't drink." Later, she added, "But he was anything but perfect. In forty years, we had something like four perfect minutes."

Around the same time, L'Engle, while working on a children's Christmas pageant, met Canon Edward Nason West, an Anglican priest affiliated with the Cathedral of St. John the Divine. On the cathedral close, where eccentricity is prima facie, Canon West, brilliant, irascible, and charismatic, stood out: one old friend describes him as "lovely and horrendous." L'Engle adored him. West became her spiritual adviser, confidant, trusted reader, and the model for Canon Tallis, who first appears as presiding magus in her Murry-family novel "The Arm of the Starfish." On West's suggestion, she delivered what became an annual tradition of Advent sermons at the cathedral about the Christmas story—the gist of which fit into what Charlotte Jones calls "Madeleine's 'It doesn't have to be true to be true' thing." The sermons—moving, allusory, and intricately reasoned—led to L'Engle's second career, as a public speaker, which often took her away from home. (Her meditations also inspired an outpouring of religious poetry and musings, which are now published by Waterbrook Press.)

During those years, Josephine miscarried, and L'Engle wrote about it, in manuscript. Alan and Josephine asked her to take it out. She did, finally, but she didn't understand why they wanted her to. Other members of the family say, too, that there were incidents in their own lives—in some cases the usual growing pains, and in others what they considered singular, traumatic events—that L'Engle appropriated and used in her novels or revealed in "The Crosswicks Journal." Her own troubles, however, were excised or trimmed to fit. "Think of it," Alan Jones said. "The confirmed construction of the self by means of narrative. Golly, what a job."

On West End Avenue, piles of paperback mysteries teeter by L'Engle's bed. She'll read any mystery, unless she knows that the plot revolves around a dead child. In her dressing gown, looking her most imperious, she pointed to a Chinese highboy across the room, and said, "It was in an antique shop in London. The Queen Mother was looking at it, but my step-grandmother bought it right out from under her nose. I've always thought she'd make a good novel, but you don't write about anything too close."

For L'Engle, the truth is in the telling. In the long dream of her fiction, in which the search for the father is central, that figure changes from an ineffectual father to a fraudulent—or absent—father. In some later novels, the father is dispensed with altogether and replaced by an Anglican priest. But in that dream, which hopscotches through time and space, and in which figures familiar from one book often appear, in another, there are two characters who do not grow up. The first is the bookish, awkward Vicky Austin, the girl who wants to become a writer. The second is Charles Wallace Murry and his Austin counterpart, Rob, who are essentially the same child. When I mentioned to Charlotte Jones that Vicky is stuck in time, and asked why L'Engle never shows us who Vicky became, she said simply, "Gran can't. I've asked her about it. Vicky is the character who's closest to her, to who she was as a child, and it would mean looking at her own life in a way she's not prepared to do. Or not willing to do."

Charlotte paused. "One thing I respect about Gran is that she's seamless. She is able to put many complicated things together and make them whole, but she wasn't able to do that with Vicky, or with Charles Wallace, ultimately, or, of course, with Bion, who to her was a combination of Charles Wallace and Rob Austin. She will not admit he died of alcoholism. She will not budge, and she will not talk about it. Bion loathed and detested the Austins."

Bion Franklin, who wanted to be a writer, lived for almost all his adult life at Crosswicks with his wife, Laurie, a doc-

tor. According to the family, he is the person for whom L'Engle's insistence on blurring fiction and reality had the most disastrous consequences. L'Engle's former agent, Theron Raines, who met Bion when he was four or five, remembers him as beautiful and sweet. Everyone in L'Engle's family is large—they're big-boned people—but in the snapshots taken of Bion in the years before he died, he is beyond big, or just heavy: he looks smeared. "It's hard," Maria Rooney said, "to be the magic child."

It was a stormy June day. I had gone to Crosswicks with my children to visit L'Engle. Laurie Franklin, Bion's widow, and Josephine Jones showed me a room above the garage, where L'Engle used to write. No one had cleaned it in a very long time. Outside, beyond a meadow, were the Murrys' woods, and the star-watching rock from the Austin-family stories. Jones said, "I have a feeling still that this is forbidden. I'm not supposed to be up here, and once in a while I still get this hit."

During the year, Jones, who lives in her own house in northwest Connecticut, travels to New York City every other weekend to see her mother. She said, "I went through a time fairly recently when I wanted my mother to know that I knew her parents hadn't been good parents to her. I often wonder if she had grown up in a different family, rather than in a family that was emotionally deprived, what kind of childhood we would have had."

"Bion wouldn't read her books," Franklin said.

"Bion would not leave home," Jones added.

Shrieks of laughter came from an indoor swimming pool, where my children were swimming with L'Engle's great-grandchildren.

L'Engle now lives across the road when she is here during the summer, in a spacious, one-story house that she built a few years ago, for when she would no longer be able to climb the stairs at Crosswicks. ("Old age," she likes to say, quoting Bette Davis, "is not for sissies.") The house is airy and light, and the living-room windows have a view of her meadow. In the late afternoon, the grass turns from green to gold. Throughout the summer, mail from fans—sometimes addressed simply to "Madeleine L'Engle, Crosswicks"—piles up here, too.

One evening, while we were having supper together, I asked L'Engle about her relationship with her readers. "It scares me shitless!" she said. "Because it's a responsibility. Over time, someone reads your book, and something happens. People want intimacy, and I have a terrible time saying no." When people tell her, "You've helped me grow up, you're my mother," she tends to brush it off: her job, as she sees it, is to write stories, not to be known. (About her own children, she has said, "My children want Mama to be Mama, and if I'm known it takes me away from them.")

In her living room, she directed her gaze to a spot beside my chair. "Now, you know an alligator comes to visit. His name is Alastair."

Marianne Moore, I mentioned, had a pet alligator when she was a child.

"Did she? How wonderful. Then I'm certain it returned to her, too, in old age. Mine is from Jacksonville."

She turned to look at me. "I think I'm less judgmental now. I accept people as they are. And I'm able to think more freely about my childhood." Later, she added, "My father was glamorous, and he seemed that way because, I think, he *was* pretty glamorous. Just because I know his faults now doesn't mean he wasn't glamorous."

She admits, though, that the portraits in her memoirs are idealized: "I can't put disturbing things about people into print." In fiction, she is freer. "If I'm working on a piece of fiction," she told me, "I do not write from life. I think that my characters came to me because I didn't have any family, and I wanted to have a family, and it was the only way I could get it."

"But you had your own family," I said.

"Even so, writing the stories came out of my childhood experiences."

Time, for L'Engle, is accordion-pleated. She elaborated, "When you bring a sheet off the line, you can't handle it until it's folded, and in a sense, I think, the universe can't exist until it's folded—or it's a story without a book."

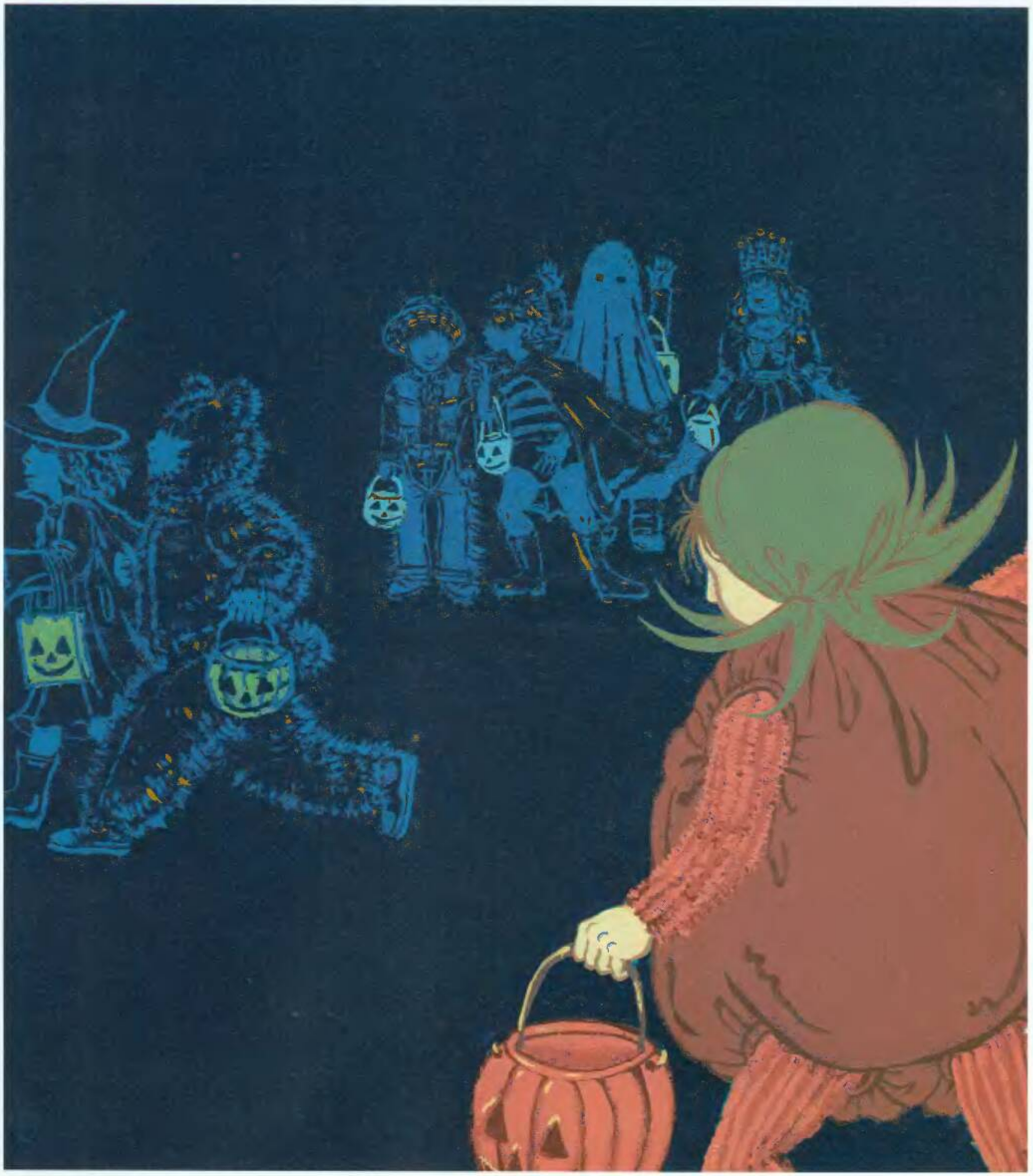
But, I asked, is there a difference between fiction and nonfiction? "Not much," she said, shrugging. It was a long shrug, the wishbone of her shoulders pulled up almost to her ears. "Because there's really no such thing as nonfiction. When people read your books, they think they know everything, but they don't. Writing is like a fairy tale. It happens elsewhere." She paused. "I had a friend, who died. She thought she could control everything. See? The story creeps up whether we want it to or not." ♦

"You get ten vacation days, three personal days, and two technical-difficulties days."

FICTION

THE RABBIT HOLE AS LIKELY EXPLANATION

BY ANN BEATTIE



My mother does not remember being invited to my first wedding. This comes up in conversation when I pick her up from the lab, where blood has been drawn to see how she's doing on her medication. She's sitting in an orange plastic chair, giving the man next to her advice I'm not sure he asked for about how to fill out forms on a clipboard. Apparently, before I arrived, she told him that she had not been invited to either of my weddings.

"I don't know why you sent me to have my blood drawn," she says.

"The doctor asked me to make an appointment. I did not send you."

"Well, you were late. I sat there waiting and waiting."

"You showed up an hour before your appointment, Ma. That's why you were there so long. I arrived fifteen minutes after the nurse called me." It's my authoritative but cajoling voice. One tone negates the other and nothing much gets communicated.

"You sound like Perry Mason," she says.

"Ma, there's a person trying to get around you."

"Well, I'm very sorry if I'm holding anyone up. They can just honk and get into the other lane."

A woman hurries around my mother in the hospital corridor, narrowly missing an oncoming wheelchair brigade: four chairs, taking up most of the hallway.

"She drives a sports car, that one," my mother says. "You can always tell. But look at the size of her. How does she fit in the car?"

I decide to ignore her. She has on dangling hoop earrings, and there's a scratch on her forehead and a Band-Aid on her cheekbone. Her face looks a little like an obstacle course. "Who is going to get our car for us?" she asks.

"Who do you think? Sit in the lobby, and I'll turn into the driveway."

"A car makes you think about the future all the time, doesn't it?" she says. "You have to do all that imagining: how you'll get out of the garage and into your lane and how you'll deal with all the traffic, and then one time, remember, just as you got to the driveway a man and a woman stood smack in the center, arguing, and they wouldn't move so you could pull in."

"My life is a delight," I say.

"I don't think your new job agrees with you. You're such a beautiful seamstress—a real, old-fashioned talent—and what do you do but work on computers and leave that lovely house in the country and drive into this . . . this crap five days a week."

"Thank you, Ma, for expressing even more eloquently than I—"

"Did you finish those swordfish costumes?"

"Starfish. I was tired, and I watched TV last night. Now, if you sit in that chair over there you'll see me pull in. It's windy. I don't want you standing outside."

"You always have some reason why I can't be outside. You're afraid of the bees, aren't you? After that bee stung your toe when you were raking, you got desperate about yellow jackets—that's what they're called. You shouldn't have had on sandals when you were raking. Wear your hiking boots when you rake leaves, if you can't find another husband to do it for you."

"Please stop lecturing me and—"

"Get your car! What's the worst that can happen? I have to stand up for a few minutes? It's not like I'm one of those guards outside Buckingham Palace who has to look straight ahead until he loses consciousness."

"O.K. You can stand here and I'll pull in."

"What car do you have?"

"The same car I always have."

"If I don't come out, come in for me."

"Well, of course, Ma. But why wouldn't you come out?"

"S.U.V.s can block your view. They drive right up, like they own the curb. They've got those tinted windows like Liz Taylor might be inside, or a gangster. That lovely man from Brunei—why did I say that? I must have been thinking of the Sultan of Brunei. Anyway, that man I was talking to said that in New York City he was getting out of a cab at a hotel at the same exact moment that Elizabeth Taylor got out of a limousine. He said she just kept handing little dogs out the door to everybody. The doorman. The bellhop. Her hairdresser had one under each arm. But they weren't hers—they were his own dogs! He didn't have a free hand to help Elizabeth Taylor. So that desperate man—"

"Ma, we've got to get going."

"I'll come with you."

"You hate elevators. The last time we tried that, you wouldn't walk—"

"Well, the stairs didn't kill me, did they?"

"I wasn't parked five flights up. Look, just stand by the window and—"

"I know what's happening. You're telling me over and over!"

I raise my hands and drop them. "See you soon," I say.

"Is it the green car? The black car that I always think is green?"

"Yes, Ma. My only car."

"Well, you don't have to say it like that. I hope you never know what it's like to have small confusions about things. I understand that your car is black. It's when it's in strong sun that it looks a little green."

"Back in five," I say, and enter the revolving door. A man ahead of me, with both arms in casts, pushes on the glass with his forehead. We're out in a few seconds. Then he turns and looks at me, his face crimson.

"I didn't know if I pushed, whether it might make the door go too fast," I say.

"I figured there was an explanation," he says dully, and walks away.

The fat woman who passed us in the hallway is waiting on the sidewalk for the light to change, chatting on her cell phone. When the light blinks green, she moves forward with her head turned to the side, as if the phone clamped to her ear were leading her. She has on an ill-fitting blazer and one of those long skirts that everybody wears, with sensible shoes and a teeny purse dangling over her shoulder. "Right behind you," my mother says distinctly, catching up with me halfway to the opposite curb.

"Ma, there's an elevator."

"You do enough things for your mother! It's desperate of you to do this on your lunch hour. Does picking me up mean you won't get any food? Now that you can see I'm fine, you could send me home in a cab."

"No, no, it's no problem. But last night you asked me to drop you at the hairdresser. Wasn't that where you wanted to go?"

"Oh, I don't think that's today."

"Yes. The appointment is in fifteen minutes. With Eloise."

"I wouldn't want to be named for

YUKO SHIMIZU

somebody who caused a commotion at the Plaza. Would you?"

"No. Ma, why don't you wait by the ticket booth, and when I drive—"

"You're full of ideas! Why won't you just let me go to the car with you?"

"In an elevator? You're going to get in an elevator? All right. Fine with me."

"It isn't one of those glass ones, is it?"

"It does have one glass wall."

"I'll be like those other women, then. The ones who've hit the glass ceiling."

"Here we are."

"It has a funny smell. I'll sit in a chair and wait for you."

"Ma, that's back across the street. You're here now. I can introduce you to the guy over there in the booth, who collects the money. Or you can just take a deep breath and ride up with me. O.K.?"

A man inside the elevator, wearing a suit, holds the door open. "Thank you," I say. "Ma?"

"I like your suggestion about going to that chapel," she says. "Pick me up there."

The man continues to hold the door with his shoulder, his eyes cast down.

"Not a chapel, a booth. Right there? That's where you'll be?"

"Yes. Over there with that man."

"You see the man—" I step off the elevator and the doors close behind me.

"I did see him. He said that his son was getting married in Las Vegas. And I said, 'I never got to go to my daughter's weddings.' And he said, 'How many weddings did she have?' and of course I answered honestly. So he said, 'How did that make you feel?' and I said that a dog was at one of them."

"That was the wedding you came to. My first wedding. You don't remember putting a bow on Ebeneezer's neck? It was your idea." I take her arm and guide her toward the elevator.

"Yes, I took it off a beautiful floral display that was meant to be inside the church, but you and that man wouldn't go inside. There was no flat place to stand. If you were a woman wearing heels, there was no place to stand anywhere, and it was going to rain."

"It was a sunny day."

"I don't remember that. Did Grandma make your dress?"

"No. She offered, but I wore a dress we bought in London."

"That was just desperate. It must have broken her heart."

"Her arthritis was so bad she could hardly hold a pen, let alone a needle."

"You must have broken her heart."

"Well, Ma, this isn't getting us to the car. What's the plan?"

"The Marshall Plan."

"What?"

"The Marshall Plan. People of my generation don't scoff at that."

"Ma, maybe we'd better give standing by the booth another try. You don't even have to speak to the man. Will you do it?"

"Do you have some objection if I get on the elevator with you?"

"No, but this time if you say you're going to do it you have to do it. We can't have people holding doors open all day. People need to get where they're going."

"Listen to the things you say! They're so obvious, I don't know why you say them."

She is looking through her purse. Just below the top of her head, I can see her scalp through her hair. "Ma," I say.

"Yes, yes, coming," she says. "I thought I might have the card with that hair stylist's name."

"It's Eloise."

"Thank you, dear. Why didn't you say so before?"

I call my brother Tim. "She's worse," I say. "If you want to visit her while she's still more or less with it, I'd suggest you book a flight."

"You don't know," he says. "The fight for tenure. How much rides on this one article."

"Tim. As your sister. I'm not talking about your problems, I'm—"

"She's been going downhill for some time. And God bless you for taking care of her! She's a wonderful woman. And I give you all the credit. You're a patient person."

"Tim. She's losing it by the day. If you care—if you care, see her now."

"Let's be honest: I don't have deep feelings, and I wasn't her favorite. That was the problem with René: Did I have any deep feelings? I mean, kudos! Kudos to you! Do you have any understanding of why Mom and Dad got together? He was a recluse, and she was such a party animal. She never understood a person turning to books for serious study, did she? Did she? Maybe I'd be the last to know."

"Tim, I suggest you visit before Christmas."

"That sounds more than a little omi-

nous. May I say that? You call when I've just gotten home from a day I couldn't paraphrase, and you tell me—as you have so many times—that she's about to die, or lose her marbles entirely, and then you say—"

"Take care, Tim," I say, and hang up.

I drive to my mother's apartment to kill time while she gets her hair done, and go into the living room and see that the plants need watering. Two are new arrivals, plants that friends brought her when she was in the hospital, having her foot operated on: a kalanchoe and a miniature chrysanthemum. I rinse out the mug she probably had her morning coffee in and fill it under the faucet. I douse the plants, refilling the mug twice. My brother is re-thinking Wordsworth at a university in Ohio, and for years I have been back in this small town in Virginia where we grew up, looking out for our mother. Kudos, as he would say.

"O.K.," the doctor says. "We've known the time was coming. It will be much better if she's in an environment where her needs are met. I'm only talking about assisted living. If it will help, I'm happy to meet with her and explain that things have reached a point where she needs a more comprehensive support system."

"She'll say no."

"Regardless," he says. "You and I know that if there was a fire she wouldn't be capable of processing the necessity of getting out. Does she eat dinner? We can't say for sure that she eats, now, can we? She needs to maintain her caloric intake. We want to allow her to avail herself of resources structured so that she can best meet her own needs."

"She'll say no," I say again.

"May I suggest that you let Tim operate as a support system?"

"Forget him. He's already been denied tenure twice."

"Be that as it may, if your brother knows she's not eating—"

"Do you know she's not eating?"

"Let's say she's not eating," he says. "It's a slippery slope."

"Pretending that I have my brother as a 'support system' has no basis in reality. You want me to admit that she's thin? O.K. She's thin."

"Please grant my point, without—"

"Why? Because you're a doctor? Because you're pissed off that she misbehaved at some cashier's stand in a parking lot?"

"You told me she pulled the fire alarm," he says. "She's out of control! Face it."

"I'm not sure," I say, my voice quivering.

"I am. I've known you forever. I remember your mother making chocolate-chip cookies, my father always going to your house to see if she'd made the damned cookies. I know how difficult it is when a parent isn't able to take care of himself. My father lived in my house, and Donna took care of him in a way I can never thank her enough for, until he . . . well, until he died."

"Tim wants me to move her to a cheap nursing home in Ohio."

"Out of the question."

"Right. She hasn't come to the point where she needs to go to Ohio. On the other hand, we should put her in the slammer here."

"The slammer. We can't have a serious discussion if you pretend we're talking to each other in a comic strip."

I bring my knees to my forehead, clasp my legs, and press the kneecaps hard into my eyes.

"I understand from Dr. Milrus that you're having a difficult time," the therapist says. Her office is windowless, the chairs cheerfully mismatched. "Why don't you fill me in?"

"Well, my mother had a stroke a year ago. It did something. . . . Not that she didn't have some confusions before, but after the stroke she thought my brother was ten years old. She still sometimes says things about him that I can't make any sense of, unless I remember that she often, really quite often, thinks he's still ten. She also believes that I'm sixty. I mean, she thinks I'm only fourteen years younger than she is! And, to her, that's proof that my father had another family. Our family was an afterthought, my father had had another family, and I'm a child of the first marriage. I'm sixty years old, whereas she herself was only seventy-four when she had the stroke and fell over on the golf course."

The therapist nods.

"In any case, my brother is forty-four—about to be forty-five—and lately it's all she'll talk about."

"Your brother's age?"

"No, the revelation. That they—you know, the other wife, and children—existed. She thinks the shock made her fall down at the fourth tee."

"Were your parents happily married?"

"I've shown her my baby album and said, 'If I was some other family's child, then what is this?' And she says, 'More of your father's chicanery.' That is the exact word she uses. The thing is, I am not sixty. I'll be fifty-one next week."

"It's difficult, having someone dependent upon us, isn't it?"

"Well, yes. But that's because she causes herself so much pain by thinking that my father had a previous family."

"How do you think you can best care for your mother?"

"She pities me! She really does! She says she's met every one of them: a son and a daughter, and a woman, a wife, who looks very much like her, which seems to make her sad. Well, I guess it would make her sad. Of course it's fiction, but I've given up trying to tell her that, because in a way I think it's symbolically important. It's necessary to her that she think what she thinks, but I'm just so tired of what she thinks. Do you know what I mean?"

"Tell me about yourself," the therapist says. "You live alone?"

"Me? Well, at this point I'm divorced, after I made the mistake of not marrying my boyfriend, Vic, and married an old friend instead. Vic and I talked about getting married, but I was having a lot of trouble taking care of my mother, and I could never give him enough attention. When we broke up, Vic devoted all his time to his secretary's dog, Banderas. If Vic was grieving, he did it while he was at the dog park."

"And you work at Cosmos Computer, it says here?"

"I do. They're really very family-oriented. They understand absolutely that I have to take time off to do things for my mother. I used to work at an interior-design store, and I still sew. I've just finished some starfish costumes for a friend's third-grade class."

"Jack Milrus thinks your mother

might benefit from being in assisted living."

"I know, but he doesn't know—he really doesn't know—what it's like to approach my mother about anything."

"What is the worst thing that might happen if you did approach your mother?"

"The worst thing? My mother turns any subject to the other family, and whatever I want is just caught up in the whirlwind of complexity of this thing I won't acknowledge, which is my father's previous life, and, you know, she omits my brother from any discussion because she thinks he's a ten-year-old child."

"You feel frustrated."

"Is there any other way to feel?"

"You could say to yourself, 'My mother has had a stroke and has certain confusions that I can't do anything about.'"

"You don't understand. It is absolutely necessary that I acknowledge this other family. If I don't, I've lost all credibility."

The therapist shifts in her seat. "May I make a suggestion?" she says. "This is your mother's problem, not yours. You understand something that your mother, whose brain has been affected by a stroke, cannot understand. Just as you would guide a child, who does not know how to function in the world, you are now in a position where—whatever your mother believes—you must nevertheless do what is best for her."

"You need a vacation," Jack Milrus says. "If I weren't on call this weekend, I'd suggest that you and Donna and I go up to Washington and see that show at the Corcoran where all the figures walk out of the paintings."

"I'm sorry I keep bothering you with this. I know I have to make a decision. It's just that when I went back to look at the Oaks and that woman had mashed an éclair into her face—"

"It's funny. Just look at it as funny. Kids make a mess. Old people make a mess. Some old biddy pushed her nose into a pastry."

"Right," I say, draining my gin-and-tonic. We are in his back yard. Inside, Donna is making her famous osso buco. "You know, I wanted to ask you something. Sometimes she says 'desperate.' She uses the word when you wouldn't expect to hear it."

"Strokes," he says.

"But is she trying to say what she feels?"

"Does it come out like a hiccup or something?" He pulls up a weed.

"No, she just says it, instead of another word."

He looks at the long tap root of the dandelion he's twisted up. "The South," he says. "These things have a horribly long growing season." He drops it in a wheelbarrow filled with limp things raked up from the yard. "I am desperate to banish dandelions," he says.

"No, she wouldn't use it like that. She'd say something like 'Oh, it was desperate of you to ask me to dinner.'"

"It certainly was. You weren't paying any attention to me on the telephone."

"Just about ready!" Donna calls out the kitchen window. Jack raises a hand in acknowledgment. He says, "Donna's debating whether to tell you that she saw Vic and Banderas having a fight near the dog park. Vic was knocking Banderas on the snout with a baseball cap, Donna says, and Banderas had squared off and was showing teeth. Groceries all over the street."

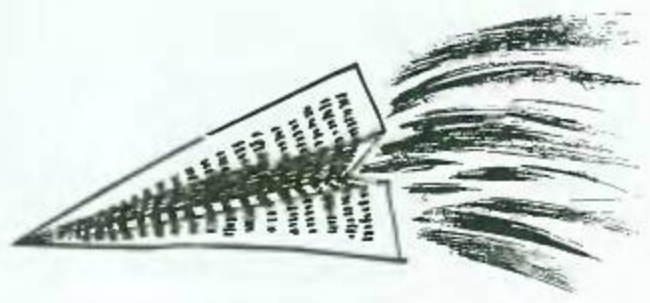
"I'm amazed. I thought Banderas could do no wrong."

"Well, things change."

In the yard next door, the neighbor's strange son faces the street lamp and, excruciatingly slowly, begins his many evening sun salutations.

Cora, my brother's friend, calls me at midnight. I am awake, watching "Igby Goes Down" on the VCR. Susan Sarandon, as the dying mother, is a wonder. Three friends sent me the tape for my birthday. The only other time such a thing has happened was years ago, when four friends sent me "Play It as It Lays," by Joan Didion.

"Tim thinks that he and I should do our share and have Mom here for a vacation, which we could do in November, when the college has a reading break," Cora says. "I would move into Tim's condominium, if it wouldn't offend Mom."



"That's nice of you," I say. "But you know that she thinks Tim is ten years old? I'm not sure that she'd be willing to fly to Ohio to have a ten-year-old take care of her."

"What?"

"Tim hasn't told you about this? He wrote her a letter, recently, and she saved it to show me how good his penmanship was."

"Well, when she gets here she'll see that he's a grownup."

"She might think it's a Tim impostor, or something. She'll talk to you constantly about our father's first family."

"I still have some Ativan from when a root canal had to be redone," Cora says.

"O.K., look—I'm not trying to discourage you. But I'm also not convinced that she can make the trip alone. Would Tim consider driving here to pick her up?"

"Gee. My nephew is eleven, and he's been back and forth to the West Coast several times."

"I don't think this is a case of packing snacks in her backpack and giving her a puzzle book for the plane," I say.

"Oh, I am not trying to infantilize your mother. Quite the opposite: I think that if she suspects there's doubt about whether she can do it on her own she might not rise to the occasion, but if we just . . ."

"People never finish their sentences anymore," I say.

"Oh, gosh, I can finish," Cora says. "I mean, I was saying that she'll take care of herself if we assume that she *can* take care of herself."

"Would a baby take care of itself if we assumed that it could?"

"Oh, my goodness!" Cora says. "Look what time it is! I thought it was nine o'clock! Is it after midnight?"

"Twelve-fifteen."

"My watch stopped! I'm looking at the kitchen clock and it says twelve-ten."

I have met Cora twice: once she weighed almost two hundred pounds, and the other time she'd been on Atkins and weighed a hundred and forty. *Bride's* magazine was in the car when she picked me up at the airport. During the last year, however, her dreams have not been fulfilled.

"Many apologies," Cora says.

"Listen," I say. "I was awake. No need

to apologize. But I don't feel that we've settled anything."

"I'm going to have Tim call you tomorrow, and I am really sorry!"

"Cora, I didn't mean anything personal when I said that people don't finish sentences anymore. I don't finish my own."

"You take care, now!" she says, and hangs up.

"She's where?"

"Right here in my office. She was on a bench in Lee Park. Someone saw her talking to a woman who was drunk—a street person—just before the cops arrived. The woman was throwing bottles she'd gotten out of a restaurant's recycling at the statue. Your mother said she was keeping score. The woman was winning, the statue losing. The woman had blood all over her face, so eventually somebody called the cops."

"Blood all over her face?"

"She'd cut her fingers picking up glass after she threw it. It was the other woman who was bloody."

"Oh, God, my mother's O.K.?"

"Yes, but we need to act. I've called the Oaks. They can't do anything today, but tomorrow they can put her in a semi-private for three nights, which they aren't allowed to do, but never mind. Believe me: once she's in there, they'll find a place."

"I'll be right there."

"Hold on," he says. "We need to have a plan. I don't want her at your place: I want her hospitalized tonight, and I want an MRI. Tomorrow morning, if there's no problem, you can take her to the Oaks."

"What's the point of scaring her to death? Why does she have to be in a hospital?"

"She's very confused. It won't be any help if you don't get to sleep tonight."

"I feel like we should—"

"You feel like you should protect your mother, but that's not really possible, is it? She was picked up in Lee Park. Fortunately, she had my business card and her beautician's card clipped to a shopping list that contains—it's right in front of me—items such as Easter eggs and arsenic."

"Arsenic? Was she going to poison herself?"

There is a moment of silence. "Let's say she was," he says, "for the sake of argument. Now, come and pick her up, and we can get things rolling."

"And thanks for the potluck."

• •

Tim and Cora were getting married by a justice of the peace at approximately the same time that "Mom" was tracking bottles in Lee Park; they converge on the hospital room with Donna Milrus, who whispers apologetically that her husband is "playing doctor" and avoiding visiting hours.

Cora's wedding bouquet is in my mother's water pitcher. Tim cracks his knuckles and clears his throat repeatedly. "They got upset that I'd been sitting in the park. Can you imagine?" my mother says suddenly to the assembled company. "Do you think we're going to have many more of these desperate fall days?"

The next morning, only Tim and I are there to get her into his rental car and take her to the Oaks. Our mother sits in front, her purse on her lap, occasionally saying something irrational, which I finally figure out is the result of her reading vanity license plates aloud.

From the back seat, I look at the town like a visitor. There's much too much traffic. People's faces inside their cars surprise me: no one over the age of twenty seems to have a neutral, let alone happy, expression. Men with jutting jaws and women squinting hard pass by. I find myself wondering why more of them don't wear sunglasses, and whether that might not help. My thoughts drift: the Gucci sunglasses I lost in London; the time I dressed as a skeleton for Halloween. In childhood, I appeared on Halloween as Felix the Cat, as Jiminy Cricket (I still have the cane, which I often pull out of the closet, mistaking it for an umbrella), and as a tomato.

"You know," my mother says to my brother, "your father had an entire family before he met us. He never mentioned them, either. Wasn't that cruel? If we'd met them, we might have liked them, and vice versa. Your sister gets upset if I say that's the case, but everything you read now suggests that it's better if the families meet. You have a ten-year-old brother from that first family. You're too old to be jealous of a child, aren't you? So there's no reason why you wouldn't get along."

"Mom," he says, breathlessly.

"Your sister tells me every time we see each other that she's fifty-one. She's preoccupied with age. Being around an old person can do that. I'm old, but I forget to think about myself that way. Your

sister is in the back seat right now thinking about mortality, mark my words."

My brother's knuckles are white on the wheel.

"Are we going to the hairdresser?" she says suddenly. She taps the back of her neck. Her fingers move up until they encounter small curls. When Tim realizes that I'm not going to answer, he says, "Your hair looks lovely, Mom. Don't worry about it."

"Well, I always like to be punctual when I have an appointment," she says.

I think how strange it is that I was never dressed up as Cleopatra, or as a ballerina. What was wrong with me that I wanted to be a tomato?

"Ma, on Halloween, was I ever dressed as a girl?"

In the mirror, my brother's eyes dart to mine. For a second, I remember Vic's eyes as he checked my reactions in the rearview mirror, those times I had my mother sit up front so the two of them could converse more easily.

"Well," my mother says, "I think one year you thought about being a nurse, but Joanne Willoughby was going to be a nurse. I was in the grocery store, and there was Mrs. Willoughby, fingering the costume we'd thought about the night before. It was wrong of me not to be more decisive. I think that's what made you impulsive as a grownup."

"You think I'm impulsive? I think of myself as somebody who never does anything unexpected."

"I wouldn't say that," my mother says. "Look at that man you married when you didn't even really know him. The first husband. And then you married that man you knew way back in high school. It makes me wonder if you didn't inherit some of your father's fickle tendencies."

"Let's not fight," my brother says.

"What do you think other mothers would say if I told them both my children got married without inviting me to their weddings? I think some of them would think that must say something about me. Maybe it was my inadequacy that made your father consider us second-best. Tim, men tell other men things. Did your father tell you about the other family?"

Tim tightens his grip on the wheel. He doesn't answer. Our mother pats his arm. She says, "Tim wanted to be Edgar Bergen one year. Do you remember? But your father pointed out that we'd have to buy one of those expensive Charlie McCarthy dolls, and he wasn't about to do that. Little did we know, he had a whole other family to support."

Everyone at the Oaks is referred to formally as "Mrs." You can tell when the nurses really like someone, because they refer to her by the less formal "Miz."

Miz Banks is my mother's roommate. She has a tuft of pure white hair that makes her look like an exotic bird. She is ninety-nine.

"Today is Halloween, I understand," my mother says. "Are we going to have a party?"

The nurse smiles. "Whether or not it's a special occasion, we always have a lovely midday meal," she says. "And we hope the family will join us."

"It's suppertime?" Miz Banks says.

"No, ma'am, it's only 10 A.M. right now," the nurse says loudly. "But we'll come get you for the midday meal, as we always do."

"Oh, God," Tim says. "What do we do now?"

The nurse frowns. "Excuse me?" she says.

"I thought Dr. Milrus was going to be here," he says. He looks around the room, as if Jack Milrus might be hiding somewhere. Not possible, unless he's wedged himself behind the desk that is sitting at an odd angle in the corner. The nurse follows his gaze and says, "Miz Banks's nephew has feng-shui'd her part of the room."

Nearest the door—in our part of the room—there is white wicker furniture. Three pink bears teeter on a mobile hung from an air vent in the ceiling. On a bulletin board is a color picture of a baby with one tooth, grinning. Our mother has settled into a yellow chair and looks quite small. She eyes everyone, and says nothing.

"Would this be a convenient time to sign some papers?" the nurse asks. It is the second time that she has mentioned this—both times to my brother, not me.

"Oh, my God," he says. "How can this be happening?" He is not doing very well.

"Let's step outside and let the ladies get to know each other," the nurse says. She takes his arm and leads him through the door. "We don't want to be negative," I hear her say.

I sit on my mother's bed. My mother looks at me blankly. It is as if she doesn't recognize me in this context. She says,

finally, "Whose Greek fisherman's cap is that?"

She is pointing to the Sony Walkman that I placed on the bed, along with an overnight bag and some magazines.

"That's a machine that plays music, Ma."

"No it isn't," she says. "It's a Greek fisherman's cap."

I pick it up and hold it out to her. I press "play," and music can be heard through the dangling earphones. We both look at it as if it were the most curious thing in the world. I adjust the volume to low and put the earphones on her head. She closes her eyes. Finally, she says, "Is this the beginning of the Halloween party?"

"I threw you off, talking about Halloween," I say. "Today's just a day in early November."

"Thanksgiving is next," she says, opening her eyes.

"I suppose it is," I say. I notice that Miz Banks's head has fallen forward.

"Is that thing over there the turkey?" my mother says, pointing.

"It's your roommate."

"I was joking," she says.

I realize that I am clenching my hands only when I unclench them. I try to smile, but I can't hold up the corners of my mouth.

My mother arranges the earphones around her neck as if they were a stethoscope. "If I'd let you be what you wanted that time, maybe I'd have my own private nurse now. Maybe I wasn't so smart, after all."

"This is just temporary," I lie.

"Well, I don't want to go to my grave thinking you blame me for things that were out of my control. It's perfectly possible that your father was a bigamist. My mother told me not to marry him."

"Gramma told you not to marry Daddy?"

"She was a smart old fox. She sniffed him out."

"But he never did what you accuse him of. He came home from the war and married you, and you had us. Maybe we confused you by growing up so fast, or something. I don't want to make you mad by mentioning my age, but maybe all those years that we were a family, so long ago, were like one long Halloween: we were costumed as children, and then we outgrew the costumes and we were grown."

She looks at me. "That's an interesting way to put it," she says.

"And the other family—maybe it's like the mixup between the man dreaming he's a butterfly, or the butterfly dreaming he's a man. Maybe you were confused after your stroke, or it came to you in a dream and it seemed real, the way dreams sometimes linger. Maybe you couldn't understand how we'd all aged, so you invented us again as young people. And for some reason Tim got frozen in time. You said the other wife looked like you. Well, maybe she *was* you."

"I don't know," my mother says slowly. "I think your father was just attracted to the same type of woman."

"But nobody ever met these people. There's no marriage license. He was married to you for almost fifty years. Don't you see that what I'm saying is a more likely explanation?"

"You really do remind me of that detective, Desperate Mason. You get an idea, and your eyes get big, just the way his do. I feel like you're about to lean into the witness stand."

Jack Milrus, a towel around his neck, stands in the doorway. "In a million years, you'll never guess why I'm late," he says. "A wheel came off a truck and knocked my car off the road, into a pond. I had to get out through the window and wade back to the highway."

A nurse comes up behind him with more towels and some dry clothes.

"Maybe it's just raining out, but it feels to him like he was in a pond," my mother says, winking at me.

"You understand!" I say.

"Everybody has his little embellishments," my mother says. "There wouldn't be any books to read to children and there would be precious few to read to adults if storytellers weren't allowed a few embellishments."

"Ma! That is absolutely true."

"Excuse me while I step into the bathroom and change my clothes."

"Humor him," my mother whispers to me behind her hand. "When he comes out, he'll think he's a doctor, but you and I will know that Jack is only hoping to go to medical school."

You think you understand the problem you're facing, only to find out there is another, totally unexpected problem.

There is much consternation and confusion among the nurses when Tim disappears and has not reappeared after nearly an hour. Jack Milrus weighs in: Tim is immature and irresponsible, he says. Quite possibly a much more severe problem than anyone suspected. My mother suggests slyly that Tim decided to fall down a rabbit hole and have an adventure. She says, "The rabbit hole's a more likely explanation," smiling smugly.

Stretched out in bed, her tennis shoes neatly arranged on the floor, my mother says, "He always ran away from difficult situations. Look at you and Jack, with those astonished expressions on your faces! Mr. Mason will find him," she adds. Then she closes her eyes.

"You see?" Jack Milrus whispers, guiding me out of the room. "She's adjusted beautifully. And it's hardly a terrible place, is it?" He answers his own question: "No, it isn't."

"What happened to the truck?" I ask.

"Driver apologized. Stood on the shoulder talking on his cell phone. Three cop cars were there in about three seconds. I got away by pointing to my M.D. plates."

"Did Tim tell you he just got married?"

"I heard that. During visiting hours, his wife took Donna aside to give her the happy news and to say that we weren't to slight him in any way, because he was ready, willing, and able—that was the way she said it to Donna—to assume responsibility for his mother's well-being. She also went to the hospital this morning just after you left and caused a commotion because they'd thrown away her wedding bouquet."

The phone call the next morning comes as a surprise. Like a telemarketer, Tim seems to be reading from a script: "Our relationship may be strained beyond redemption. When I went to the nurses' desk and saw that you had included personal information about me on a form you had apparently already filled out elsewhere, in collusion with your doctor friend, I realized that you were yet again condescending to me and subjecting me to humiliation. I was very hurt that you had written both of our names as 'Person to be notified in an emergency,' but then undercut that by affixing a Post-it note saying, 'Call me first. He's hard to find.' How would you know? How would you know what my

teaching schedule is when you have never expressed the slightest interest? How do you know when I leave my house in the morning and when I return at night? You've always wanted to come first. It is also my personal opinion that you O.K.'d the throwing out of my wife's nosegay, which was on loan to Mom. So go ahead and O.K. everything. Have her euthanized, if that's what you want to do, and see if I care. Do you realize that you barely took an insincere second to congratulate me and my wife? If you have no respect for me, I nevertheless expect a modicum of respect for my wife."

Of course, he does not know that I'm joking when I respond, "No, thanks. I'm very happy with my A. T. & T. service."

When he slams down the phone, I consider returning to bed and curling into a fetal position, though at the same time I realize that I cannot miss one more day of work. I walk into the bathroom, wearing Vic's old bathrobe, which I hang on the back of the door. I shower and brush my teeth. I call the Oaks, to see if my mother slept through the night. She did, and is playing bingo. I dress quickly, comb my hair, pick up my purse and keys, and open the front door. A FedEx letter leans against the railing, with Cora's name and return address on it. I take a step back, walk inside, and open it. There is a sealed envelope with my name on it. I stare at it.

The phone rings. It is Mariah Roberts, 2003 Virginia Teacher of the Year for Grade Three, calling to say that she is embarrassed but it has been pointed out to her that children dressed as starfish and sea horses, dancing in front of dangling nets, represent species that are endangered, and often "collected" or otherwise "preyed upon," and that she wants to reimburse me for materials, but she most certainly does not want me to sew starfish costumes. I look across the bedroom, to the pointy costumes piled on a chair, only the top one still awaiting its zipper. They suddenly look sad—deflated, more than slightly absurd. I can't think what to say, and am surprised to realize that I'm too choked up to speak. "Not to worry," I finally say. "Is the whole performance cancelled?" "It's being reconceived," she says. "We want sea life that is empowered." "Barracuda?" I say. "I'll run that by them," she says.

When we hang up, I continue to examine the sealed envelope. Then I pick up the phone and dial. To my surprise, Vic answers on the second ring.

"Hey, I've been thinking about you," he says. "Really. I was going to call and see how you were doing. How's your mother?"

"Fine," I say. "There's something that's been bothering me. Can I ask you a quick question?"

"Shoot."

"Donna Milrus said she saw you and Banderas having a fight."

"Yeah," he says warily.

"It's none of my business, but what caused it?"

"Jumped on the car and his claws scratched the paint."

"You said he was the best-trained dog in the world."

"I know it. He always waits for me to open the door, but that day, you tell me. He jumped up and clawed the hell out of the car. If he'd been scared by something, I might have made an allowance. But there was nobody. And then as soon as I swatted him, who gets out of her Lexus but Donna Milrus, and suddenly the grocery bag slips out of my hands and splits open . . . all this stuff rolling toward her, and she points the toe of one of those expensive shoes she wears and stops an orange."

"I can't believe that about you and Banderas. It shakes up all my assumptions."

"That's what happened," he says.

"Thanks for the information."

"Hey, wait. I really was getting ready to call you. I was going to say maybe we could get together and take your mother to the Italian place for dinner."

"That's nice," I say, "but I don't think so."

There is a moment's silence.

"Bye, Vic," I say.

"Wait," he says quickly. "You really called about the dog?"

"Uh-huh. You talked about him a lot, you know. He was a big part of our lives."

"There was and is absolutely nothing between me and my secretary, if that's what you think," he says. "She's dating a guy who works in Baltimore. I've got this dream that she'll marry him and leave the dog behind, because he's got cats."

"I hope for your sake that happens. I've got to go to work."

"How about coffee?" he says.

"Sure," I say. "We'll talk again."

"What's wrong with coffee right now?"

"Don't you have a job?"

"I thought we were going to be friends. Wasn't that your idea? Ditch me because I'm ten years younger than you, because you're such an ageist, but we can still be great friends, you can even marry some guy and we'll still be friends, but you never call, and when you do it's with some question about a dog you took a dislike to before you ever met him, because you're a jealous woman. The same way you can like somebody's kid, and not like them, I like the dog."

"You love the dog."

"O.K., so I'm a little leery about that word. Can I come over for coffee tonight, if you don't have time now?"

"Only if you agree in advance to do me a favor."

"I agree to do you a favor."

"Don't you want to know what it is?"

"No."

"It calls on one of your little-used skills."

"Sex?"

"No, not sex. Paper cutting."

"What do you want me to cut up that you can't cut up?"

"A letter from my sister-in-law."

"You don't have a sister-in-law. Wait: your brother got married? I'm amazed. I thought he didn't much care for women."

"You think Tim is gay?"

"I didn't say that. I always thought of the guy as a misanthrope. I'm just saying I'm surprised. Why don't you rip up the letter yourself?"

"Vic, don't be obtuse. I want you to do one of those cutout things with it. I want you to take what I'm completely sure is something terrible and transform it. You know—that thing your grandmother taught you."

"Oh," he says. "You mean, like the fence and the arbor with the vine?"

"Well, I don't know. It doesn't have to be that."

"I haven't practiced in a while," he says. "Did you have something particular in mind?"

"I haven't read it," I say. "But I think I know what it says. So how about a skeleton with something driven through its heart?"

"I'm afraid my grandmother's interest was landscape."

"I bet you could do it."

"Sailboat riding on waves?"

"My idea is better."

"But out of my field of expertise."

"Tell me the truth," I say. "I can handle it. Did you buy groceries to cook that woman dinner?"

"No," he says. "Also, remember that you dumped me, and then for a finale you married some jerk so I'd be entitled to do anything I wanted. Then you call and want me to make a corpse with a stake through its heart because you don't like your new sister-in-law, either. Ask yourself: Am I so normal, myself?"

Banderas nearly topples me, then immediately begins sniffing, dragging the afghan off the sofa. He rolls on a corner as if it were carrion, snorting as he rises and charges toward the bedroom.

"That's the letter?" Vic says, snatching the envelope from the center of the table. He rips it open. "Dear Sister-in-law," he reads, holding the paper above his head as I run toward him. He looks so different with his stubbly beard, and I realize with a pang that I don't recognize the shirt he's wearing. He starts again: "Dear Sister-in-law." He whirls sideways, the paper clutched tightly in his hand. "I know that Tim will be speaking to you, but I wanted to personally send you this note. I think that families have differences, but everyone's viewpoint is important. I would very much like—" He whirls again, and this time Banderas runs into the fray, rising up on his back legs as if he, too, wanted the letter.

"Let the dog eat it! Let him eat the thing if you have to read it out loud!" I say.

"—to invite you for Thanksgiving dinner, and also to offer you some of our frequent-flier miles, if that might be helpful, parenthesis, though it may be a blackout period, end paren."

Vic looks at me. "Aren't you embarrassed at your reaction to this woman? Aren't you?"

The dog leaps into the afghan and rolls again, catching a claw in the weave. Vic and I stand facing each other. I am panting, too shocked to speak.

"Please excuse Tim for disappearing when I came to the door of the Oaks. I was there to see if I could help. He said my face provoked a realization of his newfound strength." Vic sighs. He says, "Just what I was afraid of—some New Ager as crazy as your brother. 'I'm sure you understand that I was happy to know that I could be helpful to Tim in this trying time. We must all put the past behind us and celebrate our personal Thanksgiving, parenthesis, our wedding, end paren, and I am sure that everything can be put right when we get together. Fondly, your sister-in-law, Cora.'"

There are tears in my eyes. The afghan is going to need major repair. Vic has brought his best friend into my house to destroy it, and all he will do is hold the piece of paper above his head, as if he'd just won a trophy.

"I practiced this afternoon," he says finally, lowering his arm. "I can do either a train coming through the mountains or a garland of roses with a butterfly on top."

"Great," I say, sitting on the floor, fighting back tears. "The butterfly can be dreaming it's a man, or the man can be dreaming he's . . ." I change my mind about what I was going to say: "Or the man can be dreaming he's desperate."

Vic doesn't hear me; he's busy trying to get Banderas to drop a starfish costume he's capering with.

"Why do you think it would work?" I say to Vic. "We were never right for each other. I'm in my fifties. It would be my third marriage."

Carefully, he creases the letter a second, then a third time. He lifts the scissors out of their small plastic container, fumbling awkwardly with his big fingers. He frowns in concentration and begins to cut. Eventually, from the positive cuttings, I figure out that he's decided on the train motif. Cutting air away to expose a puff of steam, he says, "Let's take it slow, then. You could invite me to go with you to Thanksgiving." ♦

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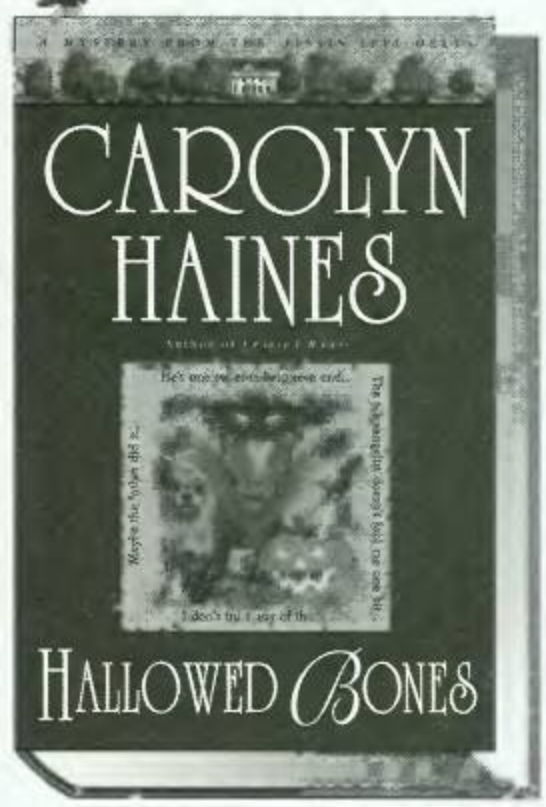

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POP MUSIC

DOOM'S DAY

Madvillain redeems the pretensions of independent hip-hop.

BY SASHA FRERE-JONES

In the early nineties, thanks to performers like Dr. Dre and his muse Snoop Doggy Dog, hip-hop became geometrically more popular than it had ever been. In the mid-nineties, multitasking figures like Puff Daddy helped make it a brand. As this happened, hip-hop gained a self-consciousness, as all successful art forms do, and a set of beliefs: hip-hop, sayeth the faithful, is made with two turntables and a microphone; graffiti and break dancing are the appropriate activities if you aren't rapping or d.j.ing. And with Scripture comes orthodoxy: parvenu superstars rapping about guns and women and sampling popular songs are somehow betraying the original ideals; these new popular artists are "rap," not hip-hop; hip-hop isn't about sampling well-known songs like Rick James's "Super Freak" and talking about champagne—it involves "skills" and an affinity for the "truth." It sounds, in short, like Sunday school.

Hip-hop, of course, *did* start with people rhyming over well-known songs, and very few hip-hop records have actually been produced with only two turntables and a microphone. This fact hasn't stopped the revisionists. As hip-hop became the lingua franca of youth all over the world and artists like Jay-Z and Eminem made remarkable and remarkably popular records, a parallel subculture of independent labels and artists grew up around a doctrine that was almost puritan. These independent artists rue the perfidy of apostate millionaires, and moan about pop stars who abandoned the true faith. Wanna-be prophets dream of chasing the moneylenders out of the temple, even though the moneylenders built the place.

Some independent acts prove their devotion by exulting in musical and linguistic obscurity, like slightly hipper stamp collectors. Some m.c.s spend so much time scolding the popular m.c.s that they come across as schoolmarms, switches in hand. Others are so committed to resurrecting various "golden ages" of hip-hop—1979, 1988, 1993—that their work is not much different from that of Renaissance-fair revivalists dancing around the maypole. Independent pop—not just hip-hop—has in many ways become a version of graduate school, a safe zone where artists can eke out a living, take their time doing specialized work. In most cases, this is the last thing a popular musician should be doing. But on "Madvillainy" (Stones Throw) the duo Madvillain—the m.c. MF Doom and the producer Madlib—demonstrate that hiding out can be the right move. Madvillain's music is accessible but idiosyncratic, catchy but soaked in noise, lighthearted but full of abstractions. Madvillain is why independent hip-hop isn't such a bad idea; this group needed breathing space.

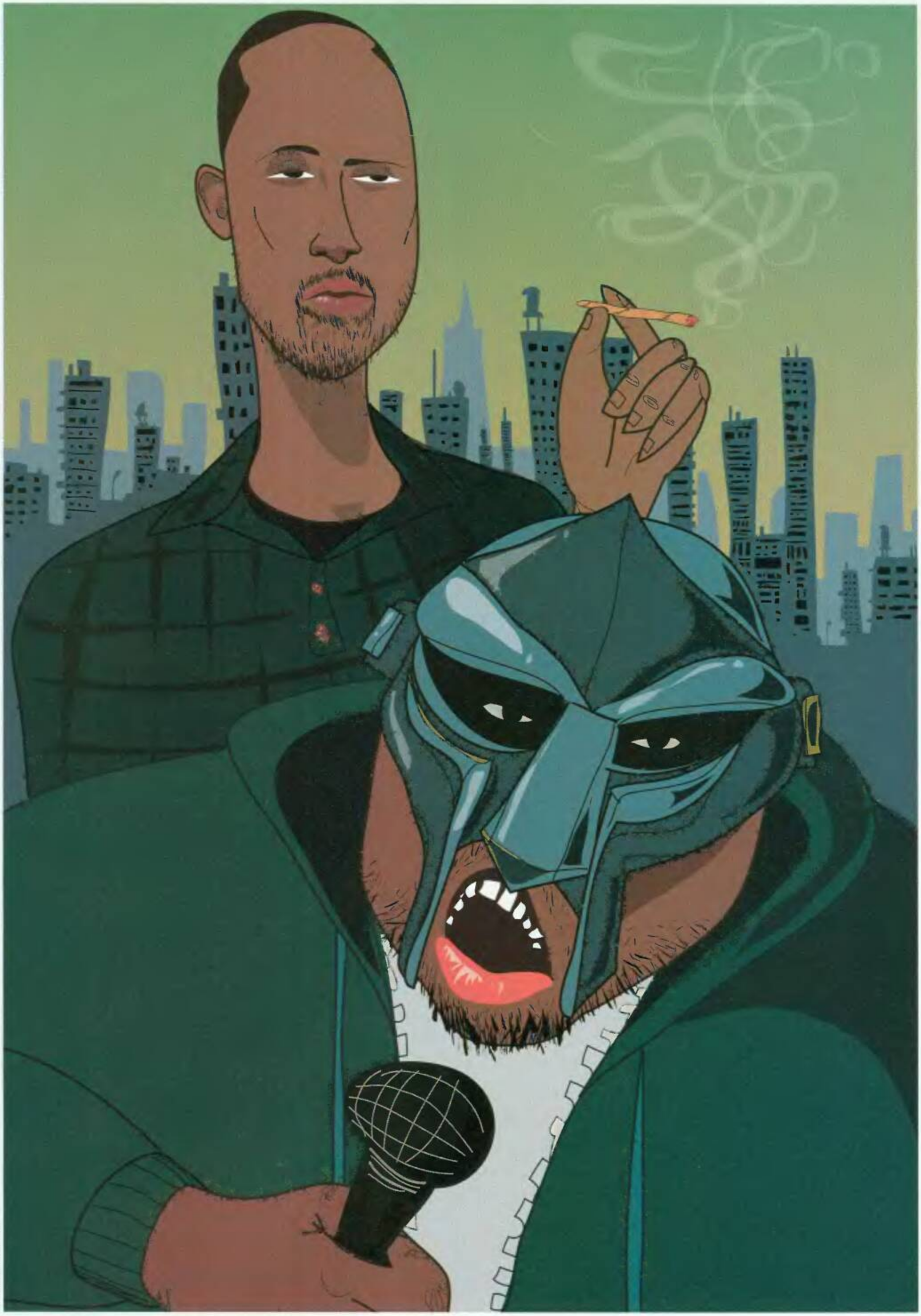
Some fourteen years ago, MF Doom (Daniel Dumile) signed with a major label, Elektra, as part of the group KMD, which included his brother Subroc. In 1991, KMD put out "Mr. Hood," a delightful, unusual record that was often lumped with De La Soul's 1989 album "3 Feet High and Rising." De La Soul combined playful samples of well-known funk songs and a friendly, Day-Glo graphic sense. KMD was a darker, stranger group, and never quite fit that template. Doom, then known as Zev Love X, has a slightly obstructed voice, as if his tongue were too big for his mouth. KMD's samples made reference to racial unease. In 1993, Elektra dropped KMD, and refused to release its second album, "Black Bastards," reportedly because of controversial artwork (a drawing of a Sambo figure hanged on a gallows). Later that year, Subroc was hit and killed by a car.

Doom resurfaced with his new name—from Marvel Comics' Dr. Doom—in the late nineteen-nineties, releasing a few independent twelve-inch singles and then, in 1999, the full-length album "Operation: Doomsday." It was a furiously odd thing, assembled from sweet nineteen-eighties R. & B. and nailed shut by Doom's glottal, pained rhymes. (Doom has since released records under the names Viktor Vaughn and King Geedorah.)

Doom's partner in Madvillain, the West Coast producer Madlib, was born Otis Jackson, Jr., and emerged in the mid-nineties with the group Lootpack. He established himself in 2000 with "The Unseen," an album by his alter ego Quasimoto. (He created the character by speeding up his voice slightly.) As hip-hop producers were moving toward keyboards and drum machines and away from samples of records, which are expensive to license, Madlib stuck stubbornly to samples of jazz and rock records—especially jazz records. His sound was distinct enough to avoid anachronism: of a tradition but unique. In 2003, Madlib was given access to the vaults of Blue Note records, and he created a long, effective montage of sixties and seventies jazz called "Shades of Blue."

Madlib and MF Doom are both comfortable with what might be called the "casual noise" of hip-hop, the sonic by-products of the act: spit hitting a microphone, the crackle of an old record, the sibilant hum of a low-resolution digital sample. The voices and samples on

Madlib (a.k.a. Otis Jackson, Jr., Quasimoto) and MF Doom (a.k.a. Daniel Dumile, Zev Love X, Viktor Vaughn, King Geedorah).



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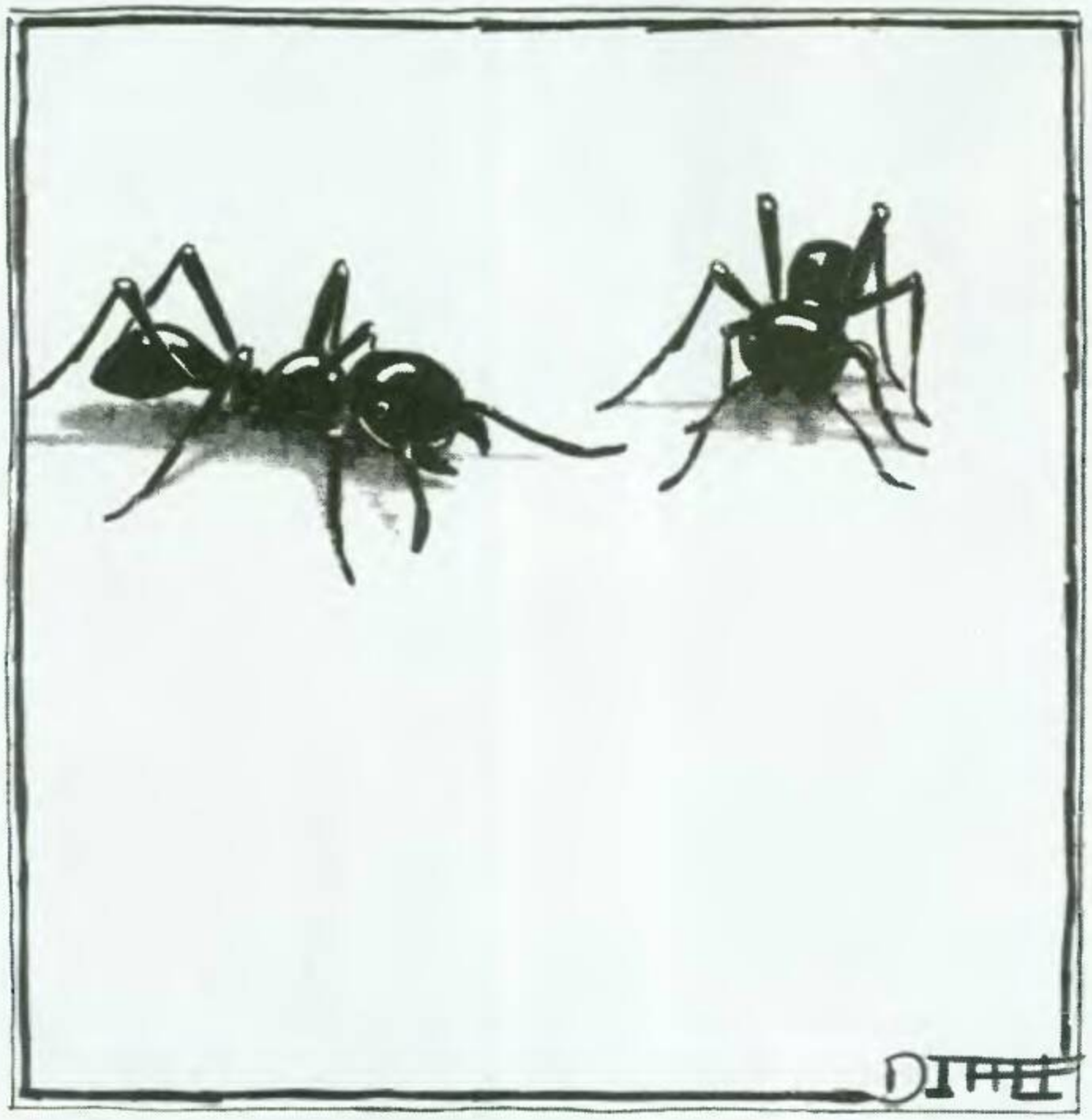

"They never told us what carrying twenty times our own weight would do to our knees."

• •

"Madvillainy" sound as if they'd been coated with dust, fried, dropped, rolled around, and then fried again.

But "Madvillainy" is hardly a difficult record. MF (which stands for Metal Face, among other things) Doom, who appears on the cover masked, looking like an extra from "Alexander Nevsky," takes a deep pleasure in words: alliteration, internal rhymes, and pure sound. The point of "Madvillainy" is largely poetic—celebrating the language of music and the music of language. It's not hard to quote Doom. From "Money Folder": "Egads, she got enough style to start three fads." From "Raid": "The metal fellow been rippin' flows / since New York plates were ghetto yellow with broke blue writing." (Who wouldn't like to hear more rhymes about license plates?) There are many references to science fiction and TV. Doom can turn a corner with a quote reminiscent of "Star Trek" or "The West Wing" ("Sir, request permission to be candid." "Granted"), touch on commercials ("Better get Maaco"), and end with an enticing metaphor all his own ("more soul than a sock with a hole"). Thankfully, Madvillain doesn't define itself against the mainstream. The only reference to popular m.c.s comes in a song called "Figaro"—Mozart's guy—and it's deliciously subtle: "The clever nerd / the best m.c. with no chain ya ever heard."

Most of Madlib's beats are made from samples of records, though it is hard to say which ones, even in a general way. Is the lovely, decaying piano figure in "All Caps" from a jazz record? An English skiffle record? A documentary about whales? "America's Most Blunted" begins with a sample of Steve Reich's "Come Out," and then stumbles into a swaggering funk pattern. The three instrumental tracks are some of the album's best moments, brief as they are: "Do Not Fire!" could be the theme of a Cuban kung-fu movie, and "Supervillain Theme" sounds like the work of an accomplished rock band from a country that the United States does not maintain diplomatic relations with.

After a few repetitions, a sample becomes known but doesn't necessarily stop being strange. The imperfections in whatever is being sampled are retained, the stresses and flaws and cracks. There is a tactile quality to "Madvillainy," which leads us to the smoking gun of the record, if there is one: marijuana. There are repeated allusions to weed and several samples of a 1971 record called "A Child's Garden of Grass: A Pre-Legalization Comedy." The key sample: "In fact, everyone finds that they're more creative stoned than straight."

For most of us, this is poppycock, but Doom and Madlib succeed in translating the heightened physical sensitivity and associative facility of the stoned mind into concrete sound. Madlib, especially, seems able to hide music inside other music. His samples lie on each other like double exposures, or like a cassette tape that allows the previous recording to bleed through the new one. "Strange Ways" sounds like several songs constantly competing to achieve dominance. Doom, happily, is undisturbed. The narcissism of the stoned can be a gift.

But not always. Quasimoto appears as Lord Quas on the mildly philosophical "Shadows of Tomorrow": "Today is the shadow of tomorrow, today is the present future of yesterday, yesterday is the shadow of today, the darkness of the past is yesterday." Somewhere, a dorm room is missing its poster.

Madvillain was thinking more clearly when this album was assembled from scenes into narrative. The twenty-two songs on "Madvillainy" cohere and zip by. (Once or twice, Doom drifts over the beat without engaging it.) "Madvillainy" makes a convincing case that, however you choose to pray, two of hip-hop's many dogmas still obtain: Every sound can make a song. All words make sense. ♦

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BOOKS

SPHERES OF INFLUENCE

How the government helped build America's media might.

BY NICHOLAS LEMANN

When did the press become the media? It seems to have happened sometime during the last generation—long enough ago, anyway, for us to have forgotten that "media" is plural. But people who use "the media" as a more encompassing term for "the press" (because it includes broadcast journalism, too) may find it hard to get used to the even more encompassing way it's used by scholars of communications: for them, it takes in just about any channel through which information is transmitted. As you're reading this, you are probably near a telephone, a television set, a computer hooked up to the Internet, a radio, a pager, a mailbox. Some of those things receive and some can also send; some are meant for person-to-person communication and some for interacting with institutions. They're all forms of media.

In order to overcome ingrained habits of thought, suppose we remove all ideas about journalism from our minds—don't worry, we'll reinstall them later—and then contemplate the media. We immediately start to think about those machines whose wondrous inventors—Samuel F. B. Morse and Alexander Graham Bell and Guglielmo Marconi—we all learned about as schoolchildren. But the technology picture is still too simple, so let's delete the machines from our minds, too. What's left? The media start to look like an array of political, economic, and social arrangements, each of which, in a different way, turns people into a public.

This is the perspective that the Princeton sociologist Paul Starr forces on us in his ambitious new book, "The Creation of the Media: The Political Origins of Mass Communications" (Basic; $27.50). Starr, who has a practical acquaintance with the subject as co-founder of the liberal monthly *The American Prospect* (and whom I know professionally), has roamed through a vast scholarly literature to produce a history that stretches from 1600 to 1941. The book's real subject is media in America, though it's counterpointed with the experiences of Britain and France. Since Starr almost always finds this country's handling of communications superior to Old Europe's—in fact, he takes that to be a factor in our global preëminence—his book demonstrates that liberals, too, can celebrate the triumph of American civilization. "In the early nineteenth century," he writes, "when the United States was neither a world power nor a primary center of scientific discovery, it was already a leader in communications"—in postal service, newspapers, the telegraph. Starr is strict, however, about the winning formula: communications does well only when it follows his American model, in which neither the government nor private monopolies gain absolute control. Instead, the government sets up a decentralized regime that encourages free and open communication among ordinary citizens. (He finds it suggestive that when the Soviets took power the communications technology they favored wasn't telephone networks, such as were being built elsewhere, but the loudspeaker.) In his view, media succeed not when they produce good journalism but when they promote a vibrant civil society. Conservatives like to present civil society and a strong central government as antithetical. Starr argues, persuasively, that one is impossible without the other's constant care and nurturing.

The American advantage, in Starr's account, began in Colonial days: this country had free and open communications and, as a result, an especially healthy "public sphere"—in Starr's words, the sphere of "public discussion, public knowledge, and public opinion." Land tenancy was more diffuse here than in Europe, voting more widespread, state power less centralized, and political censorship less strict. In Britain, publishing, when it emerged in a form that we would recognize, was held down by taxation, through an expensive stamp that newspaper owners and pamphleteers were required to purchase. But the American colonies were exempted from the tax, and circulated publications thrived here. By the time England imposed the Stamp Act on the colonies, in 1765, Colonial society was so accustomed to a plenitude of printed matter that the act became one of the causes of the Revolution. The Constitution, in Starr's telling, represented less a momentous decision to create a new nation based on the principles of freedom and democracy than an organic continuation of existing practices; the distinctive Americanness of the document lay in its simple language and wide dissemination.

The rise of the different media in the nineteenth century—the period when America became the world leader in communications—involved not just an absence of state repression but active state support. For one thing, the United States Post Office was unusually extensive. In 1831, it employed eighty-seven hundred postmasters, amounting to more than three-quarters of the federal workforce, and the ratio of post offices to population here was four times England's and eighteen times France's. Whereas European governments required post offices to be self-supporting, the United States subsidized the construction and maintenance of both post offices and post roads; and it effectively subsidized newspapers by giving them a special low postal rate. In 1832, newspapers accounted for ninety-five per cent of the weight carried by the postal service, and only fifteen per cent of postal revenue.

The government also promoted communications indirectly by educating the citizenry to an unprecedented extent, thus creating a proportionately larger number of readers than Europe had. As early as 1785, the federal government was supporting public education, through land grants, and the adult literacy rate quickly rose to become among the world's highest. American copyright laws, too, were particularly generous to publishers. When the technique of making paper from wood pulp instead of rags was developed, and a paper-making machine came along (arriving in America in 1827), and, just afterward, steam-operated cylinder presses were introduced (presses went from two hundred and fifty copies an hour, by hand, in 1830,

to twelve thousand an hour, by machine, in 1846), there was a wonderful explosion of cheap mass-market newspapers and books. But penny newspapers and dime novels could not have prospered if the Post Office and the common schools had not, in effect, got there first. The thriving new media, organized on the American model, helped to energize the public sphere. The growth of Jacksonian democracy, with its high rate of political participation and its powerful political parties, was nourished by the penny papers—and democracy nourished the papers, too. A hyperactive political system spurred public demand for news, and most newspapers formed economic and editorial alliances with a political party. By the middle of the century, eighty per cent of papers had such an affiliation; in 1872, just about the only objection that nobody thought to make about Horace Greeley's Presidential campaign was that it was inappropriate for one of the country's leading journalists to be an active electoral politician at the same time.

American media seldom thrived when left entirely to their own devices.

PAT OLIPHANT

The telegraph, the first of the electronic media, is a favorite subject of technological triumphalists, because it seems to be an example of a new machine, pure and simple, bringing about all sorts of changes in the world. (A recent history is called "The Victorian Internet.") That's too quick, as Starr is at pains to show. In his view, a major new technology generates a "constitutive moment," in which political and social forces come into play, and those forces, rather than the technology itself, determine the form it takes and, critically, whether or not it promotes the vitality of the public sphere. The telegraph provides him with a case in point.

As Starr notes, it wasn't until 1843, when Congress, by a narrow vote, gave Samuel Morse a thirty-thousand-dollar appropriation to help him test his invention, that, practically overnight, American telegraphy took off. The first message sent by telegraph was not "What hath God wrought?" but a piece of political news: the nomination of Theodore Frelinghuysen for Vice-President at the 1844 Whig Party Convention. Many political leaders, most prominently Henry Clay, thought that the government should take over telegraphy, but that view lost favor after the 1844 elections. The government still subsidized, through a variety of means, direct and indirect, the building of a vast national telegraph network, but the network wound up in the hands of a private monopoly, Western Union. Meanwhile, England was adopting a system of state ownership. To Starr, the American experience makes for an object lesson in the dangers of media concentration. The monopoly in telegraphy kept the rates high, and led to the country's first significant journalistic monopoly, the Associated Press, which had an exclusive deal with Western Union. Membership in the A.P. gave a newspaper the exclusive right in its location to publish news transmitted by telegraph, which meant a crushing advantage over competitors. And the A.P.'s affiliation with the Republican Party enabled it to play a crucial role, through the selective transmitting and withholding of information, in making Rutherford B. Hayes the winner of the disputed 1876 election. In England, where the telegraph became part of the postal service, rates were lower; there were dozens of wire-news services, and pretty much any newspaper had access to them. The lesson, for Starr, is that state ownership, though not ideal, is far preferable to private monopoly.

Things worked out better here with the telephone. In 1894, Alexander Graham Bell's patent expired, and there was a brief but fruitful period of competition during which a great deal of the country was wired—often, in rural areas, by local coöperatives. Meanwhile, England and France both nationalized their telephone systems, and wiring proceeded more slowly. By the nineteen-thirties, a telephone monopoly had arisen in America, but this one, unlike Western Union, was federally regulated. The result was a system that was amazingly extensive (the ratio of telephones to population was more than triple that of any European country) and that, under the watchful eye of the government, invested heavily in basic research, insuring that it would be technologically innovative. Of course, most of us don't think of our phones as part of the "media," but to Starr the phone is the ideal form of communication: it gives ordinary citizens the ability to trade information with one another and thus does more for the public sphere than

any work of journalism possibly could.

Radio was the next communications medium in which America became dominant. Marconi had moved from Italy to England to try to establish his invention commercially, but in the early twentieth century most people saw radio as a wireless telegraph, of interest mostly to navies for contacting ships at sea. After the sinking of the Titanic, Congress passed the Radio Act of 1912, which required all ships to have licensed radio operators and instituted a development-friendly federal allocation of the airwaves. As with the telephone, Britain and France nationalized radio and America adopted a closely regulated private system. Once again, the result here was a far more widespread and democratic communications network. And when Starr turns to the emergence of broadcast media he's able to sound his central note again: the more forcefully the government diffuses control, the more socially useful the medium turns out to be.

Starr's book stops in 1941, the point at which, he reports with a sigh, it became inevitable that broadcasting would always be dominated by a handful of national networks. But the contemporary implications of his account are clear. In the two decades since President Reagan named Mark Fowler chairman of the Federal Communications Commission, the government has been steadily moving away from the role that Starr thinks it should play, and the result has been relentless commercialization and a concentration of power. Despite the breakup of A.T. & T., we are on our way to having two dominant local telephone companies, Verizon and SBC. The Clinton Administration's dream of a proliferation of small telephone companies, broadband-service providers, and computer operating systems has failed to materialize. One company, Clear Channel Communications, owns more than twelve hundred local radio stations. The big newspaper chains have increased their market share. Access to cable television is controlled by a single company in each home. The television networks own more local stations, and, now that there's no government pressure to offer a diversity of political opinion and civic-minded programming, they have stopped doing so. As the state has withdrawn from the fray, control over every form of mass communication has become more centralized. "The Creation of the Media" can be read as an argument that this represents an alarming departure from a great American tradition. Once we understand the media in Starr's terms, we have to start caring about what those lobbyists who stand in the corridor outside the Senate Commerce Committee hearing room actually do, beyond wearing Gucci loafers and checking their Blackberries. Meanwhile, the familiar set of "media" celebrities—Dan and Peter and Tom—become ephemeral. The political, social, and economic arrangements of the media are what's crucial.

If you're willing to extrapolate further, "The Creation of the Media" sheds light on another subject: the failure of President Clinton's health-care-reform effort, in the early nineties. This still seems an epochal loss. It led to a landslide election year for the Republican Party (George W. Bush won public office for the first time), and produced a lasting Republican majority in the House of Representatives. It took universal health care, which in 1992 looked like a magic issue for the Democrats, off the table; Al Gore didn't propose it as a near-term goal in 2000, and neither has John Kerry, in 2004.

During Clinton's rise to the Presidency, Starr, whose previous major book, "The Social Transformation of American Medicine," came out in 1983, achieved the ultimate fantasy of every public intellectual: he was asked to help turn the material in that book into large-scale policy recommendations. By his own account, Starr helped persuade Clinton that universal health care should be provided not by a direct government system but by a scheme of "managed competition" among a large number of local alliances, and then helped shape the final bill in the White House. Managed competition had various advantages, but it had the big—possibly fatal—disadvantage of being easy to mock for being overcomplicated.

What "The Creation of the Media" shows is how deeply Starr believes in the ideals of localism: if the public sphere is to thrive, citizens must be able to make their voices heard and government has to restrain the tendencies of capital toward consolidation and centralization. All those local purchasing alliances that Starr favored weren't a clever device for avoiding the appearance of big government; they were at the heart of what was attractive about the plan. The plan wasn't just about extending health coverage; it was about building civil society.

Now it's time for the reinsertion of journalism into our contemplation of the media. Journalists are accustomed to a heroic version of their role in American history. Newspapers made democracy possible; press freedom was the primary and central innovation of the new American nation; Zenger and Franklin and Jefferson and Paine, all journalists at heart, built this country. Crusading journalists ended slavery, urban graft, official indifference to Depression poverty, McCarthyism, the Vietnam War, and the Nixon Administration. Starr is quite fond of journalists—especially, given his populist sympathies, showy circulation-builders like Hearst and Pulitzer, and small-time pamphleteers—but his book has an inescapably deflating effect on the journalistic ego. Journalism is taken to be of value not in itself but only in its contribution to a larger public conversation, and its quality depends on political and economic arrangements made far above the reporter's pay grade. There is no bright line, in Starr's account, between "news" (good) and "entertainment" (bad). Given his paramount concern for a healthy and democratic community, he might, if he had to choose, prefer a well-attended weekly town meeting to a good local paper.

A word, then, for the special value of journalism. Surely one reason that "the press" and "the media" have become synonyms for journalism is that we've given journalists what we think is a critical task: amassing, digesting, and getting across important material that isn't readily accessible to ordinary citizens. Journalists have an invisible *passe-partout* that allows them to roam the world and ask consequential people impertinent questions. (Starr reminds us that the news interview was an American invention, circa 1860.) They are intermediaries between the public and realms that are otherwise moated by power, distance, and complexity. It's hard to imagine a healthy public life above the neighborhood level without the aid of good journalism, because people can't participate civically if they don't know anything. Starr is interested mainly in the structure, volume, and range of communications. But what's being communicated matters, too. ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

With, *by Donald Harington (Toby; $19.95).* For four decades, Donald Harington has been writing novels about his native Arkansas, particularly the Ozarks, which are the setting for his made-up town, Stay More. In this imaginative but uneven installment (Harington's prose recalls, at once, Faulkner and Tom Robbins), a golden-haired seven-year-old girl is abducted and taken to a deserted house in the mountains by a retired cop. When he dies, she is left alone to fend for herself. Or almost alone: parts of the book dwell in the thoughts of a wise old dog who befriends her; others are narrated by the spirit of a young boy who had to leave Stay More when his parents moved to California, but who loved the place so much that part of him stuck around. It is strange that, given such a fanciful premise, the novel is almost too believable: Harington works so hard at establishing his fantasy (beautiful girl growing up naked in the wild, with beasts) that he erases any sense of mystery and makes his world seem almost mundane.

The Maze, *by Panos Karnezis (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $24).* Karnezis, a Greek writing in English, has taken for the subject of his first novel the end of Greece's disastrous Asia Minor campaign. It is 1922, and the Greek soldiers, beset by petty larceny, red mud, and rats, are in headlong retreat, struggling to make it back to the motherland. The colorful cast includes a morphine-addicted commanding officer, a mad priest, and a guilt-ridden courtesan, and Karnezis tries hard to charm us with antic incidents and delicate shades of prose. But he seems unequal to the sterner exigencies of war, and his attempted parallels with Greece's great heritage (the commanding officer finds solace in a compendium of Greek myths) are drained of all subtlety by footnotes elucidating mythological figures as familiar as King Midas and the Furies.

Necessary Dreams, *by Anna Fels (Pantheon; $24.95).* Why is it that women who can talk about anything find it so hard to talk about ambition? In this insightful study, Fels, a psychiatrist, argues that women fear—correctly—that seeking recognition will expose them to attacks on everything from their sexuality to their sanity. Although women now have access to schools and jobs, "social resources" like affirmation, support, and simple encouragement are jealously guarded male preserves. Recognition, Fels writes, is something that makes us better at what we do, and without it ambitions die. She comes down firmly on the side of working mothers, and advises those who choose full-time motherhood to get a "pre-nate" contract. She has no patience for "difference feminists," who she thinks simply rationalize women's subordinate position. According to Fels, the barriers are practical, not innate; the problem isn't the poverty of women's "chimerical" ambitions—"half plan, half dream"—but "the miserable job that they're stuck in."

One of Us: Conjoined Twins and the Future of Normal, *by Alice Domurat Dreger (Harvard; $22.95).* Part history of medicine, part consciousness-raising freak show, this surprisingly entertaining book examines cultural reactions to conjoined twins and other anatomical anomalies. Dreger argues that Victorians were more appreciative than moderns of people born "different," viewing them as "authorities on a unique and strangely attractive experience." Nowadays, pediatric surgeons so prize normalcy that they perform sexual surgery on infants without concern for adult function; they may also withhold information from parents, and even override their consent, when dealing with birth defects. Dreger sometimes strays into lit-crit goofiness—for her, conjoined twins call to mind every "crazy-in-love" song you've ever heard—but her examples persuasively make the case that the anatomically different feel normal to themselves.

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THE THEATRE

HIDE AND *SEEK*

Tricks and treachery in "Sly Fox" and "Sarah, Sarah."

BY JOHN LAHR

Volpone, whom Ben Jonson claimed to have invented in five weeks in 1606, is the kind of con man who would steal your stove, then come back for the smoke. A harbinger of the rise of both capitalism and individualism, he has proved to be one of the theatre's most durable messengers of a third ism: cynicism. For Volpone, a man who can't see a belt without hitting below it, *Homo sapiens* is *Homo sap*. Pretending to be heirless and at death's door, he uses the legend of his wealth to extort all sorts of capital from the greedy souls around him. A connoisseur of the craven, he gets a sadistic thrill not just from grand larceny but from grand humiliation: he doesn't want wealth alone; he wants to watch its power corrupt.

In our current climate of avarice, the director Arthur Penn and the playwright Larry Gelbart decided to crank up their 1976 Broadway fun machine "Sly Fox," based on "Volpone" (at the Barrymore), to see if it would still fly. They installed a new comic engine—the puckish Richard Dreyfuss as Foxwell J. Sly—and several new sparkplugs, including Bronson Pinchot as Lawyer Craven, Peter Scolari as the Chief of Police, and Professor Irwin Corey as the Court Clerk. Nonetheless, the show takes some time to get airborne. The first and most glaring impediment to liftoff is the miscasting of Eric Stoltz as Simon Able, Sly's sidekick and shill. Stoltz is a good actor who has wandered into the wrong play. Handsome, suave, and genial, he hasn't a whiff of mischief about him. Dreyfuss's comic attack is balls-out; Stoltz's is entirely balls-in. With such a bland partner in crime, the capering Dreyfuss doesn't have enough to play against, and without traction, especially in Act I, he can't build sufficient momentum. The second obstacle is the narrative drag of the play itself. Set in San Francisco around the period of the gold rush, most of the first act takes place in Sly's bedroom, as he lies behind the curtains of his fourposter bed and Simon Able ushers the suckers in and out. To find favor in Sly's will, a lawyer offers Sly stolen property, a father disowns his son, and, most amusingly, a jealous husband (the droll, bug-eyed Bob Dishy, reprising his role as Mr. Truckle) offers up his voluptuous, pious wife (Elizabeth Berkley). All three ante up in hopes of winning the same prize: the treasure chest that lies at the foot of Sly's bed. "It serves the delightful double purpose of enriching me while depriving someone else," Sly observes of his stash of gold. But no number of deft one-liners—"My boy, you could drill into Abner Truckle for a year and never strike decent"—can quite chip away at the weight of visual and structural repetition: the three characters enter through the same door, ask more or less the same question about Sly's will, and exit having reached more or less the same bargain. It isn't until a policeman finds Sly with his head up Mrs. Truckle's skirt as she lights a candle to give thanks for his miraculous recovery that the show suddenly shifts into a looser, giddier, and more surreal rhythm. "I'm an innocent man!" Sly yells above the tumult at the end of the act, as he and Able are hauled off to jail on what appears to be a rape charge. "If I'm not, may this entire city fall to the ground." There is an ominous rumble and the cast lurches: this is meant to signal the San Francisco earthquake, but it's really the sight of Gelbart's comedy taking off.

In Act II, burlesque rules. In a saloon turned courtroom, the players run wild. Released from the fetters of Sly's masquerade ("too weak" to take the stand, Sly appears in court only as a lump in a bed that is wheeled in), Dreyfuss dons whiskers and long hair—looking for all the world like Yosemite Sam—to double as the Honorable Thunder Bastardson. Alternately gnawing his gavel and banging it, he swaggers around the stage spouting ludicrous commands ("I object to your interruption and my objection is sustained!") and lewd innuendos ("They don't call me the 'Hangin' Judge' just because I'm well built!"). As the corrupt lawyer whose inheritance hangs in the balance, Pinchot skitters around the stage in a fustian flurry. He is a preposterous cartoon who achieves full silly-osity when trying to roll the word "prowesslessness" off his thick tongue: "Prow*esh-lesh-nesh*," he says. In this crazy court, the Chief of Police looks at the prim Mrs. Truckle and admits to the judge, "There was no sex act to be seen anywhere. Which is pretty much the way my luck's running lately." Later, after Mrs. Truckle confesses that she touched Sly first, the Chief, a whirlwind of repressed desire, throws himself at her feet, ripping off his jacket to expose his bare chest. "Touch me! Someplace! Any place on my flesh," he cries. The outburst—"I was carried away, Your Honor. My wife died yesterday and it's been hell"—earns him a severe dressing-down from Bastardson. "I'm fining you one month's graft," he says.

In the original play, Volpone went to jail. Nowadays, however, we've learned to be kinder to our captains of industry. As Able and Sly are about to skip town, Able contrives to swindle his boss. But, since Able's avidity wasn't really established in Act I, Stoltz can't properly bring off this last acid betrayal. The high jinks just aren't high enough. When Sly is finally dispatched and Able is alone with the booty, he savors a moment of vindictive triumph. Then he opens the chest; it's empty. Sly's head pops gleefully into view. "There's only one way to take it with you, my boy," he says. "Send it on ahead." A good con man is always one step ahead of the game, which is why he gets the last laugh; here, the con men in charge of "Sly Fox" are a few steps behind, which is why they don't.

Among the many things that a con man gets away with, the foremost is trust. The con is a defense against both intimacy and humiliation. Some-

PHOTOGRAPH BY RICHARD AVEDON

Larry Gelbart, Richard Dreyfuss, and Arthur Penn, in New York City, March 23, 2004.

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times, however, individuals can con themselves. This is what happens in Daniel Goldfarb's "Sarah, Sarah" (directed by Mark Nelson at the Manhattan Theatre Club) to the overbearing Eastern European émigrée Sarah Grosberg (J. Smith-Cameron), who invites her son's eighteen-year-old fiancée, Rochelle (Lori Prince), to tea at her modest petit-bourgeois apartment, intending to scupper the engagement. "I want Artie to marry up," she says. "To a good family, with a history even." Sarah carries out her ploy under the nose of her longtime friend and maid, Vincent (the expert Richard Masur), a Stalinist transvestite who wears a brush mustache and a housedress, and weighs in at two hundred and thirty pounds. Vincent's kink—Masur plays it straight, without a hint of camp—doesn't embarrass Sarah; in fact, she gives him lingerie for his birthday. But on the subject of her son's future she's inflexible. Still, when Vincent intercedes on the young lovers' behalf by letting it be known that Sarah herself lacks pedigree—she is an orphan from Siberia—the exposure unmoors her. Sarah's cruel work is intended not to make a better future for her son but to hide her own past. "I am so ashamed," she cries, once her secret is out. "I am nothing."

The second act, which casts the same actors in different roles, forty years on, shows Artie, now Arthur (Masur), accompanying his thirty-nine-year-old daughter, Jeannie (Smith-Cameron), to China, in order to take possession of her adopted daughter, whom she has named after Sarah. Goldfarb, who teeters on the sentimental, engineers some gentle, well-wrought ironies here. Arthur is now the one who wrestles with humiliation and who, when he fears that the baby may be brain-damaged, makes his own awful proposals. As Arthur did in the first act, Jeannie stands her ground and keeps the baby, who—this being commercial entertainment—turns out to be healthy. The shame of the last generation is healed by the embrace of the new one. Holding Sarah at the Great Wall of China, with Siberia just over the horizon, Jeannie asks her father what he thinks the baby is thinking. " 'I used to be a Chinese orphan, now I'm a rich Jew. Yay!' " Arthur says. ♦

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THE CURRENT CINEMA

FEEL THE EARTH

"I'm Not Scared" and "Twentynine Palms."

BY DAVID DENBY

Michele (Giuseppe Cristiano), the brown-legged ten-year-old at the center of the stirring Italian movie "I'm Not Scared," is fifty inches tall, and every inch a boy. By that I mean he has a boy's adventurousness and gallantry and a natural sense of the rightness of things. In 1978, in one of the southernmost regions of Italy, Michele is spending a long summer romping in the wheat fields. The other games he plays with the children in the tiny farm town where he lives (it's just a few sun-baked buildings with a flyspecked shop or two) don't do a thing for him, but the golden fields are the purest freedom. The stalks come up to Michele's eyes, and he and the other kids run and roll through them, diving like fish in the sea. But Michele needs more of an adventure. Near an abandoned farmhouse, he pulls back some corrugated tin roofing that's been thrown over a pit, and finds something unaccountable below—a creature asleep under a piece of burlap, living in the pitch black. On Michele's second visit to the pit, this phantom bursts out at him. The director, Gabriele Salvatores, turns the moment into a jolting "Boo!," but the jolt is fair enough, since this shot, like every other in the movie, is meant to put us inside Michele's perceptions and emotions. The creature is just a shape—pale, sightless, wild, half crazed. Is it a savage, a ghost, some sort of mythical beast?

Giuseppe Cristiano as a boy seeking adventure in the Italian summer.

RICCARDO VECCHIO

Michele keeps his discovery a secret. It is one of the many things he doesn't understand; he's also baffled by the fierce temper and equally fierce disappointment of his beautiful mother (Aitana Sánchez-Gijón) and the taunting affection of his father (Dino Abbrescia), a handsome fellow who smokes a cigarette from a holder tilted at a rakish, F.D.R. angle. The father comes and goes without any reason and brings home quarrelsome roughnecks who attempt to intimidate Michele. Yet the boy, guarding his secret, keeps going back to the pit, and a bond develops between him and the creature, who, he

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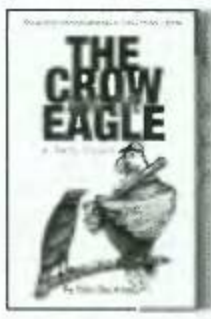

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discovers, is a child his own age being held prisoner. "I'm Not Scared," based on an award-winning novel by the young Niccolò Ammaniti, and adapted by Ammaniti and Francesca Marciano, is a lyrical throwback to such movies as René Clément's "Forbidden Games" (1952) and other works of the humanist European cinema of a half century ago. Like "Forbidden Games," the movie reveals the sordidness of adult behavior as it appears to half-comprehending but pure-hearted children. There are other influences: the ghostly boy is perhaps a nod to Fellini's fantastical side. Yet Salvatores and his cinematographer, Italo Petriccione, have their own way of using light. The dazzling sunshine and golden wheat become major elements in the story. When Michele takes the young prisoner out to get some air, the boy is blinded by the sun; it's only when he begins to see the world Michele adores that he realizes that he is not already dead. Shot almost entirely from Michele's vantage point, the movie at times seems to spring forth from a child's dreams, a storybook world of monsters and rescuers. Michele goes from friendship with the prisoner to an impassioned identification with him—he goes so far that he winds up substituting himself as a victim. This movie suggests that a full-bodied and fully inventive heroism may arise without understanding—purely out of instinct. At the end of the movie, before the violent climax, giant threshers appear over a hill and cut down the wheat, and, with a pang, we realize that Michele's time of innocence has ended forever.

A guy and a girl, sex and violence, a sinister landscape—that's all there is in "Twentynine Palms." The picture is the latest minimalist provocation from the infuriating but talented French director Bruno Dumont, who began his career, in 1997, with "La Vie de Jésus," a movie that offered the prickly notion that divinity might have been implanted in one of God's meaner creatures—a scrawny and unpleasant biker tearing around the featureless countryside of northern France. Dumont followed up that surly fable with "Humanité" (1999), a kind of metaphysical detective story about a policeman who may or may not have killed a young girl. "Humanité" finally collapsed under the weight of its many unresolved questions, yet it was clear that Dumont had certain peculiar strengths. At the very least, he could track through a given piece of turf (northern France again) with a sullen objectivity that gave audiences the willies. The policeman in "Humanité" stared into the distance like some Heideggerian wraith encountering the likelihood of his own nonexistence. Nothingness itself seemed to beckon to him. Dumont, a former philosophy professor, does not have what might be called a debonair temperament. He not only refuses to joke; he appears to live in a universe in which pleasure and wit are punishable offenses. His movies are gaunt and cryptic, yet they don't insult the audience; they communicate their gloomy questions in ways that leave one aroused and unsettled.

In "Twentynine Palms," Dumont enters the mythical landscape of the American West, and what he creates is something like anti-myth. The movie is set not in the beautiful Big Sky country of Wyoming and Montana, with its stirring mountains and cattle-rich plains, but in the barren high desert of Joshua Tree National Park, in California. There may be twenty-nine palms, but not one of them gives shade or comfort. The sun is unrelenting, the terrain is impressive but remarkably ugly; after a while, the logic of one's everyday desires begins to unravel. In "Twentynine Palms," two lovers travel to this malevolent wilderness. David (David Wissak), who is some sort of location scout in Los Angeles (for movies? advertising layouts?), has linked up with Katia (Katia Golubeva), a French-speaking Russian girl with no apparent occupation or interests. David is lean and saturnine, with a severe scowl; Katia has a wide Slavic brow and a model's glamorous cheekbones and perfect figure. They are in love but have nothing to say to each other: every time one of them reaches out, the other withdraws. Their conversations wander irritably around a circle of inconsequence and collapse into indignant silences or giggles.

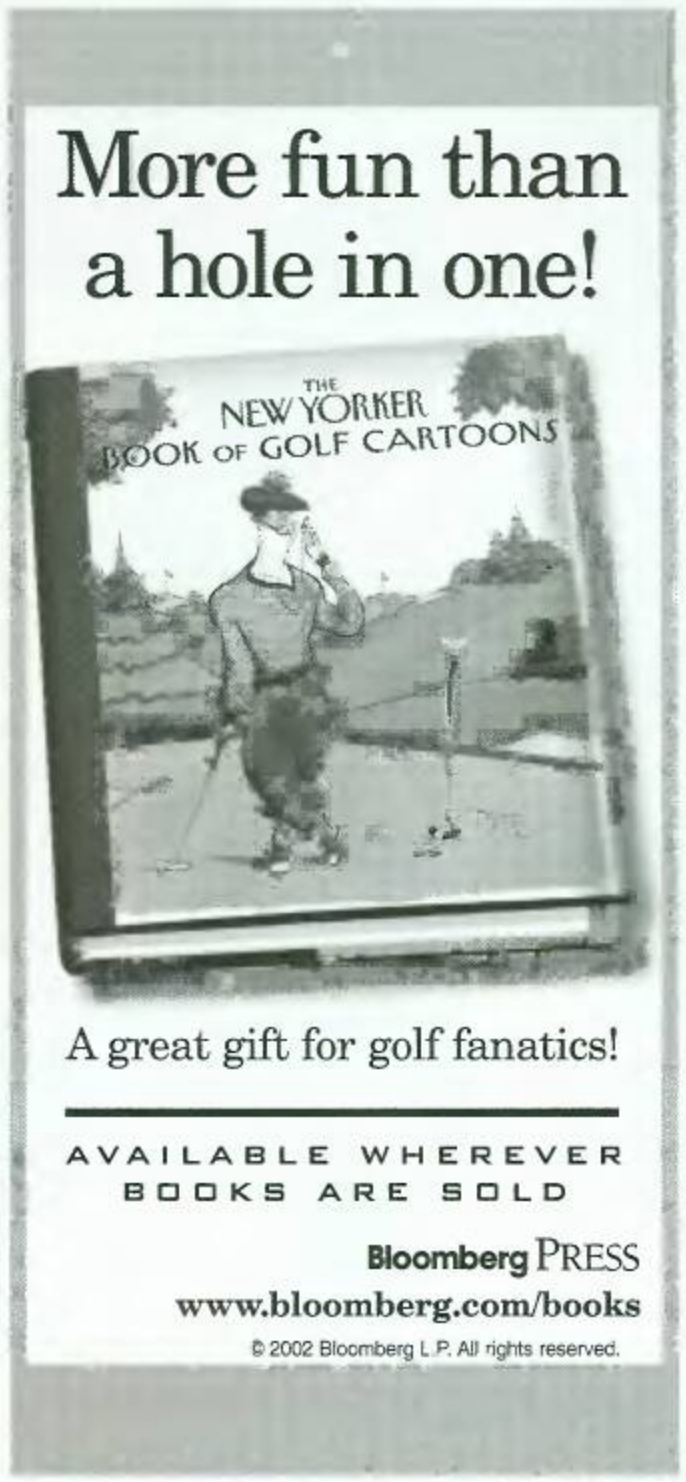
Dumont doesn't like trained performers—he thinks they give the audience technique rather than emotion—and these two semi-professional actors, working with an intentionally inarticulate script, can't really shape their scenes toward a resolution. We can see that David

is explicit, prosaic, and rather selfish, and that Katia is blank and completely arbitrary in her moods. He wants sense, she wants mystery. These two should never have got together in the first place, so what are they doing in the desert? They have driven from Los Angeles in a fashionable car (a dark-red Hummer), and they go off-road, passing through brownish wastes and across fields of spindly cactus, searching for something—the most desolate landscape in the world, perhaps.

I realize that all this sounds like a parody of an art film (Antonioni without chic), but Dumont, in his grim way, is working out a genuine philosophical impulse—his intention to reproduce what he calls "the vacuity of human existence withdrawn into its instincts." That's a strange mouthful (it undoubtedly sounds better in French), but Dumont is faithful to it. David and Katia truly connect only for sex—violent, uncomfortable sex ending in loud cries. You could say that they are trying to make sex do the work of everything else, and, for a while, of course, it can. Their lovemaking, photographed straight on, without lyricism or sensuality, but with awed amazement, is a successful assertion of will against a dead sky. There they are, clambering naked around large rocks and going at it under the sun—Adam and Eve after the fall. You can feel the heat on their skin, and their frustrated longing to break through to each other.

Dumont is a radical questioner and perhaps a bit of an artistic terrorist. He does whatever he can to increase our sense of estrangement, throwing in a noncontinuous cut, a threat without a reaction, a reaction without a threat. He arranges his figures in the hostile landscape so that they seem overmastered by it; then he holds the shots longer than expected, until menace builds up in the surrounding silence and our nerves are close to snapping. When violence finally does strike, without much warning, David and Katia have no way of dealing with it—Katia tries wanly to extend herself, but neither of them is aware enough to help the other through the disaster. They have worked their way to the end of both the magnificence and the poverty of instinct, where, in Dumont's world, sex has nowhere to go but into death.

Dumont's films are pitched at such extremes of despair that he can't really tell a story—to do that he would need to believe in a world in which human action was effective, or at least meant something, and he obviously doesn't. And he can't resolve his movies. The ending is rushed—spasmodic, really. Yet Dumont has a genius for alienated landscape, driven by an unending, not quite hopeless demand that emptiness, stared at intensively enough, will at last yield up its secrets. ♦



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Volume LXXX, No. 8, April 12, 2004. The New Yorker (ISSN 0028-792X) is published weekly (except for six combined issues: February 16 & 23, April 19 & 26, June 14 & 21, July 12 & 19, August 9 & 16, and December 20 & 27) by The Condé Nast Publications. which is a division of Advance Magazine Publishers Inc. PRINCIPAL OFFICE: The Condé Nast Building, 4 Times Square, New York, NY 10036. David Carey, vice-president and publisher; Chris Mitchell, associate publisher; Peter W. Jurew, associate publisher, marketing; Ronda Carnegie, advertising director; William Li, advertising director; Marie Wolpert, advertising director; Susan Harrington, director of creative services; Bob Gruters, director of marketing and strategic planning; Theresa Gaffney, creative development director; Rosemary Stanton, advertising business director. Advance Magazine Publishers Inc.: S. I. Newhouse, Jr., chairman; Steven T. Florio, vice-chairman; Charles H. Townsend, president and C.E.O.; John W. Bellando, executive vice-president and C.O.O.; Jill Bright, executive vice-president–human resources; John Buese, executive vice-president–chief information officer; David Orlin, senior vice-president–strategic sourcing; Robert Bennis, senior vice-president–real estate. Shared services provided by Advance Magazine Group: David B. Chemidlin, senior vice-president–general manager, shared services center. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY, and at additional mailing offices. Canada Post Publications Mail Agreement No. 40644503. Canadian Goods and Services Tax Registration No. R123242885. Canada Post return undeliverable Canadian addresses to: P.O. Box 1632, Station A, Windsor, ON N9A7C9.

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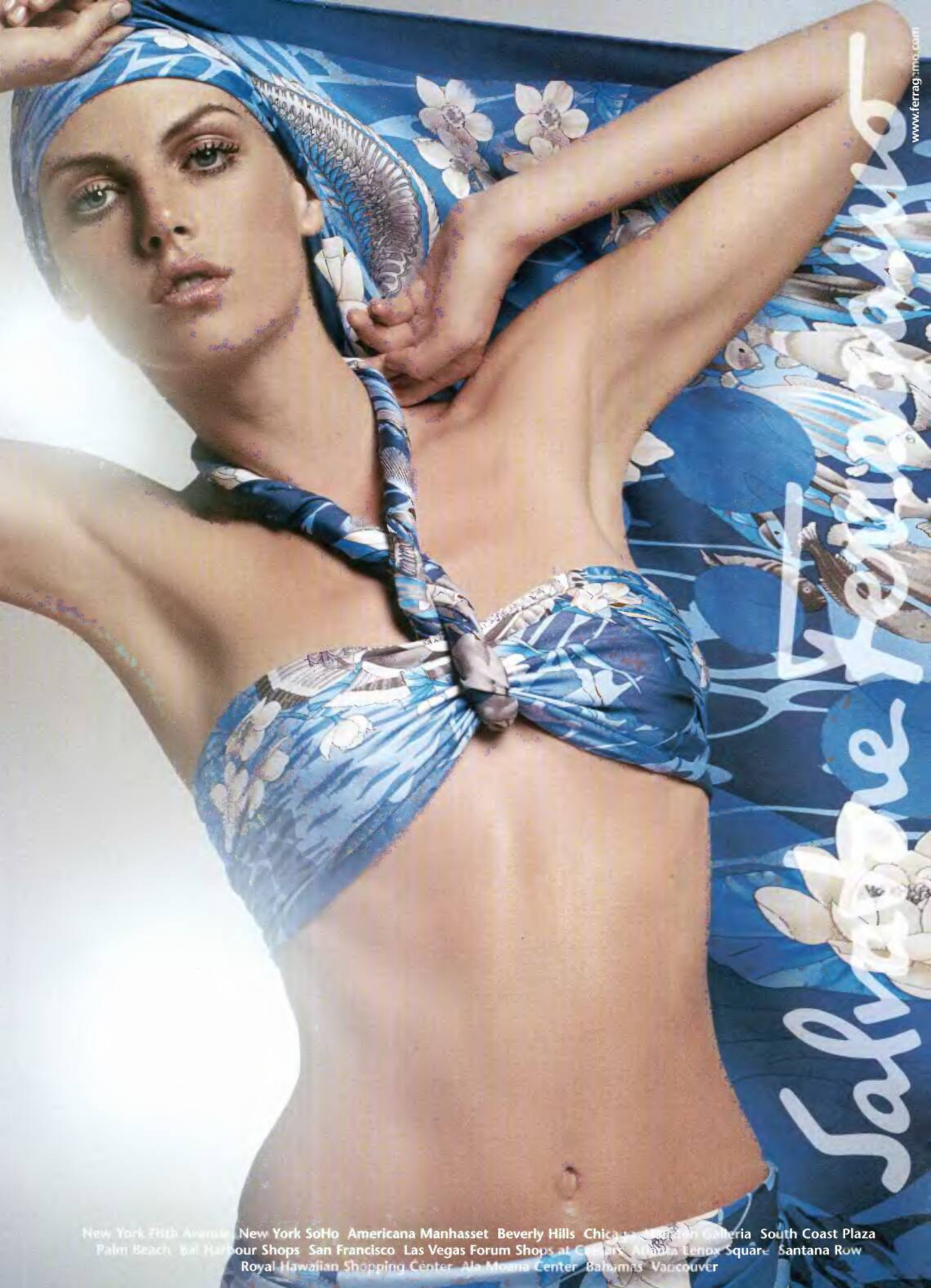
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