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THE NEW YORKER

MAY 8, 2006





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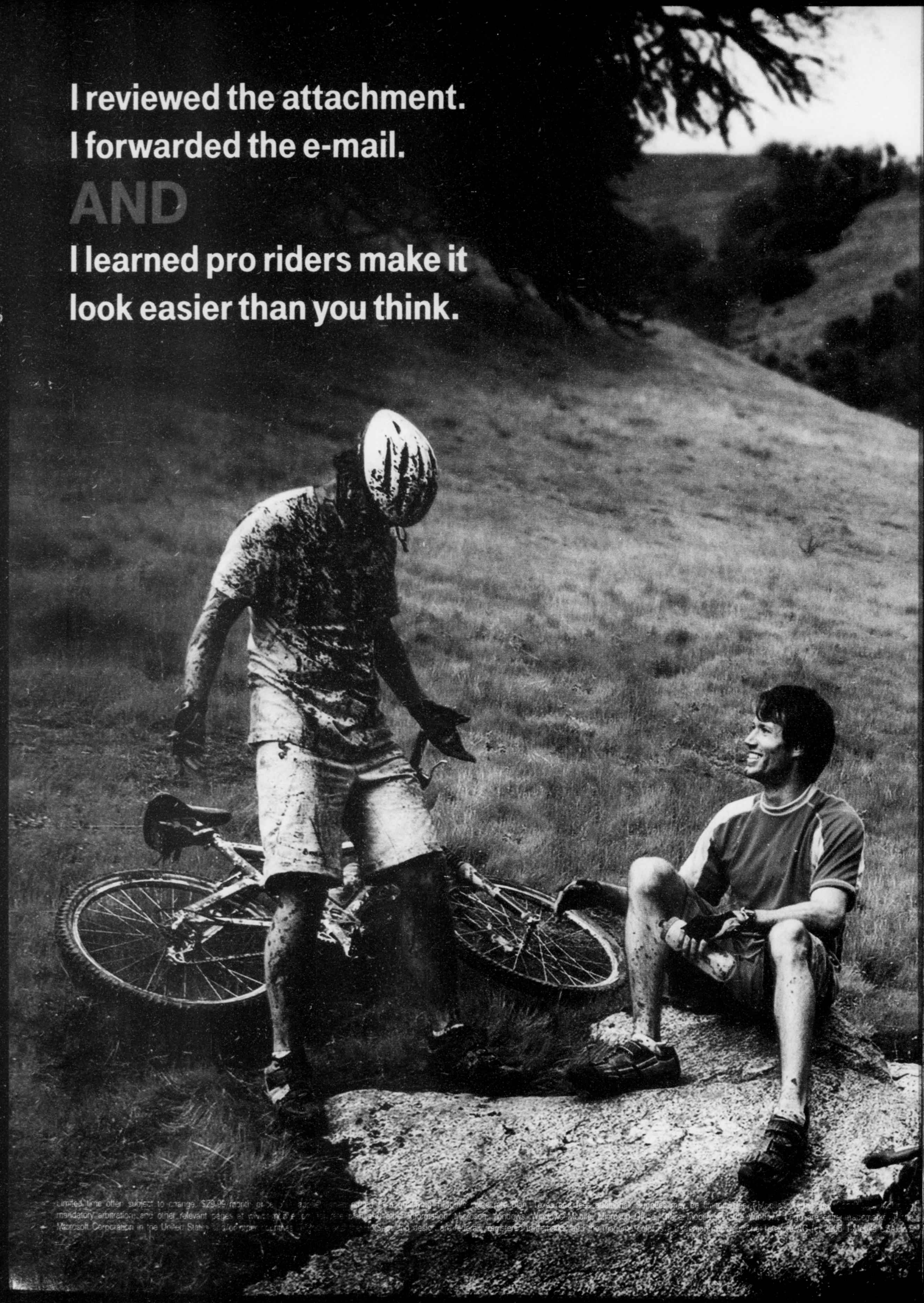
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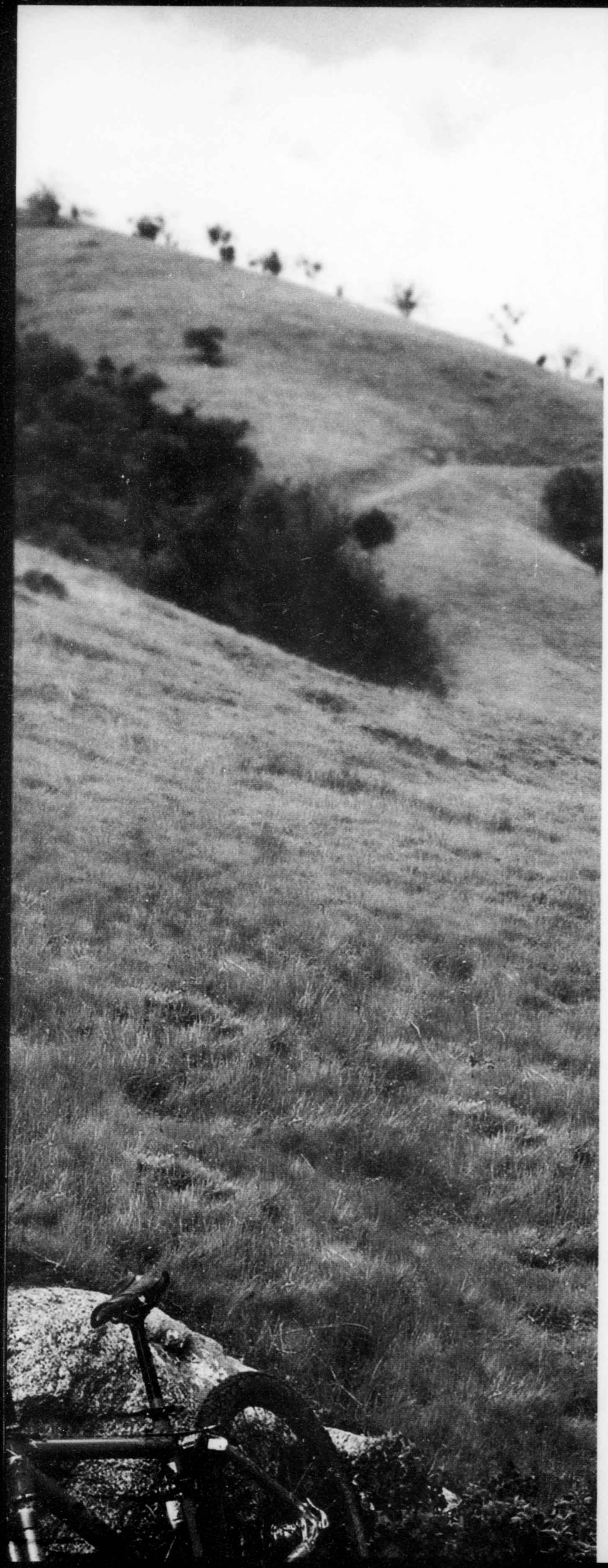
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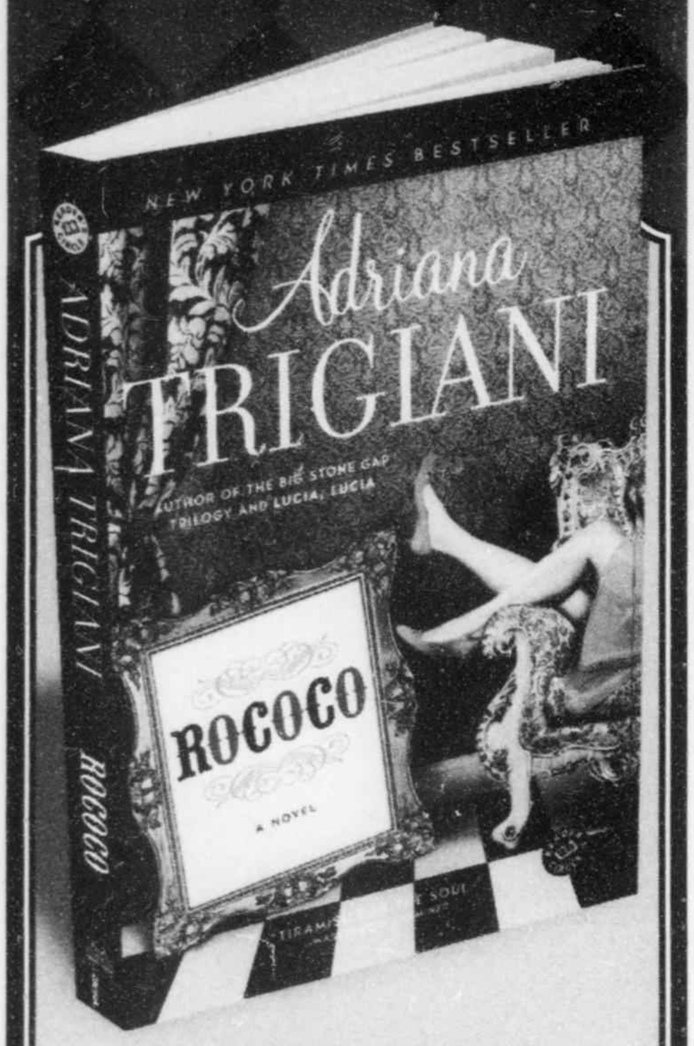
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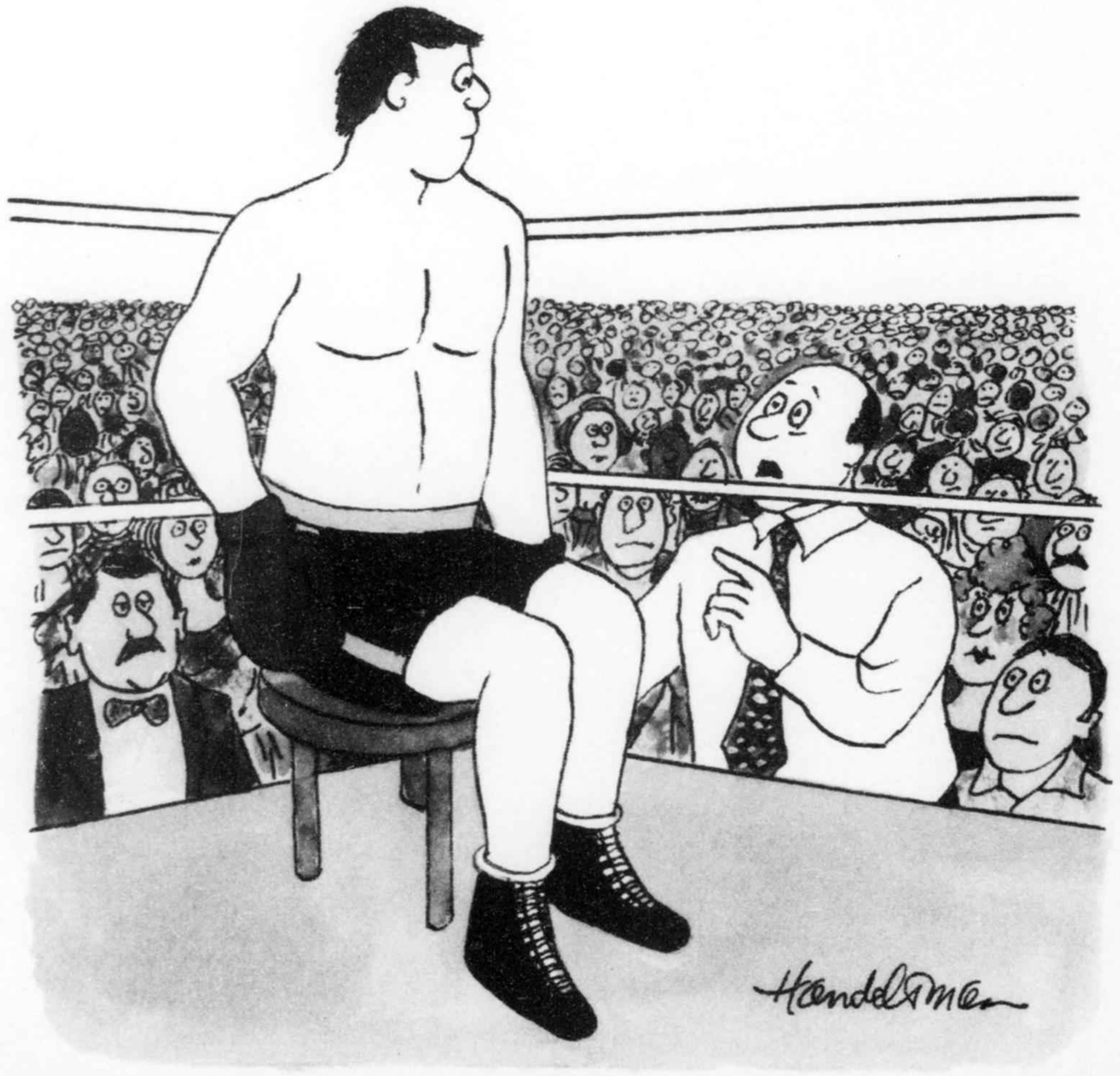
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Joan Acocella (Dancing, p. 80) is a dance critic for the magazine. ♦



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THE MAIL

THE IRAN DEBATE

Seymour M. Hersh's article on military planning in the Pentagon for a possible attack on Iran, while creating considerable concern, fails to provide what the country really needs: a public debate about the costs we are or are not willing to bear in order to deny Iran nuclear weapons ("The Iran Plans," April 17th). Hersh is right that this discussion would have to include an assessment of military action. But that discussion is incomplete without an equally fair analysis of the alternatives: Will diplomacy work? What if the Chinese and the Russians refuse to go along? Can we live peacefully with a nuclear Iran? Military action would undoubtedly incur significant costs, but every possible course of action—diplomatic, economic, or military—would bring with it an extremely high degree of risk. Alarmist commentary such as Hersh's might only derail an otherwise vitally important and necessary national debate.

Ely Ratner
San Francisco, Calif.

DISSECTING RELIGION

In his review of Daniel Dennett's "Breaking the Spell," H. Allen Orr writes that religion, as a social and political force, is "sometimes prone to excess," with the result of "intolerance, fanaticism, and, yes, terrorism" (Books, April 3rd). But it's worth noting that the great terrors of the past century have all been perpetrated by anti-religionists: Hitler, Stalin, Mao. Fanaticism is clearly not the sole province of the faithful, and religion may in fact be, broadly speaking, a moderating force in the world.

Peter McFadden
Cold Spring, N.Y.

Orr is pessimistic about science's ability to respond to religion's "larger metaphysical claims: the universe has a purpose, God exists, or life is sacred." Yet advances in geology, biology, physics, and astronomy have largely supplanted religious explanations for the creation of the earth, life, and the universe because of our capacity to be persuaded by the correlation between scientific paradigms and available evidence. In this sense, scientific explanation has crowded out religion's domain of reference. Similarly, it is likely that future advances in brain research will identify the biochemical basis of man's sense of purpose, imagination, and spirituality. If so, are these metaphysical constructs any different from our sense of happiness, despair, and contentment?

Robert Grannick
Wilmette, Ill.

ODETS ONSTAGE

I greatly enjoyed John Lahr's piece on Clifford Odets, but I must disagree with his statement, which is a common misconception, that "'Awake and Sing!' was one of the first sightings on the Broadway stage of the Jewish-American family" (A Critic at Large, April 17th). Dozens of plays about Jewish families appeared on Broadway in the nineteen-twenties, including Fannie Hurst's "Humoresque," Leon De Costa's "Kosher Kitty Kelly," Samson Raphaelson's "The Jazz Singer," and Bella and Samuel Spewack's "Poppa." True, these tended to be comedies, and to portray Jews in highly stereotypical ways. Odets's striking innovation was to elevate the Jewish family to the subject of tragedy, paving the way for Arthur Miller's "Death of a Salesman."

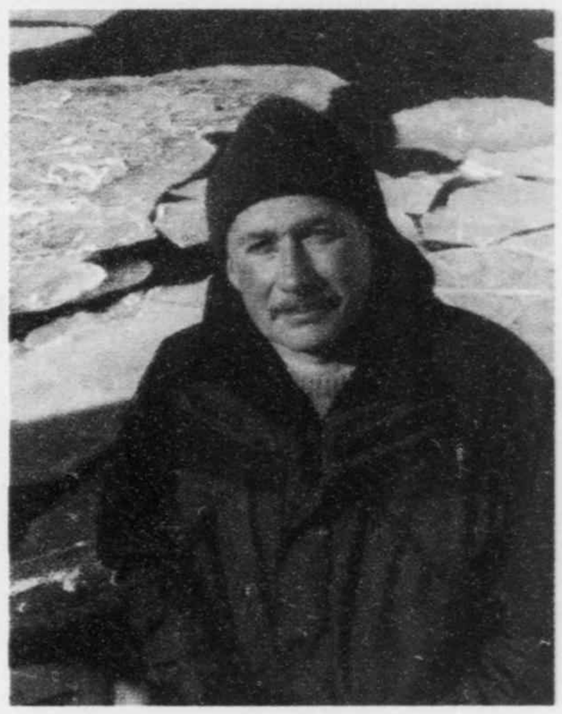
Ted Merwin
Harrisburg, Pa.

CORRECTION: Martin Amis's "The Last Days of Muhammad Atta" (April 24th) referred to the Newark Liberty airport; that name was not in use until September of 2002.

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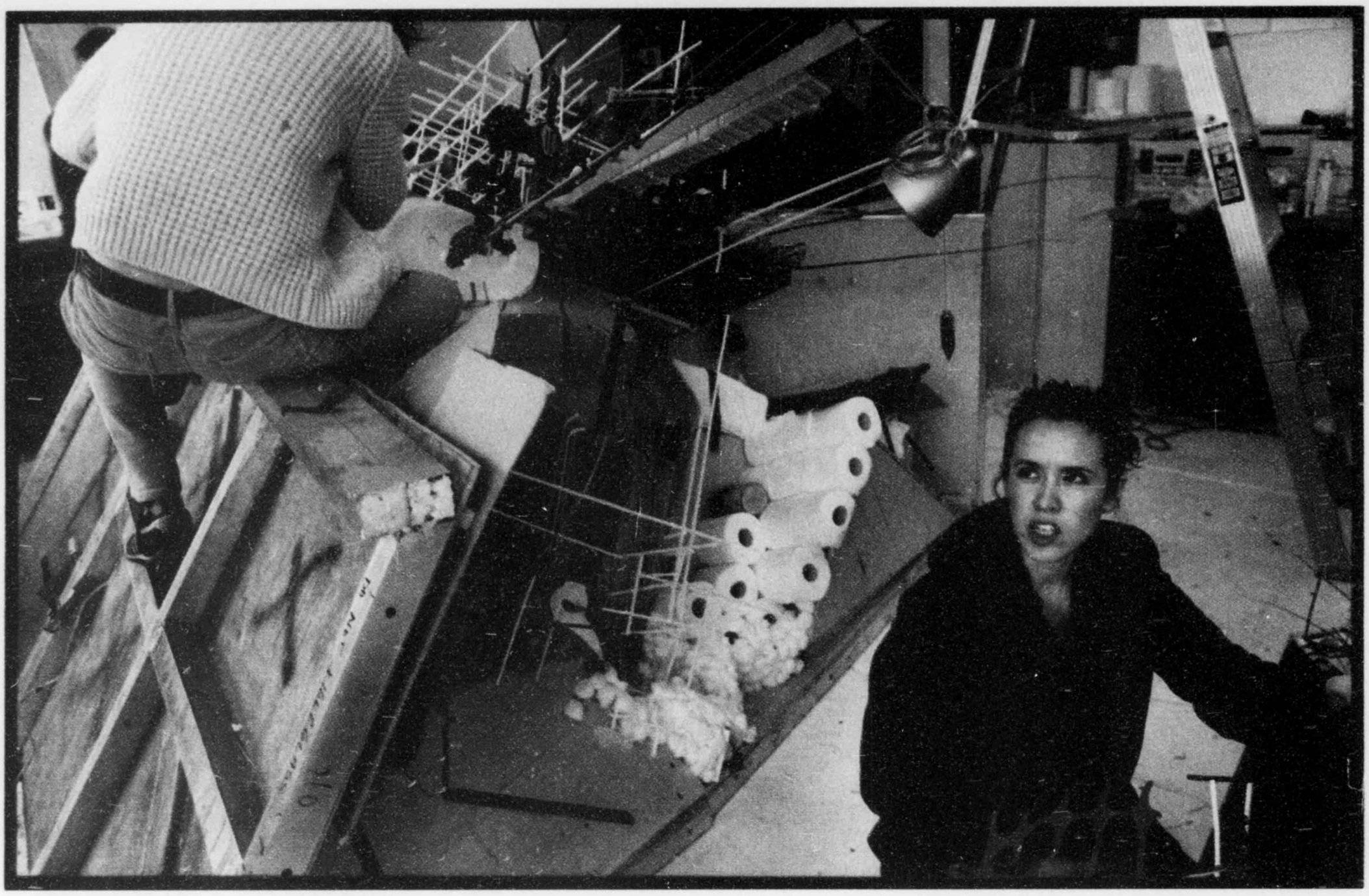
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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

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7 | 8 | 9 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6

THIS WEEK

THE THEATRE

GREAT SCOT

The comedian and actor Billy Connolly ("Mrs. Brown"), who hails from Glasgow, comes to New York with a new standup act. "Billy Connolly Live!" begins a monthlong engagement at 37 Arts. (See page 10.)

NIGHT LIFE

BOUND TOGETHER

In 1999, the guitarist Nick Zammuto met the cellist Paul de Jong in the New York City apartment building where they both lived. The two started collaborating as a duo called the Books, making captivating and quirky recordings full of found sounds and sonic experimentation. They recently assembled a band to perform their compositions onstage, and this week they play at Northsix, in Brooklyn. (See page 11.)

ART

LASTING IMPRESSION

The German-born American sculptor Eva Hesse (1936-70) died young, but her legacy is remarkably vivid and durable. The Drawing Center opens a show of works on paper this week, and the Jewish Museum follows with its own major exhibition, focussing on large-scale works and archival materials, on May 12. (See page 12.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC

IN CHAMBERS

The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center closes its season with Mozart's "Gran Partita" (with the bassist Edgar Meyer) and the world première of Michael Daugherty's "Ladder to the Moon" (a work inspired by Georgia O'Keeffe, with the violinist Ida Kavafian). (See page 16.)

MOVIES

NUCLEAR CONFUSION

Film Forum kicks off its six-week series of B noirs with Robert Aldrich's apocalyptic sleazefest, "Kiss Me Deadly," from 1955. A grungy Ralph Meeker plays the private eye Mike Hammer, whose greed and pride get his friends bumped off as he chases down a "whatsit"—a hot black box that turns out to be nuclear, not to mention ready to blow at any minute. (See page 20.)

The artist Sarah Sze, at work on a new installation. Photograph by Sylvia Plachy.



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THE THEATRE
OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

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

ALL DOLLED UP
Colin Quinn and Working Stiff Productions present a new comedy by Bobby Spillane, based on the true story of a cross-dressing gangster. Susan Campanaro directs. In previews. Opens May 7. (Acorn, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

ANNULLA
Emily Mann's play tells the story of a Jew who passed as an Aryan under the Nazi regime. Previews begin May 4. (Theatre at St. Luke's, 308 W. 46th St. 212-239-6200.)

BILLY CONNOLLY LIVE!
The Scottish comedian presents a standup show at 37 Arts. Previews begin May 9. (450 W. 37th St. 212-307-4100.)

THE BOGUS WOMAN
British playwright Kay Adshead's drama is about a young African woman seeking asylum in England. Part of the "Brits Off Broadway" series. In previews. Opens May 7. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)

BRUNDIBAR
Maurice Sendak designed the set and Tony Kushner wrote the libretto for this children's opera, in which a brother and sister, along with a clutch of talking animals, defeat an evil organ grinder. "But a Giraffe," a curtain-raiser by Kushner, begins the show. In previews. Opens May 7. (New Victory, 209 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.)

THE CAINE MUTINY COURT-MARTIAL
David Schwimmer stars in a revival of Herman Wouk's 1954 play, based on his Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, about a naval lieutenant on trial for mutiny during the Second World War. Jerry Zaks directs. In previews. Opens May 7. (Schoenfeld, 236 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

CORTEO
Cirque du Soleil comes to town with a show about a clown who imagines his funeral as a carnival. In previews. Opens May 4. (Randall's Island Park. 800-678-5440.)

DEFYING HITLER
A drama adapted from Sebastian Haffner's memoir, about a young man growing up in Germany between the two World Wars. Part of the "Brits Off Broadway" series. In previews. Opens May 7. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)

FAITH HEALER
Ralph Fiennes, Cherry Jones, and Ian McDiarmid star in a revival of Brian Friel's 1979 play, about a man with a gift for healing, his long-suffering wife, and his loyal manager. In previews. Opens May 4. (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

J.A.P. CHRONICLES, THE MUSICAL
Isabel Rose wrote, composed, and stars in this musical, about six former bunkmates at a camp reunion. Opens May 3. (Perry Street Theatre, 31 Perry St. 212-868-4444.)

THE LIEUTENANT OF INISHMORE
Martin McDonagh's gory black comedy moves to Broadway. Opens May 3. (Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

NO CHILD
Nilaja Sun wrote and performs her examination of the New York City public-school system. Hal Brooks directs. In previews. (Beckett, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

NOT A GENUINE BLACK MAN
Brian Copeland's new play tells of his experiences in an African-American family living in an almost exclusively white suburb. Bob Balaban directs. Previews begin May 9. (DR2, 103 E. 15th St. 212-239-6200.)

PRIME TIME
Alex De Witt's satire examines stereotypes perpetuated by mass media. Opens May 5. (Lion, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

SHINING CITY
Manhattan Theatre Club presents a new play by Conor McPherson ("The Weir"), starring Brían F. O'Byrne ("Doubt"), Martha Plimpton, and Oliver Platt. Robert Falls directs. In previews. Opens May 9. (Biltmore, 261 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200.)



Rosanne Cash, at St. Ann's Warehouse.

A SPALDING GRAY MATTER
The New Group (Naked) presents Michael Brandt's drama, which stems from the events surrounding the death of Spalding Gray. Previews begin May 3. Opens May 6. (Clurman, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

TARZAN
Disney's version of Edgar Rice Burroughs's classic story comes to Broadway. Bob Crowley directs. In previews. (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 212-307-4747.)

TEMPEST TOSS'D
A new family musical of Shakespeare's "The Tempest," adapted and directed by Sarah Rosenberg. In previews. Opens May 8. (Manhattan Ensemble Theatre, 55 Mercer St. 212-239-6200.)

THE THREE MUSKETEERS
The Acting Company presents a new stage adaptation of the adventure classic. Previews begin May 9. (Baruch Performing Arts Center, 55 Lexington Ave. 212-279-4200.)

TROIKA: GOD, TOLSTOY AND SOPHIA
This drama by Peter Levy tells of the last days of Leo Tolstoy. In previews. Opens May 6. (13th Street Repertory, 50 W. 13th St. 212-352-3101.)

NOW PLAYING

ABSENCE AND PRESENCE
Andrew Dawson's autobiographical drama relates his fraught experiences with his father. (P.S. 122, at 150 First Ave. 212-352-3101. Through May 7.)

THE DROWSY CHAPERONE
A meta-musical about a theatre fan in a reverie over his favorite musical, starring Bob Martin and Sutton Foster. Directed and choreographed by Casey Nicholaw. (Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 212-307-4100.)

FAUST
David Herskovits directs Target Margin Theatre's production of parts one and two of Goethe's masterpiece. (Classic Stage Company, 136 E. 13th St. 212-279-4200.)

A FINE & PRIVATE PLACE
The boy-meets-girl plot of this musical comedy set in a graveyard has one wistful twist: both Laura (Christiane Noll) and Michael (Glenn Seven Allen) are ghosts in imminent danger of losing their individuality and lapsing into nothingness. If their love should falter, they risk dissolution—it's only desire that keeps them earthbound. With the help of a wisecracking Bronx raven (played by the director, Gabriel Barre) and a zaftig widow (the appealing Evalyn Baron), the couple hold fast to their ghostly glow of romance. The lyricist Erik Haagensen and the composer Richard Isen have fashioned a gently eccentric musical from Peter Beagle's novel of the same name. (York Theatre at St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. 212-868-4444.)

THE HISTORY BOYS
In Alan Bennett's drama (London's National Theatre production, under the superb direction of Nicholas Hytner), Hector (Richard Griffiths, in a performance as huge as his girth) is a rambunctious general-studies teacher whose love of knowledge for its own sake is forced to take a back seat to the glib methods of Irwin (Stephen Campbell Moore), who is hired to get exam results. Their students are in search of a passport to the good life; Hector, with his erudite badinage, entices them instead to a life of the mind. Bennett provides a subversive critique of the British expertise in bluffing: the Socratic dialogue is replaced with the technique of paradox, and eloquence trumps relevance. (Reviewed in our issue of 5/1/06.) (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

HOT FEET
Maurice Hines conceived, directed, and choreographed this dance musical set to the groovy tunes of Earth, Wind & Fire, co-created with Maurice White. (Hilton, 213 W. 42nd St. 212-307-4100.)

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST
Lynn Redgrave stars as Lady Bracknell in Oscar Wilde's play. (Reviewed in this issue.) (BAM's Harvey Theatre, 651 Fulton St. 718-636-4100.)

LESTAT
The new musical based on Anne Rice's "Vampire Chronicles" features music by Elton John and lyrics by Bernie Taupin. (Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 212-307-4100.)

MARY STUART
The Pearl presents the play by Friedrich Schiller, about the execution of Mary, Queen of Scots, upon decree by her cousin Queen Elizabeth. Directed by Eleanor Holdridge. (80 St. Marks Pl. 212-598-9802.)

THE MISTAKES MADELINE MADE
Elizabeth Meriwether's playfully deviant workplace comedy, presented by Naked Angels and directed by Evan Cabnet, is a revolt against all that is filed and alphabetized. But what seems at first like an "Office Space" rehash, with a number of familiar targets—anal supervisors, über-rich Manhattan kids, bad dates—is offset by the transfixing oddness of the play's heroine, Edna (Laura Heisler), a fragile, brainy young personal assistant who upends her office hierarchy by holding hostage a shipment of imported Handi Wipes and refusing to bathe. Edna's hygiene issues, of course, reveal a host of psychological ones, most poignantly her need to be visible—or smellable—in a too tidy world. (45 Below, at 45 Bleecker St. 212-868-4444.)

SORE THROATS
Theatre for a New Audience presents the New York première of a play by Howard Brenton, about a woman whose twenty-year marriage collapses. (The Duke on 42nd Street, 229 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.)

THE THREEPENNY OPERA
The battle that this Roundabout Theatre Company production of Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill's 1928

EDEL RODRIGUEZ

masterpiece (with a fine new translation by Wallace Shawn) dramatizes is not the toll of economic forces on society but the toll of the director Scott Elliott's mediocre imagination on first-rate performers. In the original, the murderous Macheath is a perverse shadow of the capitalist dream of making a killing; he marries Polly Peachum, whose parents set out to have him arrested and hanged. Here Macheath (Alan Cumming) is a bisexual sex addict; his paramour Lucy Brown (Brian Charles Rooney) is a transvestite. As Macheath's prostitute lover, Jenny, Cyndi Lauper has a husky voice that cannot be denied; as Mr. Peachum, Jim Dale, an old musical pro, turns in a proper piece of epic acting. Brecht wanted to dazzle and disabuse; Elliott wants to dazzle and delight. (5/1/06) (Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 212-719-1300.)

THE WEDDING SINGER
A musical based on the 1998 movie, about a wedding singer who falls in love with a bride-to-be in New Jersey in the eighties. John Rando directs. (Al Hirschfeld, 302 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

Also Playing

AWAKE AND SING!: Belasco, 111 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **BACK OF THE THROAT:** Flea, 41 White St. 212-352-3101. **LOS BIG NAMES:** 47th Street Theatre, 304 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200. **ENTERTAINING MR. SLOANE:** Laura Pels, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300. **JACQUES BREL IS ALIVE AND WELL AND LIVING IN PARIS:** Zipper, 336 W. 37th St. 212-239-6200. **A JEW GROWS IN BROOKLYN:** American Theatre of Actors, 314 W. 54th St. 212-352-3101. **LANDSCAPE OF THE BODY:** Peter Norton Space, 555 W. 42nd St. 212-352-3101. **THE PAJAMA GAME:** American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-719-1300. **RED LIGHT WINTER:** Barrow Street Theatre, 27 Barrow St. 212-239-6200. **STUFF HAPPENS:** Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-239-6200. **SWEENEY TODD:** Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200. **THREE DAYS OF RAIN:** Bernard B. Jacobs, 242 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **TRYST:** Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 212-239-6200. **WELL:** Longacre, 220 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200.

NIGHT LIFE
ROCK AND POP

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

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (212-997-4144)—May 3: The cult figure **Dan Hicks,** whose cynicism, after all this time, still doesn't outweigh his lyricism, pulls up with his Hot Licks.

BEACON THEATRE
Broadway at 74th St. (212-307-7171)—May 3-4: The Charlotte, North Carolina, native **Anthony Hamilton** grew up singing gospel, and he delivers his old-school R. & B. with a religious intensity.

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—May 4-5: The popular young folksinger **Josh Ritter** splits the bill with **Hem,** a charming local ensemble with countrypolitan leanings. May 8: The Swedish pop collective the **Concretes.**

CUTTING ROOM
19 W. 24th St. (212-691-1900)—May 5: **Kate Taylor,** the sister of James and Livingston, drops by with a new group for a night of rockabilly. Kate's voice has a distinctive North Carolina-inflected twang, and her band has a fine pedigree: the guitarist Bill Derby has played with Bruce Springsteen; Sam Zucchini has drummed for Carly Simon; the bassist Dave Anderson has supported Taj Mahal; and the mandolin player and backup singer Catherine Russell is the daughter of Carline Ray (Ruth Brown's bassist) and the late Luis Russell, who played piano for Louis Armstrong.

THE DELANCEY
168 Delancey St. (212-254-9920)—Mondays in May: The down-tempo beats, haunted-matinée-style organ playing, and electronic flourishes of **Mudville.**

IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (212-777-6800)—May 4: The **East Village Opera Company** gives a guitar crunch to classic overtures. May 7: The natty Boston-based power-pop quintet **Click Five.**

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—May 3: **Thomas Dolby,** too often dismissed as a New Wave one-hit wonder despite his pioneering work with synthesizers, knows more about how to get a pile of transistors into orbit (at least musically) than all the engineers at NASA. Recently, Dolby was vaulted back into the news after Kevin Federline (a.k.a. Mr. Britney Spears) sampled a bit of "She Blinded Me with Science" without permission. May 5: The **Sharp Things,** a sprawling local ensemble led by the pianist Perry Serpa that specializes in lush, retro-flavored, sentimental pop. They're appearing with another local group, the **Bedsit Poets,** whose tender originals have an early-sixties innocence.

"LET'S ZYDECO"
The roving concert series dedicated to the indigenous music of Louisiana seems to have found a home at Connolly's, an Irish Bar in midtown with a fine wooden dance floor. On May 7, the **Doc Marshalls** will get couples moving in time. (121 W. 45th St. For more information, call 212-685-7597 or visit www.letszydeco.com.)

MERCURY LOUNGE
217 E. Houston St. (212-260-4700)—May 5: **Chris Berry** and **Panjea** are joined by **Michael Kang,** the violinist and mandolin player for the String Cheese Incident. Berry, who was born thirty-four years ago in Los Angeles and raised in Sebastopol, California, left the Bay Area as a teen-ager and spent more than

garde classical music, folk, and pop—but what really binds them is a passion for found sounds (they spend a fair amount of time wandering around with microphones and tape recorders). They cut and paste these elements into sonic delights that come acrosss like disembodied sound sculptures. The pair tour with video projections of (what else?) snippets of old home movies from thrift shops. May 6: **Captured! By Robots,** a one-man, multi-cyborg band from San Francisco. The man goes by the name JBOT, and he built his fellow band members because, he says, he couldn't get along with other people. Unfortunately, the robots got the better of him and enslaved him, or so the story goes. As if that were not enough, JBOT was recently ordained by the Universal Life Church, and he has invited his fans to get married onstage during the show, although he claims no responsibility for how his bandmates might act.

RADIO CITY MUSIC HALL
Sixth Ave. at 50th St. (212-247-4777)—May 5: Australia's **INXS** rode a rough form of dance rock to chart success in the eighties and nineties, but the party came to a halt, at least briefly, when the group's lead singer, Michael Hutchence, died, in 1997. In recent years, the band tried out a few other front men before settling on a novel solution: a talent search via a reality TV show. Last summer, "Rock Star: INXS" crowned JD Fortune, a former Elvis impersonator from Canada, as the new lead singer of the group. May 9: The seventies soft-rock ensemble **Chicago.**

ST. ANN'S WAREHOUSE
38 Water St., Brooklyn (718-254-8779)—May 4: The singer-songwriter **Rosanne Cash** mourns the recent deaths of her father, Johnny, her stepmother, June Carter, and her mother, Vivian Liberto, on her latest release, "Black Cadillac." As if to make



TABLES FOR TWO
BOULEY, UPSTAIRS

130 West Broadway, at Duane St. (212-608-5829)—Few chefs are as restless as David Bouley, and this tri-level venture across the road from his flagship restaurant takes eclecticism (or sheer caprice) to new levels. The ground floor is a bakeshop, selling plush loaves and Parisian pâtisseries. The basement is a "market," in reality a cabinet of meat and fish of irreproachable quality but insufficient variety. And, in the evenings, the top floor is a tiny restaurant, serving French-American fare and—why not?—sushi. A mission statement promises a "dining experience defined by eclecticism in taste and clarity in presentation." No quibbles with the first half of this claim.

There is, however, little effort to integrate the various areas of the menu into a meal. A Japanese salad of grilled eel and cucumber and a squash soup dappled with sweet chestnuts are equally outstanding as starters, but nothing from the kitchen ever arrives at the same time as anything from the sushi bar. The good-humored staff manages brilliantly, considering the tiny space and the complexity of the operation, but chaos is never far away. The tightly spaced chairs necessitate a certain agility from the waitstaff, or at least a tolerance of thrown elbows; one diner's apology for leaning back into a waitress met with a breezy "I'm used to it."

However, it's amazing that things work as well as they do. The wait for a table is ameliorated by the offer of a drink; the specialty cocktails come in combinations (gin and ginger, Campari and *soju*) that attempt a cultural synthesis similar to that of the food. Bouley, when all's said and done, can really cook, and clearly cares about little else. Halibut served with sweet corn and shiitake mushrooms in a lemon-and-thyme sauce is a marvel of aromatic delicacy. Lobster is transformed, but not overwhelmed, by red-wine sauce and a cushion of parsnip purée. It's best to arrive late in the evening, when the room thins, the pace slows, and, sometimes, Bouley himself casually munches burgers with his staff. It's then that his notion of the place as somewhere you might wander in for a bite to eat starts to seem almost realistic. (Open Mondays through Saturdays for dinner. Entrées $12-$21.)

—Leo Carey

a decade in Africa. He lived on the street, mastered the mbira (thumb piano) and the Congolese *ngoma* drum, and, after taking top honors on the TV show "New African Stars '91," in Zimbabwe, became a star throughout southern Africa. He returned to America in 2000, and he recently released his first U.S. album, the aptly named "Dancemakers."

NORTHSIX
66 N. 6th St., Williamsburg, Brooklyn (718-599-5103)—May 5: The **Books** are the guitarist Nick Zammuto and Paul de Jong, a classically trained cellist. The two share a wide range of interests—avant-

clear the personal nature of the proceedings, the album opens with a recording of Johnny's voice calling her name, but Rosanne turns her pain into something with universal appeal. She heals by uniting; the album brings together country, rock, adult contemporary, and other genres.

TONIC
107 Norfolk St. (212-358-7503)—The new album by Oakland's **Faun Fables,** "The Transit Rider," outlines a fairy tale about a young, nature-loving passenger (played by Dawn McCarthy, the group's founder and main songwriter) who gets trapped in a train car

CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
ALL EYES ON AFRICA

In the decade since "In/Sight," the Guggenheim survey that gave African photography its most intelligent and eye-opening American showcase, that exhibition's curator, the Nigerian-born Okwui Enwezor (pictured), has worked on a slew of international shows. But



African photography has never been off his critical radar, and he returns to it with "Snap Judgments," at the International Center of Photography. Focussing on recent work, Enwezor has rounded up thirty-five artists, mostly African-born, a few of whom now live outside the continent. Because even fewer of them have been shown in the U.S., there are revelations at every turn. Among them: Guy Tillim's series on squatters in Johannesburg's empty tower blocks, Andrew Dosunmu's ultrasuave music videos and fashion shots, Kay Hassen's subverted identitification photos, Moshekwa Langa's poignant still-lifes, and the Nigerian collective Depth of Field's four-screen barrage of stills, which captures the hectic spirit of the show in brilliant flashes.

—Vince Aletti

by an evil, authoritarian conductor (played with comic brilliance by Nils Frykdahl, her longtime guitarist and collaborator). The group, which is touring with costumes and stage sets (the train is loosely inspired by the New York City subway), comes to town May 6, playing songs about everything from the price of tokens (the title track was written several years ago) to a businessman's addiction to motion. The tunes are dark and intense, thanks largely to McCarthy's spine-chilling voice. Sharing the bill is the Brooklyn-based cabaret-rock outfit **Barbez**.

WORLD MUSIC INSTITUTE
May 5: A night of Indian mandolin mastery with **U. Shrinivas** and his brother **U. Rajesh.** (New York Society for Ethical Culture, 2 W. 64th St. For more information, call 212-545-7536.)

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

ALGONQUIN HOTEL
59 W. 44th St. (212-840-6800)—Through May 13: The chanteuse **Karen Akers** focusses on the songwriting team of John Kander and Fred Ebb, the men who assured us that life is a cabaret.

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—May 2-7: The gruff-voiced singer and producer **Steve Tyrell.**

DIZZY'S CLUB COCA-COLA
Broadway at 60th St. (212-258-9595)—May 2-7: Jazz at Lincoln Center, the parent of this intimate club, puts the spotlight on New Orleans this week. **Crescent City Swing** features **Wess Anderson,** on saxophone, and **Marc Cary,** on piano.

IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—May 4-7: Drawing on music from the underappreciated composer, arranger, and instrumentalist Mary Lou Williams, the pianist **Geri Allen,** along with the bassist **Kenny Davis** and the drummer **Andrew Cyrille,** brings her own spin to the captivating miniatures of Williams's 1945 recording, "Zodiac Suite." Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.** The **Mingus Big Band** takes over on Tuesdays.

JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER
Broadway at 60th St. (212-721-6500)—May 4-6: **Wycliffe Gordon** fills the Allen Room with the jazz and gospel sounds of New Orleans. The program features both the exuberant trombonist's instrumental quintet and an expanded ensemble with vocalists including **Topsy Chapman.** May 4-6: In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, African slaves gathered in New Orleans's Congo Square to perform indigenous music; during the decades before the Civil War, it was the only place in the South where drumming was permitted. The square provides the inspiration for an ambitious new piece co-composed by **Wynton Marsalis** and the percussionist **Yacub Addy.** The **Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra** and Addy's ensemble **Odadaa!** perform it in the Rose Theatre.

TONIC
107 Norfolk St. (212-358-7503)—May 9: The saxophonist **Paul Shapiro** doesn't tread lightly upon the Jewish-themed music he plays. His latest CD on the Tzadik label, "It's in the Twilight," displays all the turbulent beauty and tradition-bucking funk that his growing coterie of fans now expects.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—May 2-7: The trumpeter **Dave Douglas** brings in his post-bop quartet featuring **Uri Caine** on electric piano. Expect samples from Douglas's new album, "Meaning and Mystery." The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-535-7710)—**"The Art of Betty Woodman,"** a retrospective of ceramic pieces from throughout her career, includes a set of five vases she made to hold flower arrangements in the Great Hall. Through July 30. ♦ **"Cai Guo-Qiang on the Roof: Transparent Monument."** The Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Roof Garden has reopened for the summer, with four sculptural works by the Chinese-born artist. Among them are "Clear Sky Black Cloud," a timed gunpowder explosion that will produce a small cloud of smoke over Central Park each day at noon. Through Oct. 29. ♦ **"Hatshepsut: From Queen to Pharaoh."** Through July 9. ♦ **"Samuel Palmer: Vision and Landscape."** A major retrospective, co-organized with the British Museum, reviews the work of the Romantic-era landscape painter Samuel Palmer (1805-81). Through May 29. ♦ **"Warriors of the Himalayas: Rediscovering the Arms and Armor of Tibet."** Through July 2. ♦ The aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and forgotten items from the Met's storerooms meet in what Kara Walker calls "the story of Muck." This sad and delicate show, titled **"After the Deluge,"** mixes Walker's own gruesomely satirical silhouettes, gouaches, and writings with a range of historical works to produce a meditation on death by water and the indelible stain of American racial obsessions. Through July 30. ♦ **"AngloMania: Tradition and Transgression in British Fashion"** opens in the Costume Institute on May 3. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9400)—**"Edvard Munch: The Modern Life of the Soul"** is the first American museum retrospective of the Norwegian artist (1863-1944) in thirty years. Through May 8. ♦ In **"Without Boundary: Seventeen Ways of Looking,"** artists from Islamic backgrounds examine their cultures and homelands, mostly from afar. Unexpectedly, perhaps, women reign. Included are works by Mona Hatoum, Shirin Neshat, Ghada Amer, Shahzia Sikander, Emily Jacir, and Marjane Satrapi. Through May 22. ♦ The retrospective **"John Szarkowski: Photographs"** presents work by the critic and curator (he worked at MOMA for almost thirty years), from Midwestern scenes of the nineteen-forties through a 2002 shot taken in upstate New York. Through May 15. (Open Wednesdays through Mondays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Friday evenings until 8. For the duration of the Munch show, the museum will also stay open until 8 on Saturdays.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—**"David Smith: A Centennial."** Smith (1906-65) parlayed his experiences as a welder, an employee of the Studebaker company, a painter, and an acolyte of the Cubist movement into tremendous steel sculptures that were championed by Clement Greenberg and have become emblems of American modernism. Through May 14. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (800-944-8639)—Philippe Vergne and Chrissie Iles curated **"Day for Night,"** the 2006 Biennial. More than a hundred artists are represented, including Pierre Huyghe, Marilyn Minter, Sturtevant, and Troy Brauntuch. Through May 28. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART
200 Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—**"William Wegman: Funney/Strange."** This major retrospective goes beyond clever, anthropomorphic photographs of Weimaraners (though those are here, too) with forty years of the artist's paintings, drawings, videos, and films. Through May 28. ♦ **"Symphonic Poem: The Art of Aminah Brenda Lynn Robinson."** Through Aug. 13. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5, and weekends, 11 to 6.)

DAHESH MUSEUM OF ART
580 Madison Ave., at 57th St. (212-759-0606)—**"Stories to Tell: Masterworks from the Kelly Collection of American Illustration"** gathers original paintings and prints, as well as printed matter, featuring the beguiling visions of Maxfield Parrish, N. C. Wyeth, Charles Dana Gibson, Jessie Willcox Smith, and, naturally, Norman Rockwell. Through May 21. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6.)

DRAWING CENTER
35 Wooster St. (212-219-2166)—**"Eva Hesse Drawing"** opens this week, and promises to provide a window onto the sculptor's brief but influential career

JEROEN KOOLHAAS

through working sketches, reliefs, and notes. Opens May 6. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, 10 to 6, and Saturdays, 11 to 6.)

FRICK COLLECTION
1 E. 70th St. (212-288-0700)—**"Goya's Last Works."** Through May 14. ♦ **"Veronese's Allegories: Virtue, Love, and Exploration in Renaissance Venice."** Through July 16. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, 11 to 5. The Goya exhibition galleries will stay open until 8 on Friday evenings for the duration of the show.)

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY
1133 Sixth Ave., at 43rd St. (212-857-0000)—**"Snap Judgments: New Positions in Contemporary African Photography."** Through May 28. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, and Saturdays and Sundays, 10 to 6, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

NEW YORK CITY FIRE MUSEUM
278 Spring St. (212-691-1303)—This small museum accomplishes the trick of presenting a broad history of New York through a narrow, specialized lens. Items range in date from 1800, when city water mains were made of massive logs hollowed out with a hot poker, to 1875, when blue-and-gold hose reels with decorative plumes were hauled through the streets by hand, to March 26, 1911, the day after the Triangle Shirtwaist fire, when the front page of the New York *Evening Journal* displayed a dangling noose and the proclamation "This Fits Somebody: Who Is He?," to our city's most immediate tragedy, on September 11, 2001. Special exhibits focus on these major events, while the permanent collection presents assorted memorabilia like axes, hoses, engines, badges, shields, uniforms, toys, posters, and the taxidermied remains of a firehouse dog who could climb the pole. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 5, and Sundays, 10 to 4.)

GALLERIES–UPTOWN

Galleries are usually open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6; please call the gallery for exact hours.

JUDITH JOY ROSS
Although August Sander is the most obvious influence on Ross's small, straightforward portraits, her work is not only intensely descriptive, it's loving. For this show, her subjects are mainly children in the small-town Pennsylvania schools she herself attended, but she also includes pictures of children at play, gravediggers, election boosters, pairs of male friends, and young Ugandan refugees. Ross, who works with an old-fashioned view camera on a tripod, never gets very close to the people she photographs, but she still manages to embrace and comprehend them and to present them not as representative types but as our extended family. Through May 13. (Pace/MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. 212-759-7999.)

Short List

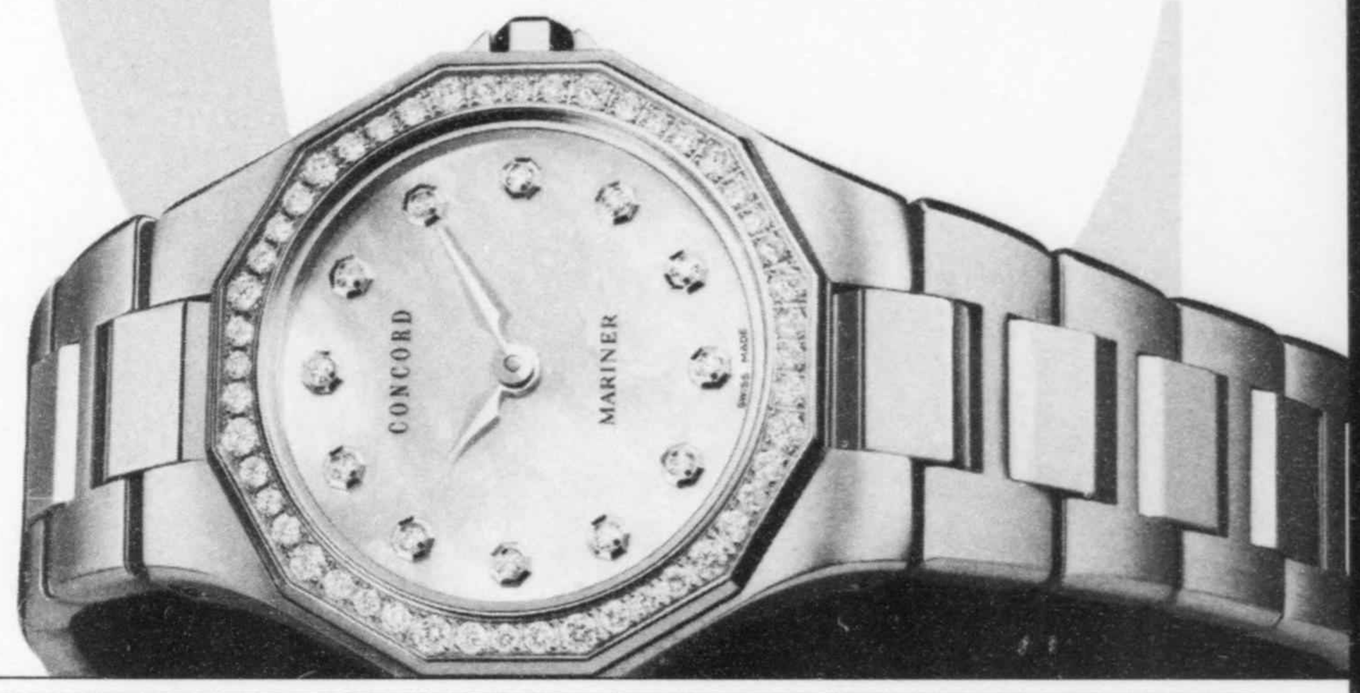
JOHN DUBROW: Bookstein, 37 W. 57th St. 212-750-0949. Through May 5. **JUAN MUÑOZ:** Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. 212-977-7160. Through June 10. **SARAH SZE:** In Central Park, at the corner of 60th St. and Fifth Ave. For more information, call the Public Art Fund at 212-980-4575. Through Oct. 29.

GALLERIES–CHELSEA

SAUL FLETCHER
This British photographer's pictures are unusually small (no photo here measures more than eight inches wide), but they never feel slight. Even if you can't penetrate the layers of allusion and illusion that Fletcher builds up with paint, cloth, and found objects on a wall in his London studio, the work's emotional charge can be jarring. The crudely constructed or drawn horses, swords, hearts, crosses, and open hands that occupy his

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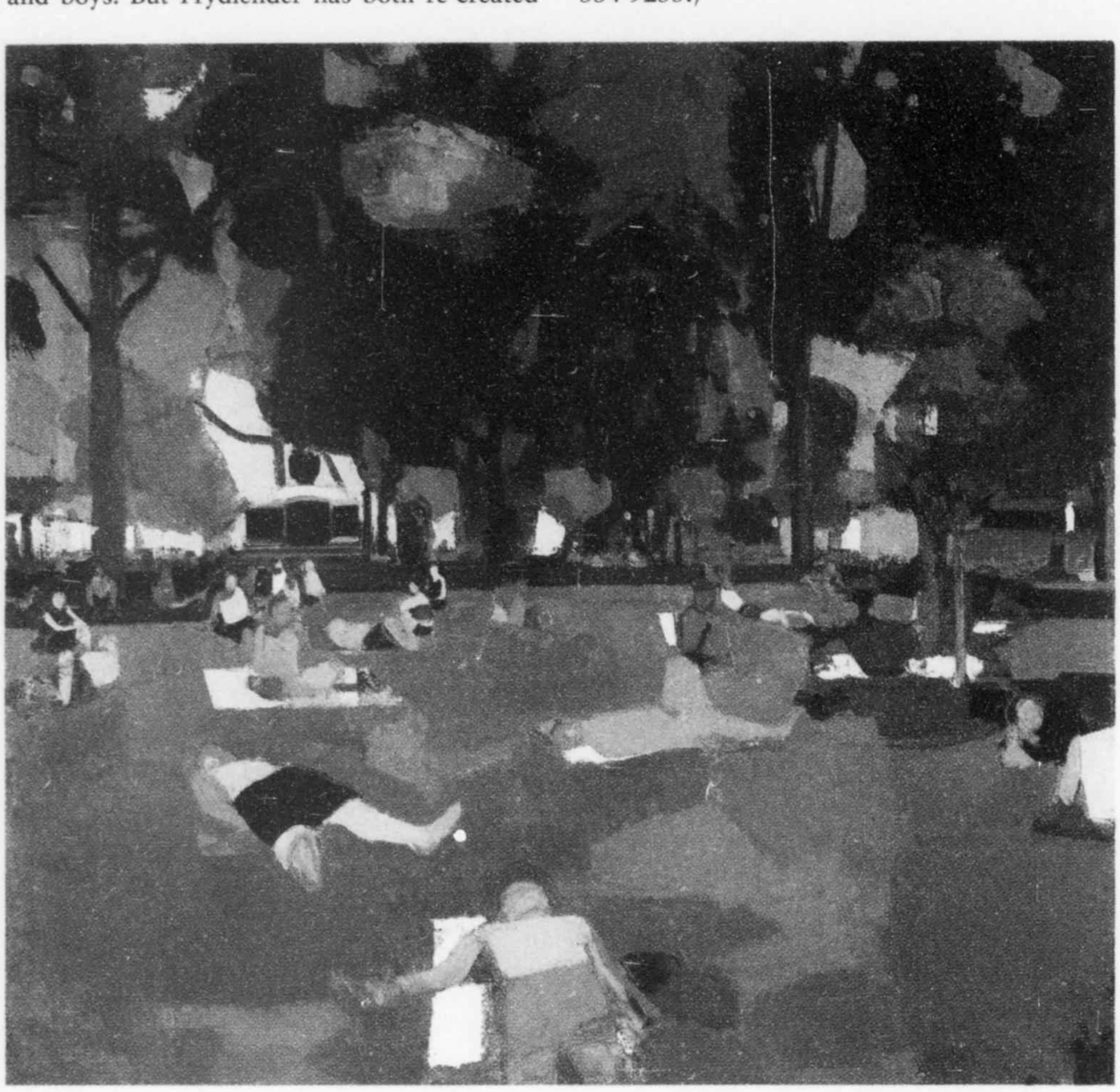
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new photos suggest a personal mythology that's dark but shamelessly romantic. Similarly evocative images crop up in the semiabstract paintings, which he's showing for the first time. Through May 6. (Kern, 532 W. 20th St. 212-367-9663.)

BARRY FRYDLENDER

Many of the huge, vivid color panoramas in this Israeli photographer's second American exhibition appear to be photojournalistic documents: records of incidents in his homeland, including a standoff between soldiers and settlers in Gaza, a group of Bedouin witnesses to that confrontation, and an outdoor gathering of Hasidic men and boys. But Frydlender has both re-created and fictionalized these actual events by digitally combining hundreds of separate images into seamless jigsaw puzzles that have the immediacy of news photos and the ambition of history paintings. Because history (ever present in Israel) and time are both compressed and expanded, every part of these images carries exceptional weight. Through May 6. (Meislin, 526 W. 26th St. 212-627-2552.)



John Dubrow's painting "Union Square," at Lori Bookstein through May 5.

MATTHEW HIGGS

In his role as director and chief curator at White Columns, Higgs has been known to cram upward of five exhibitions at a time into a single modest space. His art work follows a different tack, accomplishing much with very little: framed pages and covers ripped from art books or exhibition catalogues. "New York Now," printed in a jazzy black font on a silver ground, feels pregnant with historical weight and meaning, as do "Young Mexicans" and "British Art Today." Other pages, printed with abstract geometric designs and even more minimal texts that recall sixties abstraction and early Conceptualism, beg questions about the nature of art itself: should the artist's job be to generate "new" objects or just to look carefully at the world around him, selecting from and recycling what's already there? Through May 6. (Murray Guy, 453 W. 17th St. 212-463-7372.)

ALEXIS ROCKMAN

Rockman's realist depictions of a post-apocalyptic, environmentally roiled world recall Thomas Cole's similarly dreary nineteenth-century evocations in his cycle "The Course of Empire." The quasi-moralizing, literalist bent to Rockman's work is still here: Mount Rushmore is half submerged in brackish-looking water, the Capitol is covered with jungle greenery, and Disney World has reverted to swamp. But new things are happening, too: impasto laid down with a palette knife, forays into expressionism, and passages of near-abstraction. And despite the pessimistic bent, there's something fun about Rockman's doomsday reimaginings of the modern-day world. Through May 5. (Koenig, 545 W. 23rd St. 212-334-9255.)

KATY SCHIMERT

Schimert's work gains plenty from its context, which is to say that her headless bronzes, wire-mesh trees, dreamscape watercolors, and painted sculptural heads would undoubtedly register differently outside of Zwirner's impeccably blue-chip contemporary orbit. The work leans heavily on classical Greek and Roman mythology, translated into a dreamy, visual idiom full of floating figures, hands, and stars painted in saturated colors. The culminating effect is like Surrealism translated into the New Age realm—not much different from something you'd find in a gift shop, minus the scented candles and the pan-flute soundtrack. Through May 6. (Zwirner, 525 W. 19th St. 212-727-2070.)

JOHN WATERS

As an artist, the great rascal auteur is something of an eternal eighties art student, scavenging effluvia of the culture industry in order to, you know, subvert power. But his montaged images from Z movies and other media, disembodied headlines ("Ed Sullivan Raped Me!"), and sculptural travesties ("Playdate" stars baby mannequins of Charles Manson and Michael Jackson) are worldly-wise and reliably funny. They sting or, anyway, irrigate, as in the case of a photograph of flowers that squirts you with water (Waters!). The enemy is professionalized stupidity in show biz, to which the art world is ever less immune. Through May 20. (Boesky, 535 W. 22nd St. 212-680-9889.)

Short List

NICOLE CHERUBINI: Gasser & Grunert, 524 W. 19th St. 212-807-9494. Through May 6. **AMY SILLMAN:** Sikkema Jenkins, 530 W. 22nd St. 212-929-2262. Through May 6. **BILLY SULLIVAN:** Klagsbrun, 526 W. 26th St. 212-243-3335. Through May 6. **LARRY ZOX:** Haller, 542 W. 26th St. 212-741-7777. Through May 16.

GALLERIES–DOWNTOWN

HANS JOSEPHSOHN

The Swiss-German sculptor presents five monumental bronzes that he calls "half-figures." Lumpy gray towers subtly streaked with pale blue, rust, and ochre, the objects appear to have been thrown together from clay, threatening to melt down at any moment; their caked surfaces all but obscure the lurking core forms of elongated, totemic heads. In spite of this implied equation of the mind with mud, however, the quintet establishes a peaceful colloquy. Through May 27. (Peter Blum, 99 Wooster St. 212-343-0441.)

GEDI SIBONY AND JOSH SMITH

A proponent of what might be called Home Depot formalism, Sibony constructs enigmatic, highly abstracted installations using materials like Sheetrock, Plexiglas with the protective paper still on, and swatches of noxiously new-smelling carpet. This collaboration with Smith also features "paintings" of words stencilled on fabric—notably a yellow toile where the pastoral shepherds and shepherdesses are overlaid with spastic advertising for the artists' work. Everything is poised just so, including the spray-paint-tagged panels of building materials blocking the street-level windows. Spatially speaking, it's smart work, though perhaps the artists enjoy their commercial shock tactics a bit too much. Through May 6. (Harris Lieberman, 89 Vandam St. 212-206-1290.)

GALLERIES–BROOKLYN

"WELL READ"

A show of works that visually dramatize touchstone texts, providing a narrow curatorial window onto the vast realm of language-based art. Molly Springfield painstakingly copies by hand a blurred Xerox of Walter Benjamin's pathbreaking essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction"; Stephanie Brooks presents sheet music for an art song with Freud's "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" providing lyrics; and Nicholas Knight's mural diagrams a sentence by Cézanne. With Beth Campbell, Cui Fei, Gabriel Fowler, Vandana Jain, Heidi Neilson, Matt Siber, and Duston Spear. Through May 7. (Nurture Art, 475 Keap St. 718-782-7755.)

"WORK IN PROGRESS"

Artists making art about being artists might sound depressingly solipsistic—but this show nails the sense of sustained obsession and fascinated absurdity that is otherwise known as inspiration. For João Onofre, the muse appears as a live vulture uncomfortably housed in his workspace, in a video called, descriptively, "Vulture in the Studio." Ward Shelley and Doug Paulson present a towering pile of cardboard boxes, each labelled with a madly broad category: "Infamous Fools," "The Right Way to Do Things." Tom Burckhardt makes cardboard replicas of utilitarian items, while Martin Bromirski presents every rejection letter he's ever received. Byron Kim's Sunday paintings of the sky and Chrissy Conant's notes-to-self drawings ("Don't forget to have a baby") complete the picture. Through May 7. (Dumbo Arts Center, 30 Washington St. 718-694-0831.)

DANCE

NEW YORK CITY BALLET

Something old and something new: the second week of N.Y.C.B.'s spring repertory season offers three final performances of Balanchine's "Midsummer Night's Dream" as well as the première

of "In Vento," by Mauro Bigonzetti, the director of Italy's highly regarded modern-dance company Aterballetto. Bigonzetti made this ballet for Maria Kowroski (who has been out since last summer), the newly promoted Jason Fowler, and the budding choreographer Benjamin Millepied—all of whom danced in Bigonzetti's last piece for the company, "Vespro"—and a corps of eight. Bigonzetti, an admirer of Forsythe and Jiří Kylián, creates work that can be by turns fierce and playful, is often conceptually daring and visually striking, and is always fiendishly difficult, requiring a kind of boneless elasticity, focus, and a complete lack of ornamentation. "In Vento" (which means "in the wind" in Italian but also suggests the verb "inventare," to invent), is inspired by transformations and sensations caused by the wind, and set to a score for strings by Bigonzetti's frequent collaborator Bruno Moretti. ♦ May 2 at 7:30 and May 6 at 2 and 8: "A Midsummer Night's Dream." ♦ May 3 at 7:30 (an all-Feld program): "Intermezzo," "The Unanswered Question," "Backchat," "Étoile Polaire," "Ugha-Bugha," and "A Stair Dance." ♦ May 4 at 8: "Songs of the Auvergne," "In Vento" (première), and "Symphony in C." ♦ May 5 at 8: "Mother Goose," "Songs of the Auvergne," and "Symphony in C." ♦ May 7 at 3: "Mother Goose," "The Unanswered Question," and "Symphony in C." ♦ May 9 at 7:30: "Songs of the Auvergne," "In Vento," and "Western Symphony." (New York State Theatre, Lincoln Center. 212-870-5570. Through June 25.)

THE FORSYTHE COMPANY

Last year, William Forsythe left Ballett Frankfurt, his home for twenty years, to start a leaner company named after himself. That troupe makes its U.S. début with "Kammer/Kammer," which the expatriate American choreographer made for Ballett Frankfurt in 2000. It's a typically overdetermined piece of work, an endless loop of self-reference. Metaphors and characters from an Anne Carson essay echo and interact with metaphors and characters from a Douglas A. Martin novel, and fragments from stories about the impossibility of intimacy are mirrored, structurally, by walls that hide the action and camera feeds that selectively reveal and magnify it. As staging, this is coy and manipulative, perfectly matching the production's cynical portrayal of seduction. (BAM's Howard Gilman Opera House, 30 Lafayette Ave. 718-636-4100. May 2-6 at 7:30.)

RICHARD MOVE

"The Show (Achilles Heels)" gets its New York première, with Rasta Thomas ("Movin' Out") as the cross-dressing Achilles. In front of a series of Pop-art shoji screens, Blondie's Deborah Harry, as Athena, belts into her stick mike, strolling among the smooth dancers, who lip-synch lines culled from Hollywood epics. They segue into soft-edged, mesmerizing blends of modern and ballet—with occasional staccato bursts of everything from ballroom to hip-hop. Katherine Crockett plays a Graham-esque Helen of Troy; the original rock-infused score is by Arto Lindsay. (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 212-255-5793. May 2-6 at 8.)

1-2-3 FESTIVAL

At the Joyce, three junior companies with famous older siblings—Ailey II, Taylor 2, and the A.B.T. Studio Company—take turns presenting full-evening programs. (175 Eighth Ave. 212-242-0800. May 2-5 at 8, May 6 at 2 and 8, and May 7 at 2 and 7:30. For a complete schedule, see www.joyce.org.)

DAO ANH KHANH/STEPHAN KOPLOWITZ

"A Walk Between Two Worlds" is the fruit of a three-year collaboration between the Vietnamese visual and performance artist and the New York-based choreographer and film director. The cross-cultural journey they envision is not an easy one. Even though the multiethnic dancers are constantly surrounded by each other, they look alone, and in pain. Koplowitz's detail-rich ensemble choreography abstracts Khanh's contortions and feeds off of his daemonic presence, while Khanh's paintings on white fabric and Koplowitz's gorgeously processed video of Hanoi and New York aestheticize the difficult juxtapositions of cultures and disciplines. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. May 4-6 at 7:30 and May 7 at 2.)

"POP"

The popping of champagne bottles and the swing of vintage popular songs supply the bubbly theme of Dances Patrelle's ballet "Pop," an evening-length New Year's Eve party set in three eras (the thirties, forties, and fifties) at three legendary night clubs: the jazz-age Café de Paris, in London, where Cole Porter often sang; the swanky Stork Club, in New York; and Times Square's Peppermint Lounge, birthplace of the twist. Francis Patrelle, the choreographer and artistic director of the company, slips in and out of the idioms of ballet, ballroom dancing, jazz, tap, and rock and roll, evoking the eternal human pursuit of a good time through popular dance steps and the music of Noël Coward, Jerry Lee Lewis, and songs about New York. These are performed live, except, appropriately, the rock-and-roll tunes. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-5400. May 4-6 at 8, with a special children's matinée on May 5 at 2.)

CEDAR LAKE

The company financed by the billionaire heiress Nancy Walton Laurie has luxuries that other fledgling troupes can only dream about: year-round salaries, benefits, and an eleven-million-dollar theatre complex in Annie Leibovitz's former Chelsea studios. The group's third New York season opens with "Hammer," an evening-length contemporary ballet by the young, earnest Benoit-Swan Pouffer, the Parisian-born former Ailey dancer who took over as Cedar Lake's artistic director in 2005. While a heavy industrial score hums in the air, the lithe, athletic dancers cross a white stage atop narrow wooden planks, executing daring lifts and frantic, propulsive steps. Then the music lightens, they scuttle across the boards, and the point shoes come out. (Cedar Lake Theatre, 547 W. 26th St. 212-868-4444. May 8-9 at 8. Through June 4.)

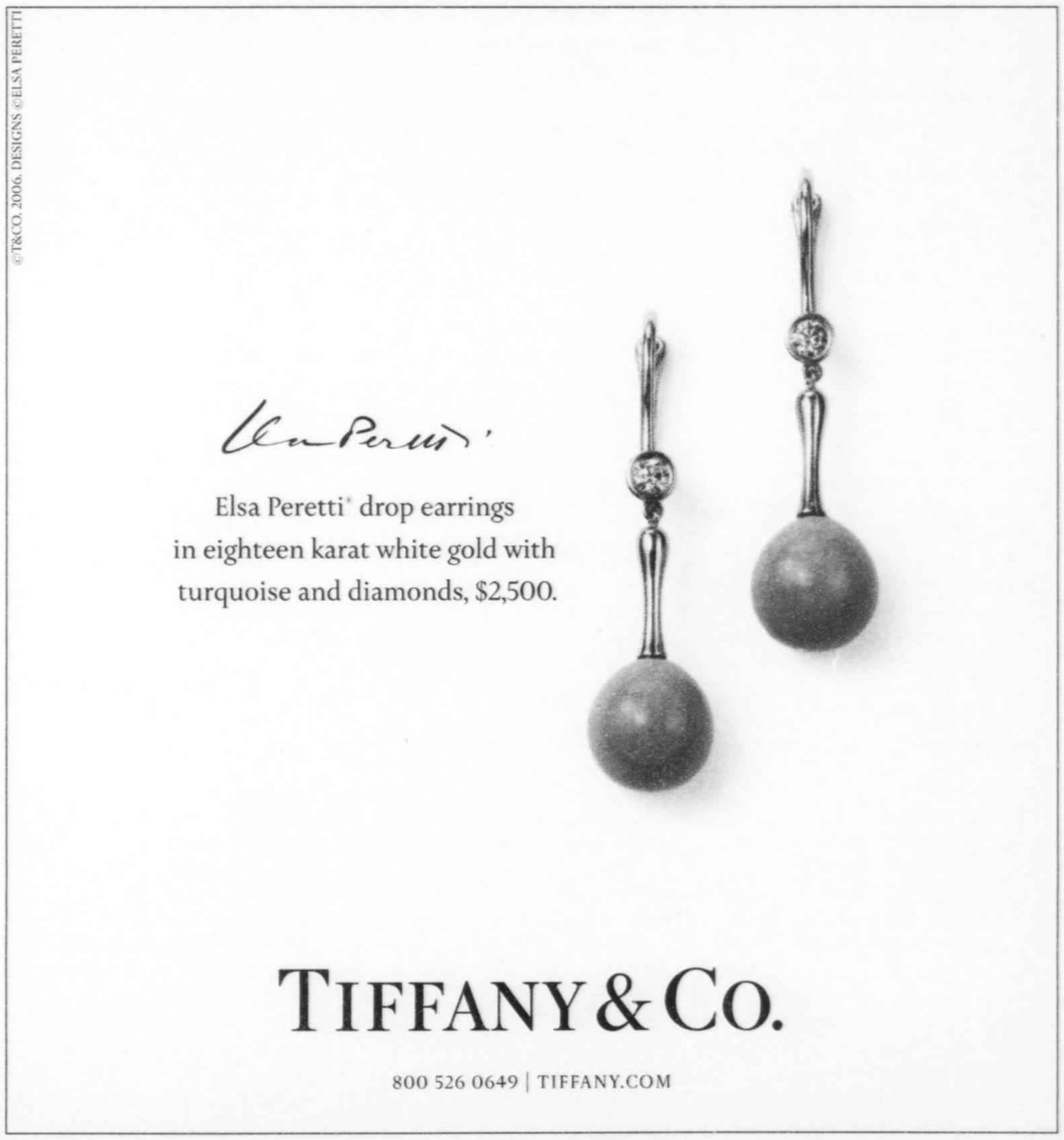
MOMIX

Moses Pendleton's band of illusionists kicks off a three-week Joyce season with its 1991 multimedia classic, "Passion." Nearly nude, extraordinarily flexible dancers move through surreal scenes to Peter Gabriel's evocative, rhythmic score for "The Last Temptation of Christ." A crucifixion triptych joins a stream of vivid images that includes Renaissance paintings, stone gods, Buddhas, pyramids, and demons. The lush visuals can be arresting: a girl swirls a long red ribbon, dancers bend long poles into gorgeously lit arcs, and bodies are silhouetted against their own umbrellas. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave. 212-242-0800. May 9 at 8. Through May 28.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA

May 3 at 7: Robert Wilson's famously static production of **"Lohengrin,"** bathed continually in deep-blue light, has endured as a powerful minimalist expression that enhances the nobility of the story and the refulgent beauty of the music. The two final performances feature the début of the young German tenor Klaus Florian Vogt, joining a cast that includes such singers as Karita Mattila, René Pape, and Margaret Jane Wray; Philippe Auguin draws a beautifully disciplined performance from the orchestra and chorus. ♦ May 6 at 7:15: With Luana DeVol replacing Wray. ♦ May 4 at 7:30 and May 9 at 8: **"Rigoletto,"** with Norah Amsellem, Nancy Fabiola Herrera, Paolo Gavanelli (in the title role), Roberto Aronica, and Robert Lloyd; Asher Fisch conducts. (These are the final performances.) ♦ May 5 at 8 and May 8 at 7:30: Deborah Voigt, adding her name to a list that includes Callas, Tebaldi, and Behrens, is taking up the title role



in **"Tosca."** Franco Farina and James Morris are Cavaradossi and Scarpia, respectively; Carlo Rizzi. ♦ May 6 at 12:30: Last season's hit production of Handel's **"Rodelinda"** returns with several of its original stars—Renée Fleming, Stephanie Blythe, Kobie van Rensburg, and John Relyea—as well as two newcomers, the countertenors Andreas Scholl and Christophe Dumaux; Patrick Summers. (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000.)

OPERA ORCHESTRA OF NEW YORK: "L'AMORE DEI TRE RE"
Eve Queler's adventurous opera-in-concert organization ranges into Teatro Grattacielo's territory, mounting Italo Montemezzi's intense yet economical verismo masterpiece, once the favored property of such legends as Caruso, Pinza, Tibbett, and Ponselle. This cast includes Samuel Ramey, Fabiana Bravo, Fernando de la Mora, and Pavel Baransky. (Carnegie Hall. 212-799-1982. May 4 at 8.)

NEW YORK CITY OPERA: VOX 2006
The company's annual showcase of new American music-theatre works, most of which will be performed by City Opera artists conducted by George Manahan, returns, presented in collaboration with the Skirball Center for the Performing Arts in two marathon sessions. May 6 at noon: A panel discussion moderated by Mark Adamo preludes performances of excerpts of works by Robert Carl, William Kraft, and Thomas Pasatieri ("Frau Margot," featuring the fearless soprano Lauren Flanigan), among others. ♦ May 7 at noon: A discussion with Tod Machover precedes excerpts of works by such composers as Mason Bates and Anne LeBaron ("Crescent City," with a libretto by Philip Littell), most featuring electronic instruments. (New York University, 566 LaGuardia Pl. No tickets required. For full schedule, see www.nycopera.com.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
In the second of two programs with the Philharmonic, Colin Davis, a beloved figure at Avery Fisher Hall, leads a compelling concert of music by Mozart (including the "Coronation" Concerto), with the pianist Mitsuko Uchida, and Sibelius (the vocal tone poem "Luonnotar"), with Soile Isokoski; the two soloists combine in a performance of Mozart's concert aria "Ch'io mi scordi di te?" (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5656. May 3-4 at 7:30 and May 5-6 at 8.)

AMERICAN COMPOSERS ORCHESTRA: "EROTIC SPIRITS"
Stephen Paulus's orchestral song cycle—sung by Deborah Voigt, no less—headlines a concert that also features full-blooded works by Derek Bermel ("Elixir," a musical "love potion"), Kristin Kuster ("Myrrha," a treatment of the sexually charged Greek myth), and Brian Current (the comparatively chaste "Symphonies in Slanted Time"). Steven Sloane conducts. (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. May 3 at 8.)

COLUMBIA SINFONIETTA AND IRCAM
Columbia University's music department teams up with the renowned Parisian electronic-music center to present a concert of a distinctly European type: three recent, large-scale works—by Joshua Fineberg, Rand Steiger, and Tristan Murail—that combine orchestral forces and sound-processing computers. Jeffrey Milarsky conducts his intrepid student group. (Miller Theatre, Broadway at 116th St. 212-854-7799. May 6 at 8. ♦ Note: The Argento Chamber Ensemble will follow the concert with a program of electroacoustic chamber pieces by Michael Jarrell, Philippe Leroux, and Murail, as well as the world première of Fineberg's "Lolita, Part I," on May 7 at 6.)

CAMERATA SALZBURG
Roger Norrington, the esteemed historical-performance maestro, leads his Austrian group in a concert of works by two composers with Hungarian connections, Bartók (the "Divertimento") and Haydn (the "Oxford" Symphony and the Piano Concerto in D Major, with the ascetic Russian pianist Alexei Lubimov). (Alice Tully Hall. 212-721-6500. May 7 at 2.)

RECITALS

"THREE ITALIAN MEN": EMANUELE ARCIULI
Columbia University's Italian Academy concludes its fancifully titled series with a recital by the pianist, a noted interpreter of new music, featuring Beethoven's Sonata No. 32 in C Minor and Rzewski's "Four Pieces" as well as works for flute and piano (with Margaret Lancaster) by Messiaen and Vivier. (1161 Amsterdam Ave. 212-854-1623. May 3 at 8.)

LISZT PIANO MUSIC CELEBRATION
Franz Liszt's piano music is of a breathtaking variety and range, and this multi-week festival, held at the Piano Salon of Yamaha Artist Services, has provided a sampling of its riches. A program featuring two exceptional large-scale works—a transcription of "Les Préludes," performed by Matthew Cameron, and the Sonata in B Minor, with Oxana Mikhailoff—brings down the curtain. (689 Fifth Ave., at 54th St. 212-339-9995. May 4 at 7.)

EMERSON STRING QUARTET: SHOSTAKOVICH
The twentieth-century master's complete string quartets get a workout from the energetic and super-disciplined ensemble, in a multi-concert series that concludes next week. This installment offers the diamond-hard Quartet No. 7 in F-Sharp Minor, the enigmatic Quartet No. 9 in E-Flat Major, and the most popular work of the cycle, the Quartet No. 8 in C Minor. (Alice Tully Hall. 212-721-6500. May 4 at 8.)

PETER SERKIN
Even for the formidable Serkin, this latest concert at Carnegie Hall is an effort of exceptional scope. It combines music both ancient (by Dowland, Bull, and Des Prez) and modern (the New York première of Elliott Carter's "Intermittences"), with classics by Bach (the Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue) and Beethoven (the "Hammerklavier" Sonata) in between. (212-247-7800. May 5 at 8.)

CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER
A première by the freewheeling American composer Michael Daugherty—"Ladder to the Moon," a fantasy inspired by the work of Georgia O'Keeffe and featuring the violinist Ida Kavafian—is the highlight of the society's final concerts of the season, sharing the program with Mozart's Serenade No. 13 for Winds and Double Bass ("Gran Partita"). (Alice Tully Hall. 212-875-5788. May 5 at 8 and May 7 at 5.)

IAN BOSTRIDGE AND LEIF OVE ANDSNES
The tenor and the pianist—as potent a mixture of fire and ice as one could musically imagine—offer a program ranging over music by Beethoven (the Piano Sonata in A-Flat Major, Op. 110, and the song cycle "An die Ferne Geliebte") and Schubert (the three "Harfenspieler" songs and a collection of fragments for voice and piano). (Zankel Hall. 212-247-7800. May 6 at 7:30.)

MAURIZIO POLLINI
The magnificent pianist offers works by Liszt (including the Sonata in B Minor and "Nuages Gris") and Chopin (several of the Nocturnes, which he has just recorded in his cool and commanding style). (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. May 7 at 3.)

IMOGEN COOPER
The admired British pianist performs music by several of her favorite composers—Haydn, Schumann ("Kreisleriana"), Schubert, and Thomas Adès ("Traced Overhead," Op. 15). (Zankel Hall, Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. May 8 at 7:30.)



DVD NOTES
THE ROAD TO WELLES

The byzantine story told by Orson Welles in "Mr. Arkadin," which he directed in 1954, is straightforward compared to the history of the film's release. Yet a new three-disk box from Criterion, featuring three different versions of the film along with a plethora of extras (including a largely ghostwritten novelization) puts a peculiar emphasis on the film's tangled provenance instead of its extraordinary artistry.

Welles made the film—a low-budget refraction of "Citizen Kane" through a "King Lear" prism—for the producer Louis Dolivet, a longtime friend who nonetheless took back control of the editing after Welles missed the Christmas, 1954, deadline for a completed cut. Welles plays Gregory Arkadin, a colossally wealthy, orotund, and ruthless grandee of high finance and international intrigue who hires a small-time American grifter in Europe, Guy Van Stratten (Robert Arden), to conduct an investigation—into Arkadin's own past. Arkadin has a grown daughter, Raina (Paola Mori), of whom he is fanatically protective, and who, to his deep dismay, is in love with the uncouth Van Stratten. Arkadin wants to find out how much of his background can be uncovered—and to bump off anyone who knows it, including Van Stratten—in order to keep it hidden from Raina.

The story is told as a set of flashbacks framed by Van Stratten's visit to the tumbledown Munich hiding place of one Jakob Zouk (Akim Tamiroff), a witness to Arkadin's earlier infamies whom Van Stratten desperately wants to keep alive while Arkadin's henchmen are on their trail. Van Stratten's investigation takes him ever deeper into a seedy world of European chaos, played out through a series of brilliant set pieces with such flamboyant character actors as Mischa Auer, Michael Redgrave, and Katina Paxinou. Welles had intended to punctuate the film with additional scenes of Van Stratten and Zouk, and it is mainly the use of this footage that distinguishes the two alternate versions—a rough cut rediscovered in 1960 by Peter Bogdanovich, and a reconstruction by the scholars Stefan Drössler and Claude Bertemes. These supplements, though intriguing, are inessential. What remains essential is the original film: even more than "Citizen Kane," "Mr. Arkadin" reveals the rickety struts on which a grand identity is built. The sight of Welles, as Arkadin, maneuvering like a big-time director of the world itself—all the while hiding behind a patently false beard and hairpiece and an artificially burnished complexion—is almost too painfully intimate to watch. Welles knew that his genius was tied to his persona, and that both were the work of an artful imagination. The fact that, in 1955, he married Paola Mori, the actress who plays Arkadin's daughter, only adds to the film's intense confessional pathos, the drama of a man who doubts that he could be loved for the person he knows himself to be.

—Richard Brody

MOVIES
OPENING

AN AMERICAN HAUNTING
Courtney Solomon wrote and directed this horror film based on the story of the Bell witch, about a Tennessee family in the early nineteenth century that is tormented by a malevolent spirit. Starring Donald Sutherland and Sissy Spacek. Opening May 5. (In wide release.)

ART SCHOOL CONFIDENTIAL
Reviewed below in Now Playing. Opening May 5. (Angelika Film Center and Empire 25.)

CRAZY LIKE A FOX
A comic drama about a family of Virginia farmers whose property is threatened by developers. Directed by Richard Squires. Opening May 5. (Union Square.)

DOWN IN THE VALLEY
In this drama, directed by David Jacobson, a man in California (Edward Norton) who thinks that he is a cowboy meets a wild young woman (Evan Rachel Wood). Opening May 5. (In wide release.)

FOLLOWING SEAN
In 1969, the documentary filmmaker Ralph Arlyck filmed a four-year-old boy in a San Francisco commune; thirty years later, he sets out to find him. Opening May 3. (Cinema Village.)

HOOT
Wil Shriner directed this family comedy, about a boy who decides to defend an endangered species of owl. Opening May 5. (In wide release.)

KISS ME AGAIN
In this melodrama, directed by William Tyler Smith, a married couple ask a woman to join them in a threesome. Opening May 5. (Quad Cinema.)

THE LEGEND OF SIMON CONJURER
A drama, starring Jon Voight, about an obese psychiatrist who leads ten troubled people on a difficult journey. Opening May 5. (Union Square.)

MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE III
J. J. Abrams directed this sequel, starring Tom Cruise, Ving Rhames, Keri Russell, and Philip Seymour Hoffman. Opening May 5. (In wide release.)

ONE LAST THING
A drama, directed by Alex Steyermark, about a dying teen-age boy whose last wish is to spend a weekend with a supermodel. Opening May 5. (Sunshine Cinema.)

THE PROMISE
A drama, set in China's distant past, about a princess who makes a deal with a sorceress. Directed by Chen Kaige. In Mandarin. Opening May 5. (In wide release.)

THE PROPOSITION
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening May 5. (Angelika Film Center and Empire 25.)

NOW PLAYING

AMERICAN DREAMZ
A busy, ambitious new film from Paul Weitz, who made "About a Boy" and, before that, "American Pie." Whether the dreamz are more authentically American than pie is another matter. The new film stars Hugh Grant as the coarse-tongued English host of a top-ranking television talent contest. In his quest to find the next batch of freaks and hopefuls to appear on the show, the host happens first upon Sally (Mandy Moore), an innocent small-town schemer with a lumpen boyfriend (Chris Klein), and then upon Omer (Sam Golzari), an Arab terrorist on a personal crusade not so much to blow up the world as to dazzle it with show tunes. Add to the mix a United States President (Dennis Quaid) who appears on the show in order to boost his ratings, and the makings of a scathing farce are all in place. Which is where they stay. Weitz's movie has plenty of recognizable pet hates, starting with the current Administration, but its scorn feels petulant and scattershot instead of rousing or principled, and the characters tend to swerve in unhelpful directions. What's the point in a satire of "American Idol," when the result leaves you less aghast than a viewing of the actual program?—*Anthony Lane* (Reviewed in our issue of 4/24/06.) (In wide release.)

ANDY FRIEDMAN

ARMY OF SHADOWS
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. In French. (Film Forum.)

ART SCHOOL CONFIDENTIAL
The director Terry Zwigoff's second collaboration with the graphic novelist Daniel Clowes (the first was the brilliant "Ghost World") follows a hapless art-school student, Jerome (Max Minghella), who refuses to give up his dream of being the greatest artist in the world. Zwigoff ensconces his youthful idealist in relentless satirical commentary on the stereotypes and (often hilarious) pomposities of art school. However, the simplistic dual plots—one involving Jerome's obsession with the prettiest girl on campus (Sophia Myles), the other having to do with a strangler on the loose—feel artificially applied, and make for a disjointed second half. Not even John Malkovich, as a drawing teacher who has discovered triangles after twenty-five years of struggle, can save this ultimately dull enterprise.—*Shauna Lyon* (Angelika Film Center and Empire 25.)

BRICK
The young director Rian Johnson, after raising money from his friends and parents, pulled off his dream project, a film noir. But in Johnson's version of noir, the inexorable Sam Spade-type detective is a mop-headed student, Brendan (Joseph Gordon-Levitt), wearing a sweatshirt and wire-rim glasses, and the setting is not the nighttime big city of Hollywood imagination—the usual claustrophobic noir precinct—but the preposterously sunny skies and wide-open spaces of San Clemente, California. The story, which involves a dead girl and a student drug gang, has the semi-unfathomable complexity of "The Maltese Falcon" and "The Big Sleep," and the characters, lounging against the blank outside wall of the school, speak in cryptic jive patter ("Bulls would only gum it," i.e., cops are dumb). "Brick" is often quite funny, but not in a campy or condescending way—Johnson never makes the distance from the original models seem laughable. The movie develops its own kind of goofy tensions: Johnson renders the wide-open spaces of a school yard as menacing as the darkened rooms of a Warner Bros. thriller.—*David Denby* (4/3/06) (Angelika Film Center.)

THE DEATH OF MR. LAZARESCU
The hero, known in full as Dante Remus Lazarescu, is an unregenerate but oddly lovable mess. A resident of Bucharest, Mr. Lazarescu (Ion Fiscuteanu) regularly drinks some sort of home-brewed poison that looks like liquid wood soap. His wife is dead, and he lives with three smelly cats that he loves. Lazarescu is largely the creator of his own problems; what is he to us? That taunting question is part of the dramatic material that the director, Cristi Puiu, who wrote the screenplay with Razvan Radulescu, has built into the movie. Lazarescu, who has a splitting headache and is sick to his stomach, is picked up by an ambulance and entrusted to the care of a sympathetic nurse, but, like some awkward, undeliverable package, he gets shunted from hospital to hospital and from specialist to specialist, each more callous and vain than the last. Shaved and naked, a poor defenseless animal waiting for an operation that never comes, he is our representative as he enters that final night. For all its terrible matter-of-factness, "The Death of Mr. Lazarescu" produces tumultuous feelings of amazement and revolt. In Romanian.—*D.D.* (5/1/06) (Film Forum.)

FRIENDS WITH MONEY
The independent writer-director Nicole Holofcener had a fresh idea for a movie: how would three well-off married women (Catherine Keener, Frances McDormand, Joan Cusack), living in Los Angeles, sustain their friendship with a younger woman who is unmarried, broke, working as a housekeeper, and given to meaningless relationships with jerks? By most standards, and particularly by wealthy Los Angeles standards, Olivia (Jennifer Aniston) is a loser, and the wealthy, notoriously, do not like to hang out with losers. In a series of tense ensemble scenes, Holofcener explores not only the gossip and shifting alliances in these relationships but the three marriages as well. The trouble with this scheme, however, is that Olivia has no drives or hopes or powerful regrets; she has nothing to say, and Aniston, a very lim-

CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
GRAY AREA

When, in the winter of 2004, Spalding Gray took his own life, the theatre world lost not only one of its most iconoclastic stars but its greatest monologuist. As a writer, actor, and founding member of the Wooster



Group, the Rhode Island native spoke about child-rearing, marriage, and existential concerns with (alternately) cutting charm, a laid-back demeanor, and deadpan fear. In his memory, the avant-garde performer and producer Lucy Sexton, with Kathleen Russo, Gray's widow, has arranged "A Tribute to Spalding Gray," for P.S. 122's Spring Gala, on May 4 at the Angel Orensanz Foundation. Including such headliners as the post-Gray monologuist Eric Bogosian and the actor James Urbaniak, the ever-droll thinking woman's pinup, the evening—which will also include an art auction—honors Gray's commitment to the individuality of the artist. In our increasingly industrialized theatre world, this event is more than worth the price of the ticket. It's a chance to see exemplary performers who have never appeared onstage with Julia Roberts.

—*Hilton Als*

CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
SOCIETY'S CHILDREN

Billy Sullivan's breezy, snapshot-ish paintings of beautiful and personable, privileged, harmlessly decadent intimates, now on view at the Nicole Klagsbrun



gallery, have gone hotter in color, cooler in erotic chemistry, and altogether more substantial in style. Imagine a cross between the urbane formality of Alex Katz and the romantic magnetism of Elizabeth Peyton, with a dash of Nan Goldin's rough-and-tumble participation mystique. (Someone should do a show called "New York Charmed Circles," documenting poetries of sociability from Florine Stettheimer through Andy Warhol to the present day. It would reveal the mysterious gravity of Sullivan's almost offhanded art as the force of an unacknowledged tradition.) In the new work, subjects with names like Alessio and Missy have evident ways of causing others to fall in love with them even, or especially, when they are blandly absorbed. Alessio and Christian converse, Bobby and Sam cuddle, and sumptuously nude Sirpa serves herself Kellogg's Corn Flakes beside a rumpled bed in a sunny hotel room. Colors run to chartreuse, pink, daffodil yellow, and no-holds-barred purple.

—Peter Schjeldahl

ited actress, does most of her work with her lower lip, which she wrinkles and tucks under the upper one. She pulls so little out of herself that we lose all interest in her by the middle of the picture. But there are good bits from the other performers, particularly McDormand as a woman who has everything going for her but throws fits over trivialities.—*D.D.* (4/17/06) (In wide release.)

I AM A SEX ADDICT

Dedicated smut-hunters will want to stay away from this film, for the good reason that it offers only a minimum—and not always a bare minimum—of actual sex. It is the first word of the title, not the fourth, that dominates the picture, which is essentially the selective erotic memoir of a San Francisco filmmaker named Caveh Zahedi. Addressing the camera and dipping into a staged series of flashbacks (otherwise known as wishful thinking), Zahedi describes his cracked marriages and his fixation with hookers. He seems incapable of lending order to these recollections, constantly having to back up and start again, and that fumbling geekiness touches his account with an exasperating charm—something of an antidote to the frictionless anecdotes of the classic seducer. Anybody worried that the movie will objectify women should be reassured by the actresses hired to play his paramours, who are, for the most part, far more in command of their bodies and souls than Zahedi can ever hope to be. He resembles a dark, undangerous Harpo Marx; if you can't imagine such a creature, go see him for yourself.—*A.L.* (4/24/06) (IFC Center.)

THE NOTORIOUS BETTIE PAGE

A bio-pic devoted to a body—Gretchen Mol's body, which is seen in every degree of cladding, from full to scanty to blissfully naked. Mol plays a real-life pinup queen of the fifties, Bettie Page, who appeared in coy nudie magazines and in highly unconvincing and frequently out-of-focus lesbian bondage movies with titles like "Sally's Punishment." As re-created by Mary Harron, who both wrote the screenplay (with Guinevere Turner) and directed, Bettie was a nice, devout girl from Nashville who never quite understood the extraordinary effect her pictures had on other people. Smut was a low-rent, casually lousy scene in those days, and Bettie's innocence fit right in. Satirizing the hysteria caused by a naïve girl who likes to disrobe is a good joke, but there is a problem with Harron's affectionate, lighthearted approach—it leaches all the danger out of the subject. In this movie, there isn't any genuine power in erotic imagery or any madness in perversion. Shot in noirish black-and-white and dazzling color.—*D.D.* (4/17/06) (In wide release.)

THE SENTINEL

There's a plot to kill the President (David Rasche), two feuding secret-service agents (Michael Douglas, Kiefer Sutherland), an unfaithful First Lady (Kim Basinger), and enough shady "24"-like plot twists to make it seem as if Jack Bauer wrote the screenplay, but this mediocre thriller lacks the breathtaking pizzazz of the television series that it so desperately wants to emulate. The high-powered actors bring nothing new to their cookie-cutter roles (Douglas is particularly doughy), and the internal intrigues of White House life have never looked so transparently ridiculous. The seasoned television director Clark Johnson ("NYPD Blue" and "The Shield," among others) brings a kinetic visual style to the story, but the film is an incoherent, ornery mess.—*Bruce Diones* (In wide release.)

SOMERSAULT

In the Australian writer-director Cate Shortland's début feature film, Heidi (Abbie Cornish, in a nuanced performance) is a sixteen-year-old hellion disguised as a dispassionate young woman. After she is caught seducing her mother's boyfriend, she runs away to a picturesque ski town, where she proceeds to endear herself to a number of locals, most promisingly a handsome, enigmatic farmer's son (Sam Worthington). Although Shortland provides obvious reminders that Heidi is still a little girl—cloying music, a glitter unicorn card that she carries around, her flowered underwear—Cornish effortlessly portrays Heidi as alternately brave and depraved.—*S.L.* (In wide release.)

STICK IT

Writer-director Jessica Bendinger here does for gymnastics even more than what she did for cheerleading as the screenwriter of "Bring It On": she sells it to teens put off by its balletic prissiness and finicky judging. Missy Peregrym, whose name belies shoulders that would do a defensive lineman proud, plays Haley Graham, a tough girl who is caught trespassing and sent to a strict gymnastics camp run by a legendary martinet, Burt Vickerman (Jeff Bridges). Their contentious relationship, sealed by Peregrym's contained fury and Bridges's understated drawl through a perpetual wad of gum, is potentially serious stuff that is seriously out of place amidst the whipped-cream antics of the other teens. Bendinger is not much of a director (her camera tricks show little of the sport itself), but she has clearly thought a lot about kids: in a surprising ending, she cuts the very concept of athletic competition down to size. An awkward, surprisingly ambitious, endearing failure.—*Richard Brody* (In wide release.)

TANNER '88

The director Robert Altman and the writer Garry Trudeau follow a fictional Democratic candidate, Jack Tanner (Michael Murphy), through the factual minefields of a primary season and straight up to the Atlanta convention in this milestone of observational humor and docu-satire. Tanner, an unknown former Michigan congressman running for the Presidential nomination after a political hiatus, starts out as a slight, likable figure mouthing liberal bromides about a better tomorrow for America. But he matures as a candidate, if fitfully, as he interacts with real politicos like Bob Dole and Gary Hart and real journalists like Linda Ellerbee and Hodding Carter. Tanner may be Murphy's very best role: he's a not-quite-hollow man who gradually fills in his own blanks. Cynthia Nixon is touching and funny as his daughter, and Pamela Reed is earthy and brilliant as his tart campaign manager who manages a runaway organization while fielding cries for help from the fledgling congressman Joe Kennedy. Made as an HBO miniseries in 1988, this work is so exuberant in its comic invention and so alive in its changeable, prickly surfaces that it never becomes a bummer—even though it suggests that the more forceful a candidate becomes in his pursuit of social justice the more unlikely he is to succeed.—*Michael Sragow* (Moving Image; May 6-7.)

THREE TIMES

A surprising disappointment from director Hou Hsiao-Hsien, whose "Café Lumière" was exquisite and illuminating. In this trio of love stories set in 1966, 1911, and 2005, he uses the same pair of actors (Shu Qi and Chang Chen) to portray a pool-hall girl and a soldier, a courtesan and a journalist, and a punk photographer and a punk. All of the characters are confined in an artificial, stilted silence that fulfills no dramatic necessity but, rather, suggests an attempt at a calculated cool. Hou lets popular music of each era do his talking but seems to prefer listening to his records to listening to his characters. The result is a pose of postmodern passivity or even incuriosity. In Mandarin and Taiwanese.—*R.B.* (IFC Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

TWO PLAYERS FROM THE BENCH

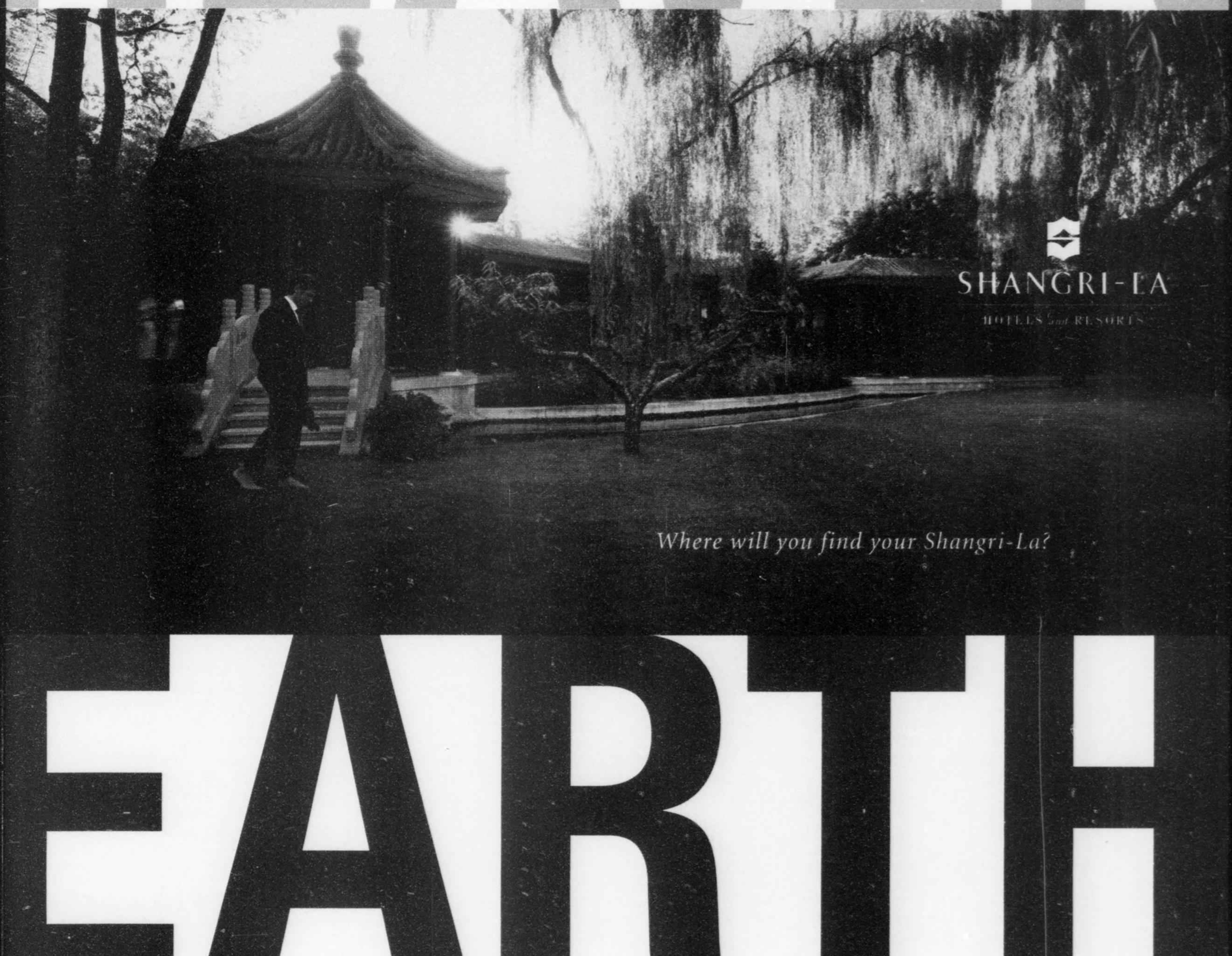
The Croatian writer-director Dejan Šorak has made what the West calls black comedy and the Balkans call life. Agents of the Croatian government lure a Croat and kidnap a Serb to serve as look-alike stand-ins for a pair of vanished witnesses who could exculpate a Croatian colonel of war crimes, locking the two in a safe house so that they can invent their own backstories and rehearse their testimony. If the gags sometimes run like Abbott and Costello in the killing fields, Šorak nonetheless bravely deflates nationalistic presumptions by deeming both sides equally guilty of wartime misdeeds. Uniting his pair of hapless heroes through language, cuisine, culture, and intermarriage, Šorak nostalgically suggests that the former Yugoslavia was the one place where Yugoslavs couldn't live together. In that disbanded country's defunct language, Serbo-Croatian.—*R.B.* (Tribeca Film Festival; May 3-5.)

UNITED 93

Paul Greengrass's account of how a single group of passengers, almost certain of death, decided on the morning of September 11, 2001, to fight back against hijackers on a suicide mission turns out to be—after much public anxiety about potential "exploitation"—an example of a hundred per cent professional film-

BILLY SULLIVAN, "JASON AND MAUREEN" (2006)

HEAVEN



EARTH

www.shangri-la.com

making. Greengrass's movie is tightly wrapped, unrelenting, and, no matter how exciting, superbly precise. For this story of semi-anonymous group heroism, he uses actual professionals (pilots, flight attendants, an air-traffic controller) mixed in with largely unknown actors, and avoids visual or verbal rhetoric. The handheld camera is an active participant in everything that's going on—and still manages to see what it needs to see out of the corner of its eye. The avoidance of front-and-center staging makes us feel the uncertainty of an unprecedented situation. This is true existential filmmaking; in the end, the viewer's dread is released in mad exhilaration as the passengers charge the hijackers with the force of engorged water breaking through a dam.—*D.D.* (5/1/06) (In wide release.)

Also Playing

INSIDE MAN: In wide release (3/27/06). **LADY VENGEANCE:** Angelika Film Center. **SILENT HILL:** In wide release. **TAKE THE LEAD:** In wide release.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES
32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5181)—"NewFilmmakers Presents." May 3 at 6: Short-film program. ♦ May 3 at 8: Films by Latino filmmakers. ♦ Special screenings. May 4 at 8: "I Was a Fireman" (1943, Humphrey Jennings). ♦ May 5-10: New York Polish Film Festival. For program information, go to www.nypff.com. ♦ May 5 at 7: "Flaming Creatures" (1963, Jack Smith). ♦ May 5 at 8: Short films by the SOLUS collective (2005-06). ♦ "Essential Cinema." May 6 at 6:30: "Michael" (1924, Carl Theodor Dreyer; silent with Danish intertitles). ♦ May 7 at 6: "Vampyr" (1931, Dreyer; in Danish, no subtitles). ♦ May 7 at 8: "Zorn's Lemma" (1970, Hollis Frampton) and "Hapax Legomena I: Nostalgia" (1971, Frampton).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-636-4100)—Through May 10: The films of Mikio Naruse. All films are in Japanese. May 4 at 6:50 and 9:15: "Late Chrysanthemums" (1954). ♦ May 5 at 6 and 9: "Summer Clouds" (1958). ♦ May 6 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:30: "Floating Clouds" (1955). ♦ May 7 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "When a Woman Ascends the Stairs" (1960). ♦ May 8 at 7: "Her Lonely Lane" (1962). ♦ May 9 at 7: "Flowing" (1956).

FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—In revival. May 3-4 at 1:10, 3:15, 5:30, 7:35, and 9:40: "Repulsion" (1965, Roman Polanski). ♦ Through June 15: "B Noir." May 5-6 at 1, 4:40, and 8:20: "Kiss Me Deadly" (1955, Robert Aldrich). ♦ May 5-6 at 3, 6:40, and 10:20: "The Killing" (1956, Stanley Kubrick). ♦ May 7 at 1:10, 4:30, and 7:50: "The Set-Up" (1949, Robert Wise). ♦ May 7 at 2:40, 6, and 9:20: "The Captive City" (1952, Wise). ♦ May 8 at 1, 4:35, and 8:15: "Thunder Road" (1958, Arthur Ripley). ♦ May 8 at 2:50, 6:25, and 10:05: "The Well" (1951, Leo Popkin and Russell Rouse). ♦ May 9 at 1, 4:30, and 8: "Reign of Terror" (1949, Anthony Mann). ♦ May 9 at 2:50, 6:20, and 9:50: "The Tall Target" (1951, Mann).

FLORENCE GOULD HALL
55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—Through May 30: The films of André Téchiné. May 9 at 12:30, 4, and 7: "Hôtel des Amériques" (1981; in French).

IFC CENTER
323 Sixth Ave., at W. 3rd St. (212-924-7771)—New York International Children's Film Festival. May 6-7 at 11 A.M.: "The King and the Mockingbird" (1980, Paul Grimault; in French), ♦ May 6-7 at 11:30 A.M.: "Zozo" (2005, Josef Fares; in Arabic and Swedish). ♦ "Waverly Midnights." May 6-7: "Cotton Comes to Harlem" (1970, Ossie Davis).

THE JEWISH MUSEUM
1109 Fifth Ave., at 92nd St. (212-423-3337)—"Freud on Film." May 4 at 6:30: "Sigmund Freud, His Family and Colleagues" (1928-1947, Philip R. Lehrman) and "Freud Home Movies" (1930-39, silent), followed by a discussion with Martin Bergmann and Lynne Lehrman Weiner.

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9480)—Through May 15: "Rediscovering Roscoe: The Careers of 'Fatty' Arbuckle." For more information, go to www.moma.org. May 3 at 6: "Early Keystones," program two (1913-14). ♦ May 4 at 8:30: "Box Office Star," program three (1914-15). ♦ May 6 at 4: "The Sophisticated Director," program four (1915-17). ♦ May 7 at 1: "A New Freedom," program five (1917). ♦ May 8 at 6: "Spoofs and Farces," program six (1918). ♦ Through May 14: The films and videos of Lech Majewski. May 3 at 6:15: "Blood of a Poet" (2006), introduced by the director. ♦ May 3 at 8:30 and May 7 at 4:30: "Gospel According to Harry" (1992). ♦ May 4 at 6: "The Roe's Room" (1997; in Polish). ♦ May 5 at 6:15 and May 8 at 8: "The Knight" (1980; in Polish). ♦ May 5 at 8 and May 8 at 6: "Angelus" (2000; in Polish). ♦ May 6 at 4:30 and May 7 at 2: "Garden of Earthly Delights" (2004). ♦ May 6 at 7: "Basquiat" (1996, Julian Schnabel). ♦ "Prix Jean Vigo." May 4 at 8 and May 6 at 2: "La Jetée" (1962, Chris Marker), "Statues Also Die" (1953, Alain Resnais and Marker; in French), and "Pondichéry, Juste Avant l'Oubli" (1987, Joël Farges; in French). ♦ Through May 22: "In Memoriam: Nam June Paik." May 5 at 8:30: Program two, including "A Tribute to John Cage" (1973-76). ♦ "An Evening with Eddie Lawrence." May 6 at 7:30: Lawrence presents clips of his film appearances, performs songs, and reminisces. ♦ "Elio Petri Revisited." May 7 at 3: "Elio Petri: Notes on a Filmmaker" (2005, Federico Bacci, Stefano Leone, and Nicola Guarneri; in Italian and English). ♦ May 7 at 5 and May 8 at 8: "Investigation of a Citizen Above Suspicion" (1970, Petri; in Italian).

MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Free senior matinée. May 3 at 10:30 A.M.: "Stormy Weather" (1943, Andrew L. Stone). ♦ "Independence World Cinema Showcase." May 5 at 7: "Viva Zapatero!" (2005, Sabina Guzzani; in Italian). ♦ May 5 at 9: "Brasília 18%" (2006, Nelson Pereira dos Santos; in Portuguese). ♦ Through June 8: "American Maverick: A Robert Altman Retrospective." ♦ May 6 at 12:30: The pilot episode of "Tanner '88" (†). ♦ May 6 at 2: "Thieves Like Us" (1974). ♦ May 6 at 4:30 and May 7 at 2: "The Long Goodbye" (1973). ♦ May 6-7 at 6:45: "McCabe and Mrs. Miller" (1970). ♦ May 7 at 12:30: Two episodes of "Tanner '88" (†). ♦ May 7 at 4:30: "Secret Honor" (1983).

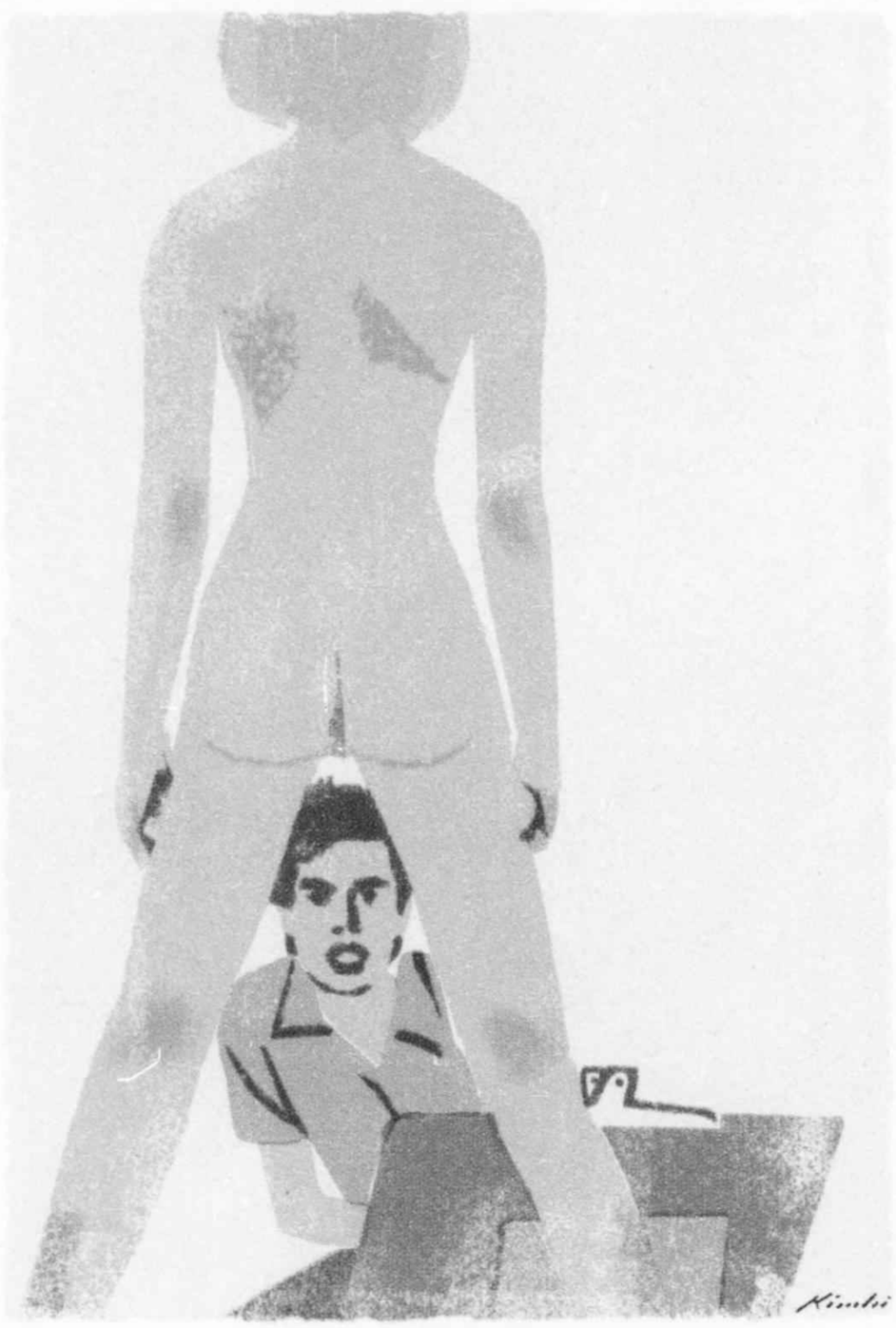
PIONEER THEATRE
155 E. 3rd St. (212-591-0434)—"Brave New Europe." May 4-9 at 9: "How I Killed a Saint" (2004, Teona Strugar Mitevska; in Macedonian). ♦ May 6 at 7:30: "Michael Haneke: 24 Realities per Second" (2005, Nina Kusturica and Eva Testor). ♦ May 9 at 6:45: "Hester Street" (1975, Joan Micklin Silver). ♦ Special screenings. May 6 at 11: "Deep Throat" (1972, Gerard Damiano). ♦

SUNSHINE CINEMA
143 E. Houston St. (212-330-8182)—"Sunshine@Midnight." May 5-6: "Truth or Dare" (1991, Alek Keshishian), presented by Peaches Christ.

THALIA THEATRE
Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. (212-864-5400)—Special screenings. May 7 at 2 and May 9 at 7: "La Dolce Vita" (1960, Federico Fellini; in Italian).

TRIBECA FILM FESTIVAL
Films will be screened at diverse locations throughout Manhattan. For information, go to www.tribecafilmfestival.org. Selected screenings. May 3 at 1, May 4 at 10:30 A.M., and May 5 at 7:30: "Two Players from the Bench" (†). ♦ May 3 at 7, May 4 at 11, and May 5 at 4:45: "Boy Culture" (2006, Q. Allan Brocka). ♦ May 4 at 10:30 A.M., May 5 at 5, and May 6 at 8:15: "The Dignity of the Nobodies" (2005, Fernando E. Solanas; in Spanish). ♦ May 4 at 8:30 and May 5 at 2:15: "The Treatment" (2006, Oren Rudavsky). ♦ May 5 at 1:45 and May 6 at 4: "When I Came Home" (2006, Dan Lohaus). ♦ May 5 at 2 and May 6 at 4:15: "Backstage" (2005, Emmanuelle Bercot; in French). ♦ May 5 at 7:30: "From Dust" (2005, Dhruv Dhawan). ♦ May 5 at 9:30: "Close to Home" (2005, Dalia Hager and Vidi Bilu; in Hebrew).

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—New York African Film Festival. For further information, go to www.africanfilmny.org. Selected screenings. May 3 at 4: "And If Latif Was Right" (2006, Joseph Ramaka; in French). ♦ May 4 at 3:15: "The Mothers' House" (2005, François Verster; in English and Afrikaans). ♦ May 4 at 9: "Free Wheels" (2004, Sijiri Bakaba; in French). ♦ Through May 18: "The Road to Damascus: Discovering Syrian Cinema." Except where noted, all films are in Arabic. May 5 at 1:30 and 6:15: "Stars in Broad Daylight" (1988, Oussama Mohammad). ♦ May 5 at 3:45 and May 6 at 4:15: "Everyday Life in a Syrian Village" (1975, Omar Amiralay) and "Blue-Grey" (2004, Mohammad al-Rouni). ♦ May 5 at 8:45: "Film-Essay on the Euphrates Dam" (1970, Amiralay) and short films. ♦ May 6 at 2: "Shadows and Light, the Last of the Pioneers: Nazih Shahbandar" (1994, Mohammad Malas) and short films. ♦ May 6 at 6:30 and May 9 at 4: "At Our Listeners' Request" (2003, Abdullatif Abdul-Hamid) and a short film. ♦ May 6 at 8:45: "Dreams of the City" (1983, Malas). ♦ May 7 at 6:30 and May 8 at 9: "Sacrifices" (2003, Mohammad). ♦ May 7 at 9 and May 9 at 2: "Nights of



Terry Zwigoff's "Art School Confidential" opens May 5.

TATSURO KIUCHI

the Jackals" (1989, Abdul-Hamid). ♦ May 8 at 2 and 6:30: "The Extras" (1993, Nabil el-Maleh). ♦ May 8 at 4:15: "The Dupes" (1972, Tewfik Saleh).

READINGS AND TALKS

LABYRINTH BOOKS
Samuel Menashe reads from his recently published collection of poetry, "Samuel Menashe: New and Selected Poems." (536 W. 112th St. No tickets necessary. May 3 at 7.)

THE POETRY PROJECT
Thurston Moore, of Sonic Youth, is also the co-editor, with Byron Coley, of the *Ecstatic Peace Poetry Journal*. They will be joined by the contributors Elisa Ambrogio, Charles Plymell, Christina Carter, and Richard Hell, for a reading from the new issue. (St. Mark's In-the-Bowery, Second Ave. at 10th St. 212-674-0910. May 3 at 8.)

HAROLD CLURMAN FESTIVAL OF THE ARTS
The Stella Adler Studio of Acting presents a four-day tribute to the highly influential director and critic, who died in 1980. Highlights include an opening-night discussion of Clurman's legacy, with the actors Zoe Caldwell, Elaine Stritch, Lois Smith, and Roy Scheider; poetry readings by Derek Walcott, Grace Schulman, Harold Bloom, Charles Wright, and Martha Serpas, along with a musical performance by David Amram, on the second day; and a symposium considering his effect on playwrights, with Edward Albee, John Guare, Horton Foote, and Israel Horovitz, on the final day. (31 W. 27th St., 3rd fl. 212-689-0087. For a complete schedule, visit www.stellaadler.com. May 5-8.)

PROTEUS GOWANUS
This newish Brooklyn gallery presents a reading and performance focussing on changes along the Gowanus Canal. Participants include the historic preservationist Lisa Ackerman, the biologist Amy Lesen, the writer Phillip Lopate, and the poet Vijay Seshadri. "The Gowanus Canal Song" will be premièred by its composer, Ben Yarmolinsky, and beer and oysters will be for sale. (543 Union St., at Nevins St. 718-243-1572. May 7 at 3:30.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

"THE GREAT SAUNTER"
The nonprofit volunteer group Shorewalkers walks Manhattan's thirty-two-mile perimeter, rain or shine. (May 6, starting at 7:30 A.M. For more information, visit www.greatsaunter.org.)

"IRUBNY"
The artist Carol Caputo has spent the past three decades roaming the city and creating abstract works by placing paper or canvas on some portion of public space (pavement, lamp, trash) and rubbing it with giant graphite crayons. Now she has created "IRUBNY," a project that aims to collect a thousand rubbings from across the city, made by ordinary folks. She inaugurates the initiative with a gathering in Union Square Park, where she'll hand out paper and crayons to passersby. (Broadway at 14th St. May 6, from 11 to 3. For more information, visit www.irubny.com.)

"PATRIOT ACTS"
The Nation and the Off Broadway theatre group the Civilians present a night of politically charged vaudeville, with the band Ollabelle; Victor Navasky, publisher emeritus of *The Nation*; David Rakoff, of the radio show "This American Life"; DJ Spooky; the comedian Jackie Hoffman; and others. (Skirball Center for the Performing Arts, 60 Washington Sq. S. 212-279-4200. May 8 at 7:30.)

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES
Christie's evening sale on May 2 is the kickoff to a very busy fortnight for New York's auction circuit, with major auctions of Impressionist and modern art followed by next week's postwar and contemporary sales. "L'Arlésienne, Madame Ginoux," an homage by van Gogh to the archaic beauty and dignity of the women of Arles, steals the show; other pieces include portraits by Picasso (one from his blue period) and a composition of water lilies by Monet. The house will present two further Impressionist sales on May 3, as well as a sale of modern works (mainly prints) from a private collection, with a selection of photographs from the holdings of the now defunct futures-brokerage firm Refco on May 5. A blockbuster sale of postwar and contemporary art on May 9 will be led by a large selection of Donald Judd sculptures from throughout his career; other important works include paintings by Warhol, Francis Bacon, and de Kooning. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.) ♦ A curvaceous odalisque by Matisse from his Nice period, reclining with her back to us as she faces a monumental samovar, is the top lot at **Sotheby's** evening sale on May 3, which also features a peaceful view of the red tiled roofs of The Hague by van Gogh, dating from his early months there. The ensuing day sales (May 4) offer works by van Dongen, Dufy, Renoir, and Magritte; auctions of American Indian art (on May 8) and of African, Oceanic, and pre-Columbian art (on May 9) follow. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.)



ON THE HORIZON

THE THEATRE
GIRL WATCHER
May 17

The increasingly prolific playwright Neil LaBute follows last year's "Fat Pig" with the U.S. première of his latest drama, "Some Girl(s)," starring Maura Tierney, Eric McCormack, and Fran Drescher, at the Lucille Lortel. (212-279-4200.)

ART
A FRENCH LESSON
May 24–Aug. 27

JOHN RITTER

Anne-Louis Girodet-Trioson (1767-1824) studied with Jacques-Louis David and was a favorite of Napoleon, whose portrait he painted several times. The Met's presentation of more than a hundred of Girodet's paintings and works on paper, subtitled "Romantic Rebel," will be the artist's first major retrospective in this country. (212-535-7710.)

NIGHT LIFE
BRED IN THE BONE
June 1

T-Bone Burnett has spent more time in recent years as a producer than as a performer, but he is undertaking his first tour in nearly two decades in support of a new solo release, "The True False Identity." He'll play Town Hall with a full band that includes the guitarist Marc Ribot and the drummer Jim Keltner. (212-307-7171.)

MOVIES
ALIENATION STATION
June 7–29

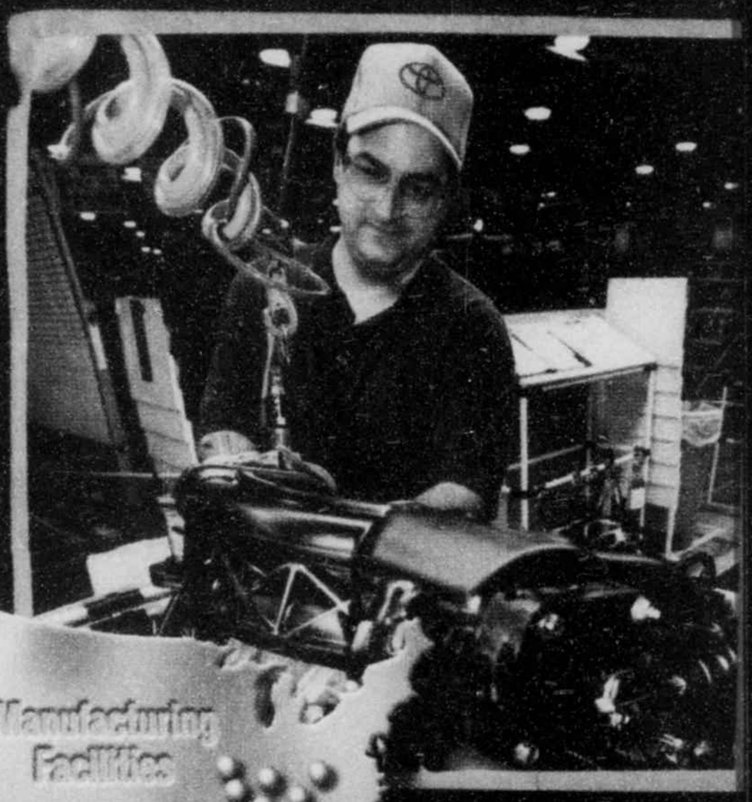
Michelangelo Antonioni, born in 1912, was obsessed by the power of the media to displace reality. He worked for two decades before life caught up to his visions; his films, from "L'Avventura" (1960) to "Blow-Up" (1966), uniquely captured the exhilaration and oppression of the go-go era. BAM offers a nearly complete retrospective of his work, including his short films and documentaries about him. (718-636-4100.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
MOZART REVEALED
June 24

This summer's Maverick Concerts series, begins with Mozart's Piano Concertos Nos. 11-13, offered in their rarely performed chamber versions by the delectable pianist Frederic Chiu; Alexander Platt conducts. (Woodstock, N.Y. 845-679-8217.)

The films of Michelangelo Antonioni, coming to BAM.

The Story of the Plant that Never Stopped Growing



THIS IS NOT A FAIRY TALE. IT'S BETTER. It's a true story about a plant that really does keep growing and growing. It's also a story about a company called Toyota. In 1996, Toyota built a plant in West Virginia, in a place called Buffalo. Soon enough, the plant was producing engines.** Then along came transmissions. The plant grew and grew—in fact, it expanded five times in nine years!

What makes this story so exciting is that quite a few of Toyota's plants are growing. Just like the one in Buffalo. Just like the company called Toyota. It's a true story, a happy story, and best of all, a story with no end in sight.



Toyota U.S. Operations	
Plants	10
Jobs	386,000*
Investment	$13B

TOYOTA

toyota.com/usa



*2005 Center for Automotive Research study. Includes direct, dealer and supplier employees, and jobs created through their spending. **Toyota vehicles and components are built using many U.S. sourced parts. ©2006



THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
NOT WISE



On March 26, 1968, Lyndon Johnson met in the Cabinet Room at the White House with a group of elder statesmen and retired generals known collectively as the Wise Men. He wanted their advice on what to do in Vietnam. They were the architects of American foreign policy in the Cold War, and they included Democrats and Republicans. Johnson had sought their counsel before, and they had always told him that he should stand firm. But Clark Clifford, who had recently replaced Robert McNamara as Secretary of Defense, found that this time, two months after the Tet Offensive, with public confidence beginning to break, most of the Wise Men, including Dean Acheson and McGeorge Bundy, both anti-Communist hawks, had changed their minds. They told Johnson that the war could not be won in the time that American opinion would permit him, and that the United States should begin to disengage from Vietnam. Five days later, Johnson announced a restriction on bombing in North Vietnam and his own withdrawal from the Presidential race.

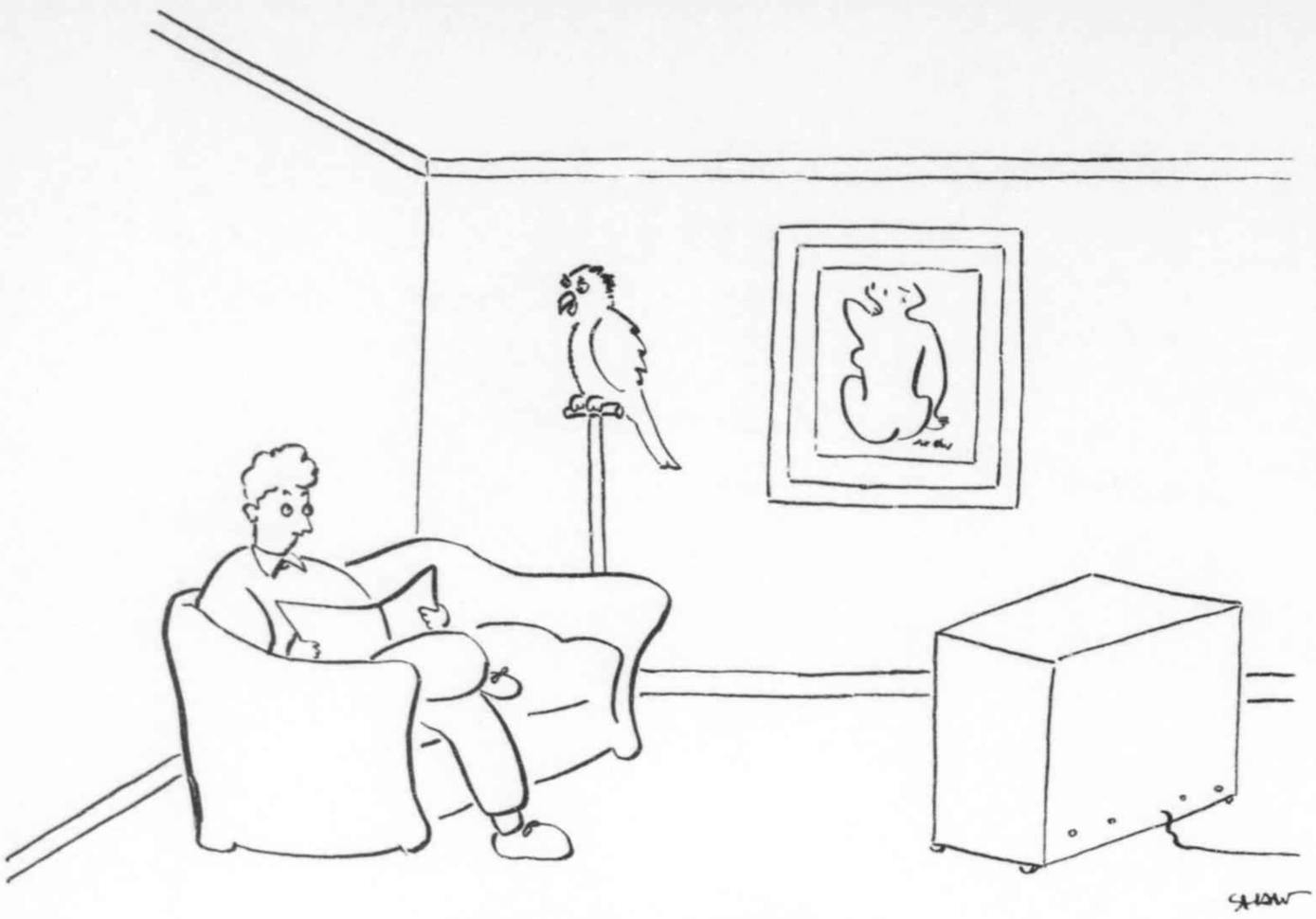
If there are any Wise Men available in the spring of 2006, what should they tell President Bush to do in Iraq? And, if they told him, would he listen? The government is in a strange and prolonged state of paralysis. Many officials in the Administration now admit, privately, and after years of willful blindness, that the war, in which almost twenty-four hundred Americans have died, and whose cumulative cost will reach $320 billion this year, is going badly and shows no prospect of a quick turnaround. Asked why the President doesn't take this or that step to try to salvage what will become his legacy—fire his Secretary of Defense, for example—they drop their heads, as if to say: We know, he should, but it's not going to happen. At the same time, they can't quite bring themselves to abandon hope for a miracle.

Last week, hope took the unlikely shape of a hard-line Shiite politician named Nuri Kamal al-Maliki, who was finally named Prime Minister of the permanent government in Baghdad, more than four months after it was elected. He is a compromise candidate among Iraq's warring groups, which include two opposing factions within what is still called the Shiite alliance. If he inspires any confidence here, it is because no one knows anything about him. The idea is that Iraq, which an Iraqi official recently described as "a country near death," will somehow begin to consolidate around the government of Prime Minister Maliki, and the violence will somehow begin to subside. As a strategy, this amounts to muddling through the rest of the Bush Presidency, without being forced to admit defeat, until January of 2009, when the war will become a new President's problem.



Since the end of the Cold War, the role of the foreign-policy establishment has been killed off by the nasty partisanship that now infects every aspect of Washington politics. In mid-March, Congress announced the formation of an Iraq Study Group to analyze the state of the war and advise the President about the way forward. Perhaps because the very idea of a bipartisan foreign policy no longer exists, the group seems to have been chosen for its political constituencies rather than for its informed and independent judgment. It's hard to imagine the likes of Rudolph Giuliani, Chuck Robb, Vernon Jordan, and Sandra Day O'Connor marching into the Cabinet Room to tell the President that his Iraq policy has failed and that he needs a new

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL



"Polly wants a flu shot."

• • •

one, along with new people to implement it.

But what if they do? This is not a President who places his faith in the wisdom of men. When thirteen former Secretaries of State and Defense were summoned to the White House in January, Bush gave them all of ten minutes to air their views. Last week, in California, he described his policymaking process in unmistakably clear terms. "I base a lot of my foreign-policy decisions on some things that I think are true," he said. "One, I believe there's an Almighty. And, secondly, I believe one of the great gifts of the Almighty is the desire in everybody's soul, regardless of what you look like or where you live, to be free." It seems that unless God himself gains entry to the West Wing and informs the President that the Iraqis' desire to be free is not the issue, a grandiose theology will continue to doom America and Iraq to a bloody stalemate.

One alternative was recently offered by Senator John Kerry. Speaking in Boston on the thirty-fifth anniversary of his Senate testimony as a Vietnam veteran, Kerry delivered an indictment of the Bush-Cheney doctrine, with its cult of secrecy and its contempt for traditional American liberties, that was far more devastating than anything he could bring himself to say during the 2004 campaign. Having found his voice, Kerry abruptly concluded the speech with a new war policy: immediate withdrawal if Iraq doesn't form "an effective unity government" by May 15th; withdrawal by the end of the year if it does. But abandoning Iraq in an exasperated rush will leave ordinary Iraqis far more vulnerable to the murderous conduct of the militias and the insurgents than they are now. As Sunnis, Shiites, and, possibly, Kurds finally face off without an American buffer, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Turkey could be drawn into a wider war that could further destabilize the region and create large safe zones for jihadis.

The choice in Iraq should not be between the Administration's failed eschatology and the growing eagerness of most politicians to be rid of the problem. Both moral obligation and self-interest require that Americans accept the consequences of the war and, if the Administration will not, imagine new ways to resolve it. Leslie Gelb and Senator Joseph Biden, in an Op-Ed they have written for the *Times*, propose that the United States, with the involvement of Iraq's neighbors, broker a political deal among the country's three main groups, based on terms set down in Iraq's new constitution: a division into three autonomous regions, a weak federal capital in Baghdad, and a fair share of the oil revenue for the Sunnis. The premise is that if the Iraqis are to have a chance of living together in the future, they need a period of separation now. This is, admittedly, the logic of desperation, raising a thousand questions and provoking as many vexing problems. Nor is it entirely a new idea. But, after three years of war and a chronic inability of leaders in both countries to think beyond next month, a fundamental change of policy deserves to be taken seriously. If there are no more Wise Men in Washington, can there at least be wisdom?

—George Packer

LIFE IMITATES DEPT.
CHOKE ARTIST



Dr. Henry J. Heimlich, the recently embattled octogenarian inventor (his younger son is campaigning to discredit many of his contributions to medicine), has at least one thing to feel good about this year: his most abiding innovation, the Heimlich maneuver, just saved the life of the actor Mandy Patinkin, who lately found himself in the dire position of having an insufficiently masticated bit of Caesar salad lodged in his windpipe.

It was a sunny afternoon at Louie's, a café on the Upper West Side. Patinkin, his wife, Kathryn Grody, their teen-age son, Gideon Grody-Patinkin, and a friend were having a convivial lunch. "I was laughing, and all of a sudden something went down the wrong way and got stuck," Patinkin said. "First, I'm in complete shock—'I'm choking!' "

Here's where things get weird: only three weeks earlier, Patinkin had wrapped a movie, a drama that is set in a New York diner and whose primary plot concern is the trauma, both literal and metaphorical, of tracheal blockage. Its main character is a shy immigrant dishwasher who seems to identify with the faceless figure—that familiar hybrid of Blue Man Group member and crash-test dummy—on the Heimlich poster that hangs next to his sink. Patinkin plays his boss. When a customer gets a fish bone caught in his throat, Patinkin's character and his employees perform all the wrong maneuvers (backslapping, pointlessly imploring him to "take a breath!"), and the dishwasher performs all the right ones (namely, the

Heimlich). The movie, which is showing at the Tribeca Film Festival this week, is called "Choking Man."

"So there I am choking," Patinkin went on, "and now it's escalating, and I'm panicking." Patinkin had spent weeks researching asphyxiation scenarios, and they were now turning into real life, like some kind of reverse-Method nightmare. The others at the table had no idea about the nature of Patinkin's latest role or the correct first-aid procedure. "We've been in therapy," Grody explained, "and we don't talk about work at home." Patinkin knew exactly what to do, but, of course, he couldn't speak.

"I'm such a goofball and a kidder, my mind is saying, 'Oh, my God, they think I'm screwing around,' " Patinkin said. "So I stood up, and I started jumping up and down, like a kangaroo or a rabbit." Finally, Gideon got up and yelled, "Does anybody know CPR?" "In that moment, I'm going, 'I'm a dead man,' " Patinkin said. "He thinks I'm having a heart attack." A young woman ran over, thrust her hands around Patinkin's abdomen, and gave him the Heimlich, which she'd seen on TV. Patinkin spat out a chunk of food and started to breathe. The check, he said, was "gratis-ed."

Celebrities, it seems, clog their canals, or rescue those who have done so, at a disproportionately high rate. There are the victims: Cher (vitamin pill), Carrie Fisher (Brussels sprout), Dick Vitale (melon), Ellen Barkin (shrimp), Homer Simpson (doughnut). And the heroes: Tom Brokaw (John Chancellor, Gouda cheese), Verne Lundquist (Pat Haden, broccoli), Pierce Brosnan (Halle Berry, fruit), Justin Timberlake (a friend, nuts), Billy Bob Thornton (his potbellied pig Albert, chicken Marsala). Dr. Heimlich himself said the other day that he has performed the move only once, in Cincinnati.

Politicians also choke with alarming frequency. John Kerry saved a fellow-senator from a near-lethal apple sliver. When Ed Koch was mayor, he gagged on a piece of pork, but, to avoid the ire of Jewish voters, said it was a sprig of watercress. Ronald Reagan almost died trying to swallow a peanut, as did Ehud Barak. And then there's George W. Bush, who passed out in the process of eating a pretzel stick, performing a sort of auto-Heimlich.

In "Choking Man," Patinkin's character says to the shaken customer, who has just vomited, in a cinematic slo-mo arc, all over his shirt, "You know, Elizabeth Taylor was Heimliched. You're in good company." Elizabeth Taylor, it turns out, actually belongs in both categories. Twenty-two years before choking on a chicken bone, she saved Montgomery Clift from swallowing his own teeth.

—Lauren Collins

REPUTATIONS

SPRUCING UP NIXON



The nine-acre campus of the Richard Nixon Library and Birthplace, in Yorba Linda, California, features the thirty-seventh President's boyhood home; his burial site; a gift shop that sells, for $9.95, the "Nixon surf logo beanie"; and a sleek museum that highlights the good and the bad, but mostly the good, of Nixon's sui-generis Presidency.

What is missing from the Nixon Library and Birthplace is an actual library. In 1974, Congress impounded forty-four million of Nixon's Presidential papers and almost four thousand hours of his tapes. There was an entirely reasonable belief at the time that Nixon could not be trusted with his own papers. So the California library was opened, in 1990, without the documentary record of Nixon's Presidency. It was administered not by the National Archives, which oversees the nation's eleven other Presidential libraries, but by the Nixon family. Nixon assiduously sought possession of his papers, but the cause was subverted by the library's first director, Hugh Hewitt, who announced that he would screen researchers for partisan compatibility; Bob Woodward, Hewitt said, would not be welcome. Hewitt is long gone (he has since made his name in conservative talk radio), and his successor, the Reverend John Taylor, a onetime Nixon factotum, made peace with the idea of dispassion in scholarship. After years of negotiations and lobbying, the National Archives finally agreed to turn over the documents. So, this fall, the Archives will take formal control of the library, relieving the family of its role (and putting an end to the squabbling for control that caused Nixon's two daughters to stop speaking to each other). The National Archives has just hired a University of Virginia historian named Timothy Naftali to run the library and to oversee the transfer of Nixon's records to Yorba Linda.

Naftali is a less than obvious choice. He is neither a Republican nor a Democrat. Until last year, he was a Canadian. He is an expert not on Nixon's Presidency but on the Cold War and American counterterrorism. Nor is he a museum curator, although the ideological reëngineering of the museum may become his first task. "I'm going to give people a museum that will lay out the peaks and valleys," he said recently, over breakfast in Washington.

Taylor concedes that the museum's exhibits now shade toward veneration. "All of the libraries do it," he said. "Because of President Nixon's particular status in history, our exhibits get attention that is far more"—he paused—"acute."

Naftali is not a keen admirer of Nixon, but he is not an acid critic, either. In his latest book, "Blind Spot," a history of American counterterrorism, he praises Nixon for his foresight. "Nixon took terrorism very seriously," he said. "Kissinger told him not to, but he was very concerned, very early on."

Naftali is forty-four, and he is thin and excitable. His boss, Allen Weinstein, who is the Archivist of the United States, calls his new employee "cheerfully caustic." Service in the federal bureaucracy may eventually cure Naftali of insouciance, but in the meantime he is happy to offer a blunt critique of President Bush. He suggested that the current Administration has many of the Nixon Administration's vices but few of its virtues. "I think that Nixon was a pragmatic internationalist, and every great foreign-policy President has understood that you can't do it alone," he said.

His principal mission, he said, is to insure open access to the Nixon material at a time when, he believes, secrecy has become an executive-branch fetish. The National Archives itself has lately become entangled in a scandal: not long after 9/11, the Archives secretly agreed with the C.I.A. and the Air Force to reclassify once open documents. (Weinstein, who was not the archivist at the time, placed a

moratorium on the reclassification.) Naftali says that the scandal is reminiscent of Nixon-era attitudes, and he described himself as "doubly angry." He said, "This is a cover-up of a reclassification effort, if you can imagine such a thing."

When asked if he expected similar difficulties in Yorba Linda, he said, "Check back with me in a year.

"The seventies are very important right now," he went on. "After all, we have a government that is trying to relive the seventies, to move us back to a period before congressional oversight." Naftali promises a wider-ranging cultural focus when he takes over, in October. "I want to have programs that look at the whole era," he said. "Woodstock and Stonewall and everything else. I want to screen 'The Godfather' and have Coppola come and talk about his screenplay for 'Patton.'" Warming to the topic, he added, "And Joan Baez! We should have Joan Baez come." He paused. "This is my first federal job," he said. "And it may also be my last."

—Jeffrey Goldberg

THE OLD WAYS
STILL KICKING



Maybe you're too young to remember, but in 1942 a man named Lou Walters opened a night club called the Latin Quarter, on the corner of Broadway and Forty-eighth Street, the kind of place that no longer exists, except, in a way that doesn't quite count, in Las Vegas. Showgirls, acrobats, colored fountains, the works—"a dream," as Walters once put it, "of nights that are carefree and full of beauty." Dapper, slim, London-born, he was a man of mottoes ("Fill them full of food and take their breath away") and edicts ("Never get a suntan that leaves lines"), but his greatest talent may have been his eye for, and guardianship of, what a Latin Quarter program called "exquisite examples of perfect young American womanhood."

When Lou Walters died, in 1977, his daughter Barbara Walters did nothing to memorialize him. She was busy having a miserable time at ABC News, as the first female co-anchor of a network news program. "I was here alone," she recalled the other day. "I wouldn't have known who to call even to arrange a memorial. It was a terrible year for me."

Twenty-seven better years later, Walters was talking about the old Latin Quarter (it's an Olive Garden now) with the developer Jerry Speyer, and he suggested that she have a street named after Lou. He knew whom to call, and so two Fridays ago she found herself standing on the club's old corner, surrounded by childhood friends, household staff, TV crews, gawkers, cops, members of Mayor Bloomberg's advance team, and a dozen or so of Lou's dancers and showgirls—a few in costume, many brandishing pictures of their younger selves—to celebrate the christening of Lou Walters Way.

"Where are Winnie and Twinnie?" Walters called out.

"Here we are!" Two women appeared, sprites dressed identically in miniskirts, fish-nets, and heels. Although carbon dating might indicate otherwise, they had the legs and the gusto of newly discovered teen-agers from Absecon, New Jersey, which is what they'd been, an undisclosable number of years ago, when they met Lou Walters. They are twins, nées Eileen and Enid Wallen.

"Twinnie and Winnie need to get through," Walters said. She cleared some space, and the twins suddenly dropped into perfect, matching splits, on the subway grating. They held up their arms—*ta-da!*

"Doing this on the sidewalk in our stockings—"

"Your father would kill us!"

The rest of the girls were formidable—tall and buxom, big-haired and bejewelled, a few with proud husbands in tow. The men carried their wives' handbags. When the Mayor arrived to unveil the new street sign, the twins flanked him, and each pointed a toe up at the sky: full extension. The Mayor blushed and said, "I don't know if this is good."

Winnie and Twinnie were Barbara Walters's favorite Latin Quarter act, when she was a kid—a shy, bookish schoolgirl among the brassy dames. Barbara didn't hang around the club much. "I wanted my father to be a dentist," she said. But her older sister, Jackie, who was mentally retarded, virtually lived there. "She loved Johnnie Ray," one of the girls recalled.

"I've never jogged, never been to a gym, never been on a machine," Winnie said. "I do five minutes of stretching a day. I do splits, back bends, and then run around my head." (Don't ask.) "My body is a wonderful house that I live in."

After the unveiling, Walters took the girls out to lunch, at Osteria Del Circo. She was eager to hear tales of her father. One woman recalled a steamship



Barbara Walters

voyage from London: Lou had them in steerage. ("How terrible," Walters said, looking accusingly skyward.) During a hurricane, they got themselves bumped up to cabin class by putting on a show.

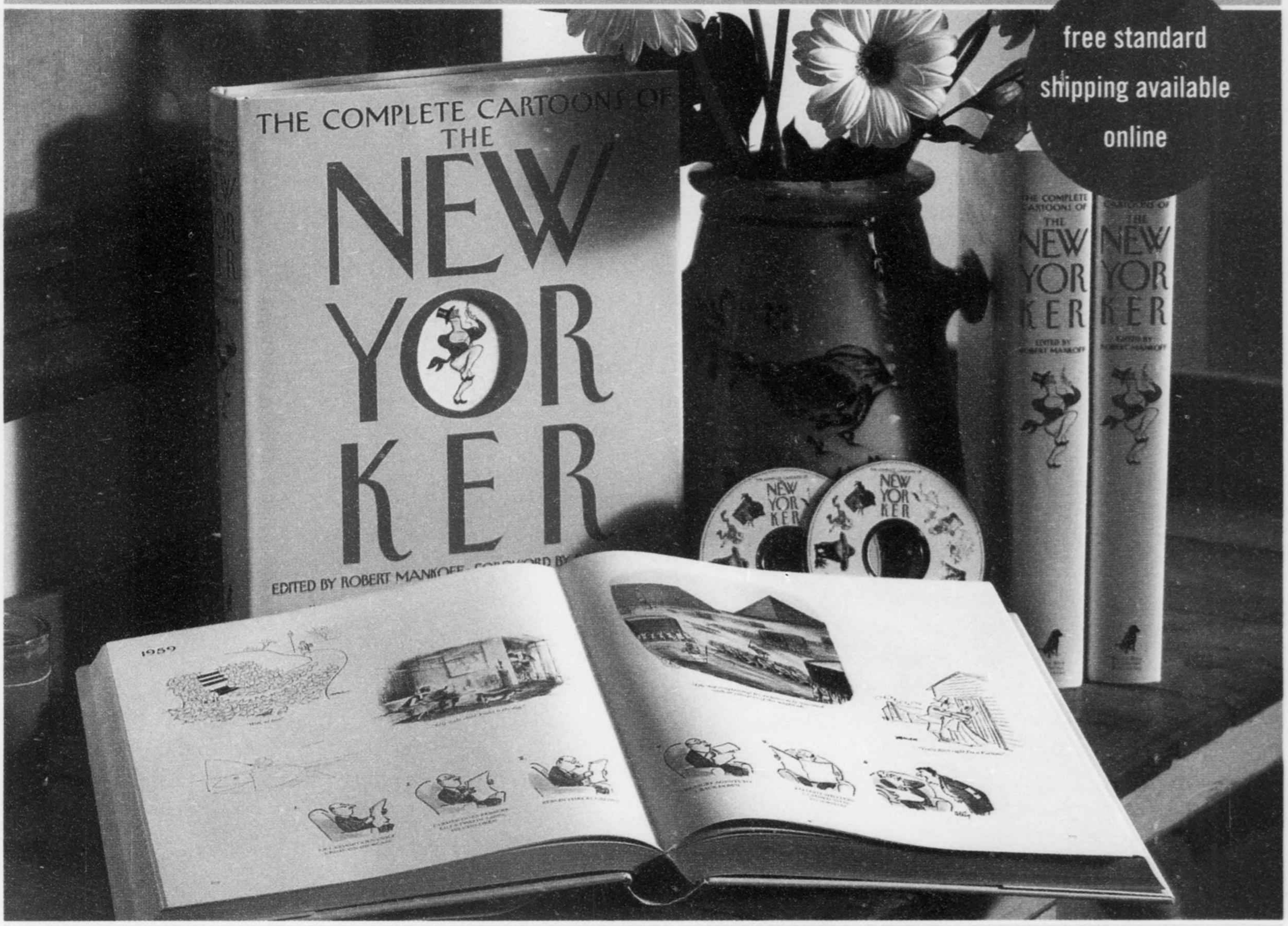
"There was an élan about him," Winnie said. "With that English accent, I thought of him as the Duke of Windsor."

Compliments were batted around ("You had the most fabulous figure—you still do!"), along with the names of headliners (Zero Mostel, Mae West, Sinatra) and patrons (Joe Kennedy, Joe Louis, the Shah of Iran: "We were very naughty that night!"). Winnie said that she could feel Lou watching them all. Her husband sang "Hello, Dolly!" in the voice of Louis Armstrong, substituting the name Barbara for Dolly. Sirio Maccioni, the restaurateur, stopped in to say hello, and Winnie ran over and did a split at his feet.

When lunch was over, Walters gave each of them an envelope, with cash inside to cover the day's expenses.

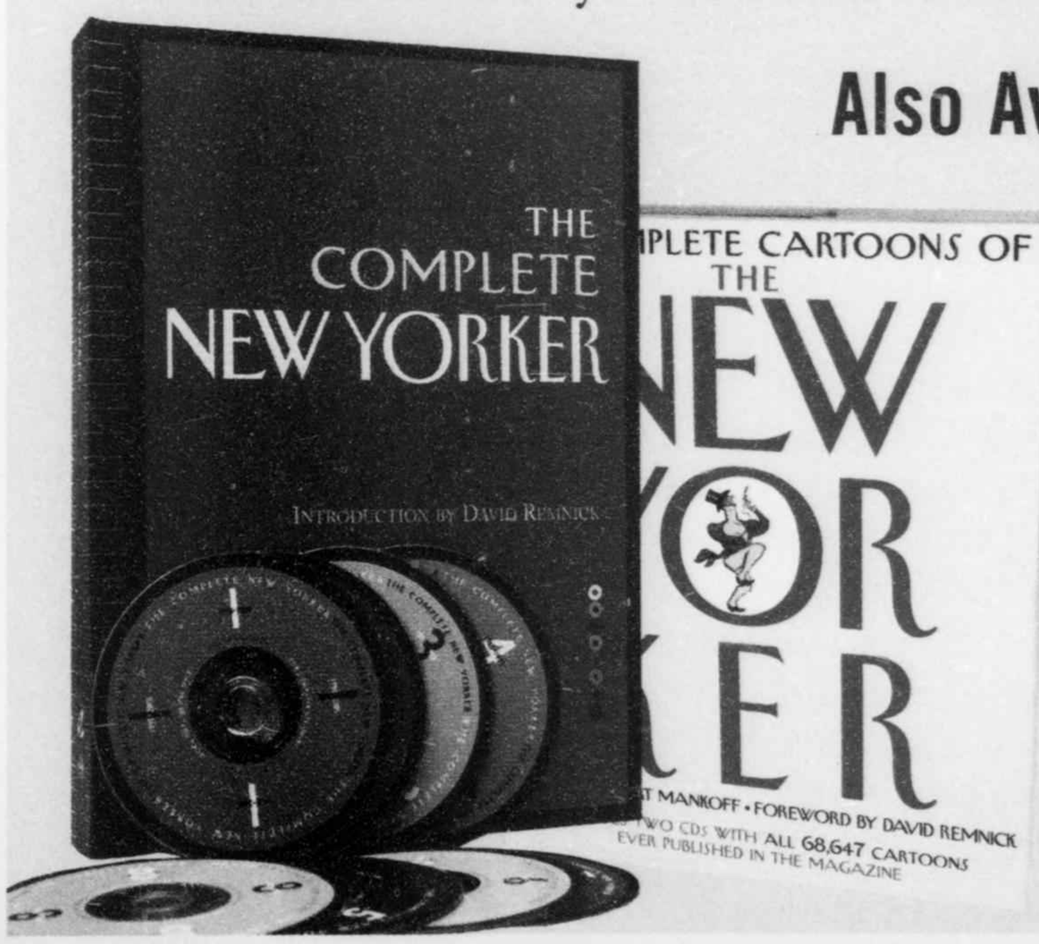
—Nick Paumgarten

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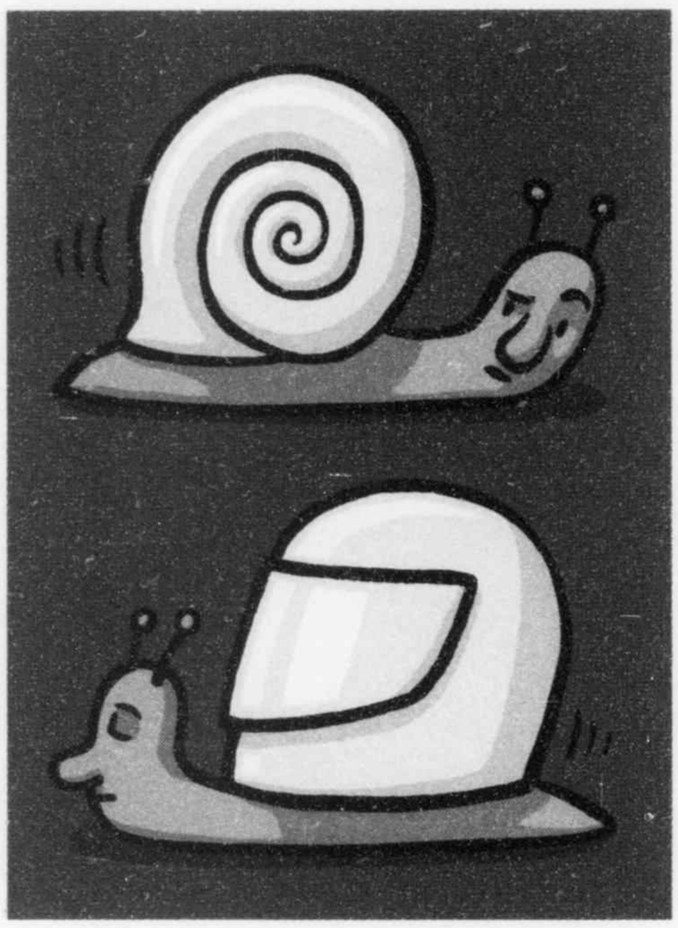
THROUGH THE ROOF

On September 2, 1666, fire erupted in a bakery on Pudding Lane in London. The fire quickly spread and raged for four days, ultimately destroying four-fifths of the city. To make matters worse, Londoners had been living without a simple but invaluable financial tool: fire insurance. Although the idea of fire insurance had been around since the early sixteen-hundreds, most people thought of fire as an act of God, and therefore not something that could be reasonably insured against. The Great Fire changed that. Soon after the city was rebuilt, a man named Nicholas Barbon opened up the Fire Office insurance company, and by the end of the century fire insurance was a thriving business.

Today, we insure our homes against fire as a matter of course. And cautious homeowners can also protect themselves against disasters ranging from windstorms and floods to earthquakes. There is one much feared cataclysm, though, against which everyone has so far been defenseless—a housing-price slump. Seemingly every magazine and newspaper in America has now prophesied the imminent bursting of the housing bubble. But even though many Americans have invested all, or almost all, their net worth in their homes, they've had no way of insuring themselves against that asset's value taking a severe tumble.

That's all changing. At a new online site called HedgeStreet, investors can bet on changes in home prices in certain cities. And later this month the Chicago Mercantile Exchange is going to start trading futures contracts pegged to housing-price indexes in ten major metropolitan areas. The Chicago plan, which is the brainchild of two economists, Karl Case, of Wellesley, and Robert Shiller, of Yale, is straightforward: if you just spent, say, $1.5 million on a two-bedroom apartment in Manhattan, and you want to hedge against the risk that it might be worth $1.2 million three years from now, you can sell contracts that will reap you a profit if local prices fall, allowing you to lock in the current value of your home. Alternatively, if you think the housing boom in Los Angeles still has a ways to run—or if you're interested in buying a year from now but are afraid that you'll be priced out of the market—you can place a bet that will pay off if prices keep going up.

If housing futures work the way they're supposed to, they will shift risk from those who are less able to bear it (individual homeowners with hefty mortgages) to those who are more willing to (speculators looking for a big upside on their investments). In the process, they will effectively provide a form of house-price insurance. They could have wider benefits, too. If there is a housing bubble, and it does burst, housing futures would soften the blow to the national economy.



If enough traders participated in the market, it would become, in the long run, a valuable predictor of housing prices in different cities. That would allow buyers to make more rational decisions about how much they were willing to pay for homes, which would make house prices swing less wildly than they currently do.

A housing-futures market makes all kinds of economic sense. But, as the example of fire insurance shows, the fate of a financial innovation doesn't depend on economics alone: culture and habit matter, too. Until the sixteenth century, after all, loans were hard to come by in Europe, because of the Catholic Church's ban on usury. And as the Princeton sociologist Viviana Zelizer has detailed in her book "Morals and Markets," for a long time life insurance failed to thrive in the U.S. because people didn't like the idea of placing a value on human life, and wives often felt as if they were betting on the deaths of their husbands. Life insurance became popular only when insurance companies stopped emphasizing it as a good investment and sold it instead as a symbolic commitment by fathers to the future well-being of their families.

Even today, it's clear that otherwise rational people harbor deep-seated beliefs that make housing futures a tough sell. People generally don't hedge individual investments, because they don't like to limit their potential gains in advance. That's especially true when it comes to housing, because of the ingrained assumption that, over time, real estate is guaranteed to be an excellent investment—even though Shiller, in a recent book, shows that, allowing for inflation, American home prices barely budged during the twentieth century. In that sense, the housing-futures market has what is known as a framing problem: selling a contract seems like betting on housing prices to fall, rather than simply insuring yourself in case they do. Emphasizing that the market is a kind of home-equity insurance might help; but even that's no guarantee. In 2002, for instance, the city of Syracuse started a program called Home HeadQuarters that essentially allows people to pay a premium to insure the equity in their homes. After four years, only a hundred and nineteen homeowners have done so.

For housing futures to become popular anytime soon, then, may require something akin to the Great Fire—perhaps a house-price meltdown in a major city like San Diego. But the last forty years have seen a burgeoning of financial innovation, much of which has given people better tools with which to measure and manage risk, and, as a result, investors have become comfortable with ideas that at first glance seemed improbable. In Mongolia, the World Bank recently gave goatherders the chance to hedge against the possibility of a disastrous number of their goats dying. If Mongolian goat insurance is here, can American home-price insurance really be far behind?

—*James Surowiecki*

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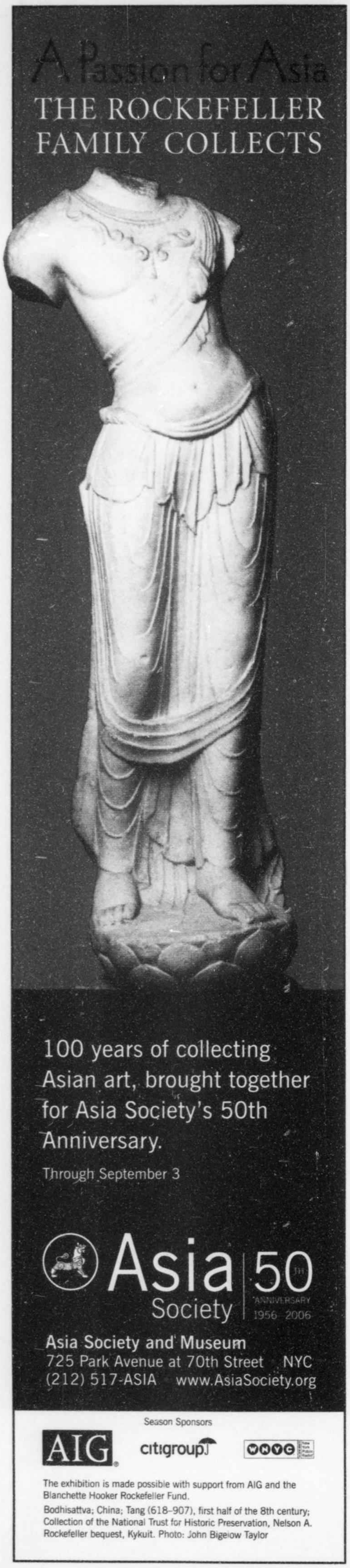
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REFLECTIONS

MEMENTO MORI

When gifts come back to haunt you.

BY DAVID SEDARIS

For the past ten years or so, I've made it a habit to carry a small notebook in my front pocket. The model I favor is called the Europa, and I pull it out an average of ten times a day, jotting down grocery lists, observations, and little thoughts on how to make money, or torment people. The last page is always reserved for phone numbers, and the second to last I use for gift ideas. These are not things I might give to other people, but things that they might give to me: a shoehorn, for instance—always wanted one. The same goes for a pencil case, which, on the low end, probably costs no more than a doughnut.

I've also got ideas in the five-hundred-to-two-thousand-dollar range, though those tend to be more specific. This nineteenth-century portrait of a dog, for example. I'm not what you'd call a dog person, far from it, but this particular one—a whippet, I think—had alarmingly big nipples, huge, like bolts screwed halfway into her belly. More interesting was that she seemed aware of it. You could see it in her eyes as she turned to face the painter. "Oh, not now," she appeared to be saying. "Have you no decency?"

I saw the portrait at the Portobello Road market in London, and though I petitioned, hard, for months, nobody bought it for me. I even tried initiating a pool, and offered to throw in a few hundred dollars of my own money, but still no one bit. In the end I gave the money to my boyfriend, Hugh, and had him buy it. Then I had him wrap it up, and offer it to me.

"What's this for?" I asked.

And following the script he said, "Do I need a reason to give you a present?"

Then I said, "Awwwww."

It never works the other way round, though. Ask Hugh what he wants for Christmas or his birthday and he'll answer saying, "You tell me."

"Well, isn't there something you've had your eye on?"

"Maybe. Maybe not."

Hugh thinks that lists are the easy way out, and says that if I really knew him I wouldn't have to ask what he wanted. It's not enough to search the shops; I have to search his soul as well. He turns gift-giving into a test, which I don't think is fair at all. Were I the type to run out at the last minute, he might have a valid complaint, but I start my shopping months in advance. Plus I pay attention. If, say, in the middle of the summer, Hugh should mention that he'd like an electric fan, I'll buy it that very day, and hide it in my gift cupboard. Come Christmas morning, he'll open his present, and frown at it for a while before I say, "Don't you remember? You said you were burning up, and would give anything for a little relief."

That's just a practical gift, though, a stocking stuffer. His main present is what I'm really after, and, knowing this, he offers no help whatsoever. Or, rather, he *used* to offer no help. It wasn't until last year that he finally dropped a hint, and even then it was fairly cryptic. "Go out the front door, and turn right," he said. "Then take a left and keep walking."

He did not say "Stop before you reach the boulevard," or "When you come to the Czech border you'll know you've gone too far," but he didn't need to. I knew what he was talking about the moment I saw it. It was a human skeleton, the genuine article, hanging in the window of a medical bookstore. Hugh's old drawing teacher used to have one, and though it had been ten years since he'd taken the woman's class, I could suddenly recall him talking about it. "If I had a skeleton like Minerva's . . ." he used to say. I don't remember the rest of the sentence, as I'd always been sidetracked by the teacher's name, Minerva. Sounds like a witch.

There are things that one enjoys buying, and things that one doesn't. Electronic equipment, for example—I hate shopping for stuff like that, no matter how happy it will make the recipient.

I feel the same about gift certificates, and books about golf or investment strategies or how to lose twelve pounds by being yourself. I thought I would enjoy buying a human skeleton, but, looking through the shop window, I felt a familiar tug of disappointment. This had nothing to do with any moral considerations. I was fine with buying someone who'd been dead for a while; I just didn't want to have to wrap him. Finding a box would be a pain, and then there'd be the paper, which would have to be attached in strips because no one sells rolls that wide. Between one thing and another, I was almost relieved when told that the skeleton was not for sale. "He's our mascot," the store manager said. "We couldn't possibly get rid of him."

In America this translates to "Make me an offer," but in France people really mean it. There are shops in Paris where nothing is for sale, no matter how hard you beg. I think people get lonely. Their apartments become full, and, rather than rent a storage space, they take over a boutique. Then they sit there in the middle of it, gloating over their fine taste.

Being told that I couldn't buy a skeleton was just what I needed to make me really want one. Maybe that was the problem all along—it was too easy: "Take a right, take a left, and keep walking." It took the hunt out of it.

"Do you know anyone who *will* sell me their skeleton?" I asked, and the manager thought for a while. "Well," she said, "I guess you could try looking on bulletin boards."

I don't know what circles this woman runs in, but I have never in my life seen a skeleton advertised on a bulletin board. Used bicycles, yes, but no human bones, or even cartilage, for that matter.

"Thank you for your help," I said.

Because I have nothing better to do with my time than shop, I tend to get excited when someone wants something obscure: an out-of-print novel, a replacement for a shattered teacup. I thought that finding another skeleton would prove difficult, but I came across two more that very afternoon—one a full-grown male and the other a newborn baby. Both were at the flea market, offered by a man who specializes in what he calls "the sorts of things that are not for everyone."

The baby was tempting because of its size—I could have wrapped it in a shoebox—but, ultimately, I went for the adult, which is three hundred years old and held together by a network of fine wires. There's a latch in the center of the forehead, and removing the linchpin allows you to open the skull and either root around or hide things—drugs, say, or small pieces of jewelry. It's not what one hopes for when thinking about an afterlife ("I'd like for my head to be used as a stash box"), but I didn't let that bother me. I bought the skeleton the same way I buy most everything. It was just an arrangement of parts to me, no different from a lamp or a chest of drawers.

I didn't think of it as a former person until Christmas Day, when Hugh opened the cardboard coffin. "If you don't like the color we can bleach it," I said. "Either that or exchange it for the baby."

I always like to offer a few alternatives, though in this case they were completely unnecessary. Hugh was beside himself—couldn't have been happier. I assumed he'd be using the skeleton as a model, and was a little put off when, instead of taking it to his basement studio, he carried it into the bedroom, and hung it from the ceiling.

"Are you sure about this?" I asked.

The following morning, I reached under the bed for a discarded sock and found what I thought was a three-tiered earring. It looked like something you'd get at a crafts fair, not pretty, but definitely handmade, fashioned from what looked like petrified wood. I was just holding it to the side of my head when I thought, *Hang on, this is an index finger.* It must have fallen off while Hugh was hanging the skeleton. Then he or I or possibly his mother, who was in town for the holidays, accidentally kicked it under the bed.

I don't think of myself as overly prissy, but it bothered me to find a finger on my bedroom floor. "If this thing is going to start shedding parts, you really *should* put it down in your studio," I said to Hugh, who told me that it was his present and he'd keep it wherever he wanted to. Then he got out some wire and reattached the missing finger.



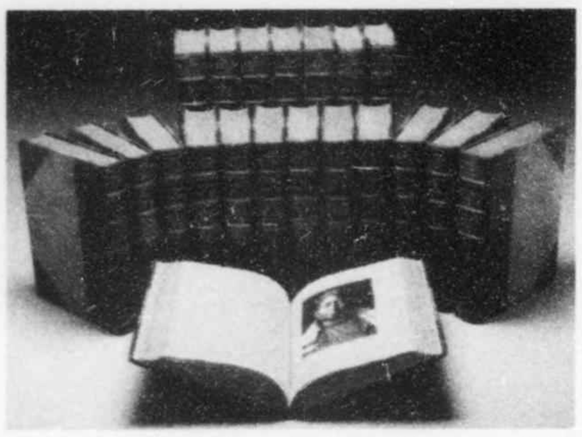
A skeleton isn't an easy gift to wrap—or to live with.

JOOST SWARTE

It's the things you *don't* buy that stay with you the longest. This portrait of an unknown woman, for instance. I saw it a few years ago in Rotterdam, and, rather than following my instincts, I

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told the dealer that I'd think about it. The next day, I returned, and it was gone, sold, which is maybe for the best. Had I bought it myself, the painting would have gone on the wall of my office. I'd have admired it for a week or two, and then, little by little, it would have become invisible, just like the portrait of the dog. I wanted it, I wanted it, I wanted it, but the moment it was mine it ceased to interest me. I no longer see the shame-filled eyes or the oversized nipples, but I do see the unknown woman, her ruddy, pious face, and the lace collar that hugged her neck like an air filter.

As the days pass, I keep hoping that the skeleton will become invisible, but he hasn't. Dangling between the dresser and the bedroom door, he is the last thing I see before falling asleep, and the first thing I see in the morning.

It's funny how certain objects convey a message—my washer and dryer, for example. They can't speak, of course, but whenever I pass them they remind me that I'm doing fairly well. "No more laundromat for you," they hum. My stove, a downer, tells me every day that I can't cook, and before I can defend myself my scale jumps in, shouting from the bathroom, "Well, he must be doing *something*—my numbers is off the charts." The skeleton has a much more limited vocabulary, and says only one thing: "You are going to die."

I'd always thought that I understood this, but lately I realize that what I call "understanding" is basically just fantasizing. I think about death all the time, but only in a romantic, self-serving way, beginning, most often, with my tragic illness, and ending with my funeral. I see my brother squatting beside my grave, so racked with guilt he's unable to stand. "If only I'd paid him back that twenty-five thousand dollars I borrowed," he says. I see Hugh, drying his eyes on the sleeve of his suit jacket, then crying even harder when he remembers I bought it for him. What I *didn't* see were all the people who might celebrate my death, but that's all changed with the skeleton, who assumes features at will.

One moment he's an elderly Frenchwoman, the one I didn't give my seat to on the bus. In my book, if you want to be treated like an old person, you have to look like one. That means no face-lift, no blond hair, and definitely no fishnet stockings. I think it's a perfectly valid rule, but it wouldn't have killed me to take her crutches into consideration.

"I'm sorry," I say, but before the words are out of my mouth the skeleton has morphed into a guy named Stew, who I shorted in a drug deal.

Stew and the Frenchwoman will be happy to see me go, and there are hundreds more in line behind them, some whom I can name, and others whom I managed to hurt and insult without a formal introduction. I hadn't thought of these people in years, but that's the skeleton's cleverness. He gets into my head when I'm asleep, and picks through

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"I paid three grand for this dress—I'll wear it wherever I want!"

the muck at the bottom of my skull. "Why me?" I ask. "Hugh is lying in the very same bed—how come you don't go after him?"

And the skeleton says, "You are going to die."

"But I'm the one who found your finger."

"You are going to die."

I said to Hugh, "Are you *sure* you wouldn't be happier with the baby?"

For the first few weeks, I heard the voice only when I was in the bedroom. Then it spread and took over the entire apartment. I'll be sitting in my office, gossiping on the telephone, and the skeleton will cut in, sounding like an international operator. "You are going to die."

I stretch out in the bathtub, soaking in fragrant oils while outside my window beggars are gathered like kittens upon the heating grates.

"You are going to die."

In the kitchen, I throw away a perfectly good egg. In the closet, I put on a sweater that some half-blind child was paid ten sesame seeds to make. In the living room, I take out my notebook, and add a bust of Satan to the list of gifts I should like to receive.

"You are going to die. You are going to die. You are going to die."

"Do you think you could alter that just a little?" I asked.

But he wouldn't.

Having been dead for three hundred years, there's a lot the skeleton doesn't understand; TV, for instance. "See," I told him, "you just push this button and entertainment comes into your home." He seemed impressed, and so I took it a step further: "I invented it myself, to bring comfort to the old and sick."

"You are going to die."

He was the same with the vacuum cleaner, even after I used the nozzle attachment to dust his skull. "You are going to die."

And that's when I broke down. "I'll do anything you like," I said. "I'll make amends to the people I've hurt, I'll bathe in rainwater, you name it, just please say something, anything else."

The skeleton hesitated a moment. "You are going to be dead . . . someday," he told me.

And I put away the vacuum cleaner, thinking, *Well, that's a start.* ♦

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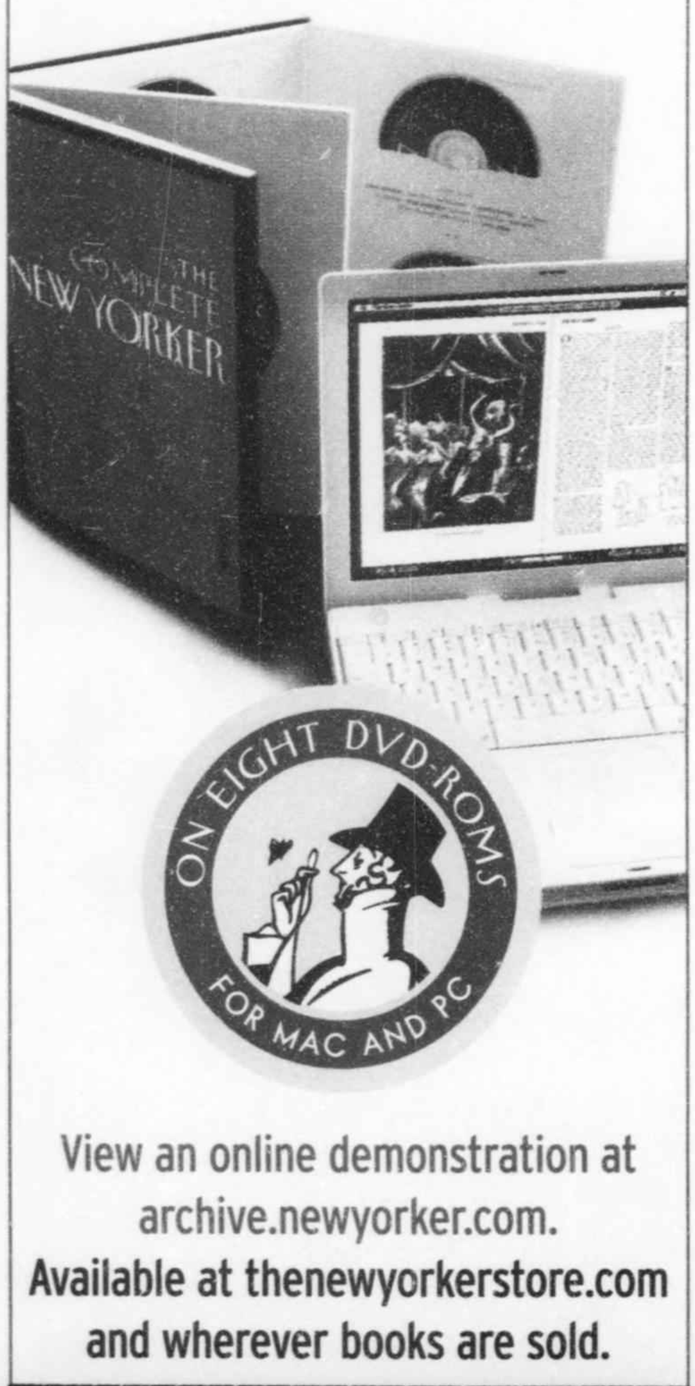
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SHOUTS & MURMURS

RUMMY IN LOVE

BY BRUCE McCALL

From: The Dormitory of D.R.
To: Miss X [EYES ONLY]

In reference to last night's date following the Freshman Mixer: It is my determination that you have advanced to the fourth quartile of personal value to this writer at the present time. I attach a voucher entitling you to (temporary) custody of one (1) ring, worth $1 million. Caution: Do not have the ring appraised by a jeweller. I happen to be a better judge of its value, which must be kept top secret and withheld from your girlfriends.

From: The Dormitory of D.R.
To: Miss X [SECRET]

My files reveal no record of my having made the long-term commitments alleged in your memo just received. You clearly confuse me with some other person with the initials D.R. with whom you showered. Please desist from pursuing this matter and further upsetting my fiancée.

P.S.: Per my previous document, the ring was a loan. Please return.

From: The Dormitory of D.R.
To: Miss X [NOT FOR CIRCULATION]

You force me to observe, anent your hysteria re lost virginity (see pp. 1-36 of the letter left on my doorstep last night), that not once has the slightest interest been evinced or mention made in reference to *my* lost virginity. Such lopsided reasoning exemplifies what is wrong with our country today.

EMERGENCY NOTICE. Re Operation Frosh Follies: You have been reassigned to babysit my nephew Ricky tonight beginning at 1600 hrs. The corsage should be turned over to Miss Y no later than 1800 hrs.

P.S.: A secretary (since outplaced) inadvertently omitted in my Final Damage Survey of this relationship the paragraph referring to your mother's inedible cooking. You may obtain a copy by writing to this address and marking the envelope "Cooking, Inedible, Mother's."

From: The Dormitory of D.R.
To: Miss Y

In response to your query as to why a certain Miss X has mailed you a parcel containing my underwear, pajamas, toiletries, and prophylactics: You should not need to be reminded at this point that "stuff happens." This matter is now closed.

From: The Dormitory of D.R.
To: Miss Y

Prior commitments have prevented me from reading all of your last eighteen letters, but I advise that the effort expended therein might have been better utilized in working out with weights to reduce the flab in the area of your upper arms.

In re the quoted passages in Letter 12 of the abovementioned series: You are hereby reminded that Rilke was German and Rimbaud French, i.e., Old Europeans, i.e., unreliable. Expunge them from your thoughts A.S.A.P.

From: The Dormitory of D.R.
To: Miss Y

In reference to our meeting in the bushes last evening:

(1) The name Rummy is reserved exclusively for individuals on the list. You are not on the list.

(2) My comments on the movie "Pillow Talk" were not opinion but fact. Openly oppositional stances such as yours publicly insult my veracity and jeopardize your current status as a contender for Most Favored Female Companion.

(3) The section in the note submitted to me under my front door this morning at approximately 0500 hrs, titled "My Thoughts on Love," is sloppily reasoned and contains 43 unacceptable conclusions—none, I am saddened to say, in the prescribed bullet-point format.

From: The Dormitory of D.R.
To: Miss Y [DESTROY AFTER READING]

Your notice of resignation as my current primary affection supplier is hereby accepted. Please return all correspondence over my signature A.S.A.P., plus the photos of me in Superman costume. I enclose a bill for expenses incurred in both the initial romantic-mode campaign and the subsequent romance-enhancement mission, now aborted.

As you know, the ring was a loan and should be returned.

P.S.: "Asshole" is one word.
cc: Miss X.

From: The Dormitory of D.R.
To: Miss Z

Our joint exercises in my vehicle last night from 0100 to 0645 hrs have been graded Satisfactory. You therefore merit transition to Phase II and the (temporary) rank of Steady Date.

Indicated actions: (a) breath mints, (b) a more powerful deodorant, (c) termination of your verbal contract with "Hal" in time for our next appointment. Call my assistant for time and place.

From: The Dormitory of D.R.
To: Miss Z [TOP CONFIDENTIAL]

I am returning your most recent letter, in which you extensively quote from Mr. Walter Whitman. As D.R.'s directory makes explicit, Mr. Whitman, a known homosexual, is not on the list of acceptable poets.

P.S.: Budget revisions necessitate that henceforth you cannot order an appetizer or dessert while dining with D.R. Unspent funds are being diverted to update equipment for the wrestling team.

From: The Dormitory of D.R.
To: Miss Z [EYES ONLY]

I can report that as of this day our alliance has escalated to Stage IV, Physical Relationship Secured.

Action taken this day: Same motel room booked, under name of "Mr. and Mrs. Jane Fonda."

From: The Dormitory of D.R.
To: Miss Z [MOST SECRET]

I am in receipt of yrs of late last night. Net takeaway: In 23 pages (26,000 words), pertinent facts and new information affecting D.R.'s personal qualities are 100% absent.

Item A: "I want to wrap my legs around your body like an octopus" contains no useful guidelines for ongoing conduct.

Item B: "Stud in Aviator Glasses" cannot be transferred to my career résumé without copious footnotes.

Before rewriting your thesis, consult the works of Clausewitz and Marshal Blücher, and "The Art of War."

From: The Dormitory of D.R.
To: Miss Z

It has been clear to this writer for some time that your interpretation of my position vis-à-vis the odds in favor of a voluntary joint marital operation are sufficiently wide of the mark to disqualify you as a romantic associate. Please return the ring, which was of course a loan.

From: The Dormitory of D.R.
To: Miss Z [NOT FOR CIRCULATION]

Follow-up re Missions Outstanding: Please put down my dog and shave your legs.

From: The Dormitory of D.R.
To: Miss Z

Your note to "Two-Timing Bastard" overlooks these crucial elements:

(1) Identical twin sisters are often mistaken for each other—particularly in the dark.

(2) In re your liberal paraphrasing of the remarks in the note wrapped around the rock hurled through your sister's bedroom window: In D.R.'s family of origin, "I love you" is a form of greeting, not unlike "Hello" and "Take a pew." He frequently says "I love you" to his own mother.

(3) Because of what I am informed could be interpreted as illegible handwriting, the phrase "new photos" might admittedly be misread as "nude photos."

(4) The undersigned was in your twin sister's bedroom shortly after midnight, only to attempt the recovery of his library card. (The "endless night of ecstasy" mentioned in the intercepted note obviously refers to ongoing delighted feelings at the prospect of retrieving same, thus avoiding fines.) Any other interpretation means you have rocks in your head. ♦

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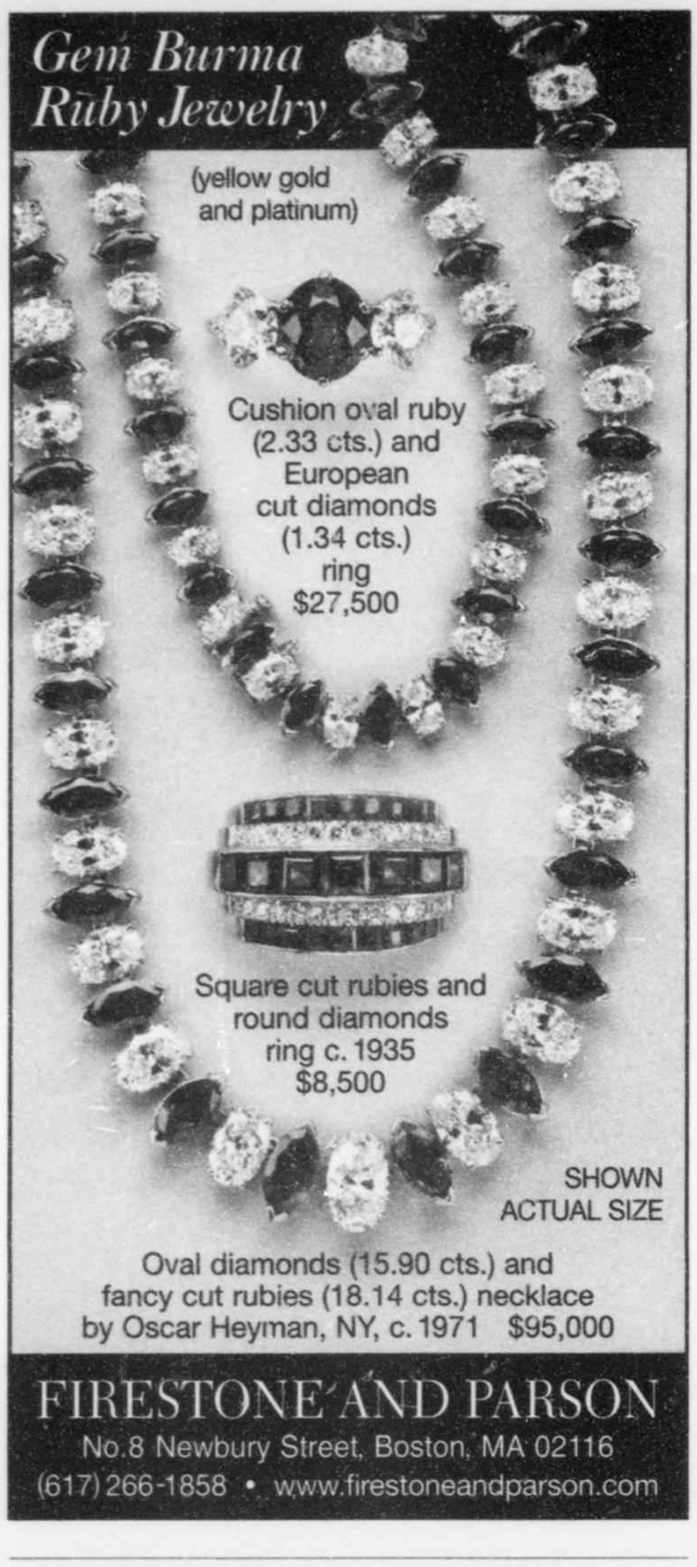
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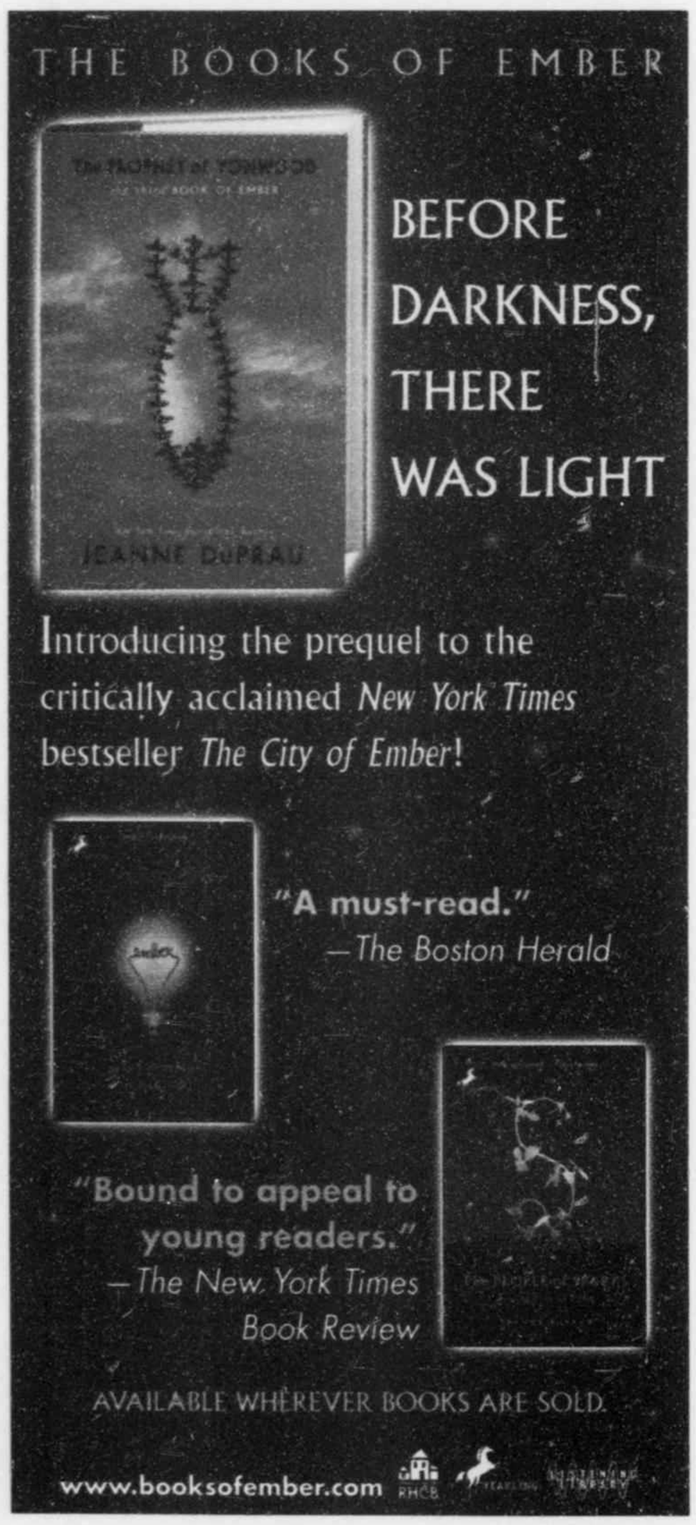
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ONWARD AND UPWARD WITH THE ARTS

PERPETUAL MOTION

Trimpin's sound sculpture.

BY JEAN STROUSE

One day in the mid-nineteen-sixties, when Gerhard Trimpin was fifteen years old and working as an apprentice electromechanical engineer in Freiburg, Germany, he and some friends passed a hardware store with a perplexing display in the window: a round cast-iron basin about two feet in diameter with a trench machined out below the rim, in which a ball bearing was constantly rolling around. They went inside to ask what kept the ball moving. "The men in the store said, 'Perpetual motion,'" Trimpin, a sound sculptor and installation artist whom I have known for several years, recalled not long after we met. "We said, 'No—perpetual motion doesn't exist.' But they insisted." Trimpin and his friends kept returning to the store with possible explanations, all of them wrong. "Finally, we cracked it," he told me. "There was a small hole in the trench, and every time the ball passed the hole it got a tiny push from a puff of air—just enough to keep it rolling. So the great secret was a fake. But I was mesmerized by the sound and sight of this perfectly round ball, rolling in Zen-like repetition, and from that moment on I wanted to do something with spheres. I didn't want to use anything fake—there had to be another way to keep a sphere in motion, probably using gravity." He added, "Most of my ideas come from my childhood. I just needed the knowledge and skills to develop them."

After thinking about this idea for nearly four decades, and working on it for four years, Trimpin (who has used only his surname since his late teens) has produced a sculpture that derives from the display in the hardware-store window: a large-scale perpetual-motion instrument called "Der Ring Hoch Drei" ("The Ring to the Power of Three," or "The Ring^3"), which gives off a steady, low-pitched hum. The piece was commissioned for a new science center in Wolfsburg, Germany, which opened last November.

The science center, designed by the architect Zaha Hadid, is called Phæno, from the German *Phänomen* (phenomenon) and the Greek φαίνω (show, reveal, disclose). The building was still under construction when Trimpin arrived to install "Der Ring^3," last May. Even unfinished, Hadid's science center seemed a spectacular work of futuristic architectural sculpture—an immense concrete slab that, on ten inverted cones, floats high above a plaza. There is not a visible right angle in the place. Phæno's walls tilt, and it has windows—parallelograms of various sizes inset at a slant to the plane of the building—that give the structure the look of a sinking ship. Trimpin designed "Der Ring^3," Phæno's centerpiece work of art, to hang from the ceiling—a grid of I-beam trusses—forty-three feet above the science center's entrance and twenty-two feet above its exhibition concourse.

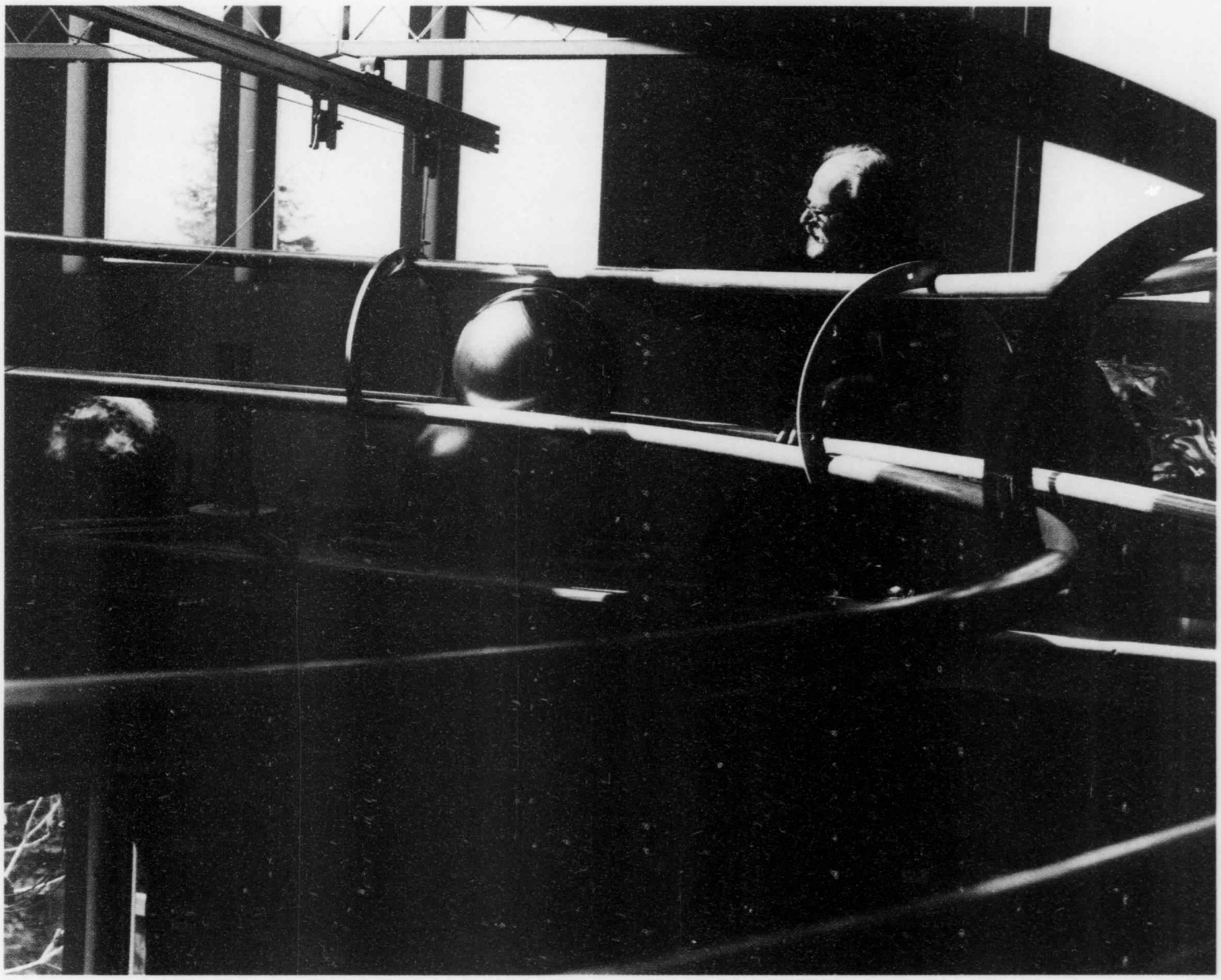
Trimpin, who has lived in Seattle since 1980, is a slim, intense man of fifty-four, with a thick brush of gray beard and thinning, shoulder-length blond hair. He got to Wolfsburg on a Sunday night, and early the next morning four large crates arrived from Seattle, containing the sculpture (in sections) and the equipment that he would need to assemble it. He spent Monday and Tuesday unpacking the crates, conferring with the exhibition design team and two professional riggers from Berlin, and cleaning off the sections of "Der Ring^3" after their five-thousand-mile journey. When I arrived, on Tuesday, he was starting to fit sections of the sculpture together—while calculating how to solve all the technical problems of making the installation work in Phæno's colossally irregular space. (He had not been able to test the whole piece in Seattle, since the largest part didn't fit in his studio.) Among the items he had shipped or brought with him to Wolfsburg were a thousand feet of aircraft cable, shackles,

clamps, pulleys, long bolts, steel wire cutters, pliers, drills, bits, Teflon tape, crimping tools, roll pins, turnbuckles, jackscrews, a Mac laptop with software custom-designed for "Der Ring^3," a spare microprocessor board, a box he had found at a Boeing surplus yard for fifteen dollars and customized to hold twelve small motors, a plumb bob, hammers, at least a hundred wrenches (Allen wrenches, hex wrenches, socket wrenches), a straight laser level, a three-hundred-and-sixty-degree horizontal laser level, and several large spools of Pacific Industrial Supply rope.

"Der Ring^3" looks like a huge mobile with three tiers, three, four, and five metres in diameter. Each tier consists of three glitter-flecked royal-blue aluminum rings, with a brushed-aluminum sphere that rolls along the bottom two rings, as if on rails. For the spheres to roll smoothly, the tiers have to start on a horizontal plane, then rotate slightly in a steady, circular rhythm.

The sculpture works like a giant puppet, its actions controlled by a complicated choreography of cables that run from a gearbox on the floor up through pulleys attached to crossbars on the I-beams, and then down to four equidistant points on each tier. As the riggers clamped the steel crossbars to the I-beams, they encountered a problem: geometry. Like the strings that animate puppets, the cables need ninety-degree hanging points, and Phæno's exhibition space has none. Hadid's trusswork ceiling, which looks like a simple grid, is actually radial: the I-beams fan out imperceptibly. "This building represents the historical end of the plumb bob," Trimpin announced with mock solemnity. Using the laser level, he shot light beams up at the trusswork, defining straight lines that enabled the riggers to attach the crossbars at right angles to each other and at slight angles to the radial beams.

The next morning, several men hoisted the five-metre ring, with the help of steer ropes, a winch, and a block and tackle, until it hung, not quite horizontally, in place. Standing back to look at his work, Trimpin decided that it was too close to an elevator shaft, and the sculpture had to be moved several feet to the right—which meant that the riggers had to reconfigure the crossbars on the ceiling. They went off to cut the metal bars, and a few minutes later the director of the science center, Dr. Wolfgang Guthardt, stopped by. An elegant, whippet-thin man, Guthardt was the force behind Phæno, raising almost a hundred million dollars for the project. Trimpin—who is quite articulate but lives so intensely in his own mind that he has no sense of how much an audience can absorb—launched into an animated explanation



Trimpin in his studio with a prototype of "Der Ring^3," a physical metaphor for the way sound works. Photograph by Susanna Howe.

of his project: "The central ratio in 'Der Ring,' three to four to five, is the same as the ratio in the harmonic spectrum. Pythagoras figured out that music works through the *sinus* and *cosinus*"—Latin for sine and cosine. "How Pythagoras laid down the foundations of music is more or less how he explained the triangle. All science is combined in this moment: if you pluck a string, the progression of kinetic motions that results will explain more than just sound—it explains the basics of physics and math." As Trimpin talked, he carved shapes in the air with his hands, miming the vibration of the plucked string, and his body, in constant motion, practically lifted off toward the suspended sculpture. After several minutes of this torrent, Guthardt, somewhat baffled, left for lunch. Trimpin resumed his calculations.

A construction worker looked up at the off-kilter ring and asked whether it was part of the lighting system.

Trimpin: "No."

Worker: "That's art?"

Trimpin: "That's right."

Born in 1951, Trimpin grew up in the small town of Efringen-Kirchen, in the southwestern corner of Germany. Like many gifted people, he began early to pay attention only to what captured his interest—a proclivity that led one of his teachers to tell his parents there was something wrong with his thought processes. She said that he would be lucky to get a job as a construction worker's helper.

Trimpin directed most of his attention to music—he began playing the flugelhorn at the age of eight—and to building things in a workshop above the family outhouse. Before long, with the encouragement of his maternal grandfather, a cement-factory worker who had a library of science books, he built his first sound sculpture. He collected the town's old tube radios, took the chassis off, and hooked the internal dials up to a pulley so that he could change all the stations at once. The mixture of short-wave messages, Morse code, music, foreign news, and local news created surprising sound patterns, he says in retrospect, "kind of like what we now know as synthesizer music."

As a boy, Trimpin played flugelhorn constantly, but when he was in his mid-teens he developed infections on his lips. His music teacher switched him to a bigger mouthpiece, which didn't help, then to the trombone: no better. Thinking that the problem could be an allergy to brass, the teacher taught him to play a trumpet with a gold mouthpiece (also no good), and then the silver flute, which worked long enough for Trimpin to become proficient but eventually caused infections on his lower lip. Next, they tried reed instruments. Trimpin played sax for a few years, until something in the reeds irritated his tongue. "I played timpani when I couldn't play the horns," he says. "I didn't really mind the allergies problem because it brought me through all the instruments: it is always exciting to learn a new one." Because he has such sensitive skin, he can't wear jeans with metal buttons or use certain kinds of soap.

In late adolescence, Trimpin discovered the work of the Swiss kinetic sculptor Jean Tinguely, who built witty machines with moving parts out of scrap metal and found objects. Some of the motors, drive belts, and metal parts made sounds, which Tinguely called "Meta-Harmonies." Trimpin credits Tinguely with having had a greater impact on his imagination than any modern figure in music. Writing about Trimpin several years ago, the composer Charles Amirkhanian quoted Arnold Schoenberg's famous remark about John Cage—that Cage was not so much a composer as an inventor of genius—and went on, "The distinction between inventor and composer is difficult to make also in the case of Trimpin, whose process of composing involves inventing not just a notation system, as commonly was the practice in the Sixties avant-garde, but the *instruments* on which his music is performed." There are several artists who work with sound in a mode similar to Trimpin's—Gordon Monahan, in Berlin and Ontario, for example, and Jacques Remus, in Paris—but not many, and, Trimpin says, "we all know each other." Tim Hawkinson, an American, makes sculptures that move, drip, knock, inflate, print, and groan; unlike Trimpin, however, Hawkinson is not interested primarily in sound. In 1998, Trimpin created a sculpture to acknowledge another major influence on his work, the man who may have been the first great scientific artist-inventor: Leonardo da Vinci. The piece, "Leonardo's Boombox," is a large vertical case filled with figures—Indonesian shadow puppets, the dog of "His Master's Voice," an Arnold Schwarzenegger-masked saxophone player, an accordion operated by hanging weights—that move by means of gears based on Leonardo's designs.

In the early seventies, Trimpin moved to Berlin, where he earned a university degree and immersed himself in the arts. He began creating instrumental hybrids that challenged physical limitations—adding a trombone slide to a trumpet, for instance, and connecting two clarinets to a single mouthpiece. He idolized exper-



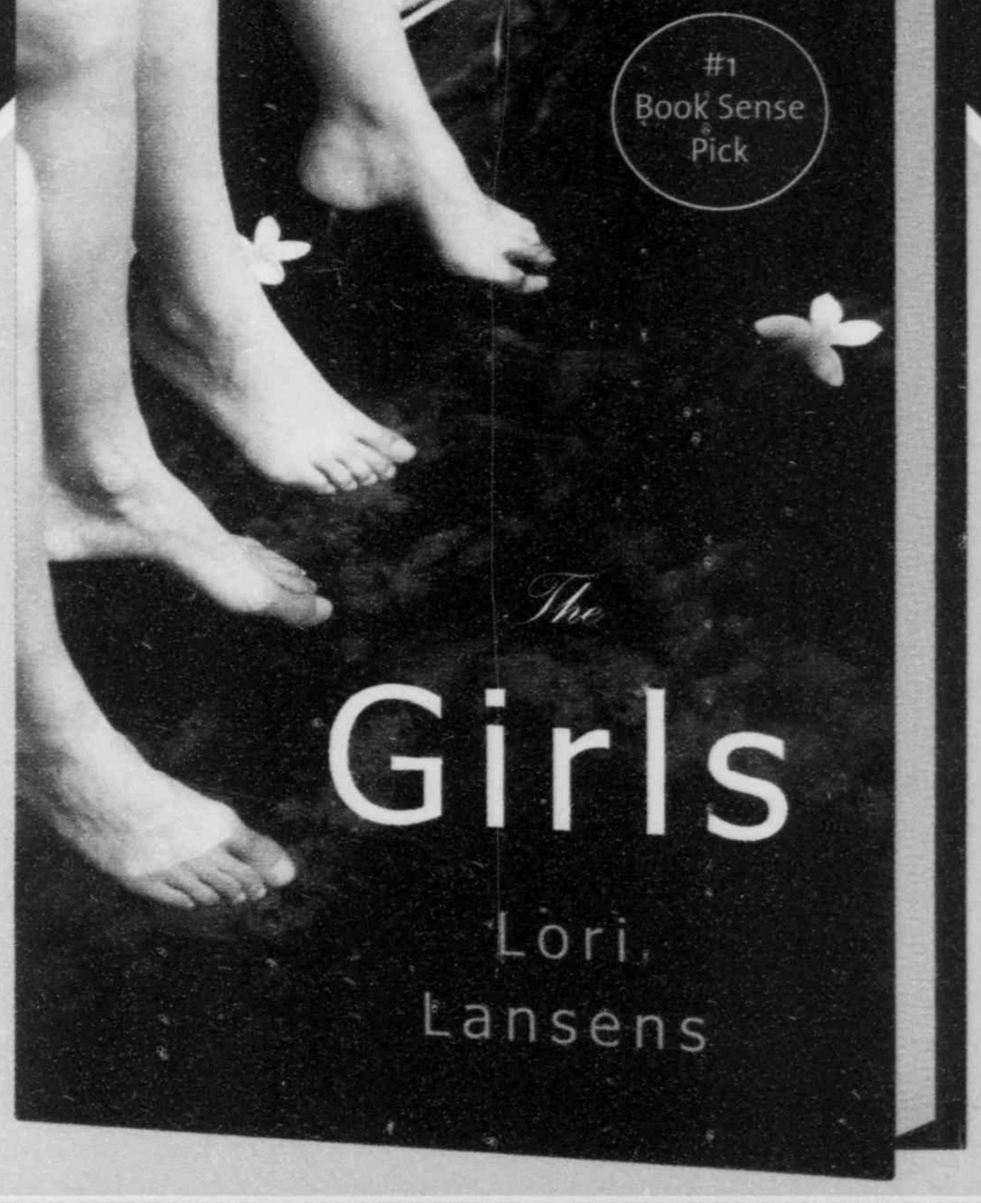
"I can remember when there was nothing here but polar ice."

imental, intellectual American jazz musicians such as the virtuoso trombonist George Lewis and the sax player and composer Anthony Braxton. In homage to Lewis, he built a stereo trombone with two bells and a split mouthpiece, so that a musician could play one horn or the other, or both at once.

On summer breaks, Trimpin hitchhiked through Latin America, Mexico, and the United States. In Mexico City, shyness kept him from calling on Conlon Nancarrow, the reclusive composer of player-piano music that is generally too fast and rhythmically complex for human hands. Despite a common interest in the unexplored capacities of instruments, the two men did not meet until 1987, at a small contemporary-music festival in Holland—by which time Trimpin had figured out how to convert Nancarrow's player-piano rolls into MIDI (musical instrument data interface) files and reproduce them using a computer. Though Nancarrow, then seventy-five, was dubious, Trimpin won him over by demonstrating what a computer-driven player piano could do with a foxtrot, and eventually he stored all of Nancarrow's work in digital files. Nancarrow, who died in 1997, fought with the Lincoln Brigade during the Spanish Civil War and had been interned in the same camp in the Pyrenees where Efringen-Kirchen's Jews were later imprisoned. The fate of that population has haunted Trimpin since he first learned of it, as a child. A piece that brings together these two major elements of his life will have its première in Yakima, Washington, this summer.

Trimpin works twelve hours a day, seven days a week. He creates most of his pieces from scratch, using salvage parts or equipment that he makes himself. Ideas come easily, he says, "but then you have to figure out 'How does it work?' " His wife, Sheryl Ball, who edits publications at the Seattle Art Museum, long ago accepted his total absorption in his art, though she told me, "I wish we could sometimes go to the movies at eight instead of ten." When she met Trimpin, she had two young children—he calls them "our kids"—both now grown. He built the house that he and Sheryl live in, at Phantom Lake, about twenty minutes from Seattle, and also his

"I have never looked into my sister's eyes...."



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NOBODY

Line after line smearing off into elephantine
scrawls as she tries to recall which way
the pencil goes, my friend's wife who can't organize
her mind to spell out her name sits staring

at the bookshelf bowed under the weight
of the thousand thousand rivulets of print
she can't remember writing. Her mind keeps scabbing
over—and then she picks it and picks it

until it bleeds . . . and she's herself again,
her heart rejoicing that she's Anne and not
someone other who afflicts her like a stranger

hiding in her bedroom, whispering with affable,
red-faced jocularity that if you're nobody
and nobody's tormenting you why do you cry out?

—Tom Sleigh

studio, in the Madrona section of the city.

Trimpin moved to the United States largely because Americans throw out a lot more of the high-tech junk he uses in his work than Europeans do. He speaks heavily accented, not entirely accurate English and comes up with winsome neologisms and wordplay. While working on the prototype for "Der Ring[3]" in Seattle last winter, he fell off a ladder in his studio and broke some ribs. Telling me about it by phone a few days later, still in acute pain, he said that the ladder was "too flimsical." In 2001, he created an installation for the Orange County Art Museum—a deconstructed twelve-string guitar that can sound like, among other things, an electric bass, an acoustic guitar, a sitar, Jimi Hendrix, and Pink Floyd. One of the sound processors had a setting labelled "Crowd Control," which struck him as funny. He named the piece "Kraut Kontrol"—after all, he says, "I'm a Kraut." One day a few years ago, he took me out to the Ballard Locks, in Seattle, to watch salmon returning to their natal streams. Afterward, I had to run an errand. Waiting for me, Trimpin made notes for a piece he was working on. When I returned, he handed me a page of musical notations and sketches called "Scientific Investigation and: Score for: What a Fish Might Hear," depicting the impact that noise pollution generated by a loud boat ("Das Boot, 500 RPM") might have on a "confused" fish.

Trimpin's sound sculptures, both whimsical and serious, have appeared all over the world. They earned him a MacArthur "genius" award in 1997. (He was taking a welding class for which he was late the day a representative from the MacArthur Foundation called. He told her, "This is great, but I have to go now." The woman gave him a phone number and asked him to call back as soon as possible. Trimpin scrawled the number on a piece of plywood he was cutting, then couldn't find it again for a day or two.) Still, he has no dealer, Web site, staff, or cell phone, rarely reads e-mail, and makes no recordings of his work. There is no signature Trimpin sound, since his pieces involve motion, space, and the acoustical properties of diverse materials. He tends not to make the kinds of things that people collect. (One exception is a five-thousand-dollar doorbell that he devised years ago for a wealthy friend, with dozens of moving parts and ringing, clanging, chiming sounds.) The choreographer Merce Cunningham, who commissioned a piece from him in 1995 (it was called "Thirteen Stitches," because Trimpin cut his hand open with a table saw while working on it), says, "He isn't concerned about whether people like what he does or not. Probably, he hopes they do, but he's going to do it anyway."

The sounds that Trimpin creates are natural and acoustic. He has no objection to electronic music, loudspeakers, or amplifiers but is, he says, "more interested in modifying or elaborating on the sounds made by traditional instruments, and in seeing how sound works in time and space. If you play the notes C and C-sharp together on a keyboard, you hear dissonance, but if you play C in one part of a room and C-sharp in another, you perceive them quite differently." He owes a great debt to the composer Harry Partch, whose book "Genesis of a Music" (1949) challenged the assumptions of the twelve-tone, equal-temperament tuning that had dominated Western music for hundreds of years. Trimpin recalls, "I had felt this myself before, but only on reading Partch did I finally understand that sound didn't have to work just in that one way. You could use microtones—I might compose a piece that asks a flute player to cover half the hole with her finger, so you hear a note in between two tones on a chromatic scale."

Trimpin uses MIDI technology to drive much of his work. His "Liquid Percussion," commissioned by the New York Hall of Science in 1991, consists of a hundred computer-controlled water valves suspended in a grid pattern from the ceiling. Strategically placed ten feet below the valves are handblown glass vessels in a variety of shapes, sizes, and colors. Water falling into the vessels sounds like raindrops playing a drum concerto in a jungle. The pattern of drips can be controlled from a keyboard by visitors to the installation or by a sensor that picks up audience movement. In any mode, the sound moves around the room. Trimpin says, "My work is always visualizing sound. A blind person can hear the movement, and a deaf person can see it. You don't have to understand the science of sine waves, pitches, and timbres to feel the impact of melodic, percussive sounds."

In 1994, a small new-music production company in New York commissioned a piece that came to be called "FireOrgan." Pyrex cylinders of different widths and heights serve as organ pipes, and a computer-controlled Bunsen burner inside each cylinder sends warm

air vibrating up through the glass to create deep, rich, organlike tones. A computer program varies the size and intensity of the flame, producing different notes and visual effects—the colors of the oscillating flames change from orange to yellow and then blue. Trimpin worked on the piece at an artists' colony north of Seattle. One night, he set the partly finished "FireOrgan" on a pontoon, added twenty-four duck calls, and floated it out on a pond. Hunters blow into duck calls to attract their prey, but Trimpin hooked his up to resonators, electromechanical pistons, and a computer that played his own quacking compositions in microtonal scales with varying rhythms. Within minutes, eagles and hawks were circling the pond.

Trimpin's best-known piece is probably the forty-foot tower made of nearly seven hundred guitars, plus the occasional banjo, keyboard, and horn, at Seattle's Experience Music Project, a building designed by Frank Gehry and paid for by Microsoft's co-founder Paul Allen. Popularly known as "the guitar tower," the sculpture, which was completed in 1999, is actually named "If VI Was IX," in part for a technical ratio involved in making it work and in part for the Jimi Hendrix song. (The artists and exhibition designers working on E.M.P. called the whole museum project SPAM—Spending Paul Allen's Money.) About thirty of the seven hundred guitars in Trimpin's sculpture actually play music—he created mechanical fretters and pluckers, and computer-controlled compositions. Visitors to the museum can hear the history of American music from ballads to punk by operating one of several touch-sensitive screens near the installation. Trimpin met with Paul Allen only once to discuss his work-in-progress. Allen loved the idea of the playing guitars but wanted to know who would tune them. Trimpin, who hadn't thought about the question until that moment, said, "They will tune themselves."

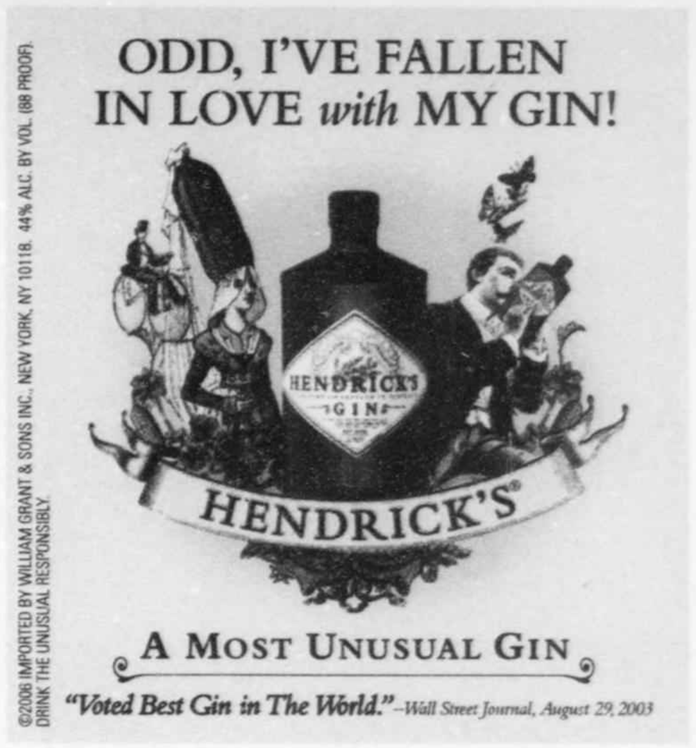
According to Trimpin, Allen said, "Wow!"

Trimpin, leaving the meeting, said to himself, "Fuck! How am I going to do this?" To the thirty computers "playing" the guitars he added listening devices, and when one of the strings goes sharp or flat the computer corrects the tension. He had expected to go back every couple of months to adjust the piece, but it has been running for six years without a hitch.

Trimpin's studio is an unassuming four-story green building with tall windows, in a residential neighborhood. Lavender bushes, grown from seeds he gathered when he was artist-in-residence at the Monet Garden, in Giverny, France, in 1995, line the front steps. Inside, Burmese puppets dangle from a spiral staircase and gorgeous glass vessels gather dust on windowsills and shelves. The studio itself is a three-story atrium with a cascade of brass horns hanging from the ceiling, along with half a bass fiddle, other horns, and parts of guitars. When I visited last spring, a couple of months before Trimpin left to install "Der Ring^3" in Wolfsburg, full-size prototypes of the two smaller rings were also suspended in the atrium. He ran them constantly, at various speeds, since he wanted to find out exactly how they work and what might go wrong. He had been afraid, he said, that the sounds of the rolling spheres at relatively close quarters would irritate people, but most visitors to the studio found the sonorous whirr both soothing and attractive. (Robb Krieg, a former Expedia executive, told him, "It would be great to have this in my bedroom.")

After I'd been there a few minutes, Trimpin gleefully flipped on an old phonograph, controlled by computer, that played Wayne Newton singing "Danke Schoen" backward. He has timpani sets, hundreds of neatly labelled drawers for tools and parts, and a player piano with a mechanical device—called a vorsetzer—that he built for Nancarrow's work. (The vorsetzer sits over the keys and plays eighty-eight-fingered arpeggios and glissandi at superhuman speed.) A machine shop occupies the basement. The third floor, open to the studio atrium, has a book-lined study with toy pianos along its balcony and a rudimentary kitchen; on the top floor are spartan sleeping quarters, plus enough noisemaking toys—including singing, gyrating Elvises and James Browns—to keep a nursery-school class happy for days.

On the main floor, as we stood beneath the circling spheres, Trimpin told me how "Der Ring^3" would work. Like most of his pieces, it's interactive—museum guides can change the speed and



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direction of the rolling spheres from the gearbox. "If we alter the ratio in the motions of the spheres, we can hear and visualize how music changes," he said. "One way would use tempos—if one sphere travels at a certain rate and the others go at double speed, it's as if they were playing an octave higher. Another mode could be time—the big sphere could make a full revolution in twelve hours, the middle one in an hour, the small one in a minute. Or the spheres could be planets revolving at the relative speeds of Mars, Venus, and Earth. If all three spheres are moving in harmonious rhythm, you'll hear a comfortable sound that feels right. If the spheres are out of synch or changing rhythm, you will hear dissonance. Nature is unpredictable. Automating a project like this is much more trickier than the way nature works: it has to be predictable. 'Der Ring' will be always in motion—if you're willing to wait, something interesting will happen."

In addition to creating a new sound machine, Trimpin has produced a physical metaphor for the way sound works. The ratio of the rings—3:4:5—represents a major triad, a chord that is the basis of all Western music and harmony. If you press on the middle of a string tuned to C, dividing it exactly in half, and pluck the string, you hear a C that is an octave higher than the open string. These two notes are numbers 1 and 2 in the harmonic series based on C. If you then divide the string into thirds, fourths, and fifths, the notes go up to G, the next higher C, and the E above that—numbers 3, 4, and 5 in the series. Played together, G, C, and E (Trimpin's 3:4:5 ratio) produce a perfect consonant chord.

"Why are some sounds pleasant to hear?" Trimpin once asked me rhetorically. "Because their frequencies like each other—they are not working against each other. The sound waves are sympathetic."

The sound waves are sine waves: the string oscillates at specific frequencies above and below the line in which it was still. Pythagoras and his followers figured out these principles in the sixth century B.C., and the idea of "music of the spheres" goes back to that time as well: people thought the planets were embedded in invisible glass spheres that made inaudible music as they rotated through the heavens.

At the simplest level, "Der Ring[3]" will make audiences think about time, planets, and acceleration. It might also entice the curious to explore the nature of musical harmonics and to think about sound in terms of numbers, ratios, and, above all, motion. Viewed from the side, each sphere travelling around its circle looks like the vibration of the plucked string: it visually mimics harmonic movement. If you directed a light sideways at one of the spheres at night, so that its shadow showed up on the opposite wall, you would see the sphere travelling down, then up, then down, then up—tracing a sine-wave pattern on the wall.

On Wednesday afternoon at Phæno, the riggers remounted the metal crossbars on the ceiling, and on Thursday they moved the big ring several feet to the right, away from the elevator shaft. Getting the next two rings in place proved considerably easier than hanging the first one, and by afternoon all three were up, still not perfectly level, but with the five-metre ring on top, then the four, then the three. One of the riggers, hanging from the rafters as he freed the brushed-aluminum spheres (which had been tied in place with twine), said, "I feel like a god—I get to set the planets in motion."

Dr. Guthardt came in to see the almost finished piece. Trimpin, taking a rare moment's pause, surveyed the structure that had until then existed only in his imagination and said, "This is the exciting part. It looks good." Guthardt declared it "marvellous," and added, "This is the real birth of Phæno."

Trimpin, however, had already moved on. "The next question is, does it work?" he asked. Guthardt and I walked downstairs from the exhibition concourse to the entrance. The most spectacular view of the sculpture is from below, where arriving visitors first see the gleaming blue rings, with their mysteriously spinning spheres, against the austere steel grid of Hadid's ceiling.

On the final day of the installation, as the riggers unhitched steer ropes and support straps, Trimpin spent hours at the gearbox, sitting on a large spool of rope with his laptop on a cardboard packing box and his glasses sliding down his nose. Finally, he switched on the gearbox: in precisely programmed sequences, it drew

the cables through the pulleys on the ceiling to create a slow, circular rotation in the rings, setting the spheres in motion.

For a few moments, Trimpin watched the sculpture move, then said, "This is the most important sound piece I've done, and it's almost silent."

When Phæno is quiet, visitors standing near "Der Ring^3" will hear the gently whirring, undulating music of the spheres, with a faint Doppler effect, as well as the sibilant, rhythmic movements of the gearbox. They will hear something different if Trimpin (or a guide) reverses the direction of a sphere—first a slowing, deepening sound, then an uncertain rhythm as the ball rolls back and forth until it finds the movement it "wants," then a gradual speeding up and rise in pitch as it regains a steady pace and hum. If the spheres move at different speeds, an educated ear will hear the harmonic ratio of their sounds. But the inevitable noise of a busy museum means that the almost comically subtle sounds of this enormous sculpture will rarely be heard. After seeing "Der Ring^3," Zaha Hadid, who designed Phæno, observed that experimentation is at the core of Trimpin's work—as, indeed, it is at the core of hers. Both in Trimpin's sculpture and in her building, she wrote to me in an e-mail, "visitors are faced with a degree of complexity and strangeness which is ruled by a very specific system of structural logic."

Lately, Trimpin has been immersed in the work of Michael Faraday, the nineteenth-century British scientist who conducted early experiments with electricity, to figure out how rolling spheres might emit light. And he spent part of February making glass spheres rather than aluminum ones, with glass pebbles and thin glass rods inside. He hopes that, as the spheres turn, the tumbling pebbles hitting the rods will sound like ocean waves receding over stones, or like gently falling rain—"kind of like 'sh-h-h,' but I can't be sure yet," he told me. "We have to try it." A few weeks ago, he began installing an eighteen-foot ring with one glass sphere at a gallery in a Seattle architecture firm. The sounds of a sculpture that Trimpin exhibited there several years ago proved too noisy for the architects. The new installation, which opened at the end of April, is called "Shhh." ♦

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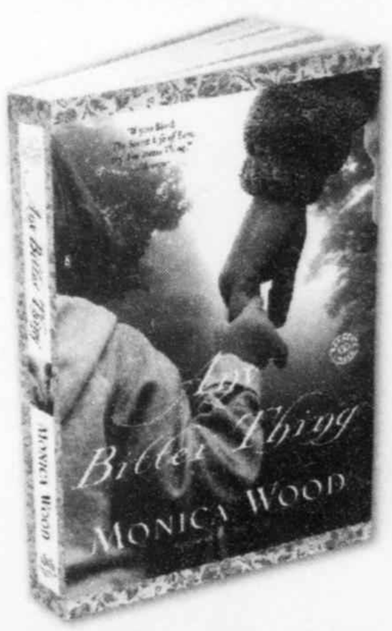


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LETTER FROM LIBYA

CIRCLE OF FIRE

Libya's reformers dream of rejoining the world. Will the hard-liners let that happen?

ANDREW SOLOMON

Here's a story they tell in Libya. Three contestants are in a race to run five hundred metres carrying a bag of rats. The first sets off at a good pace, but after a hundred metres the rats have chewed through the bag and spill onto the course. The second contestant gets to a hundred and fifty metres, and the same thing happens. The third contestant shakes the bag so vigorously as he runs that the rats are constantly tumbling and cannot chew on anything, and he takes the prize. That third contestant is Libya's leader, Colonel Muammar Qaddafi, the permanent revolutionary.

Libya is about the size of Germany, France, Italy, and Spain, combined, but its population, just under six million, is roughly the same as Denmark's. Oil revenues make Libya, per capita, one of the wealthiest countries in Africa, and yet malnutrition and anemia are among its most prevalent health problems. It is an Islamic country where alcohol is illegal and most married women wear the *hijab;* it is a secular country where women are legally allowed to wear bikinis and Qaddafi is protected by a phalanx of gun-toting female bodyguards. The version of socialism promulgated in the mid-nineteen-seventies by Qaddafi's political manifesto, "The Green Book," is honored; the country is in the throes of capitalist reform. The head of the Libyan Publishers' League says that the books most often requested in his store are the Koran and Bill Clinton's "My Life." Then, of course, there's the official line that the country is ruled by its citizens, through Basic People's Congresses, and the practical reality that it is ruled by Qaddafi. Libyan officials must far outstrip the Red Queen in her habit of believing six impossible things before breakfast.

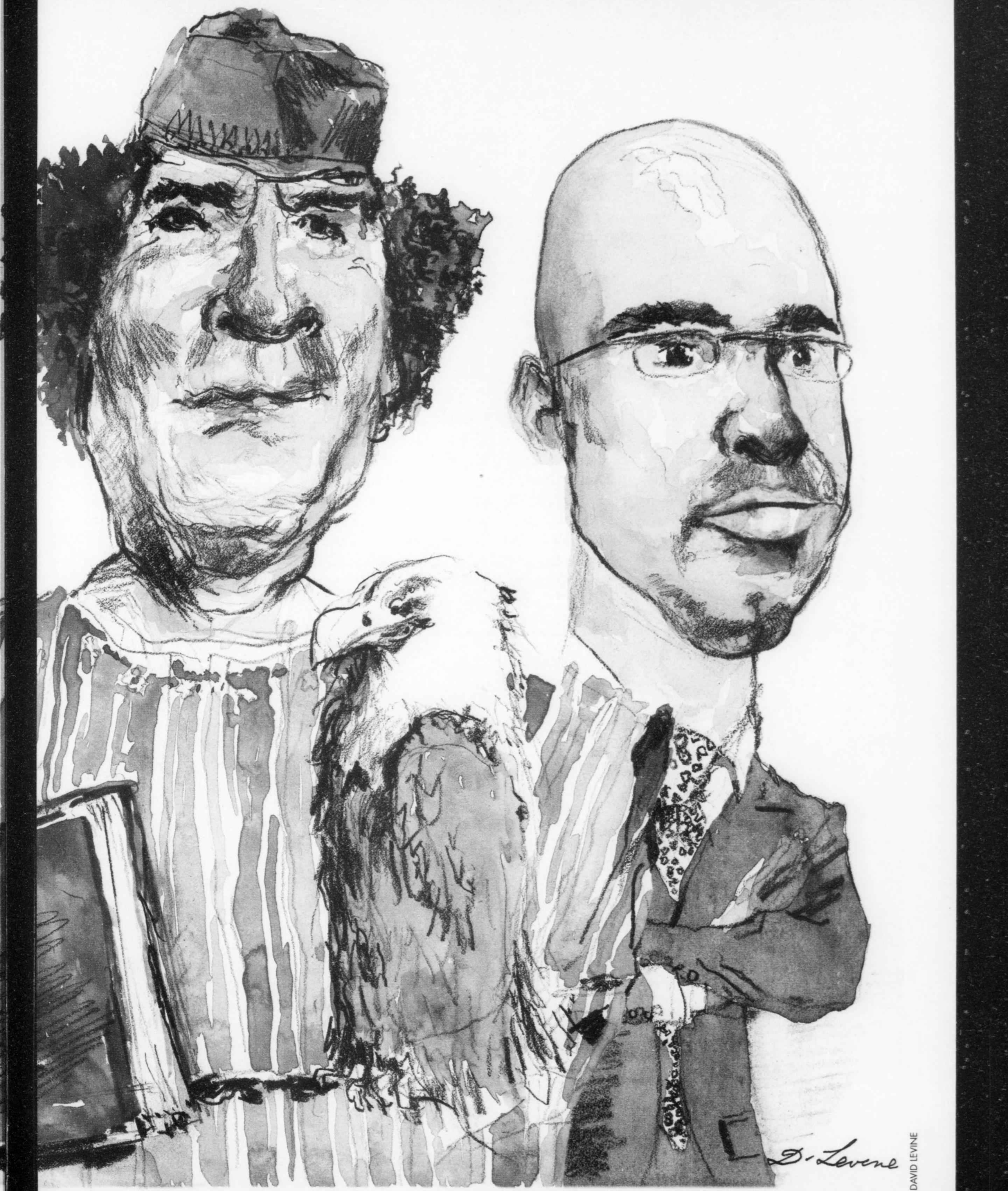
For Americans, there's an even more salient contradiction. A regime led by a man President Reagan dubbed "the mad dog of the Middle East"—a regime that, throughout the nineteen-eighties, sponsored such groups as the I.R.A., the Abu Nidal Organization, and the Basque ETA, and was blamed for the explosion that, in 1988, downed Pan Am Flight 103, over Lockerbie, Scotland—is now an acknowledged ally in America's war on terror. Libya's governing circles are beset by infighting between those who think that this alliance is a good thing and hope for closer ties to the West and those who regard the West with truculent suspicion.

Qaddafi came to power in 1969, at the age of twenty-seven, when, as a junior military officer, he helped stage a bloodless coup against the pro-Western King Idris, who had been installed by the Allies after the Second World War. Now Qaddafi claims that he has no formal role in Libya and is simply an avuncular figure dispensing wisdom when asked. Yet Libyans are afraid to say his name, except in official contexts, where it meets with predictable cheering. The general euphemism is "the Leader." Informally, people refer to Qaddafi as the Big Guy or the One, or just point an index finger straight up. Saying "Qaddafi" aloud is thought to invite trouble. So is questioning his sometimes absurd policy proposals. He once insisted that families should use only one bar of soap a week. On another occasion, he proposed that currency be eliminated in favor of barter. "He believes in desert culture, even though the desert has no culture," one cosmopolitan resident of Libya's capital, Tripoli, told me. "He is trying to take life to its childhood."

The name of Qaddafi's second-oldest son and possible successor, Seif el-Islam al-Qaddafi, is seldom spoken, either. The inner circle refers to Seif, who is one of



Qaddafi lets his son Seif represent the face of reform, but Libyans are leery of referring to either one by name. Qaddafi is "the Leader"; Seif is "the Principal."



DAVID LEVINE

eight children, as the Principal, but he is also called the Son, the Brave Young Man, Our Young Friend, and the Engineer. The relationship between father and son is a topic of constant speculation. The Principal holds no title and, in keeping with his father's decree, maintains that the position of Leader is not hereditary. He does, however, sit comfortably close to power. The Leader, for all his opposition to royalty, looks a lot like a king, and the Principal is his crown prince.

Seif's role is to be the face of reform, "to polish his father's picture," as one prominent Libyan writer suggested to me. His academic papers at the London School of Economics, where he is pursuing a doctorate in political philosophy, are said to show a solid grasp of Hobbes and Locke. He founded the Qaddafi International Foundation for Charity Associations, which fights torture at home and abroad and works to promote human rights. He appears to be committed to high principles, even though real democratic change might put him out of the political picture. One of Seif's advisers told me that Seif would rather be the first elected head of the Libyan state than the second unelected leader of the revolution, but that he could go either way.

"Qaddafi claims that he is not the Leader, and Seif claims that he is the opposition, and they are both liars," Maitre Saad Djebbar, an Algerian lawyer who has worked on Libyan affairs for many years, said. Others see a personal agenda. "The Leader is a Bedouin from the desert and simply wants power and control—he is content to rule a wrecked country," the expatriate poet Khaled Mattawa told me. "But his sons are urban; they have travelled, studied abroad, learned sophistication. They go falconing in the Gulf states with the princes of royal families. They want to drive BMWs and rule a country that is accepted in the panoply of nations."

Seif's office is in Tripoli's tallest and fanciest tower—a hulking glass building topped by a gigantic circular apparatus that was intended as a revolving restaurant but neither revolves nor serves food. The foundation's suite is modest and sparsely furnished, and its staff members appear to be the busiest people in Libya, bent over computers, talking simultaneously on several phones, surrounded by papers. The walls are covered with posters for Seif's causes: one shows a man with his face wrapped in barbed wire, with the caption "International Campaign Against Torture: Middle East Area: Libya the First Station."

Seif, however, is usually elsewhere, and I met him last fall in Montreal, where he was opening an exhibition of his own paintings. These are rendered with expressionist enthusiasm in a variety of familiar styles and may feature images of horses, desert skies, the face of the Leader, or one of Seif's beloved pet Bengal tigers. Seif has bestowed his pictures on urban centers from Paris to Tokyo, where they have been received as documentary curiosities, like the personal effects of the last tsarina. Whether the primary function of these exhibitions is political, social, or artistic is never discussed.

We met at the Sofitel, which had given over the top floor to Seif and his entourage. Various deputies and advisers had gathered there in a large, nondescript suite. When he came in, everyone sat up straighter. Though Seif tries to be intimate and casual, his presence, even his name, makes other people formal. He wore a well-cut suit, and moved with grace. At thirty-three, he is good-looking and hip, with a shaved head, and he speaks intelligently, though with the vagueness about self and reality that afflicts royalty and child stars, and that comes from never having seen oneself accurately reflected in the eyes of others. He has more than a trace of the paternal charisma, but it has yet to harden into genius, incoherence, or his father's trademark combination of the two.

When I asked why Libya was not proceeding more rapidly toward democratic reform, Seif said, "In the last fifty years, we have moved from being a tribal society to being a colony to being a kingdom to being a revolutionary republic. Be patient." (After centuries of Ottoman rule, Libya was occupied by Italy between 1912 and 1943.) But, like his father, Seif relishes extravagant pronouncements, and soon proposed that Libya give up its entire military.

"The whole faith and strategy has changed," he said, looking to his courtiers for nods of agreement. "Why should we have an army? If Egypt invades Libya,



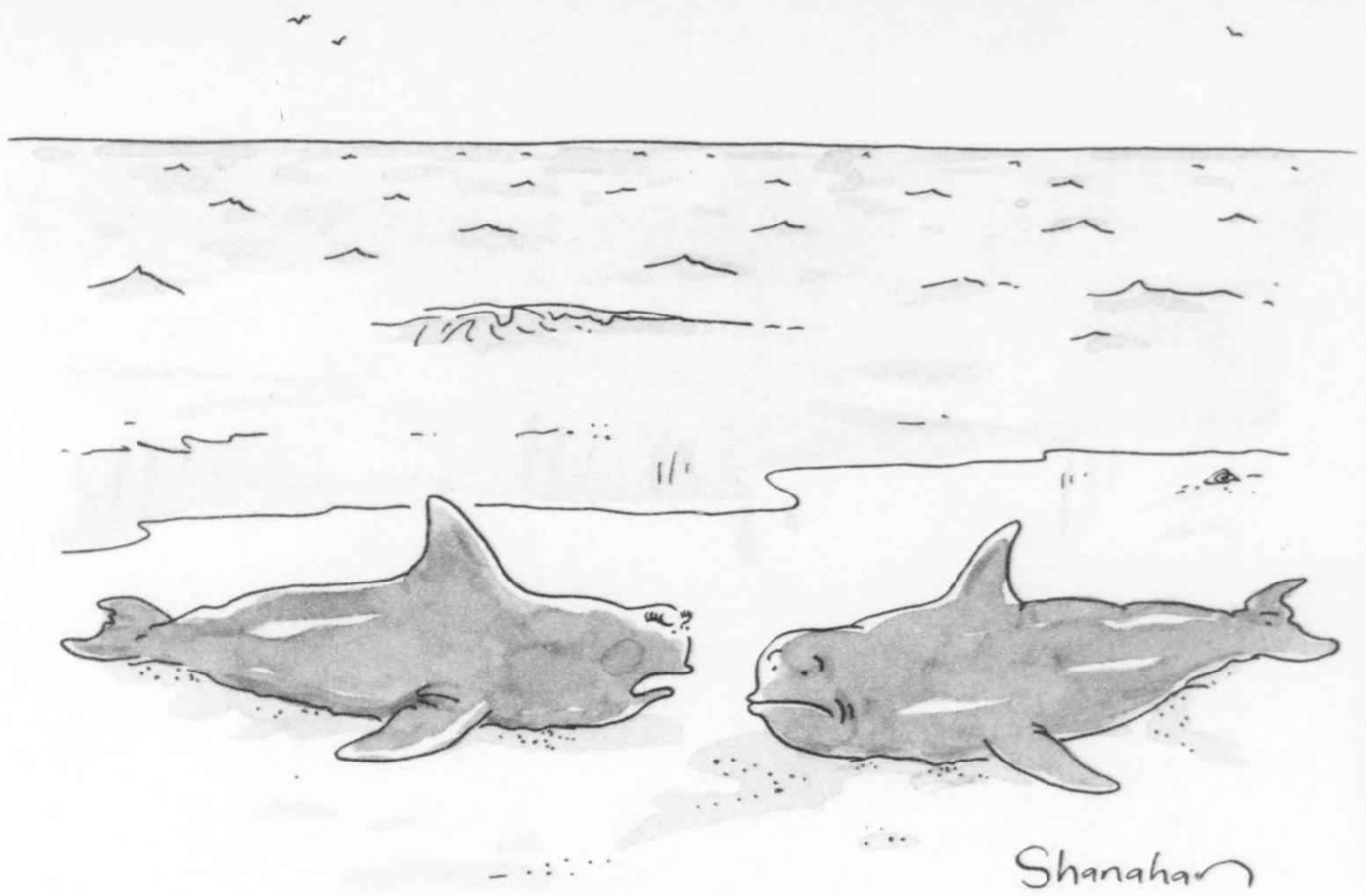
"I'd like to get back to doing less for charity."

the Americans are going to stop it." During the Reagan years, he said, Libya was "expecting America to attack us anytime—our whole defensive strategy was how to deal with the Americans. We used terrorism and violence because these are the weapons of the weak against the strong. I don't have missiles to hit your cities, so I send someone to attack your interests. Now that we have peace with America, there is no need for terrorism, no need for nuclear bombs." Seif dismissed any comparison between the terrorism that Libya had sponsored in the past and the kind associated with Al Qaeda. "We used terrorism as tactics, for bargaining," he told me. "Mr. bin Laden uses it for strategy. We wanted to gain more leverage. He wants to kill people. Fundamentalism in Libya—it's always there, though not so strong as before, in the nineteen-nineties." Seif did not mention that in the nineteen-nineties his father's security forces routinely imprisoned fundamentalists.

Religious extremists had "created a lot of problems in Libya," Seif said. "They tried to destabilize the whole society. But not anymore. Now they are weak. But the threat is there, the potential is there." Seif noted that three Libyans had been involved in suicide bombings in Iraq last year. "They are being recruited by Zarqawi," he said, "who wants to create cells and attack American interests in Libya—oil companies, American schools, and so on. It's a disaster for us, because we *want* the American presence. There aren't so many of these extremists, several dozen, but even that in a country like Libya is a big headache." As for American security interests, he said, "We are already on your side, helping the American war on terror. It's happening, and it's going to happen."

Seif's rhetoric may beguile his Western admirers, but to the hard-liners in Libya's government it remains anathema. Seif, for his part, refused to acknowledge the substantial Libyan opposition to reform: "Maybe there are three or four citizens like this. Not more."

That was the most outlandish of his declarations. An American congressional aide who has worked closely with Seif accurately described him as "eighty per cent sophisticated." Seif's prospects, of course, will depend not upon his profile abroad but upon his ability to orchestrate support at home. Despite his political presence in Libya, his father's legacy will not be easily assumed; there are too many competitors for the next generation of power. But Seif is a canny fellow. "The Principal knows that one secret of leadership is to see where the parade is headed," one of his advisers told me, "and rush in front of it before it gets there."



"Any other bright ideas, Mr. Sex-on-the-Beach?"

• •

In 2004, two decades of American sanctions came to an end, after Libya had agreed to pay compensation for the victims of Lockerbie and renounced weapons of mass destruction. (Seif, who has spent a good deal of energy trying to rehabilitate Libya's image in the world, was involved in both negotiations.) Since then, the great question in Tripoli has been how deeply reform will penetrate a country that has been largely isolated for decades. Within the government, the fighting is bitter. The National Oil Company (reformist) and the Department of Energy (hard-line) are in constant conflict, as are the Ministry of Economics (reformist) and the Libyan Central Bank (hard-line). Since Qaddafi makes the ultimate ideological decisions, the spectacle calls to mind the worst aspects of multiparty democracy, albeit without parties or democracy.

According to Ali Abdullatif Ahmida, a Libyan expatriate who chairs the political-science department at the University of New England, in Maine, Qaddafi "plays his biological son Seif el-Islam against his ideological son Ahmed Ibrahim." Ibrahim is the deputy speaker of the General People's Congress, and the most public of an influential conservative triumvirate that also includes Musa Kusa, the head of Libyan intelligence, and Abdallah Senoussi, who oversees internal security. (About a year ago, Ibrahim declared that the United States, under orders from President Bush, was "forging the Koran and distributing the false copies among Americans in order to tarnish the image of Muslims and Islam.")

The infighting helps Qaddafi moderate the pace of change. "He thinks reform should come 'like a thief in the night,' so that it is hardly noticed," one family friend said. In some areas—notably with respect to civil liberties and economic restructuring—the rate of change is glacial. "What's the hurry?" A. M. Zlitni, the country's chief economic planner, asked when we spoke, with the careful blandness that Libyan officials affect in order to avoid affiliation with either camp. "We are not desperate." In other areas, change has occurred with startling speed. Although the country is still afflicted with the legacies of its two colonial powers—Byzantine corruption and Italian bureaucracy—it has opened up to international trade with dispatch: there are foreign goods for sale, even if few Libyans can afford them. You can buy



"Here's to old friends who are hard to shake."

• •

Adidas sneakers and Italian shoes, along with local knockoffs like a brand of toothpaste called Crust. In bookstores once devoid of English-language titles, you can find editions of "Billy Budd," "Invisible Man," and the works of Congreve. The private sector is back in force. Hundreds of channels are available on satellite TV, and Internet cafés are crowded. One senior official said, "A year ago, it was a sin to mention the World Trade Organization. Now we want to become a member." The editor of *Al Shams* (the *Sun*), a leading state-owned paper, described a newsroom policy shift from "expressing struggle against the West to advocating working with foreign countries."

"Qaddafi understands the tribal structure and has the ability to play one person against another, one group against another," one Libyan official explained. "He's a strategic genius. He is doing with the reformers and hard-liners what he has done with these tribes, playing the pro-Western element against the anti-Western element."

For a foreigner, there's no better illustration of the push-me, pull-you quality of the new Libya than the process of getting in. An application for a journalist's visa that I submitted last year went nowhere, although the Libyan representative to the United States assured me steadily for five months that the visa was nearly ready. (When I met with Seif in Montreal, he volunteered to take care of it, with no evident results.) Next, I joined an international party of archeologists who had been promised entry—but as we were waiting to board a Libyan Arab Airlines flight in Rome we were abruptly denied access to the plane. One source in the Libyan government told us that the Ministry of Immigration had moved recently and our papers had been mislaid. Another said that the head of the visa section had sabotaged files during the move. A third said that the story about the move had been floated as an alibi; the Leader had decided not to let in any Americans. Indeed, a tour group from the Metropolitan Museum arrived by ship in Tripoli in October and was not allowed to dock; the next month, five other ships met the same fate.

As a dual national, I applied using my British passport, again as a member of the archeologists' delegation, and, as advised, wrote on the form that I was Anglican. Finally, I received a document marked "sixty-day invitation," though no one knew whether that was sixty days from the date of the letter, sixty days from the date the visa was stamped in my passport, or sixty days from the date I entered the country. I called the Libyan consulate in London every day about my visa. In the morning, there was no answer. In the afternoon, someone answered and said that consular services were available only in the morning. I flew to London, where the consular officer explained that I could enter Libya anytime in the next forty-five days for a stay of up to ninety days. I arrived at Tripoli airport in mid-November. Through a Libyan travel agency, I had arranged for a car at the airport, and, just as I'd joined a nearly motionless line for immigration, a man from the agency came by with my name on a placard, and walked me straight through; the immigration officer never even looked to see whether I matched my passport. "Your visa expired—you were supposed to enter within thirty days," the man said. "Fortunately, the guy at immigration is a friend, so it wasn't a problem."

It was an apt introduction to a country where the law is always open to interpretation and personal connections are the principal currency. I was in as a British Christian archeologist rather than as an American Jewish journalist, but I was in. I promptly went to the International Press Office, where I declared my journalistic purpose, and where the man in charge lectured me for thirty minutes about why Libyan democracy was better than American, the terrible untruths that American journalists had heaped on Libya, and America's imperialist tendencies. Then he volunteered that the officials I'd wanted to speak to would be too busy for me, and that I shouldn't have come.

This was standard procedure. Last April, after months of planning, the Council on Foreign Relations, in New York, sent an august delegation—including David Rockefeller, Peter G. Peterson, Alan Patricof, and Leonard Lauder—to Libya, with appointments to meet both Muammar and Seif Qaddafi. After they arrived, they were told that the Leader was unavailable and that the Principal had made a scheduling error and was on his way to Japan.

Officials in Libya seldom say no and seldom say yes. Libyans use a popular Arab term: I.B.M., which stands for *Inshallah*, *bokra*, *moumken*, or "With the will of God, tomorrow, maybe." All plans are provisional, even at the highest levels of government. You can see the

head of the National Oil Company with an hour's notice; you can also spend weeks preparing for an appointment that never materializes.

I requested a meeting with the Prime Minister, Shukri Ghanem, before I went to Libya and every day for three weeks while I was in Tripoli. On my last day, I was in the middle of a meeting when my cell phone rang. "The Prime Minister will see you," someone said. I said that I hoped he could see me before I had to leave. "The Prime Minister will see you *now*," he replied. "Oh, O.K., I'll get my tape recorder—" I began. "He will see you *right now*," the voice interrupted. "Where are you?" I gave the address. "A car will pick you up in three minutes."

The drive to the Prime Minister's office was terrifying, as most Libyan driving is. Tripolitans seem to think that traffic lights are just festive bits of colored glass strewn randomly along the roads, and they rebel against tightly regulated lives by ignoring all driving rules, blithely heading into opposing traffic on the far side of a two-way road, turning abruptly across five lanes of streaming cars. "No shortage of organs for transplant here!" a Libyan acquaintance remarked during one excursion. The driver dropped me at the wrong building. It took two hours of calls and confusion to reach my destination.

Dr. Shukri, as he is called by those close to him and by those who pretend to be close to him—he has a Ph.D. in international relations from the Fletcher School, at Tufts—has a certain portly grandeur. With a neat mustache and a well-tailored suit, he exuded an effortless cosmopolitanism that seemed more conducive to facilitating Libya's reëntry into the world than to winning over the hardline elements at home. When I arrived, he was sitting on a gilded sofa in a room furnished with Arabic reimaginings of Louis XVI furniture, before many trays of pastries and glasses of the inevitable mint tea. In the Libyan empire of obliquity, his clarity was refreshing, and his teasing irony seemed to acknowledge the absurdity of Libyan doubletalk.

I mentioned that many of his colleagues saw no need to hasten the pace of reform. This was clearly not his view. "Sometimes you have to be hard on those you love," he said. "You wake your sleeping child so that he can get to school. Being a little harsh, not seeking too much popularity, is a better way." He spoke of the need for pro-business measures that would reduce bureaucratic impediments and rampant corruption. "The corruption is tied to shortages, inefficiency, and unemployment," the Prime Minister said. "Cutting red tape—there is resistance to it. There is some resistance in good faith and some in bad faith."

Nor was he inclined to defer to the regime's egalitarian rhetoric. "Those who can excel should get more—having a few rich people can build a whole country," he said. Qaddafi's "Green Book" decreed that people should be "partners, not wage workers," but it is not easy to make everyone a partner, the Prime Minister observed. "People don't want to find jobs. They want the government to find them jobs. It's not viable."

The civil service, which employs about twenty per cent of Libyans, is vastly oversubscribed; the National Oil Company, with a staff of forty thousand, has perhaps twice the employees it needs. Though salaries are capped, many people are paid for multiple jobs, and, if those jobs are overseen by members of their tribe, failure to show up is never questioned. On the other hand, because food is heavily subsidized, people can get by on very little money, enabling them to refuse jobs they consider beneath them. Heavy labor is done by sub-Saharan Africans, and slightly more skilled work by Egyptians.

"We have a paradoxical economy, in which we have many unemployed Libyans"—the official unemployment rate is almost thirty per cent—"and two million foreigners working," Ghanem said. "This mismatch is catastrophic." The combination of an imported workforce with high domestic unemployment is typical of oil-rich nations, but the problem is especially urgent in Libya because its population is growing rapidly—it is not unusual to meet people with fourteen children in a single marriage. Roughly half the population is under the age of fifteen.



On the subject of Islamic militants, the Prime Minister's views were close to those expressed by both the Leader and the Principal. "Radical fundamentalism is like cancer," he said. "It can strike anyplace, anytime, and you can't predict it, and, by the time you discover it, it has usually spread too far to be contained. Is there such fundamentalism here? I honestly don't think so. But it could be hatching quietly, unseen by us all."

The predominant form of Islam in Libya is Sunni Maliki, a relatively supple creed that is remote from the fundamentalisms espoused by the jihadis. Some Libyans, though, have pointed out that conditions that seem to have bred terrorism elsewhere—prosperity without employment and a large population of young people with no sense of purpose—currently prevail in the country.

The Prime Minister was more circumspect on the prospects for U.S.-Libyan diplomacy. "We would like a relationship, yes, but we do not want to get into bed with an elephant," he said, laughing, and spreading his hands wide in a gesture of innocence. "It could roll over in the night and crush us."

I mentioned public statements he'd made about being unable to bring about reform when he had to work with a Cabinet assembled by Qaddafi, and asked about the constraints on his authority. Ghanem assumed the air of one confiding a great personal truth. "My ministers are like my brothers," he said, wrapping his hands around his knee. "I didn't choose them." He paused and added with a smile, "My father chose them."

At the center of Tripoli lies Green Square. Now mostly a parking lot, it's one of those vast anonymous spaces which military regimes favor. East of Green Square lie the surviving Italian colonial buildings. To the west is the old city, a warren of tiny streets and shops, crowned by the ancient Red Castle, which houses a distinguished archeological museum. In front is an esplanade beside the sea. The modern city stretches out in all other directions, with some neighborhoods of private villas, and many of Soviet-style housing developments; it reflects both the optimism and the shod-

diness of more recent Libyan history.

I was invited, one day, to the opening of a special exhibition on volunteerism, in a tent in Green Square. Addressing a gathering of a hundred or so people, an official said that tribute had to be paid to the greatest volunteer of all: Colonel Muammar Qaddafi, who, unlike the American President, does not draw a salary but out of "love and honesty" graciously consents to rule. "There is one God, and Muhammad is his prophet, and Qaddafi is his modern incarnation!" someone in the crowd cried. Such public avowals are of a piece with the billboards you find throughout Libya, showing a beaming Qaddafi, as triumphant and windswept as Clark Gable. Those billboards are the first thing a visitor notices; the second is the ubiquity of litter. Wherever you go—including even the spectacular ruins of the Hellenistic and Roman cities of Cyrene, Sabratha, and Leptis Magna—you see plastic bottles, bags, paper, chicken bones, cans: a film covering the landscape. "It's how the people of Libya piss on the system," one Libyan academic told me. "The Leader doesn't actually care about this country. Why should we keep it beautiful for him?" It is the most arresting of the country's many paradoxes: Libyans who hate the regime but love Libya cannot tell where one ends and the other begins. You can take this as a tribute, by way of inversion, to the state ideology.

In the early seventies, the Leader, disappointed by his countrymen's lack of revolutionary fervor, withdrew to the desert to write "The Green Book," in which he advanced his Third Universal Theory as superior to capitalism and Communism. Individuals were to own their homes; other land was to be held in common. In 1977, he issued a Declaration of the Establishment of the People's Authority, launching the Jamahiriya, or "state of the masses," and the Libyan system of "direct democracy," in which the country is "ruled" by the People's Congresses: what "The Green Book" calls the "supervision of the government by the people." The Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya—memorably abbreviated as "the Great SPLAJ"—was born."The Green Book" proposes that, to avoid internal disputes, every nation should have one religion, but it makes no mention of Islam. Qaddafi claimed that his manifesto enshrined the basic tenets of the Koran (freely equating, for instance, the Koranic notion of alms-giving with his redistributive social-welfare policies), and that it therefore had the status of Sharia. His relation to Islam has two aspects: he draws upon it to buttress his authority, but he is hostile to the Islamists because he will countenance no rivals to that authority.

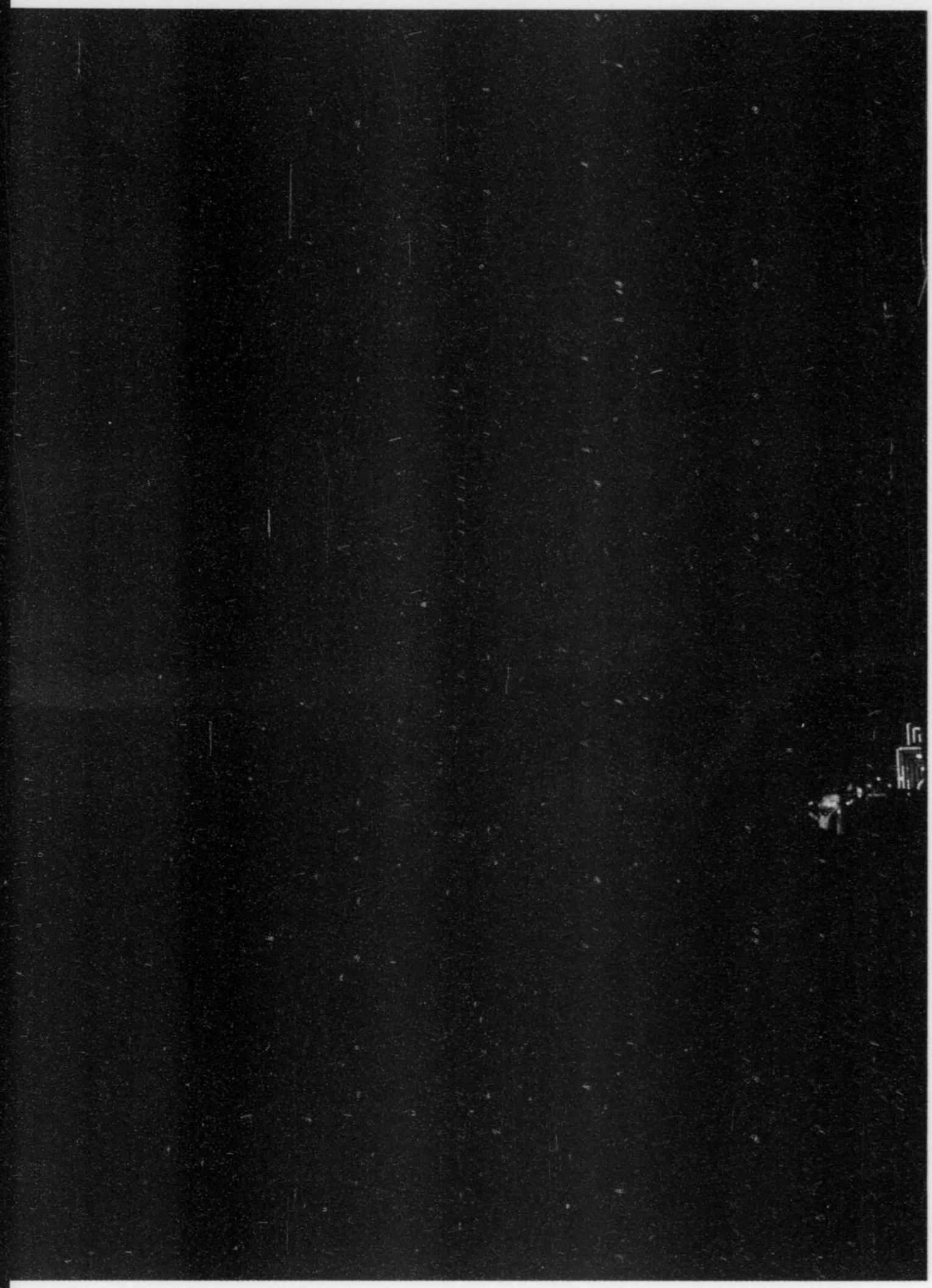
The two radical decades that ensued—televised public hangings, burnings of Western books and musical instruments, the sudden prohibition of private enterprise, intense anti-Zionism, official solidarity with terrorist and guerrilla groups—met with sharp international disapprobation. Libya's rogue status allowed Qaddafi to consolidate power and play protector of his besieged population, a role in which he excels.

One Libyan in early middle age who had lived in the United States until September 11th, and who missed America, spoke of what was wrong with Qaddafi's Libya, and then said, "But I wouldn't be where I am without the revolution. They paid for my education, sent me to America, and gave me a life I wouldn't have dreamed of without them."

In part, that's a reflection of the fact that pre-revolutionary Libya was poor.



"'Democracy' here is a word that means the Leadership considers, discusses, and sometimes accepts



other people's ideas," Libya's chief economic planner says. Photograph by Jan Van de Vel.

REPORTERS/REDUX

The Jamahiriya benefitted from the dramatic increase in petroleum prices that began in the seventies, and from the more aggressive revenue-sharing deals it imposed on foreign oil companies, so that oil earnings in the mid-seventies were roughly ten times what they had been in the mid-sixties. Oil money made possible major investments in education and infrastructure. The literacy rate in Libya has risen from about twenty per cent, before Qaddafi came to power, to eighty-two per cent. The average life expectancy has risen from forty-four to seventy-four. More than eighty thousand kilometres of roads have been built. Electricity has become nearly universal.

And Qaddafi has become, for most Libyans, simply a fact of life. Of Libya's nearly six million citizens, more than seventy per cent have been born since he came to power. During that period, the cult of personality has sparked and dimmed, in a way that has a certain congruence with the phases of Soviet leadership: a heady moment of Leninist-style revolution when many people believed in the ideals; a Stalinist period of cruel repression and deliberate violence; a long Khrushchev period of mild thaw; and now a Brezhnev-style period of corruption, chaos, and factionalism. Many of Seif Qaddafi's admirers hope that he will prove to be the reforming Gorbachev of the story.

The fact that an essentially repressive society can be characterized as being in the midst of reform reflects just how grim things used to be there. In Tripoli, I heard stories about life inside prison from many people whose only offense against the Jamahiriya was to be critical of it. In 2002, a former government official who publicly called for free elections and a free press was jailed; he was released in early 2004—only to be sent back to prison two weeks later for criticizing the regime to foreign reporters. There is no opposition press; an Internet journalist who had published stories critical of the government spent several months in prison last year on trumped-up charges. There are "social rehabilitation" facilities—effectively, detention centers—supposedly for the protection of women who have broken the laws against adultery and fornication, some of whom are in fact rape victims rejected by their families. A woman in these compounds can leave only if a male relative or fiancé takes her into his custody.

More widely covered is the case of five Bulgarian nurses who were accused in 1999 of deliberately infecting four hundred and twenty-six children in a Benghazi hospital with H.I.V. The nurses were tortured until they confessed, and were sentenced to death in May, 2004. Among people outside Libya, the accusations seem bizarre and concocted; among most Libyans, it's taken for granted that the children were deliberately infected and that the Bulgarians are the likeliest culprits. (Whereas Western investigators have blamed the infections on poor sanitation, a Libyan doctor close to the case maintains that only children on the ward where the convicted nurses worked were infected, and that, when the Bulgarians left, the infections ceased, despite the fact that sanitary conditions, in all the wards, remain far from ideal.) Seif has said that the convictions were unjust, a brave stand given how important it is that he not appear to be capitulating to Western pressure. "Sure, the Big Guy let Seif say the nurses were innocent—to see how it would play," a junior government official explained. "And it played badly." A few months later, Qaddafi reaffirmed

the hard line, declaring that the infections were caused by "an organization aiming to destroy Libya." Negotiations with the Bulgarians are ongoing, however, and Libya's supreme court has granted the defendants a new trial, which is to begin in May.

Qaddafi is no Saddam Hussein or Idi Amin. He has been brutal and capricious, but he has not killed a large part of his own population. It is illegal to slander the Leader, and Law 71 makes a capital offense of any group activity opposed to the revolution, but this has been less strictly enforced lately. Libya has signed the U.N. Convention Against Torture, and the Minister of Justice has said that he will bring Libyan law in line with international human-rights standards. Some of this is window dressing. "They closed the People's Prisons, where all our political prisoners were," one Tripolitan lawyer told me. "And what happened? The political prisoners got reassigned to other prisons." The Foreign Minister, Abdurrahman Shalgham, told me with pride that four hundred policemen had been arrested for human-rights abuses—then admitted that none have been found guilty.

Last year, Omar Alkikli, a highly regarded fiction writer who was a political prisoner for ten years in the seventies and early eighties, sued the Libyan government for excluding former prisoners from the Libyan Writers' League. "I lost, and I knew I would lose," he said. "But I made my point." A medical student at Tripoli's Al-Fateh University told me, "O.K., they've fixed maybe four per cent of our serious problems, but I guess it's something." An official in Benghazi said, "The laws that were made of stone are now made of wood."

Few Libyans are inclined to test what civil liberties they may have. Giumma Attiga, a human-rights lawyer and one of the founders of Seif's Qaddafi Foundation, said, "The fear is very intense, very deeply ingrained. The highest official could tell people to speak freely and openly, with every guarantee that it was safe to do so, and the words would stick in their throats." In fact, it is a felony entailing a three-year prison sentence to discuss national policy with a foreigner, and, although such offenses have been less frequently prosecuted recently, most Libyans speak of such matters anxiously. The atmosphere is late Soviet: forbidding, secretive, careful, albeit not generally lethal. I was asked not to mention names on the phone or in e-mail. Several people asked me not to write down their phone numbers, lest my notebook be "lost." "I am speaking from my heart," an outspoken woman told me. "Carry it in your head."

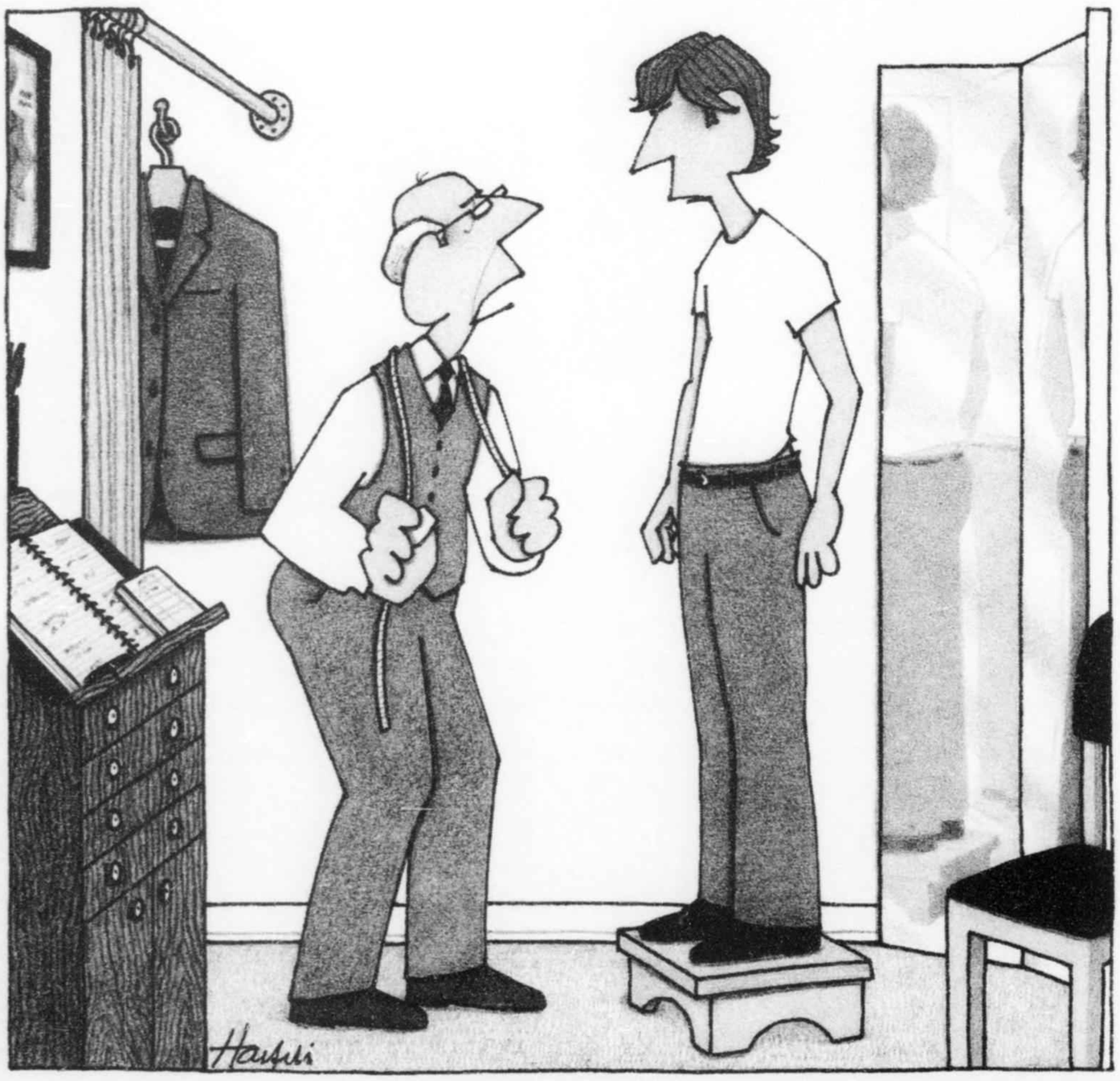
Surveillance is pervasive in Libya. I was warned that the cabdriver who had been helping me get around was reporting to the security services, and I understood that my cell-phone conversations were not to be considered private. All the same, I was surprised when a press officer questioned me about shades of meaning in a personal e-mail I had written home a few days earlier. Someone from Seif's office called me indignantly one day and said, "You were heard in the hotel unfairly saying that you were unhappy with the help we've given you."

One night, I had dinner with a bureaucrat who complained about local politics. He told me that he had been questioned at length after a recent conversation with a foreigner. "Our interrogators were trained in brutality, cruelty, and sneakiness by the best—people from Cuba, East Germany, Syria, Lebanon, and Egypt," he explained.

When we had finished our meal, the waiter cleared all our dishes, then came back and redeposited the sugar bowl.

"What's with the sugar?" I asked the bureaucrat.

He gave me a bleakly mischievous look. "The other one ran out of tape," he replied.



"And the waistband of your underpants: showing or not showing?"

For the most part, when Libyans talk of democratization they envision not elections but more personal privacy, greater educational opportunities, and expanded freedom of speech. " 'Democracy' here is a word that means the Leadership considers, discusses, and sometimes accepts other people's ideas," Zlitni, the chief economic planner, said.

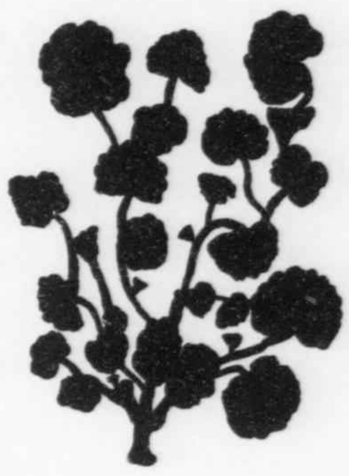
Qaddafi views electoral democracy as the tyranny of fifty-one per cent—he has memorably written that citizens of Western-style democracies "move silently toward the ballot box, like the beads in a rosary, to cast their votes in the same way that they throw rubbish in dustbins"—and recently announced, not for the first time, that Western democracy was "farcical" and "fake." "There is no state with a

democracy except Libya on the whole planet," he declared. "Countries like the United States, India, China, the Russian Federation are in bad need of this Jamahiriya system." For most Libyan pragmatists, political reform is about changing the mechanisms of Qaddafi's control, not about relaxing it. One government minister told me, "In most European countries, there are many parties, and in the U.S. only two. So here it is only one! It's not such a big difference." Even reformers seldom express much enthusiasm for electoral democracy. Most aspire to a sort of modernizing autocracy: their ideal is closer to Atatürk or the Shah of Iran than to Václav Havel. "There are no democracies in the Arab world," said Ahmed Swehli, a young businessman who had recently moved back to Libya from England, where he was educated. "We aren't going to go first. What we need is a really good dictator, and I think Seif al-Islam might be just that. And maybe he'll be that and be elected, too, though I can't think why he'd bother." Others are less cynical about electoral democracy as an ideal, but no more hopeful about its implementation.

One reason that many Libyans are leery of elections is their fear that, in a highly tribal society, the larger tribes would win control and everyone else would be squeezed out. Less intimate and specific than families, tribes are a second layer of identity, stronger for some people than for others. Especially among the less well educated, groups based on kinship and descent—tribes and their various subsets (subtribes, clans)—provide both a social network and a safety net: members of your group will get you a job or help you if you have money problems or mourn you when you die even if they didn't like you much while you were alive. "Better Qaddafi, a tough leader from a minor tribe, than one who represents his own tribe a hundred per cent," one Libyan intellectual said.

Meanwhile, the Basic People's Congresses provide at least a theatre of political participation. They are open to any Libyan over eighteen, and meet for a week or two, four times a year. In principle, you can discuss anything at a Congress, though an agenda is set from above. There are four hundred and sixty-eight Basic People's Congresses, and, when in session, they meet daily. Afterward, a brief report is sent from each Congress to a Central Committee. (Libya is committee heaven—there is even a National Committee for Committees.) A typical Congress includes about three hundred members; most educated people who are not trying to climb the political ladder do not go. The format is town hall with touches of Quaker meeting and Alcoholics Anonymous.

The Basic People's Congresses were in session while I was in Libya, and I repeatedly asked, in vain, to visit one. Then, by chance, I mentioned my interest during an interview with the director of the National Supply Corporation (NASCO), which administers the subsidies that are a mainstay of the Libyan economy; he said that there would be a meeting at its offices at noon and invited me to attend.



I had hoped to sit quietly in a corner; instead, I was escorted to the front row, and someone scurried in to serve me tea. A voluble woman made an impassioned speech asking why Libya imported tomato paste when there was enough water to grow tomatoes. A discussion of tomatoes ensued. The officials introduced issues of economic reform. My interest was more in the session's dynamic than in its content, so I was paying scant attention when my translator shifted from phrases such as "openly traded equities" and "reallocation of subsidy funds" to something about how "we are lucky to host a prominent American journalist"; and just as I was registering this new topic he said, "who will now address the Congress on the future of the U.S.-Libya relationship," and I was handed a microphone.

While each of my sentences was being translated into Arabic, I had a fortunate pause in which to think of the next, and so I gave a warm and heartfelt speech, saying that I hoped we would soon see full diplomatic relations between our countries, that I had loved meeting the Libyans and hoped they would feel similarly welcome in the United States, and so on. I received a protracted ovation, and thereafter every speaker prefaced his remarks with kind words about me. I was just settling into the comfortable glow of new celebrity when my translator said, "We have to go now," and took me outside, where three journalists from *Al Shams* wanted to interview me. We wandered through fairly predictable territory and then they asked my opinion of Qaddafi's efforts to broker peace in Darfur. (Qaddafi has publicly met both with rebel leaders and with the Sudanese President, Omar al-Bashir.) I said that anyone working on that situation deserved support. I also said that Qaddafi's opposition to terrorism would appeal to Americans.

The following day, *Al Shams* ran a nearly full-page story with three large photographs of me at the Congress, under a double-banner headline that said, "THE WORLD NEEDS A MAN LIKE MUAMMAR QADDAFI TO ACHIEVE GLOBAL PEACE," and, below, "THE AMERICAN PEOPLE APPRECIATE MUAMMAR QADDAFI'S ROLE IN EASING THE PAIN INFLICTED BY SEPTEMBER 11TH." The morning that the piece was published, I received my long-awaited invitation to the Qaddafi compound.

A minder from the International Press Office called to tell me that I was in for "a surprise" and that he would pick me up at my hotel at 4 P.M. At the International Press Office, near Green Square, I joined some twenty other "international" journalists, all from Arab countries, and talked about why Qaddafi might want to see us. I was solemnly told that one never knows what the Leader wants: "One comes when asked." Finally, at about six-forty-five, a minibus appeared; we drove twenty minutes and then stopped by a vast concrete wall, at the perimeter of Qaddafi's compound. The car was searched and we were searched, and then we drove through a slalom course of obstacles and another security gantlet before being ushered into an immense tent with a lavish buffet. Within the next half hour, four hundred or so people piled in, many in traditional robes.

One of my new journalist friends said that "the event" was about to start, and so we went over a knoll and into a polygonal structure with exposed rafters, which bore some resemblance to a rec hall at a summer camp. Hanging on the walls were sayings of the Leader's in huge Arabic and English type ("The United States of Africa is Africa's Future" and

"One African Identity"), flanked by poster-size photographs of Rosa Parks. It was the fiftieth anniversary of her refusal to move to the back of the bus, and that, we finally understood, was the occasion for the gathering. At the front of the room, on a dais, stood a gigantic Naugahyde armchair, with three microphones beside it. A man in medical scrubs came out and swabbed down the chair and the microphones with gauze pads, to protect the Leader from infection.

Some African-Americans were seated in the row in front of us. I introduced myself to one, and he dourly explained that he was Minister Abdul Akbar Muhammad, the international representative of the Reverend Louis Farrakhan, who had been in Tripoli earlier but had returned abruptly to the United States for health reasons. Qaddafi has long been one of the Nation of Islam's funders.

Then the speeches began. The speakers stood at a lectern off to the side, keeping the dais free for Qaddafi. The first speaker was a former Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs. "We Libyans cannot accept the prejudice of Americans against Africans," he began, to applause. "Those who were seven or eight when Rosa Parks was being shoved to the back of the bus are now fifty-seven or fifty-eight, and are leaders of the United States. They still carry this mentality. The new generation inherited this, and it is still going on." He worked himself up into rhetorical paroxysms, as though Jim Crow laws were still in effect. "We must fight the hatred of America for Africa," he said.

When he stepped down, Abdul Akbar Muhammad took the lectern to speak about American racial injustice, mentioning that, under segregation, blacks and whites had had to use separate *hammams*, or public steam baths, a detail previously lost on me. "We cannot count on the Zionist-controlled American media to tell our story," he said. "Zionists in the U.S. won't show how the leader of the Al-Fateh revolution is in sympathy with us and us with him."

The Leader never emerged, apparently having decided that, if Farrakhan wasn't making an appearance, he wouldn't, either. Still, the event reflected his fixation on establishing Libya as more an African than an Arab country (even though most Libyans are contemptuous of black people, who do the manual labor that Libyans disdain, and who are blamed for all crime). Qaddafi's early dream of pan-Arab unity fizzled, and when other Arab nations observed the U.N. sanctions in the nineteen-nineties, while many African countries did not, he turned southward. By African standards, Libya seems wealthy and functional; Arab nations, even North African neighbors, have little affection for Qaddafi. He has backed groups opposed to the Saudi regime, and Libyan agents were implicated in a 2003 plot to assassinate the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia. (Seif suggested to me that the Libyans involved were hoping, in his coy phrase, for "regime change" but didn't necessarily know that the agenda of their Saudi partners included physical attacks on the royal family.)

When Qaddafi went to Algeria recently, a local cartoon showed a tent pitched at the Algiers Sheraton; Qaddafi sleeps in a tent, true to his Bedouin roots. One man is saying, "Let me in, I want to go to the circus!" The other says, "There's no circus here." The first rejoins, "But I was told that there's a clown in that tent!"

For modernizing reformers such as Shukri Ghanem, Libya's major problems are poor management and isolation, and the solutions are better management and global integration. "The world has changed," as Ghanem put it, "and, like other socialist states, we recognized that we had limited means and unlimited needs." The Internet and satellite television—the dishes are so plentiful that landing in Tripoli is like descending on a

AFTER THE STORM

We used to call what ruined us the storm,
Though that suggests we could have seen it break
And barred the door. But it was multiform:
It got inside, it made a teacup shake,
It sought us out where we lay half awake.
Now it was here, what would it make us do?
When we were thrown together, then we knew.

It sometimes hit us even while we fought.
One sideways look, and soon the skin and hair
Were flying in a different sense. I thought
The consequences too extreme to bear:
This was the lion's den, the dragon's lair,
The storm. You used to say you felt the same,
When you could speak again, and spoke my name.

When the storm raged, I tried to hide in you.
Your only refuge was to cling to me.
The way we rode it out was why it grew
In fury, until you began to see
Your only chance to live was liberty.
So now you have the life you should have had,
And I am glad. No, I am very glad.

Visiting you, I see that it was worth
My loss. A family picnic on the beach.
Your beauty, still like nothing else on earth,
Here shows its purpose. No regrets. Yet each
Of us is well aware that your sweet speech
Is only tender, my glance merely warm.
This is just love. It's nothing like the storm.

—*Clive James*

migrant storm of white moths—have brought further pressure for reform, by making that larger world visible. "The change has been inevitable since Oprah came on our televisions," a leading Libyan poet said to me ruefully. What Libyans mainly relate to, though, is the standard of living in other oil-rich states, as displayed on Al Jazeera and other Arab channels. Libya seems dusty and poor in comparison, and they wonder why.

Earnings from oil exports account for about eighty per cent of the national budget. In the heyday of Libyan oil production, the country produced three million barrels a day. That number has dropped to 1.7 million, but the National Oil Company plans to get it back up by 2010. Libyan oil is of high quality, low in sulfur and easily refined. Libya has proven reserves of about forty billion barrels of oil, the largest in Africa, and may have as much as a hundred billion. Several major oil companies have ranked Libya as the best exploration opportunity in the world; the Libyans have lacked the resources to conduct extensive explorations themselves. In the fifteen years since foreign companies left, Libya's resources have been seriously mismanaged. "If Dr. No were trying to muck up the Libyan oil economy," a British adviser to the Libyan government said, "there is nothing he could think of that hasn't been done."

Still, oil money continues to make possible Libya's subsidy programs—the socialism in the Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya concept. NASCO pays twenty-six dinars for a hundred-and-ten-pound bag of flour and sells it to bakers for two dinars; you can buy a loaf of bread for two cents. Rice, sugar, tea, pasta, and gasoline are also sold for a fraction of their cost. Economic reform will involve scaling back these subsidies (which currently amount to about six hundred million dollars a year) without impoverishing or starving people—which is all the more difficult given that wages have been frozen since 1982. Meanwhile, there is little credit available in Libya: no Libyan-issued credit cards can be used internationally; no financial institution meets international banking standards.

"The oil absorbs all the mistakes, of which there have been many," one Libyan official told me. "The oil money means that there is stability, and it makes the country easy to run. It's this little country with all this oil—it's like if you decided you wanted to open a 7-Eleven and you had a billion dollars to back it." The oil is a curse as well as a blessing. The SPLAJ system has produced a population that is unhampered by a work ethic. Libyans work five mornings a week, and that's it—assuming that they have jobs to go to. "If they were willing to take jobs in, say, construction, there would be jobs for them," Zlitni said sternly. "But we're a rich country, so the youngsters don't want to work hard." The fact remains that economies based on resources such as oil generate few jobs unless they diversify. Many university students I spoke to were convinced that, for all the talk of reform, their talents would remain unexploited. "When I finish my M.B.A., chances are that I won't be able to get a job," one complained to me. "The whole country runs on oil, not on employment. The wealth doesn't come out of anything you can get by working hard, which I am prepared to do, but what's the point?"

"If we hadn't had oil, we would have developed," the Minister of Finance, Abdulgader Elkhair, told me. "Frankly, I'd rather we had water."

For him, and for aspirants to Libya's emerging private sector, the main outrages are represented by a sclerotic ministerial bureaucracy and its endemic corruption. The nonprofit organization Transparency International gives Libya a Corruption Perceptions Index of 2.5, ranking it lower than Zimbabwe, Vietnam, and Afghanistan. The Heritage Foundation's 2006 Index of Economic Freedom ranks Libya a hundred and fifty-second out of a hundred and fifty-seven countries evaluated. "You need twenty documents to set up a company," Elkhair told me, "and even if you bribe all the right people it will take six months."

One day, I sat in bumper-to-bumper traffic with a Libyan human-rights activist, who gestured in despair at the roadwork, and said, "They dig it up and close it and dig it up again, for enormous sums of money every time and with no other purpose. This corruption makes me late for my meetings. Necessary things are not done here, and unnecessary things are done over and over." I met the previous head of the National Cancer Institute, described to me by other doctors as the best oncological surgeon in the country, who had been removed from his job to make way for a friend of the Leader's. The displaced doctor is now working at a small clinic, without essential equipment. The administrator who served under him sells fish at a roadside stand nearby.

"Qaddafi is very happy to have corrupt people working for him," a Qaddafi insider said to me. "He'd much rather have people who want money than people who want power, and so he looks the other way and no one threatens his total control of the country." (Tribal loyalties,



"I have half an hour if you want someone to get sucked into your drama."

which intersect with simple cronyism, also play a role here: Qaddafi has filled many high-level military and security posts with members of his Bedouin tribe, the Qathathfa, along with members of a large tribe to which the Qathathfa have long been allied, the Warfala.) A Tripoli lawyer added, "Corruption is a problem, and sometimes a solution."

I attended the opening of a United Arab Emirates trade fair in Tripoli, which was held in a tent and was full of international goods presented with a smile. You could get samples of everything from medication to cookware and industrial equipment, and a select crowd of Libyans passed through with shopping bags. Many business cards were exchanged. "Look, this country is so rich you can't believe it," Ahmed Swehli, the English-educated businessman, told me, glancing around. "Right now, it's like we're the kids of the richest man in the world, and we're in rags. The corruption, the bloat, is impoverishing."

Compounding the problem of graft is a shortage of basic operational competence. I went to a session of a leadership training program in Tripoli, organized by Cambridge Energy Research Associates and the Monitor Group, two American consulting firms that are advising the Libyan government. The foreign organizers had been determined to include the people they thought had the strongest leadership potential, but some local officials wanted to choose on the basis of connections. The compromise was neither wholly meritocratic nor purely corrupt. To some in the group, capitalism was still a novelty; others were ready for corner offices at Morgan Stanley. They role-played. They made speeches through crackly microphones under gigantic portraits of the Leader. Some described sophisticated financial instruments and drew flow charts; there was talk of "leveraged buyouts" and "institutional investors" and "a zero-sum game." On the other hand, one participant, dressed in a shabby suit and a bright tie, was asked how he would fund a construction project, and replied, vaguely, "Don't banks do that?" Another was surprised to learn that international backers usually expect interest or profit-sharing in return for risking their money. Libyan business, it's clear, will be led by people of impressive competence and by people of no competence.

At the end of the conference, the prize for the best presentation went to Abdulmonem M. Sbeta, who runs a private company that provides oil and marine construction services. He was suave and cultivated, with darting, lively eyes. "We need not leaders but opposers," he said to me afterward, over an Italian dinner in the Tripoli suburbs. "Everyone here has had a good model of how to lead. But no one has ever seen how to *oppose*, and the secret to successful business is opposition. People want prosperity more than emancipation, but, in any case, social reform can be achieved only through economic development."

But does Qaddafi wish to teach his subjects to oppose him? An expat businessman told me, "Qaddafi is afraid that the emergence of a wealthy class might inspire a so-called Second Revolution." Wealth is a relative term; by world standards, the wealthy people in the country are the Qaddafis, and, if anyone else has truly substantial assets, he's smart enough not to show it. In the meantime, the Leader's vagaries have kept Libya's élites off balance, sometimes in almost absurd ways. In 2000, Qaddafi lifted a longtime ban on S.U.V.s, and prosperous Libyans went out and imported Hummers and Range Rovers. Three months later, the Leader decided that he had made a mistake, and he outlawed them again, leaving a large number of privileged Libyans owning vehicles that it was illegal to drive. "You can tell if you've reached the top," a young Libyan told me, "if you listen to a lot of conversation about S.U.V.s rusting in the garage."

"Don't say 'opening,'" the Foreign Minister, Abdurrahman Shalgham, said, waving his hands in protest, when I asked him about the new Libya. "Don't say 'reintegrate.' Libya was never closed to the world; the world was closed to us." But the cost of Libyan paranoia has been an isolation that feeds this paranoia and keeps Libyans in the fold of the Leader. The idea of a world that wants to engage with Libya is dangerous to Qaddafi's hegemony. "America as an enemy would cause him trouble," Ali Abdullatif Ahmida, the political scientist, said. "But he doesn't want America as a friend, either."

Relations between Libya and the United States remain shadowed by history. Qaddafi's most vigorous opponent was President Reagan, who in 1980 closed the Libyan Embassy, then suspended oil imports, then shot down two planes over the Gulf of Sidra, where the U.S. disputed Libya's sovereignty. Ten days after the Libya-linked bombing of a West Berlin night club frequented by American servicemen, in 1986, Reagan bombed Tripoli and Benghazi, dropping ordnance on Qaddafi's compound in an apparent attempt to assassinate him. Qaddafi claims to have lost an adopted daughter in the raid. "His grip on power was sliding and then there was the bombing and it united the Libyans behind him," one Libyan official told me.

The total isolation of Libya began in 1991, when the United States and Britain indicted two Libyans suspected of involvement in the downing of Pan Am Flight 103, and the French indicted four Libyan suspects in the 1989 explosion of the French airliner UTA 772 over the Niger desert. Libya refused to surrender any of the suspects, and, the following year, the United Nations approved economic sanctions. Only in 1999 did Libya allow the Lockerbie suspects to be brought to trial, under Scottish law, in The Hague. (A financial settlement was reached that year with French authorities as well.) The Scottish court convicted one of the suspects and acquitted the other. Libya long denied any wrongdoing but eventually accepted that it had to admit to it, as a pragmatic matter, though Libyan officials see it as a forced confession. Qaddafi never accepted personal guilt.

The Lockerbie question, a closed book to most Americans, was brought up repeatedly while I was in Libya. One official said, "I can't believe the Libyans at that time could have pulled off something that big. Something that stupid—that is completely believable. But not something that big." Western investigators continue to argue whether Libya had direct involvement in the event. Initial inquiries suggested that the bombing was the work of the Syrian-led Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine–General Command, a terror group funded by Iran, and both a former Scottish police chief and a former C.I.A. officer later submitted statements claiming that the physical evidence inculpating Libya had

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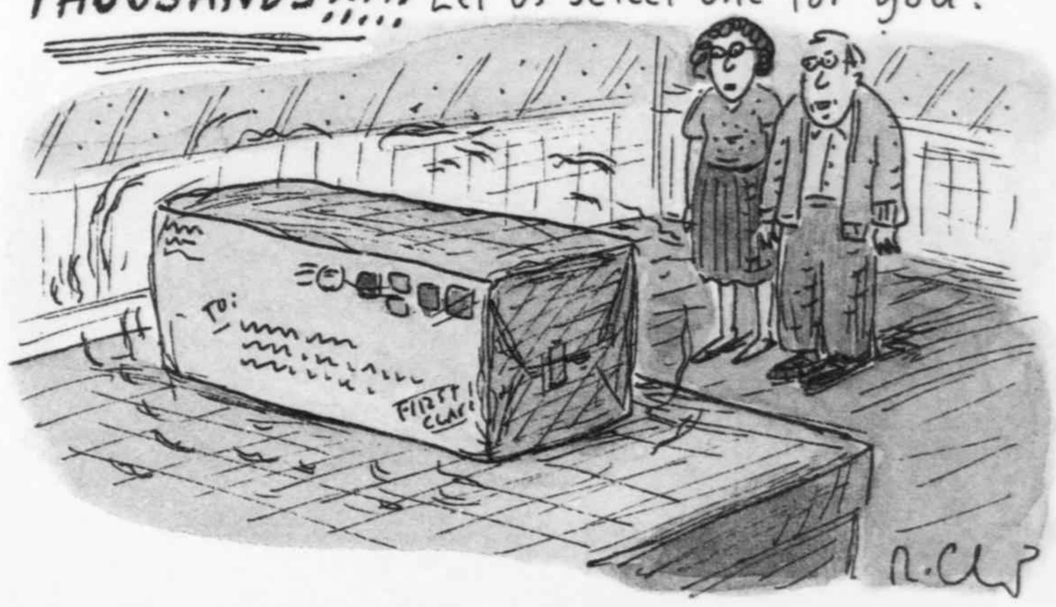
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been planted. Because of such problems, Robert Black, the Q.C. and Edinburgh law professor who helped set up the trial, told the *Scotsman* this past November that the Lockerbie verdict was "the most disgraceful miscarriage of justice in Scotland for 100 years," and would "gravely damage" the reputation of the Scottish criminal-justice system. The case is now under consideration by the Scottish Criminal Cases Review Commission. Because Libya supported foreign terrorist groups, though, the regime could have been implicated even if it was not the main author of the disaster.

In recent years, U.S. diplomatic relations with Libya have thawed to tepid. In 1999, the United States agreed to the suspension of U.N. sanctions, but not its own, which it renewed in August, 2001. Then came 9/11. Qaddafi condemned the attacks, called the Taliban "Godless promoters of political Islam," and pointed out that six years earlier he had issued a warrant for Osama bin Laden's arrest. In August, 2003, the Libyan government pledged to deposit $2.7 billion in the Bank for International Settlements, in Switzerland, to compensate the families of those lost on Pan Am 103. Four months later, after secret negotiations with a British-led team, Libya agreed to renounce its W.M.D. program, and American sanctions were eased.

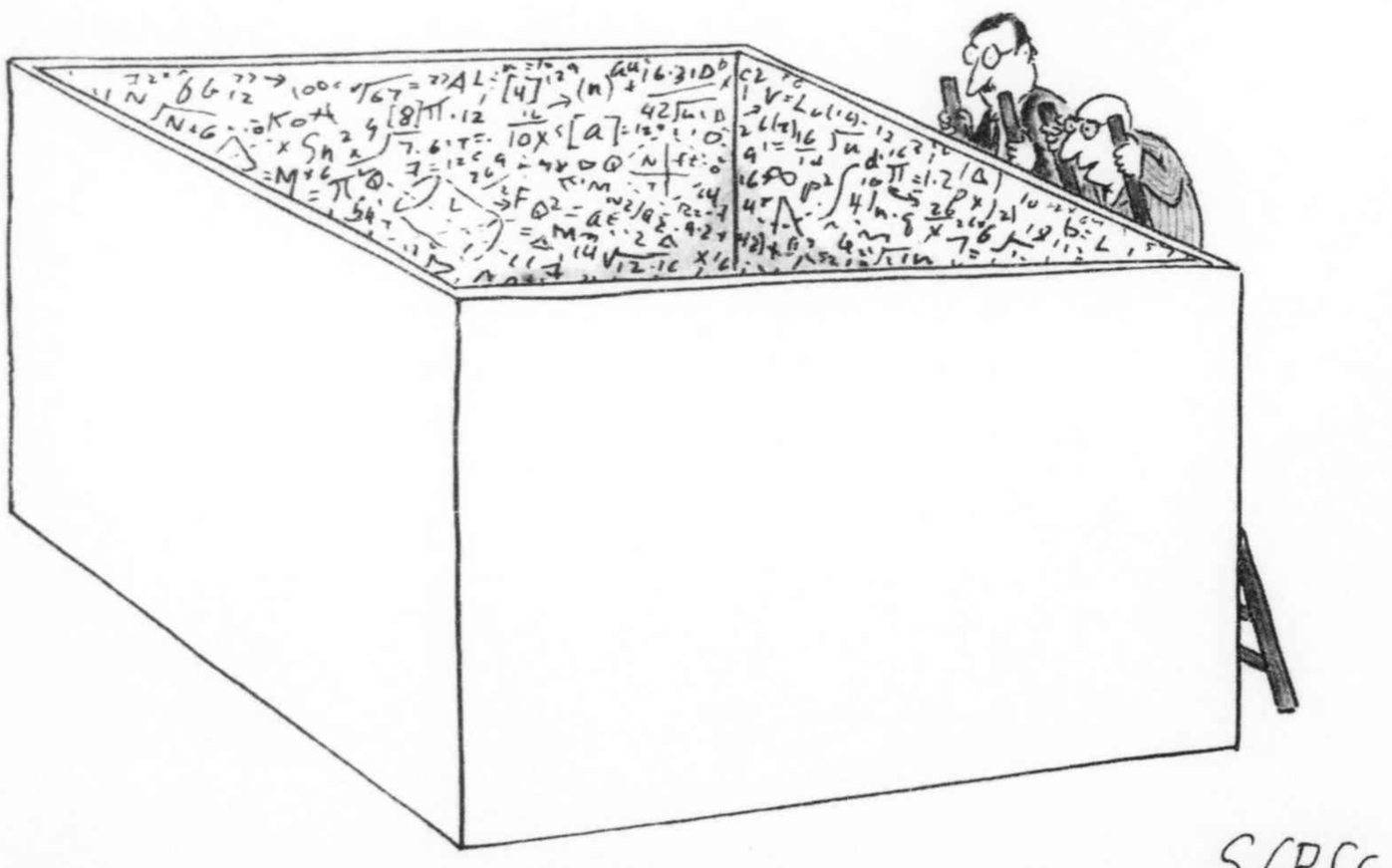
In fact, Qaddafi had made similar overtures to both George H. W. Bush and Bill Clinton but was spurned—in part, according to Martin Indyk, who was Clinton's Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, because Libya's weapons programs were not considered an imminent threat. This has been borne out. Mohamed ElBaradei, the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, described Libya's nuclear program as "at an early stage of development"—many of the centrifuges had evidently never been uncrated. But John Wolf, who, as George W. Bush's Assistant Secretary of State for Nonproliferation, played a key role in dismantling Libya's program, maintains that something of real value was secured—more by way of information and evidence than by the removal of a present threat. "The Libyans had the design of a nuclear weapon, sold by the A. Q. Khan network," he told me, referring to the former head of Pakistan's nuclear-weapons program. "Libya's decision to turn over not only equipment but also the documentation, shipping invoices, plans, et cetera, provided a treasure trove of materials that were instrumental in establishing the credible case that mobilized countries against implicated individuals and companies abroad. We would not have been able to convince many of these countries or the I.A.E.A. of the cancer-like nature of the festering A. Q. Khan network without that documentation. The information that enabled us to break up the network was critical."

After the 2003 agreement, President Bush said that any nation that gave up W.M.D.s would "find an open path to better relations" with the United States and that "Libya has begun the process of rejoining the community of nations." By late 2004, the United States had revoked the travel ban, established limited diplomatic relations, and lifted many remaining trade restrictions. What Seif calls "this cocktail of problems and sanctions" had, it seemed, been largely addressed. Certainly the Bush Administration was eager to see American companies compete for oil-exploration rights in Libya, and it has facilitated economic engagement. But issues such as the 2003 anti-Saudi plot and the affair of the Bulgarian nurses have stalled the entente, and Libya remains on the State Department's list of state sponsors of terrorism. Until the country is taken off the list, the United States must vote against I.M.F. and World Bank loans to Tripoli, and substantial sanctions remain in place.

"It's almost the same as during the embargo," the head of the National Oil Company said. Libyan hard-liners point out that U.S. officials have acknowledged that no act of terrorism has been linked to Libya in years, and they complain that, while Tony Blair, Jacques Chirac, Gerhard Schröder, and Silvio Berlusconi have all visited Tripoli, the United States has sent no one above the under-secretary level. The United States has no official consulate in Libya; Libyans who want visas apply in Tunisia, and the United States does not grant them freely. Libyan reformers who thought that settling Lockerbie and renouncing W.M.D.s would allow the resumption of normal relations talk about "receding goalposts."

David Mack, a former high-ranking U.S. diplomat who has served in Libya, told me, "It's been useful to us to be able to engage in intelligence exchanges with Libya; it's quite clearly been useful to them." He pointed out that the United States had agreed to list the dissident Libyan Islamic Fighting Group as a terrorist organization, and got it banned from Britain, where some of its members had been based. "Having made all this progress," Mack said, "if we now just let things drift, inevitably there will be relapses."

So while the Bush Administration holds up Libya as a role model for disarmament—"If Libya can do it, Iran can do it, too," John Bolton, the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, has said—some policy analysts think that



"Actually, I got some pretty good ideas when I was in the box."

the Administration has done too little to promote that example. Ronald Bruce St John, a Libya scholar at the International Relations Center, observes that America's priority has been to control W.M.D.s and get support for the war on terror; Libya's priorities are the rationalization of commercial and diplomatic relations. American goals have been met; Libyan goals have not. In Tripoli, hard-liners seethe that Libya gave away the store, while the reformers feel undermined.

The reformers' own diplomatic efforts have had limited success. Representative Tom Lantos, of California, and Senator Richard Lugar, of Indiana, both have visited Libya, where they met with Seif, Shukri Ghanem, and Qaddafi himself, and have taken an optimistic view. "Qaddafi has clearly made a hundred-and-eighty-degree turn," Lantos said to me, "and we are turning around the aircraft carrier that is U.S. policy." But when Lantos sought a cosponsor for the United States–Libya Relations Act, which was meant to strengthen bilateral relations, nobody was interested. Mack said, "We need to show the world, particularly governments like Iran and North Korea, that there is an alternative paradigm for dealing with the United States, and much to be gained by having a normal relationship with us," and suggested that American interests would be served by improved relations with an Arab leader who opposes fundamentalism and has substantial oil reserves.

"Deep down, the Libyans think the U.S. will not be satisfied with anything short of regime change," one of Seif's advisers said. "And, deep down, the Americans think that, if they normalize relations, Qaddafi will blow something up and make them look like fools."

Everywhere I went in Libya, opposition to U.S. policy was tempered by enthusiasm for individual Americans. Among the older generation of Libyans, the reformers were eager for news of the towns where they had once studied, in Kansas, Texas, Colorado. (Most of the hard-liners I met had never visited the United States.) Many Libyans hoped for improved relations with the outside world simply because the pariah experience has been a lonely one.



"Take some identification with you in case you die."

• •

I spent a morning with the human-rights lawyer Azza Magour, a striking woman with cascading hair and a warm laugh, who had just returned from a humanitarian conference in Morocco. Her father was an important figure in post-revolutionary Libyan politics, and this has given her leeway; she seemed almost oblivious of the constraints that keep most Libyan women in headscarves and at home. I asked her how she felt about the U.S., and she told me that it was hard for her to be pro-American in the wake of the news reports about Abu Ghraib and Guantánamo. "You cannot imagine how we worshipped the idea of America," she said, and she looked down at the floor, as though she were talking about a relative who had recently died. "We wanted nothing more than to be with you, this rich, fair democracy. But now we ask who is giving us this lesson of freedom? I mean—if you caught your high priest in bed with a prostitute, would you still count on him to get you in the door of heaven?" Magour is still hoping to show her young daughter the United States, though. She said that, at least once a week, her daughter asks how things are going between Libya and America, and Magour says, "It's going, sweetheart." And her daughter wonders, "So can we visit Disneyland yet?" and she has to say, "Not yet, sweetheart, not yet."

For a culture that is politically and socially underdeveloped, Libya has a surprisingly active intelligentsia, who view their own society with tenderness and irony. People I met and liked invited me out over and over and introduced me to friends and family. I went to a birthday party at the house of one Libyan; his wife cooked a feast for us, and I stayed up half the night with them and their children, watching movies. The day before I left, friends took me out for late-night tea and gave me full traditional Libyan dress—a long shirt, an embroidered vest, and a little black hat—as a going-away present.

The social life of Libyans is essentially private. Tripoli is latticed with wide highways; gasoline is subsidized, and, because there are no bars or clubs and few cinemas or theatres, the most popular pastime is driving; people cruise around for hours. The privacy of cars enhances their charm, but mostly the Tripoli highways, busy through the night, provide diversion for citizens desperate for entertainment or novelty. When they aren't driving, most Tripolitans socialize at home rather than in cafés, partly because of the absence of women and alcohol in public places.

I had my first drink in Libya after a

friend called an Army colonel and asked, "Do you have any pomegranate seeds?" (It is wise to use euphemisms in police states.) He did, and we drove to the outskirts of a small city, to a large white house with a long veranda, beside a dirt road. In the Libyan way, the house was built of concrete and painted white, but it was beginning to show signs of wear. We sat on a wide, bright-colored banquette under fluorescent lights in an enormous room. The place was decorated with souvenirs from Central Asia, where our host had trained, including many carvings of bears with fishing rods. We listened to a medley of Shirley Bassey hits played on the zither, and took turns smoking from a five-foot-tall hookah. The colonel, a beaming, extroverted Libyan of sub-Saharan ancestry, served the local home brew, eighty proof and rough enough to remove not just fingernail polish but quite possibly fingernails as well, on a table covered with a lavishly embroidered cloth and laden with Fanta and Pringles. The atmosphere was reminiscent of a high-school pot party.



I asked my friend how he would feel about his sons drinking, and he laughed, replying, "It's inevitable." Then I asked about his daughters, and he grew serious: "If my daughters were drinking, I would be very, very upset—furious, in fact. Because, if people found out that they had been drinking, they would think they might also be sexually active, and their marriage prospects would be shattered."

I met a Libyan woman who worked for Alitalia, a job that she loved but that she felt no Libyan husband would tolerate. "I have to choose between a marriage and a life, and I have chosen a life," she said. "Most women here choose a marriage. It's a question of taste." The restrictions are a matter not of laws—on issues like gender equality, the laws are more progressive than in most Arab countries—but of social norms.

Qaddafi accepts such customs, but he frequently describes his own society as "backward" (his favorite term of disapprobation); one Libyan intellectual complained to me, "If you listen to his words, you will agree that he hates the Libyan people." While Qaddafi represses the democratizing forces from the left, he is far more brutal with the Islamist ones on the right. Indeed, most of the regime's political victims in the past few decades have been members of Islamist groups that he has banned, including the Muslim Brotherhood. Libya's Islamic institutes, almost fifty of them, were shut down in 1988. When clerics protested Qaddafi's "innovative" interpretations of the Koran and his dismissal of all post-Koranic commentary and custom, Qaddafi declared that Islam permitted its followers to speak directly to Allah, and that clergymen were unnecessary intermediaries. A year later, he likened Islamic militants to "a cancer, the black death, and AIDS." As if to vex Hamas, once a beneficiary of his largesse, he has even argued, in recent years, that the Palestinians have no exclusive claim to the land of Israel, and called for a binational state—he dubbed it "Isratine"—that would guarantee the safety of both Palestinians and Jews, who, far from being enemies of the Arab people, were their Biblical kin. ("There may be some objections to the name," he allowed, "but they would be unhelpful, harmful, and superficial.")

"You ask us, 'Why do you oppress the opposition in the Middle East?' " Qaddafi said in March, speaking via satellite link to a conference at Columbia University, dressed in purple robes and seated in front of a map of Africa. "Because, in the Middle East, the opposition is quite different than the opposition in advanced countries. In our countries, the opposition takes the form of explosions, assassinations, killing. . . . This is a manifestation of social backwardness." On this point, at least, the hard-liners and the reformers tend to converge. Foreign Minister Shalgham told me, "The fundamentalists represent a threat to your security. They represent a threat to our way of life. They are against the future, against science, the arts, women, and freedom. They would drag us back to the Middle Ages. You fear their acts; we fear the ideology behind those acts. O.K., read the Koran for an hour a day, and that's enough; if you don't also study engineering, medicine, business, and mathematics, how can you survive? But people have figured out that, the tougher your Islam, the easier to find followers."

The fear of radical Islam helps explain why authorities cracked down so forcefully when, in February, protests erupted in Benghazi over the Danish cartoons of the prophet Muhammad and the decision of an Italian Cabinet minister to wear a T-shirt featuring the images. Eleven people were killed by the police, and violence spread to at least two other cities in the eastern part of the country, where Qaddafi's hold on power has always been relatively weak. Seif gave local voice to international opinion, saying, "The protest was a mistake, and the police intervention against the demonstrators was an even bigger mistake." His father, too, repudiated the "backwardness" of the police response, but mainly wanted to insist that the riots hadn't arisen from Islamic fervor, much less discontent with his regime; rather, they were spurred by anger at the history of Italian colonialism. (More than a quarter of a million Libyans—perhaps a third of the population—are estimated to have perished as a result of the Italian occupation, many in concentration camps.) "Unfortunately, there could be more Benghazis," or even "attacks in Italy," if Rome didn't offer reparations, Qaddafi warned, saying that he would be mollified if Italy were to build a highway across Libya, for some three billion euros. The Italian Foreign Minister, Gianfranco Fini, said that this was "a not too veiled threat," adding, "We have already said that we want to put the colonial past definitely behind us in our relations with Libya. We maintain this position in a clear and transparent way. We expect a similarly coherent position from the Libyan leader."

When I read this statement to a Libyan acquaintance, he burst out laughing. "Good luck, Mr. Fini!" he said. Expatriate opposition leaders have claimed that Qaddafi staged the riots to extract concessions from Europe, and that they then escalated out of control. In Libya, the issue was widely seen to be economic—a disgruntled population of unemployed youth needed an outlet for their anger.

The most immediate sequel to the riots was the dismissal of Prime Minister Shukri Ghanem. (He was given a post at the National Oil Company.) There were

already rumors when I was in Tripoli that Ghanem was going to lose his job in a Cabinet reshuffle; the openness that seemed so refreshing when we met had not pleased the Leader. "He made three basic mistakes," one Qaddafi adviser said to me. "First, he associated reform with his own name and complained publicly about the Leadership. In Libya, if you want to accomplish things you make yourself invisible, you sublimate your ego. Second, he thought that a strong position with the West would guarantee his hold on power and didn't understand that the West counts for very little here. Third, he failed to win over the Libyan people; he never seemed to be concerned about their suffering. . . . In the street, there is relief that he is gone—though there is no affection for the alternative." Ghanem's successor was the taciturn hard-liner Baghdadi al-Mahmoudi. "For the Leadership, it will be easier to make economic adjustments now that the reform will come clearly and directly from the Leadership, and not be seen as admissions that the Leader was wrong, as concessions to some kind of competition."

The change of Prime Ministers was, of course, a reassertion of Qaddafi's power: more tumbling of the rats. Several ministries—including oil and energy—were shaken up, with people removed from jobs they had held for decades. The U.S. State Department's decision, in late March, to keep Libya on its terrorism list both reflects the problem and contributes to it, and has outraged Libyans in and out of power.

Because Ghanem's strong suit was supposed to be his ease with Western powers, his failure to get Libya removed from the U.S. terrorism list helped insure his replacement by a hard-liner. Baghdadi al-Mahmoudi has been described to me as financially corrupt but wily, calculating, and extremely industrious. He is "a technocrat out of the Revolutionary Committees who works hard to glorify the Leader's policies," a Libyan-American academic said. "Will reform slow? Well, Shukri Ghanem talked a good line about reform but accomplished so little that there's not much backsliding to do. Mahmoudi realizes that economic reform has to move forward and will do that for the Leader. He has absolutely no interest in political or social reform, and he will leave it to the Leader to have a relationship with the West." It has been suggested that, with the appointment of a hard-liner, some of the infighting will subside.

"Ahmed Ibrahim's power will wane, too," one of Seif's advisers told me hopefully, referring to the deputy speaker of the General People's Congress. Seif will now be his own man: "He's old enough to carry that off."

"We call the world close to the Leader the Circle of Fire," one Libyan intellectual said. "Get close and it warms you up; get too close and you go down in flames. The Circle of Fire includes both reformers and hard-liners; Qaddafi likes the chaos that creates." He spoke with irony, almost with disdain, and yet he was not above warming himself at the fire. The class of educated Libyans—a class that includes poets, archeologists, professors, ministers, doctors, businessmen, and civil servants—is tiny. Given the way that tribalism intersects with class alliances and political identities, social relationships exist in Libya among people who in a larger society would probably be kept apart by mutual opposition. Political enmity is often crosshatched with social amity. In Tripoli, I had dinner at the home of an older writer who spoke passionately of the injustices of the Qaddafi regime in both its absolutism and its new capitalism. "He has to go," he said. "This colonel has eaten the best years of my life, poisoned my soul and my existence, murdered the people I loved. I hate him more than I love my wife. He and his government and everyone who has anything to do with him must go. Enough is enough. We have no souls left. Do not let yourself be fooled by this talk of reform. What kind of reform is it when this man is still sitting in Tripoli? I cannot say it to you enough times. He must go. He must go. He must go." A few minutes later, when I mentioned a high-ranking member of the regime whom I hoped to interview, he said, "Ah, he was here for dinner earlier this week." He added, with a shrug, "I don't agree with him, but I like him."

The coziness between the authorities and many of those who railed against them continually surprised me. Some of this was simple pragmatism, but not all; it was more intimate than that. A person's network of loyalties and connections was never predictable. I had a drink (of non-alcoholic beer) in the Tripoli planetarium with a professor who had previously claimed that the Prime Minister and Seif got drunk together and raped the country—and they were the good guys. We had joked about the government's inefficiencies, and he had said darkly that no one who wasn't Libyan had any good reason to endure this kind of chaos. He had asked how I could hold on to my sanity when I was dealing with government offices.

Now he was beaming. "Hey, I've been given a job with the Ministry," he said. He raised a hand up over his head in a gesture of pride and triumph.

I said I was surprised that he was so eager to join a regime that he loathed.

"Well," he replied, "it also happens to be the only game in town." ♦



"Listen, pal, they're all emergencies."

FICTION

ONCE IN A LIFETIME

BY JHUMPA LAHIRI



I had seen you before, too many times to count, but a farewell that my family threw for yours, at our house in Inman Square, is when I begin to recall your presence in my life. Your parents had decided to leave Cambridge, not for Atlanta or Arizona, as some other Bengalis had, but to move all the way back to India, abandoning the struggle that my parents and their friends had embarked upon. It was 1974. I was six years old. You were nine. What I remember most clearly are the hours before the party, which my mother spent preparing for everyone to arrive: the furniture was polished, the paper plates and napkins set out on the table, the rooms filled with the smell of lamb curry and *pullao* and the L'Air du Temps my mother used for special occasions, spraying it first on herself, then on me, a firm squirt that temporarily darkened whatever I was wearing. I was dressed that evening in an outfit that my grandmother had sent from Calcutta: white pajamas with tapered legs and a waist wide enough to gird two of me side by side, a turquoise kurta, and a black velvet vest embroidered with plastic pearls. The three pieces had been arrayed on my parents' bed while I was in the bath, and I had stood shivering, my fingertips puckered and white, as my mother threaded a length of thick drawstring through the giant waist of the pajamas with a safety pin, gathering up the stiff material bit by bit and then knotting the drawstring tightly at my stomach. The inseam of the pajamas was stamped with purple letters within a circle, the seal of the textile company. I remember fretting about this fact, wanting to wear something else, but my mother assured me that the seal would come out in the wash, adding that, because of the length of the kurta, no one would notice it, anyway.

My mother had more pressing concerns. In addition to the quality and quantity of the food, she was worried about the weather: snow was predicted for later that evening, and this was a time when my parents and their friends didn't own cars. Most of the guests, including you, lived less than a fifteen-minute walk away, either in the neighborhoods behind Harvard and M.I.T. or just across the Mass Avenue Bridge. But some were farther, coming by bus or the T from Malden or Medford or Waltham. "I suppose Dr. Choudhuri can drive people home," she said of your father as she untangled my hair. Your parents were slightly older—seasoned immigrants, as mine were not. They had left India in 1962, before the laws welcoming foreign students changed. While my father and the other men were still taking exams, your father already had a Ph.D., and he drove a car, a silver Saab with bucket seats, to his job at an engineering firm in Andover. I had been driven home in that car many nights, after parties had gone late and I had fallen asleep in some strange bed or other.

Our mothers had met when mine was pregnant. She didn't know it yet; she was feeling dizzy and had sat down on a bench in a small park. Your mother was perched on a swing, gently swaying back and forth as you soared above her, when she noticed a young Bengali woman in a sari, wearing vermillion in her hair. "Are you feeling all right?" your mother asked in the polite form. She told you to get off the swing, and then she and you escorted my mother home. It was during that walk that your mother suggested that perhaps mine was expecting. They became instant friends, spending their days together while our fathers were at work. They talked about the lives they had left behind in Calcutta: your mother's beautiful home in Jodhpur Park, with hibiscus and rosebushes blooming on the rooftop, and my mother's modest flat in Maniktala, above a grimy Punjabi restaurant, where seven people existed in three small rooms. In Calcutta they would probably have had little occasion to meet. Your mother had gone to a convent school and was the daughter of one of Calcutta's most prominent lawyers, a pipe-smoking Anglophile and a member of the Saturday Club. My mother's father was a clerk in the General Post Office, and she had neither eaten at a table nor sat on a commode before coming to America. Those differences were irrelevant in Cambridge, where they were both equally alone. Here they shopped together for groceries, and complained about their husbands, and cooked at either our stove or yours, dividing up the dishes for our respective families when they were done. They knitted together, switching projects when one of them got bored. When I was born, your parents were the only friends to visit the hospital. I was fed in your old high chair, pushed along the streets in your old pram.

During the party it started snowing, as predicted, stragglers arriving with wet, white-caked coats that we had to hang from the shower-curtain rod. For years, my mother talked about how, when the party ended, your father made countless trips to drive people home, taking one couple as far as Braintree, claiming that it was no trouble, that this was his last opportunity to drive the car, anyway. In the days before you left, your parents came by again, to bring over pots and pans, small appliances, blankets and sheets, half-used bags of flour and sugar, bottles of shampoo. We continued to refer to these things as your mother's. "Get me Parul's frying pan," my mother would say. Or, "I think we need to turn the setting down on Parul's toaster." Your mother also brought over shopping bags filled with clothes that she thought I might be able to use, that had once belonged to you. My mother put the bags away and took them with us when we moved, a few years later, from Inman Square to a house in Sharon, incorporating the clothes into my wardrobe as I grew into them. Mainly they were winter items, things you would no longer need in India. There were thick T-shirts and turtlenecks in navy and brown. I found these clothes ugly and tried to avoid them, but my mother refused to replace them. And so I was forced to wear your sweaters, your rubber boots on rainy days. One winter I had to wear your coat, which I hated so much that it caused me to hate you as a result. It was blue-black with an orange lining and a scratchy grayish-brown trim around the hood. I never got used to having to hook the zipper on the right side, to looking so different from the other girls in my class with their puffy pink and purple jackets. When I asked my parents if I could have a new coat they said no. A coat was a coat, they said. I wanted desperately to get rid of it. I wanted it to be lost. I wished that one of the boys in my class, many of whom owned identical coats, would accidentally pick it up in the narrow alcove where we rushed to put on our things at the end of the day. But my mother had gone so far as to

PHILIPPE CHENG (2004)

iron a label inside the coat with my name on it, an idea she'd got from her subscription to *Good Housekeeping*.

Once I left it on the school bus. It was a mild late-winter day, the windows on the bus open, everybody's outerwear shed on the seats. I was taking a different bus than usual, one that dropped me off in the neighborhood of my piano teacher, Mrs. Hennessey. When the bus neared my stop I stood up, and when I reached the front the driver reminded me to be careful crossing the street. She pulled back the lever that opened the door, letting fragrant air onto the bus. I was about to step off, coatless, but then someone cried out, "Hey, Hema, you forgot this!" I was startled that anyone on that bus knew my name; I had forgotten about the name tag.

By the following year I had outgrown the coat, and to my great relief it was donated to charity. The other items your parents bequeathed to us, the toaster and the crockery and the Teflon pots and pans, were gradually replaced as well, until there was no longer any physical trace of you in the house. For years our families had no contact. The friendship did not merit the same energy my parents devoted to their relatives, buying stacks of aerograms at the post office and sending them off faithfully every week, asking me to write the same three sentences to each set of grandparents at the bottom. My parents spoke of you rarely, and I imagine they assumed that our paths were unlikely to cross again. You'd moved to Bombay, a city far from Calcutta, which my parents and I never visited. And so we did not see you, or hear from you, until the first day of 1981, when your father called us very early in the morning to wish us a happy New Year and say that your family was returning to Massachusetts, where he had a new job. He asked if, until he found a house, you could all stay with us. For days afterward my parents talked of nothing else. They wondered what had gone wrong: Had your father's position at Larsen & Toubro, too good to turn down at the time, fallen through? Was your mother no longer able to abide the mess and heat of India? Had they decided that the schools weren't good enough for you there? Back then international calls were kept short. Of course, your family was welcome, my parents said, and marked the date of your arrival on the calendar in our kitchen. Whatever the reason you were coming, I gathered from my parents' talk that it was regarded as a wavering, a weakness. "They should have known it's impossible to go back," they said to their friends, condemning your parents for having failed at both ends. We had stuck it out as immigrants while you had fled; had we been the ones to go back to India, my parents seemed to suggest, we would have stuck it out there as well.

Until your return I'd thought of you as a boy of eight or nine, frozen in time, the size of the clothes I'd inherited. But you were twice that now, sixteen, and my parents thought it best that you occupy my room, and that I sleep on a folding cot set up in their bedroom. Your parents would stay in the guest room, down the hall. My parents often hosted friends who came from New Jersey or New Hampshire for the weekend, to eat elaborate dinners and talk late into the evening about Indian politics. But by Sunday afternoon those guests were always gone. I was accustomed to having children sleep on the floor by my bed, in sleeping bags. Being an only child, I enjoyed this occasional company. But I had never been asked to relinquish my room entirely. I asked my mother why they weren't giving you the folding cot instead of me.

"Where would we put it?" she asked. "We only have three bedrooms."

"Downstairs," I suggested. "In the living room."

"That wouldn't look right," my mother said. "Kaushik must practically be a man by now. He needs his privacy."

"What about the basement?" I said, thinking of the small study my father had built there, lined with metal bookcases.

"That's no way to treat guests, Hema. Especially not these. Dr. Choudhuri and Parul Di were such a blessing when we first had you. They drove us home from the hospital, they brought over food for weeks. Now it's our turn to be helpful."

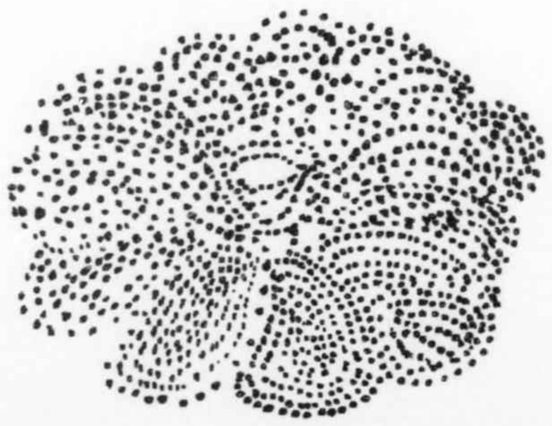
"What sort of doctor is he?" I asked. Though I had always been in good health, I had an irrational fear of doctors then, and the thought of one living in the house made me nervous, as if his mere presence might make one of us sick.

"He's not a medical doctor. It refers to his Ph.D."

"Baba has his Ph.D. and no one calls him a doctor," I pointed out.

"When we met, Dr. Choudhuri was the only one. It was our way of paying respect."

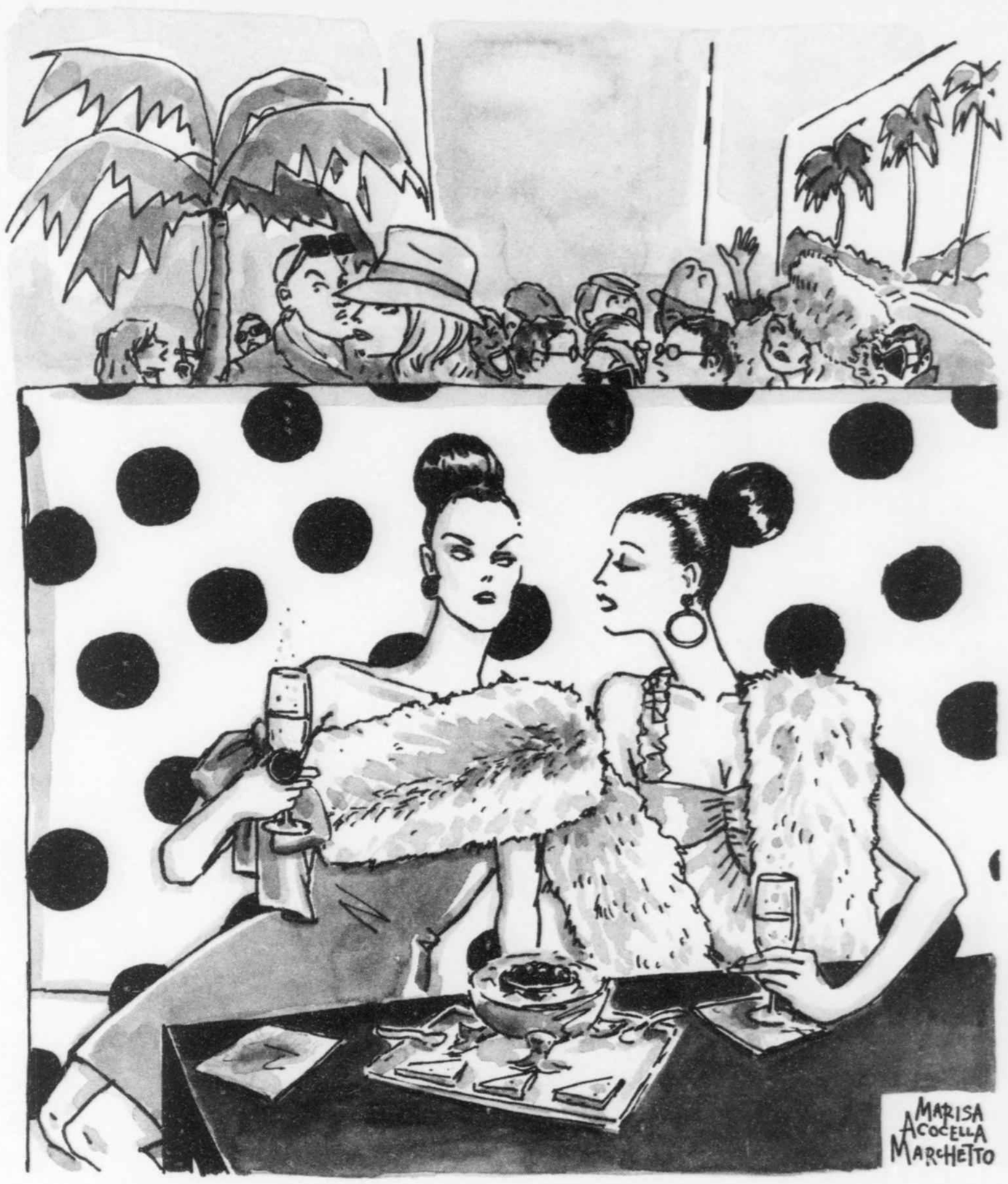
I asked how long you would be staying with us—a week? Two? My mother couldn't say; it all depended on how long it took your family to get settled and find a place. The prospect of having to give up my room infuriated me. My feelings were complicated by the fact that, until rather recently, to my great shame, I'd regularly slept with my parents on the cot in their room, and not in the room where I kept my clothes and things. My mother considered the idea of a child sleeping alone a cruel American practice, and therefore did not encourage it, even when we had the space. She told me that she had slept in the same bed as her parents until the day she was married and that this was perfectly normal. But I knew that it was not normal, not what my friends at school did, and that they would ridicule me if they knew. The summer before I started middle school I insisted on sleeping alone. In the beginning my mother kept checking on me during the night, as if I were still an infant who might suddenly stop breathing, asking if I was scared and reminding me that she was just on the other side of the wall. In fact, I was scared that first night; the perfect silence in my room terrified me. But I refused to admit this, for what I feared more was failing at something I should have learned to do at the age of three or four. In the end it was easy; I fell asleep out of sheer anxiety that I would not, and in the morning I woke up alone, squinting in the eastern light my parents' room did not receive.



The house was prepared for your arrival. New throw pillows were purchased for the living-room sofa, bright orange against the brown tweed upholstery. The plants and the curios were rearranged, my school portrait framed and hung above the fireplace. The Christ-

mas cards were taken down from around the front door, where my mother and I had taped them one by one as they'd come in the mail. My parents, remembering your father's habit of dressing well, bought robes for themselves to wear in the mornings, my mother's made of velour, my father's styled like a smoking jacket. One day I came home from school and found that the pink-and-white coverlet on my bed had been replaced by a tan blanket. There were new towels in the bathroom for you and your parents, plusher than the ones we used and of a prettier shade of blue. My closet had been weeded, bare hangers left on the rod. I was told to clear out a couple of drawers, and I removed enough things so that I would not have to enter the room while you were in it. I took my pajamas, some outfits to wear to school, and the sneakers I needed for gym. I took the library book I was reading, and the others stacked on my bedside table. I wanted you to see as few of my things as possible, so I cleared away my jewelry box full of cheap tangled chains and my bottles of Avon perfume. I removed the locked diary from my desk drawer, though I'd written only two entries since receiving it for Christmas. I removed the seventh-grade yearbook in which my photograph appeared, the endpapers filled with silly messages from my classmates. It was like deciding which of my possessions I wanted to take on a long trip to India, only this time I was going nowhere. Still, I put my things into a suitcase covered with peeling tags and stickers which had travelled various times back and forth across the world and dragged it into my parents' room.

I studied pictures of your parents; we had a few pasted into an album, taken the night of the farewell party. There was my father, his stiff jet-black hair already a surprise to me by then. He was dressed in a sweater vest, his shirt cuffs rolled back, pointing urgently at something beyond the frame. Your father was in the suit and tie he always wore, his handsome, bespectacled face leaning toward someone in conversation, his greenish eyes unlike anyone else's. The middle part in your mother's hair accentuated the narrow length of her face; the end of her raw-silk sari was wrapped around her shoulders like a shawl. My mother stood beside her, a head shorter and more dishevelled, stray hairs hanging by her ears. They both appeared flushed, the color high in their cheeks, as if from drinking wine, even though all they ever drank in those days was tap water or tea, the bond between them clear. There was no evidence of you, the person I was most curious about. Who knows where you had lurked in that crowd? I imagine you sat at the desk in the corner of my parents' bedroom, reading a book you'd brought with you, waiting for the party to end.

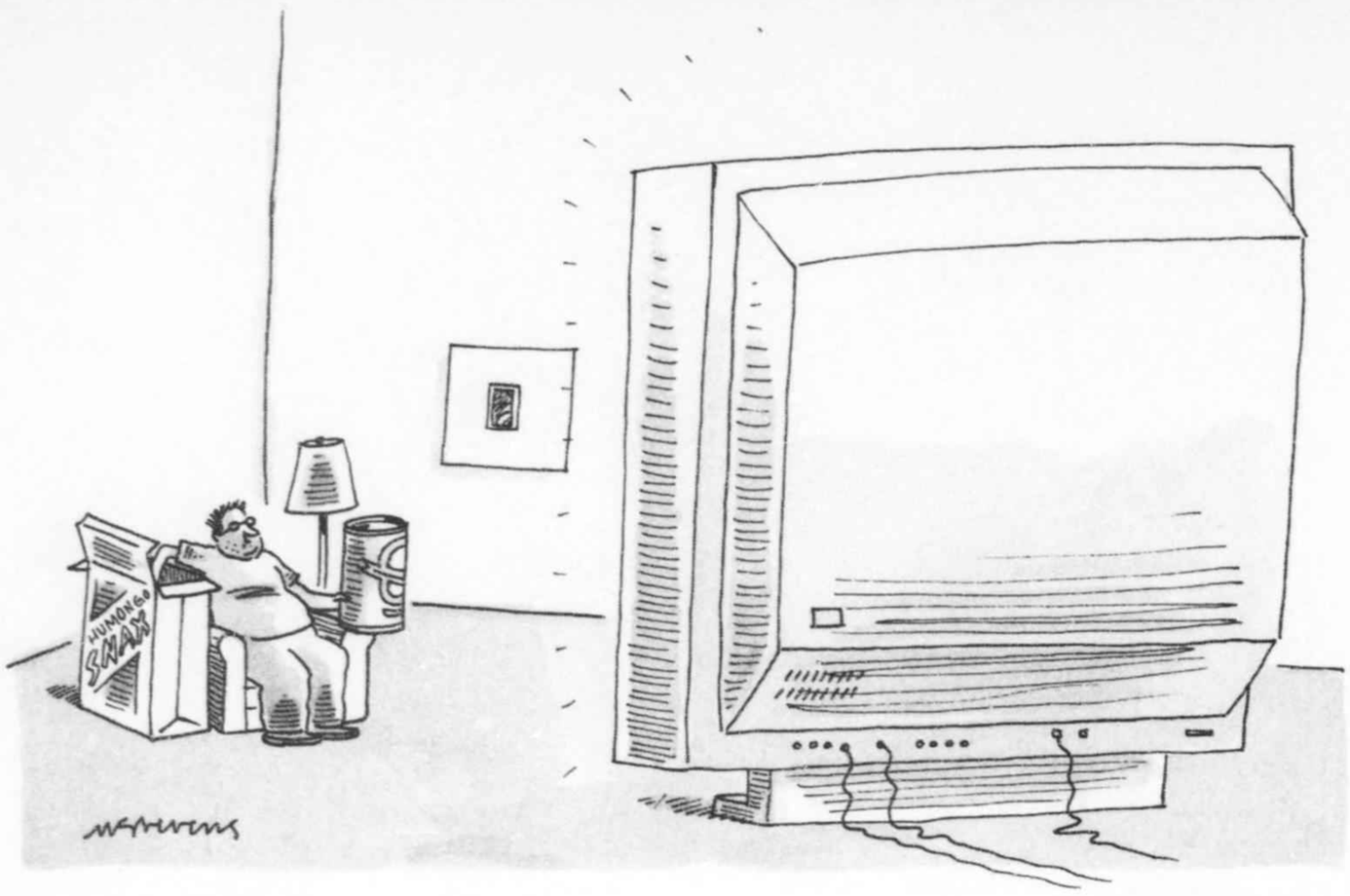


"She's a psychopathic, delusional, borderline personality—and I can say that because I'm a psychopathic, delusional, borderline personality myself."

•

My father went one evening to the airport to greet you. It was a school night for me. The dining table had been set since the afternoon. This was my mother's way when she gave parties, though she had never prepared such an elaborate meal in the middle of the week. An hour before you were expected, she turned on the oven. She had heated up a pan full of oil and begun to fry thick slices of eggplant to serve with the dal, filling the room with a haze of smoke, when my father called to say that though your plane had landed, one of your suitcases had not arrived. I was hungry by then, but it felt wrong to ask my mother to open the oven door and pull out all the dishes for my sake. My mother turned off the oil and I sat with her on the sofa watching a movie on television, something about the Second World War, in which a group of tired men were walking across a dark field. Cinema of a certain period was the one thing my mother loved wholeheartedly about the West. She herself never wore a skirt—she considered it indecent—but she could recall, scene by scene, the outfits that Audrey Hepburn had worn in any given movie.

I fell asleep at her side, and the next



thing I knew I was sprawled on the sofa alone, the television turned off, voices filling another part of the house. I stood up, my face hot, my limbs cramped and heavy. You were all in the dining room, eating. Pans of food lined the table, and in addition to the water pitcher there was a bottle of Johnnie Walker that only your parents were drinking, planted between their plates. There was your mother, her slippery dark hair cut to her shoulders, wearing slacks and a tunic, a silk scarf knotted at her neck, looking only vaguely like the woman I'd seen in the pictures. With her bright lipstick and frosted eyelids she looked less exhausted than my mother did. She had remained thin, her collarbones glamorously protruding, unburdened by the weight of middle age that now padded my mother's features. Your father looked more or less the same, still handsome, still wearing a jacket and tie, a different style of glasses his concession to the new decade. You were pale like your father, long bangs combed over to one side of your face, your eyes distracted yet missing nothing. I had not expected you to be handsome. I had not expected to find you appealing in the least.

"My goodness, Hema, already a lady. You don't remember us, do you?" your mother said. She spoke to me in English, in a pleasant, unhurried way, with a voice that sounded amused. "Come, poor thing, we've kept you waiting. Your mother told us you went hungry because of us."

I sat down, embarrassed that you had seen me asleep on the sofa. Though you had all just flown halfway across the world, it was I who felt weary, despite my nap. My mother served me a plate of food, but her attention was on you and the fact that you were refusing seconds.

"We had dinner before we landed," you replied, a faint accent present in your English, but not the strong accent our parents shared. Your voice had deepened, no longer a child's.

"It's remarkable, the amount of food you get in first class," your mother said. "Champagne, chocolates, even caviar. But I saved room. I remembered your cooking, Shibani," she added.

"First class!" my mother exclaimed, with an intake of breath. "How did you end up there?"

"It was my fortieth-birthday gift," your mother explained. She looked over at your father, smiling. "Once in a lifetime, right?"

"Who knows?" he said, clearly proud of the extravagance. "It could become a terrible habit."

Our parents spoke of the old Cambridge crowd, mine telling yours about people's moves and accomplishments, the bachelors who had married, the children who had been born. They spoke about Reagan winning the election, all the ways that Carter had failed. Your parents spoke of Rome, where you'd had a two-day layover to tour the city. Your mother described the fountains, and the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel you had stood three hours in line to see. "So many lovely churches," she said. "Each is like a museum. It made me want to be a Catholic, only to be able to pray in them."

"Do not die before seeing the Pantheon," your father said, and my parents nodded, not knowing what the Pantheon was. I knew—I was, in fact, in the middle of learning about ancient Rome in my Latin class, writing a long report about its art and architecture, all of it based on encyclopedia entries and other books in the school library. Your parents spoke of Bombay and the home you had left behind, a flat on the tenth floor, with a balcony overlooking palm trees and the Arabian Sea. "A pity you didn't visit us there," your mother said. Later, in the privacy of their bedroom, my mother pointed out to my father that we had never been invited.

After dinner I was told to show you the house and where you would sleep. Normally I loved to do this for guests, taking a proprietary pleasure in explaining that this was the broom closet, that the downstairs half-bath. But now I lingered over nothing, for I sensed your boredom. I was also nervous at being sent off with you, disturbed by the immediate schoolgirl attraction I felt. I was used to admiring boys by then, boys in my class who were and would remain unaware of my existence. But never someone as old as you, never someone belonging to the world of my parents. It was you who led me, climbing quickly up the stairs, opening doors, poking your head into rooms, unimpressed by it all.

"This is my room. Your room," I said, correcting myself.

After dreading it all this time, now I was secretly thrilled that you would be sleeping here. You would absorb my presence, I thought. Without my having to do a thing, you would come to know me and like me. You walked across the room to the window, opened it, and leaned out into the darkness, letting cold air into the room.

"Ever go out on the roof?" you asked. You did not wait for me to answer, and the next thing I knew you'd lifted the screen and were gone. I rushed over to the window, and when I leaned outside I

couldn't see you. I imagined you slipping on the shingles, falling into the shrubbery, my being blamed for the accident, for standing by stupidly as you did such a brazen thing. "Are you O.K.?" I called out. The logical thing would have been to say your name, but I felt inhibited and did not. Eventually you came back around, seating yourself on the incline over the garage, gazing down at the lawn.

"What's behind the house?"

"Woods. But you can't go there."

"Who said?"

"Everyone. My parents and all the teachers in school."

"Why not?"

"A boy got lost in them last year. He's still missing." His name was Kevin McGrath, and he'd been two grades behind me. For a week we'd heard nothing but helicopters, dogs barking, searching for some sign of him.

You did not react to this information. Instead you asked, "Why do people have yellow ribbons tied to their mailboxes?"

"They're for the hostages in Iran."

"I bet most Americans had never even heard of Iran before this," you said, causing me to feel responsible both for my neighbors' patriotism and for their ignorance.

"What's that thing to the right?"

"A swing set."

The word must have amused you. You faced me and smiled, though not kindly, as if I'd invented the term.

"I missed the cold," you said. "This cold." The remark reminded me that none of this was new to you. "And the snow. When will it snow again?"

"I don't know. There wasn't snow for Christmas this year."

You climbed back into the room, disappointed, I feared, by my lack of information. You glanced at yourself in my white-framed mirror, your head nearly cut off at the top. "Where's the bathroom?" you asked, already halfway out the door.

That night, lying on the cot in my parents' room, wide awake though it was well past midnight, I heard my mother and father talking in the dark. I worried that perhaps you would hear them, too. The bed where you slept was just on the other side of the wall, and if I had been able to stick my hand through it I could have touched you. My parents were at once critical of and intimidated by yours, perplexed by the ways in which they had changed. Bombay had made them more American than Cambridge had, my mother said, something she hadn't anticipated and didn't understand. There were remarks concerning your mother's short hair, her slacks, the Johnnie Walker she and your father had continued to drink after the meal was finished, taking it with them from the dining room to the living room. It was mainly my mother who talked, my father listening and murmuring now and then in tired consent. My parents, who had never set foot in a liquor store, wondered whether they should buy another bottle—at the rate your parents were going, that bottle would be drained by tomorrow, my mother said. She remarked that your mother had become stylish, a pejorative term in her vocabulary, implying a self-indulgence that she shunned. "Twelve people could have flown for the price of one first-class ticket," she said. My mother's birthdays came and went without acknowledgment by my father. I was the one who made a card and had him sign it with me on the first of every June. Suddenly my mother sat up, sniffing the air. "I smell smoke," she said. My father asked if she had remembered to turn off the oven. My mother said she was certain she had, but she asked him to get up and check.

"It's a cigarette you smell," he said when he came back to bed. "Someone has been smoking in the bathroom."

"I didn't know Dr. Choudhuri smoked," my mother said. "Should we have put out an ashtray?"

In the morning you all slept in, victims of jet lag, reminding us that despite your presence, your bags crowding the hallways, your toothbrushes cluttering the side of the sink, you belonged elsewhere. When I returned from school in the afternoon you were still sleeping, and at dinner, breakfast for you, you all declined the curry we were eating, craving toast and tea. It was like that for the first few days: you were awake when we slept, sleeping when we were awake; we were leading antipodal lives under the same roof. As a result, apart from the fact that I wasn't sleeping in my own room, there was little change. I drank my orange juice and ate my bowl of cereal and went off to the bus stop as usual. I spoke to no one of your arrival; I almost never revealed details of my home life to my American friends. As a child,



"I pretty much come and go as I please, since I'm unemployed."

I had always dreaded my birthdays, when a dozen girls would appear in the house, glimpsing the way we lived. I don't know how I would have referred to you. "A family friend," I suppose.

Then one day I came home from school and found your parents awake, their ankles crossed on top of the coffee table, filling up the sofa where I normally sat to watch "The Brady Bunch" and "Gilligan's Island." They were chatting with my mother, who was in the recliner with a bowl in her lap, peeling potatoes. Your mother was dressed in a nylon sari of my mother's, purple with red dots in various sizes. Distressing news of your mother's missing suitcase had come: it had been located in Rome but had been placed on a flight to Johannesburg. I remember thinking that the sari looked better on your mother than on mine; the intense purple shade was more flattering against her skin. I was told that you were outside in the yard. I did not go out to look for you. Instead I practiced the piano. It was nearly dark by the time you came in, accepting the tea that I was still too young to drink. Your parents drank tea as well, but by six o'clock the bottle of Johnnie Walker was on the coffee table, as it would be every night that you stayed with us. You had gone out in only a pullover, your father's costly camera slung around your neck. Your face showed the effects of the cold, your eyes blazing, the borders of your ears crimson, your skin glowing from within.

"There's a stream back there," you said, "in those woods."

My mother became nervous then, warning you not to go there, as she had so often warned me, as I had warned you the night you came, but your parents did not share her concern. What had you photographed, they asked instead.

"Nothing," you replied, and I took it personally that nothing had inspired you. The suburbs were new to you and to your parents. Whatever memories you possessed of America were of Cambridge, a place that I could only dimly recall.

You took your tea and disappeared to my room as if it were yours, emerging only when summoned for dinner. You ate quickly, not speaking, then returned upstairs. It was your parents who paid me court, who asked me questions and complimented me on my manners, on my piano-playing, on all the things I did to help my mother around the house. "Look, Kaushik, how Hema makes her lunch," your mother would say as I prepared a ham or turkey sandwich after dinner and put it in a paper bag to take to school the next day. I was still very much a child, while you, just three years older, had already eluded your parents' grasp. You did not argue with them and yet you did not seem to talk to them very much, either. While you were outside I'd heard them tell my mother how unhappy you were to be back. "He was furious that we left, and now he's furious that we're here again," your father said. "Even in Bombay we managed to raise a typical American teen-ager."

I did my homework at the dining table, unable to use the desk in my room. I worked on my ancient-Rome report, something that had interested me until your arrival. Now it seemed silly, given that you'd been there. I longed to work on it in privacy, but your father talked to me at length about the structural aspects of the Colosseum. His civil engineer's explanations went over my head, were irrelevant to my needs, but to be polite I listened. I worried that he would want to see whether I had incorporated the things he said, but he never bothered me about that. He hunted through his bags and showed me postcards he'd purchased, and though it had nothing to do with my report, he gave me a two-lire coin.



"Welcome to the after-party."

When the worst of your jet lag had subsided we went to the mall in my parents' station wagon. Your mother needed bras, one item that she could not borrow from my voluptuous mother. At the mall our fathers sat together in a sunken area of benches and potted plants, waiting, and you were given some money and allowed to wander off while I accompanied our mothers to the lingerie department in Jordan Marsh. Your mother led us there, with the credit card your father had handed to her before they parted. Normally we went to Sears. On her way to the bras she bought black leather gloves and a pair of boots that zipped to the knee, never looking at the price before taking something off the shelf. In the lingerie department it was me the saleswoman approached. "We have lovely training models, just in," she said to your mother, believing that I was her daughter.

"Oh, no, she's far too young," my mother said.

"But look, how sweet," your mother said, fingering the style the saleswoman presented on a hanger, lacy white with a rosebud at its center. I had yet to get my period and, unlike many of the girls

at school, still wore flower-printed undershirts. I was ushered into the fitting room, your mother watching approvingly as I took off my coat and sweater and tried on the bra. She adjusted the straps and attached the hook at the back. She tried things on as well, topless beside me without shame, though it embarrassed me to see her large, plum-colored nipples, the surprising droop of her breasts, the dark patches of underarm hair that gave off a faintly acrid but not altogether unpleasant smell. "Perfect," your mother said, running her finger below the elastic, along my skin, adding, "I hope you know that you're going to be very beautiful one day." Despite my mother's protests, your mother bought me my first three bras, insisting that they were a gift. On the way out, at the makeup counter, she bought a lipstick, a bottle of perfume, and an assortment of expensive creams that promised to firm her throat and brighten her eyes; she was uninterested in the Avon products my mother used. The reward for her purchases at the makeup counter was a large red tote bag. This she gave to me, thinking that it would be useful for my books, and the next day I took it to school.

After a week your father began his new job, at an engineering firm forty miles away. At first my father got up early and dropped him off before returning to Northeastern to teach his economics classes. Then your father bought an Audi with a stick shift. You stayed home with our mothers—your parents wanted to wait until they'd bought their home to see which school you would go to. I was stunned, and envious—half a year without school! To my added chagrin, you were not expected to do anything around the house, never to return your plate or glass to the sink, never to make my bed, which I would see from time to time through the partly open door to my room in a state of total disarray, the blanket on the floor, your clothes heaped on my white desk. You ate enormous amounts of fruit, whole bunches of grapes, apples to their cores, a practice that fascinated me. I did not eat fresh fruit then; the textures and intensity of flavors made me gag. You complained about the taste, or lack of taste, but nevertheless decimated whatever my parents brought home from Star Market. I would find you, when I came home in the afternoons, always at the same end of the sofa, the toes of your thin bare feet hooked around the edge of the coffee table, reading books by Isaac Asimov that you'd picked off my father's shelves in the basement. I hated "Doctor Who," the one show you liked on television.

I did not know what to make of you. Because you'd lived in India, I associated you more with my parents than with me. And yet you were unlike my cousins in Calcutta, who seemed so innocent and obedient when I visited them, asking questions about my life in America as if it were the moon, astonished by every detail. You were not curious about me in the least. One day a friend at school invited me to see "The Empire Strikes Back" on a Saturday afternoon. My mother said that I could go, but only if you were invited as well. I protested, telling her that my friend did not know you. Despite my crush, I didn't want to have to explain to my friend who you were and why you were living in our house.

"You know him," my mother said.

"But he doesn't even like me," I complained.

"Of course he likes you," my mother said, blind to the full implication of what I'd said. "He's adjusting, Hema. It's something you've never had to go through."

The conversation ended there. As it turned out, you were uninterested in the movie, not having seen "Star Wars" in the first place.

One day I found you sitting at my piano, randomly striking the keys with your index finger. You stood up when you saw me and retreated to the couch.

"Do you hate it here?" I asked.

"I liked living in India," you said. I did not betray my opinion, that I found trips to India dull, that I didn't like the geckos that clung to the walls in the evenings, poking in and out of the fluorescent light fixtures, or the giant cockroaches that sometimes watched me as I bathed. I didn't like the comments my relatives made freely in my presence—that I had not inherited my mother's graceful hands, that my skin had darkened since I was a child.

"Bombay is nothing like Calcutta," you added, as if reading my mind.

"Is it close to the Taj Mahal?"

"No." You looked at me carefully, as if fully registering my presence for the first time. "Haven't you ever looked at a map?"

On our trip to the mall you'd bought a record, something by the Rolling Stones. The jacket was white, with what seemed to be a cake on it. You had no interest in the few records I owned—Abba, Shaun Cassidy, a disco compilation I'd ordered from a TV commercial with my allowance money. Nor were you willing to play your album on the plastic record-player in my room. You opened up the cabinet where my father kept his turntable and receiver. My father was extremely particular about his stereo components. They were off limits to me, and even to my mother. The stereo had been the single extravagant purchase of his life. He cleaned everything himself, wiping the parts with a special cloth on Saturday mornings, before listening to his collection of Indian vocalists.

"You can't touch that," I said.

You turned around. The lid of the player was already lifted, the record revolving. You held the arm of the needle, resting its weight on your finger. "I know how to play a record," you said, no longer making an effort to conceal your irritation. And then you let the needle drop.

How bored you must have been in my room full of girls' things. It must have driven you crazy, being stuck with our mothers all day long as they cooked and watched soap operas. Really it was my mother who did the cooking now. Though your mother kept her company, occasionally peeling or slicing something, she was no longer interested in cooking, as she had been in the Cambridge days. She'd been spoiled by Zareen, the fabulous Parsi cook you'd had in Bombay, she said. From time to time she would promise to make us an English trifle, the one thing she said she always insisted on making herself, but this didn't materialize. She continued to borrow saris from my mother, and went to the mall to buy herself more sweaters

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and trousers. Her missing suitcase never arrived, and she accepted this fact calmly, saying that it gave her an excuse to buy new things, but your father battled on her behalf, making a series of irate phone calls to the airline before finally letting the matter go.

You were in the house as little as possible, walking in the cold weather through the woods and along streets where you were the only pedestrian. I spotted you once, while I was on the school bus coming home, shocked at how far you'd gone. "You're going to get sick, Kaushik, always wandering outside like that," my mother said. She continued to speak to you in Bengali, despite your consistently English replies. It was your mother who came down with a cold, using this as an excuse to stay in bed for days. She refused the food my mother made for the rest of us, requesting only canned chicken broth. You walked to the mini-mart a mile from our house, bringing back the broth and issues of *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar*. "Go ask Parul Mashi if she wants tea," my mother said one afternoon, and I headed upstairs to the guest room. On my way I needed to use the bathroom. There was your mother, wrapped up in a robe, perched morosely on the edge of the bathtub, legs crossed, smoking a cigarette.

"Oh, Hema!" she cried out, nearly falling into the tub, so startled that she crushed the cigarette against the porcelain and not into the tiny stainless-steel ashtray she held cupped in her palm, and which she must have brought with her from Bombay.

"I'm sorry," I said, turning to leave.

"No, no, please, I was just going," she said. I watched as she flushed away the cigarette, rinsed her mouth at the sink, and applied fresh lipstick, blotting it with a Kleenex, which then fluttered into the garbage pail. Apart from her bindi, my mother did not wear makeup, and I observed your mother's ritual with care, all the more impressed that she would go to such lengths when she was unwell and spending most of her day in bed. She looked into the mirror intently, without evasion. The brief application of lipstick seemed to restore the composure that my sudden appearance had caused her to lose. She caught me looking at her reflection, and smiled. "One cigarette a day can't kill me, can it?" she said brightly. She opened the window, pulled some perfume out of her cosmetics bag, and sprayed the air. "Our little secret, Hema?" she said, less a question than a command, and left, shutting the door behind her.

In the evenings we sometimes went house hunting with you. We took the station wagon; the beautiful car your father had bought could not comfortably accommodate us all. My father drove, hesitantly, to unknown neighborhoods where the lawns were all a little bigger than ours, the houses spaced a little farther apart. Your parents searched first in Lexington and Concord, where the schools were best. Some of the homes we saw were empty, others full of the current occupants and their possessions. None, according to the conversations I overheard at night as I tried to fall asleep, were the sort my parents could afford. They stepped to the side as your parents discussed asking prices with the real-estate agents. But it wasn't money that stood in the way. The houses themselves were the problem, the light scant, the ceilings low, the rooms awkward, your parents always concluded as we drove back to our house. Unlike my parents, yours had opinions about design, preferring something contemporary, excited when we happened to pass a white box-like structure obscured by a thicket of tall trees. They sought an in-ground pool, or space to build one; your mother missed swimming at her club in Bombay. "Water views, that's what we should look for," your mother said, while reading the classified section of the *Globe* one afternoon, and this limited the search even further. We drove out to Swampscott and Duxbury to see properties overlooking the ocean, and to houses in the woods with views of private lakes. Your parents made an offer on a house in Beverly, but after a second visit they withdrew the bid, your mother saying that the layout was ungenerous.

My parents felt slighted by your parents' extravagant visions, ashamed of the modest home we owned. "How uncomfortable you must be here," they said, but your parents never complained, as mine did, nightly, before falling asleep. "I didn't expect it to take this long," my mother said, noting that almost a month had gone by. While you were with us there was no room for anyone else. "The

Dasguptas wanted to visit next weekend and I had to say no," my mother said. Again and again I heard how much your parents had changed, how we'd unwittingly opened our home to strangers. There were complaints about how your mother did not help clean up after dinner, how she went to bed whenever it suited her and slept close to lunchtime. My mother said that your father was too indulgent, too solicitous of your mother, always asking if she needed a fresh drink, bringing down a cardigan if she was cold.

"She's the reason they're still here," my mother said. "She won't settle for anything less than a palace."

"It's no easy task," my father said diplomatically, "starting a new job, a new way of life all over again. My guess is she didn't want to leave, and he's trying to make up for that."

"You would never put up with that sort of behavior in me."

"Let it go," my father said, turning away from her and tucking the covers under his chin. "It's not forever. They'll leave soon enough and then all our lives will go back to normal."

Somewhere, in that cramped house, a line was drawn between our two families. On one side was the life we'd always led, my parents taking me to Star Market every Thursday night, treating me to McDonald's afterward. Every Sunday I studied for my weekly spelling test, my father quizzing me after "60 Minutes" was over. Your family began to do things independently as well. Sometimes your father would come home from work early and take your mother out, either to look at properties or to shop at the mall, where slowly and methodically she began to buy all the things she would need to set up her own household: sheets, blankets, plates and glasses, small appliances. They would come home with bags and bags, amassing them in our basement, sometimes showing my mother the things they'd bought, sometimes not bothering. On Fridays your parents often took us out to dinner, to one of the overpriced mediocre restaurants in town. They enjoyed the change of pace, having mysteriously acquired a taste for things like steak and baked potatoes, while my parents had not. The outings were intended to give my mother a break from cooking, but she complained about these, too.

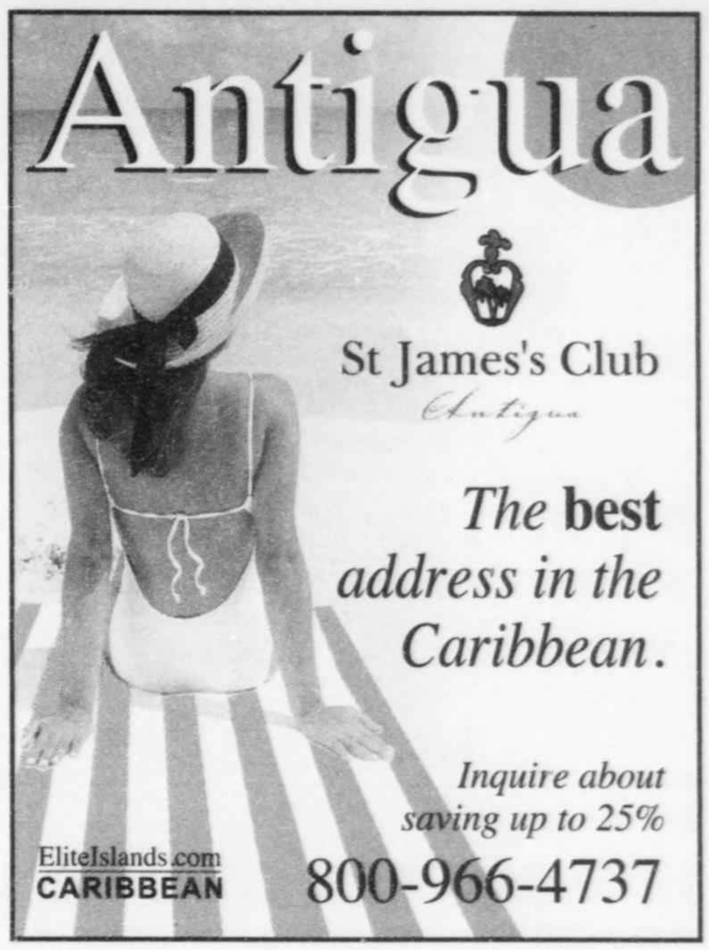
I was the only one who didn't mind your staying with us. In my quiet, complicated way I continued to like you, was happy simply to observe you day after day. And I liked your parents, your mother especially; the attention I got from her almost made up for what I didn't get from you. One day your father developed the photographs from your stay in Rome. I enjoyed seeing the prints, holding them carefully by the edges. The pictures were almost all of you and your mother, posing in piazzas or sitting on the edge of fountains. There were two shots of Trajan's column, nearly identical. "Take one for your report," your father said, handing me one. "That should impress your teacher."

"But I wasn't there."

"No matter. Say your uncle went to Rome and took a snap for you."

You were in the picture, standing to one side. You were looking down, your face obscured by a visor. You could have been anyone, one of the many passing tourists in the frame, but it bothered me that you were there, your presence threatening to expose the secret attraction I felt and still hoped would be acknowledged somehow. You had successfully wiped away all the other crushes I harbored at school, so that I thought only of being at home, and of where in the course of the afternoon and evening our paths might intersect, whether or not you would bother to glance at me at the dinner table. Long hours were devoted, lying on the cot in my parents' room, to imagining you kissing me. I was too young, too inexperienced, to contemplate anything beyond that. I accepted the picture, and pasted it into my report, but not before cutting the part with you away. That bit I kept, hidden among the blank pages of my diary, locked up for years.

Your wish for snow had not been granted since you'd arrived. There were brief flurries now and again, but nothing stuck to the ground. Then one day snow began to fall, barely visible at first, gathering force as the afternoon passed, an inch or so coating the streets by the time I rode the bus home from school. It was not a dangerous storm,



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but significant enough to break up the monotony of winter. My mother, in a cheerful mood that evening, decided to cook a big pot of *khichuri*, which she typically made when it rained, and for a change your mother insisted on helping, standing in the kitchen deep-frying pieces of potato and cauliflower, melting sticks of butter in a saucepan for ghee. She also decided that she wanted, finally, to make the long-promised trifle, and when my mother told her that there weren't enough eggs your father went to get them, along with the other ingredients she needed. "It won't be ready until midnight," she said as she beat together hot milk and eggs over the stove, allowing me to take over for her when she tired of the task. "It needs at least four hours to set."

"Then we can have it for breakfast," you said, breaking off a piece of the poundcake she'd sliced, stuffing it into your mouth. You seldom set foot in the kitchen, but that evening you hovered there, excited by the promise of trifle, which I gathered you loved, and which I'd never tasted.

After dinner we crowded into the living room, watching the news as the snow continued to fall, excited to learn that my school would be closed and my father's classes cancelled the next day. "You take the day off, too," your mother said to your father, and to everyone's surprise he agreed.

"It reminds me of the winter we left Cambridge," your father said. He and your mother were sipping their Johnnie Walker, and that night, though my mother still refused, my father agreed to join them for a small taste. "That party you had for us," your father continued, turning to my parents. "Remember?"

"Seven years ago," my mother said. "It was another life, back then." They spoke of how young you and I had been, how much younger they had all been.

"Such a lovely evening," your mother recalled, her voice betraying a sadness that all of them seemed to share. "How different things were."

In the morning icicles hung from our windows and a foot of snow blanketed the ground. The trifle, which we had been too tired to wait for the night before, emerged for breakfast along with toast and tea. It was not what I'd expected, the hot mixture I'd helped beat on the stove now cold and slippery, but you devoured bowl after bowl; your mother finally put it away, fearing that you would get a stomach ache. After breakfast our fathers took turns with the shovel, clearing the driveway. When the wind had settled I was allowed to go outside. Usually, I made snowmen alone, scrawny and lopsided, my parents complaining, when I asked for a carrot, that it was a waste of food. But this time you joined me, touching the snow with your bare hands, studying it, looking happy for the first time since you arrived. You packed a bit of it into a ball and tossed it in my direction. I ducked out of the way, and then threw one at you, hitting you in the leg, aware of the camera hanging around your neck.

"I surrender," you said, raising your arms. "This is beautiful," you added, looking around at our lawn, which the snow had transformed. I felt flattered, though I had nothing to do with the weather. You began walking toward the woods and I hesitated. There was something you wanted to show me there, you said. Covered in snow on that bright blue-skied day, the bare branches of the trees concealing so little, it seemed safe. I did not think of the boy, lost there and never found. From time to time you stopped, focussing your camera on something, never asking me to pose. We walked a long way, until I no longer heard the sounds of snow being shovelled, no longer saw our house. I didn't realize at first what you were doing, getting on your knees and pushing away the snow. Underneath was a rock of some sort. And then I saw that it was a tombstone. You uncovered a row of them, flat on the ground. I began to help you, unburying the buried, using my mittened hands at first, then my whole arm. They belonged to people named Simonds, a family of six. "They're all here together," you said. "Mother, father, four children."



"I never knew this was here."

"I doubt anyone does. It was buried

under leaves when I first found it. The last one, Emma, died in 1923."

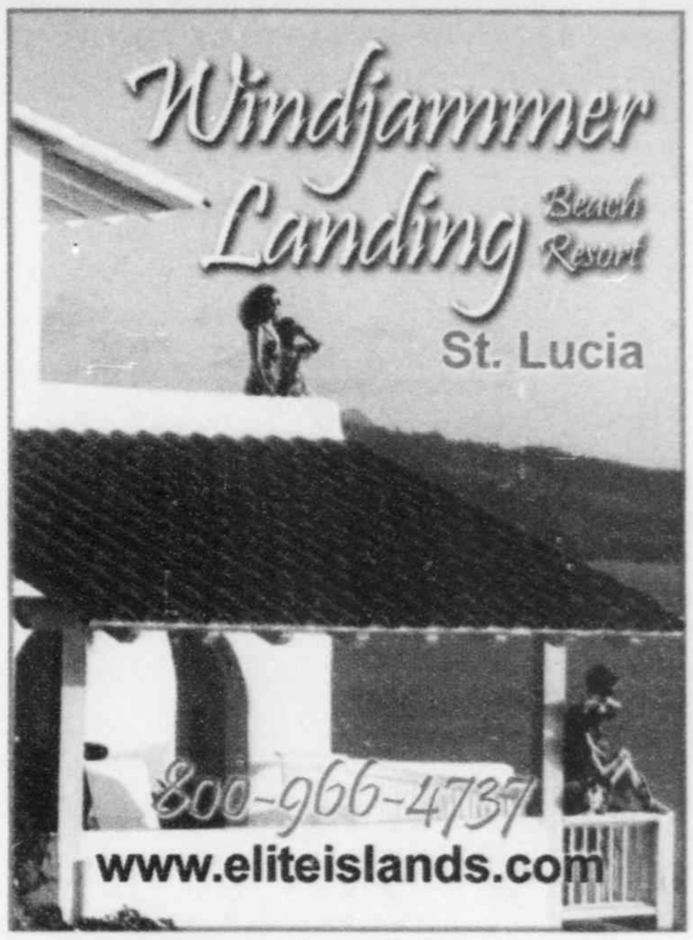
I nodded, disturbed by the similarity of the name to mine, wondering if this had occurred to you.

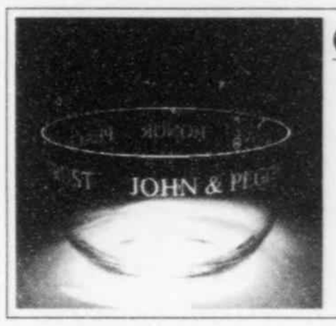
"It makes me wish we weren't Hindu, so that my mother could be buried somewhere. But she's made us promise we'll scatter her ashes into the Atlantic."

I looked at you, confused, and so you continued, explaining that there was cancer in her breast, spreading through the rest of her body. That was why you had left India. It was not so much for treatment as it was to be left alone. In India people knew she was dying, and had you remained there, inevitably, friends and family would have gathered at her side in your beautiful seaside apartment, trying to shield her from something she could not escape. Your mother, not wanting to be suffocated by the attention, not wanting her parents to witness her decline, had asked your father to bring you all back to America. "She's been seeing a new doctor at Mass General. That's where my father often takes her when they say they're going to see houses. She's going to have surgery in the spring, but it's only to buy her a little more time. She doesn't want anyone here to know. Not until the end."

The information fell between us, as shocking as if you'd struck me in the face, and I began to cry. At first the tears fell silently, sliding over my nearly frozen face, but then I started sobbing, becoming ugly in front of you, my nose running in the cold, my eyes turning red. I stood there, my hands wedged up under my cheekbones to catch the tears, mortified that you were witnessing such a pathetic display. Though you had never taken a picture of me in your life, I was afraid that you would lift the camera and capture me that way. Of course, you did nothing, you said nothing; you had said enough. You remained where you were, looking down at the tombstone of Emma Simonds, and eventually, when I calmed down, you began to walk back to our yard. I followed you along the path you had discovered, and then we parted, neither of us a comfort to the other, you shovelling the driveway, I going inside for a hot shower, my red puffy face assumed by our mothers to be a consequence of the cold. Perhaps you believed that I was crying for you, or for your mother, but I was not. I was too young, that day, to feel sorrow or sympathy. I felt only the enormous fear of having a dying woman in our home. I remembered standing beside your mother, both of us topless in the fitting room where I tried on my first bra, disturbed that I had been in such close proximity to her disease. I was furious that you had told me, and that you had not told me, feeling at once burdened and betrayed, hating you all over again.

Two weeks later, you were gone. Your parents bought a house on the North Shore, which had been designed by a well-known Massachusetts architect. It had a perfectly flat roof and whole walls of glass. The upstairs rooms were arranged off an interior balcony, the ceiling in the living room soaring to twenty feet. There were no water views but there was a pool for your mother to swim in, just as she had wanted. Your first night there, my mother brought food over so that your mother would not have to cook, not realizing what a favor this was. We admired the house and the property, the echoing, empty rooms that would soon be filled with sickness and grief. There was a bedroom with a skylight; underneath it, your mother told us, she planned to position her bed. It was all to give her two years of pleasure. When my parents finally learned the news and went to the hospital where your mother was dying, I revealed nothing about what you'd told me. In that sense I remained loyal. Our parents were only acquaintances by then, having gone their separate ways after the weeks of forced intimacy. Your mother had promised to have us over in the summer to swim in the pool, but as her health declined, more quickly than the doctors had predicted, your parents shut down, still silent about her illness, seldom entertaining. For a time my mother and father continued to complain, feeling snubbed. "After all we did for them," they said before drifting off to sleep. But I was back in my own room by then, on the other side of the wall, in the bed where you had slept, no longer hearing them. ♦





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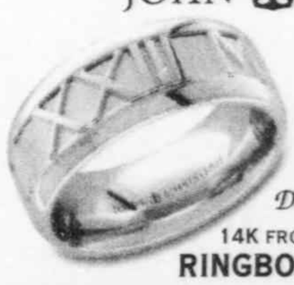


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A CRITIC AT LARGE

GOODBYE, COLUMBUS

When America won its independence, what became of the slaves who fled for theirs?

BY JILL LEPORE

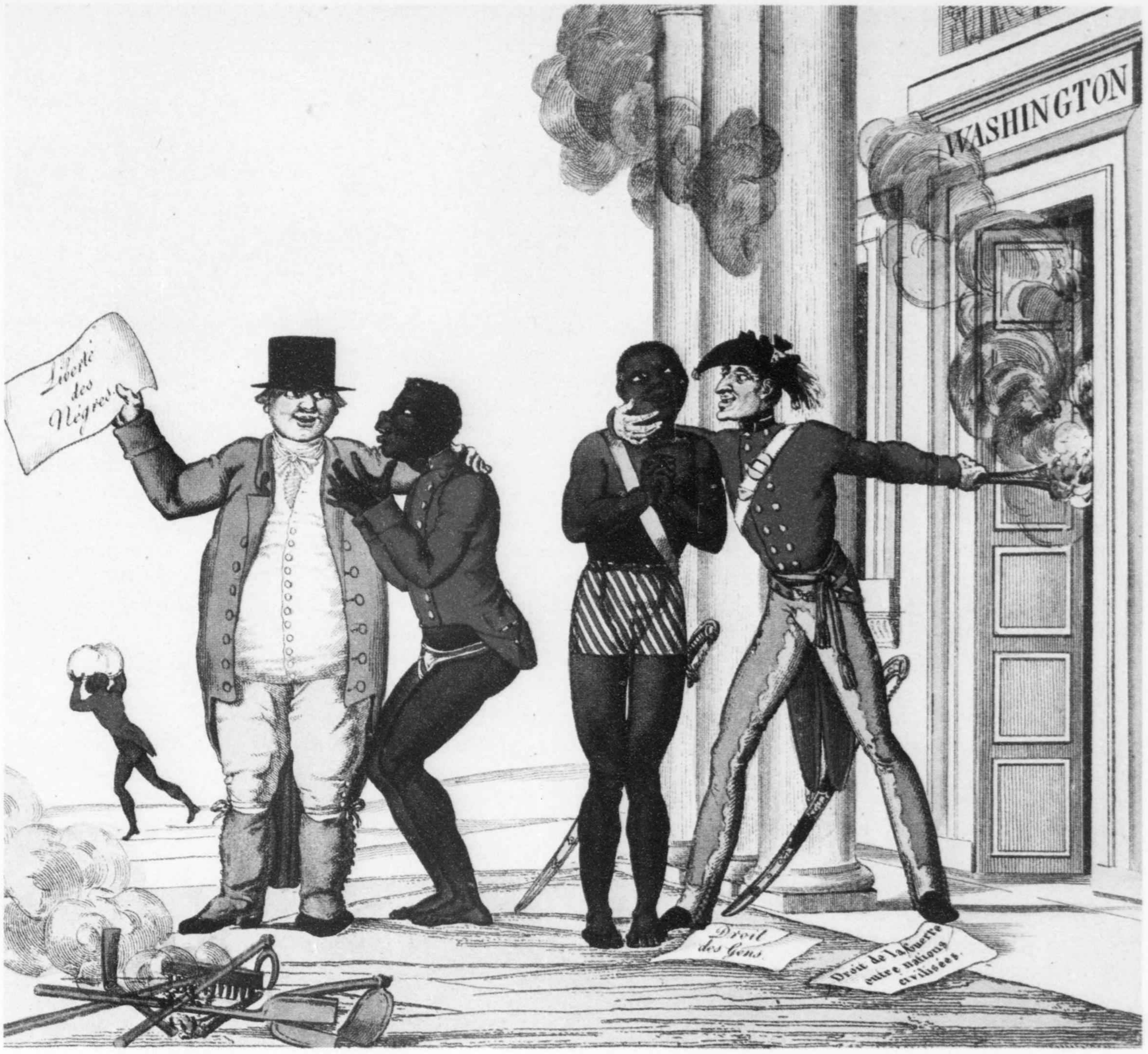
What with the noise, the heat, and the danger of being forced back into slavery, sometimes it's good to get out of the city. Such, at least, was the assessment of Harry Washington, who, in July of 1783, made his way to the salty, sunbaked docks along New York's East River and boarded the British ship L'Abondance, bound for Nova Scotia. A clerk dutifully noted his departure in the "Book of Negroes," a handwritten ledger listing the three thousand runaway slaves and free blacks who evacuated New York with the British that summer: "Harry Washington, 43, fine fellow. Formerly the property of General Washington; left him 7 years ago."

Born on the Gambia River around 1740, not far from where he would one day die, Harry Washington was sold into slavery sometime before 1763. Twelve years later, in November, 1775, he was grooming his master's horses in the stables at Mount Vernon when the royal governor of Virginia, Lord Dunmore, offered freedom to any slaves who would join His Majesty's troops in suppressing the American rebellion. That December, George Washington, commanding the Continental Army in Cambridge, received a report that Dunmore's proclamation had stirred the passions of his own slaves. "There is not a man of them but would leave us if they believed they could make their escape," a cousin of Washington's wrote from Mount Vernon, adding bitterly, "Liberty is sweet." In August of 1776, just a month after delegates to the Continental Congress determined that in the course of human events it sometimes becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the bands that have connected them with another, Harry Washington declared his own independence by running away to fight with Dunmore's all-black British regiment, wearing a uniform embroidered with the motto "Liberty to Slaves." Liberty may not have been as sweet as he'd hoped. For most of the war, he belonged to an unarmed company known as the Black Pioneers, who were more or less garbagemen, ordered to "Assist in Cleaning the Streets & Removing all Nuisances being thrown into the Streets." The Black Pioneers followed British troops under the command of Henry Clinton as they moved from New York to Philadelphia to Charleston, and, after the fall of Charleston, back to New York again, which is how Harry Washington came to be in the city in 1783, and keen to leave before General Washington repossessed it, and him.

No one knows how many former slaves had fled the United States by the end of the American Revolution. Not as many as wanted to, anyway. During the war, between eighty thousand and a hundred thousand (nearly one in five) left their homes, running from slavery to the freedom promised by the British, and betting on a British victory. They lost that bet. They died in battle, they died of disease, they ended up someplace else, they ended up back where they started, and worse off. (A fifteen-year-old girl captured while heading for Dunmore's regiment was greeted by her master with a whipping of eighty lashes, after which he poured hot embers into her wounds.) When the British evacuated, fifteen thousand blacks went with them, though not necessarily to someplace better.

From the moment that Cornwallis surrendered at Yorktown, in 1781, American allies reported seeing "herds of Negroes" fleeing through Virginia's swamps of pine and cypress. A few made it to a warship that Washington, under the terms of the British surrender, had allowed to sail to New York. Some ran to the French, on the not unreasonable supposition that earning wages polishing shoes in Paris had to be better than planting tobacco in Virginia for nothing but floggings. "We gained a veritable harvest of domestics," one surprised French officer wrote. Hundreds of Cornwallis's soldiers and their families were captured by their former owners, including five of Thomas Jefferson's slaves and two women owned by George Washington. Those who escaped raced to make it behind British lines before the slave catchers caught up with them. Pregnant women had to hurry, too, but not so fast as to bring on labor, lest their newborns miss their chance for a coveted "BB" certificate: "Born Free Behind British Lines."

As runaways flocked to New York, or Charleston, or Savannah, cities from which the British disembarked, their owners followed them. Boston King, an escaped slave from South Carolina, saw American slave owners "seizing upon their slaves in the streets of New York, or even dragging them out of their beds." A Hessian officer reported, "Almost five thousand persons have come into this city to take possession again of their former property." (It was at Washington's insistence that the names of those who boarded British ships were recorded in the "Book of Negroes," so that owners might later file claims for compensation.) In Charleston, after the ships were full, British soldiers patrolled the wharves to keep back the black men, women, and children who were frantic to leave the country. A small number managed to duck under the redcoats' raised bayonets, jump off the wharves, and swim out to the last longboats ferrying passengers to the British fleet, whose crowded ships included the aptly named Free Briton. Clinging to the sides of the longboats, they were not allowed on board, but neither would they



"We gained a veritable harvest of domestics," one French officer wrote about the American blacks who sought refuge abroad.

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let go; in the end, their fingers were chopped off.

But those who did leave America also left American history. Or, rather, they have been left out of it. Theirs is not an undocumented story (the "Book of Negroes" runs to three volumes); it's just one that has rarely been told, for a raft of interesting, if opposing, reasons. A major one is that nineteenth-century African-American abolitionists decided that they would do better by telling the story of the many blacks who fought on the patriot side during the Revolution, and had therefore earned for their race the right to freedom and full citizenship and an end to Jim Crow. "Not a few of our fathers suffered and bled" in the cause of American independence, Peter Williams, Jr., declared in a Fourth of July oration in New York in 1830. (Williams's own father, who had joined American troops in defiance of his Loyalist master, later managed to purchase his freedom and went on to help found the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church.) When the Boston abolitionist William Cooper Nell published "The Colored Patriots of the American Revolution," in 1855, Harriet Beecher Stowe supplied an introduction:

> The colored race have been generally considered by their enemies, and sometimes even by their friends, as deficient in energy and courage. Their virtues have been supposed to be principally negative ones. This little collection of interesting incidents, made by a colored man, will redeem the character of the race from this misconception.

Best not to mention those who fled to the British. Having abandoned the United States, they not only were of no use in redeeming "the character of the race"; they had failed to earn the "passport" to citizenship that Nell believed patriot service conferred.

They were also too shockingly unfree to be included in grand nineteenth-century narratives of the Revolution as a triumph for liberty. As the historian Gary Nash observes in "The Forgotten Fifth: African Americans in the Age of Revolution" (Harvard; $19.95), slavery is so entirely missing from those histories that "it would appear that the British and the Americans fought for seven years as if half a million African Americans had been magically whisked off the conti-

nent." In 1891, the Harvard scholar John Fiske took notice of Dunmore's proclamation in his two-volume "American Revolution," only to dismiss it. "The relations between master and slave in Virginia were so pleasant," Fiske wrote, that Britain's "offer of freedom fell upon dull uninterested ears."

It wasn't until Benjamin Quarles's landmark "The Negro in the American Revolution," in 1961, that what Harry Washington might have had to say about that became clear: Liberty is sweet. Many fine scholars have followed in Quarles's wake, but it would be fair to say that their work has yet to challenge what most Americans think about the times that tried men's souls.

With no place in any national historical narrative, black refugees of the American Revolution have been set adrift. Perhaps, then, it is hardly surprising that they have been taken up recently not by American historians but by historians of the places they went to.

Two new histories of their travels, the most ambitious yet, have just been published, one written by an Englishman, the other by an Australian. The British historian Simon Schama's "Rough Crossings: Britain, the Slaves, and the American Revolution" (Ecco; $29.95) follows the exiles to Nova Scotia and Sierra Leone but keeps London, and English antislavery activists, at its center; Cassandra Pybus's "Epic Journeys of Freedom: Runaway Slaves of the American Revolution and Their Global Quest for Liberty" (Beacon; $26.95) follows them everywhere, including to the Australian penal colony of Botany Bay; she teaches at the University of Sydney.

Schama writes like no one so much as Dickens. Here is how he introduces the founder of England's antislavery movement, leaving his brother's house on Mincing Lane, "neither the worst nor the best address in the City of London," in 1765:

> The door opened and out stepped an angular man looking older than his thirty years. His tall but meagre frame, hollow cheeks, lantern jaw and short curled wig gave him the air of either an underpaid clerk or an unworldly cleric; the truth is that Granville Sharp was something of both.

Schama's book is divided into two parts. The first part chronicles Sharp's career. With close colleagues, including the abolitionist Thomas Clarkson and the former slave Olaudah Equiano, Sharp led Britain's extraordinary campaign to put an end to what he called the "Accursed Thing": human bondage. It took years, but they succeeded. England took a dramatic step toward abolishing slavery on its soil in 1772, in a landmark case in which a man named James Somerset won his freedom. In 1807, the British Parliament outlawed the slave trade. The following year, the U.S. Congress did the same. In other words, England banned domestic slavery decades before making it illegal for British merchants and ships' captains to buy and sell slaves. The United States did the reverse, outlawing the overseas slave trade in 1808 but not declaring an end to slavery until Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, in 1863.

Schama points out that news of the Somerset case, as much as Dunmore's proclamation, is what led so many American slaves to flee to British lines during the American Revolution. They wrongly believed that the Somerset judgment's nuanced and limited ruling meant that "as soon as any slave sets his foot on English ground he becomes free." For one American refugee, the link between England and liberty was so close that he renamed himself British Freedom. Or consider "Yankee Doodle, or, The Negroes Farewell to America," a minstrel song popular in London in the seventeen-eighties:

> Now farewell my Massa my Missey adieu
> More blows or more stripes will me e'er take from you . . .
> Den Hey! for old Englan' where Liberty reigns
> Where Negroe no beaten or loaded with chains

But, more often than not, the price of British freedom was poverty. "I am Thirty Nine Years of Age & am ready & willing to serve His Britinack Majesty," Peter Anderson told a relief commission in London. "But I am realy starvin about the Streets." At the beginning of the war, Anderson had left behind his wife and three children in Virginia to join Dunmore's regiment. He was wounded, captured, and sentenced to be hanged. After six months as a prisoner, he escaped and foraged in the woods until he found his way back to the British Army. All this he endured only to land in London, reduced to begging. The commissioners were not sympathetic. "Instead of being sufferers of the wars," they concluded, black veterans had benefitted from it. Penniless they might be, but they had "gained their liberty and therefore come with a very ill-grace to ask for the bounty of government."

Not everyone who evacuated with the British sailed to England. Like thousands of white Loyalists, black Loyalists were relocated to Britain's northern colonies: mostly to Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Ontario. Some fifteen hundred settled in Birchtown, Nova Scotia, making it the largest free black community in North America. It was also a disaster. By the time Harry Washington arrived there, in August of 1783, there was nothing to eat, it was too late to plant, and the topsoil was too thin for anything much to grow. In 1789, the settlers were still starving. Boston King reported, "Many of the poor people were compelled to sell their best gowns for five pounds of flour, in order to support life. When they had parted with all their clothes, even to their blankets, several of them fell down dead in the streets, thro' hunger. Some killed and ate their dogs and cats."

Meanwhile, in London, Granville Sharp and his colleagues on the Committee for the Relief of the Black Poor began



"Lost a step? Hell, no. Those young zebras are juiced."

making plans to send England's beleaguered blacks to Africa. This seems now, as it did to many people then, a preposterous plan, as if the slave trade could somehow be undone by this reverse voyage, settling freed slaves just a stone's throw from British slave-trading forts. While the emigrants waited on board ships in Portsmouth Harbor, the African-born writer and former slave Quobna Ottobah Cugoano warned that they "had better swim to shore, if they can, to preserve their lives and liberties in Britain, than to hazard themselves at sea . . . and the peril of settling at Sierra Leone." But sail they did. In May of 1787, nearly four hundred reached Sierra Leone, where they settled at a place they named Granville Town, and elected as their governor a runaway slave and Revolutionary War veteran from Philadelphia named Richard Weaver. Within five months, plagued by disease and famine, a hundred and twenty-two of the settlers were dead. And, just as Cugoano had predicted, some were kidnapped and sold into slavery all over again. In 1790, a local ruler burned Granville Town to the ground.

That was not to be the end of it. In the second part of "Rough Crossings," Schama turns to the journey of John Clarkson ("the 'other' Clarkson—second born, perfectly affable, sweet-tempered Johnny"), chosen by Sharp and the elder Clarkson to head a second attempt to settle Sierra Leone, this time with the "poor blacks" who had settled in Nova Scotia. In January, 1792, nearly twelve hundred black men, women, and children found berths on fifteen ships in Halifax Harbor. Among them were British Freedom and Harry Washington. Before the convoy left the harbor, Clarkson rowed from ship to ship, handing to each family a certificate "indicating the plot of land 'free of expence' they were to be given 'upon arrival in Africa.'"

The colony's new capital, on the Sierra Leone peninsula, was called the Province of Freedom; it did not live up to its name. There was death: along with dozens of others, Boston King's wife, Violet, died of "putrid fever" within weeks of arrival. There was intrigue: in 1792, Clarkson took what he thought would be a brief trip to England, but the colony's directors, dissatisfied with his failure to turn a profit from plantation crops, never sent him back. And there was avarice: despite the promise of free land, Clarkson's successors demanded exorbitant rents. "We wance did call it Free Town," some weary settlers wrote to Clarkson in 1795, "but since your absence we have a reason to call it a town of slavery."

By 1799, Sierra Leone's settlers had grown so discontented, so revolutionary in their rejection of the colony's tyrannical government, that they were, in the words of one London abolitionist, "as thorough Jacobins as if they had been trained and educated in Paris." The next year, a group of rebels declared independence. They were crushed. Tried by a military tribunal, they were banished from Freetown to the other side of the Sierra Leone River. In their exile, they elected Harry Washington as their leader, just months after George Washington died at Mount Vernon, having freed his slaves in his will.

Cassandra Pybus wants to rescue Harry Washington from the "callous indifference of history," to call attention to what he shared with the first President of the United States: "a commitment to the transforming ideals of liberty and self-determination." Schama is more interested in one of Harry Washington's fellow-rebels. "Rough Crossings" begins by imagining British Freedom "scratching a living from the stingy soil" of Nova Scotia and ends with his exile outside the Province of Freedom:

> We can picture him surviving . . . on a few acres, or more likely finding a way to do business with the local chiefs. And if he did indeed cling to that name, he could only do so by not crossing the river to Freetown. For he must have understood that he had had his day. Over there, no one had much use for British freedom any more. Over there was something different. Over there was the British Empire.

But picturing British Freedom is about all that we can do; apart from his name, we know almost nothing about him. (Because Freedom renamed himself, he can't be traced in records like the "Book of Negroes.") "British Freedom's name said something important: that he was no longer negotiable property," Schama writes. Names count—they mattered to the parents who named their BB-certified daughter Patience Freeman—but sometimes names aren't enough. Among Schama's many enviable talents as a historian and as a stylist is his ability to turn a name into a meditation on liberty and empire. But the asymmetry, borne of the asymmetry of the evidence, is not without con-

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sequences: the black expatriates in "Rough Crossings" have names and ages and imagined motives, while the lantern-jawed architect of their freedom, Granville Sharp, is rendered in all his Dickensian detail. Sharp is focussed; the settlers are a bit of a blur.

Pybus uses a different lens. She pays scant attention to the likes of Granville Sharp. Instead, she trails the fugitives relentlessly, including the unlucky few who, convicted of petty crimes in London, were shipped thirteen thousand miles away, to Botany Bay, a place whose staggering deprivations made it worse than London, worse than Birchtown, worse than Granville Town, worse than the Province of Freedom. Here's a hint: in 1790, the punishment for stealing food was increased from a thousand to two thousand lashes.

What Pybus offers is a collective biography, made possible through her painstaking—breathtaking—examination of tax lists, muster rolls, property deeds, court dockets, parish records, and unwieldy uncatalogued manuscripts like the papers of General Henry Clinton. It allows her to rattle off details like this: in Botany Bay in 1788, "John Randall, the black ex-soldier from Connecticut convicted of stealing a watch chain in Manchester, was married to Esther Howard, a white London oyster seller, convicted at the Old Bailey of stealing a watch." In case it escaped your notice, that's months of eye-straining archival research on three continents in just thirty-four words. (She later, and still more casually, throws out that Randall eventually found work as a kangaroo-hunter; that by 1792 he had received a land grant of sixty acres; and that, widowed twice, he married three times and had nine children before his death, in 1822.) Men like Randall, Pybus argues, "carried to the far corners of the globe the animating principles of the revolution that had so emphatically excluded them."

Maybe. But, at journey's end, it's hard to know what to make of the travails of British Freedom or Harry Washington or John Randall. To follow them is, still, to leave American history behind. The story of the British abolition movement has been elegantly told by Adam Hochschild, in "Bury the Chains: Prophets and Rebels in the Fight to Free an Empire's Slaves" (Houghton Mifflin; $26.95). It is also at the heart of an excellent new biography by Vincent Carretta, "Equiano the African: Biography of a Self-Made Man" (University of Georgia Press; $29.95). These, like Schama's and Pybus's, are rich and wonderful books. All the same, with their praise of prophets and rebels and self-made men on a global quest for liberty, some readers might conclude that English abolitionists and American runaways ought to serve as honorary Founding Fathers, as though the likes of Washington and Jefferson will no longer do. (Damn those slave-owning sons of liberty!)

In the midst of this, it's easy to forget that many eighteenth-century Americans considered the *British* hypocritical about slavery. After the Somerset decision, Benjamin Franklin complained:

> *Pharisaical Britain!* to pride thyself in setting free *a single Slave* that happens to land on thy coasts, while thy Merchants in all thy ports are encouraged by thy laws to continue a commerce whereby so many *hundreds of thousands* are dragged into a slavery that can scarce be said to end with their lives, since it is entailed on their posterity!

Moreover, it was far easier for Britain, where there were few slaves to begin with, to free its slaves than it was for the American colonies, where there was considerable support for ending the slave trade, something many patriots had come to see as having been imposed on them by a tyrannical king, to Britain's profit and not their own. In Thomas Jefferson's mind, promising freedom to the very people whom British slave traders had enslaved constituted George III's last, and most unforgivable, act of treachery. In a breathless paragraph at the end of his original draft of the Declaration of Independence, Jefferson blamed the King for the slave trade ("He has waged cruel war against human nature itself, violating its most sacred rights of life and liberty in the persons of a distant people who never offended him, captivating and carrying them into slavery"); for his vetoes of the colonists' efforts to abolish it ("Determined to keep open a market where *MEN* should be bought and sold, he has prostituted his negative for suppressing every legislative attempt to prohibit or to restrain this execrable commerce"); and for Dunmore's proclamation ("He is now exciting those very people to rise in arms among us, and to purchase that liberty of which he has deprived them, by murdering the people on whom he also obtruded them").

It was the Declaration's last, longest, and angriest grievance. The other delegates could not abide it: they struck it out almost entirely. To some, it went too far; to others, it didn't go far enough. And, as everyone knew, it was they, and not the British, who were by now most vulnerable to charges of hypocrisy. (As Samuel Johnson had wryly inquired in 1775, "How is it that we hear the loudest yelps for liberty among the drivers of negroes?") Best, then, to leave slavery out altogether.

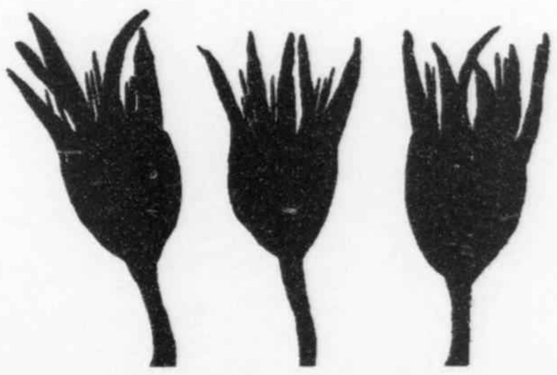
Historians have hardly known what to make of Jefferson's rant. Nash deems it "patently false." Schama calls it a "tour de force of disingenuousness." But at least part of what Jefferson meant was that it was the Revolution itself that derailed the American antislavery movement. In the seventeen-sixties and early seventeen-seventies, the colonists were arguably more ardent opponents of slavery than the British were. In 1764, the patriot James Otis, Jr., declared that nothing could be said "in favor of a trade that is the most shocking violation of the law of nature, has a direct tendency to diminish the idea of the inestimable value of liberty, and makes every dealer in it a tyrant." Not long after the Boston Massacre, in 1770, John Hancock's uncle preached a sermon urging the provincial legislature of Massachusetts to support the abolition of slavery, warning, "When God ariseth, and when he visiteth, what shall we answer!" In April, 1775, just five days before a shot was heard round the world, Philadelphians founded the Society for the Relief of Free Negroes Unlawfully Held in Bondage.

By no means did everyone in the colonies oppose the slave trade, and even fewer could imagine emancipation. Still, if the patriots hadn't needed to forge a union to protect their rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, they might have come to some agreement on ending slavery. But uniting the colonies in their opposition to the King and Parliament meant, by 1776, putting slavery to one side. It meant editing the Declaration of Independence. It also meant that Harry Washington, and John Randall, and British Freedom, and thousands more, decided to leave. They did not fare well. ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

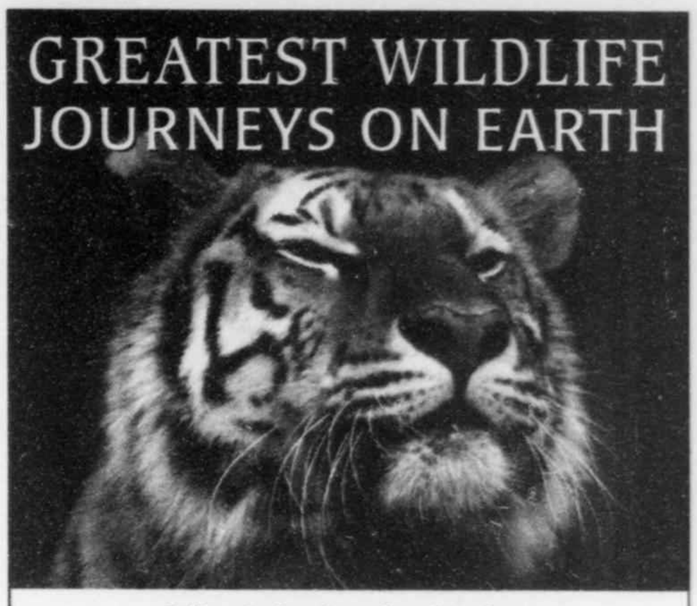
Seeing, *by José Saramago, translated from the Portuguese by Margaret Jull Costa (Harcourt; $25).* Saramago's sombre masterpiece "Blindness" had an almost mythic power, whereas his latest novel, a political satire set in the same nameless capital city, opens with more wit and less heart. When Election Day coincides with a terrible rainstorm, the government worries that no one will venture out to vote. This fear is unfounded, but the election results are even more alarming: seventy per cent of the city's voters have cast a blank ballot. Saramago has enormous fun imagining the official acrobatics precipitated by this apparent vote of no confidence, and, as the political hypocrisies and bureaucratic absurdities multiply, the narrative hums with correspondences to current events. Initially, readers may miss the previous novel's intensity of feeling, but this one's lightness proves deceptive: for Saramago's beleaguered citizens, even thoughts never uttered can be fatal, and everyone is guilty until otherwise notified.

Sono, *by Sarah Arvio (Knopf; $23).* The poems in Arvio's second collection are described as cantos, and they show almost as much allusive range as those of Pound himself. Written in pithy, often playful tercets, these verses (many set in Rome, where Arvio has a home) frequently begin with a simple string of words that serves as the basis for assonant riffing; "I was wandering in a quandary" becomes "and never without a qualm or a pang, / and thinking of taking a quantum leap / out of my quondam life and into yours." Arvio deploys insights from philosophy, psychology, and physics, but a constant preoccupation is that language constructs the things it attempts to describe, and in this her clearest forebear is Stevens, to whose "palm at the end of the mind" she alludes in the first and final poems.



Sweet and Low, *by Rich Cohen (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $25).* Cohen's unflinching and hilarious account of his family begins with his grandfather, a lawyer turned cafeteria counterman who "built the fortune that would be the cause of all the trouble." Combining saccharin, a powder three hundred times as sweet as sugar, with lactose, he produced the sugar substitute Sweet'N Low, which went on sale in 1957, in its iconic pink packets. It was aimed at diabetics, but diet mania made it ubiquitous, and by 1975 the family factory, in Fort Greene, Brooklyn, was producing forty million packets a day. Cohen, whose branch of the family was disinherited in a power struggle, acidly narrates the gradual unravelling of the family and its fortune, and detours through the histories of sugar, Brooklyn, dieting, and packaged foods. The nadir came in 1993, when federal agents raided the factory; a reputed mafioso who had been put in charge of lobbying against a saccharin ban had funnelled illegal contributions to politicians and bilked the company of millions.

Conversation, *by Stephen Miller (Yale; $27.50).* Miller traces the history of conversation from Aristotle to the present day, focussing particularly on the eighteenth century. For him, the Paris salons where Diderot opined and the London coffeehouses where Dr. Johnson imbibed between aphorisms represent conversation's apogee. In America, he feels, it fared less well, even before the contemporary menace posed by the Internet, iPods, and the polarization of the political sphere. Thoreau dismissed conversation as a waste of time, and Melville thought it was a tool of con men. Miller defines conversation as the act of speaking with others without any objective other than enjoyment and exchange, and there is something conversational about his own style, which tends toward anecdote and ignores theoretical approaches that could have enriched his argument.



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DANCING

HAPPY FACE

The Martha Graham company, contextualized.

BY JOAN ACOCELLA

After the terrible troubles that beset Martha Graham's company in the decade after her death, in 1991—fights between the artistic director and the board, a three-year lawsuit, even a brief close-down—the troupe seemed to emerge newborn a few years ago. Last spring, the company put on a fine, splashy two-week season at City Center, with a freshly commissioned work and, most important, a pit full of live musicians, something that few modern-dance organizations can afford. It looked like the old days. But as Janet Eilber, the company's new artistic director (and former star), told interviewers recently, it only looked that way. In fact, the troupe did not have the money for the live music, or for anything else.

It bought them anyway, and this was arguably a smart decision at the time. During the dark years, there was more press about the company's difficulties than about its performances. It got a reputation as a disaster zone, and this did not help in attracting funders or presenters. So, once the lawsuit was decided, the Graham enterprise needed to make a brilliant showing. Then the bill arrived. Before last year's season, the organization was four million dollars in debt; after it, the deficit was five million. As Eilber told Gia Kourlas, of the *Times*, "The house was papered." In other words, most of the tickets were given away. Two months later, Eilber came on as director, and her job, as she sees it, is to get people to buy tickets. The company, she says, has failed to address its true problems: not only the deficit but the fact that American modern dance, which Graham more or less created (her company is the oldest dance troupe in America), had moved on since her time, making her work seem old-fashioned. "It's *not* old-fashioned," Eilber told me—any more than any classic art. But, in order to convince audiences of this, you have to take them by the hand, explain the work, "contextualize" it. "That is my personal crusade," Eilber said.



Katherine Crockett performing Graham's "Lamentation" (1930).

If last year's season did not reflect the company's current situation, this year's—its eightieth-anniversary season—did, most emphatically. First, it was not two weeks long but one night long: a gala, on April 18th. It was not at City Center but at New York University's Skirball Center. It did not have a pit stuffed with live musicians; it had two pianists. That was as much as it could afford. (Almost all dance companies prosper, when they prosper, by touring. In New York, they lose money. This year's Graham season was originally announced as three performances, but two were dropped.) Second, Eilber's crusade was everywhere in evidence. The evening was chockablock with explanations. Indeed, the whole first half was a history lesson, about Graham's discovery of her modernist idiom. It opened with a suite of dances full of turn-of-the-century exoticism by Graham's teachers Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn, together with one such piece, "Three Gopi Maidens" (1926), by Graham herself. This, we were being told, was how she started. Then—*shazam!*—came the breakthrough, and we saw the modernist Graham: "Heretic" (1929), "Lamentation" (1930), a section from "Chronicle" (1936). Out went the veils and the prettiness; in came the angled arms, the slab-like groupings, the twentieth century. This historical lineup, presented under the title "Prelude and Revolt," is exactly what Eilber means by contextualizing. It was as if a museum show gave us, in the first room, Picasso's Blue Period paintings and then, in the second, confronted us with the "Demoiselles d'Avignon." We have all seen such exhibits. They are exciting; so was "Prelude and Revolt." And, as in a museum, we got wall text. The actress Judith Ivey talked us through the dances, told us jokes, gave us nuggety quotes from Graham ("I showed onstage what most people came to the theatre to avoid"), so that, in a postmodern period, we could grasp the modernism that preceded and underlay it, just as we might with Picasso.

Contextualizing wasn't the end of this rescue project. Graham, like her contemporary Eugene O'Neill, was best known for her high, dark, "mythic" dramas, for showing audiences that life is hard, and

DEMETRIOS PSILLOS

art is hard. But in the second half of the program, which consisted mainly of excerpts from the middle-period Graham, the darkness was rarely glimpsed. "El Penitente" (1940), a rather grave adaptation of a Southwestern Indian religious ritual, was represented only by its cutest, sexiest part, a little dance about Eve's temptation of Adam. From "Dark Meadow" (1946), we saw only a mating dance for the ensemble—a beautiful number, but not exactly representative of that heavy-weather piece. And the show ended with "Maple Leaf Rag" (1990), Graham's last work, which is uncharacteristically comical—indeed, self-parodic. The dancers have fits, bang their foreheads, act as though they were at the fall of Troy; then they cheer up and run around. "Maple Leaf Rag," it has been said, was not actually Graham's last work but something cobbled together by her company to supply a last work—and an audience-friendly one—when she was too old (ninety-six) to do so. We won't go into that. The point is that this piece was our sendoff. "Martha wasn't so grim," the programmers were saying. "Martha was fun, too."

The fun was deployed strategically. Before "Three Gopi Maidens," we were shown an old film of that dance, complete with a black slave in harem pants. People in the audience giggled—they were meant to—and as a result they giggled less when, in the live performance that followed, the slave reappeared. They got the message: this wasn't cornballerie, it was history. With the gut-clenchers, too, our laughter was preëmpted. The program included a clip from the 1954 movie "White Christmas," with Danny Kaye singing a deliciously philistine Irving Berlin song about how, with the advent of art dance—or "choreography," as it had only recently come to be called—the fun had gone out of show dancing: "Through the air they keep flying,/Like a duck that is dying./Instead of dance, it's choreography." Surrounding Kaye are six fierce-looking virgins, in plain, Graham-style gowns, poking their limbs out this way and that. But the gala's most aggressive comic maneuver was its inclusion of the Graham impersonator Richard Move as the host of the second half of the program. Move made his name as the creator and star of a number of very funny Graham-parody shows produced at a night club, Mother, in the meat-packing district, starting in 1996. His relationship with her organization, he has said, began with his receiving a cease-and-desist order from its lawyers. Now he is the company's friend, its contextualizer.

I will not second-guess this program. If many of the selections did not follow the main track of Graham's career, they were nevertheless performed honorably. The dancers didn't trash "Three Gopi Maidens"; they tried to put it over. In the second half, Miki Orihara and Tadej Brdnik were persuasively innocent, and poignant, as the bride and groom of "Appalachian Spring." As for Fang-Yi Sheu's performance of Cassandra's doom-predicting solo from "Clytemnestra," it was like an earthquake. That, too, got contextualized. Before Sheu came out, Judith Ivey declaimed Cassandra's fiery lines from Aeschylus' "Agamemnon," Graham's source. But this was not an intrusion. Ivey did the speech just fine, and there was nothing wrong with telling the spectators, most of whom probably hadn't read Aeschylus lately, what the solo was about. Other additions to the program were also helpful. The same could be said of certain subtractions. Not all of Graham's work was great. The mating dance from "Dark Meadow" is just about all I want to see of that portentous piece.

The only serious misfire was the use of Richard Move, and this was not his fault. He was put in a bind. Like Ivey, he was assigned to introduce the dances, give information. At the same time, as part of the evening's desanctification campaign, he was supposed to do his Martha impersonation—dress up in that glittering cloak, pin that breadbox-size chignon to the back of his head, and tell us, in that demure little voice that Graham had, how satisfying it is for a woman to kill her husband. He did so, but this sat poorly alongside his tour-guide narration. Furthermore, Move and another guest star, the superb Desmond Richardson, were delegated to perform a sexy male-female duet from Graham's 1965 "Part Real—Part Dream." This might have gone down well in the meat-packing district. (Move, who is six feet four inches tall, looked as though he could eat Richardson for dinner.) But, at a Graham company gala, it was pretty confusing—to the performers as well. Richardson played it straight; Move played it crooked. I waited for it to be over.

So certain things didn't work. And for a portion of the Graham audience, I suspect, Eilber's whole effort to renovate this repertory is not going to work. No artist ever had a greater reputation for high-mindedness than Graham. That was part of her mystique, and so, for some of her old fans, a program like this is going to look like a cheap sales job. But Eilber cannot afford to worry about the old fans. She needs new fans. If the Graham company were a European organization, it would be given a comfortable government subsidy in recognition of its status as a repository of the national art. But our government doesn't care about having a national art, so the Grahamites have to make their own way. They may be able to. The deficit is back down to four million dollars, and some substantial tours (Germany, Greece) are in the offing. Nevertheless, at the opening of the New York season the dancers—together with the teachers at the company's school—hadn't been paid in weeks. They met with their union to discuss whether they should pull out of the season; they decided to go on. But for how long? Fang-Yi Sheu, who is the company's star—and, if the troupe needs anything (besides money), it needs a female star of her magnitude, to fill the Sarah Bernhardt-size roles that Graham made for herself—is now living in her native Taiwan. She is still on the company's roster, but after the gala she took off her makeup and caught a midnight flight to Taipei, to fulfill an engagement there, for which, presumably, she was paid. These being the company's circumstances, it is not hard to see why Eilber put on a short, hand-holding season. ♦

From the Walton (N.Y.) Reporter.

Not much small stuff going on this week—must be a mid-season social slump—but the always-active senior citizens will meet in February, at the Andes Methodist Church, for blood pressure checks from 11:30 a.m. to noon, followed by a sumptuous lunch of roast pork, mashed potatoes and gravy, squash, dessert and beverages.

Don't forget the salt.

MUSICAL EVENTS

HANDEL TIME

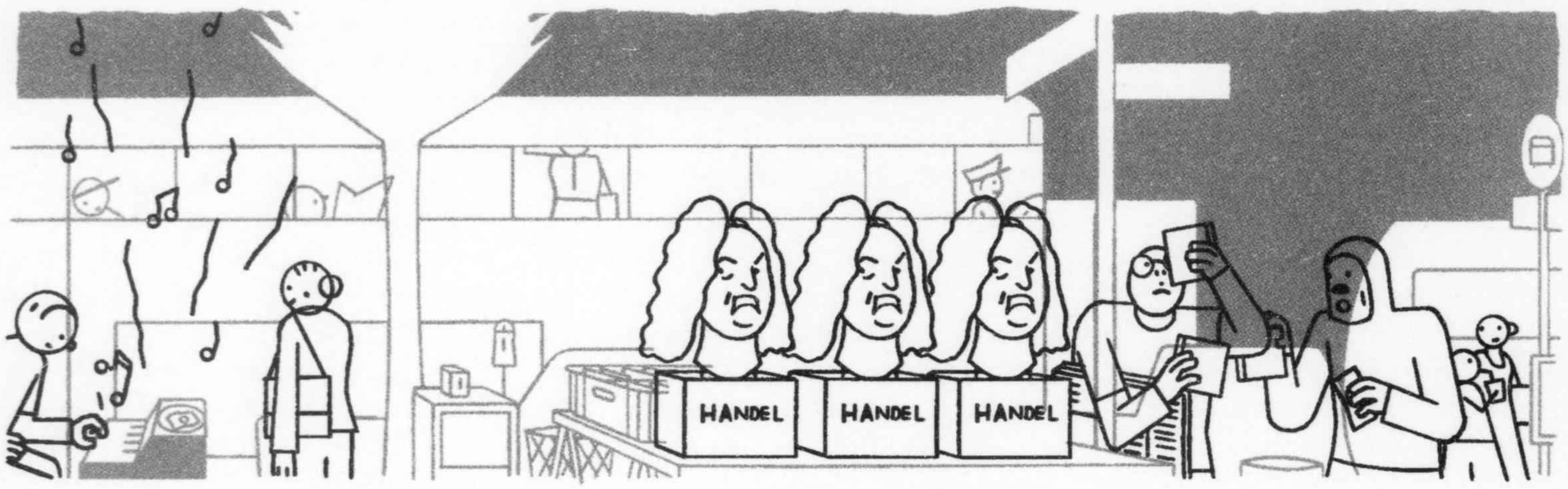
New York joins in the Baroque revival.

BY ALEX ROSS

There is nothing in music more unstoppably beautiful than a Handel aria moving in slow, regal splendor. It is like a godly machine, crushing all ugliness and plainness in its path. Consider "Ombra mai fù," an ode to a shady tree, from the 1738 opera "Serse." It has a stately tempo marking (Larghetto); a swaying meter of three-quarter time; a hypnotic procession of quarter notes in the bass; and immaculate lyric turns in the upper parts and the solo voice. As Baroque art goes, it is not very baroque. Not a single note is out of place, or seems to have been put there for a decorative purpose. The aria is all structure, as if it were an ideal modern building whose girders are gorgeous in themselves. There is something uncanny about how the segments are joined together. Often, the changing chords of any given bar pivot on a single tone, and this tone is found sometimes in the bass, sometimes in the middle parts, sometimes on top. Like a great river in the sun—the best way to track such music is by a triangulation of metaphors—the aria glitters on the surface and flows powerfully below.

For a long time, the better part of George Frideric Handel's output seemed destined for oblivion, with "Messiah," the "Water Music," and other popular favorites standing in for the rest. In the past decade or two, however, beauty has triumphed over time, and dozens of Handel's operas and oratorios have crossed over into the mainstream repertory. So far this year, "Hercules" has been staged at BAM, "Acis and Galatea" has played at New York City Opera, and "Solomon" has had a concert performance at Lincoln Center. This month, "Rodelinda" runs at the Metropolitan Opera. Deluxe recordings are piling up; some recent highlights are René Jacobs's vigorous version of "Saul," Alan Curtis's tasteful "Radamisto," and strongly characterized recitals by Sandrine Piau, Cecilia Bartoli, and Lorraine Hunt Lieberson, who sings a near-definitive "Ombra mai fù." With the release of Curtis's "Lotario" in 2004, all thirty-nine surviving Handel operas have been recorded.

It's a bit of a mystery why Handel has become so crucial for early-twenty-first-century listeners. The prior century made a cult of Bach, whose music takes the form of an endless contrapuntal quest. Perhaps, in an age of information overload and ambient fear, we have more need for Handel's gentler, steadier art. At the same time, though, this composer appeals to the permanent hunger for high-class melodrama and psychological theatre. Not only the operas but also some of the oratorios have proved stageworthy; Peter Sellars's deeply gripping 1996 production of "Theodora," which is available on DVD, was a landmark in this respect. Handel commands our attention with bold changes of tone, vivid swings from joy to rage, and spells of paralyzing sadness. From time to time, he lifts his façades to disclose a shadowy background, full of broken forms and desperate gestures. He does not conceal the artifice of his mythological stories—deus-ex-machina endings seem designed to cause as much amusement as awe—and thereby acknowledges the limits of art. He does not want to save the world, only to make it better for a little while.



In the past decade, Handel has become a repertory staple. All thirty-nine of his operas have now been recorded.

Handel was born in Saxony in 1685, moved to London in 1712, and died there in 1759. Scholars have lately been poking around in the corners of his biography, trying to flesh out the opaque image that appears in standard histories—that of the grumpy German music master with the waspish tongue. Ruth Smith has studied the composer's relationship to the politics of his time, showing how his grand Israelite oratorios metaphorically celebrated the regime of King George II, while also leaving room for religious dissent and contrary thought. Donald Burrows has emphasized the piety and workmanship of this seemingly worldly, lordly figure. Gary Thomas and Ellen Harris have delved into the composer's sexuality, drawing implications from the fact that he often moved in what would now be described

LAURENT CILLUFFO

as gay circles. We get the sense of a crafty character who had a flair for satisfying diverse constituencies without becoming captive to any of them. He was at once a great artist and a great entrepreneur, who somehow insured that business imperatives never compromised his artistic values.

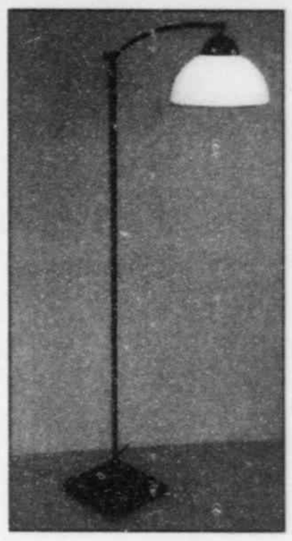
Unconfirmed reports of a gay Handel—there is no definite evidence of a relationship either with a man or with a woman—have caught the fancy of directors, who have used them as an excuse to camp up the operas mercilessly. Seldom is there an up-tempo scene in Handel without a lot of prancing to dotted rhythms, often in ersatz Mark Morris moves. City Opera's recent Handel productions have worked the camp angle, though not to excess. Mark Lamos stages the pastoral tragedy "Acis" as an ambisexual garden party disrupted by a ridiculous dancing version of the giant Polyphemus, but he manages to find tenderness and complexity in the scenario. By having Damon, Acis's boon companion, hold his friend in his arms during the aria "Consider, fond shepherd," he echoes a remarkable find in Harris's book "Handel as Orpheus"—that the climactic trio of the opera is based on a same-sex love poem by Alexander Pope. There is something recognizably Handelian about this production's intermingling of preciousness and heartbreak. By contrast, Luc Bondy's stark, modern staging of the oratorio "Hercules" is too solemn by half, unable to give life to those long sections of the work in which characters set out their feelings as ornate décor.

One reason that opera companies are so Handel-happy is that there is a practically infinite supply of singers who can spin out his intricate vocal lines with agility and ease. In "Acis," Philippe Castagner and Sarah Jane McMahon sang the leads fluently; Jason Hardy brought a strong bass voice and goofy dance moves to the role of Polyphemus; and the young tenor Nicholas Phan rendered the part of Damon in clean-cut, attractive style. The star of BAM's "Hercules" was the mezzo-soprano Joyce DiDonato, who, in a string of recent appearances, has transcended a first-rate technique to deliver portrayals of transfixing, sometimes frightening intensity. "Solomon," at Lincoln Center, was led by David Hansen, a pure-voiced young Australian who is typical of a new breed of matinée-idol countertenors. Two more representatives of the type are singing in the Met's sumptuous production of "Rodelinda": the star German countertenor Andreas Scholl and the up-and-coming Christophe Dumaux. There is little reason to think that Handel would have disapproved.

New York's unofficial Handel festival brought to town two more or less infallible interpreters of the composer: William Christie, who conducted Les Arts Florissants in "Hercules," and René Jacobs, who led the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment in "Solomon." Both men have a knack for making stylized Baroque forms sound alive and spontaneous: rhythms bounce along with quasi-popular energy, vibrant colors burst on the ears. Christie, who has come to BAM almost every year since 1989, is a familiar quantity, as coolly dazzling as ever. Jacobs, who has issued a string of brilliant and provocative recordings on the Harmonia Mundi label, is seen here much less often, and his conducting of "Solomon," by turns opulent and intimate, humorous and savage, forbiddingly grand and enveloppingly warm, was the revelation of the season.

There is a sequence in Act III of "Solomon" that presents Handel's genius at its vertiginous height. The King is showing off the Temple of Jerusalem to the Queen of Sheba, and orders musical performances to adorn the setting. Among them is a dark, violent chorus of "hopeless love," which plunges through a harmonic vortex from G minor to E-flat minor and back again. It is an enormous shock in the context of a generally festive piece. Then Solomon calls for a mood of calm, and the vortex vanishes. It's as if Handel were telling us that music is nothing more than a magic trick that he performs on command. You might suspect him of cynicism, except that these disparate movements add up to their own temple of sound, which has withstood the centuries and shines brighter than ever. The last line of the oratorio, thundered over chords of marble, becomes self-referential: "But the fame of the just shall eternally last." ♦

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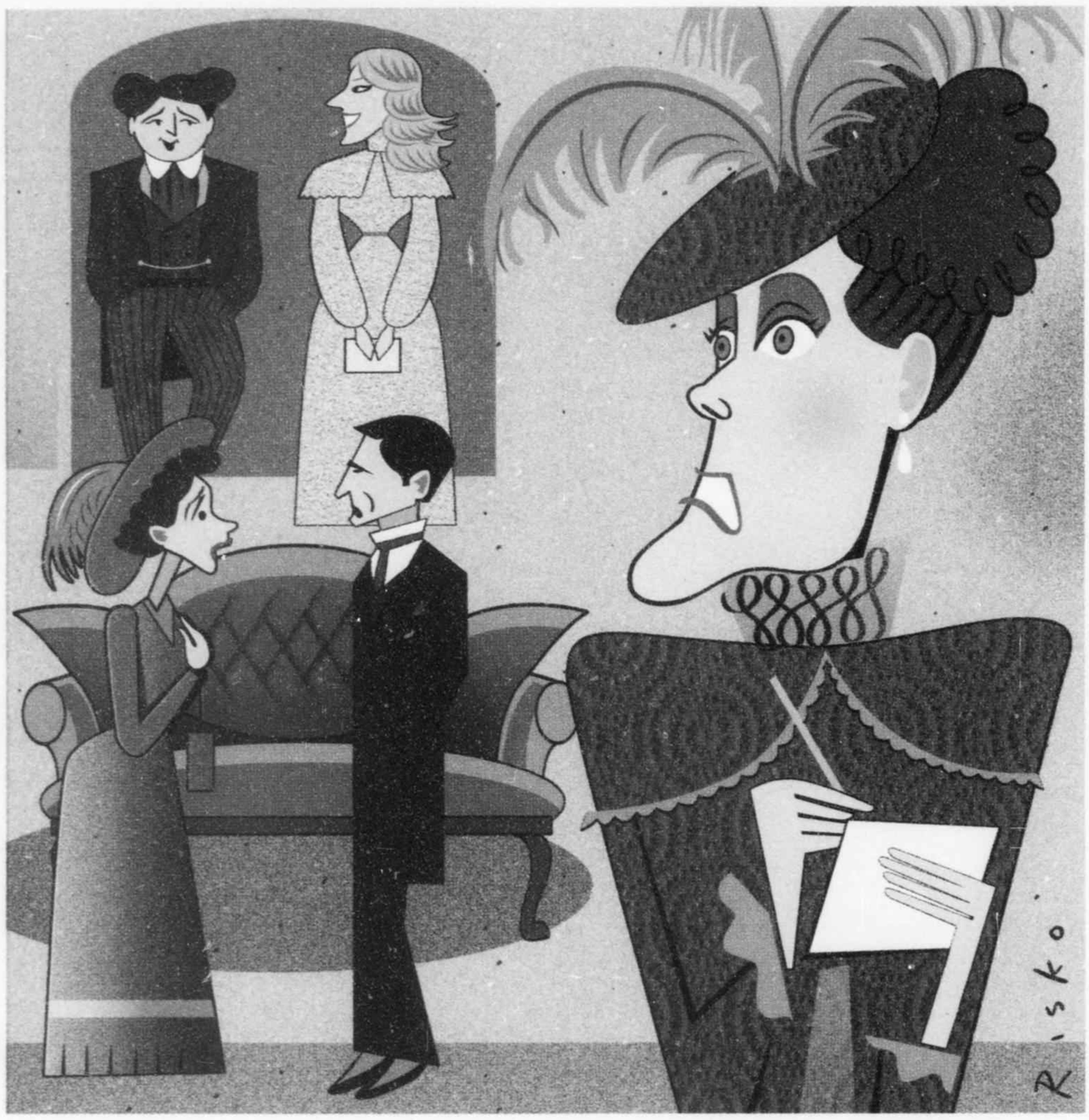
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THE THEATRE

LESS THAN EARNEST

Oscar Wilde's drawing-room satire.

BY HILTON ALS



Lynn Redgrave (right), as Lady Bracknell, accentuates the opera buffa in Wilde's play.

ROBERT RISKO

Of the many joys and miseries that buoyed or afflicted Oscar Wilde's soul, becoming a practicing Catholic was not one. Wilde's mother, the Irish nationalist-leaning poet and critic Lady Jane "Speranza" Wilde, insisted that her son be baptized in the Catholic faith, but Wilde's father, the surgeon and writer Sir William Wilde, took young Oscar's religious education in hand, ushering him into the Protestant Church. ("All women become like their mothers," Wilde wrote. "That is their tragedy. No man does. That's his.") While still a student at Dublin's Trinity College, in the early eighteen-seventies, the young poet with distinctly Hellenic leanings did have a brief flirtation with the Eucharist. But, as Richard Ellmann points out in his expansive and sympathetic 1984 biography, Wilde's interest in the Catholic Church—with its robes, its incense, and its ritual of taking in the body of Christ in wafer form—was, for the playwright-to-be, an early manifestation of a passionate curiosity about form and spectacle.

Ellmann is too even-tempered a writer to mention that Wilde's attraction to Catholicism may have had something to do with his fascination with power. Wilde fell under the sway of Cardinal John Henry Newman's 1870 tract "Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent" soon after the Vatican declared papal infallibility, thus conferring a certain unimpeachable grandeur on the Catholic faith. Like the iconoclastic, ambitious Lady Wilde, Oscar, who eventually took his degree at Oxford, wrote out of a sense of his own difference—as a homosexual Irishman in England—but with both eyes fixed on those powerful institutions (society, marriage, the Church) which not only satisfied his need for convention but provided him with ample material for satire. ("Never speak disrespectfully of Society, Algernon," Lady Bracknell cautions in "The Importance of Being Earnest." "Only people who cannot get into it do that.") Wilde's habit was to heckle from the back of the class while wearing expensive velvets and brandishing a lily. Until he was convicted on charges of gross indecency, at the age of forty, in 1895 (when both "An Ideal Husband" and "The Importance of Being Earnest" were already hits in London's West End), Wilde experienced little social ostracism. He was as certain of his place in society as any closeted homosexual who is taken up for his "naughty" views on the luxurious world of gossip and furbelows can be.

In a collection of epigrams titled "Phrases and Philosophies for the Use of the Young," Wilde wrote, "The first duty in life is to be as artificial as possible. What the second duty is no one has as yet discovered." Like Wilde, the characters in "The Importance of Being Earnest" (in revival at the Brooklyn Academy of Music's Harvey Theatre) are less interested in naturalism than they are in the great divide between what people say and what people do. "The Importance of Being Earnest" is both an English drawing-room comedy and the playwright's ultimate revenge on the English drawing room. One can read it, in a sense, as Wilde's social and spiritual autobiography, emblematic of his desire to be liked both for his lighthearted effervescence and for his A-student's adherence to correct dramatic form. It is the record of a man who knew less about who he was than about how he wanted to be perceived.

The play opens, at BAM, on a beautiful set by Kevin and Trish Rigdon. The colors—all blues and whites and browns—suggest the bloom of youth, which Algernon (Robert Petkoff), in whose home we find ourselves, happens to be enjoying. Slightly plump, munching on cucumber sandwiches, Algernon also plays the piano, as he acknowledges, not accurately but "with wonderful expression." Algernon has a chum, the somewhat in-

tense Jack Worthing (James Waterston). The strange thing is that Jack also appears to go by the name of Ernest. "You have always told me [your name] was Ernest," Algernon says. "I have introduced you to everyone as Ernest. . . . You are the most earnest-looking person I ever saw in my life." But appearances deceive. Jack has a reason to call himself Ernest in the city and Jack in the country. In the country, he lives a life of high moral purpose. He is the guardian of the innocent Cecily Cardew (Charlotte Parry), who must know nothing of his city scrapes or of his involvement with Algernon's first cousin, Gwendolen Fairfax (Bianca Amato), a dark-haired urban sophisticate. Putting all this to Algernon, Jack says, "That, my dear Algy, is the whole truth pure and simple." To which Algernon responds, "The truth is rarely pure and never simple. Modern life would be very tedious if it were either, and modern literature a complete impossibility!" The modern literature Wilde is referring to here includes the play we are watching, which, until its final, improbable moments, has very little to do with simple truth and much to do with pretense; loyalties and affections are dropped and picked up like the stitches in an especially complicated piece of needlework. After Algernon and Jack exchange confessions—Algernon has invented a sick friend who lives in the country so that *he* can get to the country when he needs to—Gwendolen enters, followed by her mother, Lady Bracknell (the brilliant Lynn Redgrave).

As Gwendolen, Amato has a petulance that is sometimes amusing, but she brings no imaginative brio to the role. Redgrave, on the other hand, understands the play's opera-buffa elements, and she adds to them by taking charge of her role with the single-minded aggression of the lone fag hag in a gay bar. Sweeping onstage in a long, pigeon-gray skirt and matching jacket, greedily grabbing for cucumber sandwiches, she cuts through Algernon and Jack's momentary fraternity with piercing, skeptical eyes. She is a woman for whom practical considerations are unobscured by emotional filigree.

LADY BRACKNELL: Good afternoon, dear Algernon, I hope you are behaving very well.

ALGERNON: I'm feeling very well, Aunt Augusta.

LADY BRACKNELL: That's not quite the same thing. In fact, the two things rarely go together.

Here, as elsewhere, the point is made as an afterthought. Lady Bracknell's "in fact" is the linguistic bridge she must cross to deliver the punch line. In fact, Lady Bracknell possesses few facts, only criticisms—the solipsist's version of the truth.

The play's director, Sir Peter Hall, seems to understand the coldness at the heart of Wilde's modernism, and what makes it successful with audiences: Wilde's comedies give us Henry James without the questions or the longing. Thus unencumbered, the audience is free to listen to the show's seemingly merry score without feeling troubled by the more sobering dialogue. (Hall adds nothing to the play, but he doesn't detract from it by overinterpreting it, either. It's direction on autopilot.) When Gwendolen meets young Cecily in the country, she engages her in some particularly sly exchanges:

GWENDOLEN: Cecily, Mamma, whose views on education are remarkably strict, has brought me up to be extremely short-sighted; it is part of her system; so do you mind my looking at you through my glasses?

CECILY: Oh! Not at all, Gwendolen. I am very fond of being looked at.

Or:

CECILY: This is no time for wearing the shallow mask of manners. When I see a spade, I call it a spade.

GWENDOLEN (*satirically*): I am glad to say that I have never seen a spade. It is obvious that our social spheres have been widely different.

This kind of nastiness takes something away from the high finish of Wilde's presentation, by making one of his personal failings all too clear: his distaste for women. Wilde's female characters always address the most cutting lines to one another, while the men bumble on. Gwendolen's cattiness (like Lady Bracknell's) feels real because it sounds like Wilde talking. The women are his mask. And only that: they never quite become characters in their own right. Instead of understanding, Wilde lampoons. In this way, he never has to face up to the conundrum of being that Marianne Moore expressed in her poem "Spenser's Ireland": "The Irish say your trouble is their/trouble and your/joy their joy? I wish/I could believe it;/I am troubled, I'm dissatisfied, I'm Irish." ♦


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THE CURRENT CINEMA

CHOOSING SIDES

"The Proposition" and "Army of Shadows."

BY ANTHONY LANE

The new Australian movie "The Proposition" begins with photographs from the late nineteenth century. Here are the stubborn settlers, in stiff collars or lace dresses, bent on transplanting British or Irish values to an unyielding soil. Here, too, are the indigenous people, their expressions harder to read, caught between defiance and resignation. Next come the charred remains of a homestead, with the words "Scene of the Hopkins Outrage" inked below in white; and there, plucked fresh from the past, is our story.

The Hopkins family, including a pregnant mother, has been slaughtered by the Burns gang, of abominable repute. The gang comprises three brothers: Mikey (Richard Wilson), hardly more than a kid; Charlie (Guy Pearce); and Arthur (Danny Huston), the presiding monster. The chief of police, Morris Stanley (Ray Winstone), has arrested the first two, but not the one he wants. By way of a deal, he offers not to hang the whimpering Mikey if Charlie, who adores the boy, can find Arthur and kill him before Christmas Day.

That last detail confirms one's sense that "The Proposition," in its morality as well as in its geography, is not just basic but Biblical. Directed by John Hillcoat, it shows humanity striving for a New Testament way of life with a Cain-and-Abel drama on the doorstep. Captain Stanley is married to the pearl-skinned Martha (Emily Watson), who solemnly serves him poached eggs for breakfast and somehow, perhaps from another hemisphere, conjures a Christmas tree. "I'm a very resourceful woman," she says. Their marriage is one of baffled and perspiring tenderness; even as Stanley tells her to stay in their lonely house, where Tobey (Rodney Boschman), the Aboriginal manservant, prunes red roses in front of a white picket fence, she longs to know more. You look at that fence, and at the ravishing sight of Martha at dusk, book in hand, wandering the all but grassless plain, and you can't help thinking of the Australian outback as the last redoubt of the Western.

If anything, "The Proposition" feels too conscious of that responsibility. It is one of those movies—Antonioni's "Red Desert" being the most flagrant example—that spend so much time brimming with moral and political suggestion that they almost forget to tell us what's actually going on. "I will civilize this place," Stanley says. "I will civilize this land," he says a while later, thus dulling the impact of his earlier pledge. The screenwriter is Nick Cave, better known as a musician and the lead singer of the Bad Seeds, and, while his ear for the dirty poetry of the settlers' speech is beyond reproach, I am not sure that incantation is enough. Why do Stanley's men, for instance, suddenly slay a group of Aborigines? And when, not long afterward, the elusive Arthur rides down from the hills and exacts revenge, is he siding with the native Australians or responding to the news that young Mikey has been sentenced to a hundred lashes? There is a clouding of motive here, and it tends to blur the repellent precision of the images—flies like pustules on the hats and backs of the townsmen, blood being squeezed from the thongs of the whip like water out of a mop.

Such is the buildup to Arthur's appearance that the figure who finally emerges from his hideout is something of a surprise: a matted, musing gentleman with a taste for verse. I doubt whether Danny Huston will ever be embraced as a leading man, but as a ripe supporting player he is already rivalling his father, John. There is the same whiskeyish croon and ursine bulk, to be deployed as either comfort or threat. Huston's rapt, crooked Sandy was the most unusual character in "The Constant Gardener," and, in Hillcoat's movie, he and Ray Winstone—outlaw and lawman, if you can tell the difference—conspire to incarnate the heavy, bullying souls who scrapped for possession of a new territory. One of them dies at the end, but the other's victory is so drowned in gore that it looks, and reeks, like a defeat. Although many viewers will not care for "The Proposition," with its fevered performances, it's not a film that wants to be cared for; it wants to drive us into an enforced communion with the blood, the heatstroke, and the drought. It wants to bruise our faith in cultural harmony, as in the unforgettable image of the faithful Tobey being



Danny Huston and Guy Pearce in a movie written by Nick Cave.

R. KIKUO JOHNSON

sent away from the Stanleys'. He pauses, removes his shoes, leaves them inside the gate, and walks out into the dust.

The arrival of Jean-Pierre Melville's "Army of Shadows" is not a re-release but a début. The film, though it hails from 1969, has never been distributed here. The title, which refers to the French Resistance, will mean nothing to most people, but for Melville-watchers it has acquired the weight of legend. If they, however, are the only ones who see it now, that will be a waste, since any moviegoers with a weakness for dry heroism, dark-toned humor, and storytelling of pantherish pace and grace—in short, lovers of cinema—should reach for their fedoras, turn up the collars of their coats, and sneak to this picture through a mist of rain.

The scene is instantly set. A column of German troops marches beside the Arc de Triomphe; there is something immediately terrifying in the way that Melville pauses the troops in freeze-frame—as if the cameraman had been interrupted (or killed) in mid-shot, or as if the whole scene were a slice of smuggled newsreel from last week. Up come the words "20 October 1942," and we see a long, low, black car being driven through a sunless countryside. Welcome to Melvilleland.

Inside the car is Philippe Gerbier (Lino Ventura), a prisoner of the German forces, who is being ferried to a small camp of fellow-undesirables. He stands before the commanding officer, who reads an official description of the new inmate: "Distant and ironic attitude. Suspected of Gaullist ideas." Two things are crucial here. First, nothing has been proved; suspicion is more potent than hard evidence in the twilit limbo patrolled by Melville's creatures. Second, the officer does not read *out* the words; he murmurs them to himself, the first of several characters to retreat into voice-over, and this sense of men as sequestered spirits deepens throughout the film—as does our treasuring of those who, against all odds, insist on brotherly love.

What follows is as inexorable as the beating of a pulse. How Melville renders that fatalism not as a grind but as a source of tremulous suspense is a miracle that I find difficult to explain. Gerbier is transferred to Paris, where he awaits interrogation. Seizing the moment, he escapes and returns to the Resistance network in which he has quietly toiled. There he encounters stalwarts like Jean-François Jardie (Jean-Pierre Cassel), as dapper as a flying ace in his leather jacket, and Le Bison (Christian Barbier), a sort of human menhir. Then, there is Mathilde (Simone Signoret), the bravest of them all. She is middle-aged and drably clothed, with a certainty of will that would not be out of place in a mother superior. Mathilde has one weakness: she carries a photograph of her daughter—a source of possible blackmail—in her handbag. "Don't keep it with you," Gerbier says, but she does. So much of "Army of Shadows" is concerned with slips in judgment or curt, momentous gestures of faith. The resisters, with their code of monkish austerity, could almost be members of a closed order. Nobody sabotages a railway line or blows up a munitions dump; all their energy is directed to their own survival, or, occasionally, to the necessary execution of a traitor. (There is a strangulation scene of which Hitchcock would be proud.) Not that "Army of Shadows" truncates, let alone mocks, the myth of the Resistance; Melville himself served in its ranks, and his work is reverent toward its leaders—and toward de Gaulle, who invests one of them, on a fleeting trip to London, with the Croix de Guerre. But your lingering impression is that the underground movement had a symbolic, near-sacred purpose that outweighed the practical, and in that imbalance the movie cuts to the heart of the argument about France's collective, endlessly troubled memory of the war.

You need not be schooled in that debate to relish the virtues of the tale. All that's required is a liking for Lino Ventura, who, with his boxer's nose and his hard-won smile, is the true heir to the humane solidity of Jean Gabin. You must accept that, when Melville clothes the heroes like those of his own gangster movies, such as "Le Samourai," he is not imposing a style so much as honoring a strain of melancholy toughness—not a bad defense mechanism under such conditions. Above all, you have to feel the plucking of your nerves as Gerbier flees his captors along empty nighttime streets, slows to a walk, and slips into the only shop where the lights still burn. It happens to be a barber's, so he sits and has a shave, still panting from his exertions, and not knowing whether the man with the razor will help him out or slit his throat. There is no backchat, no music: nothing but the scraping of the blade. For the first, and maybe the only, time this year, you are in the hands of a master, and you follow every cut. ♦

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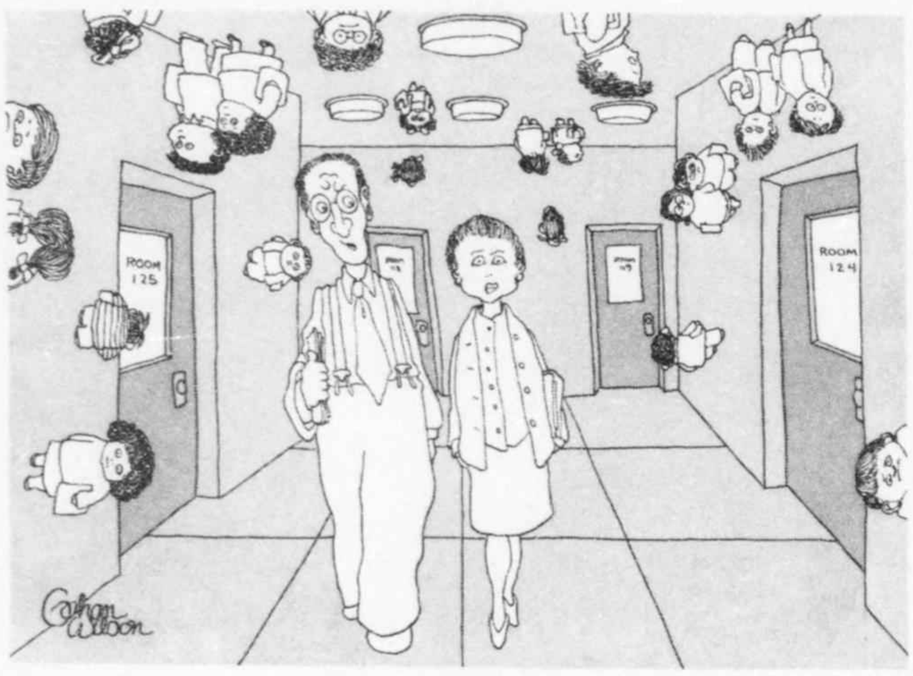
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CARTOON CAPTION CONTEST

Each week, we provide a cartoon in need of a caption. You, the reader, submit a caption, we choose three finalists, and you vote for your favorite. Caption submissions for this week's cartoon, by Leo Cullum, must be received by Sunday, May 7th. Finalists in the April 24th contest appear below; go online to vote. We will announce the winner, along with the finalists in this week's contest, in the May 22nd issue. The winner will be given a signed print of the cartoon. Any U.S. resident age eighteen or over can enter or vote. To do so, and to read the complete rules, visit www.newyorker.com/captioncontest.

THE WINNING CAPTION



"Back in my day, kids had a little respect for the law of gravity."
Thomas Buell, Jr., Pittsburgh, Pa.



THE FINALISTS

"How soon can you start?"
John Maynard, Berkeley, Calif.

"Just remember to keep away from Fletcher's wife, and Davidson's daughter, and Harris's iPod."
Mikael Rechtsman, Princeton, N.J.

"Our conflict-resolution seminar ended a bit early today."
Susan Lang, Cambridge, Mass.

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



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