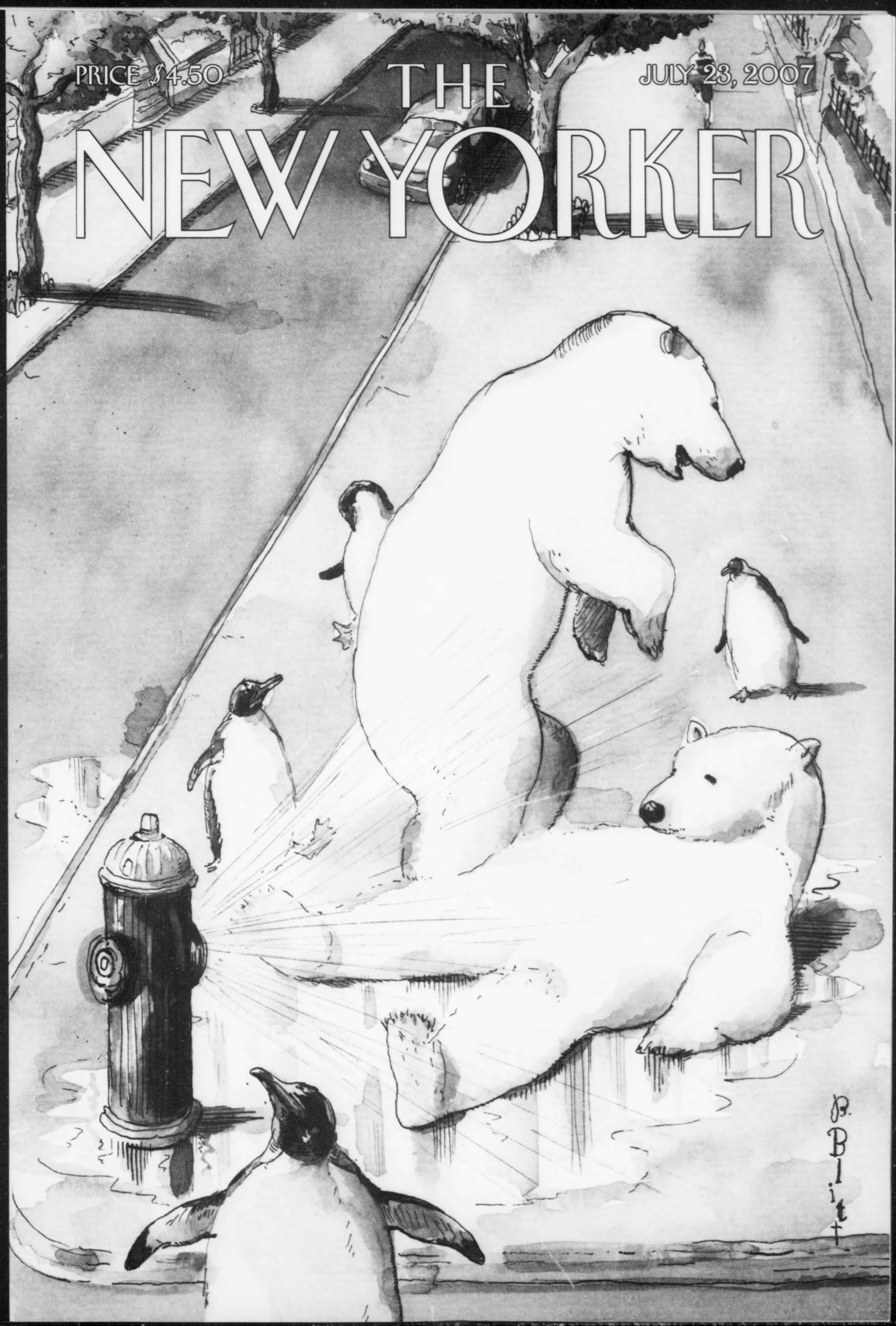
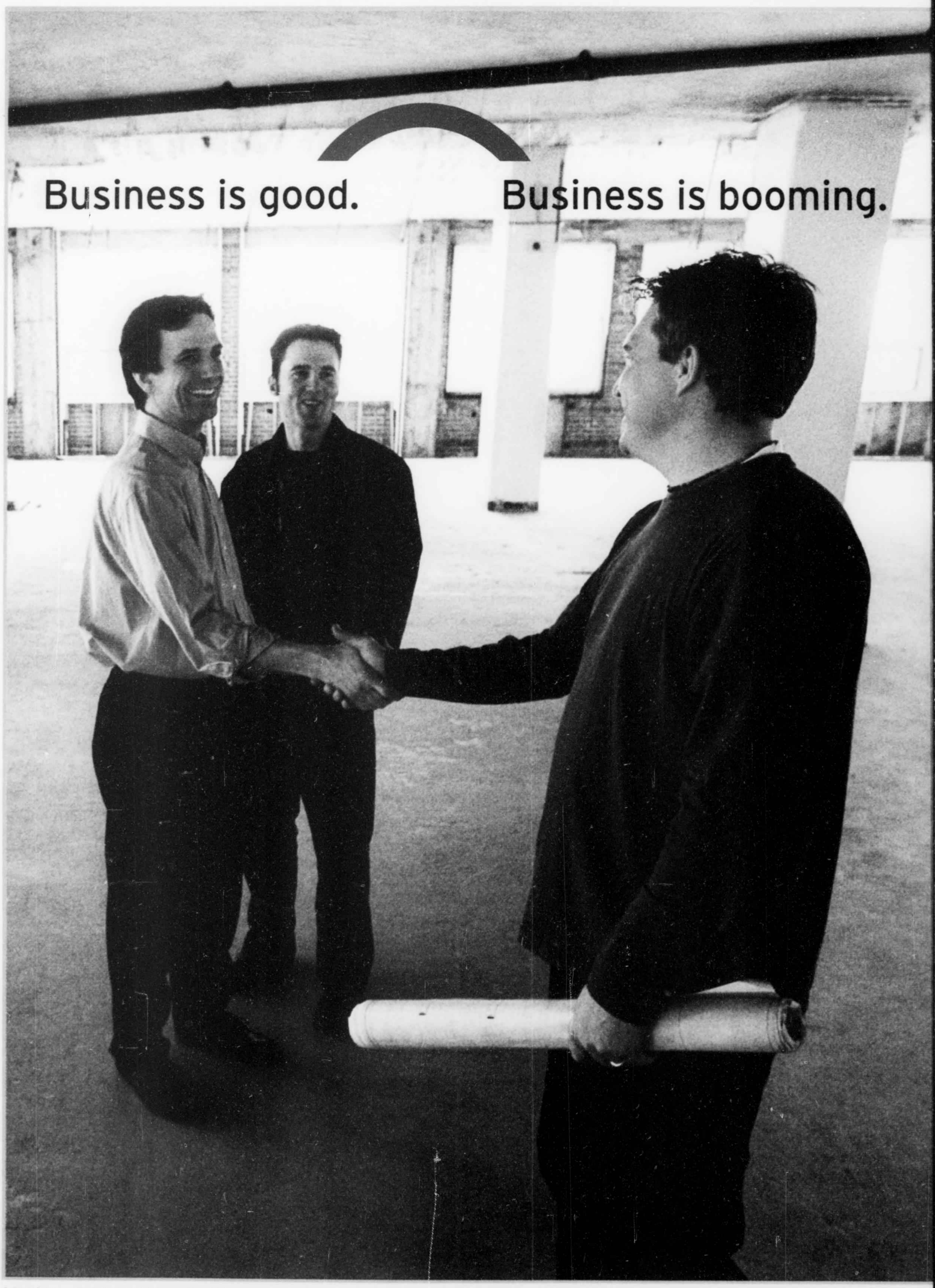
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THE NEW YORKER

JULY 23, 2007





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From acclaimed writer
and editor Bill Buford

"A SUMPTUOUS MEAL....

A superbly detailed picture" of life in the kitchen of superstar chef Mario Batali's legendary restaurant Babbo

—The New York Times Book Review

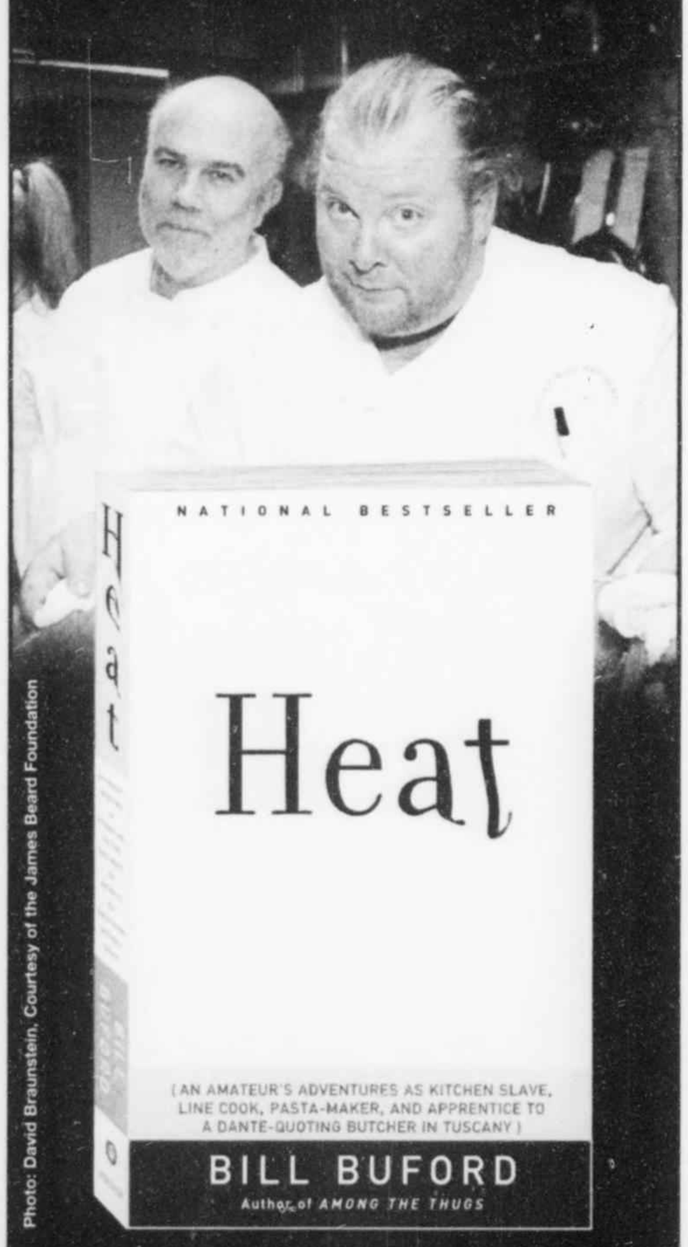


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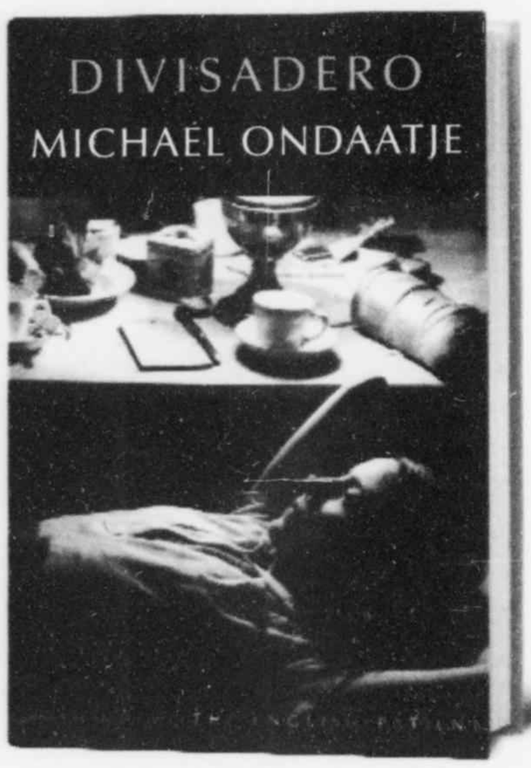
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THE ENGLISH PATIENT

Michael Ondaatje

DIVISADERO



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a rare and precious treasure"
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"Michael Ondaatje is in peak form."
—WASHINGTON POST

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CONTRIBUTORS

William Dalrymple ("Days of Rage," p. 26), a travel writer and historian, has written several books about India. "The Last Mughal: The Fall of a Dynasty, Delhi 1857" came out in March.

Atul Gawande (Comment, p. 21) is assistant professor of surgery at Harvard Medical School. His new book is "Better: A Surgeon's Notes on Performance."

Nick Paumgarten ("The Tycoon," p. 44) is a staff writer.

Mark Singer (The Talk of the Town, p. 22) has written five books, including "Character Studies: Encounters with the Curiously Obsessed."

Rachel Hadas (Poem, p. 28) is the author of many books of poetry, including "The River of Forgetfulness." A selection of her prose writing, "Classics," comes out in the fall.

Oliver Sacks ("A Bolt from the Blue," p. 38) will publish a new book, "Musicophilia: Tales of Music and the Brain," in October.

Nancy Franklin (On Television, p. 82) writes the television column for the magazine.

David Denby ("A Fine Romance," p. 58; The Current Cinema, p. 84) is a film critic for the magazine. He is the author of "Great Books" and "American Sucker."

David Ferry (Poem, p. 62) is a poet and translator. His translation "The Georgics of Virgil: Bilingual Edition" is available in paperback.

Antonya Nelson (Fiction, p. 66) teaches at the University of Houston. Her latest book is "Some Fun," a collection of short stories and a novella.

Caleb Crain (Books, p. 74) is the author of "American Sympathy: Men, Friendship, and Literature in the New Nation."

Jacques de Loustal (Illustration, p. 75) is an illustrator and artist. He lives in Paris.

Simon Rich (Shouts & Murmurs, p. 37) is the author of "Ant Farm: And Other Desperate Situations."

Barry Blitt (Cover) is a frequent contributor of cover art and illustrations. He has illustrated many children's books, including "Once Upon a Time, the End: Asleep in 60 Seconds."

THIS WEEK ON NEWYORKER.COM

Interesting Times, a blog by *George Packer.* / An audio interview with *William Dalrymple* about Asma Jahangir and Pakistan's uncertain future. / A conversation between *Oliver Sacks* and *Larissa MacFarquhar* about music and the mind. / *Donald Antrim* reads a *Donald Barthelme* story on the monthly fiction podcast. / From the archives: *Steve Coll* on Pakistan, *Pauline Kael* on John Waters's "Hairspray," fiction by *Antonya Nelson*, and more. / The Film File: thousands of capsule reviews going back to 1990. / Animated cartoons, the caption contest, and a list of *New Yorker* events around the country.



THE MAIL

TELLING LIES

Margaret Talbot's article on new technologies in lie detection was thoughtful and well researched ("Duped," July 2nd). As the inventor of brain fingerprinting, I would like to expand on her mention of this technique. Brain fingerprinting detects information stored in the brain, matching the record of a crime stored in the perpetrator's brain to the record of the crime scene. Lying or truthtelling at any point has no effect on the outcome. Talbot states that "researchers have since noted a big drawback: it's impossible to distinguish between . . . actual . . . and imagined memories." This is a well-known factor, and I took it into account when I developed the scientific protocols. In a real-world brain-fingerprinting test, we first find out information about a crime that is known only to investigators and the perpetrator, then confirm in an interview that the suspect denies knowing these details about the crime and has no legitimate way of knowing them. We can then test the subject's brain for this "guilty knowledge." To be useful, of course, brain fingerprinting must be used to detect information regarding actual events, not imaginary ones. But that is what the experimental protocols are designed to do, and they do it quite reliably.

Lawrence A. Farwell
Chairman and Chief Scientist
Brain Fingerprinting Laboratories, Inc.
Seattle, Wash.

Talbot, in her discussion of my research on the use of fMRI scans to identify the pattern of brain activity associated with lying, points to a "major flaw" in my studies' design: that increased brain activity could actually be the result "not of deception but of heightened attention." This alleged "flaw" is a known limitation of a common method of asking questions used in lie-detection tests ("the guilty-knowledge test"), which we took painstaking measures to avoid. Furthermore, the "curious" difference between the findings of my and Andrew Kozel's studies is both small and expected from the design differences. In the tangled web of businessmen, spies, and scientists, neuroscience is not the conspiracy.

Daniel Langleben, M.D.
University of Pennsylvania
Philadelphia, Pa.

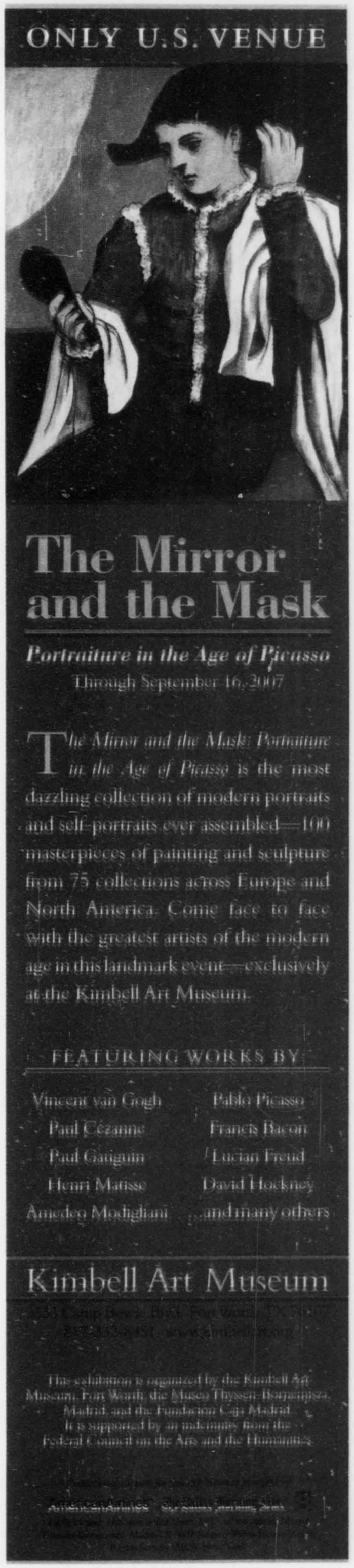
FINLAND'S WAR

Alex Ross draws an interesting portrait of Jean Sibelius and his works ("Apparition in the Woods," July 9th & 16th). However, his statement that Finland went to war against the Soviet Union in 1941 "partly because Fascist elements had infiltrated the government and the Army, and partly because the Nazis would have taken over the country anyway" is misleading. Other than in the early nineteen-thirties, when Fascist elements unsuccessfully challenged our democratic system, Fascism did not play a significant role in Finnish politics. There were never any "Nazi-style race laws" in force in Finland, and the Finnish government's wartime policy of resisting German attempts to inspire anti-Jewish actions in Finland has been publicly appreciated by our Jewish communities. For Finland, the Continuation War of 1941-44, as it is called in our history, had its roots in the Winter War. After having attacked Finland in 1939, the Soviet Union acquired, in the Moscow Peace Treaty, important parts of Finnish territory and the right to establish a military base near Helsinki; the annexation of the Baltic countries, in the summer of 1940, demonstrated the expansive nature of the Soviet policies and left the area vulnerable to further aggression. The Continuation War, then, was a defensive struggle for my country, politically separate from the war of the great powers.

Pekka Lintu
Ambassador of Finland
Washington, D.C.

•

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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

S · M · T · W · T · F · S

			18	19	20	21
22	23	24				

THIS WEEK

THE THEATRE
NOH IN NATURE

Among the plentiful outdoor offerings this summer are three traditional Japanese works performed in Dag Hammarskjöld Park, in midtown. The Japan Society presents "Hojo," a sixteenth-century Noh play with a contemporary staging; "Izutsu," a classical Noh play; and "Igui," a kyogen—or comical work—about a magic hood that renders its wearers invisible. Partial-view free seats are available on the day of the performance. (See page 8.)

NIGHT LIFE
IT TAKES TWO

The color-coördinated boy-girl duo the White Stripes have a new album, "Icky Thump," and this week Jack and Meg will bring the corresponding tour to the biggest hall in town, Madison Square Garden. (See page 10.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
LATE WINE

The Vermeer String Quartet may lack the glamour of the Emerson or the Guarneri, but the group, formed by the Israeli violinist Shmuel Ashkenasi in 1969, has consistently given strong performances full of warmth and lyrical insight. Retiring while still at the top of their game, they will offer one of their final Norfolk Chamber Music Festival concerts this week. (See page 15.)

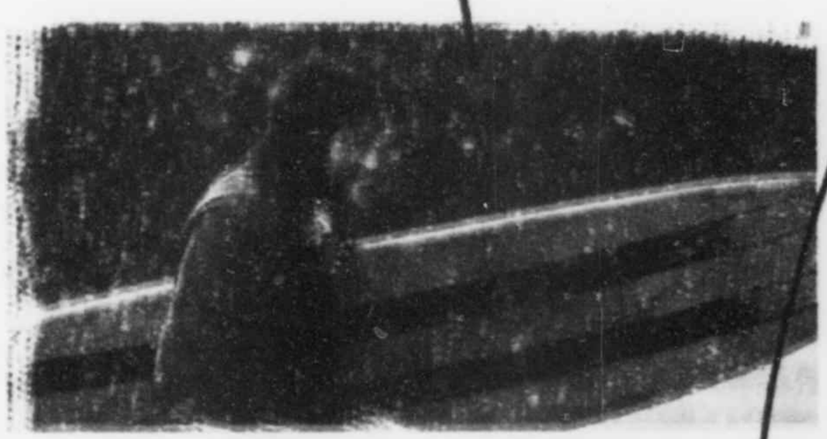
MOVIES
MACHINE DREAMS

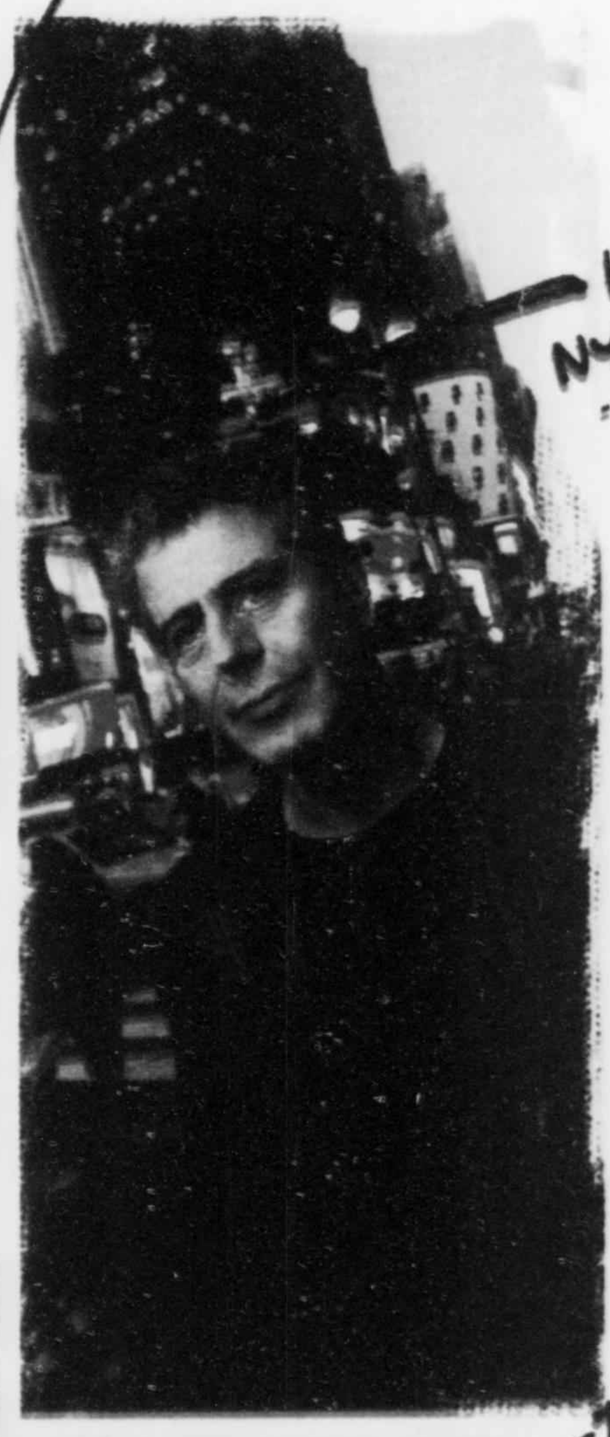
Joseph Goebbels once told the director Fritz Lang that he and Hitler had watched "Metropolis," the colossal science-fiction drama of revolution and apocalypse, and decided to offer Lang a high position in the Third Reich's movie industry. Instead, Lang fled the country, and the film was mutilated. The 2002 digital restoration, the most complete to date, is at Film Forum for a weeklong revival. (See page 17.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND
INSIDE BASEBALL

"The Glory Days," currently on view at the Museum of the City of New York, documents the period from 1947 to 1957 when the Yankees, the Dodgers, and the Giants had nine titles among them. This week, the pros who put the show together give a guided tour. (See page 18.)

The Cyclone roller coaster, in Coney Island. Photograph by Lisa Kereszi.















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HONG KONG- WHERE WHATEVER IT IS ON THE END OF YOUR CHOPSTICKS- IS NEARLY ALWAYS GOOD!

CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
FIELD OF DREAMS

Colin (Tom Courtenay), the surly young working-class hero of Tony Richardson's "The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner," feels happy only when he runs through the woods—but even that freedom



is taken from him. Sent to a Borstal for petty thievery, Colin is trained by the school's ambitious headmaster-warden (Michael Redgrave) to compete in a cross-country race against upper-class public-school boys. Victory, as the headmaster makes clear, is the only way out of the mess Colin finds himself in. Of all the early-sixties films in the British kitchen-sink school, "Loneliness" (1962), based on the Alan Sillitoe short story, is perhaps the most poetically assured (Walter Lassally's black-and-white cinematography is heartbreakingly beautiful) and the most bitter in its sense of defeat. Colin has a revolutionary consciousness, but he's a man without a party, a program, or even a text, and he's too alienated to be drawn into sensual happiness. The movie's famous ending has been celebrated as an assertion of liberty and attacked as a glorification of futility. It's the latter. Playing at Walter Reade July 19 and July 21.

—David Denby

THE THEATRE
OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

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

THE BLACK EYED
A new play by Betty Shamieh, about four Arab women from different eras who meet in the afterlife. In previews. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 212-239-6200.)

ELECTION DAY
Josh Tobiessen wrote this dark satire, about a political campaign. Jeremy Dobrish directs. In previews. (McGinn/Cazale, Broadway at 76th St. 212-246-4422.)

HOKAIBO
Nakamura Kanzaburo XVIII, whose family has been synonymous with Kabuki for centuries, stars in this comedy. In Japanese. Part of the Lincoln Center Festival. July 17-22. (Avery Fisher Hall, Broadway at 64th St. 212-721-6500.)

UN HOMBRE QUE SE AHOGA
The Argentinean troupe Proyecto Chejov presents its adaptation of Chekhov's "Three Sisters," in which the gender of each character is reversed. In Spanish, with English supertitles. Part of the Lincoln Center Festival. July 17-19. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, 150 W. 65th St. 212-721-6500.)

IDOL: THE MUSICAL
A new musical about small-town teen-agers who are obsessed with Clay Aiken. Daniel Tursi directs. In previews. (45th Street Theatre, 354 W. 45th St. 212-868-4444.)

DE MONSTRUOS Y PRODIGIOS
Teatro de Ciertos Habitantes, of Mexico, performs this comedy about the eighteenth-century practice of castrating young boys to preserve their soprano voices. In Spanish, with English supertitles. Part of the Lincoln Center Festival. July 20-22. (Gerald W. Lynch Theatre, John Jay College, Amsterdam Ave. at 58th St. 212-721-6500.)

MY FIRST TIME
Four actors perform monologues, based on interviews with hundreds of people, about losing one's virginity. Directed by Ken Davenport (who co-conceived "Altar Boyz"). In previews. (New World Stages, 340 W. 50th St. 212-239-6200.)

NOH & KYOGEN IN THE PARK
Japan Society presents two Noh plays, "Hojo" and "Izutsu," and one kyogen piece, "Igui," in the park in front of the museum. July 19-21. (Dag Hammarskjöld Park, 333 E. 47th St. 212-715-1258.)

OPUS
Primary Stages opens its season with this play by Michael Hollinger, about a string quartet that gains a new member. Previews begin July 24. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)

THE PEOPLE VS. MONA
A musical murder mystery set in small-town Georgia, by Jim Wann and Patricia Miller. Opens July 18. (Abingdon, 312 W. 36th St. 212-868-4444.)

SEUSSICAL
Theatreworks U.S.A. presents a free production of the musical, written by Lynn Ahrens and Stephen Flaherty, featuring Dr. Seuss characters such as the Cat in the Hat and Gertrude McFuzz. In previews. Opens July 19. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. For information, call 212-332-0001.)

SURFACE TO AIR
David Epstein's drama, about the family of a soldier in the Vietnam War whose remains are found thirty years after he was declared missing in action. James Naughton directs. Opens July 18. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-5400.)

NOW PLAYING

ABSINTHE
Last year, the variety show inhabiting the velvet-draped Spiegeltent served up a near-perfect cocktail of circus skill and cabaret innuendo, the risky and the risqué. This year, the recipe is the same, but the ingredients are weaker. The Borat-like m.c. (Voki Kalfayan) is amusing enough, his dumb-girl assistant (Anais Thomassian) funnier and filthier still. Paul Capsis convincingly channels Marlene, Judy, and Janis. And the sum of eye candy, acrobatic dexterity, and ambience just about offsets an excess of semi-sexy aerialists. Less can be said for the after-hours program, "La Vie," in which a cast of multitalented cirque-nouveau virtuosi get lost in an uninspired concept about Purgatory. (South Street Seaport, Pier 17. 212-279-4200.)

EAST TO EDINBURGH
Twelve American shows on their way to the Edinburgh Festival Fringe play here first. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)

GONE MISSING
The Civilians' documentary-theatre piece, based on interviews conducted by the troupe and compiled by Steven Cosson, captures the funny and inescapably poignant details that emerge when you ask people about the things they've lost, like a shoe, body parts, memory, a Palm Pilot dropped in the panic of 9/11. The stories are punctuated by genre-hopping songs by Michael Friedman, and the actors—six of them, in snappy gray suits—provide evocative characterizations in quick succession, insuring that the variations-on-a-theme approach never gets old. (Barrow Street Theatre, 27 Barrow St. 212-239-6200.)

GUILTY
A fraught coming-of-middle-age drama, written by Nancy Manocherian and directed by Kira Simring, about an age-obsessed photographer named Dori (Glory Gallo), her circle of wealthy acquaintances, and the little crimes they commit out of envy or ennui. The first half of the play is an ensemble portrait of malaise—the group does a lot of sitting on sofas with Scotch and complaining about how they "need security" and the like. Then, as revelations and impregnations pile up, the story fritters away into soap opera. Manocherian's script lacks a fundamental hook; instead, it rests upon a cluster of neuroses embodied by increasingly unsympathetic characters. (Acorn, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

GYPSY
Encores! presents Patti LuPone in the 1959 Sondheim-Styne musical. Arthur Laurents, who wrote the original book, directs. (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212.)

"ICE FACTORY '07"
The Ohio Theatre hosts the SoHo Think Tank's annual festival of new work presented by companies such as New Georges and Rindfleisch. (66 Wooster St. 212-868-4444.)

THE LAST YEAR IN THE LIFE OF THE REVEREND DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.
Waterwell premières this rock musical, drawn from King's speeches, writings, and interviews. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Barrow Street Theatre, 27 Barrow St. 212-239-6200.)

MIDTOWN INTERNATIONAL THEATRE FESTIVAL
Dozens of new plays and musicals, as well as revivals, are mounted in this festival, including works by John Guare, George Axelrod, and Anne Stockton. (Various venues. For more information, visit www.midtownfestival.org.)

MORNING STAR
Sylvia Regan's play, from 1940, about a Russian-Jewish immigrant family on New York's Broome Street, is warmhearted and sentimental, but with a pinch of spice that keeps the plot's melodramas and bromides from cloying. Becky Felderman (Susan Greenhill) is a resourceful widow, independently raising three daughters and a bar-mitzvah-age son, training them to be self-sufficient, even in the face of tragedy. The set (designed by Joseph Spirito) is attractive, and the dialogue, for all its clichés, has a tartness to it, like a lesser version of Odets's "Awake and Sing." Under the able direction of Dan Wackerman, the Peccadillo Theatre Company brings a rough-edged spunk to the working-class roles. (Bank Street Theatre, 155 Bank St. 212-868-4444.)

OLD ACQUAINTANCE
Set alternately in Greenwich Village and on Park Avenue, John Van Druten's comedy, from 1940,

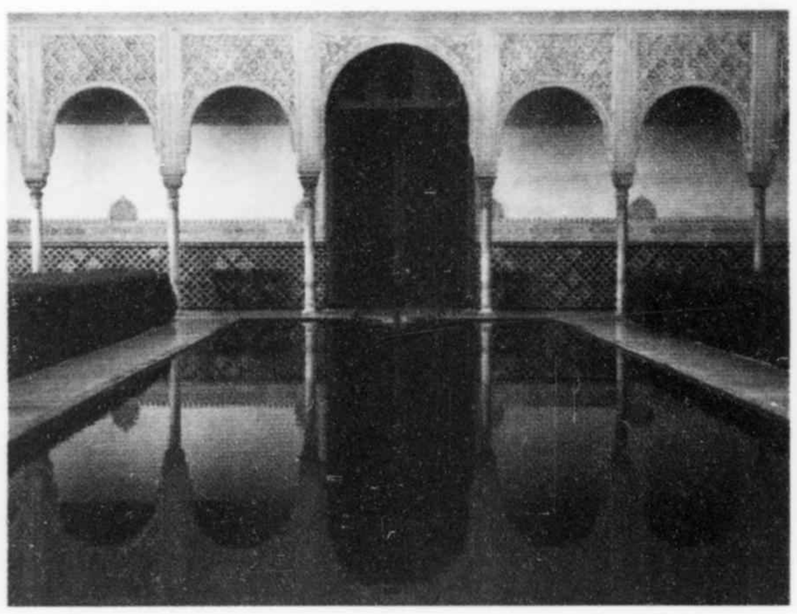
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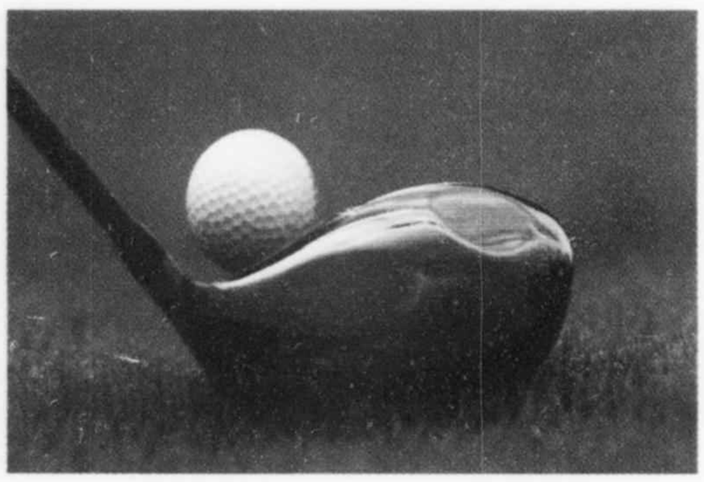




Treasures of Andalucía

At the southernmost portion of Spain, the eight provinces that comprise Andalucía embrace craggy mountains, immortal cities, and golden beaches bathed by the Atlantic and Mediterranean. Five of the provinces hug the coast, and all enjoy a warm, sensuous clime. Its name deriving from the Arabic *Al-Andalus* ("land of the west"), this region is where the Spanish character is most tangible and its history palpable.

It was from Seville, the region's capital, that world explorers ventured forth. Its landmark La Giralda, a bell tower and former minaret, was completed in 1197. Alcázar palace, tucked behind it, is another masterwork of Moorish design and architecture.



Elsewhere in the region, Mezquita, a mosque dating from 994, characterizes Córdoba, while Moorish fortresses remain the signature features of the cities of Almería and Málaga.

Yet of all the Andalucian structures that transport visitors back in time, it is Granada's magnificent Alhambra palace that is among the most visited monuments in the world. The fourteenth-century hilltop citadel is considered one of Europe's outstanding examples of Islamic architecture.

The great pleasure of Andalucía today is that its historic treasures are surrounded by natural beauty and colorful cities. Cádiz has its bay; Huelva, the marshlands; and Jaén, its olive trees. In the outlying regions, travelers can sunbathe on fine-sand beaches or enjoy winter sports at Sierra Nevada, the Continent's southernmost ski resort.

Golf is a year-round passion. Andalucía has one of the most idyllic climates in Europe for golfing, and each destination offers top courses for every level of play—from "Costa del Golf" (Costa del Sol), where more than forty within a hundred kilometres are a golfer's dream, to the championship courses in Cádiz. Among them are Valderrama Golf, near Sotogrande, which was the venue for the 1997 Ryder Cup tournament between the United States and Europe. A number of fine courses in Almería and Huelva add to the scenic choices.

Days spent in Andalucía not only seem like a celebration, many literally are. Each town in the region honors its own patron saint, and more than 3,000 annual fiestas—including fairs, carnivals, reenacted battles, harvest events, and holy weeks—expose visitors to the soul of Spain.

Visit SPAIN.INFO and ANDALUCIA.ORG when planning your trip to Spain.

TOP, L-R: ©HOWARD SAYER/ALAMY, ©PICTURENET/CORBIS; INSET: ©LEIF MILLING/GETTY IMAGES

centers on Katherine Markham (Margaret Colin), a struggling writer who has her artistic integrity. Mildred Watson Drake (Harriet Harris), Katherine's old school chum, writes trashy romances and wants to win back the affections of her daughter, Deirdre (Diane Davis), a silly but bright débutante who prefers Katherine's company. Harris plays her part with an insouciance that well befits this slight, enjoyable work, in which the brilliant costuming, by David C. Woolard, means as much to us as the characters. (Reviewed in our issue of 7/9 & 18/07.) (American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-719-1300.)

SUMMER PLAY FESTIVAL
This annual festival presents sixteen plays from up-and-coming playwrights. (Theatre Row, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

XANADU
Douglas Carter Beane wrote the book for this stage version of the movie from 1980. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

OUT OF TOWN

BARD SUMMERSCAPE
Ken Roht and his Orphean Circus headline the Spiegeltent, and Gregory Thompson directs "Saint Joan," George Bernard Shaw's 1923 portrait of Joan of Arc, through July 22. (Annandale-on-Hudson, N.Y. 845-758-7900.)

BAY STREET THEATRE
The world première of "Turandot: The Rumble for the Ring," a rock-musical adaptation of the opera set in the world of professional wrestling, by Diane Paulus and Randy Weiner. (Sag Harbor, N.Y. 631-725-9500.)

BERKSHIRE THEATRE FESTIVAL
Rick Cleveland's one-man show "My Pal George" closes July 21. Eric Hill directs Dale Wasserman's adaptation of "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest." For more information, visit www.berkshiretheatre.org. (Stockbridge, Mass. 413-298-5576.)

HUDSON VALLEY SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL
On the tented outdoor stage at Boscobel, "Richard III," directed by Terrence O'Brien, plays in repertory with "As You Like It," directed by Kurt Rhoads. For more information, visit www.hvshakespeare.org. (Garrison, N.Y. 845-265-9575.)

WILLIAMSTOWN THEATRE FESTIVAL
"Villa America," by Crispin Whittell, closes July 22. On the Main Stage, Jessica Hecht and Wendie Malick star in Noël Coward's farce "Blithe Spirit." For a full schedule, visit www.wtfestival.org. (Williamstown, Mass. 413-597-3400.)

Also Playing

ANGRY YOUNG WOMEN IN LOW-RISE JEANS WITH HIGH-CLASS ISSUES: Players Theatre, 115 MacDougal St. 212-352-3101. **AVENUE Q:** Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **THE BRIG:** Living Theatre, 19-21 Clinton St. 212-352-3101. **A CHORUS LINE:** Schoenfeld, 236 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **THE COLOR PURPLE:** Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 212-239-6200. **CURTAINS:** Al Hirschfeld, 302 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **DEUCE:** Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **EURYDICE:** Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St. 212-246-4422. **FORBIDDEN BROADWAY: THE ROAST OF UTOPIA:** 47th Street Theatre, 304 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200. **FROST/NIXON:** Bernard B. Jacobs, 242 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **GREY GARDENS:** Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200. **HAIRSPRAY:** Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 212-307-4100. **110 IN THE SHADE:** Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 212-239-6200. **LEGALLY BLONDE THE MUSICAL:** Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 212-307-4100. **MARY POPPINS:** New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 212-307-4747. **MONTY PYTHON'S SPAMALOT:** Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **SPRING AWAKENING:** Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200. **THE 25TH ANNUAL PUTNAM COUNTY SPELLING BEE:** Circle in the Square, 50th St. between Broadway and Eighth Ave. 212-239-6200. **THE YEAR OF MAGICAL THINKING:** Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.

NIGHT LIFE
ROCK AND POP

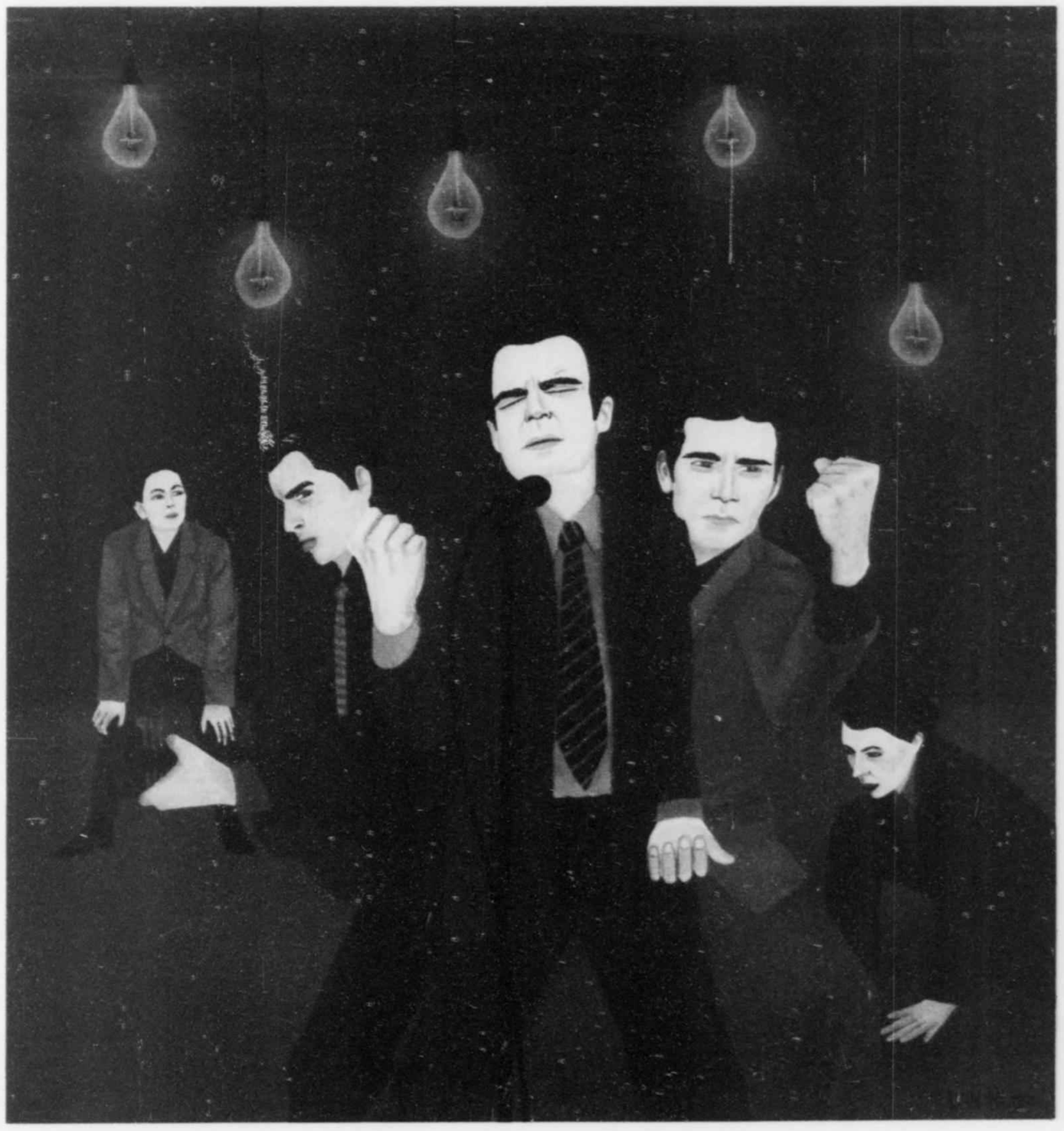
Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (212-997-4144)—July 18: The British vocalist **John Waite** has served in the ranks of mainstream pop acts (doing time with the Babys and the supergroup Bad English), but he is probably best remembered for his soft-rock balladry, most notably the slick melancholy of his mid-eighties hit, "Missing You." Though he'll never escape the big-haired stigma of his heyday, Waite continues to write and record heartfelt, radio-ready rock. July 21: **Les Nubians.** The sisters Hélène and Celia Faussart, who were raised in Bordeaux (with a brief sojourn in Chad), reconfigure American hip-hop and jazz with a severe Continental chic. July 24: **Toto** delivered a clutch of hits in the eighties (such as "Hold the Line," "Africa," and "Rosanna"), but their time on the charts came to a close by the end of that decade. The band remains popular in Asia and Europe, and it continues to record.

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—July 18: **They Might Be Giants.** The unapologetically quirky duo of John Flansburgh and John Linnell has been making willfully clever, skewed pop for more than twenty years. Their new record, "The Else," was produced in part by the Dust Brothers. The band is here the next three Wednesday nights. July 20: **Girls Against Boys** emerged from the same Washington, D.C., scene that produced bands like Fugazi and Shudder to Think in the mid-eighties. The foursome evolved from yet another angular post-hardcore band into a burly, bass-heavy beast upon the release of its second album, "Venus Luxure No. 1 Baby," in 1994. The album's slow-pummelling, danceable rock swiftly established the band as a force to be reckoned with. GVSB will perform their masterpiece in its sneering entirety. The show is part of the Don't Look Back series, an offshoot of the U.K.'s "All Tomorrow's Parties" festival, which gets bands to perform one of their old albums in concert.

CELEBRATE BROOKLYN!
Prospect Park Band Shell, Prospect Park W. at 9th St. (718-855-7882, ext. 45)—July 18: **Ani DiFranco,** an icon of feminine empowerment, continues to craft barbed folk music that outshines her other considerable accomplishments (including running her own record label and selling millions of records). For this benefit show, she will be backed by the bassist Todd Sickafoose and the drummer Allison Miller. July 20: **Bobby (Blue) Bland,** one of the greatest soul-and-blues singers still alive. With the vocalist **Catherine Russell.** July 21: The producer Hal Willner, who in recent years has organized tributes to Leonard Cohen and Neil Young, turns his attention to the songwriter Doc Pomus, who died in 1991. The Williamsburg native (born Jerome Felder; his brother Raoul is the divorce attorney) was a successful blues singer in the forties who went on to become one of pop music's greatest songwriters. With his friend and piano player Mort Shuman, he wrote "Save the Last Dance for Me," "Teenager in Love," and countless other hits. **Lou Reed, Ben E. King, Teddy Thompson, Steven Bernstein, Joel Dorn, Peter Guralnick,** and **Shannon McNally** will perform here. July 22: The rocker turned children's entertainer **Dan Zanes** and friends.

CENTRAL PARK SUMMERSTAGE
Rumsey Playfield, mid-Park at 72nd St. (212-360-2777)—July 20: The alt-country siren **Neko Case.** With the former Archers of Loaf front man, **Eric Bachmann.** July 22: The sleek global sounds of New York's own **Brazilian Girls.** With the exu-



DIVYA SRINIVASAN

The Civilians' docu-musical "Gone Missing," at the Barrow Street Theatre.

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berant, horn-heavy output of Melbourne's **Cat Empire,** whose mix of reggae, pop, jazz, and dance beats could lead you to throw away your S.S.R.I.s. Also on the bill is **Himalayas**, a marching-band collective with a frequently morphing name led by the drummer Kenny Wollesen and the saxophonist Jonathon Haffner. The band can include anywhere from three to a hundred and thirty musicians, depending on the gig.

FILLMORE NEW YORK AT IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (212-777-6800)—July 20-21: The sallow-faced, darkly charismatic Eugene Hutz—equal parts Sid Vicious and Bertolt Brecht—leads the local favorite **Gogol Bordello,** an eight-piece band specializing in what it calls "Ukrainian Gypsy surrealistic punk cabaret." Their unique sound has everyone from unwashed hipsters to polished public-radio correspondents in a swoon. This show features songs from the band's forthcoming album, "Super Taranta!"

JONES BEACH
Wantagh, N.Y. (212-307-7171)—July 24: In the late eighties, **Poison** embodied the hedonistic shenanigans of Sunset Strip hair metal, pumping out candy-colored anthems and formulaic power ballads. The rise of grunge in the early nineties brought their party to an end, and the band gradually imploded. Poison got back together at the beginning of this decade, and is now older, if not wiser.

MADISON SQUARE GARDEN
Seventh Ave. at 33rd St. (212-307-7171)—July 24: After ten years and six albums, the **White Stripes** continue to ascend in popularity and influence. They have an adherence to eccentricity that often borders on shtick. The duo's latest album, "Icky Thump," branches out a bit from their patented garage-blues formula, incorporating select bits of unexpected instrumentation. It still packs a wallop, though, and you can expect their live show to do the same.

STUDIO B
259 Banker St., Greenpoint, Brooklyn (718-389-1880)—July 20: The New York City rockers **Battles** take a slide-rule approach to their music.

WEBSTER HALL
125 E. 11th St. (212-353-1600)—July 17: Pioneers in the austere realm of post-rock, Louisville's **Slint** blazed their own sonic trail by interweaving high-volume passages with moments of icy quiet and emotional turmoil. The band's 1991 release, "Spiderland," became the template for much of the experimental indie rock that followed. Slint is performing the landmark album in its entirety as part of the Don't Look Back series (see the Bowery Ballroom).

WHITNEY MUSEUM
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (212-570-3676)—On Fridays, the "Whitney Live" events turn the museum's lower level into an adult fun house. July 20 features a clever spin on the current "Summer of Love" art exhibit, with an appearance by **Dirty Projectors,** an indie-pop group with an avant core led by the composer David Longstreth. The band's forthcoming album, "Rise Above," is a reimagining of Black Flag's 1981 début, "Damaged."

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (212-581-3080)—July 18-21: The singer **Kevin Mahogany's** taste for bluesy ballads and R. & B.-tinged swing will serve him well in a tribute to Big Joe Turner, the gruff-voiced shouter who gave the world "Shake, Rattle & Roll." Appropriately gritty support will be provided by the pianist **Cyrus Chestnut** and the West Coast-based tenor saxophonist **Red Holloway.**

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—July 17-22: The Broadway diva **Betty Buckley** makes canny use of an uncommonly expansive repertoire and a telepathic relationship with a great pianist, **Kenny Werner.**

DIZZY'S CLUB COCA-COLA
Broadway at 60th St. (212-258-9595)—July 17-22: The octogenarian drummer **Roy Haynes,** who has worked with Young, Parker, Coltrane, Corea, and others, plays with the vigor and the inventiveness of musicians born decades after he was. He's fronting his band Fountain of Youth, which features **Jaleel Shaw** on saxophone, **Martin Bejerano** on piano, and **David Wong** on bass.

"JAZZ IN JULY"
This annual series' musical director, **Bill Charlap,** has devised a smart program for the season, offering plenty to lure jazz aficionados uptown to the 92nd Street Y. July 17: The saxophonist **Phil Woods** leads a nonet in an overdue tribute to two outstanding arrangers: Quincy Jones and Oliver Nelson. July 18: Charlap shares piano duties with **Ted Rosenthal** in a program honoring the songwriter Cole Porter. The saxophonist **Frank Wess** and the singer **Sandy Stewart** will also be on hand. July 19: Charlap is joined by contemporary adherents of bebop, including the saxophonists **Eric Alexander** and **Jon Gordon,** in an homage to Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie. July 24: The festival turns the evening over to a most deserving celebrant, the saxophonist, flutist, and general wiseacre **James Moody.** He's an instrumental genius who has never forgotten to include fun in the mix. (Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500. Through July 26.)

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—July 18-19: Although he's never disappeared from the scene, **Steve Kuhn,** an accomplished and highly respected modern pianist, has gained attention as of late largely due to his justly praised album "Live at Birdland," released earlier this year; his latest recording, "Pastorale," features the bassist **Eddie Gomez,** who also joins him here. July 20-22: A trio setting spotlights the winning blend of offhand virtuosity and lyrical flair that defines **Kenny Barron,** the dean of mainstream pianists.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—Now well into his eighties, the pianist **Barry Harris** (here with his trio July 17-22) continues to champion bebop in its pure form. Expect the longtime Harris associate **Leroy Williams** to provide idiomatically appropriate drumming.

ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-535-7710)—**"Poiret: King of Fashion,"** a survey of the career of the Parisian designer Paul Poiret (1879-1944), is at the Costume Institute through Aug. 5. ♦ **"Neo Rauch at the Met: Para"** presents new paintings by the Leipzig-based artist. Through Oct. 14. ♦ **"Impressionist and Early Modern Paintings: The Clark Brothers Collect."** Through Aug. 19. ♦ **"Frank Stella on the Roof."** Through Oct. 28. ♦ **"Frank Stella: Painting Into Architecture"** presents the prolific artist's designs for architectural structures. Through Aug. 5. ♦ **"One of a Kind: The Studio Craft Movement."** Through Sept. 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)—**"Richard Serra Sculpture: Forty Years."** Through Sept. 10. ♦ **"Picasso's 'Demoiselles d'Avignon' at 100."** Through Aug. 27. ♦ With five works, **"Automatic Update"** offers only a small sampling of familiar artists who employ recent technology—it's hardly the "update" of the genre that the title implies. The ubiquitous Cory Arcangel displays a VCR wall projection that's like a color-field video painting. Paul Pfeiffer is represented by one of his manipulated-basketball-footage works. Jennifer and Kevin McCoy's tabletop rendition of the car-crash scene in Godard's "Weekend" turns it into a mildly techy toy-railroad exhibit. Rafael Lozano-Hemmer stands out with a work that uses grammatical software and LEDs flashing crazily scrabbled sentences and makes you realize what new technology can do—and can get wrong. Through Sept. 3. ♦ **"Projects 85: Dan Perjovschi."** Through Aug. 27. ♦ **"Barry Frydlender: Place and Time."**

Through Sept. 3. (Open Wednesdays through Mondays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Friday evenings until 8. The museum will be open until 9 on Thursday evenings through Aug. 30.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—The telescoping spiral of Frank Lloyd Wright's Guggenheim rotunda is in the midst of a summerlong restoration, so it's a timely moment to consider how geometry sculpts the void. **"The Shapes of Space"** culls works from the permanent collection and will evolve over the summer, moving upward as the renovation progresses. Through Sept. 5. ♦ **"Divisionism/Neo-Impressionism: Arcadia and Anarchy."** Through Aug. 6. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

Unicorns, and Mermaids." Through Jan. 6. ♦ The recently opened Anne and Bernard Spitzer Hall of Human Origins explores the science of evolution. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45.)

DRAWING CENTER

35 Wooster St. (212-219-2166)—Sculptures and drawings by the Venezuelan artist born Gertrud Goldschmidt (1912-94) are on view in **"Gego: Between Transparency and the Invisible."** Her drawings of nets of lines, often gently torqued, evoke Sol LeWitt, Agnes Martin, and other brainy exponents of the grid. Even in three dimensions, the line is paramount; the sculptures and their shadows share a flat, spare elegance. Gego's extraordinary delicacy of touch sometimes edges toward the organic (as in the largest piece, a 1975 web of steel

panorama of what appears to be an Arab village is even more arresting when it's revealed to be the wholly fabricated site of Israeli Defense Force war exercises. Through Aug. 5. ♦ **"The Sculpture of Louise Nevelson: Constructing a Legend."** Through Sept. 16. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 11 to 5:45, and Thursdays, 11 to 8.)

MORGAN LIBRARY AND MUSEUM

225 Madison Ave., at 36th St. (212-685-0008)—**"From Berlin to Broadway: The Ebb Bequest of Modern German and Austrian Drawings."** Through Sept. 2. ♦ Federico da Montefeltro (1422-82), Duke of Urbino, owned a magnificent private study lined with inlaid wooden panels in which trompe-l'oeil bookcases filled with weaponry and musical instruments tout the worldly exploits of their patron. The panels themselves are at the Met. But facsimiles grace the walls of the Morgan in a vest-pocket exhibition focussed on the books they once surrounded. Also on hand in **"Federico da Montefeltro and His Library"** are Old Testament manuscripts in Hebrew, an illustrated Life of Job, and the collected works of Virgil, along with documentation of the Duke's participation in a papal plot against the Medici, long suspected but proved only by a coded letter, written on February 14, 1478, and discovered in a private archive in 2001. Through Sept. 30. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10:30 to 5, Fridays, 10:30 to 9, Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

MUSEUM OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Fifth Ave. at 103rd St. (212-534-1672)—**"Facing Fascism: New York and the Spanish Civil War."** Through Aug. 12. ♦ **"The *Jewish Daily Forward:* Embracing an Immigrant Community."** Through Sept. 17. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

170 Central Park W., at 77th St. (212-873-3400)—**"The World of Asher B. Durand: The Artist in Antebellum New York."** Through Sept. 30. ♦ **"A New Light on Tiffany: Clara Driscoll and the Tiffany Girls."** Through July 22. ♦ **"New York Divided: Slavery and the Civil War."** Through Sept. 3. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 to 6, and Friday evenings until 8.)

P.S. 1 CONTEMPORARY ART CENTER

22-25 Jackson Ave., at 46th Ave., Long Island City (718-784-2084)—**"Organizing Chaos."** Through Sept. 24. ♦ **"Peter Young: 1963-1977."** Through Sept. 24. ♦ **"Linder."** Through Sept. 24. ♦ **"Young Architects Program 2007: Liquid Sky, by Ball-Nogues Studio."** Through Sept. 24. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, noon to 6.)



TABLES FOR TWO
CASELLULA

401 W. 52nd St. (212-247-8137)—On a recent evening, a waiter took it upon himself to explain the restaurant's name: "It comes from the Latin diminutive for house, and it kind of sounds like the word for cheese, so we like to think of it as 'the little house of cheese.' " (Language mavens: that's *casula, -ae* in the first instance, *caseus, -i* in the second.) There's an obvious infatuation with whimsy. Dishes are given irreverent names, from the succulent pork sandwich (giving a server opportunity to announce, with relish, "Here's your Pig's Ass!") to flights of cheese ("Lady Sings the Blues," "Those Crazy Kids!"). It's a lighthearted approach backed by some serious credentials: Brian Keyser, a co-owner with Joe Farrell, has worked at the Union Square Café and Blue Hill at Stone Barns, and the *fromager*, Tia Keenan, comes from the Modern.

Casellula is not a place for the calorie- or fat-averse (though a waitress said, wonderingly, "We do get people who don't want any cheese at all"). Ordering your greens in the form of the endive salad? You'll get huge hunks of blue cheese, generously strewn macadamia nuts, a swathing of dressing—oh, and some crunchy leaves to scoop it all up. Many things are perfect in their excess; the macaroni and cheese, for instance, was a deliciously gooey combination of Fol Epi, Comté, and chèvre, chewy lardons, and sweet carmellized onions. Other dishes can suffer from indulgence. A fig flatbread was piled with prosciutto and thick shavings of Pecorino, and slathered with fig compote—all those vigorously competing elements end up underwhelming. And it's hard to imagine anything more obstreperous than the Sweet Action sundae, with beer ice cream, beer caramel, orange whipped cream, and, most egregiously, a sprinkling of barley that adds little flavor and the texture of wood shavings.

As for the place's raison d'être: the cheese selection is wide-ranging, laid out in easy-to-comprehend categories, and expertly garnished. A Hawthorne Valley Farm Bianca, with the fresh, tangy flavor of cottage cheese, arrived with a sweet lychee; a pungent Mecox Bay Dairy Atlantic Mist was tamed by a curried green tomato. "Working here has made me socially unacceptable," a waitress complained, "because my clothes all smell like cheese." Time to find some new friends. (Open weekdays for dinner, weekends for brunch and dinner. Entrées $8-$13; flights of three cheeses $15.)

—Andrea Thompson

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART

Madison Ave. at 75th St. (800-944-8639)—Luxury and ruin keep close company in **"Rudolph Stingel,"** a spare show of mostly recent work by the Italian-born artist. Baroque touches—a crystal chandelier, paintings of rich brocade patterns, a mirrored floor (ladies, mind your skirts!)—are paired with pieces overrun by the human touch. One wall is covered in a white plush carpet dappled with mud and paint; visitors have free rein to carve graffiti into walls of a gallery upholstered in shiny aluminum foil. Surface is paramount, and the show is as tactile as a "Pat the Bunny" book. Stingel himself is the subject of three large-scale paintings based on photographs taken by Sam Samore. In these, he looks wearily melancholic. The show is as conversational as much of his previous work has been (his 1989 instruction book for paintings, the carpet in Grand Central), and yet one senses here a wariness in his thinking about indulgence and time. Through Oct. 14. ♦ **"Summer of Love: Art of the Psychedelic Era."** Through Sept. 16. ♦ **"Lincoln Kirstein"** honors the late, great aesthete, connoisseur, and impresario on the centenary of his birth, with an exhibition of work by artists he championed, including Walker Evans, Elie Nadelman, and Pavel Tchelitchew. Through Aug. 27. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

Central Park W. at 79th St. (212-769-5100)—**"Gold."** Through Aug. 19. ♦ **"Mythic Creatures: Dragons,**

wires that looks like cell tissue), sometimes toward Richard Tuttle-esque assemblage (as in a small collage from 1990 made from slivers of cellophane). Through July 21. ♦ Across the street, in the Drawing Room, **William Anastasi** re-creates a handful of his site-specific works from the mid-sixties. Through July 21. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, 10 to 6, and Saturdays, 11 to 6.)

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY

1133 Sixth Ave., at 43rd St. (212-857-0000)—**"Biographical Landscape: The Photography of Stephen Shore, 1969-79."** Through Sept. 9. ♦ **"Let Your Motto Be Resistance: African-American Portraits."** Through Sept. 9. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, and Saturdays and Sundays, 10 to 6, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

JEWISH MUSEUM

1109 Fifth Ave., at 92nd St. (212-423-3200)—Although there is only one Palestinian photographer, Noel Jabbour, in the smartly balanced exhibition **"Dateline Israel: New Photography and Video Art,"** she never seems to be in the minority. For these twenty-three mostly Israeli artists (Rineke Dijkstra, Wolfgang Tillmans, and Wim Wenders are among the outsiders), images of Israel are defined by the presence or absence of Palestinians. But there's nothing tendentious here, and much that's engaged and engaging, notably the work of Barry Frydlender and Leora Laor, both of whom photograph ultra-Orthodox communities with unusual sensitivity. Yaron Leshem's huge

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Summer-hours warning: Many galleries are open Mondays through Fridays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6. Others follow the normal Tuesday-to-Saturday schedule. It's best to call ahead.

"HORIZON"

An intentionally dopey concept can pan out if pursued with verve. Witness "Horizon," for which the painter, writer, and curator David Humphrey has gathered sixty-eight works of art by almost as many artists. These are hung side by side in a tight frieze around the gallery, scooting over windows and around corners, with their various horizon lines synched to form what Humphrey calls "an irrationally cooperative panorama." Most of the work is serious, abstracted, yet discernibly landscape-based painting, interspersed with a few shallow installations, drawings, prints, and photographs. Among the participants: Diti Almog, Jimbo Blachly, Adam Cvijanovic, Angela Dufresne, Medrie MacPhee, Alexander Ross, Kate Shepherd, and Amy Sillman. Through July 27. (E.F.A., 323 W. 39th St. 212-563-5855.)

Short List

ROSWELL ANGIER: Gitterman, 170 E. 75th St. 212-734-0868. Through July 28. **"KARINE LAVAL: LEISURE":** Benrubi, 41 E. 57th St. 212-888-6007. Through Sept. 8. **"21 POSITIONS":** Austrian Cultural Forum, 11 E. 52nd St. 212-319-5300. Through Aug. 28.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

ERIC BAUDELAIRE
Nietzsche remarked that events "that move the world enter on doves' feet" and Kafka once wrote, "This morning, I watched the destruction of the world as an attentive spectator, then I got back to work." Both are cited in a statement by Pierre Zaoui accompanying Baudelaire's show, which purportedly meditates on 9/11. Funny, then, that the graffiti-covered, framed photographs of buildings and the video of a professional billboard-plasterer plying his trade in the Metro were shot in Paris. Guy Debord and the Situationists might serve as better references than the two German writers; Baudelaire treads heavily in their tracks, investigating the intersections between images, public space, and politics. But the Situationists are so over-cited you can see why he'd rather not. Through July 27. (Dee, 545 W. 20th St. 212-924-7545.)

YURI MASNYJ
There's a kind of reverse bait-and-switch going on in Masnyj's sculptures and graphite-and-watercolor drawings. At first, the works look unambitious and unassuming. Step close, though, and you're hit with a world of well-honed references to modern art, thought, and furniture. Sculptures in the form of shelves are laden with arty tchotchkes and rough, handmade copies of books with titles alluding to recognizable subjects, minus a letter or two. "Caler," "Diaghle," and "Moden" might be Calder, Diaghilev, and Modern. Or they might be something else. Other works nod to Picasso, Eames furniture, and the mid-century bohemian pads where these ideas and aesthetics flourished. Through July 31. (Metro Pictures, 519 W. 24th St. 212-206-7100.)

"COMMON OBJECTS"
Usually, art differentiates itself from other objects by striving to be uncommon; not so the works here. Witness Daina Higgins's watercolor of store banners, Konstantin Kakanias's doodles painted on a display of postcards, Julia Condon's closely studied rendition of a feather, in oil on wood. Elizabeth Lennard quotes Gertrude Stein's 1922 play "Objects Lie on a Table" in a painted gelatin-silver print that spotlights cabbages, saltshakers, bananas, pots, and spoons. Two Donald Baechler works on paper depicting human skulls bring a bit of star power to the show, and also some thematic contrast. Skulls aren't very common, after all, and neither is the blue-chip Baechler in this setting. Through July 20. (Dinter, 547 W. 27th St. 212-947-2818.)

"IT'S ALL SPIRITUAL: ART FROM TRIBAL CULTURES"
Politically suspect but visually delightful, "It's All Spiritual" brings together an Olmec figure from around 1100 B.C., sixteenth-century Djenné bronzes, Sioux "ledger drawings" (small works on paper) from the late nineteenth century, Indonesian carvings, a Fijian war club, an amazing paper-sheathed Chinese Yao mask, and more. The museum-ish arrangement preaches universal values, and cultural or historical context be damned—the work itself speaks openly of genius craftsmanship, and tacitly of profound iconographic traditions and uses for art that can be hard to grasp in Chelsea. Through July 27. (Cuningham, 541 W. 25th St. 212-242-2772.)

"STRANGE MAGIC"
This terrific group show, curated by Natalia Mager Sacasa, brings together five of-the-moment artists who work with photography, all of whom happen to be women. Abstraction in the modernist mode dominates, including Liz Deschenes's vibrant, meshing moirés; Eileen Quinlan's faceted puzzles of smoke and mirrors; and Amy Granat's collagelike photograms, one of which is pinned down at floor level by a film of shivering, pixel-flecked flowers. Sara VanDerBeek shows photos of small but intriguingly layered constructions laden with art-historical references, and Anne Collier reinvigorates appropriation with paired film stills of Faye Dunaway and her Nikon in "Eyes of Laura Mars." The conversation set up here is one of the summer's most provocative. Through July 28. (Luhring Augustine, 531 W. 24th St. 212-206-9100.)

Short List

THOMAS FLECHTNER: Boesky, 509 W. 24th St. 212-680-9889. Through Aug. 17. **ALEX WEBB:** Sepia, 148 W. 24th St. 212-645-9444. Through July 27. **"CONCRETE WORKS":** Mitchell-Innes & Nash, 534 W. 26th St. 212-744-7400. Through July 27.

GALLERIES—BROOKLYN

"ATHLETIC MODEL GUILD"
From the nineteen-forties until his death, in 1992, photographer Bob Mizer—working from his L.A. studio, Athletic Model Guild—was the liveliest and most prolific supplier of prime beefcake in America. The modestly scaled photographs here (none bigger than this magazine) are typical of his output and range—from classic physique studies to staged narratives, all featuring handsome, muscular young men wearing little more than jockstraps. Though unabashedly kitsch, Mizer's work is also playful, artful, and wildly idiosyncratic. His use of painted and projected backdrops (including the Roman Forum, a boat dock, and light-show psychedelia) gave his photographs a low-budget Hollywood touch that looks positively postmodern today. Through July 27. (Wessel + O'Connor, 111 Front St. 718-596-1700.)

Advertisement



"Apparently, there's no 'energy ceiling' around here!"

DANCE

"SLOW DANCING"
The photographer David Michalek captures a burst of dancing on film, at a thousand frames per second, then plays it back in extreme slow motion, stretching a few seconds of footage across ten minutes. The result is a rare chance to savor details normally too short-lived to study. For the Lincoln Center Festival, forty-three of these films—depicting masters of ballet, modern, break dancing, tap, capoeira, hip-hop, flamenco, and voguing, among other forms—are projected on three forty-foot screens hung across the façade of the New York State Theatre, to be viewed, free, in the Lincoln Center plaza. (Daily from 9 P.M. to 1 A.M. Through July 29.)

PILOBOLUS
For its annual visit to the Joyce, the long-standing collaborative brings three repertory programs, each capped with a New York première. Jonathan Wolken's "B'zyrk" is a disillusioned comedy about an Eastern European circus family. Michael Tracy's "Persistence of Memory" is a duet of troubled intimacy. But Robby Barnett's "Rushes" is really new. In a Pilobolus first, it was created with outside choreographers—Inbal Pinto and Avshalom Pollak. Reports from its début at the American Dance Festival tout it as the best piece put out by Pilobolus in a long while. (175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. July 17-18 at 7:30, July 19-20 at 8, and July 21 at 2 and 8. Through Aug. 11.)

THOMAS/ORTIZ DANCE
The work of the partners Ted Thomas and Frances Ortiz does not suffer from the self-irony typical of many strains of downtown dance. At Dance Theatre Workshop, the company performs two new pieces, a duet to Rachmaninov about a fraught relationship (by Ortiz) and an ensemble piece (by Thomas) set to samplings of rock guitar, pop, and Japanese drums and filled with parallel and crisscrossing movement, which explores boundaries between groups of people. (219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. July 18 at 7, July 19-20 at 7:30, and July 21 at 2 and 7:30.)

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BARE FACT:

Lunchtime doesn't necessarily mean time for lunch.

Crunchy oats, peanuts and whole grains on the top. Peanut buttery layer on the bottom. 13 grams of protein for energy. And in a variety of delicious flavors.



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CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
BATTLE STATIONS

This summer, the *Guardian* asked thirteen musicians to name an album that they felt was overrated. Ian Williams, of Battles, nominated the Strokes' 2001 album, "Is This It," judging the band "the new Duran Duran."



In my house, Duran Duran-ness is something one works to achieve, so, though Williams may not have insulted the Strokes, he said something about his band. Made up of alumni of noisy indie-rock bands and the son of the composer Anthony Braxton, Battles started as a rock band that wanted to sound like anything but. The first Battles EPs were crisp abstractions recorded using a combination of digital gear and traditional rock instruments. "Mirrored," their new album, finds them creeping toward song form. Online, "Mirrored" spawned a minor hit in "Atlas," a juddering song that is totally compelling though it is little more than a rhythmic vamp matched to Chipmunks-like vocalizing. "Atlas" is Gary Glitter's "Rock and Roll Part Two" for the art-gallery crowd—a visceral and addictive bit of nonsense. It's not "The Reflex," but they're getting closer. Battles are at Studio B on July 20.

—Sasha Frere-Jones

NOCHE FLAMENCA
The beloved Spanish troupe, starring Soledad Barrio, shows flamenco at its intimate, traditional best. (Theatre 80, at 80 St. Marks Pl. 212-352-3101. July 18-20 at 8, July 21 at 2 and 8, and July 22 at 2 and 5. Through July 29.)

ANDREA HAENGGI/AMDAT
The dance-and-video installation-maker revisits "Blast Wall Art," a work inspired by the Iraqi artists who paint murals on American security barriers—just the kind of subversion that goes straight to the heart of a site-specific choreographer. The free event begins at a meeting point in Dumbo and continues on a handball court. (Meeting point: 112 Jay St., Brooklyn. 718-218-8236. July 18-21 at 8.)

PAM TANOWITZ DANCE
Tanowitz takes the vocabulary of ballet and Cunningham and chops it up, crumples it, plays it at the wrong speed. Call it deconstructed classicism. In "Forevermore," a suite of four dances, the method makes for mystery, an obscure sense of something terribly amiss. The formality is as bracing as the distortions, but Tanowitz doesn't quite sustain the mood or the pitch of invention. (Joyce SoHo, 155 Mercer St. 212-334-7479. July 19-21 at 8.)

"MONGOLIA: MUSIC, DANCE, AND BALLAD"
The Lincoln Center Festival offers two distinct programs reflecting the rich and remote cultural life of Mongolia, from a historical epic once reserved for the court to the singing and dancing usually found around campfires and in *gurs* (tents). The first program, "The Secret History of the Mongols," an anonymous thirteenth-century chronicle of the life of Genghis Khan, in two parts, is recited by a professional bard. The second program consists of a concert of traditional Mongolian music, performed with original instruments like the two-stringed lute and the horse-head fiddle, along with the dance form *biyelgee*, which focusses on the upper body, evoking everyday activities such as horseback riding and hunting. (Clark Studio Theatre, Rose Building, 165 W. 65th St. 212-721-6500. Program 1, Part 1: July 22 at 4. Program 2: July 23-24 at 8. Through July 29.)

"SECOND VISIT TO THE EMPRESS"
For his first foray into opera, the director-choreographer Shen Wei has chosen a famously static mainstay of the Chinese repertory, an almost eventless tale of dynastic intrigue. Traditionally, the singers stand still for the duration. Shen adds dancers, who, instead of contributing compensatory narrative energy, engage in music visualization, constrained and undulant, then whirling and whiplash. The music is authentic and lovely, if you have a taste for it. The choreography, like Wei's sets and costumes, is characteristically handsome, tasteful, and underwhelming. (New York State Theatre, 63rd St. at Broadway. 212-721-6500. July 24 at 8. Through July 29.)

OUT OF TOWN

JACOB'S PILLOW
At the Ted Shawn Theatre July 18-22, the Paul Taylor Dance Company marks the Pillow's anniversary season with a program of old and not-so-old favorites—"Aureole" (1962), "Esplanade" (1975), and "Promethean Fire" (2002), masterpieces all. A new work, "De Sueños," matches Kronos Quartet recordings of music by Mexican composers with a dreamscape drawn from Mexican folk celebrations such as the Day of the Dead. An epigraph from Carl Jung marks Taylor's attitude: when asked to interpret a dream (read: a dance), the psychologist would first say, "I have no idea what this dream means." ♦ The Australian troupe Chunky Move hits the Duke July 19-22 with "I Want to Dance Better at Parties," by Gideon Obarzanek. The show, which was first performed at the Joyce last year, is a well-constructed, sophisticated, and touching meditation on the role of social dancing in the lives of five men, performed by three men and two women. Obarzanek explores what dancing (or not dancing) feels like, from the release of connecting with others to the analytical breakdown of dance moves and the psychological torture of physical awkwardness. (Becket, Mass. 413-243-0745. For a complete schedule, visit www.jacobspillow.org. Through Aug. 26.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
CONCERTS IN TOWN

LINCOLN CENTER FESTIVAL
The conductor Valery Gergiev's Kirov Opera version of Wagner's four-opera cycle **"Der Ring des Nibelungen"** completes its New York run. Audiences will be confronted not only with an intensely Russian style of Wagner singing but also with the audacious sets and costumes of George Tsypin and Tatiana Noginova, which hark back to a primitive Eurasian past quite removed from Wagner's Teutonic roots. July 18 and July 20 at 6: **"Siegfried."** ♦ July 19 and July 21 at 6: **"Götterdämmerung."** (Metropolitan Opera House.) ♦ July 20-21 at 8:30: The renowned percussion quartet So Percussion teams up with the San Francisco electronica duo Matmos for two nights of imaginative high-tech jamming. ♦ July 22-23 at 9: In **"The Full Monteverdi,"** the British vocal ensemble I Fagiolini performs the composer's Fourth Book of Madrigals as a six-character opera, moving among the audience at the intimate Kaplan Penthouse. (Through July 29.) (212-721-6500.)

BARGEMUSIC
July 18 and July 20 at 8: Jorge Caballero, the youngest musician—and the only guitarist—to win the Naumburg Competition, has the barge to himself for two nights. Both feature music by Bach; the first concludes with Italian works (featuring Paganini's Grand Sonata in A Major), while the second finishes with Yamashita's arrangement of Mussorgsky's "Pictures at an Exhibition." ♦ July 21 at 8 and July 22 at 4: The upcoming program by N.Y.C.Q.—a group of four young string players, all born in the former Soviet Union—features works by Beethoven (the String Quartet in F Minor, "Serioso"), Copland, and Schumann (the Piano Quintet, with Jeffrey Biegel). (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083.)

INTERNATIONAL KEYBOARD INSTITUTE AND FESTIVAL
Jerome Rose's annual festival at the Mannes College of Music is a big-tent affair that accommodates a number of distinctive personalities. July 20 at 8:30: Olga Kern, a bravura player in the grand Russian style, performs music by Chopin and Rachmaninoff. ♦ July 21 at 8:30: The urbane Parisian pianist Michel Beroff balances works by Janáček and Bartók with Book I of Debussy's "Preludes" and two excerpts from Messiaen's "Vingt Regards sur l'Enfant Jésus." ♦ July 24 at 6: With his Mormon mission to music-mad Finland now behind him, Stephen Beus is a Juilliard artist-diploma student with a gold medal from the Gina Bachauer competition under his belt. He completes a concert of works by Bach and Mendelssohn with two short pieces by Griffes and Barber's mighty Sonata for Piano. (150 W. 85th St. 212-580-0210, ext. 4858. For full listing, see www.ikif.org.)

BROOKLYN PHILHARMONIC
Alexander Platt, the resident conductor of Chicago Opera Theatre, brings the Philharmonic's season to a close in two concerts with the dynamic Canadian violinist Lara St. John that celebrate the "Eight Seasons"—Vivaldi's "Four Seasons" and Piazzolla's "Four Seasons of Buenos Aires." (Asser Levy Park, Coney Island. July 24 at 7:30. ♦ Naumburg Band Shell, Central Park. July 25 at 7:30.) (No tickets required.)

OUT OF TOWN

CARAMOOR
July 19 at 7:30: For several years now, Caramoor has been busily commissioning string quartets. The latest has been provided by Lera Auerbach;

KIM DEMARCO

the world première will be given by the excellent Parker String Quartet, part of a program that also features quartets by Ligeti and Smetana (the expressive Quartet No. 1, "From My Life"). ♦ July 20 at 8: Will Crutchfield, Caramoor's opera chief, conducts **"Il Trovatore,"** in which such estimable singers as Francisco Casanova and Julianna di Giacomo will try to avoid being blown off the stage by Ewa Podleś, the powerhouse Polish contralto. ♦ July 21 at 8: Crutchfield returns for his final excursion into bel canto, Donizetti's rarely performed **"Linda di Chamounix,"** featuring Sarah Coburn, Barry Banks, and Marco Nisticò. ♦ July 22 at 4:30: The Mendelssohn Quartet (and the pianist Jonathan Biss) survey works by Haydn, Brahms (the Piano Quintet), and William Bolcom. (Katonah, N.Y. 914-232-1252.)

NORFOLK CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL

July 20 at 8: The Yale Brass Trio, the bassoonist Frank Morelli, and the pianists Mihae Lee and Peter Frankl offer music for winds from the Renaissance to the present. ♦ July 21 at 8: Music by Dvořák (including the Piano Quintet, with Frankl) and Janáček will be performed by the Vermeer String Quartet, a beloved group that is retiring this year. (Norfolk, Conn. 860-542-3000.)

TANGLEWOOD

The supreme music festival of the summer is in full swing, with Beethoven on its mind. July 20 at 8:30: Mark Elder leads the Boston Symphony Orchestra in the first of three all-Beethoven programs. This one travels a little bit off the beaten path—the "Leonore" Overture No. 1, the Piano Concerto No. 3 (with Imogen Cooper), the aria "Abscheulicher!" from "Fidelio" (with the powerful soprano Christine Brewer), and the ever-underrated Fourth Symphony, a farewell to the Austrian chamber-symphony tradition that began with Haydn. ♦ July 21 at 8:30: Hans Graf takes the helm this time, conducting the "Leonore" Overture No. 2, the Triple Concerto (with the men of the Beaux Arts Trio, no less), the concert aria "Ah! Perfido" (with Brewer returning), and the jaunty Symphony No. 2 in D Major. ♦ July 22 at 2:30: The Beethoven week ends with a grand Sunday-afternoon affair featuring the "Leonore" Overture No. 3, the "Emperor" Concerto (with the venerable pianist Leon Fleisher), the Romance No. 2 in F Major for Violin and Orchestra (with Daniel Hope of the Beaux Arts), and the whirling Seventh Symphony; Jens Georg Bachmann is on the podium. (Lenox, Mass. 888-266-1200.)

MAVERICK CONCERTS

July 21 at 8: The guitarist Jason Vieaux's concert reflects the inclusive spirit of the Woodstock area: works by Bach and Spanish composers, along with a tribute to the jazz-guitar legend Pat Metheny, a local resident. ♦ July 22 at 3: A wide-ranging program—string quartets by Beethoven, Ligeti (No. 1, "Métamorphoses Nocturnes"), and Smetana—offered by the unflappable Pacifica Quartet. (Woodstock, N.Y. For more information, call 845-679-8217.)

GLIMMERGLASS OPERA

This summer, the company offers several operas inspired by the story of Orpheus and Eurydice. July 21 at 8 and July 23 at 2: Philip Glass's **"Orphée"** is based on the film by Jean Cocteau. Philip Cutlip, an authoritative Glass singer, and the City Opera stars Lisa Saffer and Caroline Worra take the leading roles; Anne Manson conducts. ♦ July 22 at 2: Glimmerglass's production of Gluck's **"Orphée et Eurydice"** gets nearly everything wrong. The gifted male soprano Michael Maniaci is miscast in a role that Berlioz, the arranger, designed for a (female) mezzo-soprano; Nicola Bowie's dances are tedious and predictable; and the orchestra wavers under Julian Wachner's florid yet unfocussed direction. The second act is saved by a committed and sympathetic performance by Amanda Pabyan as Eurydice. ♦ July 24 at 2: The production of Offenbach's **"Orpheus in the Underworld"** gets nearly everything right. Part "Brideshead Revisited" and part Feydeau farce, with an unholy bit of "Cabaret" (think leather) thrown in, it's vivid, daring, funny, and musically sound. One can savor performances from the sterling veterans Joyce Castle and Jake Gardner and the impressive newcomers Marc Heller and Joélle Harvey; Jean-Marie Zeitouni leads an accompaniment with plenty of élan. (Cooperstown, N.Y. 607-547-2255.)

MUSIC MOUNTAIN

The Daedalus String Quartet, a fresh and engaging young American group, takes the stage for an afternoon of music by Mozart (the "Dissonant" Quartet), Schumann, and Fauré (the radiant Piano Quintet in C Minor). (Falls Village, Conn. 860-824-7126. July 22 at 3.)

COOPERSTOWN CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL

It would take a brave man to separate brass players from their beer. This festival pleads no contest, bundling a concert by the men of the Meridian Arts Ensemble—whose combination of technical expertise and adventuresome repertory is hard to beat—with a tasting of new brews from the nearby Brewery Ommegang. (Farmers' Museum, Cooperstown, N.Y. 877-666-7421. July 22 at 7:30.)

BARD MUSIC FESTIVAL OF THE HAMPTONS

Leon Botstein has expanded his Bard Summerscape brand by launching a partnership with the Music Festival of the Hamptons. The highlight of the final weekend is an evening with the American Symphony Orchestra that features works by Suk, Smetana, Mozart (the "Prague" Symphony), Martinů, and Dvořák (the "Czech Suite"). (East Hampton Studios, Wainscott, N.Y. 800-644-4418. July 21 at 8. For full listing, see www.bardmusicfestival-hamptons.com.)

MARLBORO MUSIC FESTIVAL

Each weekend at this renowned festival brings concerts of chamber music offered by some of the world's most distinguished musicians (including the pianists Richard Goode and Mitsuko Uchida) and their phenomenally talented protégés. (Marlboro, Vt. 802-254-2394. July 21 at 8:30 and July 22 at 2:30. Programs are announced one week in advance at www.marlboromusic.org.)

MOVIES
OPENING

ALL THE BOYS LOVE MANDY LANE

A horror film, directed by Jonathan Levine, about a teen-age girl (Amber Heard) who visits a ranch where terrible things start happening. Opening July 20. (In wide release.)

GOYA'S GHOSTS

Reviewed below in Now Playing. Opening July 20. (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

HAIRSPRAY

Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening July 20. (In wide release.)

I NOW PRONOUNCE YOU CHUCK AND LARRY

In this comedy, directed by Dennis Dugan and starring Adam Sandler and Kevin James, two friends pretend to be gay in order to gain domestic-partner benefits. Opening July 20. (In wide release.)

LIVE-IN MAID

Reviewed below in Now Playing. Opening July 18. (Film Forum.)

SUNSHINE

A science-fiction drama, directed by Danny Boyle, about a spaceship crew sent to rekindle the dying sun. Starring Cillian Murphy, Rose Byrne, Chris Evans, and Michelle Yeoh. Opening July 20. (In wide release.)



"Karine Laval: Leisure," a show of work by the French photographer, at Benrubi.

NOW PLAYING

EVENING

An elderly woman (Vanessa Redgrave) lies dying in her bed, attended by her two daughters (Natasha Richardson, Redgrave's daughter, and Toni Collette) and by memories of a painful and ecstatic weekend decades earlier. In the early fifties, at the Newport wedding of her best friend (Mamie Gummer, Meryl Streep's daughter), she divided her time between two young men—her friend's

ranting alcoholic brother (Hugh Dancy) and a handsome young doctor (Patrick Wilson) with whom she fell in love. If we have to watch an actor expire for two hours, Redgrave is the one to watch, and Meryl Streep, playing the long-ago bride, now grown old, has a fine moment, too, lying in bed with Redgrave as the two women look at the past and compare marriages. But this is one of the rare movies that are too sensitive for their own good. In both past and present, the characters spill their feelings about everyone, and the pileup of hurt, rue, and guilt becomes almost oppressive. Susan Minot adapted her own 1998 novel in collaboration with Michael Cunningham, and the narrative scheme they have worked out is far too complicated for the relatively simple story that they have to tell. Directed by Lajos Koltai.—*David Denby* (Reviewed in our issue of 7/2/07.) (In wide release.)



"Live-In Maid," starring Norma Argentina and Norma Aleandro, opens July 18.

1408
Yet another adaptation of a Stephen King work concerning an author in peril. This one features John Cusack as a writer of ghost stories who is out to debunk claims of the paranormal. Checking into a hotel on New York's East Side, he tries to unravel a series of mysterious deaths that took place there. The film has all the resident-evil tropes of other King stories (creepy and ever-shifting apparitions, ghosts of all shapes and sizes), but it is distinguished by Cusack's slowly unwinding performance, a brilliant turn at making the unbelievable believable. Directed by Mikael Håfström.—*Bruce Diones* (In wide release.)

GOYA'S GHOSTS
In Milos Forman's costume drama, set in late-eighteenth-century Spain, the miscast Natalie Portman plays Inés Bilbatua, a sweet young Catholic girl who doesn't care for pork. As a result, she is accused by the Inquisition of having heretical Jewish tendencies and shut away in a church dungeon. Through a mutual acquaintance—the painter Francisco Goya—her family asks a monk, the opportunistic Brother Lorenzo (in a wonderfully suave performance by Javier Bardem), to intervene. Instead of helping her, the monk impregnates her, and things go downhill from there. Goya, as played by Stellan Skarsgård, is an affable but unremarkable fellow; to make matters worse, the paintings he creates are poorly rendered reproductions, compounding the feeling of ersatz historical drama. The high point of this otherwise misguided film is a dinner at which the Inquisition's use of torture is coolly debated—with obvious echoes of Abu Ghraib—by Inés's father and Brother Lorenzo, leading to a highly illuminating demonstration of its efficacy.—*Marina Harss* (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

IKIRU
Akira Kurosawa is often pegged as an artist of action and a maker of epics. This 1952 picture, known in English as "To Live," proves that he was also a virtuoso humanist. Here, he uses multiple film and narrative techniques to dramatize, without tears, the plight of a dying city-government bureaucrat who looks for shreds of meaning in his family and profession. Kurosawa achieves the piercing emotions and poetry of the Italian neorealists by opposite means: he doesn't make the camera disappear. Instead, from the first view of the hero's X-rays, he deploys his camera so sharply and unerringly that it seems to take X-rays of the spirit. In Takashi Shimura, Kurosawa found an actor who could stand up to this close inspection. The crowning image of Shimura on a swing in a city park, crooning a song about life's brevity as the snow falls, comes as close as any big-screen moment to Joycean epiphany. In Japanese.—*Michael Sragow* (Rubin Museum of Art; July 20.)

INTERVIEW
Steve Buscemi directed this remake of Theo van Gogh's 2003 film, about the psychodrama that results when a demoted political journalist interviews a starlet. Though it contains a couple of good ideas, it's a total non-experience. Katya, fiercely portrayed by Sienna Miller, is a flamboyant, self-indulgent force of nature; the journalist Pierre Peders—Buscemi himself—is an ironic, condescending, frustrated blowhard. The setup for their showdown is perfect, indeed too perfect: the trick that gets the pair from a Tribeca restaurant to the actress's nearby loft, where the interview devolves into confrontation, is only the first of many absurd contrivances without which the film would not exist. Action, dialogue, and backstory are ludicrously implausible, and Buscemi's aimless direction, which features the camera bobbing and weaving with the characters, adds nothing. Although Katya's ferocity suggests the extravagant real-life passions that even a minor performer draws on, and her high-stakes wrangling with Pierre evokes the hard-core competitive streak that feeds success in any arena, the eighty-three minutes it takes for these notions to emerge are inert.—*Richard Brody* (In limited release.)

JOSHUA
In George Ratliff's psychological thriller, a family of wealthy Upper East Siders is slowly driven crazy by their brilliant, unearthly son, Joshua (an appropriately unpleasant Jacob Kogan). Vera Farmiga is convincing as Abby, a rebellious mother whose unravelling results in pill-popping and worse; Sam Rockwell is excellent as the affable father who knows he is not nearly as smart as his son; and Dallas Roberts keeps his cool as the gay uncle who benevolently communes with Joshua when everyone else is fawning over the new baby girl in the house. A baffling dénouement, however, spoils an otherwise fairly absorbing film.—*Shauna Lyon* (In wide release.)

LADY CHATTERLEY
For those of us who still believe in D. H. Lawrence as a liberator, this awkward, impoverished, and interminable French version of his most notorious work is something of a trial. The director and co-writer, Pascale Ferran, chose to use an earlier version of Lawrence's text ("John Thomas and Lady Jane"), which is less verbose than the final version. Here, the adulterous Constance Chatterley (Marina Hands) and her gamekeeper lover, Parkin (Jean-Louis Coulloc'h), speak very little. Unfortunately, neither of the actors suggests an inner life. When they finally undress, the nakedness is a relief, since their bodies are so much more expressive than their faces. When they lay flowers on each other's genitals, however, and then dance in the rain, even the most ardent Lawrentians may want to avert their eyes in embarrassment. In French.—*D.D.* (Cinema Village and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

LIVE-IN MAID
Writer-director Jorge Gaggero's domestic drama, set during the recent economic crisis in Buenos Aires, centers on Señora Beba (Norma Aleandro), a formerly wealthy woman of late middle age, and her housekeeper of twenty-eight years, Dora (Norma Argentina). Beba can no longer afford to keep Dora, though she would never say it out loud, which results in an extensive—and funny—passive-aggressive sparring match. Gaggero's script is commendably restrained, and though Aleandro's melodramatic performance is sometimes tedious, Argentina stands out as the glum, intelligent proletarian who, after decades of caring for an utterly self-absorbed woman, is not bitter but forgiving and wise. In Spanish.—*S.L.* (Film Forum.)

A MIGHTY HEART
In films like "Welcome to Sarajevo" (1997) and "In This World" (2002), the British director Michael Winterbottom has proved himself to be as much a reporter as a fabulist. That mixture carries many risks—are we wise to trust the authenticity of a scene, for instance, just because it is shot with a documentary roughness?—but there are times when its urgency feels indispensable. Such is the case with Winterbottom's new movie, which stars Angelina Jolie as Mariane Pearl, the wife of Daniel Pearl (Dan Futterman). He was kidnapped and then killed in Pakistan in 2002, and most of the story takes place in the dreadful hiatus between those two events. The mood is twitchy, the pace deliberately bewildering, and the moral impetus calculated to leave us of two minds; as the police brutalize a suspect, we both deplore the action and crave the information that it extracts. The greatest surprise is Jolie, who, rather than grandstanding, allows her character to be swept along, and half-swamped, by the horror of those days. With Will Patton, too creepy by half in the role of a security expert.—*Anthony Lane* (6/25/07) (In wide release.)

RATATOUILLE
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (In wide release.)

RESCUE DAWN
Ten years ago, Werner Herzog made an extraordinary documentary called "Little Dieter Needs to Fly." This recounted the exploits of Dieter Dengler, a German-born pilot in the U.S. Navy, who was shot down on a secret mission over Laos in 1966, imprisoned in the jungle for many months, and finally, after an audacious breakout, picked up and brought back to safety. Now Herzog retells the tale as a feature film, starring Christian Bale—first chipper, then cadaverous—as the indestructible Dengler. Many of

HOPE GANGLOFF

the highs and lows remain intact, including the hero's immersion in a well, the wooden stocks that were used to restrain him at night, and the eventual triumph of his return to the aircraft carrier from which he had set out. Yet the film lacks the hypnotic strangeness of the original, and the dramatized Dengler, however heroic his survival, feels like a watery imitation of the real thing. With Steve Zahn as Duane, a fellow-inmate of Dengler's; the highlight of the movie consists of the two starving men reciting fridgefuls of imaginary food.—*A.L.* (7/9 & 16/07) (In wide release.)

SICKO

In the beginning of Michael Moore's attack on America's health-care system, he records heartbreaking interviews with families who have been betrayed or neglected by H.M.O.s and insurance companies. But then Moore hauls off three ailing Ground Zero rescue workers and other seriously ill people to Guantánamo Bay, where the detainees allegedly get good (and free) health care. The sick Americans are turned away, of course, and the joke seems insensitive. Moore does find some help for the rescue workers in Havana (the other sick Americans mysteriously vanish), and the rest of the movie is devoted to the wonders of health care in Canada, England, and France as well as in Cuba. But Moore accepts what doctors and patients abroad say at face value—as a report on national health services in different countries, the movie is worthless—and he doesn't interview a single American who might have ideas about reforming our own system. Since the majority of Americans want some form of national health care, Moore, for once, seems behind the curve.—*D.D.* (7/2/07) (In wide release.)

TIME

Or, "Time Wasted Is Never Regained." The Korean director Kim Ki-duk found a high concept: a young woman who wants to win back her straying boyfriend changes her appearance through plastic surgery and reintroduces herself to him as someone else. It sounds like a modern-day "Vertigo" and perhaps could have been one, but Kim's airtight script lets no reality in as his direction swings between neutral exposition and arch symbolism. The one good scene—the touchingly sad aftermath of a speed date gone bad—has nothing to do with the main line of action, which stretches ever farther into absurdity without offering any insight into the characters' inner or outer lives. The pseudo-artistic fakery is the other side of the summer-blockbuster coin. In Korean.—*R.B.* (Cinema Village.)

TRANSFORMERS

Yet another quiet family drama from the director Michael Bay, bringer of "Armageddon." This one stars Shia LaBeouf as the teen-age Sam, who takes possession of his first car, unaware that it is in fact an outsized yellow robot, one of the saintly Autobots sent to deliver him from evil. The evil in question is represented by the Decepticons, who are hellbent on destroying Planet Earth for the want of anything better to do. Mankind (played largely by Special Forces units of the U.S. military) is caught in the crossfire between the warring machines, many of whom, though computer-generated, give more balanced performances than their human counterparts. The entire farrago makes just enough sense to be grasped by a nine-year-old boy, but no more; any logical rifts are bridged by flying wreckage and a soundtrack apparently scored for brass, wind, and jackhammers. With Jon Voight as a barely transformed Donald Rumsfeld.—*A.L.* (7/9 & 16/07) (In wide release.)

YOU KILL ME

The new film from John Dahl stars Ben Kingsley as Frank, a drunken Polish hit man: an obvious career move for the man who once played Gandhi. Until vodka got the better of him, Frank worked for the Polish Mob in Buffalo; now he is sent to San Francisco to get his life together so he can come back and kill people. It's a tart, misanthropic conceit, and the script, by Christopher Markus and Stephen McFeely, leaves no irony unturned; better still, we get Bill Pullman as Frank's Mephistopheles, a real-estate agent stripped of all illusion, and Téa Leoni (one of the film's executive producers and the most unsentimental actress in Hollywood) as the lonely cynic to whom our hero turns. Yet their romance seldom rings true, and a pall of indecision hangs over the whole tale; where Dahl's finest work, like "The Last Seduction," cleaves proudly to a genre, this film doesn't know whether it's a Mob thriller, a tar-black comedy, or a grudging lesson in love. Despite the promise concealed in the title, it never slays you.—*A.L.* (In wide release.)

ZOO

Frederick Wiseman's 1993 documentary about Miami's MetroZoo filters out the cuteness to show both the life of the institution and the tense and ambivalent relations between humans and the captive species. Though he films animals with a patient, tender astonishment, he exposes the uneasy authority that the zoo's cheerful spectacle depends on, from the orders barked by a stick-wielding trainer at a trio of performing elephants to a ponderously elegant gorilla's angry lunge at a group of admiring children. The central dramas concern the exacting veterinary care of a rhinoceros in labor and the hunt for feral dogs that get through the fences and kill young animals. The extraordinary devotion of the staff to the health and well-being of the creatures on display is balanced by the dullness of existence behind bars. Much protection, little joy: the trade-off that justifies the zoo business (which Wiseman reveals, with its photo ops and fund-raisers) speaks as well to the blank-eyed viewers of subjugated nature.—*R.B.* (BAM; July 18.)

Also Playing

COLMA: THE MUSICAL: Quad Cinema. **HARRY POTTER AND THE ORDER OF THE PHOENIX:** In wide release. **LIVE FREE OR DIE HARD:** In wide release. **TALK TO ME:** In wide release.

DVD NOTES
TO BE A CLOWN

Eddie Murphy, who claimed Jerry Lewis's comic mantle with his remake of "The Nutty Professor," borrowed Lewis's inflections and genial-nebbish persona for the title role of "**Norbit**" (DreamWorks), a mild-mannered orphan, but he cuts loose as Rasputia, the abusive harridan Norbit marries. Raised by three thuggish brothers to take whatever she wants, whenever she wants, Rasputia is a demon of appetite in all its varieties, and Murphy, playing her in a grotesquely large fat suit, turns her into an uproarious villain. Under the hilarious mischief, Murphy unleashes an id-storm of feminine terror in a daring act of self-liberation—yet Brian Robbins's aimless direction gives him little more than a bare stage for it.

The sure-handed genre master John Landis directed Murphy in the 1988 comedy "**Coming to America**" (Paramount) as Akeem, an African prince who goes to New York disguised as a poor student in the hope of finding a wife. The film's sharp comic timing, keen attention to the story's Queens locations, and jovial devotion to people at work—whether in the fast-food restaurant where Akeem finds love or in the barbershop where he finds wisdom—suggest Landis's comic debt to Howard Hawks, to whose "A Song Is Born" he pays visual homage. Though Murphy amazes and delights in multiple roles (as does his co-star, Arsenio Hall), the effect is one of impersonal virtuosity: neither he nor Landis seemed to need each other's distinctive talents.

Jerry Lewis's antics inspired Hollywood's most original postwar comedy director, Frank Tashlin. A former Looney Tunes director, Tashlin saw a world of people turned cartoonish by the infantilizing drone of mass media, and Lewis was Exhibit A. In "Artists and Models" (1955), featured in the "**Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis Collection, Vol. 2**" (Paramount), Lewis is Eugene, a comic-book fanatic with a crush on the Bat Lady, a cartoon character, and Martin plays his roommate, Rick, a fine artist and ladies' man. When they lose their day jobs as sign painters, Rick gets hired to draw comic books based on the violent fantasies that Eugene babbles about in his sleep. A brief parody of "Rear Window" suggests Tashlin's Hitchcockian fascination with the unconscious: he worried that the inner life of modern man was molded more by the effluvia of pop culture than by primal experience. In Tashlin's ironic view, Lewis, the Ethical Man, is ensnared by the lurid pulp phantasmagoria to which Martin's Wild Man of unfettered desire is immune. After the duo broke up, Lewis directed himself playing both archetypes; the results were such masterworks as "The Bellboy" and "The Nutty Professor." It's surprising that Murphy hasn't tried his hand at it.

—*Richard Brody*

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES

32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5181)—"Essential Cinema." July 18 at 7:30: "Wavelength" (1967, Michael Snow). ♦ "Goethe-Institut New York Presents." July 19 at 7:30: "Romance in a Minor Key" (1943, Helmut Käutner; in German). ♦ In première. July 20-26 (call for showtimes): "Walking to Werner" (2006, Linas Phillips).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS

30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-636-4100)—Special screening. July 18 at 6:50 and 9:30: "Zoo" (†). ♦ Through July 29: "Signore & Signore: Leading Ladies of Italian Cinema." All films are in Italian. July 19 at 6 and 9: "Juliet of the Spirits" (1965, Federico Fellini). ♦ July 20 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "La Nonna Sabella" (1957, Dino Risi). ♦ July 21 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Two Women" (1960, Vittorio De Sica). ♦ July 22 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "The Girl with the Suitcase" (1960, Valerio Zurlini).

FILM FORUM

W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—In revival. July 18-19 at 1:30, 3:25, 5:20, 7:15, and 9:10: "Manhattan" (1979, Woody Allen). ♦ July 20-26 at 1:30, 4:20, 7, and 9:30: "Metropolis" (1927, Fritz Lang; silent).

FRENCH INSTITUTE ALLIANCE FRANÇAISE

Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—The films of René Clair. July 24 at 12:30, 4, and 7:30: "The Grand Maneuver" (1955; in French).

IFC CENTER

323 Sixth Ave., at W. 3rd St. (212-924-7771)—"Waverly Midnights: Remembering James Lyons." July 20-21: "Postcards from America" (1994, Steve McLean). ♦ "*Filmmaker* Magazine Presents." July 24 at 7:30: An evening with the director Jem Cohen.

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9480)—"Automatic Update," films and videos about technology. July 18 at 6: Short works by Laurie Anderson, Pipilotti Rist, and others. ♦ July 19 at 8:30: "Synthetic Pleasures" (1996, Iara Lee). ♦ July 23 at 8:30: "Crash" (1996, David Cronenberg). ♦ "Premiere Brazil! 2007." All films are in Portuguese.

July 20 at 6: "No Reason Explains the War" (2006, Carlos Diegues and Rafael Dragaud). ♦ July 20 at 8: "Forbidden to Forbid" (2006, Jorge Durán). ♦ July 21 at 2: "Antônia" (2006, Tata Amaral). ♦ July 21 at 4:15: "Cartola" (2006, Lírio Ferreira and Hilton Lacerda). ♦ July 22 at 2: "Pixote in Memoriam" (2005, Felipe Brisso and Gilberto Topczewski). ♦ July 22 at 4:30: "Pixote" (1981, Hector Babenco).

MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE

35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Classic and recent horror films. July 21 at 2: "Carrie" (1976, Brian De Palma). ♦ July 21 at 4:30: "Final Destination 3" (2006, James Wong). ♦ July 21 at 6:30: "Halloween" (1978, John Carpenter). ♦ July 22 at 4:30: "The Last House on the Left" (1972, Wes Craven), followed by a discussion with the film professor Amy Villarejo.

RUBIN MUSEUM OF ART

150 W. 17th St. (212-620-5000)—"Cabaret Cinema." July 20 at 9:30: "Ikiru" (†).

SUNSHINE CINEMA

143 E. Houston St. (212-330-8182)—"Sunshine@Midnight." July 20-21: "Back to the Future" (1985, Robert Zemeckis).

THALIA THEATRE

Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. (212-864-5400)—"Garbo & Dietrich: Screen Goddesses." July 21-22 at 6: "Blonde Venus" (1932, Josef von Sternberg). July 21-22 at 7:45: "Camille" (1937, George Cukor).

WALTER READE THEATRE

Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—Films by Woodfall Film Productions. July 18 at 4:30 and 9: "A Taste of Honey" (1961, Tony Richardson). ♦ July 18 at 6:30, July 19 at 1:30 and 6:20, and July 22 at 1:30: "A Delicate Balance" (1973, Richardson). ♦ July 19 at 4:10 and 9 and July 21 at 3:50: "The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner" (1962, Richardson). ♦ July 21 at 1:30 and 8:45: "Hamlet" (1969, Richardson). ♦ July 21 at 6: "The Charge of the Light Brigade" (1968, Richardson). ♦ July 23 at 8: "Mademoiselle" (1966, Richardson). ♦ "Golden Silents." July 20 at 7: "Way Down East" (1920, D. W. Griffith; silent). ♦ "Norman Mailer on Film." July 22 at 4:30: "Tough Guys Don't Dance" (1987, Mailer), followed by a discussion with the director. ♦ July 22 at 8: "Maidstone" (1971, Mailer).

READINGS AND TALKS

HOUSING WORKS BOOKSTORE CAFÉ

The Danish writer Christian Jungersen's latest novel, "The Exception," is set in a genocide-information clearinghouse. On July 18 at 7, he talks with Mark Hanis, the founder of the Genocide Intervention Network. (126 Crosby St. No tickets necessary.)

SOUTH STREET SEAPORT

Eric Jay Dolin discusses "Leviathan," his history of the American whaling industry. (Melville Gallery, 213 Water St. Tickets at the door. July 18 at 7.)

MCNALLY ROBINSON BOOKSELLERS

Roger Rapoport reads from and discusses "Citizen Moore," his biography of the filmmaker Michael Moore. (52 Prince St. No tickets necessary. July 18 at 7.)

"PARK-LIT"

The roving summertime series, which presents readings in public spaces by contributors to literary magazines, brings Mary Karr, André Aciman, and other writers from *The Paris Review* to Central Park. (Near the statue of Hans Christian Andersen, which is just west of Conservatory Water, off Fifth Ave. at 74th St. For more information, call 212-696-6609. July 18 at 6:30.)

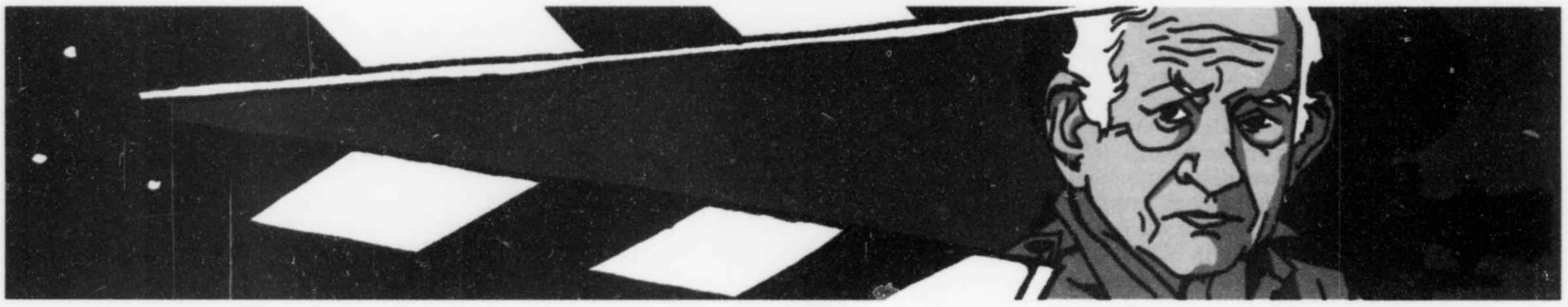
ABOVE AND BEYOND

"THE GLORY DAYS"

Fifty years ago, fate delivered New York City baseball a wicked brushback pitch (some would say beanball) when the Dodgers left Brooklyn for Los Angeles and the Giants left Manhattan for San Francisco. The moves were all the more devastating to city fans because during the prior ten years Gotham's three teams (out of a mere sixteen nationwide) had unrivalled success. From 1947 to 1957, a local franchise played in the World Series in every year but one; there were seven Subway Series; and the city captured nine world championships. "The Glory Days," a new exhibit of photographs and memorabilia at the Museum of the City of New York, documents the era when giants like Jackie Robinson, Willie Mays, Joe DiMaggio, and Mickey Mantle roamed not just the earth but such parts of New York City as Ebbets Field, the Polo Grounds, and Yankee Stadium. On July 21 at 2, Ann Meyerson, the show's curator, and John Thorn, a baseball historian, lead a tour of the exhibit. (Museum of the City of New York, Fifth Ave. at 103rd St. 212-534-1672. Through Dec. 31.)

NEW YORK CITY TRIATHLON

The daily New York City triathlon that consists of achieving career ambitions, maintaining domestic relations, and getting across town in heavy traffic gets upstaged by a genuine athletic contest. Top competitors from around the world, including last year's champions, Emma Snowsill and Greg Bennett, will swim the Hudson River, bike from Manhattan to the Bronx and back, and then run through Central Park, all before noon. (July 22, starting at 5:50 A.M. For more information, visit www.nyctri.com.)



JASHAR AWAN

ON THE HORIZON

MOVIES
THE CONTENDER
July 25-Aug. 2

Norman Mailer, who wrote trenchantly about Hollywood in "The Deer Park," also spent years trying his own hand at making movies. Anthology Film Archives offers a retrospective of Mailer's films, from the improvisational "Wild 90" (1967) to the off-Hollywood noir "Tough Guys Don't Dance" (1987). The Film Society of Lincoln Center will present other Mailer-related films, including "The Executioner's Song" and "Maidstone," along with a discussion with Mailer. (212-505-5181.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
A NERVOUS SPLENDOR
July 27-Aug. 5

In "A Florentine Tragedy" and "The Dwarf," the Viennese composer Alexander Zemlinsky transformed two prose works by Oscar Wilde into full-blooded one-act operas. Leon Botstein will conduct both works as a double bill at Bard Summerscape. The sets and costumes for both performances are by the faux-Romantic duo McDermott and McGough. (845-758-7900.)

ART
FULL CIRCLE
Aug. 17-Sept. 25

Richard Pousette-Dart (1916-92), a founding member of the New York School and a seminal Abstract Expressionist, had his first solo show at Peggy Guggenheim's Art of This Century gallery, in 1947. Now the Guggenheim museum will survey his career. (212-423-3500.)

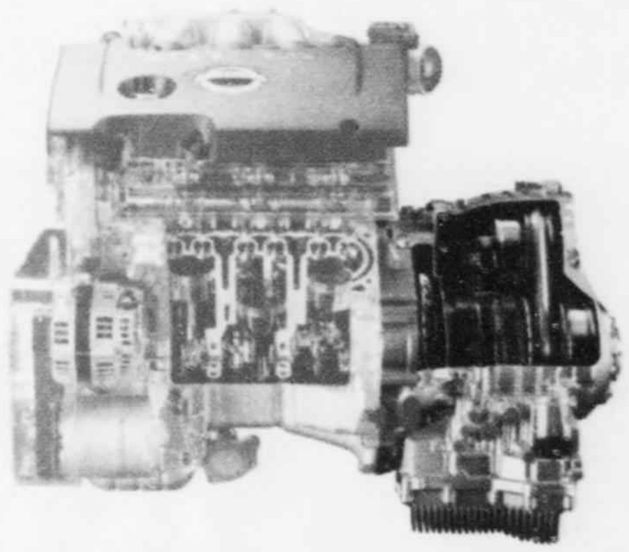
ABOVE AND BEYOND
SEASIDE SPIKES
Aug. 23-26

Professional volleyball players from around the country descend on Coney Island for the second annual Brooklyn Open, next month. (www.brooklynavp.com.)

THE THEATRE
SIBLING RIVALRY
Aug. 29

Atlantic Theatre Company kicks off the new season with a world première of a drama by Lucy Thurber, "Scarcity," about siblings who long to escape their life of poverty in Massachusetts, and the fallout when one of them is offered a chance to go away to a better school. (212-239-6200.)

The films of Norman Mailer, at Anthology and the Film Society of Lincoln Center.



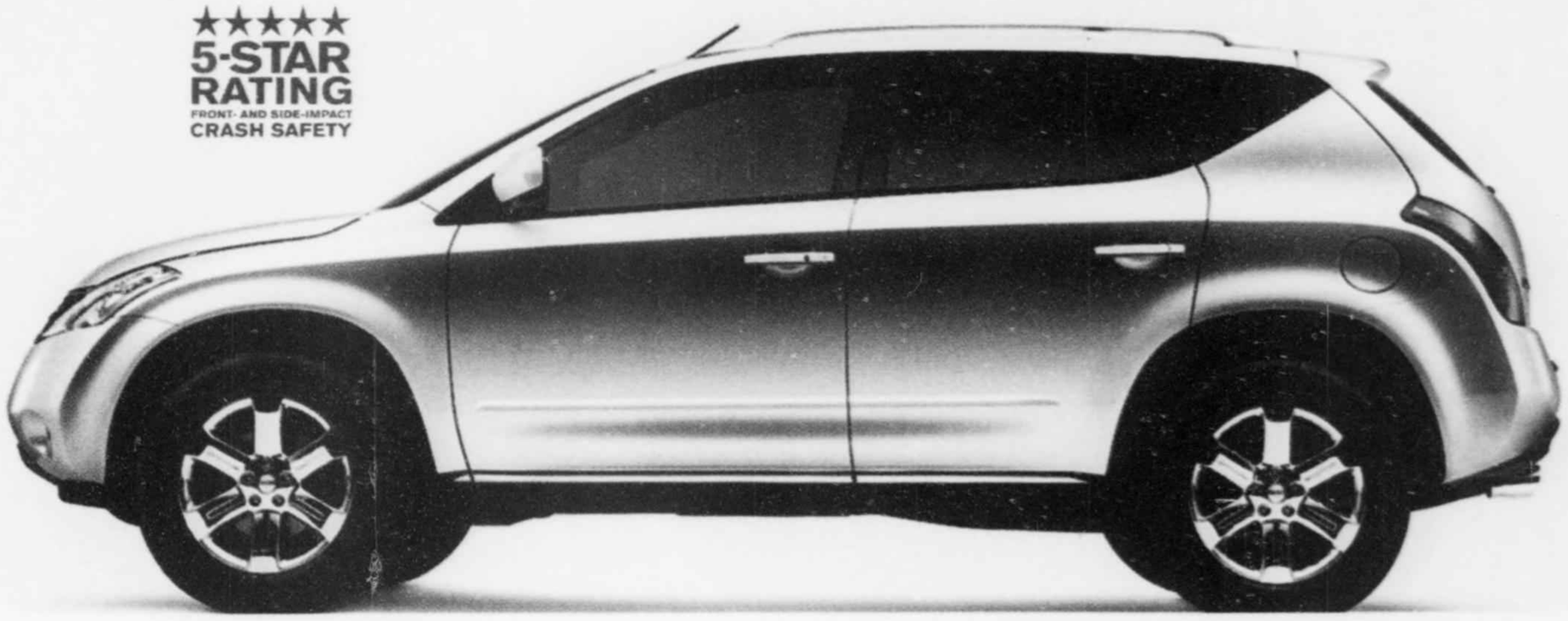
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Sonata in D major for Two Pianos
Piano Concerto No.27 in B-flat major

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New York State Theater
Tickets from $30



Photo: Stephanie Berger

THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
SICK AND TWISTED



The documentary filmmaker Michael Moore has more than a few insufferable traits. He is manipulative, smug, and self-righteous. He has no interest in complexity. And he mocks the weak as well as the powerful. (Recall his derision, in "Roger and Me," for an impoverished woman in Flint, Michigan, who slaughtered rabbits to make ends meet.) For all that, his movie about the American health-care system, "Sicko," is a revelation. And what makes this especially odd to say is that the movie brings to light nothing that the media haven't covered extensively for years.

Few will be surprised, surely, to learn that insurance companies routinely deny people individual coverage, or jack up applicants' rates, if they have diabetes or are obese or produced a weird blood-test result in the sixth grade. It's just that a lot of us haven't met those people, or seen what happens to them afterward. Moore makes sure that we do.

Their travails are by turns depressing, blackly comical, and infuriating. There's the twenty-two-year-old who was denied reimbursement for her cervical-cancer treatment because someone at her insurance company thought that she was "too young" to have the disease; the seventy-nine-year-old on Medicare who works picking up trash at his local Pathmark store to pay for the medicines that he and his wife need; the thirty-something-year-old who matter-of-factly sews up a trickling five-inch gash in his leg with kitchen thread, because he doesn't have insurance to cover an emergency-room visit.

These have become ordinary tales in America. Just this year, in my own surgical practice, I have seen a college student who couldn't afford the radiation treatment she needed for her thyroid cancer, because her insurance coverage maxed out after the surgery; a breast-cancer patient who didn't have the cash for the hormone therapy she needed; and a man denied Medicare coverage for an ambulance ride, because the chest pain he thought was caused by a heart attack wasn't—it was caused by a tumor. The universal human experience of falling ill and seeking treatment—frightening and difficult enough—has been warped by our dysfunctional insurance system.



"Sicko" doesn't really offer solutions. Yes, it visits France. But it doesn't discuss the difficulties of reforming a system that encompasses sixteen per cent of the economy. It doesn't investigate the tradeoffs that universal health care will inevitably require. It's an outrage machine. Moore hopes that once people grasp the inhumanity of our system we will replace it.

But will we? The movie is so effective in depicting the inhumanity that it makes our failure to act seem baffling. Moore blames the familiar villains: insurance companies, pharmaceutical-industry lobbyists, politicians. But plenty of countries have private insurance—not to mention politicians and lobbyists—and nonetheless have health-care systems that cover all their residents, at a lower cost, and with higher levels of satisfaction. Israel, the Netherlands, and Switzerland all provide universal coverage through multiple private insurers and, like Moore's France, spend between half and three-quarters of what we do. The finger of blame points to an obstacle different from the one the movie suggests: us.

Our health-care morass is like the problems of global warming and the

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL



"If I'd snitched, Senator, I would have lost my street cred."

• •

national debt—the kind of vast policy failure that is far easier to get into than to get out of. Americans say that they want leaders who will take on these problems. Large majorities profess support for fundamental change. Yet when it comes to specific solutions we balk. A big reason is the cost. Even though universal health coverage can reduce the system's over-all expense—for instance, by granting everyone access to preventive care and to prompt, consistent treatment for chronic illnesses—any plausible approach will shift substantial costs from the private sector to taxpayers. The cheapest proposals circulating would still require more than a hundred billion dollars a year in public funds—around a thousand dollars per American household. Taxing millionaires or cutting "waste, fraud, and abuse" won't pay for that. Then we get bogged down in the innumerable, wearying complexities: whether abortions will be covered, whether states will be allowed to design their own systems, what's an acceptable co-payment for drugs—and on and on. Finally, Americans are deeply skeptical about government, and it doesn't take much to sow doubts about expanding its role.

Health care confronts us with a difficult test. We have never corrected failure in something so deeply embedded in people's lives and in the economy without the pressure of an outright crisis. The welfare reforms of 1996 made changes that profoundly affected people's lives, but only those of the poor, which was why voters supported the experiment. We adopted rules to protect clean water, clean air, and endangered animal species, but the costs seemed small and were largely hidden from taxpayers.

In the past few months, John Edwards and Barack Obama have put forward coherent proposals to achieve universal or near-universal coverage. For the first time in a decade and a half, the prospects for reform seem genuinely promising. But the fight is about to begin. For example, Rudy Giuliani recently outlined a tax-credit-based health plan that would come nowhere near covering everyone; for one thing, he would let insurers continue to exclude people with preëxisting conditions. Its main purpose, it seems, is to let him attack other proposals as involving a big government takeover of medical care.

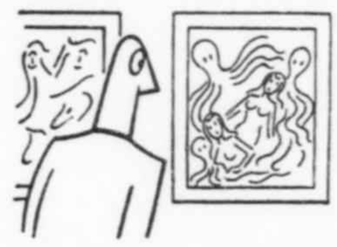
If, in 2009, we actually swear in a President committed to universal health care, the fight will turn ugly. The plan most likely to gather broad support will look something like the Edwards/Obama approach, which would subsidize health insurance for everyone who does not receive coverage through work or through existing programs. It would provide a choice of private insurance options, as in the Netherlands, and would probably add a Medicare-like government option as well. And it would require Americans to obtain coverage for, at a minimum, their children.

People on the right will attack the plan as a tax-and-spend nightmare, because it will have to include some mixture of increases in business and personal-income taxes. And they'll say that it dictates your medical choices and gives government too much control. People on the left—Moore included—will attack the plan as a boondoggle for insurance companies, because it isn't single-payer, and will say that it gives government too little control. Others will attack it for what it does or doesn't do about malpractice litigation, birth control, acupuncture, and so forth. The debate will become angry and murky and mind-numbingly complicated, and the temptation will be to put off reform yet again.

That's exactly when you'll need to remind yourself of what's really at stake. So if, in the throes of the debate, you find yourself experiencing blurred vision, headache, and vertigo, here's a prescription: go visit an emergency room, clotted with the uninsured, and see what's it like to try to get care. Or watch the movie. Either way, you'll be outraged again.

—Atul Gawande

THE PICTURES
GHOSTLY



When Milos Forman was a student in Prague, more than fifty years ago, he read a book about the Spanish Inquisition that gave him an idea for a film. Great idea, just one teensy problem: the Inquisition part. "In Czechoslovakia the same things were happening," Forman said one day recently. "People were being arrested and then confessing to crimes they hadn't committed. But if I had even mentioned to anyone, 'I want to make a film of the Inquisition'—I would have been branded an enemy of the state." Thirty years later, in Madrid, he visited the Prado and saw

paintings by Francisco Goya, whose life coincided with the final chapters of the Inquisition. "In one room," Forman recalled, "you see Goya's depictions of desperation and darkness—the Black Paintings of the destitute, the powerless. In the next room, his magnificent portraits of dukes and kings." Which led to this amplified idea: Inquisition plus Goya plus French Revolution plus some overreaching by Napoleon, then Wellington, ecclesiastical and royal intrigues, human degradation, etc.—on balance, not the most sure-thing pitch in Hollywood, though it didn't hurt that Forman possessed two Best Director Oscars (for "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest" and "Amadeus"). Another couple of decades passed and he and the screenwriter Jean-Claude Carrière had a script. The resulting film, "Goya's Ghosts," Forman's first in eight years, opens this week.

The least crowded public venue in New York for looking at a Goya painting is the Frick Collection. When Forman showed up there on a sunny weekday morning, he wore a red-and-white striped shirt, navy striped pants, and a surgical corset. At seventy-five, he's fit enough to keep up with his eight-year-old twin sons, as long as he's not nursing a fractured vertebra. ("Never get up in the middle of the night in an unfamiliar hotel room without first turning on the light.") He bought an admission ticket, learned at the information desk that two of the Frick's four Goyas were temporarily out of circulation, then made his leisurely way through the collection. In the library, he momentarily mistook a Gilbert Stuart portrait of George Washington for a Goya portrait of his brother-in-law Francisco Bayeu. The real things, it turned out, were in the West Gallery—on one wall, between two Turners, the portrait "Don Pedro, Duke of Osuna," one of Goya's principal patrons, and, across the way, "The Forge," his famous rendering of blacksmiths at work.

"You see the difference between how he paints the face of a nobleman and the faces of the common folk," Forman said. "One is the best of the eighteenth century. The other, it's as if it's already the twentieth century. He wouldn't use the roughness of that brushstroke with the delicate faces of the nobles."

Of the several books about Goya that Forman read, he said, "None of them is about his life—they're about his paintings. We know very little about his inner life. I think he knew what he thought but he also knew that if he wanted the powers that be to leave him alone he should keep it to himself."

The opening scene of "Goya's Ghosts" shows a shadowy council of Catholic clerics passing around copies of Goya etchings that depicted the quotidian fears and miseries of life under the Bourbons and the Inquisition. Provocative images, though not nearly as subversive as the despair and grotesquerie of "The Disasters of War," the etchings that Goya kept hidden and that weren't published until nearly forty years after his death.

"The fascinating thing to me about Goya is that he's the most courageous of cowards," Forman continued. "He was courageous in his work, but in his private life he really didn't want to antagonize anybody. He painted the Spanish royal family. They were kicked out by Napoleon. So he painted Napoleon's brother Joseph. Then Wellington drove out the French and he painted Wellington. And I thank God he was like that. Can you imagine if, in the beginning of his career, he had stood on a corner and attacked the Inquisitors? They would have locked him up."

"Goya's Ghosts" spans more than fifteen years, almost all of it spent underground by a character played by Natalie Portman, who is tortured until she falsely confesses to heresy, then gets tossed in a dungeon. Though she weathers this adversity with considerably more dignity than, say, Paris Hilton would have mustered, she still loses her mind and her complexion.

Leaving the Frick, Forman paused on the front steps and confessed, "I'm aware that this is not a 'feel-good' movie. I will be very happy if some people think it is, nevertheless, a 'think-good' movie."

Actually, there is one perversely feel-good moment, an ingenious turning-of-the-tables in which Javier Bardem, as Father Lorenzo, a fanatical agent of the Inquisition who really has it coming to him, is himself briefly tortured until he confesses that he is a monkey.

"We screened this in Prague and Madrid," Forman said, smiling. "That scene the audiences applauded."

—*Mark Singer*

REBUTTAL DEPT.

IN THE ZONE



When, a couple of months ago, Morgan Stanley, Lehman Brothers, and Smith Barney revised their expense-account policies so that employees were forbidden to entertain clients at Hawaiian Tropic Zone, a Times Square restaurant featuring waitresses wearing bikinis, the restaurant's owner and C.E.O., Dennis Riese, said that his feelings were hurt. He told the *Post*, "We are a totally misunderstood restaurant." Over lunch the other day with a young investment banker, Riese set out to correct the record. (The banker asked that his name be withheld, in case his bosses were unimpressed with Riese's defense.)



The first thing to understand is that Hawaiian Tropic Zone is not an upscale Hooters. "It burns me deeply to hear those words," Riese, a short man in his mid-fifties, said. His holdings also include Tad's Steaks, TGI Friday's, and Tequilaville. He asked the banker, "Have you ever been to a Hooters?"

The banker, who is from Columbus, Ohio, replied that he had, once.

"Would you call this an upscale Hooters?"

"It's a very different feel," the banker said.

Nor is Hawaiian Tropic Zone a strip club. "No nipples," Riese said. "You're never, ever going to see a girl nude." He continued, "I'm such a feminist. I love women and believe in them. And I'm not being P.C. by saying that men *and* women like to look at the woman's form—it's been going on since Michelangelo, you know, since they were doing statues of Venus de Milo. So I really believed that I was creating a restaurant that was going to appeal to men and women. I used colors that are very feminine in this place." He gestured toward a tropical mosaic and toward a pair of soft-orange overhead lights shaped—as are the salt and pepper shakers—like breasts.

Riese called for a menu. "We have a section that says 'simply grilled,' because women don't like to eat sauces the way men do," he said. "They're watching their weight more often." He pointed at the menu. "Also, see, it says 'sharing encouraged,' no extra charge. Well, women have smaller stomachs. And maybe two young single girls have a smaller pocketbook, and the idea of encouraging two girls to come in—nobody's going to put a spotlight on you, make you feel uncomfortable because you're sharing a dish, or that you want something just simply grilled." (Riese says that women make up about a third of the restaurant's customers.) "Women *like* sexy. Talk about empowerment and feminism! There's nowhere offering women sexy in the way they would like it to be—*classy* sexy!"

The waitress, a petite African-American woman wearing a black string-bikini top and a floral-print mini sarong, brought over a salmon burger for Riese and a green salad for the banker. A nametag at her hip identified her as India.

"Beautiful women use these attributes of theirs to get up in life," Riese said. "I don't think these girls are feeling exploited. If a bunch of guys are coming in and ogling them, it's because they're guys and those are girls! And that's part of our biological nature."

The banker had a question. He said, "I'd heard that periodically all the girls line up and customers rank each of them from one to ten. Is that true?"

"No, but we have a beauty pageant," Riese said. "Twice a night. Music comes on, and they walk across that stage up there." He gestured toward a catwalk over the bar. Behind it, fifteen giant plasma screens showed a woman in a blue bikini, running her hands over her body. "The ballots are on every table." The winner, Riese said, "gets a little tiara, and she wins fifty dollars."

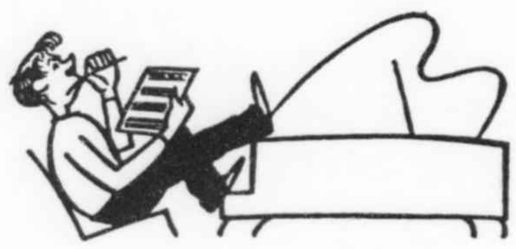
"My understanding was that you rank them, from one to ten," the banker persisted. "And it seemed surprising to me—I would think that the women who scored very low, especially ones who took pride in their good looks or their bodies—"

"But we don't do that," Riese interrupted. "That would be prehistoric."

—Louisa Thomas

ENCORES

REVISITING "THE PRAIRIE"



Lukas Foss, the composer, turns eighty-five in August, and his hearing is not what it used to be, but when he attended a rehearsal the other day by the Brooklyn Philharmonic of his choral work "The Prairie" he listened attentively, sitting very upright in a hard-backed chair, nodding precisely in time to the music. It had been a decade since Foss had last heard an orchestra play the piece, and sixty-three years since "The Prairie," which is based on a poem by Carl Sandburg, had its New York première, at Town Hall, when Foss was just twenty-two.

"The poetry was very visual, and about landscape, and ideal for music," Foss explained during a break in the rehearsal, which was taking place in a vaulted chamber on the tenth floor of Riverside Church. (The piece was performed earlier this summer at Lincoln Center, and also in Bridgehampton.) There had been a downpour that morning, and he was still wearing a raincoat over a tan sports jacket, dark slacks, and black loafers with thick white soles. His eyes, behind glasses, were blue and very bright. "Think of cowboys, and how all young people idealize them," said Foss's wife, Cornelia Foss, who is a painter and who compensates for her husband's diminished vigor—he has Parkinson's—with her own.

Foss, whose family fled first Berlin and then Paris, had never seen the prairie when he wrote the work, and he still never has. Lukas Fuchs, as he was then known, arrived on the Upper West Side of New York City in 1937. "He slept under the piano, because there wasn't room for a bed in the apartment," Mrs. Foss said. "At age sixteen, he kept himself alive by giving piano lessons and playing for dance companies." In the manner of musical prodigies, Foss had been composing for years. "I started at age seven, with a piano piece," Foss said. "Soon, I began a children's opera. A year later, I threw it away, calling it childish." He re-started it when Cornelia was pregnant with their first child, Christopher, who is now forty-nine. Foss is still composing; in a recent work, he set a poem by Christopher Foss to music.

"The Prairie" was inspired in part by the effort of Aaron Copland to write classical music that was distinctively American. "The idea of freedom and liberty was very much symbolized by the prairie," Mrs. Foss said. "And even though the piece itself is extremely complicated, the complications are there to serve a youthful idealism." The Fosses met in 1949, in Rome, at the American Academy, and married two years later. "He was a fellow, and I was a C.O.F., a child of a fellow," Cornelia said. "We eloped. We had a secret wedding at the Campidoglio. I came home afterwards and my mother asked, 'Where have you been all afternoon?' I wanted to say, 'Oh, out getting married,' but I didn't."

Mrs. Foss declined to give her age, but said that she was a "very young teenager" when she was wed. "We had to get the American Ambassador's permission for the marriage," she said. "I was very underage. But he said to us, 'You are obviously very much in love.' " Her father and mother, both archeologists, were furious when they belatedly discovered that their daughter was a newlywed. "But then they saw him play his piano concerto," she said, casting a fond glance at her subdued, enduring maestro. "And they very much changed their minds."

—Rebecca Mead

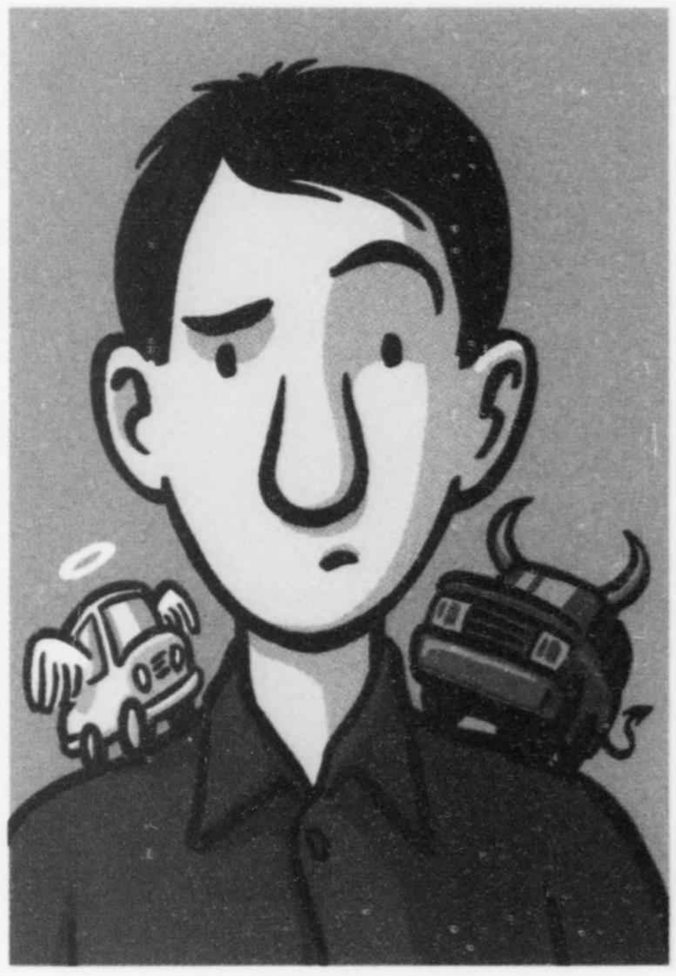
THE FINANCIAL PAGE

FUEL FOR THOUGHT

In the auto industry, there's one thing you can always count on: if a new environmental or safety rule is proposed, executives will prophesy disaster. In the nineteen-twenties, Alfred Sloan, the president of General Motors, insisted that the company could not make windshields with safety glass because doing so would harm the bottom line. In the fifties, auto executives told Congress that making seat belts compulsory would slash industry profits. When air bags came along, Lee Iacocca told Richard Nixon that "safety has really killed all our business." A few years later, when Congress was thinking about requiring fuel-economy standards, auto executives warned that instituting such standards would create "massive financial and unemployment problems." And now, with Congress debating a bill to raise fuel-economy standards, for the first time in almost twenty years, the Chicken Littles are squawking again, forecasting doom for Detroit and asserting that making higher-mileage vehicles is technologically unfeasible and economically suicidal.

Of course, much of this is simply stonewalling by executives determined to keep meddlesome politicians out of their business. But sometimes the industry's fears have been founded on real market research. In the case of safety glass, G.M. believed that consumers weren't prepared to pay more for cars with safety glass, so Sloan worried that it would be hard to recoup the cost of installing it. Similarly, when, in the mid-nineteen-seventies, G.M. offered front-seat air bags as an option on Cadillacs, Buicks, and Oldsmobiles, they didn't sell. Fuel-economy standards present the same difficulty: although there are plenty of affordable models that get good gas mileage, over the past two decades some of the most powerful and least fuel-efficient vehicles on the market—S.U.V.s and pickup trucks—have also been among the best-selling. Thirty years ago, so-called "light trucks" accounted for about a fifth of all auto sales. Today, even with a recent slowdown, they account for more than half.

Americans may want to buy the biggest and most environmentally damaging vehicles available, but polls show that, given an option, some three-quarters of them vote for dramatic increases in fuel-economy standards—increases that may well force automakers to sell fewer (or at least smaller) S.U.V.s. We buy gas guzzlers but vote for gas sipping. This isn't because people are ignorant about how higher fuel-economy standards would affect them personally; polls that explicitly lay out the potential trade-offs involved still find support for tougher standards. And it isn't as if voters and car buyers belong to two different groups; one recent survey of pickup owners found that seventy per cent strongly favored tougher requirements. The curious fact is



that many people buying three-ton Suburbans for that arduous two-mile trip to the supermarket also want Congress to pass laws making it harder to buy Suburbans at all.

What's happening here? Back in the nineteen-seventies, an economist named Thomas Schelling, who later won the Nobel Prize, noticed something peculiar about the N.H.L. At the time, players were allowed, but not required, to wear helmets, and most players chose to go helmet-less, despite the risk of severe head trauma. But when they were asked in secret ballots most players also said that the league should require them to wear helmets. The reason for this conflict, Schelling explained, was that not wearing a helmet conferred a slight advantage on the ice; crucially, it gave the player better peripheral vision, and it also made him look fearless. The players wanted to have their heads protected, but as individuals they couldn't afford to jeopardize their effectiveness on the ice. Making helmets compulsory eliminated the dilemma: the players could protect their heads without suffering a competitive disadvantage. Without the rule, the players' individually rational decisions added up to a collectively irrational result. With the rule, the outcome was closer to what players really wanted.

The same phenomenon is, to some extent, at work in the fuel-economy debate. People believe that bigger and heavier cars are safer in a crash (forgetting that, often, bigger cars are also more likely to crash). And people like the fact that driving a higher-horsepower car makes you look better at the stoplight. So our desires as individuals to protect ourselves and to outclass our neighbors encourage us to buy bigger and bigger vehicles with more and more horsepower. And the market doesn't create counter-incentives that would push us in a responsible direction, since someone who drives a Hummer doesn't suffer the effects of pollution and global warming any more than someone driving a Prius does, and isn't charged more for the extra environmental damage.

The results of this size-and-power arms race are easy to see: between 1984 and 2002, the average vehicle got twenty per cent heavier and its zero-to-sixty acceleration improved by twenty-five per cent, while fuel efficiency stagnated. (By contrast, between 1975, when fuel-economy standards were first introduced, and 1984, average fuel economy improved by sixty-two per cent, without any decline in performance.) This is not because of technological difficulties or a conspiracy on the part of the auto industry. It's because automakers have listened to car buyers, and put their energy into making vehicles bigger and faster, rather than more efficient. In calling for a law requiring better gas mileage in our cars, then, voters are really saying that they're unhappy with the collective result of the choices they make as buyers. Sometimes, they know, we need to save ourselves from ourselves.

—*James Surowiecki*

CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

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LETTER FROM PAKISTAN

DAYS OF RAGE

Challenges for the nation's future.

BY WILLIAM DALRYMPLE



Asma Jahangir, a human-rights lawyer, has fought for a secular civil society.

In the white glare of a hot summer's noon, the broad avenues of Islamabad, Pakistan's modern capital, are usually empty. But on a sweltering day this May the streets were crowded with noisily chanting protesters, all of them demonstrating against the military government of President Pervez Musharraf. Three separate protests were under way. Each one represented a slightly different vision of the future that Pakistan might have if—as now seems more likely than ever—Musharraf's government were to fall.

The largest crowd by far was made up of lawyers in starched collars, white shirts, and black suits. They marched in orderly ranks, three abreast, like emperor penguins in a nature film. Some held up very British-looking umbrellas, on which markedly un-catchy slogans, such as "Long Live Lawyers Unity," had been carefully daubed in white paint. In earlier demonstrations, the lawyers had clashed with riot police, and the country's most senior barristers, silk ties flying, had responded with surprising vigor, hurling back tear-gas cannisters at staff-wielding policemen and jabbing at them with furled umbrellas.

The lawyers began demonstrating when, on March 9th, Iftikhar Chaudhry, Pakistan's Chief Justice, was suspended, reportedly because Musharraf had accused him of using his position for personal gain and for trying to get his son a top police job. The first demonstrations, which consisted of a few hundred lawyers protesting against Musharraf's attack on

JOOST VAN DEN BROEK/HOLLANDSE HOOGTE

the independence of the judiciary, escalated into a full-scale campaign against military rule when, a week later, riot police attacked first the protesters and then the offices of an Islamabad news channel that had broadcast images of police beating up barristers. By May, the demonstrations had turned into a countrywide protest movement calling for fair elections, a civilian government, and the return of real democracy.



Female vigilantes from a madrassa calling for the establishment of full Sharia law, before the siege of the Red Mosque.

B.K. BANGASH/AP PHOTO

On that particular May day, the overwhelming majority of the protesting barristers were men. Yet at the center of the group was a fragile-looking, diminutive woman in a crisp white shalwar kameez, a neat black jacket, and heavy tortoiseshell spectacles, named Asma Jilani Jahangir. She is in many ways a symbol of the values that the lawyers are fighting for. Pakistan is a notably patriarchal society, but Jahangir is its most visible and celebrated—as well as most vilified—human-rights lawyer. She has spent her professional life fighting for a secular civil society, challenging the mullahs and generals, and championing the rights of women at risk of "honor killing" and religious minorities accused of blasphemy. She has investigated alleged extrajudicial killings by the security forces, set up a shelter for vulnerable young women, and campaigned to end child labor. For Pakistan's liberals, she is a symbol of freedom and defiance, comparable to Aung San Suu Kyi, in Burma.

"These protests really have touched a chord," Jahangir shouted to me as the lawyers chanted around her. "There is so much pent-up anger. The country is beginning to stir."

Five hundred yards from the lawyers, a group of heavily bearded men wearing checked Arab kaffiyehs and black turbans were engaged in their own protest. These were the supporters of a right-wing alliance of religious parties, the Muttehida Majlis-e-Amal, or M.M.A., which has become a significant force in Pakistani electoral politics. The alliance's imposing patriarch, Liaqat Baloch, was standing on a jeep, exhorting his flag-waving supporters. "The friend of Bush is our enemy!" he roared. "The rulers should read the writing on the wall! Help give one last push to the falling wall! The only system that will come here is the system of the Prophet!"

The third group of protesters that day was not as conspicuous, but represented the greatest immediate threat to the government. Less than a mile from the Supreme Court, and not far from the headquarters of Pakistan's powerful intelligence agency, the Inter-Services Intelligence, or I.S.I., an angry crowd of students stood outside the Lal Masjid, or Red Mosque, a sprawling complex of prayer halls, classrooms, and dormitories. During the previous six months, the Lal Masjid had become the principal center of radical Islamist resistance to Musharraf's rule. The Islamists in the Lal Masjid were not interested in elections. They wanted to take direct and immediate revolutionary action against a government that they regarded as an American puppet, an infidel imposition on a state that should by rights be ruled entirely by Islamic law.

Under the leadership of two brothers, Maulana Abdul Aziz and Abdul Rashid Ghazi, the Lal Masjid had also become a base for Taliban-style vigilante squads, headed by fearsome, stick-wielding, burka-clad young women, which had been pouring out of the mosque and its

two madrassas, one for men, one for women. For months, these women had been calling for the establishment of full Sharia law and the closing down of all "dens of vice." Jokes in English-language newspapers about "chicks with sticks" were quickly abandoned as the women began kidnapping suspected prostitutes, threatening video-store owners, and making bonfires of books, videocassettes, and DVDs that they regarded as un-Islamic. For months, the security forces did nothing to stop them, even after the women kidnapped policemen and ransacked government buildings, while the two brothers threatened holy war, and even issued a fatwa denouncing a female cabinet minister who had been photographed receiving a hug from a French skydiving instructor.

The Lal Masjid was also allegedly sheltering militants from some of Pakistan's most dangerous jihadi groups, so when I went to visit, in May, I took the precaution of arriving with a friend who is the owner of Mr. Books, Islamabad's best bookshop. He had known Abdul Rashid Ghazi since Ghazi was a left-wing student activist at Islamabad's leading university, Quaid-i-Azam. We were politely led inside the mosque by three men, two with walkie-talkies and the third with a Kalashnikov, and invited to sit on a carpet. Ghazi, in John Lennon-style glasses and a knitted woollen hat, looked more like an old hippie than like any sort of Islamic firebrand. As we sipped tea, Ghazi, speaking eloquently in idiomatic English, described his campaign to get rid of Musharraf's élitist and pro-American government and replace it with a more egalitarian Islamic regime.

According to Ghazi, the women in his madrassa reflected the true feelings of most Pakistanis, and particularly their resentment of the United States' influence over Musharraf. "After 9/11, Musharraf made an abrupt change in our policy that was not supported by the people of Pakistan," Ghazi said. "The attack on Afghanistan caused a lot of resentment, and in the name of the war on terror many innocent people were killed. In the name of 'enlightened moderation' vulgarity has been promoted—women running in marathons, brothels, pornography in CD shops. . . . All these things have been accumulating in the minds and in the hearts of the people of Pakistan. What we are voicing is the desires of the people. The system is the root of all the problems. . . . The rulers are living a life of luxury while thousands of innocent children have empty stomachs and can't even get basic necessities."

Six weeks later, Ghazi was dead. In early July, Musharraf's government, after months of apparently ignoring the regular provocations issued by the radicals in the mosque, suddenly laid siege to the Lal Masjid. Ten days into the siege, after negotiations failed, commandos from the Army's Special Services Group, backed by hundreds of troops, stormed the complex. Abdul Rashid Ghazi was killed in the basement of the building on July 10th, allegedly in the crossfire between his men and the commandos. Officially, seventy-six militants and eleven soldiers were also killed; local TV stations and newspapers gave figures almost double that. Although Pakistan is an unusually turbulent society, nothing like this had ever happened in the capital before.

Ghazi had predicted that any violent end to the siege would help speed an Islamic revolution in Pakistan. "We have a firm belief in God that our blood will lead to a revolution," he said in a statement issued three days before his death. "God willing, Islamic revolution will be the destiny of this nation."

All this upheaval would have been unimaginable even six months ago. Islamabad has long been viewed as a dull city where lobbyists and industrialists bribed politicians, and civil servants shuffled papers and wove great cocoons of red tape amid huge concrete courthouses, ministries, and palaces—a sort of Islamized version of the center of Washington, D.C., air-dropped into the foothills of the Himalayas.

Since 1999, when Musharraf seized power in a bloodless coup—he is still Commander-in-Chief of the Army—promising to bring "true" democracy, law and order, and economic revival, Islamabad has been unusually quiet, even by its own somnolent standards; indeed, across the country the government has faced surprisingly little opposition. So disastrous were the tenures of Musharraf's two democratic predecessors—Benazir Bhutto, who has confronted a litany of corruption charges, and Nawaz Sharif, her inept, unpopular, and autocratic successor, who brought the country to the edge of economic catastrophe—that until recently the only strenuous opposition to Musharraf came from extreme Islamists, who tried twice to assassinate him in suicide bombings.

The country's economic recovery has been perhaps the most remarkable achievement of Musharraf's government. Under Shaukat Aziz, a former vice-president of Citibank and now the Prime Minister, Pakistan is enjoying a construction and consumer boom, with annual economic growth of around seven per cent and one of Asia's best-performing stock markets (some of this prosperity has been

THE COLD HILL *SIDE*

As months and years accumulate,
I miss you more and more.
Forgetting where I put the key,
I sometimes find a door

and other times feel stunned and lost,
though living in my own
body and life, presumably,
bewildered and alone

as the knight, kidnapped and released
to a dim world, who said
And I awoke and found me here
on the cold hill side.

—Rachel Hadas

generated by the lifting of trade restrictions and by substantial debt relief from the United States and other countries after September 11th). The effects can be seen everywhere: in new shopping centers and restaurant complexes, in building sites, in advertisements for the latest laptops and iPods. In 2003, there were fewer than three million cell-phone users in Pakistan; today there are nearly fifty million.

Despite elections in 2002 that were denounced by journalists and civil-rights groups as having been openly rigged, liberals have remained largely supportive of Musharraf, or at least quiescent, while most of the country's mullahs, normally stridently outspoken, have been relatively subdued. But Musharraf's treatment of the Chief Justice—and the lawyers' refusal to accept it—finally broke the eight-year status quo.

Few are convinced by Musharraf's explanation for his firing of the Chief Justice; many people believe that Chaudhry was suspended for his independence of mind—in particular, for blocking the sale of a state-owned steel mill, from which some government officials reportedly would have profited. It appears to be the first time that the judiciary had confronted one of the great scandals of Pakistani public life: the military's profitable economic empire. In a recent book, "Military Inc.," the political scientist Ayesha Siddiqa estimated that the military controls business assets of more than twenty billion dollars, with interests ranging from cement and dredging to the manufacture of corn flakes and the baking of bread. It controls a third of all heavy manufacturing in the country and owns nearly twelve million acres of land. As Asma Jahangir put it to me, "The Army is into every business in this country. Except hairdressing."

The Chief Justice had also raised the issue of the number of political activists who have disappeared and are thought to be held by the state intelligence agencies. Most damaging of all was his presumed opposition to Musharraf's continuing as both President and Army chief. Elections are due to be held soon, and Musharraf will require a constitutional amendment to continue to double as President and Commander-in-Chief. The military government needed a pliant Chief Justice if Musharraf was to stay in office without removing his uniform.

Imran Khan, the country's great sporting hero, who retired from cricket to enter politics and founded a party called Tehrik-e-Insaaf, or the Movement for Justice, in 1996, initially believed that Musharraf seriously intended to reform the system. But he has joined the lawyers. "This is the first time in our history that the judiciary has asserted its independence," he told me. "Normally, it just sides with whoever is in power. Change is irreversible. You can't have prosperity without genuine democracy and an independent judiciary."

Yet it is widely recognized that the lawyers' protests may be severely endangering the stability of the country. It is not just the violent Islamists of the Lal Masjid who have taken advantage of President Musharraf's predicament. The country's



powerful religious parties have also tried to use the turbulence for their own ends. Historically, the parties received only a tiny fraction of the vote. That situation began to change, however, after the United States invaded Afghanistan. In the election of October, 2002, the M.M.A. ran a successful campaign under the slogan "It is a war between Islam and the American infidel." Several of its parliamentary candidates had been Taliban commanders. The religious parties more than doubled their representation. The M.M.A. won by a large margin in the North-West Frontier Province, one of the conservative areas bordering Afghanistan, and succeeded in forming a coalition government in Baluchistan. Both provinces now have pro-Islamist governments.

Some fear that Islamists could hijack the protests of the lawyers' movement, just as they hijacked the civil-rights protests against the Shah in Iran in 1979. The day after the demonstration in Islamabad, I asked Rashed Rahman, the editor of the *Post*, in Lahore, what he thought about the attempts of the lawyers—and particularly their spokesperson that day, Asma Jahangir—to bring down Musharraf's government.

"Asma Jahangir is brave and fearless," he said. "She has stood up for all the right causes. She has huge credibility, and has achieved what she has through integrity and hard work. She is also a great friend. But her political judgment is another matter. She is a supporter of democracy, right or wrong, and the situation in Pakistan is extremely complex at the moment. Will there be an Islamic revolution? I personally don't think the Islamists are on the verge of seizing power, but we cannot ignore the growing power of the militants. Asma is an idealist, and sometimes in this part of the world it is better to be a realist."

Lahore lies four hours' drive south of Islamabad. During the seventeenth century, from the fort of Lahore, the Mughal emperors ruled most of India, all of what is now Pakistan, and large areas of Afghanistan. At the time, Lahore dwarfed both London and Paris; in "Paradise Lost," the great Mughal metropolis is revealed to Adam after the Fall as one of the future marvels of divine creation. Today, strung between the marble domes of the Mughal mosques in the Old City, and the orderly colonial townscape of the Mall, Lahore is not only the most attractive city in Pakistan but also the most artistic and intellectual.

Asma Jahangir was born here in 1952, five years after the creation of Pakistan as a homeland for the Muslims of India, and it remains her base. Driving through the city to her house, I found it striking to see billboard after billboard filled with beautiful Pakistani models, all with their heads uncovered—something that would be unthinkable in the frontier provinces.

Mohsin Hamid, whose novel "The Reluctant Fundamentalist" was an international best-seller earlier this year, recently wrote about the dramatic cultural and economic revival of Pakistan. He had worked as a consultant in Manhattan for several years, and returned home to find Lahore unrecognizable. He was particularly struck by "the incredible new world of media that had sprung up":

> I knew, of course, that the government of Musharraf had opened the media to private operators. But I had not until then realized how profoundly things had changed.
>
> Not just television, but also private radio stations and newspapers have flourished in Pakistan over the past few years. The result is an unprecedented openness. . . . Young people are speaking and dressing differently. Views both critical and supportive of the government are voiced with breathtaking frankness in an atmosphere remarkably lacking in censorship. Public space, the common area for culture and expression that had been so circumscribed in my childhood, has now been vastly expanded. "The Vagina Monologues" was recently performed on stage in Pakistan to standing ovations.

When I arrived at Jahangir's home, in the residential district of Gulberg, I asked her whether Musharraf's rule had really been so dictatorial: wasn't it in some ways more liberal than the democratic governments that preceded it?

"Well, it's true that dictators have got more sophisticated at masking their military rule these days," she replied. "Musharraf's government has a civilian face—there are still elections and assemblies—and he has come to believe his own propaganda that he really is a democrat. There is a degree of press freedom. And it is true that these days we have better communications than used to be possible under military rule, thanks to the Internet and mobile phones. It's all more complex than it used to be."



We were in Jahangir's sitting room, and she curled her feet up beneath her on the sofa. "And don't misunderstand me," she said. "I have no illusions about our elected politicians. Pakistani democracy is anything but perfect. In fact I can't think of any other country in the world where the benefits of democracy are less immediately clear—even Nepal."

Jahangir's house was built in the nineteen-sixties but looks like something from the twenties, with beautiful dark-wood panelling and elegant chintz sofas. There are similar properties throughout Gulberg, where large houses with tropical gardens, carefully watered lawns, and expansive pools lie hidden behind high brick walls. It was a reminder of one of the paradoxes of Pakistan. Although the country is frequently depicted in the international media as a failed state, and India, its neighbor and rival, as a burgeoning superpower, the distinction is not always so clear on the ground.

Jahangir's mischievous affability and charm in private form a contrast with her steely public image and, along with her striking self-confidence, identify her immediately as a child of the Pakistani upper middle class. This was the élite that reaped the full benefits of a system that has always been more accommodating to the rich than its equivalent in India, where socialist laws, land-reform acts, and punitive taxes quickly reduced the status of the landowning classes after the departure of the British, in 1947.

The family of Malik Jilani, Jahangir's father, had extensive property in both the city and its rural hinterland; her grandfather even had a stud farm. But her father chose to enter government service, and much of her childhood was spent in his official bungalow, in Sahiwal, in the fertile plains of the Punjab, to the southwest of Lahore, where he was a senior local bureaucrat.

"In those days, a man of my father's position was God," she said. "It was a small town, and my mother relished the status my father's job gave her. We had a lovely bungalow, our own *tonga*"—

horse and carriage—"and I remember having the only film projector in the district. It was a great cause of envy for my friends, though we had only one film, 'The Fabulous Señorita,' which we watched over and over again."

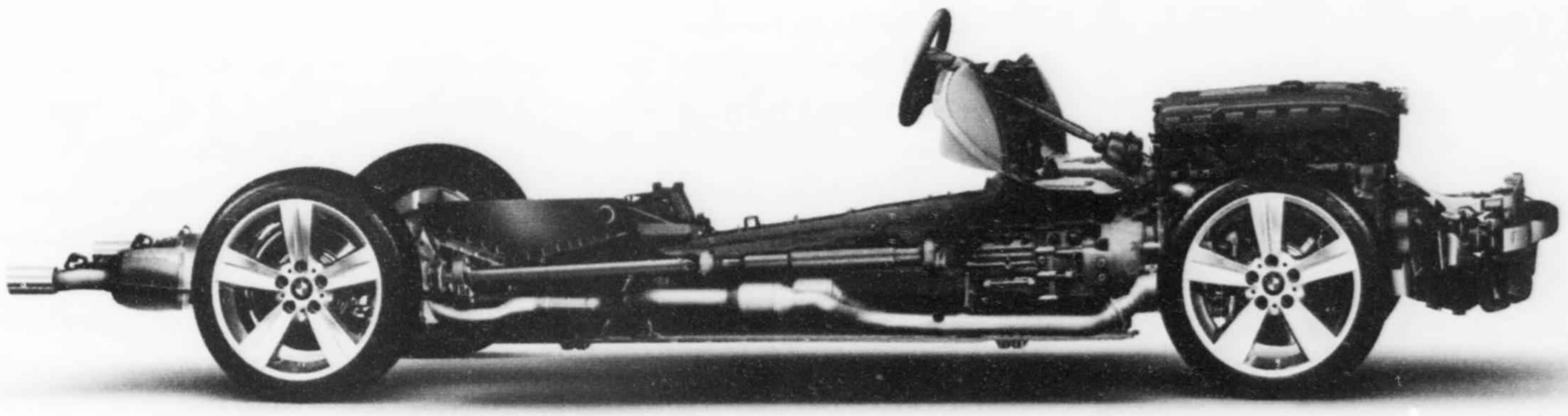
Jahangir remembers her childhood as idyllic, yet from an early age her life was touched by the anxieties, disappointments, and disillusionment that afflicted Pakistan from its birth. In 1958, General Ayub Khan seized power in the course of Pakistan's first military coup. To everyone's surprise, Jahangir's father, a man who until then had shown more interest in living the good life than in politics, resigned from the Civil Service in protest. "My mother was horrified and asked him why," she told me. "He replied that once a military government came it was a declaration that civilian institutions have failed. He was not really an idealist by nature, but he was strangely committed to the question of democracy and human rights."

The family moved back to Lahore, and Jahangir's father joined the opposition to the military government, becoming increasingly vocal in his criticisms. Life for the family changed: the secret service moved in across the street from their house, Jahangir told me, and began recording the license plates of visitors' cars; soon people became reluctant to visit. In 1961, Malik Jilani was arrested. "They came in the middle of the night with torches," she recalled. "Hordes of police surrounded the house and banged on the doors. It was terrifying. My young sister was crying, but my father appeared completely calm, and gave orders for the valet to bring the police tea. I remember him saying 'Ta-ta' very lightly to us as he got into the police van."

It was the first of a succession of arrests and prison terms, and Jahangir and her mother spent much of their time in court trying to challenge the various detention orders. On one occasion, after her father had witnessed what the family believed was a government-sponsored killing, there was an attempt to assassinate him. A man who looked like Jilani was shot dead walking up to the family house, and a second man was critically wounded. Jahangir, who was only thirteen at the time, was alone in the house with her two sisters, and had to take the badly wounded man to the hospital. Two years later, Ayub Khan confiscated the family's land in an attempt to pressure Jilani to stop his opposition activities. It didn't work.

"He would go into prison smiling and come out smiling," Jahangir said. "It was only in the nineteen-eighties, when he was dying of cancer and rambling because of the drugs that the doctors gave him, that we discovered he had been disgustingly tortured."

In 1969, at the age of seventeen, Jahangir began her own pro-democracy rebellion against Ayub Khan. She was a leader of a women's demonstration—one of the largest in the history of Pakistan—and risked gunfire to climb the gate of the Punjab governor's house to hoist a symbolic black flag. She was temporarily suspended from college. A few years later, she began studying law, teaching herself at



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HEAR

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home, as her professors did not think it suitable for women to attend law lectures. "I had been very impressed with the courts we visited to see my father," she said. "The judges wearing wigs, the lawyers, the legal arguments—it was all exciting stuff for a kid."

Although it was not unusual for a woman of Jahangir's class to take up a profession—a number of Pakistan's senior editors and politicians are upper-middle-class women—it was almost unknown for women to enter the law. In 1980, Jahangir set up a practice with her sister Hina Jilani and two other friends, which was the first free legal-aid center in Pakistan; it was also the first all-woman legal practice. Named A.G.H.S., after the initials of the four partners, it was soon dubbed Hags by the male legal establishment. The practice and its reputation quickly grew; by 1982, both Jahangir and Jilani were Advocates of the High Court.

The establishment of Jahangir's firm coincided with a new period of ultraconservative military rule, under General Zia ul-Haq. Zia took power in 1977, in a coup that displaced Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the father of Benazir Bhutto. Although Zia became a hero in Washington when, in 1979, he gave full support to the United States after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, it was he who brought about Pakistan's rapid Islamization. The country had been set up as a homeland for Indian Muslims, but it had been a more or less secular state, as envisaged by its founder, the clean-shaven, tweed-jacketed, and Anglicized Muhammad Ali Jinnah.

Zia was responsible for initiating the alliance between the conservative military officers and the reactionary mullahs, both groups that tended to be drawn from the middle classes, in contrast to politicians, who mostly came from feudal landholding backgrounds. When Pakistan's Islamic radicals joined the anti-Soviet jihad in Afghanistan, their recruitment was controlled by the I.S.I. and funded by both the C.I.A. and the Saudi intelligence agency. Soon the I.S.I. became the paymaster of myriad jihadi groups. These were intended to be selectively deployed in Afghanistan and, later, Kashmir, where Pakistan has been engaged in a long-running dispute with India. The Pakistani Army saw the jihadis as a cost-effective means of dominating Afghanistan while keeping the Indian Army bogged down in Kashmir. As Hamid Gul, the director of the I.S.I. at the time, told me, "If they encourage the Kashmiris, it's understandable. The Kashmiri people have risen up, and it is the national purpose of Pakistan to help liberate them. . . . If the jihadis go out and contain India, tying down their Army on their own soil, for a legitimate cause, why should we not support them?"

Zia also transformed Pakistan's domestic policies, changing Jinnah's vision of an Anglicized Pakistan forever. Two years after the coup, he established the Hudood Ordinances of Sharia law. The Ordinances discriminated severely against women, asserting that women were not allowed to testify in cases involving crimes of the highest magnitude. They also made any sex outside marriage—known as *zina*—a punishable offense. Rape became difficult to prove and victims were often charged with adultery and imprisoned or flogged.

Jahangir helped organize protest marches against the Hudood Ordinances, and she was arrested and sent to prison for a month in 1983. There she met many women who had been arrested under the new laws, and, on her release, she took up their cases. She helped overturn a sentence of imprisonment and flogging issued against a blind woman who was raped and then charged with *zina*. In 1986, she helped establish the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan. The H.R.C. defended women accused of adultery. It also took on a growing number of blasphemy cases filed against Ahmadis, a heterodox Muslim sect, and Christians: a single accusation could result in execution.

Jahangir's position as a human-rights lawyer made her especially vulnerable to the violent religiosity that had become more evident in the country. In 1994, Jahangir won the freedom of a fourteen-year-old Christian boy who had been sentenced to death for blasphemy. Soon afterward, her family compound was attacked by a group of jihadis who were determined to kill her as a defender of infidels and an enemy of Islam. They broke into one of the houses in the compound and took the family of one of Jahangir's sisters hostage. Jahangir managed to get the police; the siege ended when the jihadis escaped.

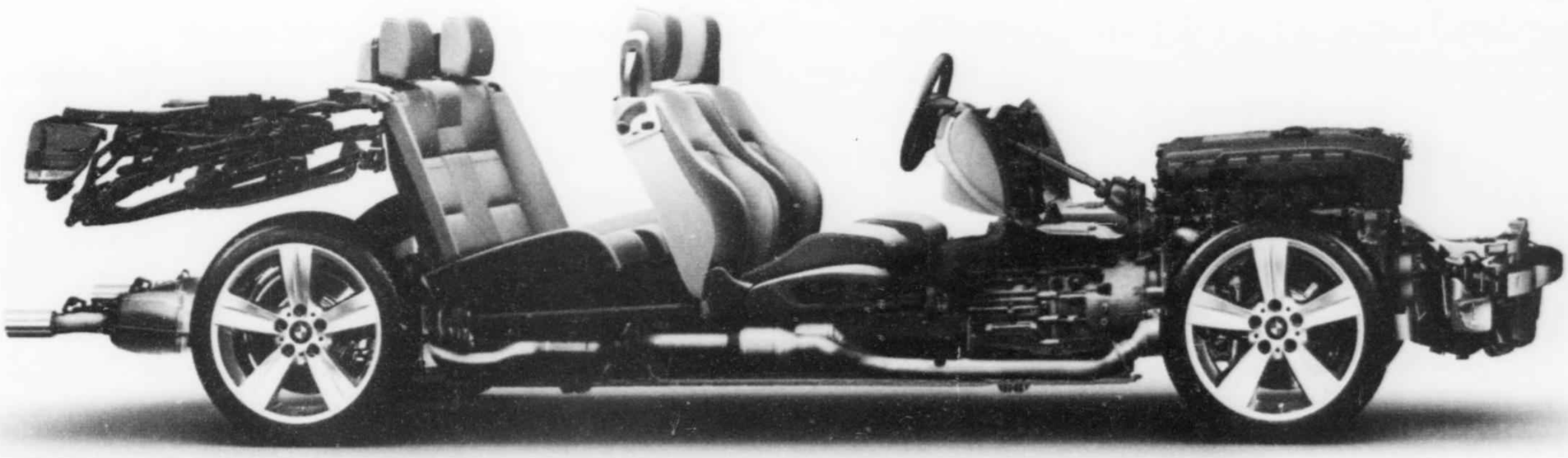
In 1999, two people were killed at Ja-

hangir's office. A woman named Samia Sarwar, from Peshawar, who wanted a divorce from her abusive husband, was hiding from her family in the H.R.C.'s shelter. Under Jahangir's guidance, Sarwar agreed to discuss the situation with her mother. But the mother showed up at Jahangir's office with a hired assassin posing as her driver. As the two entered the office, the assassin shot Sarwar in the head. The assassin was killed by a policeman as he attempted to flee the building. Yet Sarwar's mother was never charged with being an accomplice to murder. Following the strictures of Sharia, the heirs of the victim—in this case the abandoned husband and the two children—exercised their right to forgive the murderer. It was a graphic illustration of the way that Sharia can be twisted to legalize the murder of women deemed to have "shamed" their families.

"Honor killings are not a specifically Islamic tradition," Jahangir said firmly. "They are just a bad tradition that must be stopped." Before Zia came to power, honor killings were restricted mainly to Pakistan's tribal regions and other remote areas. But the practice has since spread to the rest of the country, and is now widely seen as something linked with religion as well as with the old notions of tribal honor. "I was born a Muslim and that is still my identity," Jahangir continued. "Islam is no more violent or fanatical than any other religion—it's just that many Muslim countries have politicized religion for the benefit of the rulers. There are Christian fanatics and Hindu fanatics, too—put a gun in the hands of any of them and they will terrorize people. Religion should be something personal. It should not be the concern of the state, and no religion has a right to degrade women or erode their human dignity.

"I always ask these Islamists, 'What kind of justice do you want? Give me specifics.' Look how selectively Sharia law is applied here. When Zia started his Islamization, it was aimed first at women, non-Muslims, and the poor. That served his purpose. It is never invoked against the élite—we've never had an Islamic banking system here, for example. The poor understand this. I remember one woman in jail telling me, 'If there is a God, it's a God of the rich people.' It's not about faith. It's about political strategies."

The question of Pakistan's future is complicated by a fundamental flaw in the political system. Real democracy has never thrived here, at least in part because the landowning class remains the principal social base from which politicians emerge. In general, the educated middle class—which in India gained control soon after independence—in Pakistan is still largely excluded from the political process. In many of the more backward parts of Pakistan, the local feudal *zamindar*, or landowner, can expect his people to vote for his chosen candidate. The Pakistani journalist Ahmed Rashid told me, "In some constituencies, if the feudals put up their dog as a candidate, that dog would get elected with ninety-nine per cent of the vote." Such loyalty can be enforced.





"Oh, you know, the usual—just imagining what my co-workers look like naked."

• • •

Many of the biggest *zamindars* are said to have private prisons, and some have private militias.

Behind Pakistan's swings between military government and democracy lies a surprising continuity of interests: to some extent, the industrial, military, landowning, and bureaucratic élites are all interrelated and look after one another. Recent rumors of secret negotiations between Musharraf and Benazir Bhutto—who, though in exile, continues to lead the Pakistan People's Party—are typical of the way the civilian and military élites have shared power. (Both Musharraf and Bhutto have denied such rumors, but some have suggested that an alliance between them is something that the United States would welcome, in the hope of uniting the two pro-American groupings in the country.)

This closed nature of the Pakistani political system has contributed to the strikingly poor performance of its democratic politicians. As Jahangir put it, "If Pakistan's dictators are sometimes less dictatorial than one might imagine, then its democrats have proved consistently less democratic than they should be."

In 1995, during Benazir Bhutto's government, the anti-corruption organization Transparency International named Pakistan one of the three most corrupt countries in the world. Bhutto and her husband, Asif Zardari—widely known as "Mr. 10%"—faced allegations of plundering the country; charges were filed in Pakistan, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States. (Bhutto has consistently asserted her innocence. Two cases in Pakistan were eventually decided in her favor, and a case in Switzerland is still ongoing.)

It was difficult to imagine Bhutto's successor, Nawaz Sharif, making as big a mess of things, but he was soon harassing his opponents, physically intimidating the judiciary, and threatening journalists. In May of 1999, Najam Sethi, the editor of the *Friday Times*, was abducted from his home; a month later, after a series of demonstrations, in which Jahangir played a leading role, and an international campaign, he was released. Meanwhile, the economy came close to collapse.

"A return to democracy would certainly not be an instant miracle for this country," Jahangir told me. "But it would be a start. This military government has no direction, no plan, no schedule. In terms of human rights, this government is worse than any civilian government we've ever had. We estimate that there have been about six hundred disappeared since 2002. They are usually picked up by plainclothesmen in four-wheel drives—sometimes there are policemen with them, sometimes not. If the victims are ever seen again, they invariably say that they have been tortured with electric shocks, beaten, given injections, hung upside down by their ankles." (The government has claimed that "all efforts are being made to find the missing persons.")

Jahangir lit a cigarette, and continued. "Since 9/11 and Guantánamo, the security forces feel they have a free hand," she said. "And then there is the interference of the executive in the judiciary, which has been constant and unbearable. The sacking of the Chief Justice was the final straw. If we lose this one, it is all over for the rule of law in this country."

Pakistan today in many ways resembles pre-revolutionary Iran. A cosmopolitan middle class is prospering, yet for the great majority of poorer Pakistanis life remains intolerably hard and access to justice or education is a distant hope: just 1.8 per cent of Pakistan's G.N.P. is spent on education. The published literacy rate is forty-nine per cent, and in some areas the rate is estimated to be as low as fourteen per cent. Instead of investing adequately in education, Musharraf's government is spending money on a fleet of American F-16s for the Air Force. Health care and other social services for the poor have also been neglected, in contrast to the public services that benefit the wealthy, such as highways and airports—many of which are world-class.

It is this disparity perhaps as much as anything else that has fuelled the growth of the Islamist religious parties. Ayesha Siddiqa told me, "There is a breakdown of effective government. The political parties have all failed to create an environment where the poor can get what they need from the state. The laws are always twisted for the rich; in fact, there are effectively no laws for them. So the poor have begun to look to alternatives for justice." She went on to point out, "The religious parties and Sharia are increasingly seen as the one source of justice for them. In the long term, flaws in the system will create more room for the fundamentalists."

Paralleling the rise of the religious parties as the only effective opposition to the entrenched Pakistani élite—widely perceived as corrupt, Westernized, and decadent—there has been a growing number of Taliban-style Islamist vigilantes, particularly in the M.M.A.-ruled North-West Frontier Province. In the past few months, a rash of suicide bombings—something previously almost unknown in Pakistan—have left scores of people dead in the frontier region.

As the events at the Lal Masjid show, Musharraf has been unable to act effectively against the Talibanization of the country. Indeed, the presence of so many heavy weapons in a known center of mil-

itancy in the heart of Islamabad suggests at the very least that the intelligence agencies were turning a blind eye to what was going on, and has led to much speculation about the reasons for this. Was Musharraf trying to scare his Western backers by showing how much worse things could get if he was to go? And why, when the decision was made to confront the militants, was it done so heavy-handedly? As Jahangir told me during the bloody storming of the complex, the incident exemplified Musharraf's indecisiveness and his managerial ineptitude. He allowed the crisis to fester for months, she said, and then, without making much of an effort to solve the problem by peaceful methods, he sent in the tanks. "He didn't even attempt to cut off the water and electricity until the very end," she observed. "Any layperson can see how clumsily it was handled."

Dependent on the support of the mullahs as well as on that of the Americans, Musharraf is in an almost impossible position. He has replaced many of the more pro-Islamist I.S.I. generals, and he appears in many ways to be coöperating with the United States in the hunt for Al Qaeda suspects. But the Army continues to use jihadis in Kashmir, and the extent to which Taliban units are openly operating out of Pakistan's tribal areas implies that the I.S.I. is not doing all it can to prevent the Taliban's resurgence in Afghanistan. Musharraf cannot have the blessings of both the Americans and the Islamists, and he cannot continue to dismantle democratic organizations while claiming to be the savior of democracy.

Few people are predicting a happy resolution to this increasingly dangerous situation, yet Jahangir remains optimistic. "Musharraf is rapidly losing the minimum respect that gives you the moral authority to rule a country," she said. "We have the resilience to create new institutions and new systems. We have enough people of integrity. Given an opportunity, political parties can make a difference and new political leaders can emerge. But we civilians have to run the government ourselves. At the moment, it is not that the country has a garrison; it is that the garrison has a country.

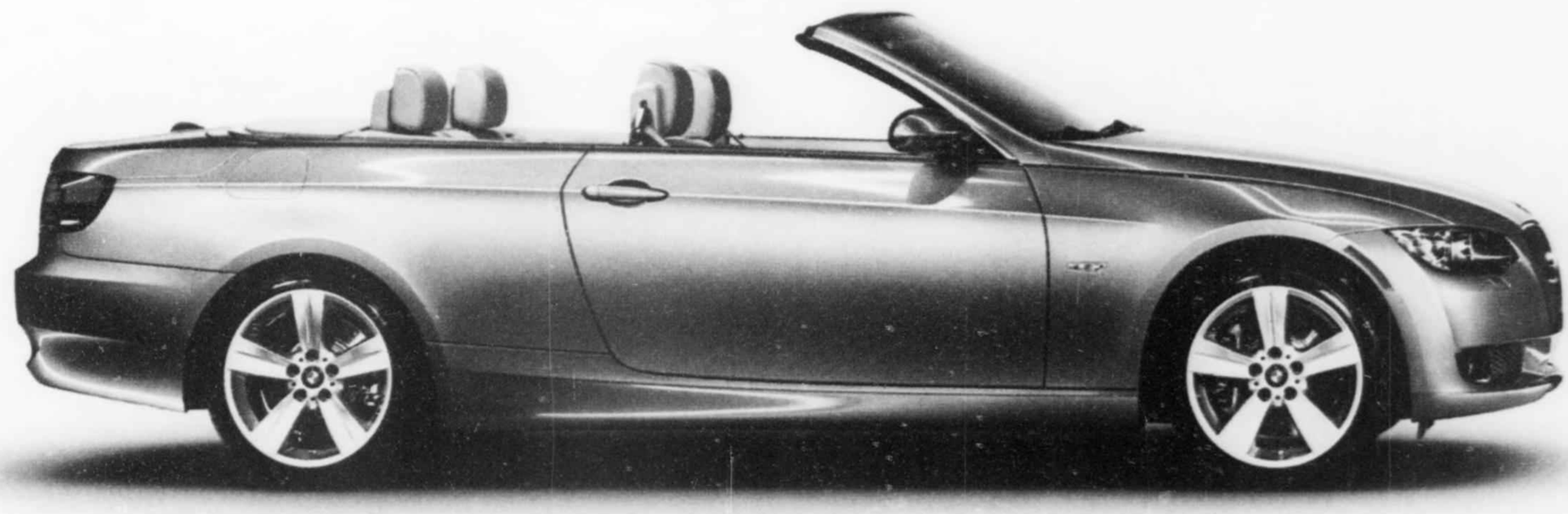
"However flawed democracy here is, it is still the only answer," she continued. "Once there is a proper political movement, the religious parties will become marginalized. I am not at all gloomy. These protests have been a wake-up call."

Shortly after our conversation, I talked to Jugnu Mohsin, the publisher of the *Friday Times*, and the wife of its editor, Najam Sethi. "Is Asma naïve?" she asked. "It is true that the lawyers' movement, if it destroys Musharraf, could create more problems than it solves. The fall of Musharraf could well lead to the rise of violent political Islam. I certainly believe that no civilian government on its own can put that genie back in the bottle. But, if idealism is naïveté, then so be it. It is ideals that move history forward—think of Gandhi or Martin Luther King. Many thought they were politically naïve, but it was they, not the realists, who succeeded in changing the course of history." ♦

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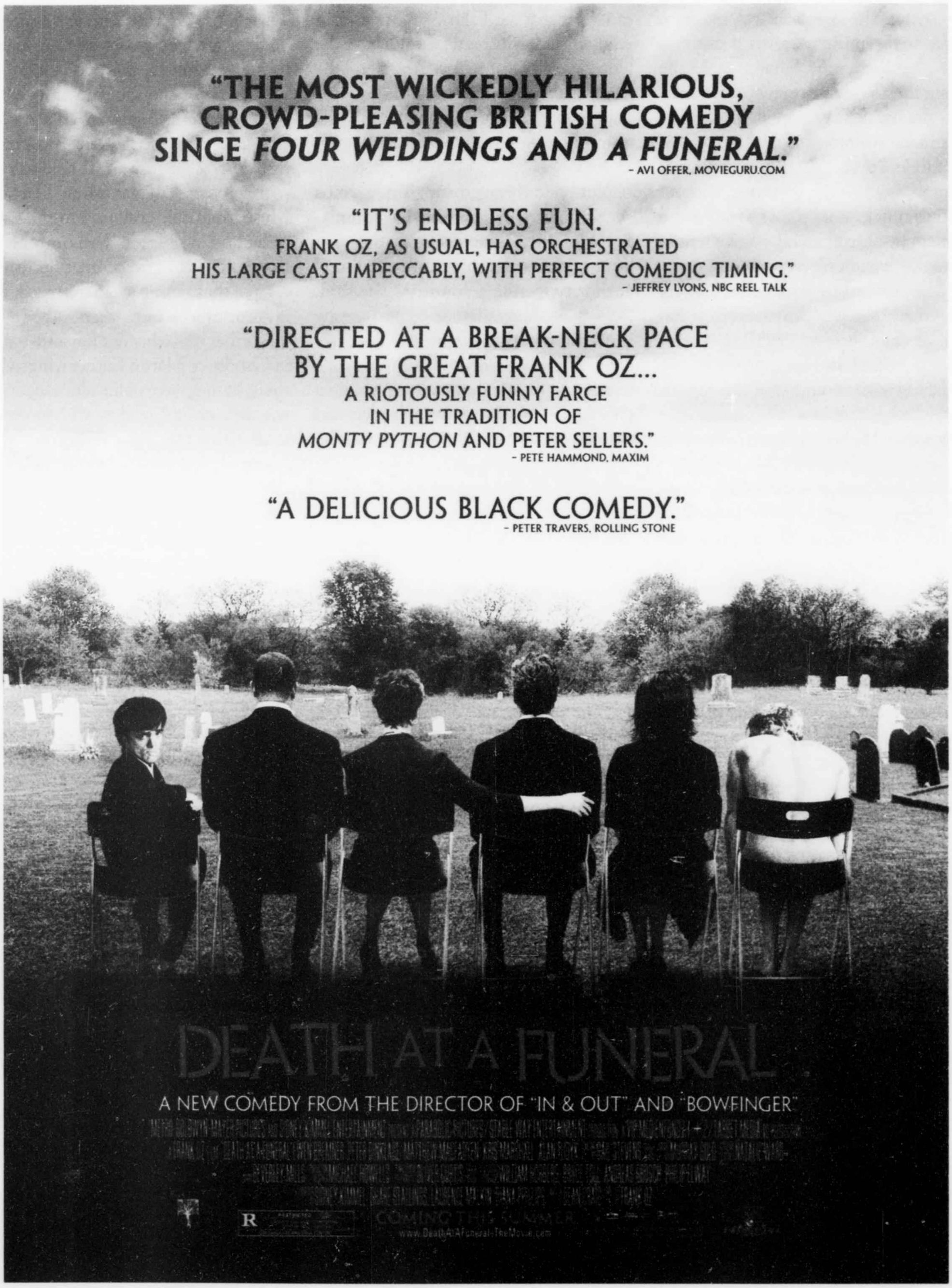
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SHOUTS & MURMURS

HEY, LOOK

BY SIMON RICH

What I imagined the people around me were saying when I was . . .

Eleven:

"Oh, man, I can't believe that kid Simon missed that ground ball! How pathetic!"

"Wait. He's staring at his baseball glove with a confused expression on his face. Maybe there's something wrong with his glove and *that's* why he messed up."

"Yeah, that's probably what happened."

Twelve:

"Did that kid sitting behind us on the bus just get an erection?"

"I don't know. For a while, I thought that was the case, but now that he's holding a book on his lap it's impossible to tell."

"I guess we'll never know what the situation was."

Thirteen:

"Hey, look, that thirteen-year-old is walking around with his mom!"

"Where?"

"There—in front of the supermarket!"

"Oh, my God! That kid is *way* too old to be hanging out with his mom. Even though I've never met him, I can tell he's a complete loser."

"Wait a minute. He's scowling at her and rolling his eyes."

"Oh, yeah . . . and I think I just heard him curse at her, for no reason."

"I guess he's cool after all."

Fourteen:

"Why does that kid have a black 'X' on the back of his right hand?"

"I bet it's because he went to some kind of cool rock concert last night."

"Wow. He must've stayed out pretty late if he didn't have time to scrub it off."

"Yeah, and that's probably why his hair is so messy and dirty—because he cares more about rocking out than conforming to society."

"Even though he isn't popular in the traditional sense, I respect him from afar."

Fifteen:

"Hey, look, that kid is reading 'Howl,' by Allen Ginsberg."

"Wow. He must be some kind of rebel genius."

"I'm impressed by the fact that he isn't trying to call attention to himself."

"Yeah, he's just sitting silently in the corner, flipping the pages and nodding, with total comprehension."

"It's amazing. He's so absorbed in his book that he isn't even aware that a party is going on around him, with dancing and fun."

"Why aren't any girls going over and talking to him?"

"I guess they're probably a little intimidated by his brilliance."

"Well, who *wouldn't* be?"

"I'm sure the girls will talk to him soon."

"It's only a matter of time."

Sixteen:

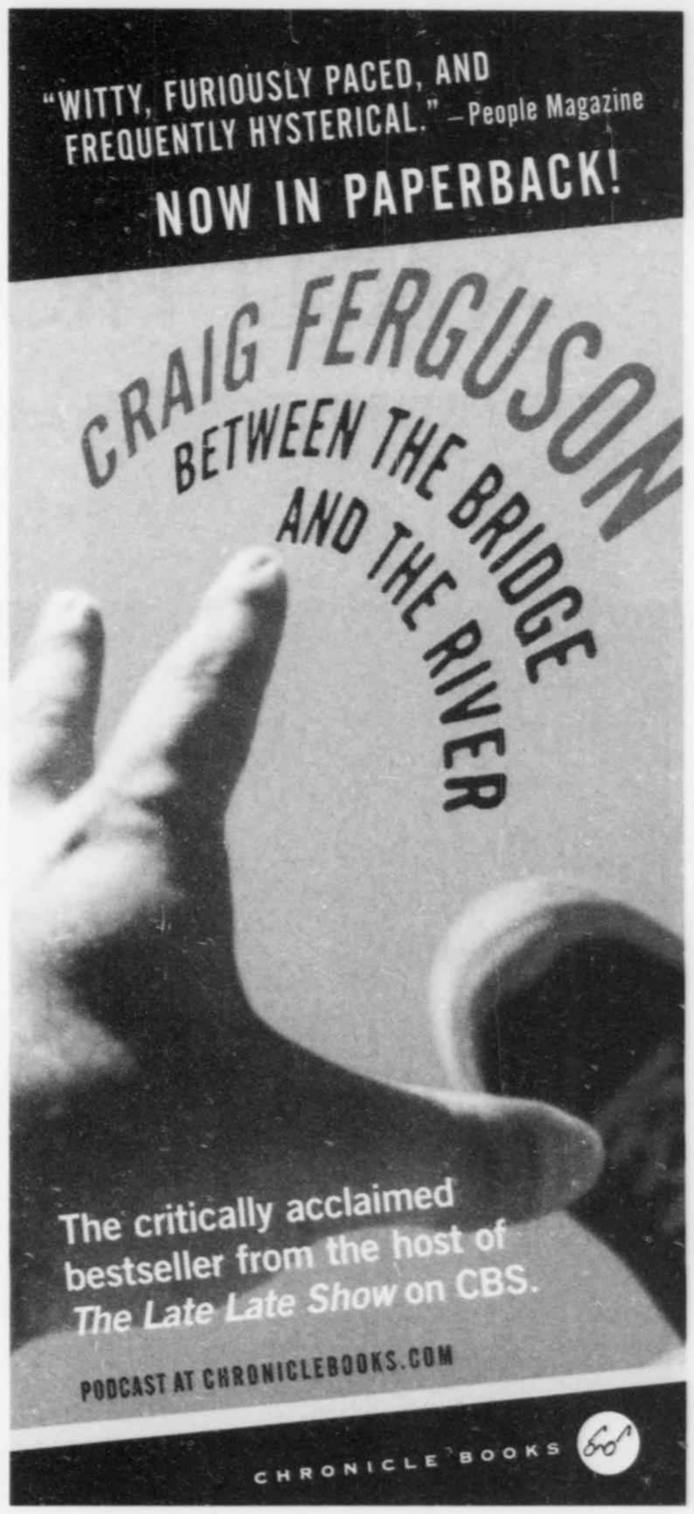
"Hey, look, it's that kid Simon, who wrote that scathing poem for the literary magazine."

"You mean the one about how people are phonies? Wow—I loved that poem!"

"Me, too. Reading it made me realize for the first time that everyone is a phony, including me."

"The only person at this school who isn't a phony is Simon."

"Yeah. He sees right through us." ♦



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A NEUROLOGIST'S NOTEBOOK

A BOLT FROM THE BLUE

Where do sudden intense passions come from?

BY OLIVER SACKS



After the accident, he was inspired, even possessed, by music.

Tony Cicoria was forty-two, very fit and robust, a former college football player who had become a well-regarded orthopedic surgeon in a small city in upstate New York. One afternoon in 1994, he was at a lakeside pavilion for a family gathering. It was pleasant and breezy, but he noticed a few storm clouds in the distance; it looked like rain.

He went to a pay phone outside the pavilion to make a quick call to his mother (this was before the age of cell phones). He still remembers every second of what happened next: "I was talking to my mother. There was a little bit of rain, thunder in the distance. My mother hung up. The phone was a foot away from where I was standing when I got struck. I remember a flash of light coming out of the phone. It hit me in the face. Next thing I remember, I was flying backwards."

Then—he seemed to hesitate before telling me this—"I was flying forwards. Bewildered. I looked around. I saw my own body on the ground. I said to myself, 'Oh shit, I'm dead.' I saw people converging on the body. I saw a woman—she had been waiting to use the phone right behind me—position herself over my body, give it CPR.... I floated up the stairs—my consciousness came with me. I saw my kids, had the realization that they would be O.K. Then I was surrounded by a bluish-white light . . . an enormous feeling of well-being and peace. The highest and lowest points of my life raced by me. I had the perception of accelerating, being drawn up. . . . There was speed and direction. Then, as I was saying to myself, 'This is the most glorious feeling I have ever had'—*slam!* I was back."

Cicoria knew that he was back in his own body because he felt pain—pain from the burns on his face and on his left foot, where the electrical charge had entered and exited—and, he realized, "only bodies have pain." He wanted to go back, he wanted to tell the woman to stop giving him CPR, to let him go. But it was too late—he was firmly back among the living. After a minute or two, when he could speak, he said, "It's O.K.—I'm a doctor!" The woman, who turned out to be an intensive-care-unit nurse, replied, "A few minutes ago, you weren't."

The police came and wanted to call an ambulance, but Cicoria refused. His family took him home ("It seemed to take hours," he recalled), where he called his own doctor, a cardiologist. The cardiologist thought that Cicoria must have had a brief cardiac arrest, but said, "With these things, you're alive or dead." He did not believe that Cicoria would suffer any aftereffects.

Cicoria also consulted a neurologist—he was feeling sluggish (most unusual for him) and having some difficulties with his memory. He found himself forgetting the names of people he knew well. He had a thorough neurological exam, an EEG, and an MRI. Again, nothing seemed amiss.

A couple of weeks later, when his energy returned, Cicoria went back to work. There were still some lingering memory problems—he occasionally forgot the names of rare diseases or surgical procedures—but his surgical skills were unimpaired. In another two weeks, his memory problems disappeared, and that, he thought, was the end of the matter.

What happened then fills Cicoria with amazement even now, a dozen years later. Life had returned to normal, seemingly, when "suddenly, over two or three days, there was this insatiable desire to listen to piano music." This was completely out of keeping with anything in his past. He had had a few piano lessons as a boy, he said, "but no real interest." He did not have a piano in his house. What music he did listen to tended to be rock and roll.

With this sudden onset of craving for piano music, he began to buy recordings and became especially enamored of a Vladimir Ashkenazy recording of Chopin favorites—the "Military" Polonaise, the "Winter Wind" Étude, the "Black Keys" Étude, the A-flat Major Polonaise. "I loved them all," Cicoria said. "I had the desire to play them. I ordered all the

"TREE SONATA" (1999)/ROBERT AND SHANA PARKEHARRISON / JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY

sheet music. At this point, one of our babysitters asked if she could store her piano in our house—so now, just when I craved one, a piano arrived, a nice little upright. It suited me fine. I could hardly read the music, could barely play, but I started to teach myself." It had been more than thirty years since the few piano lessons of his boyhood, and his fingers felt stiff and awkward.

And then, on the heels of this sudden desire for piano music, Cicoria started to hear music in his head. "The first time, it was in a dream," he said. "I was in a tux, onstage; I was playing something I had written. I woke up, startled, and the music was still in my head. I jumped out of bed, started trying to write down as much of it as I could remember. But I hardly knew how to notate what I heard." This was not surprising—he had never tried to write or notate music before. But whenever he sat down at the piano to work on the Chopin his own music "would come and take me over. It had a very powerful presence."

I was not quite sure what to make of this peremptory music, which would intrude and overwhelm him. Was he having musical hallucinations? No, Cicoria said, they were not hallucinations—"inspiration" was a more apt word. The music was there, deep inside him—or somewhere—and all he had to do was let it come to him. "It's like a frequency, a radio band. If I open myself up, it comes. I want to say, 'It comes from Heaven,' as Mozart said." His music is ceaseless. "It never runs dry," he said.

Now he had to wrestle not just with learning to play the Chopin but with giving form to the music in his head, trying it out on the piano, getting it down on manuscript paper. "It was a terrible struggle," he said. "I would get up at four in the morning and play till I went to work, and when I got home from work I was at the piano all evening. My wife was not really pleased. I was possessed."

In the third month after being struck by lightning, then, Cicoria—once an easygoing, genial family man, almost indifferent to music—was inspired, even possessed, by music, and scarcely had time for anything else. It began to dawn on him that perhaps he had been "saved" for a special pupose. "I came to think that the only reason I had been allowed to survive was the music," he said. I asked him whether he had been a religious man before the lightning. He had been raised Catholic, he said, but had never been particularly observant; he had some "unorthodox" ideas, too, such as a belief in reincarnation.

He himself, he grew to think, had had a sort of reincarnation—had been transformed and given a special gift, a mission, to "tune in" to the music that he called, half metaphorically, "the music from Heaven." This came, often, in "an absolute torrent" of notes with no breaks, no rests between them, and he would have to give it shape and form. (As he said this, I thought of Caedmon, the seventh-century Anglo-Saxon poet, an uneducated herdsman who, it was said, had received the art of song in a dream one night and spent the rest of his life praising God and creation in hymns and poems.)

Cicoria continued to work on his piano technique and his compositions. He would travel to concerts by his favorite performers, but had nothing to do with musical friends or musical activities in his own town. This was a solitary pursuit, between himself and his muse.

I asked whether he had experienced other changes since the lightning strike—a new appreciation of art, perhaps, different taste in reading, new beliefs. Cicoria said he had become "very spiritual." He had started to read every book that he could find about near-death experiences and about lightning strikes. And he had acquired "a whole library on Tesla," as well as anything on the terrible and beautiful power of high-voltage electricity. He thought he could sometimes feel "auras" of light or energy around people's bodies—he had never felt this before the lightning bolt.

Some years passed, and Cicoria's new life, his inspiration, never deserted him. He continued to work full time as a surgeon, but his heart and mind now centered on music. He got divorced in 2004, and that same year he had a fearful motorcycle accident. He had no memory of this, but his Harley was struck by another vehicle and he was found unconscious in a ditch, with broken bones, a ruptured spleen, a perforated lung, cardiac contusions, and, despite his helmet, head injuries. Nonetheless, he made a complete recovery and was back at work in two months. Neither the accident nor

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his head injury nor his divorce seemed to have made any difference to his passion for playing and composing music.

I have never met another person with a story like Tony Cicoria's, but I have occasionally had patients with a similar sudden onset of musical or artistic interests—including a research chemist in her early forties, Salimah M. (I have changed her name and some identifying details.) In 2002, Salimah started to have brief episodes, lasting a minute or less, in which she would get "a strange feeling"—sometimes a sense that she was on a beach that she had once known while at the same time being perfectly conscious of her current surroundings and able to continue a conversation, or drive a car, or do whatever she had been doing. Occasionally, the episodes were accompanied by a "sour taste" in her mouth. She noticed these strange occurrences, but did not think of them as having any neurological significance. It was only when she had a grand-mal seizure, in the summer of 2003, that she went to a neurologist and was given brain scans, which revealed a large tumor in her right temporal lobe—the cause of her peculiar episodes. The tumor, her doctors felt, was malignant (though it was probably an oligodendroglioma, of relatively low malignancy) and needed to be removed. Salimah wondered if she had been given a death sentence and was fearful of the operation and its possible consequences; she and her husband had been told that it might cause some "personality changes." But, in the event, the surgery went well, most of the tumor was removed, and, after a period of convalescence, Salimah was able to return to her work as a chemist.



Before the surgery, Salimah had been a fairly reserved woman, who would occasionally be annoyed or preoccupied by small things like dust or untidiness; her husband said that she was sometimes "obsessive" about jobs that needed to be done around the house. But now, after the surgery, she seemed unperturbed by such domestic matters. She had become, in the idiosyncratic words of her husband (English was not their first language), "a happy cat." She was, he declared, "a joyologist."

Salimah's new cheerfulness was apparent at work. She had worked in the same laboratory for fifteen years and had always been admired for her intelligence and dedication. Yet, while losing none of this professional competence, she seemed a much warmer person, keenly sympathetic and interested in the lives and feelings of her co-workers. Where before, in a colleague's words, she had been "much more into herself," she now became the confidante and social center of the entire lab.

At home, too, she shed some of her Marie Curie-like, work-oriented personality. She permitted herself time off from her thinking, her equations, and became more interested in going to movies and parties, living it up a bit. And a new love, a new passion, entered her life. As a girl, she had been, in her own words, "vaguely musical," had played the piano a little, but music had never played any great part in her life. Now it was different. She longed to go to concerts, to listen to classical music on the radio or on CDs. She could be moved to rapture or tears by music which had carried "no special feeling" for her before. She became "addicted" to her car radio, which she would listen to while driving to work. A colleague who happened to pass Salimah in her convertible on the road said that the music on her radio was "incredibly loud"—he could hear it a quarter of a mile away. Salimah was "entertaining the whole freeway."

Like Tony Cicoria, Salimah showed a drastic transformation from being only vaguely interested in music to being passionately excited by it and in continual need of it. And with both of them there were other, more general changes, too—a surge of emotionality, as if emotions of every sort were being stimulated or released. In Salimah's words, "What happened after the surgery—I felt reborn. That changed my outlook on life and made me appreciate every minute of it."

Could someone develop a "pure" musicophilia, without any accompanying changes in personality or behavior? In 2006, just such a situation was described by the neurologists Jonathan Rohrer, Shelagh Smith, and Jason Warren in their striking case history of a Thai woman in her mid-sixties who had severe temporal-lobe epilepsy. After seven years, her seizures were finally brought under control by the anticonvulsant drug lamotrigine (LTG). Prior to starting on this medication, as Rohrer and his colleagues wrote,

> she had always been indifferent to music, never listening for pleasure or attending concerts. This was in contrast to her husband and daughter, who played the piano and the violin. . . . She was unmoved by the traditional Thai music she had heard at family and public events in Bangkok and by classical and popular genres of Western music after she moved to the United Kingdom. Indeed, she continued to avoid music where possible, and actively disliked certain musical timbres (for example, she would shut the door to avoid hearing her husband playing piano music, and found choral singing "irritating").

This changed abruptly when the patient was put on lamotrigine, they continued:

> Within several weeks of starting LTG, [she] sought out musical programmes on the radio and television, listened to classical-music stations on the radio for many hours each day, and demanded to attend concerts. Her husband described how she had sat "transfixed" throughout "La Traviata" and became annoyed when other audience members talked during the performance. She now described listening to classical music as an extremely pleasant and emotion-charged experience. She did not sing or whistle, and no other changes were found in her behavior or personality. No evidence of thought disorder, hallucinations, or disturbed mood was seen.

While Rohrer and his colleagues could not pinpoint the precise basis of their patient's musicophilia, they hazarded the suggestion that, during her years of seizure activity, she might have developed an intensified neural connection between perceptual systems in the temporal lobes and certain parts of the limbic system involved in emotional response—a connection that became apparent only when her seizures were brought under control with medication. In the nineteen-seventies, the neuropsychiatrist David M. Bear suggested that such a sensory-limbic hyperconnection might be the basis for the emergence of the unexpected artistic, sexual, mystical, or religious feelings that sometimes occur in people with temporal-lobe epilepsy. Could something similar have occurred with Tony Cicoria?

Last spring, Cicoria took part in a

ten-day retreat for music students, gifted amateurs, and professionals. The music camp doubles as a showroom for Erica vanderLinde Feidner, a concert pianist who also specializes in finding the perfect piano for each of her clients. Cicoria bought one of her pianos there—a Bösendorfer grand, a unique prototype made in Vienna. She thought he had a remarkable instinct for picking out a piano with exactly the tone he wanted. It was, Cicoria felt, a good time—a good place—to make his début as a musician.

He prepared two pieces for his concert: his first love, Chopin's B-flat Minor Scherzo; and his own first composition, which he called "Rhapsody, Opus 1." His playing, and his story, electrified everyone at the retreat (many expressed the fantasy that they, too, might be struck by lightning). He played, Erica said, with "great passion, great brio," and, if not with genius, at least with creditable skill—an astounding feat for someone with virtually no musical background who, at forty-two, had taught himself to play.

What, in the end, did I think of his story? Dr. Cicoria asked me. Had I ever encountered anything similar? I asked him what *he* thought, and how he would interpret what had happened to him. He replied that as a medical man he was at a loss to explain these events, and he had to think of them in "spiritual" terms. I countered that, with no disrespect to the spiritual, I felt that even the most exalted states of mind—the most extraordinary transformations—must have some physical basis or at least some physiological correlate in neural activity.

At the time of his lightning strike, Cicoria had both a near-death experience and an out-of-body experience. Many supernatural or mystical explanations have arisen to explain out-of-body experiences, but they have also been a topic of neurological investigation for a century or more. Such experiences are relatively stereotyped in format: one seems to be no longer in one's own body but outside it and, most commonly, looking down on oneself from eight or nine feet above (neurologists refer to this as "autoscopy"). One seems to see clearly the room and people and objects nearby, but from an aerial perspective. People who have had such experiences often describe vestibular sensations like "floating" or "flying." Out-of-body experiences can inspire fear or joy or a feeling of detachment, but they are usually described as intensely "real"—not at all like a dream or a hallucination. They have been reported in many sorts of near-death experiences, as well as in temporal-lobe seizures. There is some evidence that both the visuospatial and vestibular aspects of out-of-body experiences are related to disturbed function in the cerebral cortex, especially at the junctional region between the temporal and parietal lobes. (The neurologist Orrin Devinsky and others have described "autoscopic phenomena with seizures" in ten of their patients and reviewed similar cases in the medical literature, while Olaf Blanke and his colleagues in Switzerland have been able to monitor the brain activity of epileptic patients actually undergoing out-of-body experiences.)

But it was not just an out-of-body experience that Dr. Cicoria reported. He saw a bluish-white light, he saw his children, his life flashed past him, he had a sense of ecstasy, and, above all, he had a sense of something transcendent and enormously significant. What could be the neural basis of this? Similar near-death experiences have often been described by people who have been, or believed themselves to be, in great danger, whether they were involved in sudden accidents, or struck by lightning, or, most commonly, revived after cardiac arrest. All of these are situations not only fraught with terror but likely to cause a sudden drop in blood pressure and cerebral blood flow. There is likely to be intense emotional arousal and a surge of noradrenaline and other neurotransmitters in such states, whether the effect is one of terror or rapture. We have, as yet, little idea of the actual neural correlates of such experiences, but the alterations of consciousness and emotion that occur are very profound and must involve the emotional parts of the brain—including the amygdala and brain-stem nuclei—as well as the cortex. (Kevin R. Nelson and his colleagues at the University of Kentucky have published several papers stressing the simi-



"It's a French film, so we don't have to shower."



"You need to stop focussing on getting drunk and start focussing on being drunk."

• •

larities between the dissociation, euphoria, and mystical feelings of near-death experiences and those of dreaming, REM sleep, and the hallucinatory states in the borderlands of sleep.)

While out-of-body experiences have the character of a perceptual illusion (albeit a complex and singular one), near-death experiences have all the hallmarks of mystical experience, as William James defines it: passivity, ineffability, transience, and a noetic quality. In a near-death experience, one is totally consumed—swept up, almost literally, in a blaze (sometimes a tunnel or funnel) of light, and drawn toward a Beyond—beyond life, beyond space and time. There is a sense of a last look, a (greatly accelerated) farewell to things earthly, the places and people and events of one's life, and a sense of ecstasy or joy as one soars toward one's destination. Experiences like this are not easily dismissed by those who have been through them, and they may sometimes lead to a conversion or metanoia, a change of mind, that alters the direction and orientation of a life. One cannot suppose, any more than one can with out-of-body experiences, that such events are pure fancy; similar features are emphasized in every account. Near-death experiences must also have a neurological basis of their own, one which profoundly alters consciousness itself.

What about Tony Cicoria's remarkable access of musicality, his sudden musicophilia? Patients with degeneration of the front parts of the brain, so-called frontotemporal dementia, sometimes develop a startling emergence or release of musical talents and passions as they lose the powers of abstraction and language—but clearly this was not the case with Cicoria, who was articulate and highly competent in every way. In 1984, Daniel Jacome described a patient who had had a stroke that damaged the left hemisphere of his brain and who subsequently developed "hypermusia" and "musicophilia," along with aphasia and other problems. But there was nothing to suggest that Cicoria had experienced any significant brain damage after the lightning strike, other than a very transient disturbance to his memory systems for a week or two.

His situation did remind me a bit of that of Franco Magnani, the "memory artist" of whom I have written. Magnani had never thought of being a painter until he experienced a strange crisis or illness—perhaps a form of temporal-lobe epilepsy—when he was thirty-one. He had nightly dreams of Pontito, the little Tuscan village where he was born; after he woke, these images remained intensely vivid, with a full depth and reality ("like holograms"). Magnani was consumed by a need to make these images real, to paint them, and so he taught himself to paint, devoting every free minute to producing hundreds of views of Pontito.

Could Tony Cicoria's musical dreams, his musical inspirations, have been epileptic in nature? Such a question cannot be answered with a simple EEG such as Cicoria had following his accident, but would require special EEG monitoring over the course of many days.

And why was there such a delay in the development of Cicoria's musicophilia? What was happening in the six or seven weeks that elapsed between his cardiac arrest and the rather sudden eruption of musicality? We know that there were temporary aftereffects—the confused state that lasted for a few hours and the disturbance of memory that went on for a couple of weeks. These could have been due to cerebral anoxia alone—for his brain must have been without adequate oxygen for a minute or more. One has to suspect, however, that Cicoria's apparent recovery was not as complete as it seemed, and that his brain was still reacting to the original insult and reorganizing itself during this time.

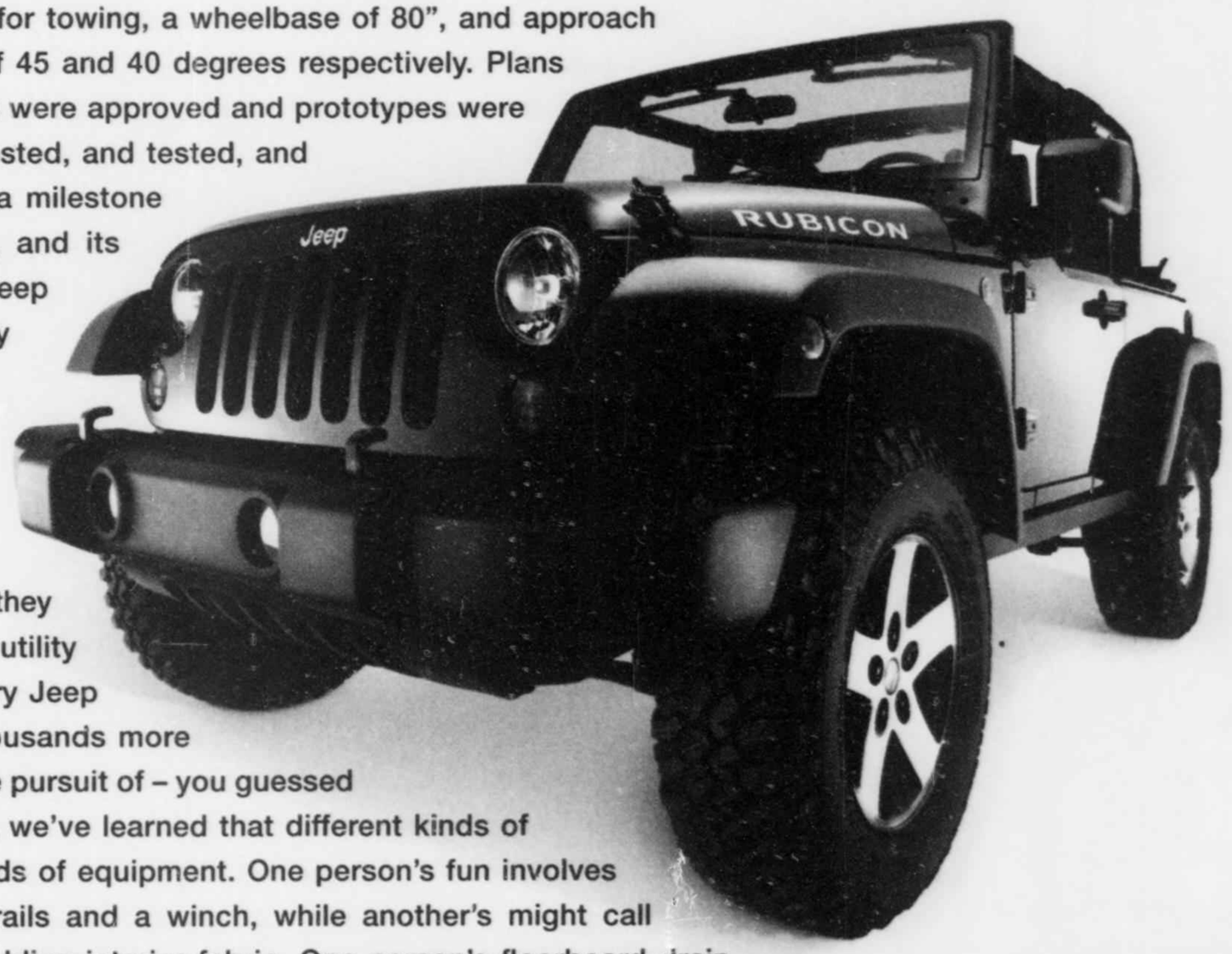
Cicoria feels that he is "a different person" now—musically, emotionally, psychologically, and spiritually. This was my impression, too, as I listened to his story and saw something of the new passions that had transformed him. Looking at him from a neurological vantage point, I suspected that his brain must be very different now from what it had been before he was hit by lightning or in the days immediately following, when neurological tests showed nothing grossly amiss. Could we now, a dozen years later, define the neurological basis of his musicophilia? Many new and far subtler tests of brain function have been developed since Cicoria had his injury, and he agreed that it would be interesting to investigate this further. But after a moment he reconsidered, and said that perhaps it was best to let things be. His was a lucky strike, and the music, however it had come, was a blessing, a grace—not to be questioned. ♦

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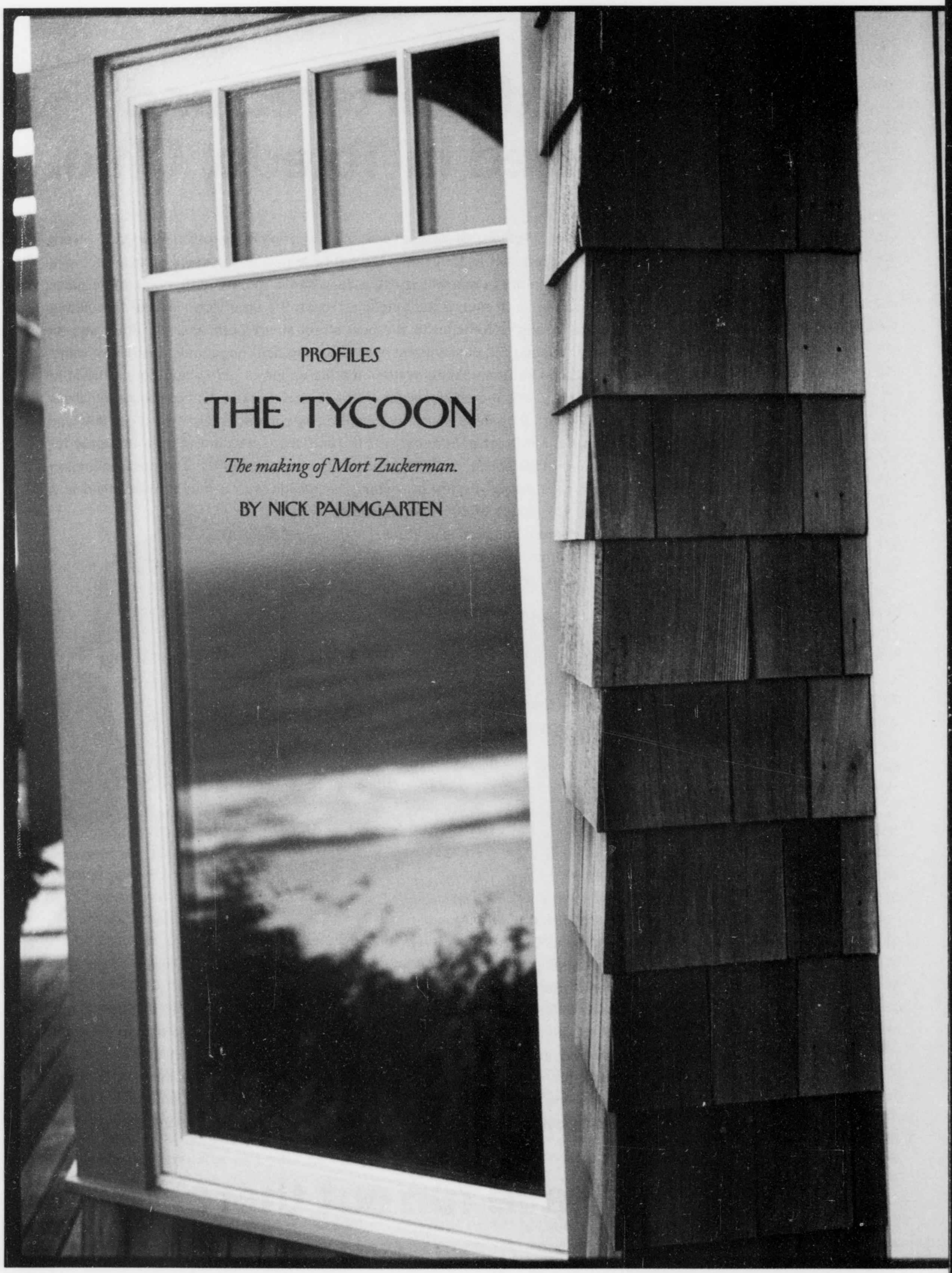
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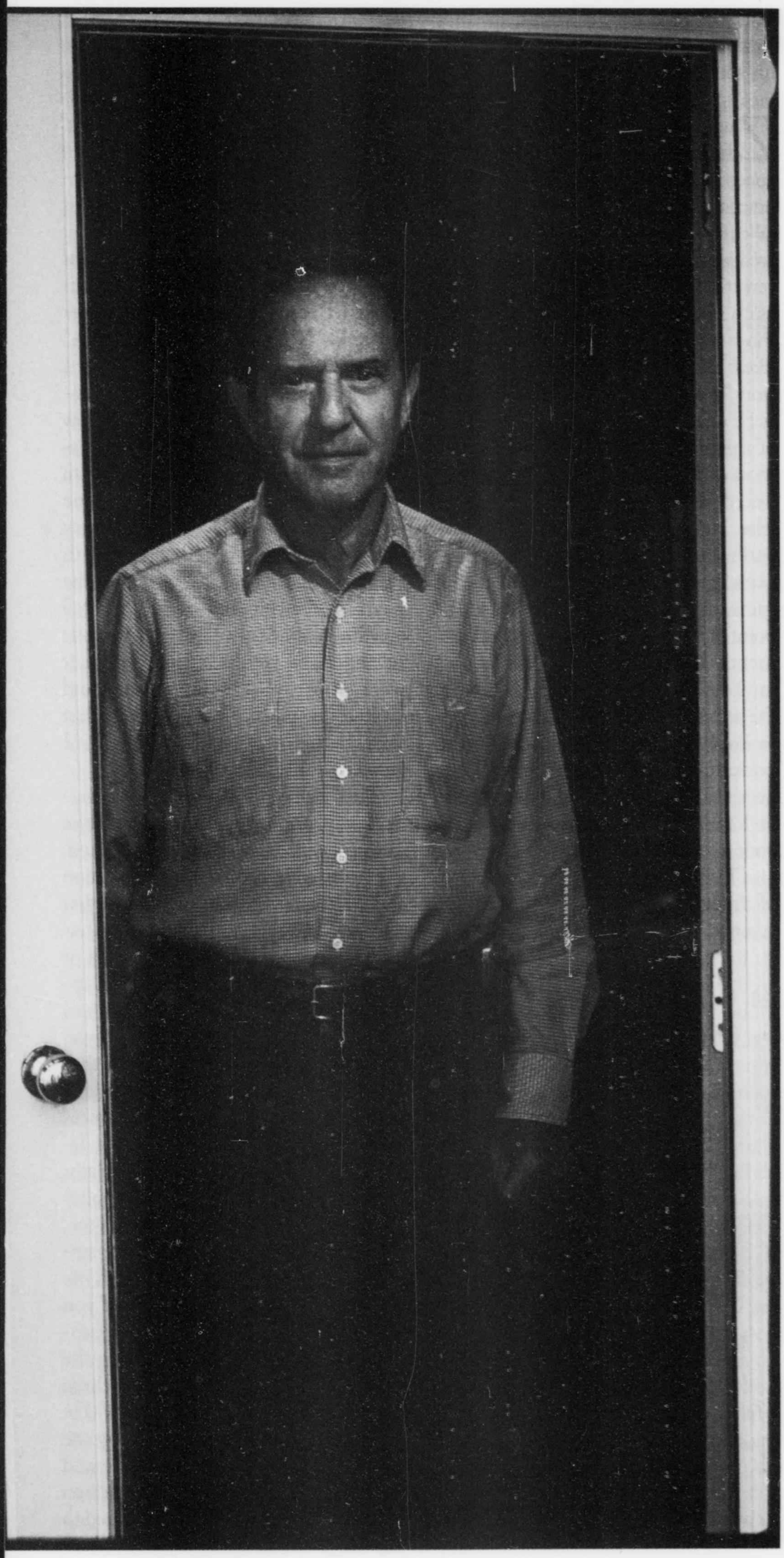
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Zuckerman—a real-estate developer, media proprietor, journalist, and unofficial roving ambassador—at his home in East Hampton.



Photograph by Martin Schoeller.

Shortly before turning seventy, last month, Mortimer B. Zuckerman decided that it was time for him finally to take up the task of writing a memoir. He already had in mind a title ("Backstory") and a first line, "I have never worked a day in my life," by which he meant that all the work he has done—as a graduate-degree accumulator, a real-estate developer, a publisher, a philanthropist, a back-channel envoy—has felt to him more like play. The one pursuit that may have felt like a job (lawyering) he abandoned before he'd billed a minute or taken the bar. He often says that the law is the opposite of sex: "Even when it's good, it's lousy." The one thing that law school taught him, he says, is not to be intimidated by lawyers.

Zuckerman speaks softly, except when he shouts, which he does occasionally, at people who work for him or to make himself heard as a commentator on "The McLaughlin Group," the Sunday-morning talk show. Quiet-talking is a power tactic, and Zuckerman has mastered it. At a benefit dinner or embassy reception, to be within earshot of this voice, as it playfully disparages everyone beyond its limited range, is to bask in the back-of-the-bus insouciance of a front-of-the-bus man. He has a slight lisp, and there are traces of his native Canada in his vowels. (He was born in Montreal.) He is lean, not very tall, deliberate in his movements, a study in self-possession. He dresses impeccably—in sharp suits with silk ties and matching pocket handkerchiefs—and keeps his hair neat and dark. Age has weathered him; his nose, up close, seems to have borne the brunt of it, and his eyes, glinting things, at times succumb to a look of all-encompassing fatigue—the weight of the world. This drawn, anxious manifestation hardly resembles the fleshier, grinning version of him in the society pages, or in the head shot accompanying his column in his magazine, *U.S. News & World Report*. Worry hounds him. There is in his manner a trace of Montgomery Burns, the sibilant and miserly industrialist in "The Simpsons." But a certain allure evinces itself. As his many friends attest, he is fun to be around. They talk about his loyalty and generosity, making references to family trag-

edies or health scares that he has helped see them through. Barbara Walters describes him as one of the best dinner-party companions she has ever known.

Eminence, too ardently grasped, can be as slippery as a trout; to get hold of it, you may occasionally squeeze too hard, and away it goes. Still, Zuckerman has spent a lifetime assembling the core components—money, influence, allies, properties, positions, women—and it has accrued to him, in a provisional kind of way. Few of his contemporaries have done as much as he. He attended great universities, became a billionaire (he's worth $2.8 billion, according to *Forbes*), purchased prominent publications, and befriended heads of state. He has been on the boards of hospitals, schools, and major Jewish organizations. He counts as friends men and women of high degree, who praise him for his keenness and the reach of his mind. He has a jet, a helicopter, a yacht, houses in East Hampton and Aspen, and a three-story apartment on Fifth Avenue that is filled with paintings by Picasso, Rothko, and Matisse. He is a man whose collection of accomplishments, possessions, and associations both obscures and begs the question of what life is for. If this has nagged him, he does not readily admit to it, although his restlessness, his chronic dissatisfaction, suggests that it might, in some form or another, tug at the levers of his soul.

Zuckerman is a relentless and proficient teller of stories—both of real anecdotes and of those known to non-practitioners as jokes. Along with policy talk and opinion pronouncement, these are his chief mode of discourse, his conversational carapace. (He tends not to ask a lot of questions, at least not of those whose answers may not be of interest to him.) "I'm going to tell you a story," he says, his eyelids fluttering a bit, as he reaches into the storehouse. He is of a genus and a generation for whom most occasions—speeches, dinner parties, deal closings—call for a well-told joke. He assembles the jokes in a notebook. He can perform in paragraphs; like a figure skater completing a series of spins, he returns from tangents to the point at hand. A poet could collect two months of his punch lines, lay them out in verse, and call the result "Mort." In the anecdotal category, the stories tend to involve his dealings with famous or powerful people, and the funny things he has said to them. It is not uncommon to hear the same stories more than once.

This spring, I visited him a number of times at his office at 599 Lexington Avenue, the New York headquarters of his real-estate company, Boston Properties, of which he is the chairman. The building, next to the Citigroup tower—another Boston Properties property—was his first development in New York. His office, spacious enough, is stocked with books and artifacts of a semi-public life—a photograph of him on Air Force One with President Bill Clinton, a page from the *Congressional Record* of his eulogy for Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, and a plaque on his desk that reads "The Mishegoss Stops Here." The view is unspectacular. We'd sit at a glass table, and Zuckerman would quietly tell stories, interrupting himself now and then to call out directives to his assistant Clare Probert, without whom he'd be lost. One day, he greeted me with an account of a recent three-day trip to Israel, where he had met with Prime Minister Ehud Olmert. On the way, his jet had hit a bird, which knocked out the radar. "So we get out over the Atlantic, and we don't know whether we're going to have to turn around. And I said to the pilots, 'The only thing that worried me is that before the bird hit I heard it say, "*Allahu Akbar*." ' "

Then he began to speak, in his elliptical way, about Israel: "I met all the major players, and we basically talked. We reviewed both their strategic position and their tactical position, let's put it that way." He said that he'd gone as "an analyst," on authority he finds it difficult or indiscreet to specify. "I have been involved with these people for years and years and years," he said. "And so you have a certain history, where either they trust your judgment and confidentiality or they don't." He explains the nuances of American politics and policy to the Israelis and then comes home and explains the nuances of Israeli politics and policy to the Americans. "It always amazes me, but very few people know what's happening in Israel in detail," he said. "And the same is true on the other side. If you think the Israelis can learn what's happening here on the basis of reading the Washington *Post* or the *Times*—believe me, you know how wrong that is." He was not impressed, for example, by the former Israeli Defense Minister and Labor leader Amir Peretz. Zuckerman had once asked him how he proposed to negotiate with the Palestinians. "He said, 'Well, it would be like a labor negotia-



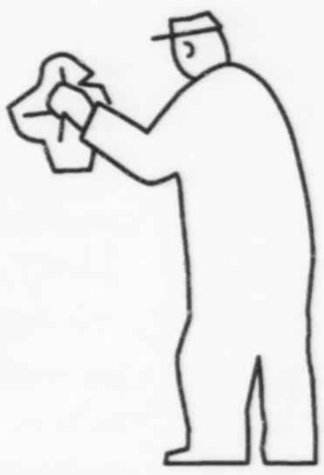
"I can also play a hippo."

tion. I put myself in their shoes. Figure out what they need.' And I said, 'There's a different way of describing that particular process, which is that when you're in a negotiation that is as difficult as this will be you *do* want to walk a mile in the other man's shoes. That way, when the deal blows up, you're a mile away—and you have his shoes.' And he said, 'Can you explain that to me again?' "

Zuckerman's anecdotes often feature an incongruity, which leavens or adorns the greater gist, the grander scheme. Later that same afternoon, he told me about the Nicholas Daniloff incident. Daniloff, a Moscow correspondent for *U.S. News*, was arrested in 1986 by the Soviets and accused of espionage. Zuckerman went to Moscow to facilitate his release and then met with William Casey, the director of the C.I.A. "Casey came to my office," Zuckerman started in. "It was the end of the day, and he was wearing black tie. In fact, all four times I met him he was wearing black tie. And I said to him, 'Is black tie the costume du jour for spooks?' Now, Casey shared with me some of the most extraordinary things. I couldn't believe what he was willing to share with me. I don't know how else to put this, but it was very hard for me to concentrate on it, because he had his fly open. I didn't know what to expect. Would a microphone come out of the zipper?" (Zuckerman also has a habit of prefacing many of his best stories with some variation of "This is off the record, and you'll see why in a moment." This was the case in his ensuing discussion of the extraordinary things that Casey told him.)

It was through the Daniloff incident, according to Zuckerman, that he became friendly with Ronald Reagan, whose manner in private surprised and impressed him. "Among the reasons we hit it off was that he loved to tell jokes," Zuckerman told me. "I would be invited to dinners with Reagan, even private dinners. I'd be sitting at his table, and we would tell jokes." In May, at a dinner for the Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center (he is on the Sloan-Kettering board and last year gave the hospital a hundred million dollars), he dusted off a joke that he said he'd told Reagan, involving a French priest and a "young, vivacious, attractive Jewish woman" who was fleeing the Nazis. The punch line—"I haven't told her the war is over yet"—apparently suited the battles against both the Soviets and cancer.

"The wonderful thing about Reagan," Zuckerman went on, "is that he would tell jokes that were apropos of the moment. And, by the way, as I spent more time with him he would tell some of these jokes over and over again. But you wouldn't have known the difference between one session where he told the joke and the other. Every word was the same. Every intonation was the same. He had polished them to the highest gloss imaginable."



I noted to Zuckerman that this talent had not eluded him, either.

"Well, I don't have it anywhere near the way he did. I just have more recent and slightly more salacious material. Sure. I have a ton of jokes. He would laugh, my goodness." Zuckerman smiled. "I'm going to tell you another story. I was at the Harmonie Club, and I was playing squash. And somebody comes: 'You've got a telephone call.' And I said, 'Well, ask who it is'—I don't want to interrupt the squash game, that's sort of the etiquette—'I'll call him back,' and the person said, 'You don't understand. It's the President.' I said, 'Bullshit! Just ask who it is.' 'No, it's the President!' I'm sitting there, I'm sweating like hell. And it's Reagan on the phone." Reagan, he went on, was being criticized for doing more for Daniloff than for American hostages being held in Beirut, and he knew that Zuckerman was going to be on the David Brinkley show that weekend. Zuckerman told me, "On this telephone call, Reagan tells me of all the unbelievable—all the covert operations they did to try to get these guys out. And he said, 'You can't talk about this specifically, by the way—and we've been talking with Iran.' Now, this was in September. So when I was on the Brinkley show I said, 'Look, I'm not in a position to describe it in detail. But I can tell you that I have been briefed on what the government is doing on behalf of the hostages in Beirut, and I can tell you if it were possible to describe it you would never say that they weren't doing enough.' Ninety days later, with the Iran-Contra affair—I didn't even pay attention to Iran. When Reagan mentioned Iran, I mean, it went right by me."

The greater gist: Zuckerman, in his role as a journalist, had been accorded not just a front-row seat but also a supporting role in the making of history. This elevation, along with the maturing self-importance of a Council on Foreign Relations man, has made him the object of ribbing from old friends and something closer to scorn from his critics. He has learned to be game, to play along; he has held up well on "The Colbert Report" and in bit parts (as a homeless man and a wounded soldier) in films made by his close friend Irwin Winkler. And his own stories, while depicting a man of privilege and access, also wittingly describe a man who, in the thrall of this privilege and access, sometimes misses the big scoop or drops the drink. The *macher* must be part schlemiel.

Through his Russian contacts, he came to know a Chinese three-star general, who introduced him to the general who had commanded the troops in Beijing during the Tiananmen Square massacre. Zuckerman went to China in his guise as *U.S. News* editor, and interviewed him and others in the Chinese government. That was a score. But the story Zuckerman likes to tell is how, before the interview, the Tiananmen general asked him to review an honor guard. And so Zuckerman, who had never so much as pretended to salute, found himself reviewing a line of eight hundred Chinese soldiers, having no idea what to do—"I mean, I'd seen people in the movies doing it." A kung-fu expert was brought in; he chopped a giant stone in half with his head. The general then handed Zuckerman a sledgehammer and urged him to try. "So I've taken the sledgehammer, and I'm determined to break the fucking thing. I mean, if he could do it with his forehead, I could at least do it with a sledgehammer. And I go *whack!* Well, the sledgehammer was not, as we say, well constructed, because the hammer part was not well attached to the handle. And so the goddam hammer came off and went flying, missing the commanding general's head by this much."

He indicated a few inches. "And I had this fantasy: 'U.S. Journalist Kills Commanding General.' "

Occasionally, the surreal pomp of some situation or another—arriving in Kazakhstan before dawn to find soldiers lining the road to his hotel; singing "Ol' Man River" to Jiang Zemin—has inspired him to imagine his grandfather looking down on him and saying, with wonder and pride, "What are you doing?" This grandfather, Samuel, his father's father, was an Orthodox rabbi and a mentor to Zuckerman; he died in 1966. Zuckerman's maternal grandfather had emigrated to Montreal from Ukraine, in 1914, leaving his wife and daughters to peddle sandwiches to passing trainloads of Russian troops during the First World War. In 1919, he brought his family over. Two years later, Zuckerman's mother, who had fallen in love with Zuckerman's father in high school, travelled back to Ukraine to persuade him to marry her. He joined her in Quebec, and gradually brought his own family over, including his father, the rabbi.

As a boy, Zuckerman didn't know any of this. His parents and grandparents hardly spoke of their past, and it wasn't until after his mother died, in 1976, that he heard the Old Country stories from her relatives. Zuckerman grew up in the Outremont part of Montreal, which is close to, but more affluent than, the cold-water-flat neighborhood of St. Urbain Street, memorialized in the novels of Mordecai Richler. Zuckerman's father had a wholesale tobacco-and-candy business, which earned enough money to put four children (Zuckerman has three older sisters) through college. When Zuckerman was three, his father had a heart attack; unable to endure the Montreal climate after that, he and his wife spent the winters in Florida, leaving the children behind. He died when Zuckerman was seventeen. Zuckerman didn't know him well. "I regretted it," he told me. "My father was a remarkable man, but I didn't know it then. All I knew was a very sick man, spending how many times in the hospital. I hated going into hospitals, from that experience."

Zuckerman was a studious and worldly boy, doted upon by his mother, and something of a loner. Once, when he was twelve, he took a train by himself to New York City. He spent three nights at the Hotel Edison, ate at a nearby Horn & Hardart, walked around town, and went to the movies.

Zuckerman often cites the "tremendous" anti-Semitism of mid-century Montreal. He told me that French-Canadian boys would ambush him on his way to school and pelt him with rocks and slurs. "This is how I became one of the fastest two-block runners in Montreal," he said. Still, when Zuckerman, at sixteen, enrolled at McGill University, he did not imagine that he'd ever leave Montreal. He lived for a time in Paris, to study law at the Sorbonne, but found the French as inhospitable as the Québécois. (French students would come to an apartment he shared with some McGill friends, and drink his wine and eat his bread and cheese. " '*Volontiers*,' they'd always say. '*Volontiers*'—'gladly,' " Zuckerman recalled. "But they never returned the favor. We never once were invited anywhere. We all ended up hating the French.")

It was only after going to the United States to pursue a series of graduate degrees—an M.B.A. at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School; at Harvard, a law degree (he already had one from McGill) and a Ph.D. in business (he never completed it)—that his distaste for the law evolved into a reluctance to return home, and that his homesickness turned into a kind of resolve. On one of his first days in Boston, he went to the Opera House to meet the son of a relative's friend. Zuckerman arrived twenty-five minutes early. Waiting outside, he watched maybe fifteen hundred people walk past him, not recognizing any of them, and it occurred to him that had he been in Montreal he would have known and perhaps conversed with dozens of people. He thought about his parents, who had come to a hostile province, with no possessions or prospects, and in that moment he felt for the first time an acute and abiding admiration for his forebears and the rest of Canada's immigrant Jews, and for America's as well. It steeled him. You might say that his life afterward was a sustained campaign to get to know the operagoers.

In 1962, he got a job in Boston at the commercial real-estate firm of Cabot, Cabot & Forbes, working with its chief executive, Jerry Blakeley, who had spearheaded the development of industrial parks along Route 128. Blakeley became a kind of surrogate father to him. Zuckerman rose quickly, and within two years he had become a partner and the chief financial officer. "They thought I knew something," Zuckerman recalled. "I did not disabuse them of that notion."

"Mort was brilliant," Blakeley told me recently. He used to call Zuckerman his "private genius": "He knew all the new financial tools. He also had the greatest fund of ethnic jokes." Blakeley was changing Cabot from a Wasp stronghold to a more diverse and meritocratic outfit. "I hired the first Irish Catholic and I hired the first Jewish people," he said.

Not long after being hired, Zuckerman was sent to California to check on the firm's development of a seven-thousand-acre planned community southeast of Laguna Beach, called Laguna Niguel. Zuckerman wrote a withering memo, predicting that the project would go bankrupt within half a year, but then hesitated. "I thought, What am I doing? I've only been here three months." He consulted his sister's father-in-law, a judge in Canada, who advised Zuckerman to change the word "bankruptcy" to "insolvency." He sent the memo, and insolvency was averted. He told me, "That was when—and I will not be coy about it—that's when I found that I had a flair for finance, that I could understand, somehow or other, the business structure and financial structure of a transaction." His brain is like the back of a very large envelope. As an executive who worked closely with him years later said, "When I'd show him the numbers, he'd pick out the one number on page 13 that ended up being a typo. It was awesome."

In 1970, Zuckerman, who was thirty-two, decided to go off on his own. (As a former Cabot colleague told me, "Blakeley was great at attracting talent. What he wasn't so good at was reining it in.") On unwinding his stake in various partnerships at Cabot, Zuckerman found that on one of them his calculations didn't square with the firm's, and so he sued—a brazen act, for that time and place. Blakeley said, "Mort did tend to be a little litigious. I don't like lawsuits myself." Eventually, Zuckerman got a settlement of five million dollars.

He called his new venture Boston



Properties. He brought along a Cabot colleague named Ed Linde, a Brooklynite and an alumnus of M.I.T. and Harvard Business School. "He's the most wonderful man," Zuckerman said. "I've ridden his coattails ever since." Zuckerman and Linde (pronounced "Lindy") have been partners for nearly forty years, a startling span for any professional collaboration, and especially for one involving so volatile and demanding an executive as Zuckerman. Of all the relationships he has had, the one with Linde is the most like a marriage, at least of the happy variety. "Mort was brilliant, but he wasn't a people person," Blakeley told me. "He would antagonize people. He was a tough negotiator. He wasn't the gentle diplomat Ed Linde was. Ed is very calm. Mort can come up with the crazy schemes, and Ed can make them work."

One day, I met with Linde at the Boston Properties headquarters in Boston, in the Prudential Center, which the company owns, and then went to the top of the Prudential Tower for lunch. The building was shrouded in fog, which obscured the view he'd hoped to show me, a veteran developer's Boston. Linde, who is sixty-six, is tall and languid, with a genial manner. He was dressed casually and had on sleek brown sneakers. For several years now, he has been battling cancer. (When I first began talking to Zuckerman, he made it clear that Linde's health was a source of great distress to him. In May, Linde relinquished the title of president to his son Doug, who has been with Boston Properties since 1997; he remains the C.E.O.)

Their first projects were office buildings in Lexington and Waltham. Generally, Zuckerman dreamed up the deals and handled the financing, while Linde ran the company and oversaw the development and management of the properties. In other words, Zuckerman was the money guy and Linde was the real-estate guy, although, as both men will tell you, they each did, and do, their share of both. Zuckerman had a knack for structuring deals with more built-in risk (and therefore a potentially higher return). "The key was to convince the lender that that was a sane policy," Linde said. "Mort had an ability to work with the lenders and give them a sense of confidence that they weren't taking an unnecessary risk. His intellectual power in that area was obvious to the person across the table." Zuckerman also believed heartily in the adage "Under-promise, over-deliver." "You do that two or three times, and the outside financiers develop confidence in you," Linde said. "Traditionally, there was always suspicion of real-estate guys. And Jerry Blakeley actually started this before Mort did: this was the beginning of the professionalizing of the industry. It was no longer a few guys in the back of a truck saying, 'What can we get away with?' "

It is a trend that has lasted four decades, and has remunerated Zuckerman and Linde well. "Mort was the first millionaire a lot of us had ever met," the writer Jeffrey Steingarten, who was a lawyer in Boston at the time, recalled. In those years, Zuckerman lived in an elegant town house in Beacon Hill and had a private chef, a Chinese man named Ah Chiu, who eventually came with him to New York. Zuckerman moonlighted as an associate professor in urban planning and design at Harvard (and later as a lecturer at Yale). Steingarten worked, along with Barney Frank, for Mayor Kevin White, and they were part of a group of intellectuals and young comers who often hung around the Cambridge home of the Harvard professors Norman and Dorothy Zinberg. "It was the sixties, even if it was the seventies," Steingarten said, "so naturally there was a suspicion of someone who'd made money, but as long as you were at the Zinbergs' nice house and overhearing Mort talking to Pat Moynihan about cities or something, it was intoxicating." Still, Steingarten said, "Mort was never really accepted by the Yankee part of the set, because they were anti-Semitic. When Mort would try to do things that other people had done or done worse, there were always newspaper stories."

In the early seventies, Zuckerman and Linde won the rights to develop Park Plaza, a huge office-and-retail tower complex next to Boston Common. Their plan provoked fervid opposition from civic groups, which complained that the towers would cast a pall over the Common. "The shadow," as it came to be known, became a metaphorical cartoon alter ego for Zuckerman, one that made a repeat performance in New York a decade later, when Zuckerman's nine-year campaign to put up two high-rises on Columbus Circle (on

the site now occupied by the Time Warner towers) earned him the enmity of Jacqueline Onassis, Walter Cronkite, and a broad coalition of civic activists. He and Linde had bid $455.1 million to build on the site—a record at the time. The shadow, in this case, would supposedly have darkened a strip of Central Park, an effect that opponents dramatized, one afternoon in 1987, by assembling in the Park with open black umbrellas. The shadow also darkened Zuckerman's social prospects, at a time when he was new to New York. (He moved to the city in 1984.) At any rate, in both instances, after tortuous negotiations, court rulings, architectural revisions, and bruising press coverage, Boston Properties wound up walking away.

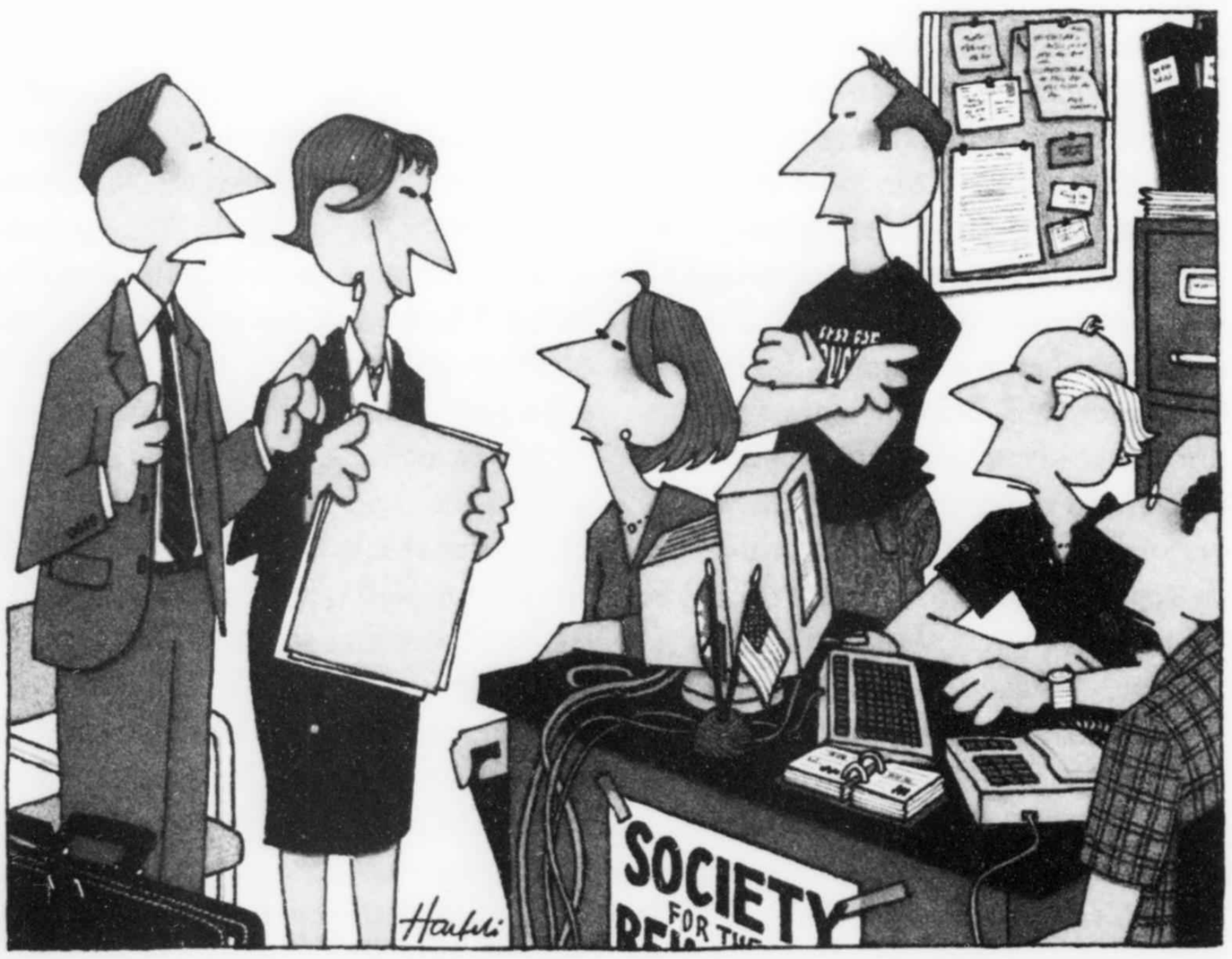
These episodes, though, helped the firm hone a strategy that became its core strength: to buy or develop buildings in markets where it is hard to build—where there are, as they say, significant barriers to entry. This has insulated it from precipitate downturns caused by oversupply. It has focussed on Washington, D.C., Boston, San Francisco, and New York. There is perhaps no place more difficult to build than Manhattan, owing to politics, constraints on space, competition, and high construction costs. In order to build what it wanted at 599 Lexington, for example, Boston Properties had to finance the reconfiguration of the subway station below.

Ten years ago, Zuckerman and Linde sold the majority of the company to the public, redesignating it a real-estate investment trust, or REIT, a structure that granted a significant tax advantage. With nine hundred million dollars from the I.P.O., Zuckerman and Linde began buying trophy properties (such as the Embarcadero Center, in San Francisco) and developing others (such as two towers in Times Square) in a period when many were wary. Their timing has been fortuitous: 5 Times Square, which they built for half a billion dollars five years ago, sold last year for $1.28 billion. Boston Properties' stock price has quadrupled since it went public. The company now owns forty-three million square feet of office space and has a market capitalization of $16.6 billion. Last year, Zuckerman sold seventy-five million dollars' worth of stock, but he still holds nearly a billion dollars' worth. The less involved Zuckerman appears to be in real estate, the richer he gets. He has always been adept at taking money off the table.

Wealthy men have long sought properties or projects to gild their legacies, impress their peers, and enhance their days and nights, not to mention sublimate their competitive urges, camouflage their unglamorous origins, and complicate their balance sheets. Some of these motives may have lapped at Zuckerman when he decided, in the mid-seventies, to buy a chain of local newspapers on Boston's North Shore and enter the media business. But his stated impetus—a passion for journalism and public policy—is by no means insincere. "Even when I was thirteen years old, I was mesmerized by that stuff," he told me. He likes to say that when he was a kid there were a hundred and fifty readers of the New York *Times* in Montreal, and that he was one of them. How could he have known that one day he'd end up in a *Times* crossword puzzle? (The clue: "Publisher Zuckerman's book about weapons negotiations?" The answer: "MORTON-SALT.") Being immersed in journalism and public policy, Zuckerman says, "is like a lifetime of chocolate sundaes."

There is a scattershot element to most media empires—motley fiefdoms held together by vague synergistic inference—and that is especially so of Zuckerman's little realm. He has bought what's available. If anything, the trail of purchases follows a regional logic: first, he took, or attempted to take, Boston (*The Atlantic Monthly*), then Washington (*U.S. News*), and, finally, New York (the *Daily News*). A sign that he may find this last foray incomplete lies in thwarted attempts, in recent years, to buy other publications here, such as *New York* magazine and the *Observer*. He was briefly an investor in a failed incarnation of the start-up magazine *Radar*.

The Atlantic, founded in 1857, was a jewel of American letters, a distinctly Brahmin enterprise, and when Zuckerman bought it, in 1980, he was belittled by his new professional peers as an arriviste and a dilettante, a presumptively presumptuous meddler. What could a real-estate mogul from Canada know about such things? This interpretation fanned the acrimony when Zuckerman, looking at *The Atlantic's* books, discovered liabilities that he felt the sellers, a group made up of the staff and Marion Campbell, a member of the family that had owned it since 1938, had kept from him. He withheld some of the purchase money. They sued him, he countersued, and seven years later a judge ordered him to pay the remainder, minus half a



"We think you could gain much wider support simply by re-languaging your bigotry."

million dollars. For the sellers, it was a bitter episode. Within a year, he'd got rid of the editor, Robert Manning, who later advised employees at the *News*, as they contemplated Zuckerman's impending purchase of their paper, "Get the money up front."

After a long courtship, Zuckerman hired, as editor, William Whitworth, a genteel Arkansan who had been a candidate to take over the editorship of *The New Yorker*, after William Shawn. Whitworth served as yet another mentor, as well as a charge, the relationship benefitting from mutual regard—a key ingredient of harmonious collaboration with Zuckerman.

"This was a guy who had taught at both Harvard and Yale," Whitworth told me. "He was a lawyer. He'd taught city planning. He'd built a business. And yet there was this condescending attitude. I've worked with a lot of smart people, and Mort is one of the smartest people I've ever been around. The press was foolish to portray him as though he were some sort of intruder who didn't have the education or background to participate. Frankly, he was better educated than most of them."

Zuckerman told me, "You're going to get people who think, as someone said to me once, that I bought *The Atlantic* so that I could get invited to Wasp dinner parties on the North Shore. And I said, 'Before I bought *The Atlantic* I was invited to those dinner parties and they were so goddam boring I wouldn't go again if I was invited.' People can ascribe whatever motives they want. I can't help that." But the criticism still grates. After I recalled for him the frequent deployment, in those days, of the term "arriviste," he began our next meeting by seizing on the word and then enumerating his life's accomplishments, starting with his positions as the chairman of the McGill Winter Carnival and the president of the school's Scarlet Key Society. "So you see, I earned every bit of it," he concluded, fifteen minutes later. "As far as I'm concerned, what I did is what America's all about."

As chance would have it, Zuckerman and Whitworth's first issue together had an excerpt from Philip Roth's latest novel, "Zuckerman Unbound," whose protagonist had nothing, of course, to do with Mort Zuckerman. Still, it provided him with an opportunity to have a hand in the editorial process, when he told Whitworth, "You can put anything you want on the cover, but you're not going to put on your first issue 'Zuckerman Unbound.'" In their first year, the magazine published "The Education of David Stockman," by William Greider, in which Stockman, Reagan's former budget director, revealed his doubts about Reaganomics. It caused a sensation (and inspired Zuckerman to name his dog Stockman). Abe Rosenthal, then the executive editor of the *Times*, told him that he might "really turn that magazine around." Zuckerman, confident that it was already turning, urged Rosenthal to read an earlier cover story, "The Kingdom of Auschwitz." Rosenthal sent him a letter of praise, dictated from a phone booth in Chicago. "I spoke at his eightieth-birthday party, and I told that story," Zuckerman recalled. "And I was always indebted to him." Another reason Zuckerman might feel indebted to Rosenthal was that in 1985, two days after the *Times* ran an unflattering story about him, the paper published an editor's note, apologizing for its tone: "The pejorative phrases and anonymous criticism created an unbalanced portrait. They should not have appeared." After Rosenthal was forced to retire from the *Times*, in 1999, Zuckerman hired him to be a columnist at the *News*.



Zuckerman's purchase of *The Atlantic* also included its historic headquarters, which he eventually sold, for ten million dollars. His next media foray, *U.S. News & World Report*, which he bought in 1984, also came with real estate, and it was his interest in both the magazine and the property that won him the deal. "Some bidders wanted the land, others the magazine," David Gergen, a former editor there, said. "Zuckerman was the only one who wanted, and understood, both." The passage of time has suggested that he understood one better than the other. He sold *U.S. News*' properties, in the West End, for more than a hundred million dollars, and moved its offices to Georgetown: a home run. As for the magazine, Zuckerman, who named himself editor-in-chief, had in mind an American version of *The Economist*, but it has not lived up to such lofty ambitions. For a time, in the early nineties, it closed the gap (in ad dollars, circulation, and cultural prominence) between it and *Newsweek* and *Time*. But then it languished. Amid a retrenchment severe even by the dismal standards of the category, the staff has been gutted, and in May the magazine basically shuttered its investigative division. Zuckerman reckons that changing circumstances call for a new approach. "We no longer can afford to do the kind of reporting we have in the past," he told me. "We have to come up with a business model that works." What remains is the college-and-hospital-ratings franchise and whatever falls under the rubric of "News You Can Use." Zuckerman says he has no plans to sell.

U.S. News did provide a calling card, or a press pass, to help Zuckerman gain access to the Washington scene and to the halls of power in various capitals. It can be hard to sort out under what auspices, exactly, his relationships with politicians and prominent journalists initially sprang into life—whether as a result of his wealth, his editorship, or his unaffiliated intelligence and charm. Certainly, his journalistic credential got him a spot on television, although in that realm it is ultimately the quality of performance that earns the airtime. And it provided him the opportunity to write a weekly column, which is a source of both pleasure and pride to him—he told me that, according to reader research, his column is the most popular page in the magazine—as well as a pretext for rigorous self-education. One must learn things if one is to know them.

Generally, Zuckerman reads up on his column subjects on the weekends, underlining as he goes. He writes early in the week, dictating a first draft of the column over the phone to a secretary in Mexico City. She transcribes his musings and sends them to him; he fiddles and dictates anew, until he has a workable draft. ("I wish that I could write with metaphors, but I just try to marshal the facts as well as I can," he said.) Then, typically, he sends it to Harry Evans,

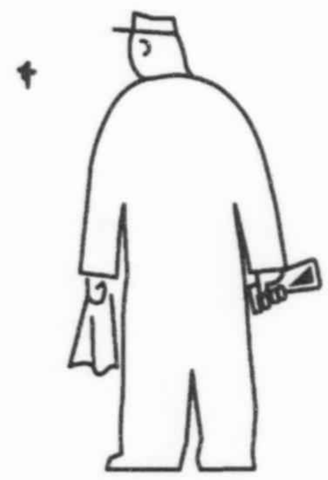
the eminent newspaperman and publisher. Characterizations of Evans's contribution vary, depending on which former editor of the magazine you talk to. Evans calls his round "a conventional dust job."

Evans, who battled Rupert Murdoch when he took over the *Times* of London, has been a friend, consigliere, and proxy of Zuckerman's for three decades. Zuckerman is a godfather to Evans's daughter with his wife, Tina Brown. Evans has had various roles at Zuckerman publications—as a kind of wise man with a vague portfolio. For a while, he served as their editorial director, in one of Zuckerman's many mercurial attempts to address his restiveness about them.

The *News*, which Zuckerman bought in 1993, is another imperfect vehicle for media prominence. In the mid-seventies, it was the largest-circulation newspaper in the country, the quintessence of the big-city tabloid. But it had come down in the world; Zuckerman bought it out of bankruptcy, after the drowning death of its putative owner, Robert Maxwell. It continues to be primarily a blue-collar paper, a first read for the outer boroughs. It is often said that it galls Zuckerman that his crowd does not usually read it, but he insists that he doesn't care. (Nonetheless, at times he intervenes when something in the paper offends them.) Zuckerman wanted it because it gave him a voice in local affairs, as well as, occasionally, in national ones. It can be useful, also, for a real-estate developer to have a paper; it gives him leverage.

Until last fall, the *News* was still ahead of the *Post* in circulation. In October, however, the *Post* finally passed it (although the *News* is still ahead in the five boroughs). The *Post* has several advantages. For one, its owner, Rupert Murdoch, doesn't mind losing money on it; estimated annual losses of twenty million dollars hardly register on the News Corp.'s balance sheet. Zuckerman says, "I didn't go into journalism to make money—a wise decision," but he insists, out of some combination of temperament and necessity, that his publications be run like businesses. The *Post* costs a quarter; the *News*, fifty cents. The *Post* also has mischief on its side; its commitment to journalistic rigor may be less absolute than is its allegiance to Murdoch's interests. Perhaps as a result, the *Post* is more fun. It sometimes veers into self-parody, which is what a lot of its readers—the Manhattan sophisticates whom its columnists affect to disdain—crave. They read it, after they're done with the *Times* or the *Wall Street Journal*, for the lurid headlines, the disreputable assemblage, the big-city opera buffa. Zuckerman is, depending on whom you ask, too scrupulous or too fainthearted to countenance such playful malice; he'd prefer to be taken seriously, and yet he lacks the confidence to commit his paper wholeheartedly to this course. The *Post* knows this, and it needles him constantly. (The papers, however, do tend to honor a tacit nonaggression pact regarding the owners' private lives.)

The *News* has never been and never will be the *Times* or the *Journal*. Still, Zuckerman is convinced that his paper's endorsements of the mayoral candidates Rudolph Giuliani and Michael Bloomberg—the only one from a major paper that Bloomberg got in his first election—tipped the votes in their favor. "For those two reasons alone, I'm happy that I bought the *Daily News*," he said. Zuckerman now hopes to back Bloomberg for President, if he decides to run; and Zuckerman thinks there's a good chance he will. "He's the most gifted public servant I've ever encountered," he said. Zuckerman is a believer in the noncorrupting power of immense wealth.



One symptom of perpetual dissatisfaction at Zuckerman's publications is the turnover in editors. *U.S. News* has seen eight editorships in twenty-three years; the *News*, seven in fifteen. Zuckerman is notorious for wanting things, if not both ways, then at least the other way. It is not so much that the editor fails to fulfill the mission as that Zuckerman decides that the mission needs changing. "Mort loves to be present at the creation," a former colleague said. "He's not as comfortable with managing over time." There are notable exceptions. Whitworth remained the editor of *The Atlantic* until Zuckerman sold it, in 1999.

Some of the vanquished editors, such as Roger Rosenblatt and Mike Ruby, both of *U.S. News*, retain a modicum of affection for Zuckerman. (A good Mort story, of the kind not told, or even remembered, by Mort, has Rosenblatt and Zuckerman on their way to Washington on Zuckerman's private jet, to announce Rosenblatt's resignation to the staff of *U.S. News*. The plane hits turbulence, and Rosenblatt and Zuckerman go flying out of their seats. Zuckerman turns to Rosenblatt and says, "Did you see what just happened to me?") Others, like James Fallows, who was fired as *U.S. News* editor in 1998, after two ambitious but teeth-grinding years, emerge so embittered by their experiences in failing to please Zuckerman that they will not revisit them at all. (Fallows declined to talk about him.) Zuckerman, a seductive hirer, is a clumsy firer. Last year, his longtime friend and softball buddy John Leo, a conservative columnist at *U.S. News*, was abruptly fired, and Zuckerman failed to call or meet with him to explain. "He was pissed," Zuckerman says now. Leo, too, declined to talk about Zuckerman, although apparently they are again cordial. Debby Krenek learned that she was to be replaced as the editor of the *News* from a gossip column in the *Post*. She resigned two days later. (Krenek wouldn't talk to me about Zuckerman, either. You can't ascribe all the *omertà* to discretion or churlishness. In some cases, his former employees have signed non-disclosure or non-disparagement agreements.)

Zuckerman loves to appear on television. Punditry pleases him. He will cancel a dinner date to do "Scarborough Country." He has been an occasional guest host on the Charlie Rose show, and a regular commentator on the cable networks. Twenty or so Fridays a year, he revs up his private jet and flies down to Washington, D.C., to tape "The McLaughlin Group," the long-standing if not quite venerable interruption exercise. He clearly enjoys talking and having others listen. (One former employee told me that he knew of dinner-party hosts in New York who had imposed "Mort moratoriums" because he talks so much.) He does television, he says, to raise the profile of *U.S. News*, under whose banner he appears; it is no doubt a coincidence that this profile has shrunk as he has done more TV, but for the cost

of the flights he takes to and from Washington for "McLaughlin" he could probably hire Angelina Jolie to do it for him.

"Real estate allowed me to enter journalism at the right level," Zuckerman says from time to time, meaning that he got into it as a proprietor, bypassing all the ink-stained stages. It's a clever enough thing to say, but it also suggests a certain contempt for the trade, and may be more charming to his peers than to his employees. His opinion of journalists is complex: he admires them and considers himself one of them, and yet professes disdain for their economic ignorance, their sanctimony, their limited world view. "They don't know how the world works," he told me. "As observers, they don't do the work of the world. They believe they know how the world *ought* to work." I once remarked to him that journalism was an inefficient undertaking, and he said, "Let the record show that this is the first time a journalist has ever admitted this." Journalists' neediness annoys him. (The feeling can be mutual. David Halberstam reportedly once called him "a sad little man . . . who likes to think of himself as a journalist but doesn't have any earthly idea what a journalist really is.") In a speech after the end of the first Gulf War, Zuckerman, addressing media complaints about military restrictions, said, "The press, in my judgment, is petulant, self-concerned, self-centered, and really downright silly."

Zuckerman, who became an American citizen in 1977, is a hawkish and fiscally conservative Democrat. He despises Jimmy Carter, and he supported George W. Bush in the last election, in large part because he knows, and thinks little of, John Kerry. He was an early and avid supporter of the invasion of Iraq—*News* staffers recall, with some distaste, a Bush endorsement two days before the 2004 election with the headline "RIGHT WAR, RIGHT TIME, RIGHT MAN"—but now deems the war, and the Administration, to be a disaster, though one worth seeing through; he supports the surge. Ultimately, he believes in character and power. He speaks often of a trait that he has observed in men he admires most, such as Dick Cheney, Robert Rubin, George Shultz, and Ariel Sharon. "They share some quality which incentivizes people to give them power,"



"And it should take no more than fifteen minutes for you to begin experiencing the first pleasant symptoms of arousal."

• • •

Zuckerman told me. "You don't get the feeling that they're in it to accumulate power or aggrandize themselves. It's a very rare commodity, especially in politics."

In 1974, Zuckerman, crack negotiator, met his match in Fred Drasner, a tough-talking Brooklyn "street kid," as Zuckerman calls him, who became, for the better part of thirty years, his unlikely wingman. Drasner was adept at marathon evening sessions. He liked to eat a big midafternoon meal, enter a negotiating room, and then, as the night wore on, wait for his adversaries to succumb to their hunger and his terms. Zuckerman first got to know him when Drasner, then a tax lawyer in Washington, D.C., was on the other side of a deal. "At about 2 A.M., I had whittled the issues down to one that was worth about two hundred thousand dollars," Drasner recalled recently, in an e-mail. "Mort was adamant about not conceding, stating that his position was 'set in stone.' At about 3 A.M., I told Mort we were done; they would not budge. I said I was going home, and if he had another deal in D.C. to give me a call. Mort said, 'Wait, do you hear that sound.' I said, 'What sound?' He said, 'The sound of stone cracking.' " Zuckerman (who recalls that it was not "stone" but "concrete") was impressed and hired Drasner to be a lawyer, and then a partner, in some other transactions. He brought him in to run the business side of *U.S. News*. Harry Evans recalls, "He was very astute, but with an imperfect appreciation for the eccentricities of journalism." (Drasner remarked, "I was not prepared for the eccentricities of Harry Evans.") Later, Drasner also ran the *News;* he used to call the newsroom "the cost center." Drasner, for all his brusqueness—one person I spoke with said that he had hurled a machete in a sales meeting, something that Drasner denies—had a native's feel for the kind of paper the *News* actually was. One evening, Drasner took Zuckerman to the Golden Gloves, an amateur boxing tournament sponsored by the *News* and attended by the kind of characters one is not likely to see dining in the Grill Room at the Four Seasons. Zuckerman looked around and said, "Who are these people?" Drasner replied, "These are our readers." Drasner's role earned him the attentions of the *Post*. One memorable

tale in Page Six, which Drasner denies, had him shooting sitting ducks in a pond near his house in Dutchess County, after coming up empty on a hunt. Thereafter, he was known to readers of the *Post* as the Duckslayer.

For many years, the relationship was as rewarding, in its way, as the one with Linde, Drasner's temperamental opposite. In 1995, Drasner introduced Zuckerman to the founders of *Fast Company*, a magazine focussed on the tech economy. Zuckerman invested about ten million dollars in the venture, making him its majority owner. The magazine was sold five years later, on the eve of the dot-com collapse, to Gruner & Jahr, for three hundred and sixty million dollars. Zuckerman made more than a quarter of a billion dollars on the sale. According to an executive closely involved in the deal, over those five years Zuckerman probably spent no more than five hours on this investment. (Zuckerman reckons it was more.)

Drasner also persuaded Zuckerman to invest with a young entrepreneur named Dan Snyder. They gave him a few million dollars to start a marketing company called Snyder Communications. "They made three hundred million dollars on their three million dollars," Snyder told me. "I delivered." In 1999, Snyder asked Zuckerman if he'd help finance a bid to buy the Washington Redskins, one of the most valuable franchises in the National Football League. "He said, 'You owe it to me,'" Zuckerman recalled. "And that was a fair point." Zuckerman threw in, and Snyder got the team. Not long afterward, Zuckerman sold his stake back to Snyder. "Mort's not really a sports guy," Snyder said. Zuckerman was amazed that he'd get calls from such prominent Washingtonians as Anthony Lake, the national-security adviser, who would assail him with strategic suggestions about how to improve the team. Zuckerman knew that it was time to sell when he walked (reluctantly) into the locker room and saw Snyder and Drasner, on bended knees, praying with the team after a game.

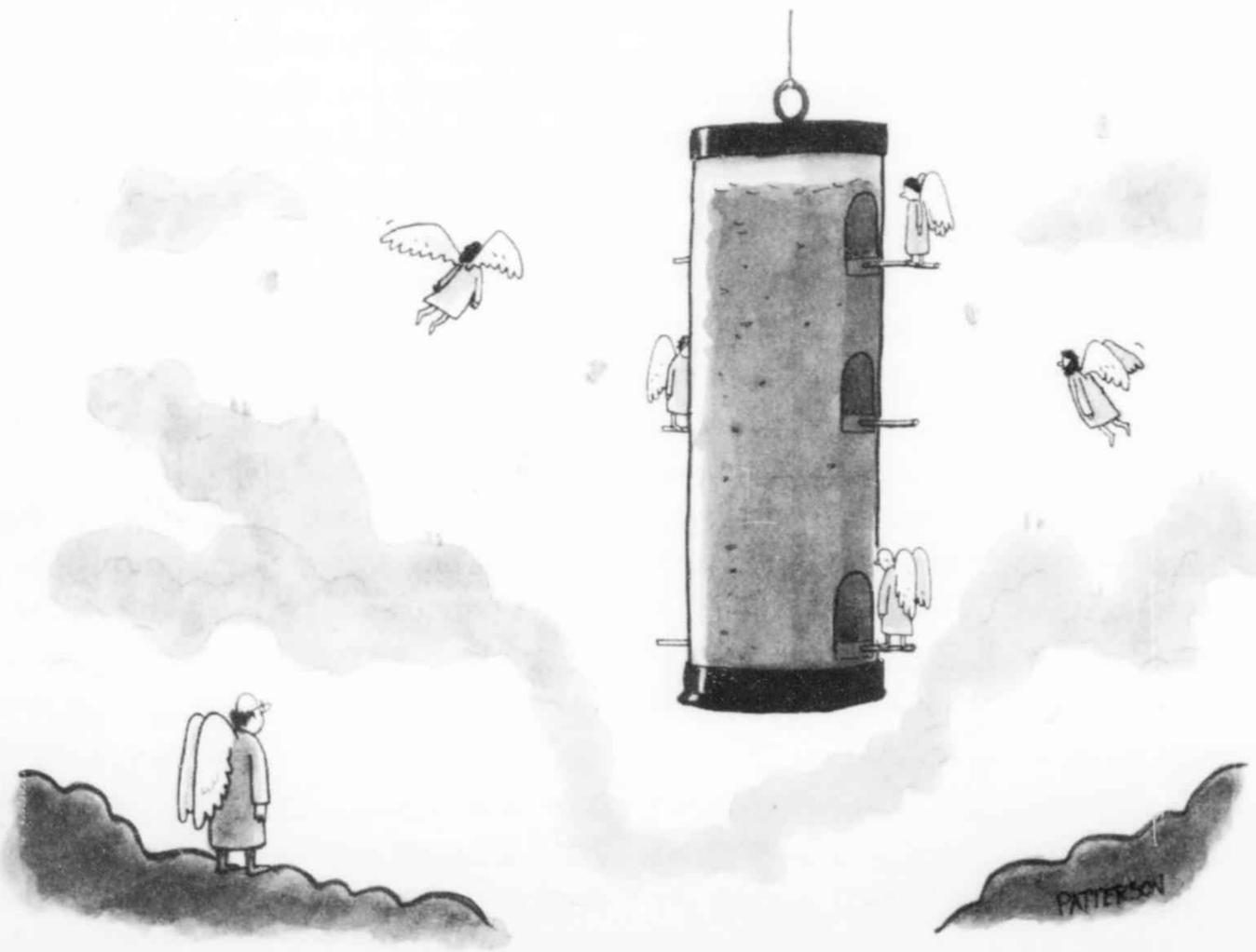
By 2000, the relationship between Drasner and Zuckerman had frayed. The performances of Drasner's businesses had started to lag. To Zuckerman's annoyance, Drasner seemed more interested in the Redskins. And, whether or not Drasner disdained Zuckerman's crowd—as a colleague of theirs recalled, "Mort's having lunch with Barbara Walters and Henry Kissinger; Fred's having lunch with Quad/Graphics"—he may have begrudged his relatively small equity share. By many accounts, they came to resent each other bitterly, and by 2003 they had disentangled their myriad investments. Drasner says now that he just decided, at the age of sixty-one, to do something new. He sold his house, bought a giant sailboat, remarried, and spent the next several years sailing around the world. Zuckerman went to the wedding, which was on the boat, in Venice. "Until I got on this boat, I didn't know we had done so well," Zuckerman said to Drasner. Generally, Drasner's transformation seems to have bewildered him: "I mean, what is a guy from Brooklyn doing fishing for black marlin off the coast of New Zealand or whatever the hell it was? Well, he did it. Good for him."

One afternoon this spring, Zuckerman flew down to Washington. He stopped in at the studio of the Tucker Carlson show, and taped a segment denouncing Don Imus for insulting the Rutgers women's basketball team, then headed to his car, where Carlson's producer called him on his cell phone to tell him that Imus had just been fired. Zuckerman, the compliant billionaire, returned to Carlson's studio, recast his remarks, and then hurried out to the Foxhall neighborhood, to the home of Beth Dozoretz, a prominent Democratic fund-raiser, and her husband, Ronald, a health-care magnate, who were hosting a reception for a group known as the Zuckerman Fellows.

Zuckerman has put up ten million dollars to underwrite, for each of the next five years, the interdisciplinary postgraduate Harvard education of twenty-five exceptional students—M.B.A. candidates studying government at the Kennedy School, aspiring doctors studying law—the goal being the cultivation of leaders. Zuckerman was paying each student's tuition, plus a stipend to each of thirty thousand dollars a year. This was their chance to meet their benefactor.

On arriving, Zuckerman, in blue-tinted rectangular sunglasses, lingered in the Dozoretzes' driveway long enough to shovel down a small plate of cheese and grapes and trade a few gentle wisecracks. He was accompanied by his new editor at *U.S. News*, Brian Kelly, whose predecessor, Brian Duffy, had left a few weeks earlier, to write a book, and perhaps to escape the grim task of further winnowing the magazine's staff. Then Zuckerman rushed inside, to address the students, who were seated in rows in a parlor off the kitchen.

Zuckerman sat next to David Gergen, another ex-editor, who oversees the Zuckerman Fellowship program. Gergen, in the role of a Beltway James Lipton, began to interview him. In a near-whisper, Zuckerman told a compact version of his life story and summed it up



with the remark that he hadn't worked a day in his life. This was an earnest bunch, bred to impress, and they presented him with questions about public service, the state of the nation, and the public-school system in Atlanta. He was asked if he had any regrets, and he said that if he could live his life over he would have five children. (In a book due out this fall, comprising essays on regret by prominent personages, Zuckerman writes that his greatest one is not having taken music lessons.) A woman stood up and said that she had been a lawyer at the *Post*. "My boss there had two kids after seventy," she said, referring to Rupert Murdoch.

"He's not my role model, but I take your point," Zuckerman said.

A young woman asked him a question about race, and he replied with an anecdote about the time, in 1963, that he joined Martin Luther King, Jr.,'s March on Washington and wound up sitting next to Harry Belafonte on a chartered bus. Someone had hung a suit jacket on a hanger, and as the bus made its way through Washington the hanger slid back and forth. "And I'll never forget it," Zuckerman told the students. "Belafonte turned to face the jacket and in that booming voice called out to it, as if it were a man, 'I told you to sit in the back of the bus!' " The students seemed amused but perplexed.

In romance, Zuckerman has tended to favor accomplished and independent women. He has dated, among others, Arianna Huffington, Nora Ephron, Gloria Steinem, Diane von Furstenberg, Blair Brown, and Marisa Berenson. He cultivates intimacy; he likes to enlist women in the task of helping him make decisions or solve problems, or to favor them with sotto-voce monologues critiquing other people in the room—commentary as camouflage for the come-on. Friends know him to be a covetous but fickle suitor, prone to what Stephen Sondheim, in "Follies," called the "God-Why-Don't-You-Love-Me-Oh-You-Do-I'll-See-You-Later Blues." ("That's preposterous," Zuckerman said. "I long ago became uninterested in unavailable women.")

In a 1992 memoir, "Revolution from Within," Steinem describes a rich boyfriend—whom readers and reviewers at the time took to be Zuckerman—who served as a kind of solace during a period of exhaustion and gloom. "Remember the scene in 'Bus Stop' when Marilyn Monroe, a desperate singer in a poor café, wraps herself in the warm, rescuing sheepskin jacket of her cowboy lover?" Steinem writes. "Well, that was the way I felt." She also found this boyfriend uncommonly self-absorbed. "Unlike other men in my life, who were as interested in my work as I was in theirs . . . this man answered questions about his own life and childhood, but didn't know how to ask them of someone else," she writes. (As a former colleague of Zuckerman's observed, "He was a genius, but there are holes in his brain. For example, the perception of what others are thinking.") Still, Steinem found him magnetic: his energy, his passion for his work, his control over their social life. "All I had to do was show up, look appropriate, listen, relax at dinners, dance, laugh at his wonderfully told jokes. . . . I found this very restful." (Steinem wrote me in an e-mail that the character wasn't "totally" based on Zuckerman: "The purpose of the two stories in that chapter was not reporting; otherwise I would have used names. Few readers outside Manhattan ever cared anyway—younger readers now don't care at all—so they've become the parables I intended in which readers see parts of themselves." Zuckerman said that he was not aware of the portrayal.) Many feminists were surprised by the relationship; Zuckerman, after all, once served as a judge for the Miss America pageant. Steinem likes to tell a story of dining with Zuckerman and a prominent Soviet academic. Zuckerman, after a dissertation on U.S. policy toward the Soviet Union, asked the academic if he had any questions. "Yes," the Russian said. "What are Mort Zuckerman and Gloria Steinem doing together?"

In "First, You Cry," the newscaster Betty Rollin, another former girlfriend, tells of her bout with breast cancer, in the mid-seventies. "David, a banker from Philadelphia," she writes, persuades Rollin to leave her husband, after she has a mastectomy, and live with him. But, soon afterward, David announces that he may not love her anymore. Still, he wants to have a child with her; she demurs, because the cancer makes pregnancy potentially perilous. He presses, she resists, and the relationship sputters out. According to people who know them both, Zuckerman is David. (Rollin declined to talk about Zuckerman, citing legal considerations. Zuckerman denied that he was the David portrayed in the book; however, he said that he was involved in vetting the movie made from it.)

Huffington dated Zuckerman for a couple of years, soon after she arrived in New York from London, in the early eighties, and, like many of his ex-girlfriends, has remained friends with him. (He was an usher at her wedding to Michael Huffington, and her date in May at the Time 100 dinner.) This was a period in which Zuckerman was making his way into journalistic circles in the Hamptons—playing the weekly media softball game in Sag Harbor, where he became a regular presence on the mound. Huffington was writing a book about the Greek gods, which Zuckerman helped her to revise. She likened him to Hermes. "Hermes was the god who embodied certain childlike qualities, which Mort has," she told me. "He has this childlike capacity for intimacy. It's his most endearing quality. He has it with women, as well as with his men friends. He talks a lot about his own quandaries. He's willing to be vulnerable."

In 1996, Zuckerman met Marla Prather, a curator at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. He spent a summer courting her, and within months had married her. Zuckerman and Prather divorced in 2003. Prather is now remarried; Zuckerman is still single.

Zuckerman got to know Natan Sharansky, the former Soviet dissident, when *U.S. News* bought the serial rights to his memoirs, in the mid-eighties. At their first meeting, Zuckerman marvelled at the nine years that Sharansky had spent in a Soviet prison, and wondered what it had been like for him to reunite with his wife. "I highly recommend marriage," Sharansky said, dryly. A friendship emerged. When Sharansky, who had immigrated to Israel, wanted to open a center for Russian immigrants in Jerusalem, Zucker-

man paid for the building and had it named Zuckerman House, after his grandfather. Sharansky told me that at the opening "he brought some famous people, his friends. When he was putting the mezuzah on the doors, he said, 'My parents were from Ukraine. Some of my relatives from there disappeared in the Holocaust. This is the first time I feel like I've done something for their memory.' The famous actress—what is her name, Barbara Walters—said to me, 'This is the first time I've ever seen him so sentimental.'"

In 1997, Sharansky was a minister in the Cabinet of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, whose relationship with President Clinton had become rocky. Sharansky, together with Sandy Berger, who was then Clinton's national-security adviser, and Dennis Ross, the Special Middle East Coördinator, enlisted Zuckerman to act as a kind of special envoy between the White House and Netanyahu, with whom he was friendly, to help them resuscitate efforts to make peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians. The eventual resumption of talks between Netanyahu and Yasir Arafat culminated, two years later, in the Camp David summit (the advances of which came to naught).

Zuckerman will not speak on the record about the part he played in these affairs, but he clearly relishes it, in the way that some might prize an old summer romance. Among other things, it enhanced his standing in Israel. When Dan Gillerman, the Israeli Ambassador to the United Nations, took his post, four years ago, at his presentation to Kofi Annan he invited Zuckerman to be his one outside guest. "It was not because he was my best friend," Gillerman said. "I thought he represented the complete tapestry—media mogul, Jewish leader, a man of great wit and influence. He was one of my closest allies, whose presence signalled 'I'm not alone here. I represent Israel, but also the Jewish people.'" When Ehud Olmert had his first meeting with President Bush, last year, they spent six hours together, well beyond the scheduled time. Gillerman said that this was "to a very great extent the result of Mort briefing him, coaching him, and telling him what would be accepted and welcomed." Gillerman considers Zuckerman to be a "roving ambassador to and from the United States and Israel," and imagines that Zuckerman could make an effective Ambassador to the U.N.

Zuckerman's interest in Jewish issues has increased over the years. In 2001, he succeeded Ronald Lauder as the chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. "This position is lovingly called 'the King of the Jews,'" Abraham Foxman, the head of the Anti-Defamation League, told me. "We don't have a Pope. There are people who wanted for a lifetime to become king." Zuckerman's candidacy for the post was initially opposed by some of the more liberal elements of the conference. One issue was his role as a columnist, and the possibility that his printed views might not represent the consensus of the conference. Still, Malcolm Hoenlein, the conference's executive vice-chairman, told me, "Without exception, Mort won everybody over."

Zuckerman also played a back-channel role for the Clinton Administration, in Russia. In 1998, through mutual friends—"I have phenomenal contacts in Russia"—Yevgeny Primakov, the new Prime Minister, asked Zuckerman if he would act as an adviser on economic matters. The Clinton Administration had lost trust in Primakov after oligarchs had absconded with American and International Monetary Fund money.



Zuckerman approached Berger, the national-security adviser, and gleaned from him some of the conditions that the Russians would have to meet in order to get more financial support. Carlos Pascual, who at the time worked on Russian policy for the National Security Council, told me, "He developed a pen-pal relationship with Primakov. He would comment on Russian policy proposals to Primakov and reflect what he thought U.S. government responses to policy positions might be. We would consult back and forth." Pascual added, "It was definitely unusual. Occasionally, private citizens get named as envoys. But Mort wasn't an envoy."

The relationship ended in March of 1999. Primakov was on his way to the United States for a formal meeting with Vice-President Al Gore, and, at Primakov's behest, Zuckerman had set up a meeting for him in New York with American business leaders and academics, including Paul O'Neill, then the C.E.O. of Alcoa (and later Bush's Treasury Secretary); Henry Kravis, the financier; and Paul Volcker, the former chairman of the Federal Reserve. In Zuckerman's telling, this group was about to assemble in his apartment when the news came that Primakov's plane had turned around over the Atlantic. NATO, against Russia's wishes, had just commenced bombing Belgrade.

"Those few moments where I was involved in playing a role on behalf of the American government were as thrilling to me as anything I've ever done in life," Zuckerman told me. "In fact, more so. I mean, it was in a very minor way, believe me. But you sort of have a sense of brushing up against history, in some way."

Over Memorial Day weekend, Zuckerman had thirty or so people for lunch at his house on the beach in East Hampton. Four tables were set out on a wood-plank patio at the house's western end, overlooking a small swimming pool bordered with honeysuckle. As his guests trickled out onto the deck, he joked, gesturing toward a lavish catered buffet, that he had spent hours in the kitchen. Zuckerman was dressed like a dude-ranch novice: red-and-white checked gingham shirt, plain boxy workman's dungarees, a cowboy belt, brown driving shoes.

The house, well fenestrated and cedar-shingled, many rooms wide but one room deep (so that despite its size it feels beachy), sits atop a ridge of rustically landscaped duneland overlooking the ocean. When Zuckerman bought the place, twenty-five years ago, from the investor Peter Peterson, he reinforced these dunes by placing dozens of giant wire baskets filled with rocks sixteen feet belowground and nineteen feet above, and then covering it all with sand and native plantings. The dunes, in other words, are mostly stone. The revetment has held up against all but one hurricane (Gloria), which sheared away

the plantings and revealed the defense beneath.

Zuckerman is not a voluble host. His guests wander in, load up, recline, and then leave, without much fanfare. Their comings and goings can seem ungracious, a choreography of familiarity and entitlement—Gatsby's guests, decades on. On this occasion, they included the entertainment attorney Alan Grubman and his wife; the actors Bob Balaban, Ron Silver, and Lori Singer; Judith Miller and Jason Epstein; and the lobbyist Liz Robbins. Robbins sat next to Zuckerman at lunch, and they talked about congressmen. The scene was casual, a far cry from the dinners he hosts in his apartment on Fifth Avenue, which are usually receptions for some dignitary or another and include remarks by Zuckerman and questions for the featured guest. After two hours, the East Hampton house had emptied out.

The next day, I returned to play tennis with Zuckerman. He answered the door himself, in his dude-ranch dungarees, and then went upstairs to get changed. In the foyer were some Frank Stella sculptures, two books—"A History of the English-Speaking Peoples Since 1900" and "The Dangerous Book for Boys"—and an old tin sign reading "DÉFENSE D'ENTRER, DANGER DE MORT." In the living room, I found a photograph of Zuckerman pitching in an East Hampton softball game, in 1988, with Bill Clinton, in tight shorts, standing behind him on the mound, playing ump. Copies of *U.S. News* were fanned out on a coffee table.

Moments later, Zuckerman came down, in Lacoste tennis whites, and we stepped out onto his rear lawn, which sloped down through thicket and pitch pine to a swimming pool and a Har-Tru court. Zuckerman looked trim. He was a week short of seventy, and feeling better than he had in months, thanks in large part to recent back surgery. He is an avid exerciser, determined to stay nimble and fit. He says that before his back problems he typically jogged four miles every day, then eight miles each day on weekends. He also does a hundred pushups each morning. A dozen years ago, his friend Joan Ganz Cooney, Peterson's wife and the co-creator of the Children's Television Workshop, gave him a birthday gift of yoga lessons; after a while, he ditched the instructor, because he grew tired of listening to yogic philosophies, but he has kept up the yoga. And until recently (the back, again) he was an intense and capable squash player, known to thrash subordinates. He used to draw on the ball the faces of people who had annoyed him. "It's a great urban game," he says.

As for tennis, Zuckerman grew up playing on the public courts in Montreal and reckons that he reached his peak five or ten years ago. His game is slightly frantic, relentless, a little slappy—you can see the squash in it. He gets to a lot of balls and has an effective defensive slice. He doesn't dawdle, or curse, or apologize for errant shots. Because of his back, he didn't want to serve, so we didn't play a match.

At one point, Zuckerman and I were at the net, picking up balls, and I mentioned something about John McEnroe. He said, "I'm going to tell you a story about John McEnroe." Once, years ago, when Zuckerman was guest-hosting the Charlie Rose show, he called McEnroe to ask him on the program in order to discuss the difference between being a player and being a commentator. "Go fuck yourself, you miserable motherfucker," McEnroe told him. Zuckerman was confused. He thought McEnroe might be kidding. But he wasn't. "Fuck you, Mort. Forget it." Apparently, some weeks earlier, the *News* had published a gossip item about McEnroe. "You could've had it killed and you didn't," McEnroe said. McEnroe continued to berate him, and Zuckerman hung up. They haven't spoken since. (I remembered another Rosenblatt recollection. Zuckerman once told him, "The trouble with you, Roger, is that when you say 'Fuck you' you mean it.")

As we hit, private jets passed overhead. A multicolored pileup of giant inflatable toys drifted and bumped in the lee corner of the pool, and the air smelled of the sea. A pitcher of iced tea, on a silver tray, sat on a wrought-iron table in the grass. When we were done, we sat down there. Zuckerman peeled back the plastic covering the top of the jug and poured out two glasses. Then he began to tell a story about running in the Boston Marathon in 1974, which led him to a story about Michael Dukakis: "This is off the record. You'll understand why in a moment." When it came time for me to leave, he didn't ask where I was going or how I would get there. Then he returned to the court and began sweeping it, himself. ♦



"Hey, Frankie, remember me? Summer of '88—we were twelve and you buried me up to my neck and left me to die."



COLUMBIA PICTURES/PHOTOFEST; OPPOSITE: SUZANNE HANOVER/UNIVERSAL PICTURES/EVERETT COLLECTION

How did we get from Frank Capra's "It Happened One Night" (1934), above, to Judd Apatow's "Knocked Up"?



A CRITIC AT LARGE

A FINE ROMANCE

The new comedy of the sexes.

BY DAVID DENBY

His beard is haphazard and unintentional, and he dresses in sweats, or in shorts and a T-shirt, or with his shirt hanging out like the tongue of a Labrador retriever. He's about thirty, though he may be younger, and he spends a lot of time with friends who are like him, only more so—sweet-natured young men of foul mouth, odd hair, and wanker-mag reading habits. When he's with them, punched beer cans and bongs of various sizes lie around like spent shells; alone, and walrus-heavy on his couch, he watches football, basketball, or baseball on television, or spends time memorializing his youth—archiving old movies, games, and jokes. Like his ancestors in the sixties, he's anti-corporate, but he's not bohemian (his culture is pop). He's more like a sullen back-of-the-classroom guy, who breaks into brilliant tirades only when he feels like it. He may run a used-record store, or conduct sightseeing tours with a nonstop line of patter, or feed animals who then high-five him with their flippers, or teach in a school where he can be friends with all the kids, or design an Internet site that no one needs. Whatever he does, he hardly breaks a sweat, and sometimes he does nothing at all.

He may not have a girlfriend, but he certainly likes girls—he's even, in some cases, a hetero blade, scoring with tourists or love-hungry single mothers. But if he does have a girlfriend she works hard. Usually, she's the same age as he is but seems older, as if the disparity between boys and girls in ninth grade had been recapitulated fifteen years later. She dresses in Donna Karan or Ralph Lauren or the like; she's a corporate executive, or a lawyer, or works in TV, public relations, or an art gallery. She's good-tempered, honest, great-looking, and serious. She wants to "get to the next stage of life"—settle down, marry, maybe have children. Apart from getting on with it, however, she doesn't have an idea in her head, and she's not the one who makes the jokes.

When she breaks up with him, he talks his situation over with his hopeless pals, who give him bits of misogynist advice. Suddenly, it's the end of youth for him. It's a crisis for her, too, and they can get back together only if both undertake some drastic alteration: he must act responsibly (get a job, take care of a kid), and she has to do something crazy (run across a baseball field during a game, tell a joke). He has to shape up, and she has to loosen up.

There they are, the young man and young woman of the dominant romantic-comedy trend of the past several years—the slovenly hipster and the female straight arrow. The movies form a genre of sorts: the slacker-striver romance. Stephen Frears's "High Fidelity" (2000), which transferred Nick



"Did he say when the next travelling exhibition will be?"

• •

Hornby's novel from London to Chicago, may not have been the first, but it set the tone and established the self-dramatizing underachiever as hero. Hornby's guy-centered material also inspired "About a Boy" and "Fever Pitch." Others in this group include "Old School," "Big Daddy," "50 First Dates," "Shallow Hal," "School of Rock," "Failure to Launch," "You, Me and Dupree," "Wedding Crashers," "The Break-Up," and—this summer's hit—"Knocked Up." In these movies, the men are played by Vince Vaughn, Owen Wilson, Adam Sandler, John Cusack, Jimmy Fallon, Matthew McConaughey, Jack Black, Hugh Grant, and Seth Rogen; the women by Drew Barrymore, Jennifer Aniston, Kate Hudson, Sarah Jessica Parker, and Katherine Heigl. For almost a decade, Hollywood has pulled jokes and romance out of the struggle between male infantilism and female ambition.

"Knocked Up," written and directed by Judd Apatow, is the culminating version of this story, and it feels like one of the key movies of the era—a raw, discordant equivalent of "The Graduate" forty years ago. I've seen it with audiences in their twenties and thirties, and the excitement in the theatres is palpable—the audience is with the movie all the way, and, afterward, many of the young men (though not always the young women) say that it's not only funny but true. They feel that way, I think, because the picture is unruly and surprising; it's filled with the messes and rages of life in 2007. The woman, Alison (Katherine Heigl), an ambitious TV interviewer in Los Angeles, gets pregnant after a sozzled one-night stand with Ben (Seth Rogen), a nowhere guy she meets at a disco. Cells divide, sickness arrives in the morning—the movie's time scheme is plotted against a series of pulsing sonograms. Yet these two, to put it mildly, find themselves in an awkward situation. They don't much like each other; they don't seem to match up. Heigl has golden skin, blond hair, a great laugh. She's so attractive a person that, at the beginning of the movie, you wince every time Rogen touches her. Chubby, with curling hair and an orotund voice, he has the round face and sottish grin of a Jewish Bacchus, though grape appeals to him less than weed. At first, he makes one crass remark after another; he seems like a professional comic who will do anything to get a laugh. It's not at all clear that these two should stay together.

Authentic as Ben and Alison seem to younger audiences, they are, like all the slacker-striver couples, strangers to anyone with a long memory of romantic comedy. Buster Keaton certainly played idle young swells in some of his silent movies, but, first humiliated and then challenged, he would exert himself to heroic effort to win the girl. In the end, he proved himself a lover. In the nineteen-thirties, the young, lean James Stewart projected a vulnerability that was immensely appealing. So did Jack Lemmon, in his frenetic way, in the fifties. In succeeding decades, Elliott Gould, George Segal, Alan Alda, and other actors played soulful types. Yet all these men *wanted* something. It's hard to think of earlier heroes who were absolutely free of the desire to make an impression on the world and still got the girl. And the women in the old romantic comedies were daffy or tough or high-spirited or even spiritual in some way, but they were never blank. What's going on in this new genre? "Knocked Up," a raucously funny and explicit movie, has some dark corners, some fear and anxiety festering under the jokes. Apatow takes the slacker-striver romance to a place no one thought it would go. He also makes it clear, if we hadn't noticed before, how drastically the entire genre breaks with the classic patterns of romantic comedy. Those ancient tropes fulfill certain expectations and, at their best, provide incomparable pleasure. But "Knocked Up" is heading off into a brave and uncertain new direction.

Shakespeare knew the Roman farces—by Plautus, Terence, and others—in which a scrambling boy chases after a girl and lands her. He varied the pattern. His comedies were rarely a simple chase, and the best American romantic comedies have drawn on the forms that he devised—not so much, perhaps, in the coarse-grained "Taming of the Shrew" but in "Much Ado About Nothing," with its pair of battling lovers, Beatrice and Benedick. Why is the contact between those two so barbed? Because they are meant for each other, and are too proud and frightened to admit it. We can see the attraction, even if they can't. They have a closely meshed rhythm of speech, a quickness to rise and retort, that no one else shares. Benedick, announcing the end of the warfare, puts the issue squarely: "Shall quips and sentences and these paper bullets of the brain awe a man from the

career of his humor? No, the world must be peopled."

Romantic comedy is entertainment in the service of the biological imperative. *The world must be peopled.* Even if the lovers are past child-rearing age or, as in recent years, don't want children, the biological imperative survives, as any evolutionary psychologist will tell you, in the flourishes of courtship behavior. Romantic comedy civilizes desire, transforms lust into play and ritual—the celebration of union in marriage. The lovers are fated by temperament and physical attraction to join together, or stay together, and the audience longs for that ending with an urgency that is as much moral as sentimental. For its amusement, however, the audience doesn't want the resolution to come too quickly. The lovers misunderstand each other; they get pixie dust thrown in their faces. Befuddled, the woman thinks she's in love with a gas-station attendant, who turns out to be a millionaire; an unsuitable suitor becomes a proper suitor; and so on. It's always the right guy in the end. Romantic drama may revel in suffering, even in anguish and death, but romantic comedy merely nods at the destructive energies of passion. The confused lovers torment each other and, for a while, us. Then they stop.

The best directors of romantic comedy in the nineteen-thirties and forties—Frank Capra, Gregory La Cava, Leo McCarey, Howard Hawks, Mitchell Leisen, and Preston Sturges—knew that the story would be not only funnier but much more romantic if the fight was waged between equals. The man and woman may not enjoy parity of social standing or money, but they are equals in spirit, will, and body. As everyone agrees, this kind of romantic comedy—and particularly the variant called "screwball comedy"—lifted off in February, 1934, with Frank Capra's charming "It Happened One Night," in which a hard-drinking reporter out of a job (Clark Gable) and an heiress who has jumped off her father's yacht (Claudette Colbert) meet on the road somewhere between Florida and New York. Tough and self-sufficient, Gable contemptuously looks after the spoiled rich girl. He's rude and overbearing, and she's miffed, but it helps their acquaintance a little that they are both supremely attractive—Gable quick-moving but large and, in his famous undressing scene, meaty, and Colbert tiny, with a slightly pointed chin, round eyes, and round breasts beneath the fitted striped jacket she buys on the road. When she develops pride, they become equals.

The cinema added something invaluable to the romantic comedy: the camera's ability to place lovers in an enchanted, expanding envelope of setting and atmosphere. It moves with them at will, enlarging their command of streets, fields, sitting rooms, and night clubs; rapid cutting then doubles the speed of their quarrels. Out on the road, in the middle of the Depression, Gable and Colbert join the poor, the hungry, the shysters and the hustlers; they spend a night among haystacks, get fleeced, practice their hitchhiking skills. In screwball comedy, the characters have to dive below their social roles for their true selves to come out: they get drunk and wind up in the slammer; they turn a couch in an upstairs room of a mansion into a trampoline; they run around the woods at a country estate—the American plutocrats' version of Shakespeare's magical forest in "A Midsummer Night's Dream," where young people, first confused and then enlightened, discover whom they should marry.

In many of the screwball classics, including "Twentieth Century," "My Man Godfrey," "The Awful Truth," "Easy Living," "Midnight," "Bringing Up Baby," "Holiday," "The Philadelphia Story," "The Lady Eve"—all made between 1934 and 1941—the characters dress for dinner and make cocktails, and the atmosphere is gilded and swank. The enormous New York apartments, the country houses with porticoes, the white-on-white night clubs in which swells listen to a warbling singer—all this establishes a façade of propriety and manners, a place to misbehave. Except for the Fred



LAKE WATER

It is a summer afternoon in October.
I am sitting on a wooden bench, looking out
At the lake through a tall screen of evergreens,
Or rather, looking out across the plane of the lake,
Seeing the light shaking upon the water
As if it were a shimmering of heat.
Yesterday, when I sat here, it was the same,
The same displaced out-of-season effect.
Seen twice it seemed a truth was being told.
Some of the trees I can see across the lake
Have begun to change, but it is as if the air
Had entirely given itself over to summer,
With the intention of denying its own proper nature.

There is a breeze perfectly steady and persistent
Blowing in toward shore from the other side
Or from the world beyond the other side.
The mild sound of the little tapping waves
The breeze has caused—there's something infantile
About it, a baby at the breast. The light
Is moving and not moving upon the water.

The breeze picks up slightly but still steadily,
The increase in the breeze becomes the mild
Dominant event, compelling with sweet oblivious
Authority alterations in light and shadow,
Alterations in the light of the sun on the water,
Which becomes at once denser and more quietly
Excited, like a concentration of emotions
That had been dispersed and scattered and now were not.
Then there's the mitigation of the shadow of a cloud,
And the light subsides a little, into itself.

Astaire–Ginger Rogers dance musicals, in which evening clothes are integral to the lyric transformation of life into movement, the lovers are no more than playing at formality. The characters need to be wealthy in order to exercise their will openly and make their choices. The screwball comedies are less about possessions than about a certain style of freedom in love, a way of vaulting above the dullness and pettymindedness of the sticks. (In these films, no matter how rich you may be, you are out of the question if you hail from Oklahoma or Albany—you are Ralph Bellamy.)

Many of the heroines were heiresses, who, in those days, were prized for their burbling eccentricities—Carole Lombard's howl, Irene Dunne's giggle, Katharine Hepburn's Bryn Mawr drawl. Pampered and dizzy, they favored spontaneity over security when it came to choosing a man. As for the men, they came in two varieties. Some owned a factory or a mine, or were in finance—worldly fellows who knew how to float a debenture or hand a woman into a taxi—and others were gently cartooned intellectuals. Innocents preoccupied with some intricate corner of knowledge, they gathered old bones (Cary Grant, in "Bringing Up Baby"), or new words (Gary Cooper, in "Ball of Fire"), or went up the Amazon and discovered unspeakable snakes (Henry Fonda, in "The Lady Eve"). The man is the love object here—passive, dreamy, and gentle, a kind of Sleeping Beauty in spectacles—and the woman is the relentless pursuer. Katharine Hepburn in "Baby" nearly drives Cary Grant crazy with her intrusions into his work, her way of scattering his life about like pieces of lawn furniture. She's attracted by his good looks but also by what's unaroused in him, and she will do anything to awaken him. Equality in these comedies takes a new shape. The man is serious about his work (and no one says he shouldn't be), but he's confused about women, and his confusion has neutered him. He thinks he wants a conventional marriage with a compliant wife, but what he really wants is to be overwhelmed by the female life force. In the screwball comedies, the woman doesn't ask her man to "grow up." She wants to pull him into some sort of ridiculous adventure. *She* has to grow up, and he has to get loose—the opposite of the current pattern.

The screwball comedies were not devoted to sex, exactly—you could hardly describe any of the characters as sensualists. The Production Code limited openness on such matters, and the filmmakers turned sex into a courtship game that was so deliriously convoluted precisely because couples could go to bed only when they were married. The screwball movies, at their peak, defined certain ideal qualities of insouciance, a fineness of romantic temper in which men and women could be aggressive but not coarse, angry but not rancorous, silly but not shamed, melancholy but not ravaged. It was the temper of American happiness.

Sometimes the couple in a romantic comedy are already married, or were formerly married, but husband and wife go at each other anyway, because they enjoy wrangling too much to stop. Who else is there to talk to? In a case like that, romance becomes less a dazed encounter in an enchanted garden than a duel with slingshots at close quarters—exciting but a little risky. The most volatile of these comedies was "His Girl Friday," Howard Hawks's 1940 version of the 1928 Ben Hecht–Charles MacArthur play "The Front Page." In the original, the star reporter Hildy Johnson is a man. In Hawks's version, Hildy (Rosalind

Although this is a lake it is as if
A tide were running mildly into shore.
The sound of the water so softly battering
Against the shore is decidedly sexual,
In its liquidity, its regularity,
Its persistence, its infantile obliviousness.
It is as if it had come back to being
A beginning, an origination of life.

The plane of the water is like a page on which
Phrases and even sentences are written,
But because of the breeze, and the turning of the year,
And the sense that this lake water, as it is being
Experienced on a particular day, comes from
Some source somewhere, beneath, within, itself,
Or from somewhere else, nearby, a spring, a brook,
Its pure origination somewhere else,
It is like an idea for a poem not yet written
And maybe never to be completed, because
The surface of the page is like lake water,
That takes back what is written on its surface,
And all my language about the lake and its
Emotions or its sweet obliviousness,
Or even its being like an origination,
Is all erased with the changing of the breeze
Or because of the heedless passing of a cloud.

When, moments after she died, I looked into
Her face, it was as untelling as something natural,
A lake, say, the surface of it unreadable,
Its sources of meaning unfindable anymore.
Her mouth was open as if she had something to say;

But maybe my saying so is a figure of speech.

—David Ferry

Russell) is a woman who has fled the barbarous city desk and plans to marry a timid businessman (Ralph Bellamy). Her former husband and editor, Walter Burns (Cary Grant), will do anything to get her back to the paper. He doesn't seem drawn to her as a woman, yet he woos her in his way, with scams, lies, and one important truth—that she's the only person good enough to cover the hottest story in town. She knows him as an indifferent and absent husband, yet she's attracted, once again, by the outrageous way this man fans his tail. And, despite her misgivings, she's caught, too, by the great time they have together toiling in the yellow journalism that they both love. Vince Vaughn, in some of his recent roles, has displayed a dazzling motormouth velocity, but he has never worked with an actress who can keep up with him. Rosalind Russell keeps up with Grant. These two seize each other's words and throw them back so quickly that their dialogue seems almost syncopated. Balance between the sexes here becomes a kind of matched virtuosity more intense than sex.

If Russell and Grant were exactly alike in that movie, Spencer Tracy, slow-talking, even adamantine, with a thick trunk and massive head, and Katharine Hepburn, slender, angular, and unnervingly speedy and direct, were opposites that attracted with mysterious force. In the classic comedy "Adam's Rib" (1949), their sixth movie together (they made nine), they were an established onscreen married couple, rising, drinking coffee, and getting dressed for work. How can you have romantic comedy in a setting of such domestic complacency? "Adam's Rib," which was written by a married couple, Garson Kanin and Ruth Gordon, and directed by George Cukor, takes these two through combat so fierce that it can be ended only with a new and very desperate courtship. They become opposing lawyers in a murder case. He prosecutes, and she defends, a woman (Judy Holliday) who put a couple of slugs in her husband when she caught him in the arms of his mistress. As the two lawyers compete in court, and Tracy gets upstaged by Hepburn, the traditional sparring at the center of romantic comedy intensifies, turns a little ugly, and then comes to an abrupt stop with a loud slap—Tracy smacking Hepburn's bottom in a proprietary way during a late-night rubdown session. The slap is nothing, yet it's everything. The husband has violated the prime rule of mating behavior by asserting a right over his wife physically. The drive for equality in movies can lead to bruising competitions, and in "Adam's Rib" the partnership of equals nearly dissolves. Suddenly anguished, the movie uneasily rights itself as husband and wife make concessions and find their way back to marriage again.

Achieving balance between a man and a woman in a romantic comedy can be elusive. Marilyn Monroe, her tactile flesh spilling everywhere, was either lusted after or mocked, but only Tony Curtis, appearing in Cary Grant drag in "Some Like It Hot," knew how to talk to her. Rock Hudson and Doris Day, in their films together, were exclusively preoccupied with, respectively, assaulting and defending Day's virtue, and they both seemed a little demented. Tom Hanks matched up nicely with Daryl Hannah and with Meg Ryan, as did Richard Gere and Hugh Grant with Julia Roberts, whose eyes and smile and restless, long-waisted body charged up several romantic comedies in the nineties.

In recent decades, however, Woody Allen and Diane Keaton have come closest to restoring the miraculous ease of the older movies. Short and narrow-jawed, with black-framed specs that give

him the aspect of a quizzical Eastern European police inspector, Allen turned his worried but demanding gaze on Keaton, the tall, willowy Californian. In their early films together, they seemed the most eccentric and singular of all movie couples; it was the presence of New York City, in "Annie Hall" (1977) and "Manhattan" (1979), that sealed their immortality as a team. Allen, narrating, presented himself as the embodied spirit of the place, sharp and appreciative, but also didactic, overexplicit, cranky, and frightened of lobsters off the leash and everything else in the natural world. The idea was that beauty and brains would match up, although, early in "Annie Hall," the balance isn't quite there—Keaton has to rise to his level. Initially, she's nervously apologetic—all floppy hats, tail-out shirts, and tremulous opinions—and she agrees to be tutored by Allen, who gives her books to read and takes her repeatedly to "The Sorrow and the Pity." For a while, they click as teacher and student. If Tracy and Hepburn were like a rock and a current mysteriously joined together, these two neurotics were like agitated hummingbirds meeting in midair.

Working with the cinematographer Gordon Willis, Woody Allen created the atmosphere of a marriage plot in conversations set in his beloved leafy East Side streets—his version of Shakespeare's magical forest. But "Annie Hall," surprisingly, shifts away from marriage. The quintessential New Yorker turns out to be a driven pain in the neck, so insistent and adolescent in his demands that no woman can put up with him for long. And the specific New York elements that Allen added to romantic comedy—the cult of psychoanalysis and the endless opinions about writers, musicians, and artists—also threaten the stability of the couple. Psychoanalysis yields "relationships" and "living together," not marriage, as the central ritual, and living together, especially in the time of the Pill and the easy real-estate market of the seventies, is always provisional. Opinions about art—the way the soul defines itself in time—are provisional, too. In "Annie Hall," Keaton outgrows Allen's curriculum for her and moves on, and in "Manhattan," perhaps the best American comedy about selfishness ever made, she returns to the married man she was having an affair with. Allen loses her both times; the biological imperative goes nowhere. "Annie Hall" and "Manhattan" now seem like fragile and melancholy love lyrics; they took romantic comedy to a level of rueful sophistication never seen before or since.





"Up gets you nowhere."

The louts in the slacker-striver comedies should probably lose the girl, too, but most of them don't. Yet what, exactly, are they getting, and why should the women want *them*? That is not a question that romantic comedy has posed before.

The slacker has certain charms. He doesn't want to compete in business, he refuses to cultivate macho attitudes, and, for some women, he may be attractive. He's still a boy—he's gentler than other men. Having a child with such a guy, however, is another matter, and plenty of women have complained about the way "Knocked Up" handles the issue of pregnancy. Alison has a good job, some growing public fame, and she hardly knows the unappealing father—there's even some muttering about "bad genes." Why have a baby with him? Well, a filmmaker's answer would have to be that if there's an abortion, or if Alison has the child on her own, there's no movie—or, at least, nothing like this movie. And this movie, just as it is, has considerable interest and complication as fiction.

What's striking about "Knocked Up" is the way the romance is placed within the relations between the sexes. The picture is a drastic revision of classic romantic-comedy patterns. Ben doesn't chase Alison, and she doesn't chase him. The movie is not about the civilizing of desire, and it offers a marriage plot that couldn't be more wary of marriage. "Knocked Up," like Apatow's earlier "40-Year-Old Virgin," is devoted to the dissolution of a male pack, the ending of the juvenile male bond. Ben and his friends sit around in their San Fernando Valley tract house whamming each other on the head with rubber bats and

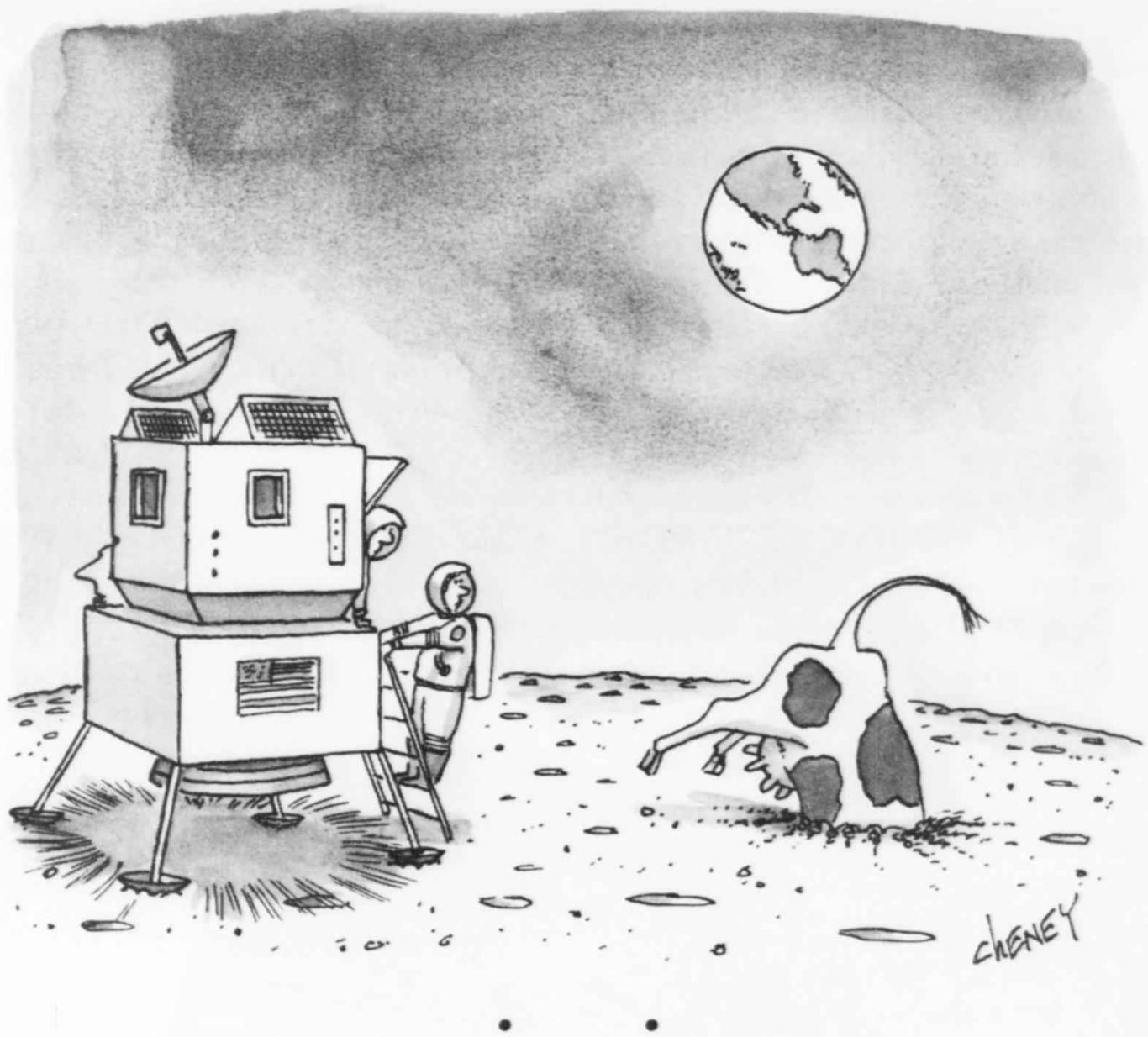
watching naked actresses in movies. The way Ben lives with his friends is tremendous fun; it's also as close to paralysis as you can get and continue breathing. Apatow, of course, has it both ways. He squeezes the pink-eyed doofuses for every laugh he can get out of them, but at the same time he suggests that the very thing he's celebrating is sick, crazy, and dysfunctional. The situation has to end. Boys have to grow up or life ceases.

Ben and Alison's one-night stand forces the issue. Willy-nilly, the world gets peopled. Yet the slowly developing love between Ben and the pregnant Alison comes off as halfhearted and unconvincing—it's the weakest element in the movie. There are some terrifically noisy arguments, a scene of Rogen's making love to the enormous Heigl ("I'm not making love to you like a dog. It's doggy *style*. It's a *style*"), but we never really see the moment in which they warm up and begin to like each other. That part of the movie is unpersuasive, I would guess, because it's not terribly important to Apatow. What's important is the male bond—the way it flourishes, in all its unhealthiness, and then its wrenching end. Alison lives with her sister, Debbie (Leslie Mann), and brother-in-law, Pete (Paul Rudd), and Ben begins to hang out with Alison at the house of the married couple, who are classically mismatched in temperament. Pete is restless, disappointed, and remorselessly funny, and Ben links up with him. Whooping with joy, they go off to Las Vegas, but they don't gamble or get laid. Instead, they hang out and eat "shrooms." They merely want to be together: it's as if Romeo and Mercutio had left the women and all that mess in Verona behind and gone off to practice their swordsmanship. When Ben and Pete get high, crash, and then return, chastened, to the women, the male bond is severed at last, the baby can be born, and life continues. In generic terms, "Knocked Up" puts the cart before the horse—the accidental baby, rather than desire, pulls the young man, who has to leave his male friends behind, into civilization.

As fascinating and as funny as "Knocked Up" is, it represents what can only be called the disenchantment of romantic comedy, the end point of a progression from Fifth Avenue to the Valley, from tuxedos to tube socks, from a popped champagne cork to a baby crowning. There's nothing in it that is comparable to the style of the classics—no magic in its settings, no reverberant sense of place, no shared or competitive work for the couple to do. Ben does come through in the end, yet, if his promise and Alison's beauty make them equal as a pair, one still wants more out of Alison than the filmmakers are willing to provide. She has a fine fit of hormonal rage, but, like the other heroines in the slacker-striver romances, she isn't given an idea or a snappy remark or even a sharp perception. All the movies in this genre have been written and directed by men, and it's as if the filmmakers were saying, "Yes, young men are children now, and women bring home the bacon, but men bring home the soul."

The perilous new direction of the slacker-striver genre reduces the role of women to vehicles. Their only real function is to make the men grow up. That's why they're all so earnest and bland—so *nice*, so *good*. Leslie Mann (who's married to Apatow) has some great bitchy lines as the angry Debbie, but she's not a lover; she represents disillusion. As Anthony Lane pointed out in these pages, Apatow's subject is not so much sex as age, and age in his movies is a malediction. If you're young, you have to grow up. If you grow up, you turn into Debbie—you fear that the years are overtaking you fast. Either way, you're in trouble.

Apatow has a genius for candor that goes way beyond dirty talk—that's why "Knocked Up" is a cultural event. But I wonder if Apatow, like his fumy youths, shouldn't move on. It seems strange to complain of repetition when a director does something particularly well, and Apatow does the infantilism of the male bond better than anyone, but I'd be quite happy if I never saw another bong-gurgling slacker or male pack again. The society that produced the Katharine Hepburn and Carole Lombard movies has vanished; manners, in the sense of elegance, have disappeared. But manners as spiritual style are more important than ever, and Apatow has demonstrated that he knows this as well as anyone. So how can he not know that the key to making a great romantic comedy is to create heroines equal in wit to men? They don't have to dress for dinner, but they should challenge the men intellectually and spiritually, rather than simply offering their bodies as a way of dragging the clods out of their adolescent stupor. "Paper bullets of the brain," as Benedick called the taunting exchanges with Beatrice, slay the audience every time if they are aimed at the right place. ♦



FICTION

SHAUNTRELLE

BY ANTONYA NELSON



It isn't just a husband you divorce but a life. A credit rating. Certain friends—sadly, some of them small children. A mother-in-law, that innocent bystander. And sometimes it seemed to Constance that she had divorced her own pronoun, *I*, and run away with another, *she*. *She*, she sometimes thought, of herself, and always in the present tense. As in *Has she disconnected from her past so completely?*

She hadn't, however, divorced her city. Houston was still hers, although this part of it was new to her. Along with the novelty of the South Loop, she'd acquired a roommate, this after many years of the known quantity: husband, daughter. Dogs. She guessed she'd divorced them, too.

At the front desk of the Laventura, a disdainful blond woman provided her with a handful of devices for entry into her new life: apartment and mailbox keys, garage-gate remote, car tag, a code for accessing inner sanctums bearing keypads. Up the dizzying garage ramp Constance drove, around and around, seeking out her stall. On one side of it a racing bike was locked to a fire hose; on the other sat a vintage Mercedes with soft tires, mint green. One of these vehicles belonged to her new roommate, Fanny Mann. The voice on the phone and the affect over e-mail suggested the Mercedes: Fanny had used "y'all"; her cell-phone area code was from Louisiana.

The apartment door had a lighted doorbell and a peephole, and was situated in a long hallway of such doors. The only distinguishing characteristic was the welcome mat. Some doorways had one; some did not. Fanny Mann's was bright red, not a speck of dirt on it.

"Hi there!" The voice sang out before the face appeared. This was perhaps to offset the effect of the startling bandages that covered some of it. "Don't be frightened! Come on in! I'm your roomie—you're at the right place! You didn't know you were moving in with the Invisible Woman, did you?" The roommate wore lipstick under the antiseptic white strips; her eyes were outlined in kohl, hazel-colored, vaguely bloodshot. "Rhinoplasty," she explained. "In case you were thinking battered wife." Certain other details caught Constance's attention—the manicure, the studded belt, the short denim skirt.

"How smart is it," Fanny Mann was saying as they jockeyed into the too-cool apartment, "to move in with someone you wouldn't recognize on the street?"

Was she drunk? No. This, Constance would learn, was her way—she worked hard to make people laugh. Or at least smile, if only at her effort. It was Fanny Mann's most appealing characteristic; she was a flirt, down to the makeup and heels.

The apartment smelled overwhelmingly of perfume, a familiar scent that happened to have been the favorite of Constance's late mother: Shalimar. The Art Deco bottle flashed in Constance's mind. Under the perfume, the odor of hospital, fresh paint, and air-conditioning, and the faint cigarette smell of someone who took her habit out to the balcony. The furniture was brand-new, tags still hanging from a few objects, and the art inoffensive—abstract landscapes, vases. The dining-room table was set for two: placemats, plates, polyester napkins blooming from industrial-strength wineglasses. "I should probably put those away," Fanny Mann said. "But they amuse me. When I moved in, last week, all the lights were on and the stereo was blaring classical. I kept expecting somebody in a cummerbund to show up with dinner! I put the plastic plants out on the balcony, to spruce it up a bit, and, let me tell you, they're flourishing!"

She was older than Constance had guessed, younger than her mother would have been, yet older than her stepmother. Sixty-two? The body would reveal your secrets, given a chance. It was in the leathery arch of Fanny's foot in its spike heel, the automatic lift of the chin so as to photograph well, the second-nature way she had with the unlit cigarette she held, as if she had been born with a wandlike object in her hand. Her accent was lazier than Constance's, swampier, homier. She was only a temporary tenant in Houston, here for a forced vacation while her flooded house was under repair. She was taking advantage of the exodus to have her nose sculpted, her face lifted, her skin lasered and peeled, her fat vacuumed, her tummy tucked, her breasts bolstered, her neck tightened, her teeth veneered, and the spare skin around her eyes snipped away. Her goal, she told Constance, was to more closely resemble the personal ad she'd posted on the Internet. She was limping, she explained, because of liposuction, moving tenderly and somewhat unsteadily on stilettos. In New Orleans, she was a chiropractor.

"I sure wish I could show you a 'before' picture," she said regretfully. "So that you could fully appreciate what's going to come 'after.' "

She never knows what to say to sudden intimacies from strangers. Fanny Mann's revelations, and the expectant pause that followed, seemed coercive, as if Constance now owed the woman her own confession. But it was not Constance's habit to make herself available to other people; strangers mistook her for cold. To get to know her, to grow fond of her, you had to spend a long time hanging around. Her marriage to William had lasted twenty-one years; their daughter was now eighteen and in college. The two dogs were also relatively old, brothers, a decade in Constance's care. The boyfriend was her most recent kinship, a love affair of five years. Those beings had been her intimates, and now every one of them had found sudden, utter, devastating fault with her. Wouldn't that send anybody to the third person?

But Fanny Mann didn't seem to mind Constance's reticence; she may not even have noticed it. "I gab enough for two or three fools," she said cheerfully. "I get along great with the quiet type. My husbands were all still-waters sort of guys."

They had located each other through a corporate-housing Web site, one in need of a room, the other in need of a roommate. Fanny Mann's best friend from grade school—she was of the age and region and disposition to have had the same best friend for more than fifty years—who had originally promised to share the apartment and undergo similar improving procedures, had backed out at the last minute.

"Cancer," Fanny Mann said, with no less vibrancy. "Stage four, in her lungs."

"That's *awful*." These, apart from the initial mumbled pleasantries, were Constance's first words to Fanny Mann.

"It truly is." Her eyes, bruised yellow above the bandages, briefly filled with tears. Her mascara was waterproof, perfect. "Bless her heart," she added, covering her own chest with her hand. "Your room," she went on, continuing the tour. The carpet was plush and caught at Fan-

CINDY SHERMAN, "UNTITLED #400" (2000)/COURTESY METRO PICTURES

ny's heels. "Your bath, your walk-in closet, your towels and sheets and butt-ugly bedspread. You ever lived in so-called corporate housing before?" The corporate-housing company they had used, which owned and rented out a few apartments in the Laventura, advertised that one needed only to show up—the rest awaited: appliances and their services, lamps and throw rugs and trash cans and kitchen gadgets. Sample-size containers of face and bath and dish and laundry soap.

"Don't answer the land line is my advice. Some gal named Felicia had this number before—all the calls ask for Felicia, and they leave messages on our machine, too, all P.O.ed, because Felicia is up to her eyeballs in debt. No wonder she got rid of the number. The thing is, the answering machine isn't Felicia's, or mine, either. The answering machine is Ray." She poked the little unit to make it produce its former owner's deep voice. "You've reached Ray," he said enticingly. "And you know what I need." Then a chuckle, followed by the beep.

"Can't hurt, can it? A man answering our phone? I like his sexy voice, too. I wonder where he went, anyway."

As if on cue, Fanny Mann's cell phone buzzed on her hip. She squinted at the screen before declining to engage the line. "And we can get the Internet sometimes, not all the time, and always in a different room. Yesterday the kitchen, but only by the sink; today, who knows?" This accounted for the laptop blinking on the chopping block.

The last stop on the tour was the balcony, from which you could see the Astrodome to the west, the hospitals to the north. Directly below, six floors down, people waiting for a bus. Constance could hear them talking, exclamations and murmurs and the occasional clear profanity. Scattered around the Laventura sat empty businesses, their doors padlocked, vines crawling over them, as if to reclaim them for nature, while on the street loitered a fleet of people pushing grocery carts. This detritus, man-made, earth-grown, was a kind of moat surrounding the building proper, this modern fortress, painted a yellow that was surely labelled Tuscan.

"Laventura, Laventura!" Fanny Mann sang, finally lighting her cigarette, mindful of the flame so near her bandages. "I think it means 'little wine bottles' in Italian."

"I did notice some broken glass around the front door," Constance said.

"Yeah, very corporate, huh? The neighborhood's gentrifying, but somebody forgot to tell the winos. See there? That fizzling blue light on the corner? That's our local grocery. I call it the No Judgment Store. Everybody buying beer and condoms and lottery tickets and tubs of lard. Whack rags." Fanny smiled, wincing a bit, either from the smoke or the sutures. "I'm usually the only white woman in the place. The bag boy thinks I'm fine. 'You *fine!*' Don't you love that? Nobody bats an eye, you pick up a carton of smokes and a pack of pork rinds at nine in the A.M. On a Sunday, no less."

Constance returned her smile, relieved, relaxing suddenly, as if she had finished a challenging physical chore or swilled a stiff drink. Here was a woman with scruples less developed than her own, someone who had chosen to be not frightened but entertained by her new neighborhood, someone who soldiered on with her elective surgery even when her best friend got a diagnosis of cancer. *Lung* cancer—and Fanny Mann sucking on a cigarette. Constance felt lighter, as if Fanny had spirited away a sack of stones she'd been lugging around. "Maybe I'll bum a smoke," she said shyly.

"There you go!" Fanny Mann crowed, expertly tapping the pack so that one jumped out. "There's a carton in the freezer—you just help yourself."

Constance unpacked her clothing that first night in her strange chilly room, brushed her teeth, plumped the pillows on her new bed, set the alarm. Then what? Her ex-husband would be sleeping on what had for twenty-one years been her side of the bed; he'd always coveted it. Her boyfriend would be fiddling at his computer, the only source of light in his shabby duplex, likely stoned, busy in the virtual world where he was most comfortable. Constance held those images in her mind, staring through them at the wall, still able to smell the vanilla sweetness of Shalimar, which made her picture her mother, too, preparing for an evening out, back when her parents were the adults, and death and stepmothers were things that she had only read about in the Brothers Grimm. *She hardly recognizes herself in the mirror.*

Now she tucked herself in and opened her book, a novel assigned, in a fashion, by her daughter. "There's this book I really liked," Lily had reluctantly offered when Constance asked how the semester was going. Lily was a secretive, serious girl, even more so now that her mother had been discovered to have her own serious secret. Constance wasn't making good progress on the recommended book, however. Every night she tried to enter its world—the streets of Los Angeles, a city she had never actually visited. On those streets, two gay girls, runaways, were making their living as prostitutes. One, Jo, was a heroin addict. The other, Deezy, merely drank. They loved each other but had sex with men—graphic, angry sex—and sometimes weren't even paid for the service. When they reconvened, after their separate desperate nights, they wanted only to abuse their respective substances and fall into a chaste embrace. The fact that her daughter had enjoyed this book alarmed Constance, interfered with her ability to simply read. Instead, she took it in as if she were in Lily's presence—self-conscious and with a heightened attention. It was the way she'd felt when Lily was younger and they'd watched inappropriate movies together, averting their eyes as the clothes were peeled off, as the ravishing sex ensued.

The book gave Constance nightmares. Although her dreamscape had nothing to do with the novel's landscape, the book seemed to operate as a kind of portal. Through it she entered another world, which was neither Los Angeles nor Houston. It seemed to be a city on a hill, with unsteady buildings teetering up its sides, a body of water lapping at its base. There, a boy whom she'd loved as a teen-ager often appeared: Corey Forster. Like the girls in Lily's novel, Corey had had bad habits, and also bad luck; the combination had killed him in a car crash when he was only nineteen. He'd driven off an unfinished highway overpass one night, heedless of the orange cones and flashing lights. He'd been drunk and high, and probably thrilled at the sudden absence of traffic, the secret shortcut home from a party where Constance had remained. In her dreams, Corey Forster was always on the verge of taking her hand, of leading her down a hallway, into a room where she could have him back.

Why, then, did she think of these

dreams as nightmares? Because they were difficult to leave, and that was somehow worse: being happy in a made-up place in the company of a ghost. The experience seemed insane. Constance was tormented by it.

In the morning, she found her new roommate at the dining table, its elaborate setting enhanced by a plate of plump muffins. These were delivered daily, downstairs, Fanny Mann informed Constance. She was kind of a welcome sight, jolly and bathed, done up like a tropical bird in a vivid silk wrap. "These are blueberry and chocolate," she said. "Some days we get croissants, some days zucchini loaf. Oh, not now," she added, frowning down at her cell phone vibrating on the table. "Poor Lucille. A better friend might have cancelled her face-lift, esprit de corps and all. But, really, what could I do for her? To quote my daddy, I have no medical expertise and, furthermore, I'm not getting any younger." She let the phone burr and buzz its way closer to the plate of muffins. "They got crappy reception over there at the cancer ward, anyway. Everyone else in my life left me but Lucille—first my son, then my daughter, next that maroon I married, and after that the other maroons, but never Lucille. Still, I've been waiting a long time to pimp this ride. She said to go ahead, the sight would cheer her up. She's over there losing weight without even trying, bless her heart." Finally, the phone ceased.

"You are not wearing those shoes!" Fanny Mann said, in horror, when Constance was ready to leave for work. "What size are you?"

"Eight and a half?"

Fanny Mann tottered off to her room, returning with a pair of open-toed red heels for Constance. "It's the least I could do for that poor black suit. You aren't going to a funeral, are you?"

"No. Work."

"Someday, when I can bend over again, I'll give you a pedicure. We'll have a day of beauty. Where do you work? I forget."

Constance mentioned the acronym for the energy office; everyone in Houston was in awe, but Fanny Mann looked nonplussed. She'd never heard of it, which made Constance smile. Her job was sometimes a trial to her; she'd got her position there because her father was a senior V.P. In the early days, her co-workers had called her the Princess, and so her reputation had been set: a pampered dilettante who didn't deserve her status. If they'd known the truth, they would have understood the miracle of her having been hired at all: Constance's stepmother, also a senior V.P., did not like her.

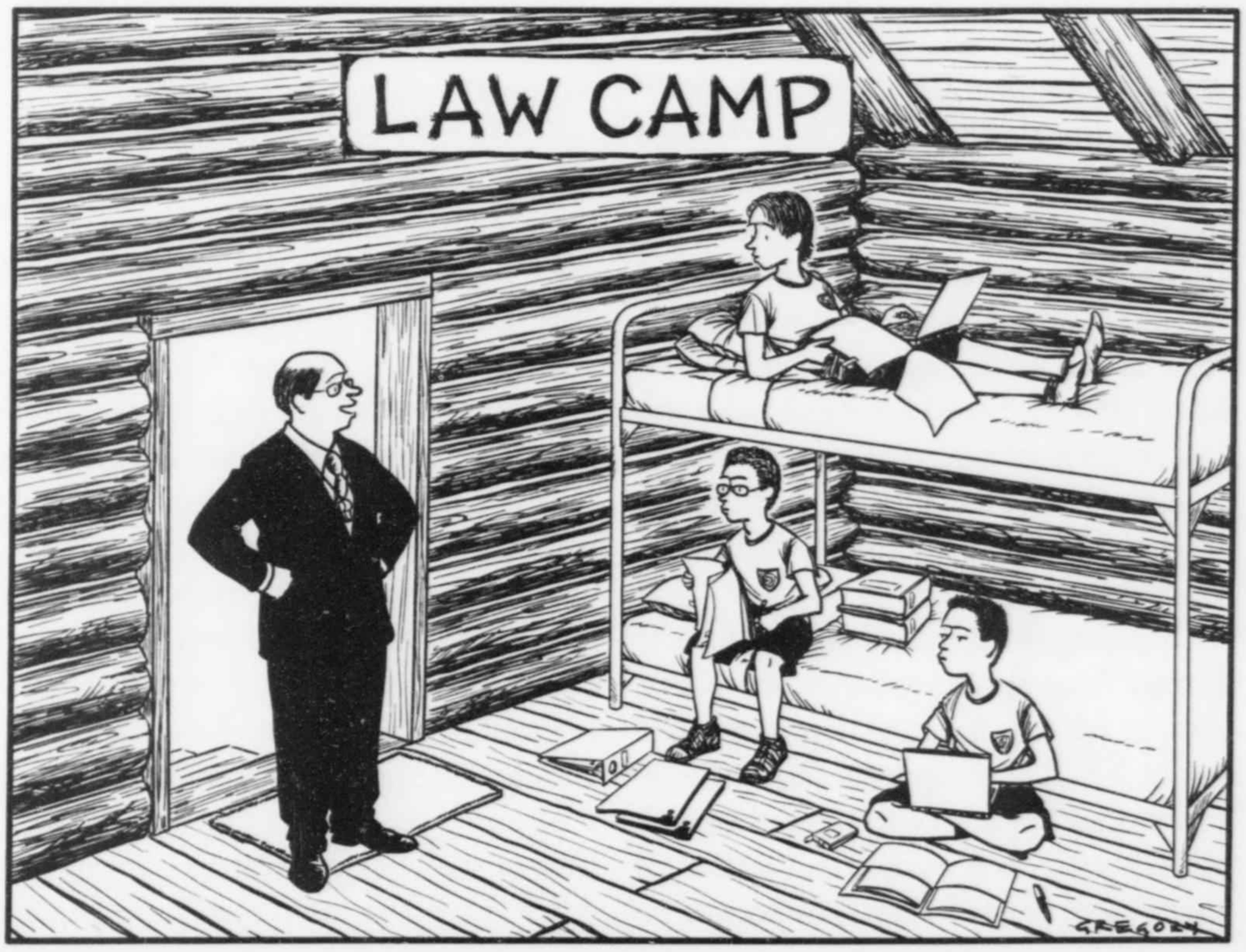
Rather than take the belt loop to the office, she detoured on surface streets through her old neighborhood, just to catch a glimpse of the house. William had removed the leaded stained-glass windows she'd hung in their bathroom, she noticed, finally getting his way; she had shopped for months for those pretty panes, but he claimed that they weren't opaque enough, that strangers could see him step from the shower. At her daughter's bedroom window was a sponge head of Yao Ming, faded and stiff from the sunlight. Lily and William had gone to games together, coming home hoarse from cheering; now Lily was a freshman at Barnard. She had left home last fall, at which point Constance had understood that she was free: her daughter would most likely never live at home again, and therefore Constance did not have to remain there, waiting.

The two dogs lay on the front porch, lifting their muzzles at the sight of the familiar car, some brief motion from each tail, but neither bothering to leave his spot. William would already be at his law office, downtown.

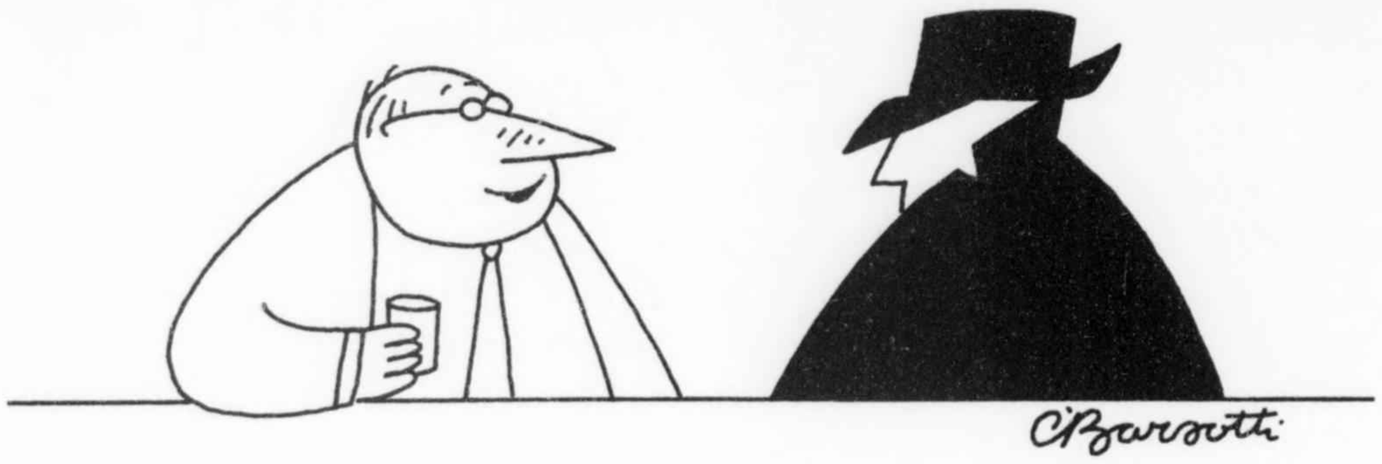
The boyfriend was Kendall Kirkendoll; she avoided driving past his duplex, as he might be there. He had moved nearby last year so that they could see each other more often. She could walk those slathering dogs right to his alley door and into his home.

Constance had left William in order to claim Kendall. For five years, she had believed that their secret life was building toward something, that they were preparing for a future, one that was presentable and public, substantial, painfully garnered but somehow worth the damage. However, it turned out that Kendall hadn't been inhabiting that scenario with her. The day she told her husband about her affair, the day she released the tethers that held the safety net of her marriage, the day she showed up at Kendall's door planning to stay not a feverish hour but the rest of her life—well, Kendall panicked. Before her eyes he transformed. Or, rather, he failed to transform. He had wanted nothing to change. He liked his autonomy, his bachelor life, his occasional trysts with Constance. Faced with his alarm, she felt herself shrivel, suddenly aware of how little she had traded her marriage for. This dirty rented space, its frightened occupant. *She feels as if she'd got loose of her spaceship and were floating in space.*

Losing William to divorce felt to Constance exactly like losing her mother



"Who's up for archery waivers?"



"You're a good listener."

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to death: she'd grown to resent the cloying, unconditional love, her own role as a spoiled child in its nonjudgmental vapor, and then, as soon as it was gone, she immediately wished to have it restored, around her like a force field.

Kendall Kirkendoll was younger than Constance, but only occasionally had his youth worried her. Once, he'd made a comment about Lily, about her prettiness; he was of an age, his mid-thirties, that had sexual rights on either side of it—to both mother's and daughter's generation. Had his comment about Lily been the beginning of the end? The daughter no longer a child, Constance no longer the object of the male glance?

Banished by William, she had insisted on staying with Kendall, lying in the bed she'd made. With her she took one of the dogs, Bruno, who came along gamely enough. But once he realized that this wasn't merely a walk, that he wasn't simply being given preferential treatment this evening (his brother, Bob, left at home, brooding in a corner), Bruno sidled up to the back door and sat there whisking his tail on the floor, whimpering, nosing the handle. Constance was furious beyond reason at his unflagging unhappiness. She finally dragged him the three blocks back to her old home, yanked open the front gate, and kicked him into the yard. He ran with glee, so glad to be rid of her, back where he belonged.

She'd stayed at Kendall's only slightly longer than Bruno, exhausted, in the end, by his reluctance to have her as his guest. Then she'd spent a night at her office, another few with her father and stepmother, then a month at a downtown hotel. *She feels like a fickle princess in a fairy tale, trying out all the options—this door, that bed—and detecting flaws in each.* And now she had landed here at the Laventura, with Fanny Mann.

Fanny Mann's face was unwrapped for exactly one day before she returned to the clinic for her next procedure. "I love Dr. Fondel's office," she said. "It's perfect, like a cross between a spa and a hospital. Everyone's real professional, all sanitary in their lab coats, but nobody's dying." Constance, accustomed to the bandages, was fascinated by Fanny's exposed features. Her nose, petite and perfect, was very white, as if it had come from some other person's face. When Fanny sneezed, it bled. "Don't look, don't look! I'm a work-in-progress!" Her cheeks and forehead were blurred beneath a thick application of Vaseline, only her eyes and mouth familiar. She warned Constance not to grow too attached to them, as she was having improvements made in both areas. She packed a set of soft chintz bags and waved with her fingertips at the door.

That night, alone in the apartment for the first time, Constance hid in her room. She could have tuned in to one of the nighttime dramas that Fanny Mann had taught her to enjoy, but without Fanny there to provide backstory the shows seemed nearly indistinguishable from the commercials that interrupted them. This was why Constance had sought out a roommate—she had discovered during her time at the hotel that she did not like to be alone. When she couldn't fall asleep—despite three chapters of Lily's novel—she ransacked Fanny Mann's medicine cabinet and took an OxyContin, letting its loopy undertow suck her down at last.

A few hours later, she could hardly rouse herself when a persistent sound broke into her sleep—the doorbell, she eventually determined, never having heard it before. For a moment she simply sat on the edge of the bed, gathering together the strange place, the unfamiliar sound, and the drugged fog in which she was trying to operate. Finally, she remembered the peephole, and this allowed her to open her bedroom door and creep to the front of the apartment.

Leaning on the other side of the peephole was an exasperated-looking young black woman. She'd been poking at the doorbell, but now she slapped her palm on the door, just below Constance's blurred eye. "I know you in there, Shauntrelle!"

Constance would not unlock or open up, but she put her face to the slit between the frame and the door and said, croakily, since she hadn't spoken in hours, "I'm not who you think I am."

The woman abruptly ceased. "Shauntrelle?"

"No."

The woman stepped back, then suddenly disappeared from the fish-eyed confines of the peephole. But Constance could hear the faint ring of another doorbell, down the hall, which set off a barking dog.

Now completely awake, she lay in bed, agitated, wondering whether she should risk another pill. The woman's determination to find Shauntrelle had made Constance aware of her own desire to be found, to be sought after. Kendall Kirkendoll had always complained that it was he who had the most at stake, in loving her; never mind her husband and daughter—he, he'd said, had nobody to fall back on, no Plan B. He would not hear her when she reminded him that he also had no one to injure, no one to fail. Yet, for all his declarations, it had seemed easy for him to let her go. Kendall Kirkendoll wasn't breaking down her door, calling her name. And neither was her husband, who'd taken the news of her betrayal quietly, the infliction she made on him one of shock. Complete shock.

When Fanny Mann returned, her chest was bound, her lips swollen, and her eyes hidden behind sunglasses. The Vaseline had given her a terrible case of acne, and she hadn't tended to her hair, which was so thin and tortured that her scalp showed. "Don't look at me!" she insisted, dropping her bags on the living-

room floor and scurrying into her room. Later, after hours of restorative efforts, she joined Constance on the balcony.

Constance had stopped by the No Judgment Store for cigarettes and cocktail-hour food: processed cheese and crackers, gherkins, olives, meat that did not require refrigeration. You took a risk, exiting the building on foot, walking in this neighborhood; men had catcalled, leered; everyone had asked her for spare change. But once she stepped back through the doors of the Laventura—mildly sweaty from apprehension, humidity—she was surrounded by chilled air, by the soft rock that played in the elevators and in the gym, in the cybercafé and the corporate meeting suite, even out by the pool and the hot tub, the soundtrack of safety. The contrast with the outside world was so extreme as to cause disorientation, dizziness.

She made Fanny Mann a vodka gimlet—weak, in consideration of the painkillers—and told her about the nighttime visit from the woman seeking Shauntrelle.

Fanny laughed delightedly, adding it to the names she had already begun calling Constance: Felicia, as in "Felicia, Columbia House is gonna garnishee your wages!," or Ray ("I got bad news about that rubber, Ray"), and now Shauntrelle. These were the identities that occupied their apartment with them.

"Lord knows nobody's sniffing around here for me," Fanny Mann pointed out.

"Me, neither," Constance said, sighing.

"One thing about the Laventura is: who'd think to look for us here, even if they were looking?" Fanny said. She and Constance weren't members of the Laventura's typical demographic, and there was nothing "corporate" about the long-term residents. Next door to the east lived a night watchman who arrived at dawn to fall asleep; his newspaper lay on his threshold all day, then disappeared in the evening. Across the hall was an Indian medical student, married to another Indian medical student, the parents of a small baby who was handed off between shifts. Directly below Fanny and Constance lived somebody who took flash photographs from his or her balcony, the bright quiet blast of light below them every now and then like a spill of phosphorescence, fairy dust, at their feet.

"It's true," Constance agreed. "This is not a likely place for me to be." How, then, to explain her lingering hope that she would be rescued from it? Kendall Kirkendoll, if he put his mind to it, could locate her; surely William, with all his connections, could pull it off. The dedicated suitor could find a way. No matter the locked doors and security cameras or the smooth, unscalable surface of the building itself—a determined man could storm the castle. Gestures could be made. They both knew where she worked, of course, and could find her there. In expectation of this, she kept an eye out for them: William in one of his gray suits, with his polished bald head, sitting in his Audi. Or Kendall's shaggy blond hair and vintage button-down shirts with old-fashioned patterns, checks or paisleys or chevrons. He didn't drive a car, so he would have to ride his bike; her glance eagerly chased any bicycle that flew by. He worked at the public-radio station, and she listened to his jazz program, even though he never spoke during it, except to mention call letters and megahertz. He'd been the d.j. at William's office Christmas party five years ago. His gig had ended at midnight, and Constance had offered him a ride, him and his equipment, when his friend with the van hadn't shown up. It had felt good to separate herself from the group of lawyers and their spouses. She'd observed Kendall's amused scorn toward them all evening, could read it in his eyes as he sat behind his elaborate table of machinery, spinning disks, poking buttons, insulated in headphones.

But why should she expect him to put effort into finding her now, when there hadn't been much, on his part, ever? As for William, he was proud. She had forsaken him foolishly; her father had been appalled and impatient, her daughter hurt and embarrassed. Her stepmother had seemed unsurprised; she'd taken a barely concealed pleasure in the news. At any rate, none of them had inquired about Constance's corporeal location; apparently, having her cell number and e-mail address sufficed. In her dreams, ghostly Corey Forster visited and lured, but it didn't matter to him where she lived. *To them all, she is ethereal.*

For Fanny Mann the anonymity was temporary. She would occupy it only long enough to emerge like the phoenix, a brand-new version of herself. She consulted frequently with her hand mirror, another fixture on the dining-room table, alongside the pristine place settings. In it she gazed at her face, touching here and there, her expression critical. She applied this same critical glance to Constance's face, then prescribed Botox and wax, nothing more.

"Maybe we should try Sunday brunch," she said now, feet crossed on the railing, one shoe rocking like a pendulum held by the fulcrum of her big toe. "That's how you meet people. And we could go to Yappy Hour, out there in the courtyard, running round in circles, sniffing behinds with the rest of the mutts."

Under their balcony a bus stopped, brakes wheezing, its doors slapped open, then shut, engine roaring and sending up a plume of noxious smoke as it rumbled away. The people who had got off stepped, somewhat dazed, into the street, looking around as if unsure what was supposed to happen next.

"Wouldn't they have a cow if I dropped a shoe on their head?" Fanny Mann said.

The next time Fanny Mann left for the night, it was to go to her friend Lucille's bedside at M. D. Anderson. "How do I look?" she asked before leaving. She had dressed for the visit, generously spritzed herself with Shalimar, and done her best to cover the fresh bruises around her newly widened eyes. She carried a red silk hankie, because her nose still bled now and then.

"You look great," Constance said, wondering if Fanny had always seemed like a person built of incongruous parts, her calves too fine for her feet, her neck too brief, her chest too broad. Had surgery created the freakish appearance, or softened a more extreme original? She called her surgeons magicians, but Constance had no idea how to gauge that assessment.

"Maybe I'll meet a doctor," Fanny said. "Well, of course you'll meet a doctor, Fanny fool," she scolded herself. "Maybe I'll meet a man. If I do, I'll see if he has a friend, for you."

"O.K.," Constance agreed, but without enthusiasm. She knew how rare it was for her to fall in love. It had happened only three times in her life, less than once a decade. Corey Forster. William. And Kendall Kirkendoll. Dead, disap-

pointed, and disappointing, respectively.

Once again, in her roommate's absence Constance felt irrationally vulnerable, aware of every sound. On the street below, screeching brakes, then horns and curses, slamming car doors; in the apartment next door, the dog barked, the night watchman yelled at the animal to shut the fuck up. The elevator bell kept pinging, children from another floor playing pranks. And then, hours later, when Constance had finally fallen asleep, the phone woke her. She listened as Ray's chuckling, sexy voice took the call, which was not for Felicia but, surprisingly, for someone named Gerald. "Buzz me in, Gerald!" shouted the caller. He was on a street; Constance could hear traffic, wind, the man's breathing, and a clicking as he pressed an intercom button. "Dude," he pleaded, "it's starting to rain!"

Constance went to the balcony, opened the door, and stepped out, stuck her hand into the air over the edge. No moisture. Liar. Or maybe he was standing outside a building in some other part of town, some other town, even. Who knew how he'd managed to find Constance, mute audience to his manic anguish? "Motherfucker, let me in! Let me in, or call a motherfucking cab!"

Constance picked up the phone then. "You have the wrong number," she told the man who was looking for Gerald.

On his end there was a long pause. "Do what?"

"This isn't Gerald's house. I don't think this is even Gerald's neighborhood."

"Am I speaking with Gabrielle?"

Now Constance paused; another person she wasn't. "No," she said, on the verge of giving her own name. She hadn't said it for a while, to anyone. "This is Felicia."

"Well, hell, Felicia, can't you open this door? It's raining like a motherfucker. Hear that thunder?" From his end came a rumble, hissing, and squeaks. They sounded more like cheap acoustical imitations than like a real storm.

"You aren't anywhere near where I am," Constance said. She was sitting now on the balcony, out in the balmy night. Not a drop of rain; in fact, she could make out a few stars, an odd occurrence in the Houston firmament.

"Bitch," he muttered before hanging up. Constance tried not to feel stung.

Once more alert in the lonesome night, she took herself around the apartment, seeking an Internet connection, resorting to e-mail. This was how she met up with Lily, who sent messages only in reply to her mother's, not even bothering to adjust the subject line. Constance tried not to burden her daughter with too many e-mails; it would take time to repair the damage she'd done to the girl, however vicarious, or what you might, in the current climate, call collateral.

More than anything, what Constance wished was that she would open her computer and it would sparkle like a treasure chest, perched here on the windowsill of the living room. The screen would be radiant, flooding the dark apartment, and a hundred messages would await her. She longed for every single space to be filled with Kendall Kirkendoll, his repeating name scrolling down her in-box, "kendallkirkendoll" vibrating in nearly three-dimensional intensity, as if she might prick her finger if she touched the screen.

But there was nothing new, not even spam.

"Where can we go, to show off my new rack?" Fanny Mann asked. Her contractor had been putting the final touches on her home in New Orleans; her aestheticians had done the same to her body, here in Houston. Their time together, hers and Constance's, was nearing its close. "My daughter thinks I'm vain," Fanny Mann had confided. "She thinks all the money I've spent on cosmetic surgery should have gone to Oxfam. Her brother joined the Army when he was eighteen. You wouldn't believe the scene I made when he came home in camo and a buzz cut. How'd I produce kids like that—a career soldier and a bleeding-heart hippie? They aren't even on speaking terms. And," she added, shuddering, "my daughter hasn't shaved her legs in twenty years."

Constance was tempted to reply that the truly remarkable thing was Fanny Mann's own capacity to keep caring—about anything, whether it was the size of her breasts or the state of the Union. Instead, she named an expensive restaurant, and—what luck!—they managed to score a reservation that very evening. In the middle of the main course—braised lamb, new potatoes—Fanny missed the burring of her cell phone, the call to notify her of Lucille's death. It had happened that afternoon, but only now, in the early evening, had the hospital located her number, the person playing the role of next of kin. And only later still, in the quiet car retrieved from valet parking and en route back to the Laventura, Constance carefully blinking away her own drunkenness at the wheel, did the equally tipsy Fanny Mann squint at her flashing little screen, recover the message, and then phone the hospital to receive the news.



"Now she'll never see how it all turned out!" Fanny cried, meaning all these enhancements and rejuvenating procedures. She'd enjoyed dolling herself up for her début at Carlo's Fine Dining, appearing there with décolletage and beckoning eyes, bruises kindly undetectable by candlelight—once more the object of that coveted male gaze—but the real audience for the metamorphosis had been Lucille, best friend and record keeper. Who else would so profoundly know how to care?

"I'm so sorry," Constance said. *She can never offer a comforting hug automatically. She is a stilted, stunted person.*

"Oh, sugar, it's terrible!" Fanny answered, slumped in the passenger seat. They'd reached Constance's parking spot after the nauseating circling of the garage floors, and now neither opened her door. "I should have been there!" Fanny cried.

Constance waited, weighing the two deaths that had mattered to her: her mother's and Corey Forster's. She was glad that her mother hadn't lived to see what had become of her marriage, or, for that matter, what had become of her father, when he chose his next mate. Neither of those were destinies her mother would have approved of; her living would have prevented them. In the more distant past, Corey Forster had offered Constance a ride home the night he died, but she hadn't been done with the party—it hadn't yet ceased being an evening of enchantment and possibility. Had he driven her, his route would have been different, and he'd never have flown off that bridge to nowhere. "You were a good friend,"

she chose to say to Fanny Mann. "You are a good friend."

"I am a selfish person," Fanny said, wiping her cheeks, smearing her lipstick. "Selfish and ugly. Ugly ugly ugly, that's what my daughter would say. And she'd be right."

"No," Constance said. "No, she wouldn't; you're not. I'm sure your daughter loves you. You're very kind."

Fanny Mann yanked open the door then, igniting the dome light. "You don't know shit about me, Shauntrelle, but I do appreciate you trying to cheer me up." Then she clacked across the garage, amazingly able, given the grief and alcohol and stilettos and still healing surgery.

Constance sat behind the wheel for another few minutes, allowing Fanny time to enter their apartment, sequester herself in the privacy of her own room, and occupy her own solitary remorse. She closed her eyes to test her inebriation, now that she was safely out of traffic. She always thought of Corey Forster when she drove drunk. Now she recalled a more recent fatal evening, another party. Had she not felt the hour proper to flee that party she would never have fallen in love with Kendall Kirkendoll. She couldn't have known that falling for him would mean never being able to reclaim an unfallen state.

Constance's time in the care of corporate housing would hang like a discrete interlude in her life. It wasn't best measured by days or months; even the rent was prorated, down to the hour. It was a season of uncertain and drifting identity, of upheaval and limbo, of anxiety and laughter, of transience and transients, situated in the Laventura itself, and, more precisely, on the sixth floor of that establishment, in a two-bedroom apartment, with two roommates at a strange crossroads. Here, they were protected from the riffraff, the neighborhood, even from Mother Nature, in the form of floods or biting insects. The city of Houston floated and bobbed, sinkholes opening now and then to claim a piece of terra firma, and over this blighted terrain presided Fanny Mann and Constance, of different generations and stations, crises and wishes.

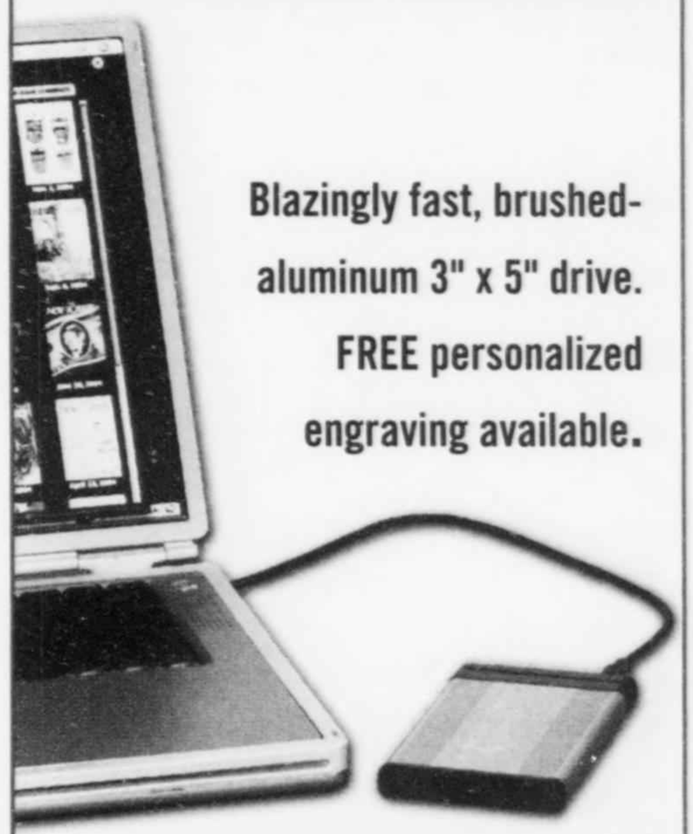
Constance finished Lily's novel a few nights before her chosen departure day. She packed the book, since it was hers, and the instructions from corporate-housing headquarters were firm about removing all personal belongings—God forbid that Constance should risk her and Fanny's security deposit—but she would have preferred to forget that book. Deezy, the novel's drunk, had had to mourn Jo, the heroin addict, who wasn't dead but might as well have been. All along there'd been a growing rift between the girls, one of them more interested in her high than in her beloved, the other grieving over her lost love, over her powerlessness when faced with the other's stubborn self-destruction. Constance wanted to reach in and turn Jo around, convince her of the correct course, crash her body against Deezy's the way one manipulated dolls, making them hug, settling them into bed together in their dollhouse so that they could live happily ever after.

Had this exquisite frustration moved Lily? Constance was desperate to know if her daughter felt like one of those fictional creatures—Deezy, lover of the living ghost, or Jo, the afflicted ghost herself—but it wasn't a question that she was brave enough to ask. She was tempted to contact William, seek his opinion. But she already knew what he would say. He would default to the obvious: Lily's liking the book merely meant that she was a lesbian. And he would be satisfied with that, both the obvious conclusion and the fact of his daughter's sexuality.

"You promise to visit?" Fanny Mann demanded on moving day. "I won't leave till you swear." She was set to drive away in her classic mint-colored and mint-condition Mercedes, having rallied from Lucille's demise. She looked good in her new body, her bright outfit, her coiffed, honey-blond hair, ready for the road trip to her refreshed home in New Orleans. "You visit and I'll introduce you to my future sugar daddy's unmarried son. I have the whole fantasy all worked out!"

"O.K.," Constance agreed. They embraced—gently, since Fanny Mann was still on the mend. Fanny smelled, as always, of Constance's mother's too-strong perfume, an antique odor of romance, bravado, faith. Constance would still be able to smell it later on, as she drove down the winding ramp for the last time, pulling away from the closing electric gate and the saluting security guard, onto the gritty ground floor and out into traffic, en route to . . . *Where is she, anyway, and where does she think she's going?* ♦

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THE CRITICS



BOOKS

THERE SHE BLEW

The history of American whaling.

BY CALEB CRAIN

If, under the spell of "Moby-Dick," you decided to run away to the modern equivalent of whaling, where would you go? Because petroleum displaced whale oil as a source of light and lubrication more than a century ago, it might seem logical to join workers in Arabian oil fields or on drilling platforms at sea. On the other hand, firemen, like whalers, are united by their care for one another and for the vehicle that bears them, and the fireman's alacrity with ladders and hoses resembles the whaler's with masts and ropes. Then, there are the armed forces, which, like a nineteenth-century whaleship, can take you around the world in the company of people from ethnic and social backgrounds unfamiliar to you. All these lines of work are dangerous but indispensable, as whaling once was, but none seem perfectly analogous. Ultimately, there is nothing like rowing a little boat up to a sixty-ton mammal that swims, stabbing it, and hoping that it dies a relatively well-mannered death.

Nor is there anything like skinning the whale's penis, "longer than a Kentuckian is tall," and wearing it as a tunic while you slice up the fat harvested from the rest of its body. Melville's narrator, Ishmael, claims that the mincer of blubber usually wore such a tunic, in a clerical cut that made him look like "a candidate for an archbishoprick." For "Moby-Dick," Melville drew on scientific, historical, and journalistic accounts of whales, but he had a reputation for blurring the line between fact and fiction, and scholars have noted that for this chapter "none of Melville's fish documents was particularly helpful." In other words, he may have made the tunic up, for the sake of the archiepiscopal pun and perhaps, too, as a symbol. In another chapter long suspected of symbolism, Ishmael falls into ecstasy while squeezing the lumps out of spermaceti freshly bailed from the head of a sperm whale: "I found myself unwittingly squeezing my co-laborers' hands in it, mistaking their hands for the gentle globules." But, fanciful as it sounds, sperm-squeezing is attested to by another source. In an 1874 memoir, the whaler William M. Davis recalled how "luxurious" it was to wade into pots of sperm and "squeeze and strain out the fibres," which would darken the oil unless they were removed, and added that, in the rich bath, "I almost fell in love with the touch of my own poor legs."

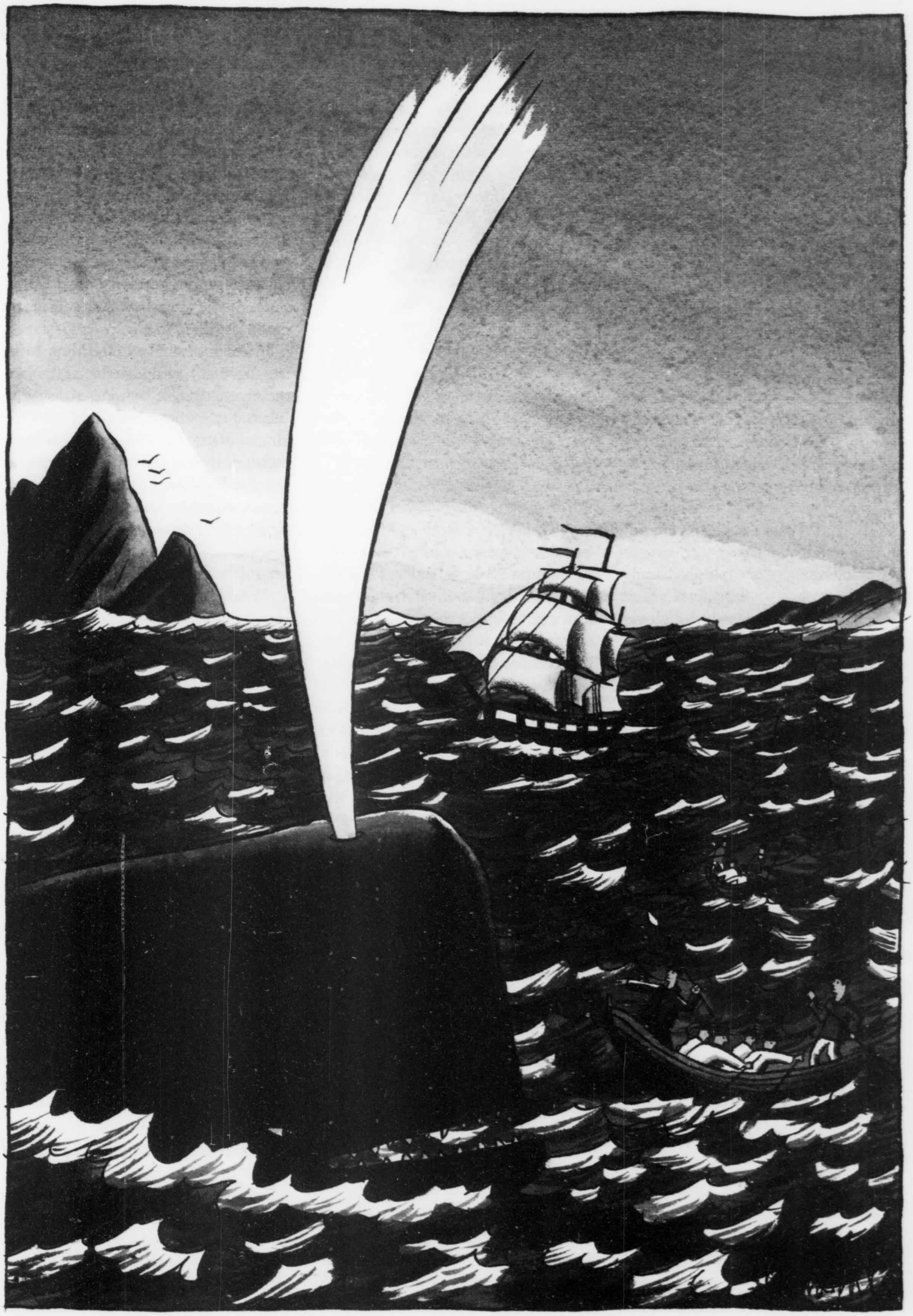
It is difficult to follow in Melville's footsteps if you can't tell when he's fibbing, but there is no shortage of whaling histories for a Melville aficionado to turn to. ("Though of real knowledge there be little," Melville wrote, "yet of books there are a plenty.") In the latest, "Leviathan" (Norton; $27.95), Eric Jay Dolin offers a pleasantly anecdotal history of American whaling so comprehensive that he seems to have harpooned at least one fact from every cetacean text ever printed. "Leviathan" is a gentle book about a brutal industry. By ending his story when America stopped whaling, Dolin omits the most gruesome years of international whaling history, when new technology increased killing capacity approximately tenfold. He presents whaling in a more innocent age, when it was the fifth-largest industry in America and a source of national pride—in the time before ecology, as well as before steamships, as it were.

It's hard to say who qualifies as the first American whaler. The Inuit hunted whales in the Canadian Arctic a thousand years ago, but Dolin isn't convinced that anyone in what is now the United States did so before Europeans arrived. Basque whale hunters reached Labrador in the sixteenth century, and in 1614 John Smith, unable to return to his beloved Virginia, tried to catch whales near what is now Maine. (They got away.) The day after the Pilgrims signed their 1620 compact, whales surrounded the Mayflower, but the Pilgrims lacked whale-catching equipment, and Dolin suspects that they lit their lamps with oil from dead whales they found on the beach. The first to hunt whales and actually catch them in waters that today belong to the United States were the Dutch, off the coast of Delaware, in the sixteen-thirties. The vagueness of this prehistory says a lot about Colonial America, which had few clear political borders, but even more about whaling, which throughout its history has tended to defy them. "In whaling the natural resource (the stock of whales) was owned by no one," the economists Lance E. Davis, Robert E. Gallman, and Karin Gleiter noted in a definitive 1997 analysis of the industry. One theme to emerge from Dolin's book is the oblique angle the history of whaling forms with political history. To whalers, nation-states were usually irrelevant and sometimes a hazard.

Once a whale washed ashore, of course, it was bound to end up as someone's property, and whales entered early American law through the question of who owned them when they did. On Long Island, a town's householders divvied up the oil among themselves, after paying a few shillings to the finder and something to the butcher, and sometimes surrendering the fins and flukes to local Indians for ceremonial use. In Massachusetts, Plymouth Colony taxed towns by taking a barrel of oil from every drift whale. In the sixteen-

JACQUES DE LOUSTAL

For centuries, American whalers' basic method of capture and killing remained remarkably unchanged.





"Our psychopharmacologist is a genius."

• •

forties and fifties, colonists began to sail a few miles to kill whales spotted from shore, and, not long afterward, Colonial governments were demanding a share of the profits from these whales, too.

Serious money was at stake. When two shallops of Rhode Islanders towed home a right whale in 1662, a contemporary commented that "they had earned more than a whole farm would bring us in an entire year." Besides oil, right whales contained baleen, a fibrous and feathery tissue in their mouths, which is probably responsible for the "strange, grassy, cutting sound" that Ishmael hears as he watches them feed. Flexible when heated, baleen, also known as whalebone, kept whatever shape it was cooled into, like plastic. It was used primarily in corsets, fashionable from the sixteenth century to the dawn of the twentieth, but it could be molded into items as various as umbrella ribs, fishing rods, and shoehorns.

The island of Nantucket happened into the business a few years later, when a skinny whale strayed into one of their harbors and wandered there for three days, long enough for the Nantucketers to forge a harpoon, paddle out, and stick it. The island upgraded its whaling in 1690 with the expertise of a Cape Codder named Ichabod Paddock, who was said to have been swallowed by a whale in whose belly he found the Devil and a mermaid playing cards for his soul. No less fabulously, around 1712 a Nantucket captain cruising for right whales near shore was supposedly blown out to the broad Atlantic in his small boat, where he made the most of his predicament by killing a sperm whale, which swims only in deep waters. The logistics of a small boat tugging a sperm whale in from the high seas are doubtful, Dolin points out, but, whatever its origins, offshore whaling was dominated by Nantucket until the early nineteenth century.

This involved the island in a certain amount of un-American activity. War interfered with profits, so, when conflict with Britain loomed, Nantucket tried to stay out of it. In 1775, when Britain moved to restrict New England's trade and fishing rights, Nantucket won a special exemption by pleading pacifism and loyalty to the Crown. The neighbors on the mainland took note, and, once the Revolutionary War broke out, rebels seized flour and whaleboats from Nantucket and put the islanders under an embargo, suspecting them of trading with the enemy British. Some Nantucketers did indeed intend to trade with the British, and a few went so far as to base their whaleships in the Falkland Islands. Others, who stayed, won permission from Massachusetts authorities, in 1779, to ask British military officials not to raid them, a bit of diplomacy that, as an American general pointed out, was "traitorous."

When the war finally ended, the first ship to fly an American flag on the Thames, in 1783, was a Nantucket whaler, hoping to unload four hundred and eighty-seven casks of whale oil. Unfortunately, the British, peevish about the war, had decided to foster a whaling fleet of their own, and, in order to protect domestic whaling, they set a high tariff on imported oil, even though it wasn't clear that British whaling alone could adequately supply London's street lamps. ("We are all surprised that you prefer darkness," the American Ambassador, John Adams, rebuked the Prime Minister in 1785.) To dodge the tariff, Nantucket, ever flexible, considered declaring "neutrality"—that is, seceding from the United States. In 1786, a group of Nantucketers moved to Nova Scotia, thinking they had found a loophole. Another group moved to Dunkirk, all expenses paid by the French, happy to spite their national rivals. Lafayette had recently arranged for Paris to be lit with whale oil.

When Britain and America went to war again, in 1812, Nantucket was once more caught between free-market capitalism and a hard place, and in 1814 the island did declare neutrality and even stopped paying taxes to the U.S. government. Peace followed, but Nantucket's recovery was impeded by a failure to exploit new whaling grounds. "The comparatively total disappearance of the whale, in the Atlantic, is an unquestionable fact," a visitor to America noted in 1809. By 1790, a British whaler had rounded Cape Horn and pioneered whale hunting in the Pacific, but such distant voyages required large ships, and a sandbar limited the size of what could get into and out of Nantucket Harbor. It proved easier to supply ships in New Bedford, just fifty miles away, and more firmly lodged in the American continent. It was from New Bedford that the nation's whalers sailed into their golden age, which lasted until the Civil War.

In small ways—innovations in harpoon design, rigging, ironwork, sail fabric, windlasses, pumps, winches, and cranes—American whaling changed constantly. But its basic method scarcely changed at all. In the early twentieth century, some Americans were still catching whales much as they had in Melville's day, or, for

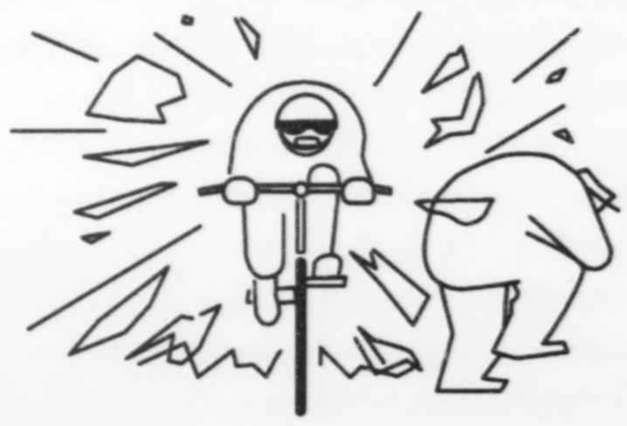
that matter, in the seventeen-hundreds.

That method depended in large part on the good nature of the whale. "The Providence of GOD is manifested in the tameness and timidity of many of the largest inhabitants of the earth and sea," the British whaler, linguist, and historian William Scoresby, Jr., wrote in 1820, "whereby they fall victims to the prowess of man, and are rendered subservient to his convenience in life." Except for rare but memorable cases of "intentional mischief," Scoresby observed, a whale does not fight back. "A bird perching on its back alarms it." Sometimes the geniality of whales even enhanced efficiency. "The taking of one of a school, almost always ensures the capture of another," explained Francis Allyn Olmsted, a medical student who travelled aboard a whaler in 1839, "for his comrades do not immediately abandon the victim, but swim around him, and appear to sympathise with him in his sufferings." Some whalers liked to spear a calf first, knowing that the mother would remain nearby, to be killed at leisure, though with California gray whales the strategy backfired, throwing the mother into a murderous rage.

Lookouts stood inside a hoop on a ship's masthead, and called out "There she breaches" if they saw skin, and "There she blows" if spout. The captain then asked, almost ritually, "Where away?," and all hands were summoned on deck to lower the ship's boats—there were usually four—for the chase, in the direction the lookout indicated. Whaleboats were lightweight, built of cedar, and "sharp at both ends," as Olmsted put it, so they could back up in a hurry. While the harpooner and four other men rowed, their oars muffled at the fulcrums with matting, the captain or one of his mates steered and encouraged. In "Moby-Dick," the second mate, Stubb, addresses his oarsmen in a tone "strangely compounded of fun and fury." When the team neared the whale, the harpooner stood in the bow and darted his weapon—a delicate moment, given that the boat was nearly on top of an enormous creature about to be startled. If the harpoon held, and the whale swam, and the boat was not upset, the attached line ran out at life-threatening speed. One stray coil meant "a speechlessly quick chaotic bundling of a man into eternity," as Melville put it. Scoresby wrote of a harpooner whose line "caught him by a turn round his body. He had but just time to cry out, 'Clear away the line,' — 'O dear!' when he was almost cut asunder, dragged overboard, and never seen afterwards," though the whale was safely caught.

Whalers knew that their prey could not stay under indefinitely. "Whales must breathe the atmospheric air," a whaling captain named Preserved Fish testified in a New York courtroom in 1818, in a dispute that hinged on the question of whether a whale was a fish. "They would drown in the water, as much as a man would, if they were tied or kept by any means under water." The whalers' method depended on that fact. When the whale resurfaced, fatigued from dragging its pursuers, oarsmen pulled and rowed the boat up to it, and the mate tried to kill it with a lance. "We hauled up and *churned* a lance back of his head," the journalist J. Ross Browne wrote in 1846. The vivid italicized word seems to have been a term of art. Melville used it for Stubb's leisurely death blow—"carefully churning and churning, as if cautiously seeking to feel after some gold watch that the whale might have swallowed, and which he was fearful of breaking ere he could hook it out." When dead, the whale rolled over, fin out; superstition had it that dying sperm whales turned toward the sun, which is perhaps why Ahab, at a late and crucial moment, turns away from it. After timing twelve hunts, Scoresby found that the average capture took just sixty-seven minutes.

Once the whalers had towed the dead whale back to their ship, they peeled off its blubber in a single long piece while the whale revolved in the water—"precisely as an orange is sometimes stripped by spiralizing it," Melville observed. The strip was chopped into pieces, the pieces minced into leaves, and the leaves boiled in cauldrons known as try-pots to release their oil, which was poured into barrels and stowed below. In the case of a sperm whale, the head was cut off and emptied separately. Browne likened the "blood-stained decks, and the huge masses of flesh and blubber lying here and there, and a ferocity in the looks of the men, heightened by the red, fierce glare of the fires," to a scene out of Dante. Because whalers processed oil on board as early as the seventeen-fifties, Dolin thinks that they may be the first Americans to have worked on "what could reasonably be called an industrial assembly line."



In fact, during the eighteen-forties and fifties, the industry's peak, ordinary seamen on a whaleship earned roughly the same as women in Massachusetts textile factories—less than two-thirds of what they could have made ashore as unskilled laborers. Worse, their wages sank as time went on, while whaling captains, whose salaries were more than triple those of captains in the merchant service, saw theirs rise. Whalers may not have realized how bad they had it, because no one on a whaleship was paid a set salary. Instead, they signed up for a fraction of the voyage's net profits, called a lay. In "Moby-Dick," Ishmael takes a lay of 1/300, but this is a joke; even a completely green hand was rarely offered less than 1/200, and Melville himself got 1/175 the first time he went whaling. The lottery-like system may have appealed to men who would have thought twice if offered a flat rate. Browne had a simpler explanation, though. Interviewing his fellow-sailors, he found that "rum and love had done signal service in the way of driving them to sea."

Some whalers, understandably, felt aggrieved, and, by one estimate, about two-thirds of a ship's crew deserted each voyage, to be replaced by new recruits in the next port. "It is the most dogish life," one whaler wrote to his brother in 1844. According to the historian Briton Cooper Busch, a whaler could be put in irons for everything from attempted sodomy to "not taking off his shoes while sailmaking." Another common punishment was to tie a sailor's hands above his head for an extended period, in what is today known as a stress position. Busch found records of flogging in nearly ten per cent of whaleship logs he examined from the eighteen-forties, administered to miscreants who let the whales hear them coming, or who asked to see the nearest American consul, the representative of sailors' rights abroad.

Sailors bunked together at the front of

a ship, in a wedge-shaped space below deck called the forecastle, whose entrance hatchway was the only source of ventilation. "Black and slimy with filth, very small, and as hot as an oven," Browne complained, though, as Dolin notes, he was writing an exposé. Like most people in institutions, whalers hated the food, which, according to Dolin, "was designed for longevity, not for taste," and consisted in large part of salt-preserved meat, hard biscuits, and such indigestible-sounding concoctions as duff ("a compound of flour, water and slush"—melted pork fat—"eaten with molasses," said one sailor, who judged it "pretty good"). Browne claimed that the tread of a fly on his plate had made him fastidious in civilian life, but that as a whaler "it did not at all affect my appetite to see the mangled bodies of divers well-fed cockroaches in my molasses." But the dining was not always grim. Docked in the Azores, Browne and his shipmates were able to trade for onions, potatoes, figs, and apples. And when the tally of whale oil reached a thousand barrels on Olmsted's ship the crew celebrated by frying doughnuts in the try-pots.

Between whales, a ship had more hands than it needed, and one sailor calculated in his journal that in eleven hundred and seventy-three days his ship spotted only sixty-four whales. To pass the time, whalers carved scrimshaw and sang ballads. On Olmsted's ship, seamen could check out books from the captain's two-hundred-volume library; in 1852, a whaler aboard the Arnolda read the just-published "Moby-Dick." Whalers also wrote. According to Busch, more than five thousand of their journals and logbooks survive in archives. To fend off loneliness, some captains brought along their wives, who then had to contend with boredom themselves. "I drank up the last bottle of ale yesterday," one admitted in a log she kept in 1862; another amused herself by giving names to the whales her husband caught, including Jonah, Queen Victoria, and Buster. Ordinary seamen, however, would look forward to sex in ports, with prostitutes or native women, a topic to which Dolin rather decorously gives no more than a page and a half. As for homosexual activity, the best evidence of it on whaleships, apart from Melville's innuendos, consists of records of its punishment. Between shore leaves, whalemen's only society was one another. On the high seas, ships whose paths crossed held a "gam," during which the men exchanged news, jokes, out-of-date periodicals, letters to be forwarded, and tales of the occasional bull sperm whale who head-butted his persecutors instead of dying quietly.

There are two ways to explain the end of American whaling.

First, history. During the Civil War, the North bought up aging whaleships, loaded them with stone, and sank them in Charleston Harbor in an attempt to block it. The South, meanwhile, purchased warships from Britain and set about catching and burning Union whalers. In all, Dolin reckons, more than eighty whaleships perished in the Civil War. Then, in 1871, pack ice descended on the northern coast of Alaska sooner than expected, pinning a fleet of whalers and cracking their hulls like so many eggshells. In this and a similar disaster five years later, forty-five more whaleships were lost. A new and far more destructive era of global whaling was about to begin—in the eighteen-sixties, a Norwegian named Svend Foyn devised a radically more efficient way to kill whales, by firing explosive-tipped harpoons from a cannon mounted on a steam-powered, iron-hulled schooner—but the American industry was too demoralized to participate.

Second, economics. If all had been well with whaling's profit margins, the Civil War's blow would have glanced like a blunt iron off a sperm whale's snout. But for a long time beef tallow had been selling cheaper than spermaceti as an ingredient in candles, and lard oil had been underselling whale oil as a fuel for lamps. From the eighteen-forties on, more and more cities lit their streets with coal-derived gas, and a Canadian discovered how to extract from coal an oil called kerosene, which burned brighter and cleaner than whale oil. By the time crude petroleum was found underground in western Pennsylvania, in 1859, the whaling industry was already in retreat. Petroleum doomed it. In a single day, an oil well pumped as many barrels as a whaleship might collect in a three-year voyage. As sales shrank, the owners of whaleships cut costs by offering smaller lays, and the rate of literacy and the level of experience of the whaling workforce dropped, dragging productivity down with it. Davis, Gallman, and Gleiter surmise that the fashion for wasp waists in the late nineteenth century added about fifteen years to the dying industry's life, by bidding up the price of baleen for corsets, but it was only a temporary reprieve.

In 1838, a whaler wrote in his journal:

> There was a time, (so says my rhyme,
> And so 'tis prosed by many)
> Sperm whales were found on "Japan
> Ground,"
> But now there are not any.

But the economists tell us that whales are innocent of having damaged the whaling industry by becoming scarce, and nineteenth-century whalers had to keep searching for new grounds because whales in much-hunted areas grew more canny. Americans never caught enough sperm whales to throw them out of equilibrium. They did harm the populations of grays and bowheads, it seems, and maybe of right whales, too, but too late to have contributed to the decline of American whaling.

With Foyn's new technology, the Norwegians hunted bigger and faster whales than the ones that man power and sail power had been able to handle; requiring new fleets, it was tantamount to a whole new industry. There was no reason to think that America would be good at it, especially since American labor cost more than Norwegian labor, so New Bedford's millionaires quietly shifted their capital to railroads, petroleum refining, and textiles.

Whaling in the United States survived as a conscious antique, but only for a few decades. In 1914, the newspaper of the whaling industry shut down for lack of readers. Like "a staunch old whaling bark," the editors wrote, the "Journal is to be hauled out on the beach." As it happens, Melville dropped hints from time to time that the making of literature was like whaling. It, too, was a craft that lingered into the industrial age. It, too, expressed by a somewhat violent process the essence that a living creature collected in its head. In "Moby-Dick," Ishmael even claims that, while working at his desk, he once saw in a mirror "a certain semi-visible steam" rising from his own head, like a whale's spout. Perhaps writing, then, is the career to run away to—so long as you don't mind figuring as both whaler and whale. ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

Summer Reads

Spook Country, *by William Gibson (Putnam; $25.95).* As in his previous novel, Gibson abandons the futuristic dystopias that have sustained most of his career, picturing instead a dystopic present—specifically, a post-9/11 America, which, in thrall to ubiquitous media and vague threats of annihilation, has "developed Stockholm syndrome toward its own government." The convoluted and politically insistent plot involves a missing shipping container, a former rock star, a Cuban-Chinese crime-facilitating family, and an Ativan addict coerced into domestic espionage. Fanciful touches include the creation of virtual art in public spaces using satellite mapping and Wi-Fi; texting in Volapuk, a Cyrillic-Latin amalgam; encrypting data within songs on an iPod; and the C.I.A.'s recruitment of sea pirates in the war on terrorism. (All but the last are verifiably real.) If Gibson's vision has got bleaker, his eye for the eerie in the everyday still lends events an otherworldly sheen.

Bangkok Haunts, *by John Burdett (Knopf; $24.95).* Sonchai Jitpleecheep, the hero of Burdett's Bangkok-based thrillers, is a unique police detective. A Buddhist as closely attuned to karma as to crime, Sonchai is profoundly aware that the latter is only an expression of the former, and, accordingly, he finds answers in places that logic-hampered Westerners would never know to look. In his third adventure to date, a murdered prostitute proves to be—even more in death than she was in life—a femme fatale of special magnitude. As in previous episodes, the pleasures derive less from Burdett's baroque plotting (in this case including former Khmer Rouge hired killers, a pornography ring debased even by Bangkok standards, and a death by torture involving elephants) than from the vivid portrait he paints of contemporary Thai life and mores.

Confessions of a Wall Street Shoeshine Boy, *by Doug Stumpf (HarperCollins; $24.95).* This début novel views corruption at Wall Street's highest levels through the eyes of two outsiders. Gil, who immigrated to New York from São Paulo as a child and retains a Portuguese-flavored grammar, overhears tales of life on the trading floor while shining some of the nicest shoes in business. He absorbs the particulars of a world where jockeying banter about sex, drugs, and push-up contests is interspersed with long hours of watching numbers on a screen, and where the appeal of insider trading as a way to break the tedium becomes unignorable. Stumpf switches between Gil's voice and that of a magazine writer in need of a big story who fastens onto him as a source. As they become entangled in mounting financial and sexual scandals, Stumpf exposes the sordidness in both the financial and the journalistic worlds.

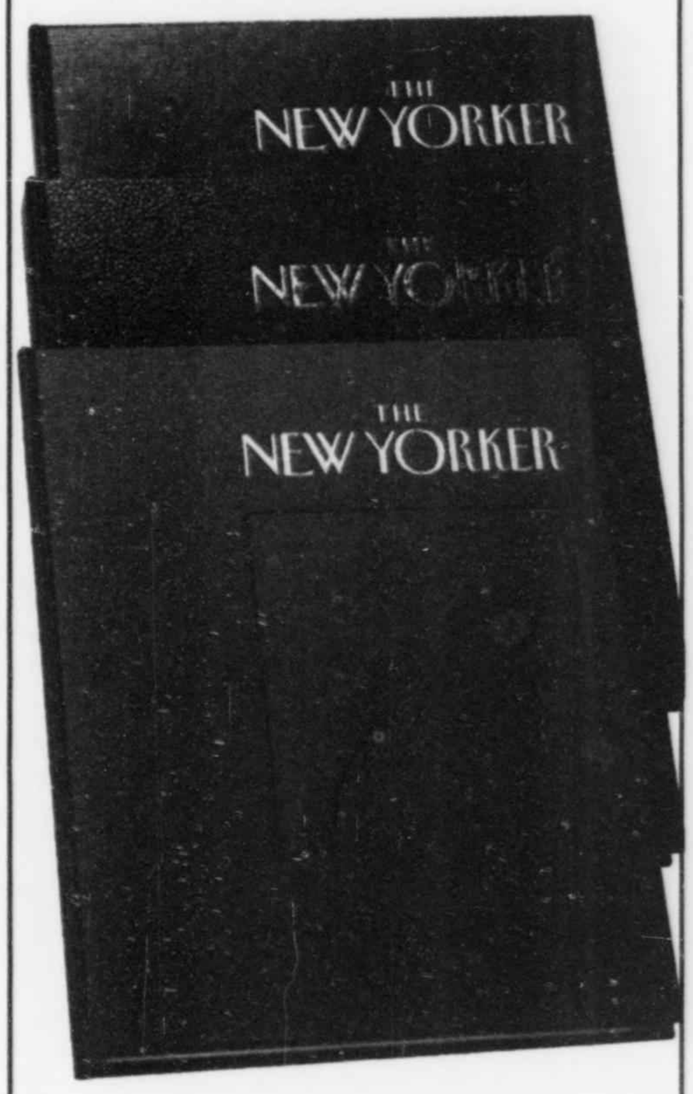
A Much Married Man, *by Nicholas Coleridge (Thomas Dunne Books; $24.95).* Anthony Anscombe is the scion of an English banking family and the inheritor of an estate that includes a small Cotswold village. Decent to the point of passivity, he goes through three marriages (and an extramarital liaison), each seemingly less well-advised than the last. Coleridge's laid-back narrative breezes through forty years of Anscombe's life with broad but acute satiric touches. The book is pitched as an uproarious comedy of manners, but it devolves into a gentle meditation on love, responsibility, and family in which Coleridge conveys the existential vertigo of middle age: "There were times when Anthony wondered how it had all worked out like this; he felt he had ended up at the epicentre of an enormous adhesive spider's web, upon which legions of ex-lovers, ex-wives, children and extended families were stuck for ever, all looking to him to feed, house and educate them."



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THE THEATRE

CHASING THE MUSE

"Xanadu" on Broadway and a rock operetta about Martin Luther King, Jr.

BY HILTON ALS

"Xanadu" (at the Helen Hayes) is so ridiculously brilliant, so lavish and sublime a confection that any set of adjectives you might come up with after a single viewing will more than likely be replaced by another set of ineffectual adjectives once you've seen the show a second or third time. It's probably the most fun you'll have on Broadway this season, one reason being that everything about it is so resolutely *anti*-Broadway. In its wildness and ecstasy, "Xanadu" is a welcome relief from the synthetic creations that some Broadway producers have been peddling for years. Here you can't count the disco balls fast enough—not to mention the roller skates, the frosted-pink lips, and the glittering spandex that the director, Christopher Ashley, hurls at you like a PCP flashback. "Xanadu" is far sleazier and cheesier than conventional musical theatre, and it points out just how tame most other musicals are.

A bit of background: The current show was inspired by the 1980 movie musical of the same name. The film starred the Australian pop sensation Olivia Newton-John as a Greek muse who materializes out of a mural painted on a wall in Venice, California, and befriends an artist called Sonny. She names herself Kira (as befits a Los Angeles-loving, roller-skating muse), and inspires Sonny to quit his day job as a commercial artist in order to follow his passion. The two join forces with a rich older patron (played in the film by Gene Kelly, and onstage by the always fine Tony Roberts), and open a roller disco called Xanadu. At last, Sonny becomes the man he has always meant to be: a straight guy who loves costumes, disco, and lights.

The film version of "Xanadu" is largely forgettable, and is generally regarded as a nail in the coffin of the American movie musical. But the film's songs—which were written by Jeff Lynne and John Farrar, and which Ashley reprises—linger on, especially for those of us who are children of the disco era. Out of the film's wreckage, a number of synthesizer-heavy tracks, laced with Newton-John's breathy vocals, emerged as hits, "Xanadu," "Suddenly," and "Magic" among them. These were the songs you might have listened to on your Walkman while pogo-ing over to your drug dealer's.

When, last year, it was announced that Ashley and Douglas Carter Beane were planning to mount a Broadway version of the movie, potential investors scoffed: why not leave that turkey in the oven? Beane, especially, was considered mad for undertaking the project. He was coming off a bona-fide hit, last year's "The Little Dog Laughed," a somewhat obvious satire about the perils of fame. What could he possibly have to gain from trying to improve "Xanadu" 's hopelessly leaden script?

As it turns out, Beane was the ideal playwright to adapt this work for the stage. In the film, which is slow and trippy, Sonny spends much more time in pursuit of his muse than is good for him, or us. Beane has retained the film's basic plot, but he streamlined its action and transformed its lazy camp into something more intelligently suggestive. (He kept almost no dialogue from the original script.) Everything that made "The Little Dog Laughed" feel strident or too blunt is sharpened in "Xanadu." As Kira, Kerry Butler is a powerhouse, ethereal and daffy at once. She not only imitates, which is to say exaggerates, Newton-John's accent; she stands outside the entire role and shrugs. She's both an ironist and an innocent—a little like a blond Lucille Ball—and an arresting believer in true love.



Wheels in motion: Kerry Butler and Cheyenne Jackson find love.

We trust Butler when she falls for Sonny (the excellent Cheyenne Jackson), even though he's about as deep as a cartoon character. Jackson plays Sonny with a Horatio Alger-like grin, which widens when, near the end of the show, he gets to flaunt his long legs in hot pants. Though the story traffics in purely heterosexual confusion, intimations of a more closeted sexuality abound. Mary Testa and Jackie Hoffman, both exceptional, play Melpomene and Calliope, Kira's fellow-muses and ugly sisters; they are the perfect stand-ins for every form of stunted lasciviousness. Why should Sonny and Kira be happy when Melpomene and Calliope have no hunk to call their own? Naturally, the girls

YUKO SHIMIZU

try to break up Sonny and his girl. But love and disco triumph in the end. Don't they always?

Sometimes it's all about what looks good on a marquee. "The Last Year in the Life of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. as Devised by Waterwell: A Rock Operetta" (at the Barrow Street Theatre) is a title that beckons to us from another era. In its rhythms, it conjures the name of Peter Weiss's anarchic 1964 tone poem, "The Persecution and Assassination of Jean-Paul Marat as Performed by the Inmates of the Asylum of Charenton Under the Direction of the Marquis de Sade"—a consideration of violence, mental collapse, spiritual disorder, and the restructuring of social norms.

The Waterwell company's five collaborators—Hanna Cheek, Rodney Gardiner, Arian Moayed, Tom Ridgely, and Kevin Townley—wrote the script and the lyrics for "The/King/Operetta" and perform in the show; Ridgely directs. Their endeavor owes something both to Weiss and to the legendary director Peter Brook, whose production of "Marat/Sade" ignited worldwide interest in the possibilities of avant-garde performance. But Waterwell's latest effort fails to satisfy Brook's most fundamental criteria for the theatre. As he wrote in an introduction to a printed edition of "Marat/Sade," "A play in performance is a series of impressions; little dabs, one after another, fragments of information or feeling in a sequence which stir the audience's perceptions." A good play, he explains, "sends many such messages, often several at a time, often crowding, jostling, overlapping one another." The overriding message you get from "The/King/Operetta" is a kind of relief at having survived college. It's a forced and ultimately condescending work, marred not only by the smugness of the smart kid in class but also by the wearisome antics of the class clown.

The five actors perform as a kind of choir, facing the audience as they intone this simplistic bit of agitprop: "Dr. King/He's the greatest. . . ./White man . . . /Won't let you sit down at the counter just to grab some lunch/Call Dr. King." Already, we know we're in trouble; to reduce King's broad vision for humanity to a series of sit-ins in support of the "Negro" cause misses the point right off the bat. Later, we see King (Rodney Gardiner) inhabiting both his public and his private roles—delivering speeches (with little of the real man's passion) and interacting with his wife, Coretta Scott King (Hanna Cheek). During these scenes, we're given no sense of the couple's complicated intimacy; King's womanizing is hinted at, but there's no trace of the sacrifices each made to promote King's startling ascendancy in the public eye.

Gardiner is less than thrilling in the role, but he possesses a degree of sincerity. J. Edgar Hoover and Lyndon Johnson also make an appearance—and both are portrayed as buffoons. (Hoover pops up at one point wearing a dress, a cheap shot that feels extraneous.) We get the picture: whitey bad, black man good. The show may wish to leave us with the suggestion of a larger idea: that everything sick about our current Administration has happened before, that for every King or Barack Obama there's a Hoover or a Trent Lott. But the specifics of King's legacy prove too complex for this sketch-minded troupe, so the Waterwell players have cut it all down to size. The result is a series of vignettes that offer little insight into the great man, and only the slightest glimmer of the way his times reflect our own. To judge by this production, King's moral seriousness made him a dullard. That's fitting, in a way, given that "The/King/Operetta" as a whole is tedious, fully illustrating Brook's observation that, in a poor play, "the impressions are well spaced out, they lope along in single file, and in the gaps the heart can sleep while the mind wanders to the day's annoyances and thoughts of dinner." ♦

CORRECTION OF THE WEEK

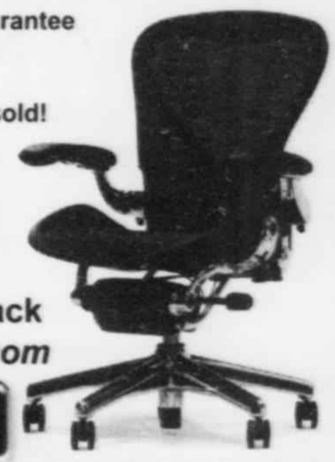
From the Los Angeles Times.

An article in Sunday's California section profiling members of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors said that decorations on the walls of Supervisor Mike Antonovich's office included a framed letter from his "hero," inventor and visionary Buckminster Fuller. The article should have identified Antonovich's hero as conservative columnist and National Review magazine founder William F. Buckley Jr., who sent the letter that is framed in the supervisor's office.

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ON TELEVISION

DANGEROUS LIAISONS

Law and disorder on FX.

BY NANCY FRANKLIN

Glenn Close is an actress whom people respect but don't give their love to, the way they do to, say, the living national treasure Meryl Streep, who is roughly Close's age peer and one of the few other American actresses who have some degree of majesty. (Anjelica Huston is another, but the list is short. All three, interestingly or not, have notably irregular, majestic noses. You aspiring actresses, cancel that consultation with the plastic surgeon.) Over the years, Close has become a finite entity in our minds. We don't think of her and imagine the possible roles she *could* play; we think "Fatal Attraction" and "Dangerous Liaisons" and Cruella De Vil, from "101 Dalmatians." Hollywood casting directors apparently share our limited imaginations (Close was in her mid-thirties by the time she made her feature-film début, thereby missing out on romantic leads, which for women are mostly, and perversely, reserved for the junior-varsity squad), but she has used our idea of her to very good effect in her most recent television outings. She was sensational, two years ago, as a season-long guest star on "The Shield," playing the new police captain in a hornet's nest of a precinct in Los Angeles. In her first episode, her character immediately established herself as strong, smooth, tough, cool, observant, amusable, winning her subordinates' admiration even as she clamped down on their wild, corrupt ways.



Rose Byrne and Glenn Close play for high legal and emotional stakes in "Damages."

LARA TOMLIN

Close has now been given a show of her own—"Damages," on FX, which begins July 24th. Here her character, a top New York litigation attorney named Patty Hewes, is more extreme on both ends: she's cruel, Machiavellian, dogged, charming, and dangerous. At the same time, she's vulnerable, precisely because of her hard-charging ways—she's a target of those she has gone after and brought down. When she receives a package at her office—and it is her office; she's the head of the firm—we find out just how vulnerable. (Tough woman as target: where have I seen that before? Oh, right—in just about every movie and TV show ever made in the history of the world; in this case, however, the character appears to deserve most of what she gets.) She does have a life, though. There is love in her relationship with her husband, Phil (Michael Nouri); he's devoted to her and to her troubled teen-age son. So she's not going home after work and eating Ben & Jerry's out of the container while watching "Grey's Anatomy." But her core is all business. As an attorney from a rival firm puts it to a young law-school graduate who's up for a job with both firms, Patty Hewes "sees her destiny in grander terms than the rest of us." If the young lawyer, Ellen Parsons (Rose Byrne), goes to work for Patty, he warns, "she'll own you."

That cautionary interlude is a flashback that comes a few minutes into the first episode; it follows a haunting opening scene, set in the present. The camera shows us ordinary New York images, capturing the city just waking up to its first cup of coffee, the air shimmering with tension and expectation. Then it closes in on an apartment building, moves into the lobby, then to the elevator, shot so close up that you can see small scratches on the metal doors. They open to reveal a woman—Ellen—spattered with blood and looking shell-shocked. O.K., I'm hooked. A little.

Hooked because "Damages" is deranged and over the top, and only a little hooked for the very same reason. There is more than a whiff of camp about the show, which is to say, ridiculousness that appears to be unintentional, and I already did my time, back in the eighties, with "Dynasty." A colleague of Hewes's who preps Ellen for her job interview with Patty, Tom Shayes (Tate Donovan, play-

ing a variation on the spineless, compromised character he played on "The O.C."), tells her that she's going to be quizzed on the firm's latest big case, a class-action suit brought by the employees of a company who lost millions of dollars by investing in its stock, while the billionaire head of the company, Arthur Frobisher (Ted Danson), dumped his just in time and got away unscathed. But Tom warns Ellen that Patty will be much more interested in how she handles herself than in her answers, because "when it comes to reading people, Patty lives and dies by instinct," and, further, "If you're phony with her for one second, she'll skewer you." Does anyone applying for a job need to be told this? Isn't this in "Job Interviews for Dummies"?

Ellen is asked to interview with Hewes on a Saturday—the day of her sister's wedding—and, forced to choose, she chooses family over career. This, incredibly, causes Hewes to show up at the reception. Why? "Because, kiddo, you're the first person stupid enough to turn me down," Hewes says, with that glint in the eye we've seen Close display before. Lock up the bunnies! One of the things that are unintentionally funny in "Damages" is the sexual tinge to Hewes's dealings with her would-be protégée. It's all toying and flirting and flattery. When Ellen asks if it's too late for her to reapply for the job, Hewes says, "I think it'd be a waste of time, Ellen," then pauses dramatically, unleashes a loaded half-smile, adds, "You're hired," and, with a look that sings, "Come on-a my house, I'm gonna give you candy," turns and sails away. While they're working on a case, Hewes stands in Ellen's doorway and gazes at her with possessive tenderness. And when Hewes passes along some of her cold-blooded wisdom—"Kids are like clients: they want all of you, all the time"—and sees Ellen digesting this pearl, she giggles, bites her lip, and smiles girlishly. "You know what I like about you?" she says, tapping her own temple. "There's always something going on." Rose Byrne has a chronically worried look on her face, so it's hard to tell whether Ellen is confused, repelled, or flattered by this attention. Maybe all three: bosses can be pretty good at messing with a person's head.

"Damages" is not a lawyers-are-evil show; it's a cat-and-mouse show, and a somewhat complicated one, because it turns out that Hewes hired Ellen with cause; she's connected to someone who may know something important regarding the Frobisher case. The plot is difficult to follow—shot sequences, at least in the first few episodes, often pair sex and death (an FX trademark, practically; it's the network that looks our animal selves in the eye), whether or not their pairing helps the story—but you're strung along deftly enough so that you do want to know how it's all going to play out. In among the camp, there's real intrigue.

Agghh! I tried. I really tried. I really wanted to see if it was possible to write about TV without mentioning that HBO show which ended last month. Just. Could. Not. Do it. There's a reason, though. "Damages" was co-created by Todd A. Kessler, Glenn Kessler, and Daniel Zelman, the first of whom was a writer and producer of "The Sopranos" for two seasons, and the first episode of "Damages" was directed by Allen Coulter, who directed a dozen of "The Sopranos"' eighty-six episodes. Kessler and Coulter know how to create and depict powerful characters; Close knows how to play them—now all that remains is for viewers to fall in love with her.

Have any states yet legalized marriage between human beings and TV shows? If so, I'm going to throw a few things in a bag and run off with "Mad Men," the new drama on AMC set in the world of advertising at the dawn of the sixties—and encompassing New York life, and marriage, and sex, and repression, and what America was and was not. It is gorgeous in every way. As it should be—it's the spawn of all those handsome, stylish office movies that were made in the fifties. Like those movies, "Mad Men" is smart and tremendously attractive, and it stirs you more than it probably should. It may not be deep, but if you're a certain age and have a certain sensibility and certain fantasies of what New York used to be like (thanks to those movies) it hits a deep place in you, like a straight-up Martini made of memory and desire.

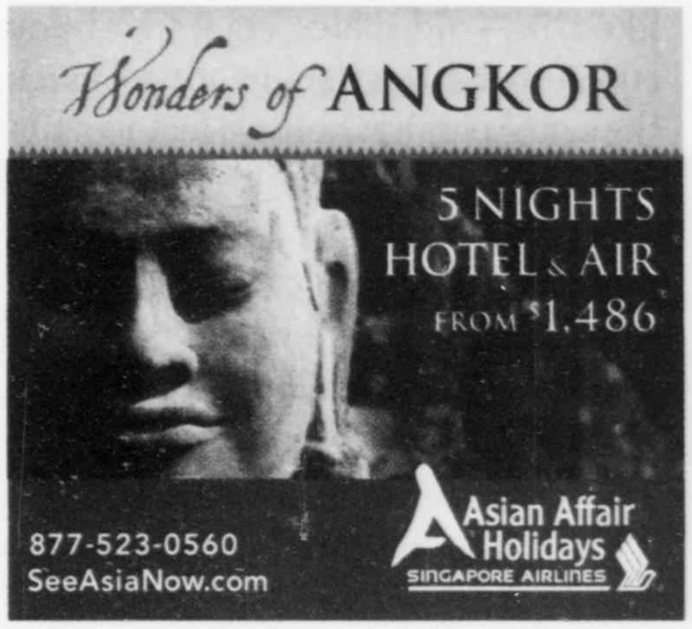
Did I mention that "Mad Men" was created by Matthew Weiner and that Alan Taylor directed three episodes? Their names may ring a bell, because Weiner was the executive producer, and Taylor directed nine episodes, of—*oh, my God, it's that show again!* ♦

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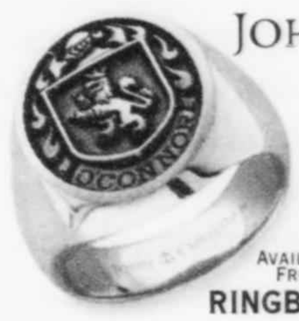
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THE CURRENT CINEMA

DREAM ON

"Hairspray" and "Ratatouille."

BY DAVID DENBY

The movie version of the hit Broadway musical "Hairspray" is perfectly pleasant—I smiled to myself all the way through it—but it's not as exhilarating as the show. For a subject like this—old dance crazes and pop styles—what matters is not so much the actual past but how we feel about it, and onstage David Rockwell's sets and William Ivey Long's costumes distilled our nostalgia for the candied years between Elvis's early work and the arrival of the Beatles. Set in 1962, "Hairspray," whose first incarnation was John Waters's deadpan camp movie from 1988, celebrates a time when teen-agers, as a distinct consumer group with their own culture, were a fairly recent invention. The stage musical crystallized the euphoria of that period as naïvely eager commerce and irony-free fantasy; when the chubby young heroine, Tracy Turnblad, awoke in bed and sang "Good Morning, Baltimore," she was surrounded by a pink shag carpet dotted with hair-spray cans and 45s, and the bouffant-and-beehive nuttiness of her world was buoyed by affection. The movie is a lovefest, too, but, this time, when Tracy (Nikki Blonsky) awakes, she jumps onto the streets of Baltimore and passes vermin, a drunk, and a creep. Later, she joins a civil-rights march that has a confrontation with the police. Many people love movies because they make sensuous contact with the surfaces of the world, but this material hardly cries out for realism. "Hairspray" doesn't need to be "opened up"; it needs to be freshly stylized for the screen.

That hasn't quite happened. The director, Adam Shankman, who has made comedies and family films, and the screenwriter, Leslie Dixon, have removed the traces of weird humor and Broadway blue that gave the show its happily knowing flavor. I admire John Travolta, but using this movie star, rather than the show's Harvey Fierstein, as Edna Turnblad, Tracy's hefty mother, is an idiocy on the same level as replacing Julie Andrews with Audrey Hepburn for the movie version of "My Fair Lady." Both Fierstein and Divine, who played Edna in the original movie, worked as female impersonators who confidently let us in on the joke. In the show, when Fierstein held forth on life and love and the Gabor sisters in his basso absurdo—a testosterone-drenched Bensonhurst snarl—he was not a man pretending to be a woman; he was a man openly playing a woman and speaking in his own voice. But Travolta does a wistful imitation of the female sex. Buried in a full-body fat suit and various silicone prosthetic appliances, he looks rounded, smooth, and cute, rather like Miss Piggy, and he speaks in a light, high female voice—he sounds a little like Robin Williams in "Mrs. Doubtfire," without the lilt. The role demands exaggeration rather than modesty, yet Travolta, with a misbegotten sense of duty, tries to give an authentic performance as a working-class Baltimore housewife of forty-five years ago—a shy, guarded woman who is embarrassed about her weight. It's a touching attempt, but the lunatic joke that started with Divine has almost vanished.

The rest of "Hairspray" is less delicate and self-conscious. As before, Tracy lives to dance and to make out with the sweet, good-looking boy (Zac Efron) who's the high-school king. "Hairspray" is geared to her energy and her triumph. At the local afternoon-TV dance show, she bursts through the ban on fat girls, frustrating the designs of the hypocritical, racist station manager, Velma Von Tussle (Michelle Pfeiffer), who wants her own untalented daughter to become Miss Teenage Hairspray



Nikki Blonsky and John Travolta as Tracy and Edna Turnblad.

1962. Pfeiffer, not seen much in recent movies, plays this vaudeville bitch with enormous zest. Her Velma, however, is not a very formidable villain, and everyone else helps Tracy's dreams come true, including the show's slick m.c., Corny Collins (James Marsden), and the lead performer on the show's monthly Negro Day, Motormouth Maybelle (Queen Latifah). At school, Tracy falls in with the black kids, who admire her spirit and show her how to really dance. When Negro Day is booted off the schedule, Tracy goes to the black side of town, joins forces with her friends there, and fights to integrate the station. (The protesters show up with signs saying "Do the Checkerboard.") In an amiably sappy way,

JONAS BERGSTRAND

"Hairspray" is offering a racial fable: blacks teach whites how to move, liberating their bodies, and whites help blacks gain their rights. It's hard to take this message-movie stuff even half seriously: Shankman seems to think he has something important to say, but Marc Shaiman's music (including a few new songs), with its homogenized Broadway sound, is not memorable enough to serve as a vehicle of political thought—or even genial political fantasy.

The rest is dance. The kids hold an endless platter party in the TV studio, school corridors, and classrooms, and it's a relief to see their bodies whole, and not chopped into churning limbs in the Baz Luhrmann ("Moulin Rouge") or Rob Marshall ("Chicago") manner. But the routines, unfortunately, are nothing special—worked-up versions of popular dances of the time, with groups of girls in cone skirts and boys in cardigans and string ties dancing in rows, and the camera, for the most part, plopped down right in front of them. Shankman could use a little liberating himself: with few exceptions, he uses the camera stiffly; he doesn't give us the concentrated essence of pop whimsy that we want. The finest moment is something very simple and straightforward: Christopher Walken, playing Tracy's father, Wilbur Turnblad, coarsens his voice and gentles his manner and woos Edna with the lovely Old Broadway-style song "You're Timeless to Me." The number begins in the Turnblad living room, works its way down the back stairs, and concludes in the yard, amid hanging laundry. In the end, Shankman may feel a greater kinship with the old folks than with the pulsing kids.

"There's something about humans," muses Remy (Patton Oswalt), the French country rat who is the hero of the animated gastronomic marvel "Ratatouille." He goes on: "They *taste*. . . . They *discover*." What Remy doesn't say, though it's implicit in his attitude, is that humans and rats are brothers under the fur: they alone, among all God's creatures, eat everything. But Remy has his own version of the omnivore's dilemma: he's afflicted with a refined palate. Refusing the usual repast of garbage, he realizes that in order to eat well he needs to cook. "Ratatouille" starts out as a minor conceit about a rat who turns himself into a connoisseur, and becomes a gripping comic tale about the implacability of an artist. Washed into a sewer, Remy lands in Paris, and makes himself known to a young man, Linguini (Lou Romano), who has inherited a famous restaurant but cannot so much as crack an egg. Quietly, he rides under Linguini's toque and pulls tufts of his hair, controlling his chopping and sauce-stirring techniques like a master puppeteer. A menacing challenge lies ahead: a visit from the annihilating restaurant critic Anton Ego (Peter O'Toole).

The animation gang at Pixar don't settle for goosing old fairy tales and shining up media-weary jokes, as the DreamWorks folks do in the "Shrek" series. They create each movie afresh, and some of their productions, especially this one and "The Incredibles," both written and directed by Brad Bird, have reached heights of invention, speed, and wit not seen in animation since the work done by Chuck Jones at Warner Bros. in the nineteen-forties. In "Ratatouille," the level of moment-by-moment craftsmanship is a wonder. Keeping the space clear and coherent may seem an odd thing to praise in an animated film, but one of the marvellous things about "Ratatouille" is how well we come to understand the geography of the kitchen in which much of the movie takes place.

The point of view jumps to the top of cabinets and scampers beneath ovens and counters, but we always know where we are in relation to the rest of the kitchen and why it matters where Remy goes or doesn't go. When he calls in his family and friends to help out in a crisis, the animals, who need to be sanitized, emerge from a dishwasher in a puff of steam and get assigned to their stations as sauciers, sous-chefs, and the like, where they crawl up ladles to the rims of soup tureens and send mushrooms cascading into a waiting *boeuf en daube*. Our knowledge of the kitchen makes the rapid-fire gags much funnier. Bird has turned disgust into a celebration of efficiency, and, on the fly, he offers the most detailed cooking lore and the most ardent celebration of the chef as artist since "Babette's Feast." Toques off to Mr. Bird. At a time when many Americans have so misunderstood the ethos of democracy that they hate being outclassed by anyone, when science is disdained as dangerous and expertise as élitism, this animation artist, working in a family medium, has made two brilliant movies that unequivocally champion excellence. "Ratatouille" suggests that some omnivores are better than others. There's nothing to do but get over it. ♦

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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 Gahan Wilson, must be received by Sunday, July 22nd. Finalists in the July 2nd contest appear below; go online to vote. We will announce the winner, along with the finalists in this week's contest, in the August 6th 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



"He's his own best friend."
Jennifer Iverson, Santa Ynez, Calif.



THE FINALISTS

"Except here it's always good cop, good cop."
Gary Rawitz, New York City

"They have a really hard time meeting their quota."
Elizabeth Goldberg, Amenia, N.Y.

"I don't mind cops, but you'd think God would have let in at least one exhaust specialist."
Andy Leighton, Arlington, Va.

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



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